

# SOMO Quality Policy

## 1 Introduction

SOMO is in possession of the following quality certificates:

❑ **ISO 9001:2015**

SOMO complies with ISO 9001:2015, a Quality Management System standard defined by the International Organisation of Standardisation. SOMO is audited against these standards on an annual basis.

❑ **Partos 9001:2015 (version 2018)**

SOMO also complies with the Partos standard, a sector specific application of the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

SOMO's quality policy is our guideline for the development of both internal and external relationships. In order to realise this policy, SOMO has established a quality management system that facilitates compliance and adherence to the standard and the pursuit of our quality objectives. The scope of application of the management system is:

**To contribute to sustainable and equitable social, economic and ecological development through research, network coordination, training, advice and awareness-raising & advocacy. Focused on multinational corporations in their international context of production chains and regulation of trade, investment, taxation, and responsibility for compliance with human rights.**

**Vision:** SOMO envisions a global economic, political and legal system that is equitable, democratic, transparent, and environmentally sustainable. In this system, civil societies have the power to hold multinational corporations and governments to account for destructive and unfair business practices, and the power to realise economic alternatives, locally and globally.

In SOMO's vision, both of these powers are an essential precondition for the elimination of the structural causes of poverty, inequality, and the exploitation of people and natural resources by multinational corporations.

**Strategy:** SOMO believes that to be able to contribute to social change, four preconditions must be met:

- ❑ **Speak truth to power** – gain access to reliable information (research) and enable (groups of) people to stand up for their rights in relation to repressive economic powers;
- ❑ **Connect** – joint activities by organisations with (partially) shared interests increase collective influence;
- ❑ **Mutual capacity development** – through training and collaborative strategy development complementarity in international cooperation is used and developed to link knowledge and action;
- ❑ **Reaching relevant target groups with perspectives for action** – SOMO is able to do its work through support from subsidy providers and clients.

**Quality:** In order to realise this vision, it is vital that SOMO cooperates with all its stakeholders in a professional manner. This demands that its own organisation is structured in a professional manner as well. SOMO's quality policy serves to ensure this.

The following values are vital in this:

- ❑ Reaching our target groups in an effective way (effective);
- ❑ Carrying out our activities in an independent and reliable way (reliable);
- ❑ Adopting a self-critical stance, through which we can learn from our mistakes (self-critical);
- ❑ Creating as much transparency as possible within the organisation (transparent);
- ❑ Having optimal accountability in relation to all our financiers (accountable).
- ❑ Accountable for the way we carry out the work towards stakeholders (integrity)

## 2 General objectives of the quality policy

Quality plays a major role in SOMO's work on various levels and is viewed by SOMO as a process of continuous improvement. Based on relationships and needs both within and outside SOMO, the organisation has classified its quality policy and its general objectives as follows, taking the different levels as well as respective core values into account:

1. **Internal management:** collaboratively increasing effectivity and efficiency, by increased uniformity in knowledge and information management, as well as monitoring bottlenecks and improvement measures, and increasing possibilities for management and supervisory board within the scope of SOMO objectives.
2. **External reliability:** increasing and maintaining the trust that clients, financiers, target groups and other stakeholders have in the work of SOMO to support the acquisition of financial means and to increase the impact of SOMO's work.
3. **Effective cooperation:** because SOMO is a hybrid organisation (subsidy programmes, service provision, network hosting) and functions in a complex environment with many external contacts and stakeholders, it is vital that activities are carried out in a uniform way.

## 3 Essential relationships for the quality policy

SOMO's quality develops as a chain in which objectives become the scope in which SOMO's work is carried out in all its relationships. The most important relationships are those with organisations that collaborate to realise SOMO's results (e.g. researchers in the South, Dutch NGOs that follow up on our publications). Therefore, SOMO's quality policy is based on a stakeholder analysis. To ensure SOMO's quality, it is necessary to apply the quality policy to the different stakeholder groups. SOMO uses the following instruments to transfer this to stakeholders:

1. **Staff:** In order to safeguard the quality of its implementation by SOMO staff, SOMO introduces its quality standards through:
  - a. **HR management policy:** in recruitment & selection, training, and supervision of development and performance reviews. SOMO also has a safety policy that is applicable to business travel and field research for the safety of staff, respondents and cooperation partners.
  - b. **Code of Conduct:** the standards that apply to good research and proper relations with stakeholders are expressed in SOMO's Code of Conduct.
  - c. **Complaint procedure:** if a stakeholder disputes SOMO's working methods, the stakeholder may submit a complaint to SOMO.

