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## MINUTES OF DIGNITY BOARD MEETING JUNE 19, 2025

AT DIGNITY, Bryggervangen 55, Cph

PARTICIPANTS: Lars Udsholt, Emil Kiørboe, Anna Mette Nathan, Marie Louise Nørredam, Una Marquard-Busk, Maja Lærke Kielsholm, Bettina Jæger, Peter Vedel Kessing

ON TEAMS: Manfred Nowak (till 4.30 pm)

ABSENT: Lotte Leicht, Nomfundo Mogapi

FROM MANAGEMENT: Rasmus Grue Christensen

GUESTS:

REFERENT: Mette Grimstrup (MG)

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### **1. Approval of agenda of board meeting Jun 19, 2025**

Lars Udsholt (LU) chaired the meeting and introduced the agenda. The agenda was approved.

### **2. Welcome round**

Everybody presented themselves, including the new board members.

### **3. Orientation from the Chairperson**

Lars Udsholt shared reflections on DIGNITY and his role as the new chairperson. He described DIGNITY's complexity as both challenging and inspiring. Reflecting on his own background, from activism in Ghana to roles in bureaucracy, he emphasized that his and the board's job is not to "speak up" themselves but to empower others in the organization to be champions for human rights, also in the public sphere. He appreciated the structures and routines already in place within the board and expressed interest in how to work even more effectively with board members based in different countries.

Finally, he noted that his first term as board member was soon ending. The board approved of a 2<sup>nd</sup> term for Lars Udsholt.

### **4. Orientation from the CEO**

Rasmus Grue Christensen (RGC) provided an update on the current state of the organization. Despite worsening global conditions, DIGNITY remains relatively stable due to strong partnerships and long-term donor commitments.

The combination of accountability work and support for victims has proven to be a strong combination, applicable in many settings and human rights emergencies in the last few years. DIGNITY's prevention work, however, has not seen a similar increase in attention and funding. This might be natural, but we are, cf. strategic priorities for this year, looking into possible ways to revitalize this aspect. This will probably be worth discussing at a future board meeting.

Nationally, the ongoing healthcare reform may open new opportunities and challenges. It is a complex process. At the recent Danish Democracy Festival, "Folkemødet", DIGNITY's dual role as both strong critic and trusted partner of Danish public institutions was evident in many debates. The organization's complex and strong advocacy role in Denmark might also be worth discussing in the board at some point.

The board thanked for the orientation. Denmark's new war crimes legislation was mentioned, and it was shortly discussed how DIGNITY could support its actual implementation. The board also noted that the new Danish development policy strategy includes strong priorities on both human rights, including torture, and mental health.

## **5. Disposition in the EC**

The EC has been informed by email about a MIDRIFT project in Kenya to roll out violence prevention throughout the country. The budget is potentially rather large, but DIGNITY's share is just under DKK 4 million.

We are still in dialogue with donors about the projects in Syria, Georgia, and Bangladesh.

## **6. Recent Geopolitical Developments and the Fight for Human Rights**

The board reviewed geopolitical developments impacting DIGNITY's strategy implementation since the board seminar in January. RGC presented a short overview and highlighted three global trends: The global funding environment has contracted by 40%, forcing a shift from growth to maintaining current operations. The goal of donor diversification has also become more difficult to achieve. There is a rise in repressive regimes, increasing the complexity of operative decisions. And international institutions like the UN are under both political and financial pressure. Given DIGNITY's leading position in the field, it is worth discussing whether this status brings new responsibilities or opportunities for new alliances.

Nationally, the continued low number of refugees in Denmark may affect DIGNITY's work in the future, though many existing refugees in Denmark still lack access to specialized treatment. Considerations about possible new target groups might be a question for the next strategic period.

The board agreed that adapting to new and complex realities was necessary. Board members shared concerns about the diminishing willingness of governments to fill the gap left by U.S. funding cuts. Alternative funding sources, such as the private sector and Global South partners, were considered, though both also pose new challenges. The board agreed that both international and Danish advocacy need further attention - underlining that the UN's crisis is not only financial but even existential.

## **7. Risk Assessment 2025**

RGC introduced the 2025 risk assessment. The current risk management framework was originally designed when the global context was more promising. Now, risk management is part of everyday operations and attention. Currently, data security remains a major focus, and funding volatility is a growing concern. The organization is also working on mitigating the risk of secondary trauma among staff, especially those working internationally.

The board noted that the narrative approach to risk presentation was appreciated. The risk of fraud was addressed, with RGC noting that trust from donors and strong internal systems help control this issue. A new risk identified was the sustainability of partner organizations, many of which are now more reliant on DIGNITY's presence. Board members also pointed out that risks to beneficiaries – not just partners – must be considered.

The board took note of the assessment.

#### **8. Budget revision 2025**

The budget revision for 2025 was presented and approved. The financial picture is relatively stable, with a modest projected surplus of around 2 million DKK. The increase in revenue is attributed to growth in the MENA program (mostly from other Danish partners), carry-over spending from last year's DED funds, and better-informed budgeting based on clinic revenue patterns.

Anne Mette Nathan (AMN) reminded the board that the goal is not to grow equity, but to spend funds meaningfully. It was agreed to be mindful of this at the coming budget process.

#### **9. Annual wheel 2026**

The board approved of the annual meeting plan for 2026. Topics proposed for board discussions in 2026 included advocacy, gaining better insight into international program activities, and developing a clearer overview of DIGNITY's research initiatives. It was agreed that these themes be incorporated into the annual planning cycle.

RGC mentioned DIGNITY's growing number of staff based abroad and suggested that a future discussion should address the strategic purpose and challenges of this shift.

#### **10. AOB**

Nothing pt.

#### **11. Board's 15 min**

Closed item.