

Foreword

Policy evaluation means systematically assessing the design, the implementation, the results and the effects of policy. Attribution is a key issue: can the observed effects be attributed to policy?

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) carries out systematic, independent evaluation reports about the results of Dutch foreign policy. IOB evaluates the policy based on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and – if feasible – also the coherence and sustainability of the achieved results. This Annual Report provides a snapshot of the results from the policy reviews, evaluations and other studies conducted this past year. Most of them concern parts of the Dutch bilateral policy in the area of development cooperation, foreign trade and diplomatic relations. The Annual Report also provides a summary of ongoing studies and contributions by IOB in support of the quality of evaluation work by other departments and diplomatic missions.

In 2016, IOB completed five studies: two policy reviews and three impact evaluations. The policy reviews concerned two themes, namely international cultural policy and public diplomacy. The evaluations concern Dutch development cooperation in the Palestinian Territories, the Netherlands' policy regarding the World Health Organization, and the consequences of ending Dutch development aid. For the latter evaluation, IOB conducted extensive country studies in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Zambia. All completed policy reviews, (impact) studies and other studies can be found on IOB's redesigned website: <https://english.iob-evaluatie.nl/>

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This Annual Report provides a brief description of completed studies that fall under the Foreign Affairs (FA) budget and the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (FTDC) budget. This is followed by a summary of the other studies and a short review of the impact of the completed studies. Ongoing studies are presented according to the same principle. Finally, this Annual Report will provide concise information about IOB's management and other activities.

In the introduction to this Annual Report, IOB reflects on the meaning of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in light of experiences with the Millennium Development Goals. What do these new goals mean for the broader sustainability policy of the Netherlands and its international cooperation policy? One thing is certain, the complexity of the problems requires that we set national priorities, focus on policy coherence and continue to monitor, evaluate and learn for (new) policies. This presents new challenges for evaluators and evaluation departments such as IOB.

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The 2030 Agenda: from a development policy to a policy for sustainable development

Introduction

In September 2015 the United Nations (UN) presented its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. These goals succeeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2015. The new agenda is ambitious and comprehensive: it counts 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators to monitor progress. In addition to environmental, climate and development goals, there are also goals related to peace, security, human rights, good governance and fighting inequality.

Moreover, the agenda concerns everyone, including developed countries such as the Netherlands. In this main article of the 2016 Annual Report, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) will focus in detail on these broader issues and challenges, also in light of its experience with the MDGs. The report starts by briefly outlining IOB's experiences with the MDGs and the agenda's background and ambitions for the sustainable development goals. What do they mean for the broader Dutch sustainability policy and Dutch international development cooperation policy? One thing is certain, the complexity of the problems requires setting national priorities, focusing on policy coherence and continuing to monitor, evaluate and learn for (new) policy. This presents new challenges for evaluators and evaluation departments such as IOB.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030



Experiences with the MDGs

The MDGs were drafted in 2001 by UN staff. The goals built on the Millennium Declaration that had been ratified by heads of state at the UN Summit in September 2000. They arose from previous discussions about development goals by the group of rich donor countries affiliated with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC). The eight global goals and 21 targets with concrete objectives and 48 indicators were selected based on two criteria: whether internationally agreed indicators existed for measuring progress and whether reasonably good data were available to document global trends (Vandemoortele 2007). The authors' ambition was to develop a relatively simple, widely accepted and measurable development agenda, without embracing any specific development theories or prescribing a fixed set of policies, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had done in the previous decade. Indeed, few development countries would have accepted that (Van der Hoeven 2012: 5).

It did not take long for the MDGs to be criticised either. One objection was that they seemed to focus mainly on measurable challenges, such as schooling, child and maternal mortality, poverty reduction and disease control, and ignored more controversial and difficult issues, such as social, economic and political inequality, human rights, peace and security, and good governance (AIV 2016). A second objection was that the MDGs were originally designed to be global targets, but were gradually also presented as goals that should measure the performances of individual regions and even nation states. The critics argued that this amounted to unrealistic social engineering that was destined to culminate in cynicism. The goal to halve the number of people living under the poverty line, for example, meant that African countries would have to achieve an average annual growth of seven percent of their gross national product in the period 2000-2015. Only seven of the total of 153 countries had managed to do that in the 15 years prior to that. There were two African countries among those seven: Botswana and Equatorial Guinea. And the goal of achieving universal primary education meant that most developing countries would have to achieve in 15 years what took most wealthy countries a century to achieve (Clemens and Moss 2005; Easterly 2009). A third point of criticism was that over time the MDGs developed into a mainly Western, donor-driven agenda that perpetuated existing, dominant Western aid programmes (Kenny 2015: 6). According to Van der Hoeven, the result was a perverse game:

'Development organizations lobbied to get their specific concerns tagged onto one or more MDGs or to have indicators of specific targets to get their concern explicitly mentioned. Challenges explicitly covered in the MDGs trumped other development concerns that arguably were equally important.'

(Van der Hoeven 2015: 6)

Nevertheless, the MDGs received a great deal of justified praise as well. After all, they created the political momentum that spurred governments in developing countries and donors to actively work towards improving development outcomes. As a result, a number of goals were actually attained or brought within reach. The education goals are an example. As early as 1990, representatives from 155 countries had agreed during the global Education for All conference that they would ensure that all children have access to primary education before the turn of the century. But it was not until after 2000 that many countries managed to introduce real improvements in this area (IOB 2008). Instruments to approach the MDGs included Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), debt relief (linked to investments in poverty programmes), sector support, general budget support and international funds such as the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Global Partnership for Education.¹ Though they were not unanimous about this point, donors did acknowledge that close cooperation with recipient countries and providing support to national programmes were probably the most effective and efficient ways of bringing the goals within reach (see Kemp, de et al. 2011). The 2006 Paris Agenda was a reflection of this.

It would be going too far to show all of the outcomes for the period until 2015. Following are some of the key points:²

1. The goal to halve extreme poverty was amply attained: the number of people in the world with an income of less than USD 1.90 fell from two billion (37%) in 1990 to 700 million in 2015 (10%). Poverty figures remain high in sub-Saharan Africa, however.³
2. Enrolment in primary schools improved worldwide from 83% in 2000 to 91% in 2015. The number of children who did not go to school decreased during that period from 100 million to 57 million. In sub-Saharan Africa, school enrolment increased from 52% to 80%.
3. School enrolment for girls has improved significantly: nowadays in all developing countries more girls are attending school than boys. In sub-Saharan Africa 93 girls are attending school for every 100 boys (85 in 2000).
4. Mortality of children under five years of age has more than halved from almost 13 million in 1990 to less than six million in 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa the figures decreased from 155 per 1,000 live births to 83.
5. Maternal mortality decreased from 385 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 220 in 2015. The figures for sub-Saharan Africa were 990 and 550 respectively.
6. By intensifying the fight against the three big killer diseases (aids, malaria and tuberculosis – TB) since 2000, 21–30 million deaths were prevented in 2015, including 14–20 million in sub-Saharan Africa (McArthur and Rasmussen 2017). Deaths caused by TB decreased by 45% between 1990 and 2015.
7. In 2015, 91% of the world's population had access to clean drinking water, as opposed to 76% in 1990. In sub-Saharan Africa it involved an increase of 55% in 2000 to 68% in 2015.
8. Official development assistance increased by 82% between 2000 and 2015. Thanks to high expenditure on first-year refugee support, the Netherlands was once again (a one-off?) among the countries that honoured the 0.7% commitment to development spending.⁴

¹ This latter fund is the result of an initiative by Minister Herfkens in 2002 to establish an educational fund called the *Fast-Track Initiative (FTI)*. Countries could appeal to it for help if they did not have the available resources and donor contributions were insufficient to achieve the MDGs for education.

² The overview relies on the most recent MDG reports, the *Global Monitoring Report* and other World Bank studies, as well as the *Global Monitoring Reports* by UNESCO and WHO and the World Bank's *World Development Indicators*.

³ IOB will be publishing a study about this in the near future.

⁴ Sweden spent 1.4% of its national income on development this year, including expenditure on refugees.

The enhanced political commitment to the MDGs therefore made a real contribution to the fight against hunger, poverty and disease. Indeed, there is universal agreement that these efforts merit continuation (Sachs 2012).

The SDG agenda: problems and challenges

The SDG agenda confirms that the 'old' global goals have not lost their significance but badly needed to be revised as a result of shifting international relations and circumstances. The past 15 years have witnessed rapid economic development in countries such as China, Brazil and India. There are still major challenges, however. For example, reaching the status of a middle-income country does not mean that poverty has been eradicated. Right now 70% of the world's poor live in such a country. This is primarily the result of India's 'promotion' to the group of (lower) middle-income countries. It is estimated that 23% of the world's poor live in weak, conflict-sensitive states that have to contend with extremely weak administrative capacity and rising demographic pressure. Developed, wealthier countries are struggling to cope with the social and political fallout caused by large-scale cuts in public expenditure, unemployment, inequality and resistance against further globalisation. Moreover, economic development in recent decades has come at the expense of the environment and biodiversity. For these reasons, the UN has made sustainable development the main priority on the SDG agenda for the coming 15 years (Sachs 2012; Van der Hoeven 2012: 13).

According to a generally accepted definition that draws on the 1987 report by the Brundtland Commission, the concept of sustainable development means that the current generation, in its pursuit of prosperity and well-being, must also ensure that sufficient economic, human, natural and social capital remains available for future generations. Natural capital – the climate, natural resources and biodiversity – play a key role in this because humanity needs it to survive (CBS 2016: 12).⁵ The current 17 global goals for the period until 2030 constitute a broad sustainability challenge with a non-legal obligation to perform to the best of one's ability. Unlike the MDGs, they apply to all countries, including developed Western ones. Goal 2 is illustrative of this as it calls for an end to hunger but also promotes sustainable agriculture. And goal 8 refers to economic growth and employment opportunities, but points out that neither should be at the expense of the environment. Goal 10 focuses on reducing inequality, both within and among countries.⁶ Goals 13, 14 and 15 are even completely devoted to the climate and biodiversity.

