

Annual Assessment for 2004 of the INFID Liaison Office Brussels

1. Background

The Liaison Office contributes to the implementation of the INFID program according to its agreed objectives and strategies. The background of each project is already presented in the reflections of the individual projects.

The work of the LO is based on five main tasks, i.e.

Collection and update of information on policy trends in Europe related to INFID's issues

Dissemination of issue related information to advocacy targets in Europe

Dissemination of issue related information to and maintenance of INFID's Network in Europe

Facilitation of INFID's advocacy work in Europe

Project Implementation Contribution

These main tasks are embedded in the general policies and strategies of the overall program of INFID and the implementation of the specific project implementation. In this, the LO is dependent on the successful work and implementation of the work plan of other units of the INFID Secretariat. Output of the LO and the outcome of its works is directly proportional to the success of the INFID's overall work.

The following document reproduces the sections on conclusions and lessons learned of periodical reports of 2004 and summarises in the last section the overall assessment for the year 2004.

1. Assessment of the first semester 2004 (January 1st – June 30th 2004)

1. The present report still has the form of a narrative enumerating the activities. The Liaison Office still cannot produce a quarterly report comparing activities and achievements against planned and projected objectives and output. The production of the overall work-plan for the entire Secretariat is still dragging on. Since the work-plans of the individual projects did not indicate a detailed division of labour it was not possible for the Liaison Office to extract a work-plan for its work. However, there is a work-plan for the activities of the Assistant Liaison Officer that are not depending on input, guidance or material from Jakarta.

2. The communication between the various units has improved during the last quarter mainly due to the important achievement that finally regular meetings are held in Jakarta. Now this progress needs to be translated into an improvement of the transmission of information between the offices in Jakarta and Brussels. An effective and informative way of minutes taking and communication has to be developed to make better use of the oral exchange and discussion during the meetings in the Jakarta office. The suggestions the staff in Jakarta take turns to communicate contents of discussion and decision to the staff of the Liaison Office should be realised and pursued with more perseverance and consistency. By now written communication cannot yet replace oral communication by phone.

3. The international aspects of activities of the Jakarta office need to be further stressed. More attention should be paid to internationalising the material produced by INFID by producing timely and qualitatively acceptable English material. The translations system still needs to be improved.

.../4

4. The OA process has made a great leap forward by successfully completing the team building workshop in Anyer. The homework of this workshop should be done quickly and effectively in order to maintain the momentum of this successful effort.
5. The Filing Order needs to be reviewed soon, since it cannot fully cope with the current correspondence and issues. In the recent Team Building Workshop at Anyer, the General Administration and HRD (GAHRD) unit has hinted that it was planning on an integrated system of filing. LO should take this opportunity to review its filing system and closely cooperate with GA/HRD in building the new system.
6. SNO is still managed and owned by LO only. It is stated in the work plan of each unit that they will support SNO, indicating formal admission on the importance of SNO in INFID's work. But there has been no real supporting action ever; perhaps so because of the absence of clear ideas of how they could support SNO.
7. The integrated web site project was still dragging on. LO depended on the Jakarta Secretariat since it did not have the money for or the expertise in building web site. The secretariat in its turn relied on outsourcing for its IT matters. There is a need to have a permanent IT staff if the secretariat wants to have full control of its IT management.
8. INFID has mailing groups but they are not used strategically. Mailing groups can become effective only when they have most of the targeted audience in their recipient list. There is a need to optimise these groups. (Written in July 2004)

2. Assessment of the third quarter (July 1st – September 30th, 2004)

Only a limited judgement is possible for this period since there were long times of absence of one of the two staff, and even a complete closure of the office in August.

The CGI campaign is moving forward, though at a snails pace and has not met any deadline set in the original schedule yet. Material planned to be ready at the end of September to be used in the network meetings in Europe was not available at that time and was jeopardising the launching of the campaign here in Europe. Since this year no lobby visits will take place here in Europe (nor in the US, Japan or elsewhere), the one key element of INFID's international advocacy work through its partner networks is at stake.

The flow of information in terms of quantity has significantly increased during the reporting period. During the reporting period also several telephone conferences took place involving smaller and larger parts of the staff of both offices. Moreover, the Jakarta office now held regular weekly meetings, as does the Liaison Office. Minutes of the meetings are exchanged on a regular basis. However, the quality and usefulness of the information transmitted can still be improved. The same applies to the manner information is being used and reacted to. While on the one hand written information either submitted by email or by using informal channels such as chatting is increasingly replacing oral communication, this information channel is not always reliable and effective. The responsiveness to written questions can – from the point of view of the Liaison Officer – still be improved. Questions and requests of the LO, which cannot be addressed to one person, but need discussion and co-ordination in the Jakarta office tend to be lost on, since nobody is taking them up. On various issues the Liaison Office has therefore experienced obstacles in carrying out its (internal and external) tasks.

The co-operation in financial terms is going on smoothly. The system of quarterly reports of the LO to the head of the financial department and to the Executive Secretary is now well established. The same applies for the regular transfer of the necessary funds for the Brussels office. Documents pertaining to the accounting process are regular sent to Jakarta allowing the financial department to keep track of the cash flow and assets of the entire organisation.

