

Rigpa moving towards a Federation

Meeting of national and international representatives

25 - 27 June, 2018

Meeting Report

Introduction

Rigpa's principle national and international teams met for three days of productive, progressive and heart-warming discussions in Amsterdam. The meetings were attended by representatives of the Vision Board, National Boards, National Directors, and the Transformation Team.¹

Over three days we looked at how we move forward as one global Rigpa organization, bearing in mind that until Sogyal Rinpoche's retirement in August 2017, he held the role of Spiritual Director of Rigpa for all Rigpa entities. This was what united all national Riggas, retreat centres and the Lerab Ling Congregation. The goal of these meetings was to establish a new model for how we will be connected together and work together as one Rigpa organization moving into the future.

The key topics addressed were:

- how to move towards a federation
 - how decisions will be made under a federation,
 - the boundaries, functions and scope of the decision-making bodies (Vision Board, Rigpa Board, International Coordination Group)
 - the next steps required so that we can begin to function according to the federated model (for a designated period of time before the legal structure is adopted)
- how we work together
 - to continue to develop a more personal connection and working relationship with each other through working with our habits and reflecting on how to create a more nourishing working culture in Rigpa.

The discussions were building on, and further developing, work that has been done over the last months and years, and were linked to the work being done by the Vision Board.

¹ The Transformation Team is an interim team leading a process in the Lerab Ling Congregation to overcome the current financial crisis and review the governance of the Congregation.

Meeting outcomes

Federation

The group agreed on the following:

- functions of the federation
- responsibility of the Rigpa Board and International Coordination Group (executive)
- the membership of the Rigpa Board and International Coordination Group (executive)

Functions of the Federation

The functions of the federation that have been stated since it was decided that Rigpa would take on this legal structure are:

- to preserve and propagate the Rigpa tradition (chiefly, the path of study and practice) and brand in one legal and organisational framework that brings together all Rigpa entities.
- to ensure consistent spiritual leadership (Vision Board & Panel of Honorary Advisors) and spiritual guidance [Faculty of teachers and practitioners] throughout the Rigpa organization.
- to facilitate a shared, consultative process for setting goals, strategies and projects, for the global organization

During the meetings, the group went into further details, and the following functions were unanimously agreed upon. The Federation will:

- ensure quality control with regard to Rigpa's name and brand. Use of Rigpa's name and teachings in all entities must be in accord with our vision and mission.
- facilitating the process of defining vision / mission for all of Rigpa.
- assure international collaboration across Rigpa entities
- facilitate cooperation and ensure implementation of international strategic priorities such as fundraising, international programmes, and budget for international services.
- ensure the study & practice needs / concerns of audiences worldwide are heard & addressed through consultation
- provide internal and external communication (to be defined further)
- safeguard the legality of Rigpa (overall and between the entities) / ensure legal clarity among entities
- provide mediation and facilitation in crises situations between entities
- encourage best practice & good governance

Principles:

- have a charter that ensures we work together with respect, mutual trust & according to the principles of lamtön
- function on the basis of a principle of solidarity

The function of the federation would NOT be to:

- *coordinate* education services e.g. curriculum and programme development, teaching archive (this would be the role of the Congregation Lerab Ling)
- hold responsibility for national strategies and budgets

Board and executive responsibilities:

How these functions will be shared will be like in any organisation. The board takes responsibility for:

- Safeguarding the vision and mission
- The legalities of the organization (legally responsible, employer, trademark)
- Signing off the accounts
- The policies and guidelines
- The governance, ensure the teams have what they need to function
- Signing off the budget

The International Coordination Group (or ‘executive’) takes responsibility for:

- Defining and signing-off a strategy
- Budgeting
- Coordinating Internal and external communication
- Monitoring and adjusting projects and budgets
- Human resources
- Reporting on outcomes

Membership and functions of Federation bodies

The membership of the Federation Board and *interim* International Coordination Group was agreed upon. The exact membership of the International Coordination Group is still to be finalised, for example, are all NDs and all members of the Transformation Team in the interim executive or representatives of these groups?

•Vision Board

The Vision Board's role is to safeguard the spiritual integrity of Rigpa, helping ensure all its activities remain true to its spiritual vision, values and culture. We do this by listening closely to the members, working collaboratively with the rest of the organisation, and with the spiritual guidance of the lamas advising Rigpa.

•Rigpa Board - Board Chairs from each national Rigpa (including Lerab Ling & Dzogchen Beara)

The Rigpa Board is responsible for Rigpa's vision, mission and strategy, with advice from the Vision Board and input from the International Coordination Group and Rigpa members.