⁵ Following the example of Statistics Netherlands (CBS), 60 member states accepted the so-called CES framework of the Conference of European Statisticians in 2014. This distinguishes between economic capital (machines and buildings) and human capital (labour, education and health) and social capital (social networks and trust).

⁶ The debate about this in Western countries was boosted by the publication of the widely-discussed book *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* by Thomas Piketty.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

	1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
	2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
	3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
	4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
	5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
	6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
	7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
	8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
	9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
	10. Reduce income inequality within and among countries.
	11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
	12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
	13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.
	14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
	15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
	16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
	17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

Source: CBS 2016: 16.

As was the case with the MDGs, an important question related to the SDGs is how to monitor the goals at different levels. Are we on the right path to achieve the goals? What trends are appearing and what mechanisms play a role in them? What interim (policy) modifications are needed to make timely adjustments and enhance the impact of the commitments? A first step that needs to be taken before we can answer these questions is to convert the broadly defined, at times even downright vague, ambitions in the SDGs into concrete goals (AIV 2016: 9; PBL 2016: 22; CBS 2016: 20). An example of this is target 12c:

'Rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities.'

The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) points out that a quarter of all targets related to the environment uses the terms ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainability’, without explaining them in more detail (PBL 2016: 22).⁷ A second step is to develop an internationally harmonised database of indicators that would permit a comparison of different countries and regions. The Inter-Agency Expert Group has taken the lead in that respect for the SDGs by compiling a list of 230 unique indicators, which was ratified in a ministerial statement by the UN’s Economic and Social Council. Many of these 230 indicators (including many of the implementation indicators) mainly describe input or policy mechanisms and fairly few outcomes (CBA 2016: 20). A key role in the further development and refinement of the indicator list has been accorded to the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG). This group works closely with the UN’s Statistical Commission, to which it reports annually, and with the UN’s Statistics Division and the World Bank (Heider 2016; Rugg 2016). Statistics Netherlands (CBS) plays a leading role in the Netherlands in these processes.

A third step is to make more concrete the SDG adage that a goal has only been reached when countries do not lag behind other countries and when no citizens are being left behind. This principle is the diplomatic outcome of negotiations about the question of whether and how poverty, deprivation and inequality among and within countries should be put on the agenda. To turn these ambitions into concrete actions and results, statistics need to be available at the level of households, groups and individuals, for example, ordered by age, gender, education level, health and ethnicity. These are not available or of insufficient quality in many low and middle-income countries. Of course, fundamental political discussions and choices lie beneath these technical issues. During preparations for the 2030 Agenda, activists and scientists called on the High-Level Panel, for example, to devote attention to more facets of inequality. They also advocated the use of the Palma ratio, which indicates how much higher the income of the richest ten per cent of the population is compared to the poorest forty per cent. Others, such as the well-known expert in the area of inequality, Branko Milanovic, and (former) World Bank economist, Martin Ravallion, are less impressed with the Palma ratio. Milanovic (2015) calls it an arbitrary indicator. Indeed, the ratio does not take into account other changes in inequality within the groups.⁸

These kinds of debates underscore the importance of the fourth step: converting the general global goals into individual, national implementation agendas with concrete political and social priorities and targets that fit with individual contexts and integrate (national) initiatives that already exist. This often also requires additional national monitoring indicators and implementation modalities. The scope and complexity of the SDG challenges means that governments are not the only ones that must take action but so must civil society actors, citizens, the business sector and the knowledge community at the global and regional, national and local levels (AIV 2016; PBL 2016: 28-29). That is why SDG 17 refers to strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the partnerships for development (see box).

⁷ This struggle is reflected in the Dutch cabinet’s action plan. It states that sustainable development is clearly ‘defined in the Brundtland report: a development that provides the needs of the current generation, without putting into danger the needs of future generations, both here and in other parts of the world. (...) The word ‘development’ refers to an ongoing process. Things do not change from being unsustainable to sustainable from one day to the next. A development phase means changing one’s mission from respect for human beings and the environment (for example, by complying with the OECD’s guidelines for multinational enterprises and publishing sustainability reports) to inclusive growth. Sustainable development manifests itself in different ways. It can concern promoting initiatives by third parties through volunteer work, philanthropy and grants. It can also concern improving one’s own business operation, with or without assistance from NEN standards. But usually it refers to the ultimate goal: adapting one’s own philosophy’ (TK 2016-2017, 26485, no. 232).

⁸ Milanovic also provides a technical argument, namely that decomposition is impossible. IOB will publish a study about inequality in the near future.

SDG 17 – International cooperation

SDG 17 International cooperation – Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development.



- 17.1 Help developing countries to mobilise financial resources.
- 17.2 Implement development assistance commitments.
- 17.3 Mobilise additional forms of financial support for developing countries.
- 17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability.
- 17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion schemes for least-developed countries.
- 17.6 Cooperation and exchanges with developing countries in science, technology and innovation.
- 17.7 Promote development and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.
- 17.8 Enhance developing countries' technology and ICT capacity.
- 17.9 Enhance support to developing countries' capacity to implement the SDGs.
- 17.10 Promote a fair global trade system.
- 17.11 Promote exports by developing countries and a fair share of global exports.
- 17.12 Realise timely implementation of access to the global market for developing countries.
- 17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability.
- 17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.
- 17.15 Respect each country's policy space in implementing policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development.
- 17.16 Promote the global partnership for sustainable development.
- 17.17 Encourage public-private and civil society partnerships.
- 17.18 Enhance capacity building support to developing countries to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data.
- 17.19 Develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP and support statistical capacity building in developing countries.

Source: CBS 2016: 68-69.

Converting global goals to concrete national strategies and implementation priorities requires countries to systematically develop in terms of the relationships between the various themes, sectors and levels of the overall SDG agenda. That is the fifth step. Where can goals reinforce each other (synergy), which ones are at odds with each other or have conflicting conditions (trade-off)? An example of this kind of system is what is referred to as the nexus approach, which has mapped the links between the food, water and energy interface. It is along those lines, for example, that PBL has shown that there is a large degree of synergy between trying to improve access to food, safe drinking water and clean energy and goals aimed at saving and/or improving the management of natural resources such as air, water and biodiversity (PBL 2016). And an IOB policy review from 2015 revealed that Dutch aid policy aimed at promoting the use of renewable cooking fuel by poorer rural communities is only having a minor impact on the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions. From a climate adaptation point of view, it is more effective to directly invest in making electricity generation more sustainable and distributing cleaner energy to urban areas (IOB 2015).

Gaining an understanding of the links between the themes, level, goals, targets, instruments and players involved is also an important condition for achieving sufficient policy coherence in order to ensure that the SDG agenda is successful. This is why policy coherence was incorporated as a separate target, namely SDG 17.14 (Heider 2016; Partos 2016; PBL 2016; OECD 2015). Traditionally it was particularly the EU and OECD that – often to no effect – spearheaded efforts to ensure that policy in the areas of trade, investment, agriculture, migration, taxes, anti-corruption and emergency relief dovetailed better with the goals of international development cooperation and poverty reduction.

However, optimists are arguing that the broader agenda for sustainable development that has now emerged provides a new impetus to fight (policy-related) fragmentation, compartmentalisation and inconsistency, precisely because the goals involve all countries, and civil society stakeholders will closely monitor the agenda.⁹

The Netherlands has already taken initial steps towards developing an implementation agenda, as demonstrated by the action plan that minister Ploumen sent to the Dutch House of Representatives on behalf of the cabinet in September 2016. For this purpose, eight ministries announced they would gather information about existing and forthcoming national policies for each of the SDG's 169 targets. One of the next tasks will be to determine, by means of external reports, where there are gaps in terms of the goals to be attained and where additional national targets or goals are needed. The political responsibility for the various SDGs remains with the thematically leading minister. For the time being, the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation will play a minor coordinating role, in anticipation of the upcoming cabinet formation in 2017. The cabinet, in its own words, is opting for a 'pragmatic implementation' and not specifically for a national strategy or national implementation programme (TK 2016-2017, 26 485, no. 232).¹⁰

What are the initial findings regarding the consequences of the SDGs for the Netherlands? In November 2016, Statistics Netherlands gathered preliminary information by examining how the Netherlands scores compared to the year 2000 and compared to other EU countries. Although the Netherlands has advanced statistics at its disposal, it currently only has information about one-third of the SDG goal indicators. By comparison, the United States and Germany have attained approximately the same level, but less developed countries face a much greater task. The general picture that emerged from the measurement is that the Netherlands is doing well in many of the SDG areas. However, according to Statistics Netherlands there are also 'important areas of concern' in which the Netherlands scores quite poorly compared to the EU average and where there seems to be a trend 'against the grain of the goal or one that is only developing very slowly'. These areas concern climate and energy, nature and the environment, and inequality. These scores are reflected, for example, in relatively high greenhouse gas emissions, a high consumption level of fossil fuels, a low share of renewable energy in total energy consumption, limited sustainability in food production, high environmental pressure that Netherlands puts on developing countries, an increase in the number of people in the Netherlands living under the poverty line and a widening poverty gap (CBS 2016: 27-28).

The first impression regarding international cooperation is mixed. The level of Dutch development cooperation is still fairly high internationally speaking (0.64% of the GNI in 2014 and 0.76% in 2015). On the other hand, there has been a downward trend since 2000, and the increase of the share between 2014 and 2015 can be attributed to the rising cost of first-year refugee support. Overall, 23% of development aid was spent on refugee support in the Netherlands in 2015 and 9% in 2016. Private remittances to developing countries amounted to 1.5% of GNI in 2015, and the transfer of funds from people from developing countries working in the Netherlands amounted to 1.1%. The high and rising total amount of imports from developing countries (measured in euros per inhabitant), for example, demonstrates the importance of the Netherlands as a sales market. However, the country imports a great deal of energy and agricultural and other raw materials from these countries, which means that Dutch consumption is responsible for relatively high environmental pressure elsewhere in the world. This means that the Netherlands will have to start using indicators that will make it clearer how large its

⁹ Heider (2016) views the SDGs as an opportunity to overcome the present fragmentation in the aid landscape. One lesson from the MDGs, after all, is that we should not be focusing on isolated interventions and projects, but that we need to continue having the broader context in mind in order to be effective. The question, however, is whether – in practice – donors will not drift away from the above-mentioned coherence. The fact remains that it is extremely tempting to limit programme aid in favour of more visible project aid, which enables donors to present 'results' more easily and more quickly.