The form of this quarterly report is still a narrative since it was not possible for the LO to produce a work-plan. In the course of the year and also during the third quarter various revisions of the work-plans of the respective project officers and other units were necessary due to revision of budget and strategy. This delay

in the finalisation of work-plans resulted in the absence of such a document for the Liaison Officer, even though there is an embryonic work-plan for those activities of the LO which can be implemented independently from the activities in Jakarta. (Written in October 2004)

3. Overall assessment of year 2004 (including 4th quarter)

The final months of the year 2004 were deeply influenced by the uncertainty about the succession of the incumbent executive secretary. In the meantime the staffs struggle to keep up with the original plans of a large-scale CGI campaign. Even though the session of the CGI was postponed several times and finally held only in January 2005 the products for the advocacy have not been produced until time of reporting, or at least have not reached the LO in Brussels (despite several requests).

The lack of reliability is undermining the public standing of INFID as a partner in advocacy work and is creating difficulties for the LO to perform well. Particularly, the exclusion of the LO from advocacy activities related to the CGI in January 2005 without prior discussion with the LO caused particular irritation since it over-turned decisions made in joint meetings in Jakarta in December 2004.

Many items of the corporate work plan agenda, which were jointly considered to be important and of high priority, did not receive much attention not only during the fourth quarter of the year, but during the course of the entire year. Among those are some items that are of specific importance for the LO's international advocacy and network activities such as the English language web site, a comprehensive database, and the installation and maintenance of issue-related mailing lists. The LO received verbal commitment, but when it came to implementation there was either no follow-up, or the suggestions and requests were rejected due to high work load in Jakarta. On the other hand, there was little contribution from the Jakarta office's side to activities such as SNO etc. as foreseen in the work plan. This has created deep seated frustration on the side of the LO.

In the course of the year 2004 the access to institutions of the European Union has been further strengthened. The LO has regular meetings with officials of both the European Commission and the Council of the European Union. The LO can bring up current matters as well as strategic issues. The officials of the two institutions refer to the LO for advice and assessment on political and economic questions. The trust and influence that has been built is reflected in the European Commission's request to the LO to facilitate a workshop between the European Commission and Indonesian NGOs to discuss the forthcoming Country Strategy Paper.

Moreover, firm working relations exist with the European Parliament after the new Parliament has been convened last summer. As a first result the INFID LO succeeded in placing question of Aceh on the agenda of the EP's Development Commission and to invite to speakers of this hearing. This was also made possible through the close co-operation with INFID's European network.

The co-operation with networks in Europe has been further developed. There are regular meetings of these networks in London and The Hague respectively. The LO is regularly attending these meetings. The LO has initiated a co-operation between the Dutch and the British network on the EU presidency. While the Netherlands chaired the EU in the second semester 2004, the UK will do so in the second semester 2005. Moreover the UK is the chair of the G7/G8 in 2005. Since the German network is not so strongly positioned co-operation is only possible with individual organisations

In addition, this co-operation has opened access to officials of the Dutch (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the British government (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Treasury), which can facilitate meetings at short notice. Regular contact exists between the LO and the German government (Ministry of Economic Co-operation). The LO is regularly invited to country hearings and could make a presentation and make structured interventions.

INFID was able for the first time to accredit a delegation to the Session of the UNHRC in Geneva. The LO acted as chief delegate and attend part of the session in April 2004.

The process of organisational development going on during the course of the year 2004 has significantly increased the commitment of INFID's staff and the communication among each other. The OA/OD team including the Liaison Officer as one member, has continuously met during the years and conducted various telephone conferences during the year to support the overall process in the Secretariat. The active participation in the work of the team and the overall process represents an important part of the LO's staffs internal activities. The results of this process will be separately presented to the board.

In summary, the year 2004 has two very different features: on the one hand INFID (through the work of its LO) has greatly strengthened its position in Europe to influence key policy makers in European governments and the institutions. The work of many years of continuous work now starts paying off. On the other hand INFID was not in a position to effectively use this opportunities by channelling the policy recommendations to these key players. A CGI campaign was no possible in Europe in 2004. Moreover, an effective and broad network exists in Europe willing to support INFID in advocating its issues towards European governments and institutions.

On the other hand the staff of the LO felt being left alone by the office in Jakarta on various important occasions and in some central issues of its works (CGI campaign in Europe in autumn 2004, English website of INFID, database for target group outreach) In the last month of 2004 and in the first month of 2005 the communication between the two offices was maintained unilaterally by the LO office except of the exchange of minutes of meetings and progress reports. The communication between the Liaison Officer and the Deputy Executive Secretary proved to be particularly difficult. Despite various attempts to create a professional relationship, no such level of communication has been reached so far. Moreover, there seems to be an increasing tendency to sideline the Liaison Officer and to exclude him from strategic discussions related to his primary field of responsibility.

The Liaison Officer requests the board to discuss this issue and to support the INFID secretariat to achieve a professional and effective co-operation between the two offices for the sake INFID's international advocacy work. The staffs of the Liaison Office are willing and ready to contribute its fair share to overcome the present crisis.

Khs, February 2005