•Interim International Coordination Group - All National Directors and representatives from the Transformation Team

With the direction of the Vision Board & Rigpa Board, and with input from Rigpa members, the International Coordination Group implements Rigpa's programme of events, study & practice.

Federation Next Steps

- For the national directors and the Transformation Team to meet to prioritise coordinating/federative functions needed above - July
- Report to the international Rigpa Board (Vision Board & chairs of boards) on how the executive functions will be held, by whom while the restructuring is being completed, and with what priorities - including a delegation charter - July
- Begin to use the full decision-making process now as described above on all international matters - July
- Communicate our decision-making process transparently to the sangha and public - July
- The international Rigpa Board will define a deadline for the finalisation of the federation process - October
- Research and consult around sangha involvement, elections at national levels, appointments etc for review and decision - federation working group to develop

How we are working together

During the meetings there was a thread of short contemplations and interactive exercises to reflect on how we work together. The aim was to explore together what would be generally helpful for us so that we can work from a place that is nourishing for ourselves and others,

and prevent burnout and also to get real, honest and personal with each other, before diving into the working topics during the meetings. After just one day of meetings in Amsterdam everyone commented how there was real feeling of equality amongst the group—no higher and lower, expert or novice—and lots of love and appreciation for each other.

Other topics discussed

In the context of the Federation discussion the group also:

- recapped on the work and developments by national/international Rigpa teams between 2015 – 2018, identifying the developments and progress that has been made that influence our next steps as an organisation
- discussed the role & scope of the Lerab Ling Congregation - as both a retreat centre and home of the international services provided by what was formerly called 'Rigpa International'
- reminded the group about the role of the Transformation Team - an interim team leading a process in the Lerab Ling Congregation to overcome the current financial crisis and review the governance of the Congregation.
- reminded the group of the role and scope of the Vision Board, and
- agreed on the roles of the different Rigpa Centres (large retreat centres, national centres, local centres) so that with this collective understanding, we could see the unique and specific qualities of each centre/type of centre which will enable us to support and develop activity according to the strength/qualities of each centre

Dedication

The accomplishments of this meeting are dedicated to the long life of Sogyal Rinpoche and all the masters of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the fulfilment of Rigpa's vision for all beings and for the dharma, and so that the teachings of the Buddha may flourish for lifetimes to come.

ENDNOTE:

Present in Amsterdam: Saskia Bloemen ND Netherlands, Gabriele Maass ND Germany, Jessica Duval ND USA, Jane Hanlon UK representative, Gill Kainey Transformation Team, Ian Ives Transformation Team, Sam Truscott Lerab Ling / Transformation Team, Michele Phamtan Transformation Team, Stéphane Vandezande ND Belgium, Christian Hauser Board Switzerland, Gabriela Hack Swiss Holding Group, Michele National team Italy, Isabelle Stragliati National Team France, Mauro deMarch Vision Board, Verena Pfeiffer Vision Board, Vinciane Rycroft Vision Board, Kathryn James Board Chair Australia, Fian Loehr Rigpé Shyönnu. Kathryn O'Flaherty Dzogchen Beara, Wim Marseille Netherlands Board, Jessy Geertsema Netherlands TS

Following online (most sessions): Dominique Side Lerab Ling Congregation Board, Eric Jeanteur Transformation Team, Nadi Breick Spain National Team, Richard Grimes USA Board, Nathalie Excoffon France national team, Anne Sheehan ND Ireland, Helen Cargill Transformation Team

For session on programme only: Sebastien Regianny Lerab Ling/Rigpa France, Astrid Hubert Lerab Ling, Nicolas Schram Lerab Ling



Back row from left: Michele D'Alessio (Italy), Stéphane Vandezande (Belgium), Isabelle Stragliati (France), Kathryn O'Flaherty (Dzogchen Beara), Verena Pfeiffer (Vision Board), Gabriela Hack (Switzerland), Christian Hauser (Switzerland), Mauro DeMarch (Vision Board), Vinciane Rycroft (Vision Board), Jane Hanlon (UK representative at the meeting),

Front row from left: Jessica Duval (USA), Saskia Bloemen (Netherlands), Sam Truscott (Congregation Lerab Ling), Kathryn James (Australia), Gill Kainey (Transformation Team), Ian Ives (Transformation Team), Michele Phamtan (Transformation Team), Jessy Geertsema (Netherlands representative), Fian Loehr (Rigpa Shyönnu representative).

On TV screen (following online): Nadi Breick (Spain), Nathalie Excoffon (France), Amalée Rycroft (Rigpa Shyönnu), Julia Pruy (Belgium), Richard Grimes (USA)