¹⁰ 'In terms of content, there is no dictate from top to bottom, but an integrated impetus from bottom to top with points on the horizon. The starting point for the procedure – apart from a few minor provisions – will be the current institutions, division of tasks and policy initiatives. There are many activities going on with all actors, many of which are related to terms such as 'social responsibility' and 'impact'. As a result, a national sustainable development strategy or a national SDG implementation programme has little added value at the moment.'

footprint is from its own production and consumption activities and what the impact will be on resources in its own country, but also elsewhere in the world and in the future. Ideally, such footprint data will also shed light on the impact of the different links in the production chain. The import of food from areas that are not suffering from food or water scarcity will have less of an impact, for example, than from areas where there is scarcity. The indicators that measure the footprint must take this into account (PBL 2016: 27; CBS 2016: 45).

The Netherlands, like many other countries, is only just starting to integrate the SDG goals into its broader government policy. It still needs to formulate its own national goals. Only then will it be possible to monitor how things stand in terms of achieving goals, what this means for sustainable development, what needs to be adapted and whether the Netherlands is actually contributing its fair share to the global effort. Indeed, the complexity of the issues requires putting more emphasis on policy coherence and conducting more frequent evaluations – also ex ante and government-wide – and learning for (new) policymaking. These are major tasks awaiting the new cabinet.

Consequences for evaluators

What are the consequences of this all for the evaluation function and the role of evaluators? Without going into too much detail, we would like to mention five. First, the importance of external evaluations, enforced and conducted by donor countries, will decrease in favour of developing countries' own national evaluations. Indeed, the aid landscape has changed drastically in the past 15 years.

As a result of programme aid during the MDGs period, evaluation departments began focusing less on their 'own' projects and more on the effectiveness of national programmes, which they were financially supporting. This implied close cooperation with recipient countries and increased attention to methodological rigor. Evaluation departments, including IOB, began looking less at the process and much more at the extent to which the results could be attributed to the programmes. The climate for cooperation and the high dependency of partner countries on donor aid also made this possible. Indeed, donor evaluation departments were given access to statistical data from recipient countries. Examples include the IOB evaluations in the area of primary education, drinking water and sanitation, budget support and renewable energy.

This methodology is partly the result of the reduction in the share of foreign aid in many national budgets due to financial pressure. Whereas ten years ago donors were still funding 30%-50% of the expenditures of a ministry in a recipient country, that has now fallen to 10%-20% or even less. This not only affects the willingness of these countries to adapt their policy to the wishes of donors, but it also affects their willingness to accept external evaluations. Ownership of evaluations is on the rise because it concerns the effectiveness of their own budget resources and also because the SDGs put the responsibility for the implementation and achievement of the goals more emphatically in the hands of national governments.

Second – and related to the first point – the need for evaluation capacity is rapidly increasing in low and middle-income countries. It was decided at the UN's General Assembly that in order to monitor results the UN will use rigorous evaluations from the countries themselves based on accessible, reliable and timely data of high quality (UNGA 2015: 74g). This means when it comes to evaluating results in recipient countries, donor evaluation departments will depend much more on the monitoring and evaluation capacity in those countries. This demonstrates how important it is to improve the statistics and evaluation capacity. The UN has recognised this as well. The 2030 Agenda calls for an increased focus on capacity development, including the strengthening of national statistics systems and evaluation programmes, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the least-developed countries, as an important condition for monitoring and evaluating the SDGs (UNGA 2015).

In the area of evaluation, both the World Bank (including the Independent Evaluation Group - IEG) and bilateral donors are actively involved in strengthening capacity, for example through CLEAR and IPDET.¹¹ An important question is whether that is sufficient.

Third, the increased complexity and transboundary nature of the SDG programmes and projects require those designing and implementing policies to have an increasingly greater amount of expertise. Therefore, more and more frequently, evaluators will have to combine their own methodological skills with the knowledge in the field, and they will have to adopt skills that emanate from the increasing complexity and the new technological possibilities of big data, geo-tracking and other innovations. Conversely, those developing and implementing policy cannot afford to leave the difficult questions to the evaluators. They will have to show courage and develop the skills for 'evaluative thinking'. This is an outlook that critically reflects on and weighs assumptions, ambitions and claims, linked to a willingness to learn and adjust existing insights based on new insights and knowledge (Schwandt 2016).

Fourth, the complexity of the SDG Agenda and its accompanying monitoring and evaluation activities expose the limitations of existing logframe models, the intervention logic and even quasi-experimental designs. Complexity requires in-depth expertise and makes higher demands on how (*ex ante*) we think through the theory of change (Weiss 1998; Uitto 2016). The use of different qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods is becoming increasingly important. Modelling, game theory and insights from sociology, political science and psychology, but also new techniques, will take an increasingly large place in this development. As information becomes available more quickly, it will be possible, and is indeed desirable, for feedback mechanisms, and therefore learning as well, to become available more quickly.

Fifth, learning must not be limited to those designing and implementing policy. They often judge others, but how efficient and effective are their actions? Evaluation effectiveness increasingly means thinking about the relevance of evaluation themes and the methods of reporting. And just as it is the case with implementing (sustainable) development programmes, evaluators will have to invest in monitoring their own processes and results. Evaluation departments will also have to ensure that their methodology, processes and standards are more closely aligned with each other. There is still much heterogeneity on that point.

¹¹ The Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR Initiative) are an initiative aimed at strengthening the monitoring and evaluation development capacity. CLEAR is regionally organised and brings together universities, think tanks, development organisations and foundations. IPDET is the International Program for Development Evaluation Training, the training programme for evaluators from the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank and Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.

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Completed evaluations – Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Culture as opportunity. Policy review of the international cultural policy (2009-2014) | IOB evaluation #411

This evaluation falls under policy article 4 of the FA budget – Consular advocacy and international promotion of Dutch values and interests.



The Dutch government has been explicitly pursuing an international cultural policy since the 1970s. This policy aims to enrich Dutch art and culture, strengthen the economic importance of culture for the Netherlands, promote international and bilateral relations and contribute to broader development objectives. A variety of instruments and players have been used for this, including Dutch representatives abroad, cultural funds and other (cultural) institutions and programmes. The countries in which the Netherlands is most actively pursuing its international cultural policy are: Belgium (Flanders), Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. Specific themes are being targeted in these priority countries – depending on the situation – such as cultural heritage and the creative industry. The policy is part of the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Main findings

Following are the report's main findings:

- The international cultural policy has appeared to be of great value for gaining access to, linking up with and forging partnerships with a broad, relevant professional network in the priority countries in question and in the Netherlands.
- Despite the limited and fragmented resources, the cultural policy often serves to connect the political, economic and civil society issues that the foreign policy targets.
- The complex organisational and policy-related embedding of the cultural policy means that consultation and coordination are absolute conditions for the development and implementation of successful policy.
- The ministries have failed to sufficiently manage coordination and coherence during implementation of the international cultural policy. Developing a strategic policy requires a tailored approach.
- The thematic and country-specific priorities of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are not always aligned.
- The mandate of *DutchCulture* is inadequate to fulfil the coordinating role it has been accorded.



Lessons

Following are the most important lessons for future policy:

- Clear governance structure are needed, as are agreements between the various ministries and with the missions and cultural funds about how to manage, coordinate and implement the international cultural policy.
- The implementation of the international cultural policy at the major missions abroad requires more synergy.
- To successfully develop a tailored approach, each country and/or theme has to be looked at individually. Local expertise can be used for that purpose.

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Policy review of public diplomacy (2010-2014) | IOB evaluation #413

This evaluation falls under policy article 4 of the FA budget – Consular advocacy and the international promotion of Dutch values and interests.



Public diplomacy (PD) is a type of diplomacy creating partnerships and dialogue with non-state actors abroad who can influence decision-making in policy areas that are interesting to the Netherlands. Since 2004, the Netherlands has been pursuing an increasingly proactive PD policy, as a result of which the cooperation with non-state actors, both online and offline, has started to play a more prominent role in foreign policy. The focus is on the following themes: (1) peace and justice; (2) water, climate and energy; (3) agri-food; and (4) the creative industry. In addition, activities are being carried out under the heading 'trade, Europe and development cooperation'. Despite the positive developments and considerable support from the Communication Department in the area of PD, a number of steps need to be taken to further develop the PD policy and embed it in the (government-wide) organisation.



Main findings

Following are the report's main findings:

- The ministry has responded well to the changing PD context. For example, it is increasingly seeking to cooperate with non-state actors, increasingly focusing on thematic priorities and developing a global vision of the Netherlands' image abroad.
- The ministry has gradually shifted its PD approach from a reactive and 'intuitive' one to a more proactive and strategic one. Despite this ongoing professionalisation, work still needs to be done by the ministry and the embassies and other official representatives (the 'missions').
- In recent years, the missions have been investing more frequently and explicitly in PD than in the past in order to achieve generic and specific policy objectives, but there is room for improvement here. It would be wise to embed PD in the ministry as a fundamental diplomatic instrument for effective implementation of policy.
- More attention needs to be devoted to the management and coordination of PD within the organisation.



Lessons

Following are the most important lessons for future policy:

- Make PD an integral part of the missions' multi-annual strategy and abandon management based on central PD themes.
- Strengthen the function of PD by improving the coordination and management of the Communication department and involve the ministry's thematic and regional divisions in policy alignment.
- Strengthen the learning process in PD by ensuring there is adequate monitoring and evaluation.