- d. **Integrity policy:** SOMO has implemented a policy to safeguard integrity and to combat fraud and corruption.
  - e. **Risk policy:** SOMO likewise has introduced a risk policy, which is defined and monitored by staff, management, director and supervisory board.
2. **Collaborative partners:** In order to safeguard the quality of operations carried out with SOMO or financed by SOMO with partner organisations, SOMO applies quality standards through:
- a. **Recruitment and selection:** SOMO applies its partner protocol to the recruitment and selection of new partners, in which an assessment is carried out based on evaluation of reference(s) to determine the reliability and suitability for cooperation with SOMO.
  - b. **Contracting:** SOMO informs collaborative partners about its standards for proper research and conscientious conduct with stakeholders. These standards are part of contractual agreements.
  - c. **Development:** SOMO issues instructions (research manual) or supplies training to collaborating partners for the proper and effective conducting of research when needed to ensure compliance with these standards.
  - d. **Evaluation, learning or sanctioning:** each collaboration in which SOMO also acts as financier is evaluated per contract. Lessons are learned from this which are applied to future collaboration. As part of its partner policy, SOMO assigns a risk profile. These profiles indicate conditions for the form of collaboration. These could relate to the intensification of strategic cooperation or the phasing out of cooperation and application of a sanction policy by SOMO in the event of negative experiences.
  - e. **External evaluation and cooperation in alliances:** Monitoring and evaluation, performance measurement, etc. is rising on the agenda in diverse external evaluations, Partos activities and political discussions on NGOs. Presenting measurable results is becoming more and more desirable. Where possible and relevant, SOMO participates in evaluations on the sector level or alliance level. Moreover, SOMO initiates its own additional external evaluations to stimulate learning for the organisation.
3. **Sustainability and suppliers:** Social responsibility and sustainable business practices are of great importance to SOMO. As a civil society organisation, SOMO strives for social improvement – this shapes the objective of SOMO’s primary process. In this, SOMO strives to optimise its sustainable operations and where possible to be able to offer an alternative.
- a. **Accountability:** SOMO’s first obligation in its social responsibility is its accountability for the social effects of its primary process, which is aimed at social change. SOMO’s central focus is to strengthen social and ecological interests in relation to the dominant financial-economic interests of strong actors. However, as described in its Code of Conduct, SOMO aims to prevent that actors suffer damage as a result of SOMO’s activities that are not motivated by major societal interests. SOMO articulates this social responsibility through means of its Code of Conduct, a hearing procedure for stakeholders and a complaint procedure.
  - b. **Independence:** because of its social responsibility, the independence of SOMO’s research is of vital importance. For this reason, SOMO is critical in acceptance of financing. SOMO does not accept financing from all actors and SOMO never agrees to conditions for financing which could undermine its independence. This also means that SOMO does not accept financing from the management or directors of multinational corporations.
  - c. **Sustainable operations:** SOMO’s policy has been developed to promote sustainable operations. This is comprised of objectives regarding the improvement of SOMO’s

ecological footprint and the promotion of decent work and social indicators in SOMO's purchasing and operations. In its purchasing policy, SOMO evaluates the supplier as well as the product/service, whereby environmental performance, social performance and supply chain management are major criteria for purchasing decisions. Where possible, SOMO chooses the most sustainable option, concerning both the product/service and the supplier, in which the possibilities for re-use and/or stimulation of social entrepreneurship are considered.

#### 4 Components of SOMO's quality policy:

SOMO distinguishes four related components in its quality policy, based on the general objectives and relationships mentioned:

1. **Process management/supply chain management:** the objective of this is to allow the organisation to function more effectively and efficiently. SOMO's primary process specifies the steps within the process, based on which progress and results are periodically monitored.
2. **Performance measurement:** By means of result registration and internal discussions of these results, SOMO promotes a focus on results
3. **Learning processes:** By holding monthly team sessions, participating in evaluations, themed learning sessions (internally and with stakeholders) and strategy days, SOMO ensures its long-term relevance and learning in order to improve processes, as well as learning about SOMO's contribution to the intended social change.
4. **Accountability:** SOMO increases its reliability for stakeholders through reporting (subject to the requirements of financiers, IATI or publicly via reports) and via storytelling on the website.

Based on the needs from both within and outside SOMO, SOMO has classified its quality policy as follows, with associated core values.

|         |   |  |        |
|---------|---|--|--------|
|         | Internal  |  |        |
| Process | <b>Process management/<br/>Supply chain<br/>management</b><br><br><i>Core values:<br/>reliability,<br/>efficiency</i> | <b>Performance<br/>measurement</b><br><br><i>Core values:<br/>effectivity,<br/>ability to govern</i> | Result |
|         | <b>Learning organisation</b><br><br><i>Core values:<br/>creativity, innovativeness</i>                                | <b>Accountability</b><br><br><i>Core values:<br/>transparency,<br/>responsiveness, flexibility</i>   |        |
|         | External  |  |        |