Completed evaluations – Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation



How to Break the Vicious Cycle: Evaluation of Dutch Development Cooperation in the Palestinian Territories (2008-2014) | IOB evaluation #412

This evaluation falls under policy article 5 of the FTDC budget – Strong frameworks for development.



The Palestinian Territories are one of the larger recipients of Dutch development aid. At the request of the House of Representatives, IOB undertook an extensive evaluation of Dutch development cooperation in the period running from 2009 to mid-2014. The evaluation focused primarily on development cooperation and the degree to which it contributed to a functioning Palestinian state, a viable Palestinian economy and political stability. The Netherlands provided its support through bilateral, multilateral and private channels. The evaluation devoted special attention to the bilateral programme and to the areas of agriculture, security, justice, municipal development, human rights and humanitarian aid. The Netherlands spent approximately EUR 415 million on development cooperation in the Palestinian Territories between 2008 and mid-2014.



Main findings

Following are the report's main findings:

- The occupation of the Palestinian Territories by Israel and the weak position of the Palestinian Authority were the greatest limitations on the effectiveness of the Dutch programme in the Palestinian Territories.
- Dutch policy for the Palestinian Territories was ambitious, but realistic. The Netherlands made deliberate strategic choices within the limitations of the complex political context.
- The Netherlands has helped to build a foundation for a Palestinian state. It has not contributed much to the development of a healthy Palestinian economy.
- The Dutch programme was largely relevant from the perspective of the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority, the European Union, and the general and thematic Dutch development policy.
- No major irregularities were reported in the spending of donor money. There is a relatively low incidence of corruption in the Palestinian Territories. Patronage and favouritism, however, are widespread.



Lessons

Following are the most important lessons for future policy:

- The Netherlands has to continue its critical dialogue with Israel about improving the circumstances that are currently undermining Dutch aid to the Palestinian Territories.
- The Palestinian Authority has to take responsibility for the development of the state and the economy, for reinforcing support among the Palestinian people and for greater credibility with donors.
- The European Union has to use its influence with Israel more to challenge the most important factors that are having a negative impact on Dutch development efforts.
- The Netherlands must support civil society in the Palestinian Territories if it wants to play a more prominent role there. The role of civil society as a critical observer and campaigner is important to ensure that the authorities remain accountable.

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Prevention is better than cure. Evaluation of the Netherlands and WHO (2011-2015) | IOB evaluation #414

This evaluation falls under policy article 5 of the FTDC budget – Strong frameworks for development.



On 8 August 2014, the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Because previous warnings about the Ebola outbreak had received little attention, the virus was able to spread rapidly and uncontrollably. After the Public Health Emergency of International Concern had been declared, the outbreak received the attention it needed and human resources were mobilised to fight the disease, bury the victims and prevent it from spreading further. Before the outbreak even reached its peak, WHO was already criticised for its late response and its capacity to deal with that kind of emergency situation. In the meantime, countless experts have addressed this and other questions and offered their recommendations. In this evaluation, IOB analyses the Netherlands' role in following up on recommendations that have been made since 2011 on how to make WHO more effective in preventing and fighting global health crises.



Main findings

Following are the report's main findings:

- For a long time, the international community – including the Netherlands – did little to follow up on the recommendations that have been made since 2011 to put WHO in the position to carry out its mandate in the area of disaster preparedness and response. These recommendations concern an emergency fund that WHO could draw from in the initial phases of a Public Health Emergency and the establishment of a Global Health Emergency Workforce that would enable the organisation to get the right people in the right place more quickly.
- The international community – including the Netherlands – also played down the poor state of health systems in developing countries and the potential consequences of that for global public health.
- The lack of attention for these points has contributed to the problems that WHO faced when addressing the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-2015.
- The Ebola outbreak has contributed to change the way the Netherlands perceives the importance of a well-functioning global health-care system and the role of a stronger WHO.
- The Netherlands believes that the reform measures that have been proposed since May 2015 should be implemented as quickly and comprehensively as possible. These measures mainly concern setting up a central programme for emergency preparedness and response, addressing WHO's organisational structure and funding, and meeting the requirements under the International Health Regulations.



Lessons

Following are the most important lessons for future policy:

- As a country with open borders it is in the Netherlands' interest, in light of increased globalisation, to have infectious diseases in other countries addressed. The Ebola outbreak and its repercussions have underscored this once again.
- A functioning and accessible basic health-care system is not only essential for preventing and fighting outbreaks of diseases, but it is also a condition for achieving Dutch development cooperation goals regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
- An increasing number of countries have developed multi-annual global health strategies. They acknowledge that protecting their national public health situation goes hand in hand with improving global health care, meeting the obligations in the International Health Regulations, building public health in developing countries and providing support during humanitarian emergencies. The Netherlands could consider developing such a global strategy as well.
- It is important that the proposed reform measures for WHO are implemented as quickly and comprehensively as possible and that they do not suffer the same fate as recommendations made by previous advisory groups and committees. A structural solution is needed to deal with the financial consequences of these measures. Being one of the WHO member states, the Netherlands cannot avoid the consequences of such measures.



The gaps left behind: An evaluation of the impact of ending aid | IOB evaluation #415

This evaluation falls under policy article 5 of the FTDC budget – Strong frameworks for development.



In 2010 the Dutch government decided to cut the number of countries with which the Netherlands had a structural bilateral development relationship from 33 to 15. The new policy also involved the phasing out from the education and health sectors. The subsequent coalition introduced new budget cuts for development cooperation, increasing from EUR 520 million in 2014 to EUR 1.04 billion in 2017. For the first time, the Netherlands would no longer adhere to the target of allocating 0.7% of GNI to ODA. Responding to the government's proposals, the House of Representatives asked for an evaluation of the impact of the budget cuts of the previous government (2010–2012) on countries and programmes. This report describes the results of the evaluation requested by parliament to assess the impact of the budget cuts on development cooperation for partner countries, sectors and previously supported organisations.



Main findings

Following are the report's main findings:

- The country selection was largely aligned with the criteria that the ministry had stipulated in advance. There were also exceptions: ending aid to Tanzania and especially Burkina Faso cannot be explained by the selection criteria.
- Because the ministry wanted to phase the aid out quickly and showed little flexibility, it turned out to be difficult for the embassies to respect the guidelines for phasing out aid responsibly.
- Despite all the agreements about a better division of labour and coordination on a larger scale, European donors did not harmonise their exit strategies. The exit therefore had major consequences for former partner countries, especially in education and health care.
- The expenditures and investments in these two sectors in the (former) partner countries are still far too low to grant everyone high-quality access. Moreover, the cuts had a negative impact on the institutional capacity of local NGOs. They had to reduce their spending by cutting back on the number of employees and activities.

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Lessons

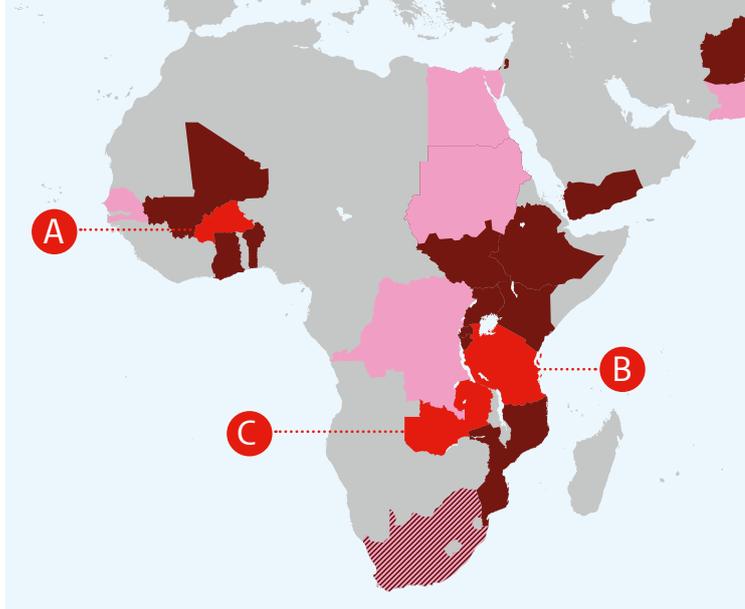
Following are the most important lessons for future policy:

- Make a thorough analysis of the consequences of an exit from sectors in partner countries and develop a reasonable timeline for phasing out aid.
- Improve harmonisation among donors, also in the face of an exit. Handle the phasing out of aid with more flexibility and grant more time to do it. If an embassy remains open, then it is not necessary to stop all activities simultaneously.
- Develop the exit strategy in cooperation with the involved organisations or ministries in the partner countries. Regarding long-term support to NGOs and civil society organisations, it is important to make agreements to prevent aid dependency.



Conclusions from the country studies

The evaluation report's conclusions are based to a significant degree on six country studies in which the impact of ending Dutch aid was examined: Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Zambia, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Guatemala. The most important criteria for the selection of these six case studies were the income levels in recipient countries and the scope and importance of Dutch aid.



Legend

- case studies
- other exit countries
- current partner countries
- ▨ transition countries



A. Burkina Faso country study

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world. Despite economic growth, 80% of the population lives in poverty and more than 50% of the population lives in extreme poverty. The Netherlands was one of the most important bilateral donors, with average annual bilateral aid equal to EUR 50 million in the form of general budget support and support for education and health care. The Dutch embassy also supported a number of NGOs in the areas of education and good governance. The study shows that the Dutch exit had a major impact on Burkina Faso. If the Netherlands had continued to provide aid, then in 2014 this would be the equivalent of 0.5% of the national income and 2% of government expenditure. Support to the education sector equalled the cost of providing education for 180,000 pupils. The contribution to health care varied from six to nine percent of the Ministry of Health's budget. A number of NGOs encountered major difficulties after Dutch aid was withdrawn. That was the case with FONAENF, for example, an organisation that organised literacy programmes for adults. The rapid phasing out of Dutch aid – in two years – after having been active for almost 40 years did not do much for the credibility of the Netherlands' motives for providing aid.



B. Tanzania country study

For a long time, the Netherlands was one of the strongest proponents of general budget support to Tanzania. After a conflict about the interests of a Dutch entrepreneur in Tanzania, the Minister for Development Cooperation suspended this support in 2008. The original intention was to resume this in 2011, but that year the Netherlands decided to definitely end budget support. Shortly thereafter, it also decided to completely halt delegated bilateral aid to Tanzania. The sequence, manner and speed of these decisions met with incomprehension. IOB examined the impact of ending budget support, the support for decentralisation and the aid to the health care sector, which was given partly via the government and partly via NGOs. The consequences were especially acute in the latter sector. The Netherlands was the most important bilateral donor in the health care sector. It was innovative, and its expertise was highly appreciated. IOB concluded that the Dutch exit was responsible for ending one of the most effective SRHR programmes. Based on extensive scientific studies, IOB estimates that Dutch aid amounted to saving 3,600-4,000 lives a year. Support for decentralisation was not effective and ending this aid therefore had no impact.



C. Zambia country study

The Netherlands was an active bilateral donor in Zambia for almost 50 years, with an average contribution of EUR 44 million in the period 2008-2010. One of the reasons to end aid was that the country was set to reach (lower) middle-income status quickly. Nonetheless, almost two of every three inhabitants live in extreme poverty. And even though government expenditure increased in the social sectors, the quality of the services remains low. IOB examined the consequences of ending general budget support and the consequences of the Netherlands' withdrawal from the education and health-care sectors. The Netherlands was the leading donor in education, together with Ireland. Dutch support to the education sector was equivalent to the enrolment of 140,000 pupils. The withdrawal coincided with that of a third donor in the sector, namely Denmark. In the health-care sector, the embassy supported the ministry and NGOs in the areas of SRHR and HIV/AIDS. IOB concluded that the exit had major consequences. Zambian health care is still suffering from huge deficits, in part because almost all bilateral aid fell by the wayside.



Legend

- case studies
- other exit countries
- current partner countries
- ▨ transition countries



D. Guatemala country study

IOB examined the process of ending Dutch aid, with a focus on the consequences of the exit for good governance. The Netherlands was an important and prominent actor there. In what was a difficult political context, the embassy devoted a large share of its attention to processes of transitional justice. It turned out to be very difficult to transfer Dutch activities to other donors. The specific form of Dutch aid, a combination of non-earmarked financial support and political support, played a role in that. Ending Dutch aid led several civil society organisations, supported by the UNDP programme PAJUST, for example, to scale down successful activities. Closing the Dutch embassy left a vacuum behind. Progress in the area of transitional justice in Guatemala has slowed down.



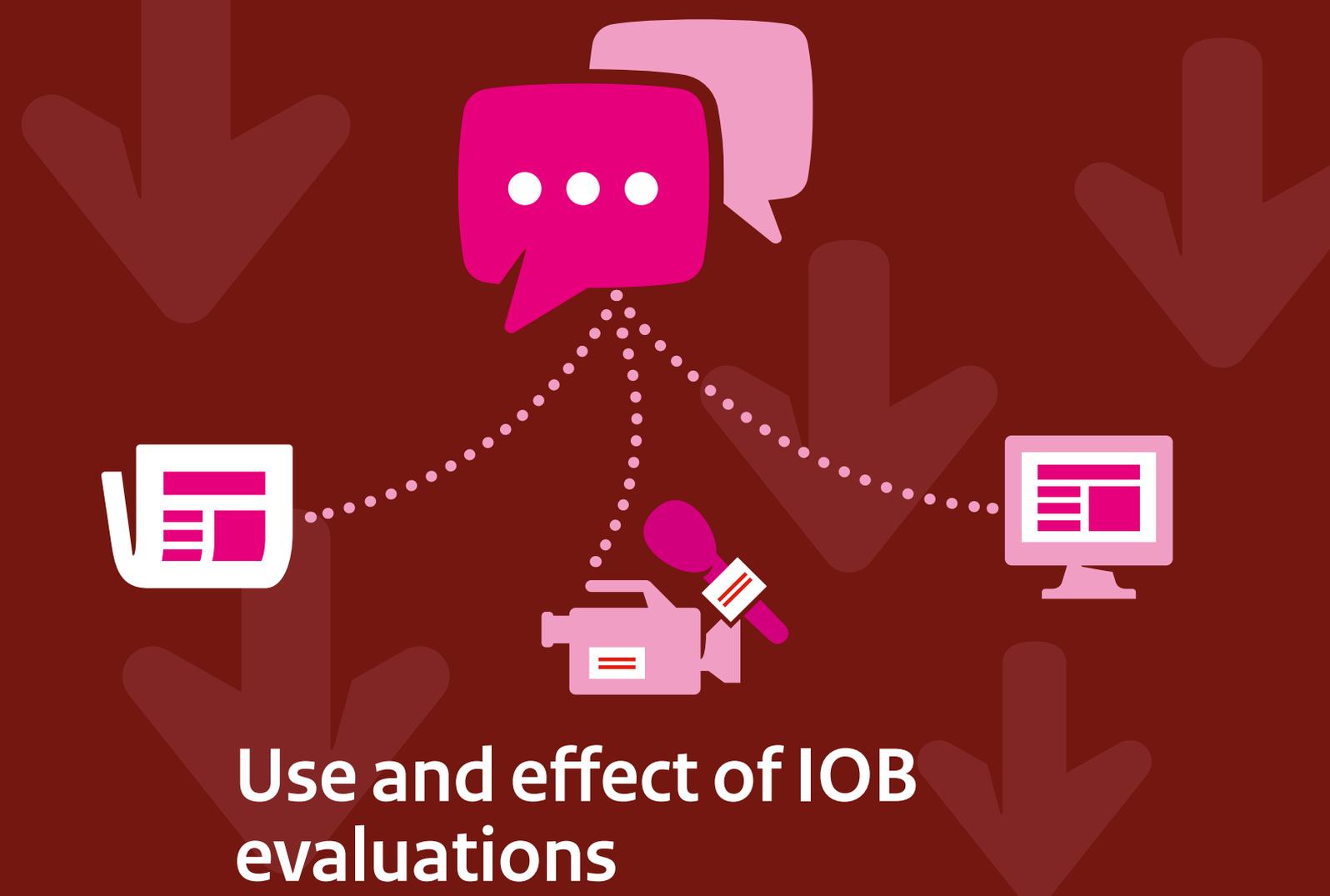
E. Nicaragua country study

The research for this country study focused on the process of ending Dutch support and the effects it had at a macro-level on education, health care and SRHR. IOB concluded that there was barely any donor coordination during the phasing out of Dutch aid. Between 2007 and 2013 eight traditional European donors ended their aid to Nicaragua. As a result, it was impossible to transfer Dutch activities to other donors. The macro-economic consequences of the Dutch exit were limited, in part thanks to economic growth and the oil deal with Venezuela. The consequences at the sector level were greater, however. The Netherlands made a positive contribution to education and health care, sectors that still face tremendous problems, especially in poorer regions. Another conclusion was that civil society organisations working in SRHR are finding it difficult to cope without the Dutch embassy's political and financial support. These organisations are finding it hard to operate effectively in the difficult political context for SRHR.



F. Bolivia country study

IOB examined the process and the effects of ending Dutch aid on the education sector and on good governance. The one-sided ending of Dutch aid essentially also ended donor coordination in Bolivia. At the macro-economic level, ending Dutch aid was not a problem for the country, which had a surplus both in the balance of payments and the government budget. The Bolivian government was able to easily take over Dutch support to the education sector. That was not the case for a number of NGOs that the Netherlands was supporting, however. IOB concluded that organisations focused on good governance and democratisation faced difficulties after Dutch aid ended because the Bolivian government was less keen on these issues.



Use and effect of IOB evaluations

The Dutch Council for Culture (*Raad voor Cultuur*) and the responsible policy departments have used the results of IOB's evaluation report *Culture as opportunity. Policy review of the international cultural policy 2009-2014* (IOB evaluation # 411) for both their recommendations on the future of international cultural policy and the new policy framework of the 2017-2020 International Cultural Policy Unit. In doing so, they followed up on the recommendation to introduce more strategy and improve coordination and cooperation.

After the publication of the evaluation *How to Break the Vicious Cycle: Evaluation of Dutch Development Cooperation in the Palestinian Territories (2008-2014)* (IOB evaluation # 412), the report was briefly discussed during the budget debate for 2017 for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in November 2016.

The results of the evaluation *Prevention is better than cure. Evaluation of the Netherlands and WHO (2011-2015)* (IOB evaluation # 414) were presented at several occasions to domestic and foreign health-care experts in July and September 2016. In collaboration with Vice Versa, KIT, Cordaid and Wemos, IOB organised a special debate about Dutch policy in the area of global health to commemorate the publication of the evaluation report in September 2016. After IOB presented the study's findings, an expert panel discussed several positions based on IOB's findings and recommendations. Vice Versa also published various articles, interviews and opinion pieces about the report on its website. The conclusions and recommendations were also discussed during the general consultation of the general Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation about health-care systems in September 2016.

The evaluation report *The gaps left behind: An evaluation of the impact of ending aid* (IOB evaluation # 415) received extensive coverage in the Dutch national press. In addition, the professional journal *Vice Versa* has dedicated many articles, interviews and critical opinion pieces to the evaluation. In November, IOB organised a meeting together with *Vice Versa* about the report's conclusions in the Humanity House in The Hague. Following a presentation of the evaluation report by IOB and critical reflections about the report, an expert panel discussed the report's conclusions and recommendations. The parliamentary debate on the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation for 2017, which was held in November 2016, and the parliamentary meeting about the Netherlands' partner country policy in December 2016 discussed the evaluations' findings and recommendations in detail. Finally, IOB provided a technical briefing in December 2016 of the report that was submitted to the House of Representatives' committee for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.



Publications related to IOB evaluations

Culture as opportunity. Policy review of the international cultural policy (2009-2014) | IOB evaluation #411

- *De Telegraaf* (2016). 'Kunstgeld verstrooid', *De Telegraaf online* 7/5/2016, <https://www.pressreader.com/netherlands/de-telegraaf/20160507/281479275622450>
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Ongoing studies – Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Policy review of operational objective 2.3: Disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms export policy

This evaluation falls under policy article 2 of the FA budget – Security and stability.

The policy review of operational objective 2.3 ('Promotion of disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms export policy') of the budget for Foreign Affairs concerns different forms of international cooperation aimed at preventing the proliferation of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction, as well as other potentially dangerous goods and knowledge, and reducing their potential threat.

The policy review focuses specifically on four priority areas:

- the UN Arms Treaty (ATT);
- the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT);
- the Chemical Weapons Treaty (CWC); and
- the export control policy of strategic goods, i.e. export control of military goods (conventional weapons and surplus defence materials) and so-called 'dual-use' goods.

Specific attention is being devoted to a number of converging themes in the underlying policy:

- strengthening international rule of law;
- the universal signing and ratification of international treaties and agreements;
- harmonising compliance with these treaties and agreements; and
- transparency.

The policy review attempts to shed light on the way in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented its policy during the period 2009-2016. The central evaluation questions were phrased as follows:

1. How has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented its policy on disarmament, arms control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to which results has it contributed?
2. How has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented its policy to control the export of strategic goods and to which results has it contributed?

The policy review concentrates on the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As far as any other Dutch institutions are involved in the (implementation of the) policy, the review will focus on their relation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The policy review follows the requirements laid down in the Regulation on Periodical Evaluation Studies (2015), including a reconstruction of, and the reasons behind the policy, a summary and analysis of the available resources and the way they have been employed, and an analysis of the policy's effectiveness and efficiency, taking into account the four above-mentioned themes. Special attention is being devoted to the various international forums which the Netherlands is working with to achieve its policy objectives, including the European Union and the United Nations. The policy review will be finalised in 2017.



Policy review of the Netherlands and the European Neighbourhood Policy

This evaluation falls under policy article 3 of the FA budget – European cooperation.

Preliminary research for the policy review 'The Netherlands and the European Neighbourhood Policy' was completed in 2016 and the study has commenced. This policy review concerns policy objectives 3.2 ('effective, efficient and coherent action by the Union regarding third countries and regions, including developing countries') and 2.5 ('promoting transition in priority areas') of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' budget.

The ENP was developed prior to the expansion of the European Union in 2004. The Union attempts to contribute, by means of the ENP, to a stable, secure and prosperous environment, sometimes referred to as a 'ring of friends'. The essence of the ENP is that the Union should provide its eastern and southern neighbours with economic integration, political association, mobility and financial and technical assistance, in exchange for reforms in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and a market-driven economy.

In this policy review, IOB is investigating how and to what degree the Netherlands has contributed to the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the ENP. The first step is to examine which factors determine the policy's effectiveness and coherence. Subsequently IOB will examine how the Netherlands has helped to give shape and implement the ENP. Establishing a link between the Dutch objective and the strong and weak points of the ENP will make it possible to judge the Netherlands' contribution to the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence.

The study design consists of the following components:

- a study of the literature on the ENP's effectiveness and coherence;
- four country-specific case studies of two eastern neighbourhood countries (Georgia and Azerbaijan) and two southern ones (Egypt and Tunisia);
- a desk study supplemented by interviews related to European financial and technical assistance to neighbourhood countries; and
- an analysis of the way in which the Netherlands has helped to give shape to and implement the ENP.

In 2015, IOB finalised the evaluation of the Matra programme in countries belonging to the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). In 2015, IOB also evaluated Dutch support for Arabic countries in transition in the Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia). Both evaluations will be used as building blocks for this policy review, which will be finalised in 2017.



Ongoing studies – Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation



Development into the Bargain: Evaluation of Technical Assistance for Trade Policy and Regulations

This evaluation falls under policy article 1 of the FTDC budget – Sustainable trade and investments.

This evaluation focuses on the technical assistance to trade policy and regulations supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also referred to as aid for trade in the strict sense. Trade facilitation is part of the evaluation, but trade development is not. The latter activity was already largely taken into consideration in the review of private sector development policy (IOB evaluation # 389). The results of the evaluations of the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IOB study # 397), the Trade Mark East Africa programme and the Multi Donor Trust Fund for Trade and Development II will be taken into consideration, insofar as they are related to trade policy and regulations.

The central question in this evaluation of aid for trade is whether aid has helped to improve the integration of developing countries into the multilateral trade system. This should be evident from an increase in the diversity of trade flows. In order to examine that, IOB will see whether aid has helped to improve trade policies, negotiation capacity, trade facilitation and regulation. The main question will be answered based on these ‘intermediate results’ and any causal links emanating from econometric research.



Evaluation of Economic Diplomacy

This evaluation falls under policy article 1 of the FTDC budget – Sustainable trade and investments.

Economic diplomacy is one of the spearheads of the current Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation policy, but it has not been evaluated since the Directorate-General for Foreign Economic Relations (DGBEB) was integrated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This evaluation aims to gain an understanding of the impact of interventions that were (and are being) carried out in the framework of economic diplomacy. In addition, it aims to align itself with the DGBEB's modernisation agenda and thus contribute to the learning process.

Although the justification for government interventions in the area of economic diplomacy has broad support, as yet little is known about the impact of this policy. As a result, it is unclear to what extent and how economic diplomacy contributes to the objective of Dutch foreign economic policy. Lessons from this evaluation could contribute to the effectiveness of current and future economic diplomatic policy. The study will be finalised in 2017. This evaluation focuses on the following main question: *in what way and to what degree do interventions of an economic diplomatic nature help to strengthen the Netherlands' international trade and investment position?*



Policy review of Dutch commitment to global food security (2012-2016)

This evaluation falls under policy article 2 of the FTDC budget – Sustainable development, food security and water.

Food security is one of the four spearheads of Dutch development cooperation policy for the years 2012-2016. The policy note on food security from 2011 describes four result areas: (1) increased sustainable agricultural production, (2) access to better nutrition, (3) more efficient markets, and (4) a better business environment. The intention was to increase the annual budget of EUR 160 million in 2011 to EUR 435 million in 2015. The food security brief from 2014 built on this but had a slightly different emphasis: (1) eradicate current hunger and malnutrition; (2) promote inclusive growth in the agricultural sector; and (3) establish ecologically sustainable food systems.

Following a preliminary study, a policy reconstruction and a systematic review of the most suitable ways of achieving food security (IOB study # 363) IOB developed an evaluation plan for food security in 2012-2016. The main question of this policy review is as follows: *What is the contribution of the Dutch food security policy to the food security situation in the 15 Dutch partner countries between 2012 and 2016?* Other questions focus on assessing the policy, country programmes and activities, and the policy's effectiveness and, if possible, the efficiency of the policy.

Four impact studies were carried out for this policy review in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda and Bangladesh. The studies evaluated each country's food security programme and one or two projects in detail. In doing so, IOB monitored Dutch interventions and examined how they – by means of agricultural production and income – are improving food consumption and leading to an expected decrease of malnutrition.

The following projects were selected:

- a seed sector development programme in Ethiopia (ISSD2);
- an agricultural input, soil fertility and market project in Rwanda (Catalist);
- a dairy sector development programme in Uganda (aBi Trust Dairy); and
- a polder development project (Blue Gold) and a value chain development project (Safal), both in Bangladesh.

In 2014 baseline measurements were carried out, followed by impact studies in 2016. The country reports will be finalised soon. In addition, an impact study of two irrigation projects in Indonesia, carried out for the policy review of water management, also contribute to this policy review. The policy review will be published in 2017.



Policy review of water management (2006-2016)

This evaluation falls under policy article 2 of the FTDC budget – Sustainable development, food security and water.

The policy area of water management covers a total of more than 200 activities, funded by ODA resources. The total expenditure during the period 2006-2016 amounts to more than EUR 700 million. The main question of the study is: *How did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs help to improve water management in developing countries in the period 2006-2016?* The policy review examines three sub-themes to this end: water in agriculture, water management plans and cross-border water management.

The policy review consists of the following elements:

- broad study of the policy's implementation and results based on available documentation and supplementary interviews;
- in-depth studies of partner countries with the highest expenditure (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mali and Mozambique). These country studies examine the policy's implementation and results and the assumptions regarding the way in which the objectives are achieved; and
- in-depth examination of a selection of activities in the three sub-themes. This will be based on impact studies, field visits and interviews with stakeholders and other informants.

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In 2016 research was conducted on the policy's implementation and results based on available documentation and supplementary interviews. Two impact studies have been completed for the 'water in agriculture' sub-theme: the polder development project (Blue Gold) in Bangladesh and two irrigation projects in Indonesia (PISP supported by ADB and WISMP supported by the World Bank and co-financed by the Netherlands). The planned country studies have been prepared, and the Bangladesh country study is being finalised. The other country studies will be carried out in early 2017. Completion of the policy review is scheduled for 2017.



Policy review of Dutch support to civil society

This evaluation falls under policy article 3 of the FTDC budget – Social progress.

This policy review concerns policy objective 3.3. of the Explanatory Memorandum concerning support for civil society. The three main questions of the study are:

- *What are the insights regarding the effectiveness of the support that the ministry is providing to civil society in the South through Dutch NGOs?*
- *What explanations are there for the degree of effectiveness?*
- *What lessons can be drawn to increase effectiveness?*

These main questions were broken down into questions arising from the Regulation on Periodical Evaluation Studies (2015):

- questions about the quality of the support that Dutch NGOs provide to civil society in the South. This quality concerns reach, expertise, relations and support in the area of lobbying and advocacy;
- questions about the effects of the nature and dynamics of the ministry's support to Dutch NGOs and questions about the way in which these NGOs have been operating; and
- a question about the consequences of having reducing the budget for support to civil society. The answers to these questions can help us to find explanations for effectiveness.

The policy review focuses on support given to the Co-Financing System (MFS) II, the SNV programme and the Trade Union Co-Financing Programme (TUCP). The study consists of the following components:

- a reconstruction of Dutch policy regarding support for civil society, including an examination of the effects of the ministry's policy changes on the way Dutch NGOs operate.
- a study of the effectiveness of the support given to civil society organisations in the South by MFS-II, SNV and TUCP and the reasons for it;
- a study of the efficiency of the MFS-II, SNV and TUCP programmes;
- a perception study of the quality of the non-financial service provision by Dutch NGOs to civil society organisations in the South;
- a study of the relations between Dutch NGOs and the ministry and between alliances of Dutch NGOs; and
- a study of the consequences of reducing the budget for support to civil society.

The study is scheduled to be complete in first half of 2017.



Policy review of cooperation with the United Nations

This evaluation falls under policy article 5 of the FTDC budget – Strong the frameworks for development.

This policy review focuses on cooperation with organisations that belong to the United Nations (UN) system that are relevant to the policy objectives of Dutch development cooperation. The emphasis of the review is on decision-making processes in the Netherlands and the ensuing cooperation with the UN for achieving Dutch priority themes. For this reason, a central concern is the assessment of the expectations mentioned in the policy regarding the comparative benefits of using the UN channel.

The evaluation questions follow the system of the Regulation for Periodic Evaluation Studies (2015). The emphasis is on gaining insight into the effectiveness and efficiency of the funded activities. The evaluation will i) monitor the quality of the accountability regarding expenditures by the UN organisations and ii) assess to what extent available evaluations make it possible to understand the effectiveness of the funded UN organisations. Another question that the policy review seeks to answer is whether, and if so how much, progress has been made with the integrated approach and cooperation between UN organisations advocated by the Netherlands (and other member states). The policy review is primarily based on existing studies, evaluation reports and literature. The possibility of field research at country level is severely hampered by both financial and methodological limitations, and there is a lack of legitimacy for conducting a single-donor evaluation study. The research consists of four sub-studies about cooperation with the UN for each spearhead of the Dutch development cooperation policy:

- a) SRHR: UNFPA and UNAIDS;
- b) drinking water: UNICEF;
- c) food security: FAO and IFAD; and
- d) security and rule of law: UNDP.

A separate desk study has been scheduled about the progress and coordination of the UN's development cooperation activities. The review covers the period 2012-2015 and will be finalised in early 2017.



Ongoing studies – other studies



Poverty and inequality in Africa

Many less-developed countries have been experiencing high levels of growth for over a decade. That is not only the case for emerging economies such as Brazil and India, but it is increasingly also true for sub-Saharan Africa. Countries such as Zambia and Ghana have reached the status of (lower) middle-income country. Extreme poverty is diminishing. In 1990, 36% of the world's population lived in extreme poverty, whereas nowadays and for the first time in history, this share has dropped below 10%. The drop in poverty is not the same everywhere, however. In 1990 15% of the extremely poor lived in sub-Saharan Africa; now approximately 50% of the extremely poor live there. More than a third of the population in sub-Saharan Africa lives under the poverty line of USD 1.90 a day. Economic growth in Africa did not go hand in hand with reduced poverty figures as much as it did in other parts of the world. Poverty is decreasing, but at the same time it is becoming more extreme in conflict countries and in countries that rely heavily on the export of raw materials. Drought, conflict and rapid population growth are important factors.

After years of economic growth and the global reduction of extreme poverty, donors, including the Netherlands, have now turned their attention to the increasing inequality. More and more, it is being recognised that in many countries large groups are not benefiting enough from economic growth. It is for good reason that the Sustainable Development Goals for 2016-2030 focus on reducing inequality within and between countries. This study aims to provide an overview of the relationship between economic growth, poverty and inequality in sub-Saharan Africa and of trends and targets for policy, for the governments and involved countries, as well as the Netherlands. The study examines the connections between these three issues, specifically for sub-Saharan Africa. The study will delve deeper into the background mechanisms for five countries. IOB will publish the study, which is being carried out by IOB together with the Free University of Amsterdam and the University of Groningen, in 2017.



Communication and cooperation



Communication

In order to increase their international use, IOB reports are increasingly being published in English, and in some cases translated summaries are published. In addition to evaluation reports, IOB also publishes a short *evaluation newsletter* with each report. Evaluation newsletters contain the most important findings and lessons of evaluation studies and usually appear in Dutch. Since 2015, IOB has also attempted to provide visual summaries of its reports and activities, using infographics. For example, in 2016 the main findings from the exit evaluation (IOB evaluation # 415) were visually summarised in infographics in order to make them more accessible to the general public.

IOB has further increased its reach and visibility by actively using Twitter. In mid-2016, IOB's Twitter account passed the mark of 1,000 users, which include various journalists, academics, policy officers, fellow evaluators and politicians. IOB is using the medium to announce lectures and meetings, share news about evaluations and refer to new publications and related articles. In addition to messages posted by followers about – or to – IOB, IOB's tweets are regularly retweeted by various followers, as a result of which a substantial network of people are being reached, both in the Netherlands and abroad.

In the fall of 2016, IOB's website was moved to the Government Online Platform, which falls under the Ministry of General Affairs' Public Information and Communications Service. The URL has remained the same: <https://english.iob-evaluatie.nl/>, but the website now better meets the government's security and quality requirements. It is striking that the number of visitors has increased since the website was moved in early October 2016. In 2015, the site was visited about 7,000 times. There were about 3,000 visitors to the new site in the last three months of 2016. An IOB product was downloaded more than 1,000 times in those three months, as opposed to 1,500 downloads of IOB reports and evaluation newsletters in the whole of 2015.



Lectures, presentations and conference

March 2016

- *Vrouwenrechten en gendergelijkheid in het Nederlandse buitenlandbeleid* ('Women's rights and gender equality in Dutch foreign policy') Masterclass for the Jong Wiardi Beckman Foundation, The Hague.
- *Beleidsvaluatie en EU-voorzitterschap* ('Policy evaluation and the EU Presidency') Guest lecture for the European Public Affairs Master's programme, Maastricht University
- *Inhoud en opzet beleidsdoorlichtingen* ('Content and design of policy reviews') Technical briefing for members of the Dutch House of Representatives - general Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, The Hague

April 2016

- *Nederland en Latijns-Amerika: een veranderende relatie*
(*The Netherlands and Latin America: a changing relationship*)
Guest lecture for the Latin American Studies Bachelor's programme, Leiden University.
- *Wat is beleid?* ('What is policy?')
Presentation for The West Wing, the think tank of the Western Hemisphere Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

June 2016

- *Evaluating foreign policy & development cooperation*
Masterclass for students at the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague
- *Het Nederlandse humanitaire beleid doorgelicht*
(*A review of Dutch humanitarian policy*) Presentation during debate about humanitarian aid, in collaboration with Humanity House and Vice Versa, The Hague
- *Evaluation of Dutch Food Security Policy 2012-2015: The place of nutrition impact studies in policy evaluation*
Guest lecture in the series 'Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of the FNS programme', Centre for Development Innovation (CDI), Wageningen University.
- *Monitoring and evaluating the SDGs*
Presentation for the conference 'Critical perspectives on governance by Sustainable Development Goals', Center for Sustainable Development Studies, University of Amsterdam.

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July 2016

- *Prevention is better than cure. The Netherlands and the World Health Organization*
Presentation for health-care experts and policy offers from Cordaid, The Hague

August 2016

- *Monitoring and evaluation*
Training for Afghan civil servants, in collaboration with the Clingendael Institute, The Hague.

September 2016

- *Prevention is better than cure. The Netherlands and the World Health Organization*
Presentation during debate about Dutch policy in the area of global health, in collaboration with Vice Versa and KIT, Amsterdam.
- *Prevention is better than cure: The Netherlands and the World Health Organisation*
Presentation during Cordaid's Health Experts Training Week, The Hague.

October 2016

- *Methodieken van monitoring en evaluatie ('Monitoring and evaluation methods')*
Technical briefing for members of the Dutch House of Representatives - general Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, The Hague

November 2016

- *Monitoring and evaluation*
Training event for civil servants and researchers from Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Clingendael Institute, The Hague.
- *Stoppen, en dan? ('The gaps left behind')*
Presentation during a debate about the future of development cooperation, in collaboration with Vice Versa and Humanity House, The Hague.
- *Lobbying and Advocacy*
Workshop held during the 2016 Africa Day, Amsterdam.

December 2016

- *The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department*
Guest lecture about the subject of Public Policy, Public Administration programme, Tilburg University.



International meetings and cooperation

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OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation

The Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) is the forum of evaluation boards of members of OECD/DAC. Increasingly, EvalNet is working with new partners (new funds and non-DAC donors, for example). The focus is also on strengthening the synergy between DAC, EvalNet and DAC's other aid bodies.

IOB plays the following role in the network:

1. IOB promotes the relevance of EvalNet and the effectiveness of this aid body's methodology, taking into account DAC's work programme, the 'beyond aid' agenda, the SDGs and, increasingly, issues in the areas of security, conflict and migration.
2. IOB supports initiatives by EvalNet that focus on gaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of multilateral organisations and partnerships and also actively participates in these initiatives;
3. IOB promotes an effective and efficient division of tasks within EvalNet, including the planning of joint evaluations. This year, the director of IOB was asked to become one of EvalNet's two vice-chairpersons.

In 2016, EvalNet published a new overview of the tasks and methodologies of the different evaluation departments. This overview can be found on EvalNet's website: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/>

EU HEADS

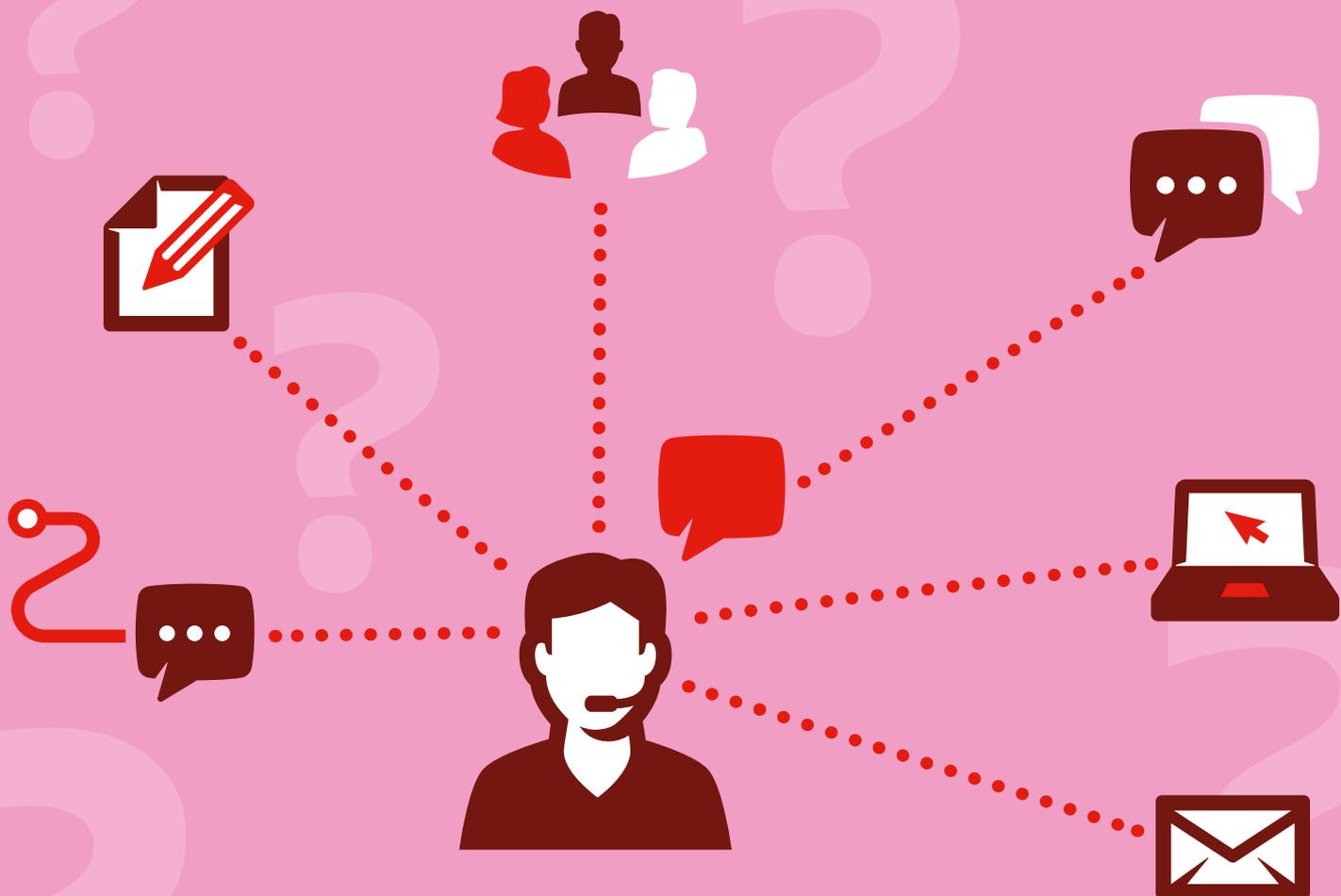
The EU HEADS meeting is an initiative of the Evaluation Unit of the Directorate-General for development cooperation of the European Commission. The annual meeting is used to discuss the unit's evaluation plans, exchange programming and look for opportunities to work together more often. In recent years this has led to the development of a joint methodology for the evaluation of budget support and the implementation of joint evaluations in that area. The aim is to extend the approach to other forms of programme aid.

Nordic+

For several years now, IOB has been part of the Nordic+ group on evaluation, a group of like-minded (mainly Scandinavian) evaluation departments, who are mostly members of EvalNet (see above). In 2016, the annual meeting took place in Dublin, where at the instigation of the Netherlands, Germany was welcomed as a new partner. IOB presented the results of the evaluation of the consequences of the budget cuts on development cooperation and talked about the consequences of the SDGs for evaluation departments (also see the introduction). Other subjects were the evaluation of partnerships and the evaluation of humanitarian aid (Ireland). Participants expressed a desire to carry out more joint evaluations, especially in the areas of conflict, migration and regional shelter. In 2017 Germany will host the Nordic+ meeting.

DACH Treffen

IOB has been invited to participate in the 'DACH Treffen', the annual meeting of the German-speaking evaluation departments in Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Switzerland. IOB was scheduled to organise the DACH Treffen in 2016, but this meeting was moved to June 2017 as a result of busy schedules.



IOB's help desk

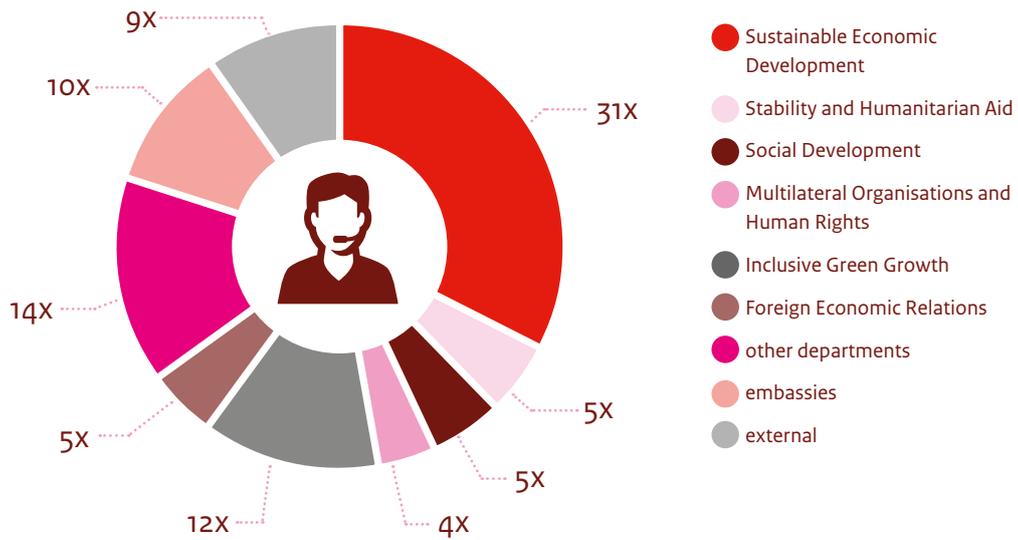
In 2016 IOB's help desk again provided advice to departments and missions about designing and implementing evaluations (the 'decentralised evaluations'). Such advice is provided in different ways and at different points in the evaluation process – from giving written commentary during the design of an evaluation study to participating in a reference group during the research phase. If requested, IOB also provides advice about evaluation policy and research that is formulated or carried out outside the ministry.

In recent years, there has been a strong increase in the number of requests for advice at the help desk. In 2014, there were about 30 requests. In 2015 that number rose to 61, and in 2016 there were 95 requests. About two-thirds of the requests for advice concerned one-time requests for verbal and/or written commentary, but increasingly IOB evaluators are being asked to participate in reference groups. This occurred 33 times in 2016, and in some cases it concerned large, long-term evaluation processes.

The total time spent on these advisory activities in 2016 was almost 2,000 hours. This is a huge increase compared to previous years. By comparison, the time spent on the 61 requests that were received in 2015 was about 510 hours. This increase can be partly attributed to several intensive support projects for tenders, framework agreements and portfolio surveys, each of which took 80 hours or more of supervision.

In ten cases, advice was requested by a Dutch embassy, and nine requests for advice were aimed at organisations outside the ministry. The other requests all came from departments at the ministry in The Hague (particularly the department of Sustainable Economic Development and Inclusive Green Growth). The figure below gives an overview.

Number of requests for advice in 2016



A special form of advice concerned three training sessions in the area of monitoring and evaluation for staff members of the ministry in The Hague and the Dutch embassy in Rwanda.

Definitions

IOB uses evaluation criteria that largely coincide with the criteria of OECD/DAC. The OECD/DAC definition uses five evaluation criteria to assess activities: efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance and sustainability. IOB has added the criterion of coherence to that list.

The evaluation criteria are used at various 'result levels', i.e. the levels of output, outcome and impact. They, in turn, are derived from the logical model or the result chains, which enables researchers to present their findings in an ordered and coherent manner. How much emphasis each evaluation criterion receives, differs per evaluation.



Effectiveness

Effectiveness concerns the extent to which the direct results of an aid activity (the output) contribute to the policy objectives (the outcome). An activity can be considered effective if it makes a demonstrable contribution to the achievement of the objectives.



Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the extent to which the direct results of an aid activity (the output) weigh against the cost of the resources (input) and the way in which these are deployed. The concept therefore reflects a ratio (cost/benefit) and refers to a level of results that can be verified.



Relevance

Relevance concerns the extent to which the effect of the aid activities contribute to the achievement of the desired objective. An activity's relevance can be measured by the results it generated that ultimately brought the development goal closer within reach. Sometimes relevance also refers to the extent to which the objectives of an activity are consistent with the needs of the target group or country in question.



Sustainability

Sustainability concerns the extent to which an aid activity's achieved impact is lasting. This concept is therefore an aspect of effectiveness. It has several dimensions, such as socio-cultural, institutional, political, ecological and financial-economic sustainability.



Coherence

Coherence refers to the extent to which the objectives and results of the policy are not damaged by other forms of policy or the extent to which the results of different policy efforts reinforce each other. This encompasses both consistent policy measures that avoid conflict between different policy areas, as well as policy coherence.

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Cover illustration: *The 17 icons of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | United Nations*

Photo completed evaluations – Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Tourists pose at Lake Seokchon Seoul, South Korea, in order to take pictures with a gigantic rubber duck, designed by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman | Peng Qian*

Photo completed evaluations – Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation: *A Palestinian women behind the colours of the Palestinian flag during an exposition of mural paintings | Majdi Fathi / NurPhoto*

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