



# Foreword

Policy evaluation means systematically assessing the design, the implementation, the results and the effects of policy. A pivotal question in this regard is: does the policy work and does it offer value for money?

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) carries out systematic, independent evaluation research on the results of Dutch foreign policy. IOB evaluates policies based on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and – if feasible – also the coherence and sustainability of the results achieved.

This annual report provides a snapshot of the results from the policy reviews, evaluations and other studies conducted by IOB this past year. Most of these 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 within the Ministry and by the Dutch embassies and consulates.

In 2017 IOB completed five studies: four policy evaluations and one impact evaluation. The reviews all concern comprehensive and more complex areas of foreign policy: support to civil society organisations in developing countries, Dutch commitment to two of its major policy spearheads, namely water management and food security, and Dutch cooperation with the United Nations' development agencies. The impact evaluation concerns a study of Dutch interventions to improve trade policy and trade regulations in developing countries. All completed studies can be found on IOB's website: [www.iob-evaluatie.nl](http://www.iob-evaluatie.nl).

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In addition to delivering major, complex ex post evaluations, IOB is also increasingly acting as a close but independent advisor in the early stages of policy development. If requested, IOB staff will provide support for the so-called 'decentralised' evaluations of policy departments, for the development of instruments for result management, for baseline measurements and for the substantive backing of inspections of embassies. IOB adheres to this demand-driven form of internal consultancy because it enables it to contribute to quicker and more targeted ways of 'learning to avoid mistakes' and thus in the long term also to better policies.

Strengthening the evaluation capacity of policy departments and implementing organisations is an ongoing priority for IOB. It is already doing so by means of its own help desk and by providing active support to larger and more complex evaluation studies, such as the monitoring and evaluation of EU migration funds for the Horn of Africa. Though the implementation of these programmes has only just begun, it is important to learn lessons in the interim for timely policy modifications.

Wendy Asbeek Brusse  
*Director*

Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB)  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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# Completed studies

## Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (FTDC)



### Policy review of Dutch support to the development of civil society in the South | IOB evaluation #416

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



For years, civil society has been one of Dutch development cooperation's main channels. By providing support to Southern civil society organisations, the Netherlands hopes to contribute to getting important social issues on the agendas of – local, national and international – governments as well as private sector players. This should enable civil society to contribute to decision-making and policy implementation that aim to promote sustainable economic development and direct poverty reduction. The policy review focuses primarily on support to civil society during the period 2011-2015 through organisations in the Co-Financing System (MFS II), the Dutch development agency SNV, and the Mondiaal FNV (MFNV) and CNV Internationaal (CNVI) unions.



## Main findings

- Dutch support for civil society in the South has helped to achieve the objectives of promoting economic development and direct poverty reduction in the countries in question.
- Support for capacity development has helped to strengthen the organisational capacity of Southern civil society organisations.
- Mondiaal FNV and CNV Internationaal's aid has helped to improve the position of unions, as well as the working and living conditions for employees in Southern countries.
- FNV contributed to the results achieved by its partners by playing supportive and catalytic roles.
- It is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the programmes that focus on developing a strong and varied civil society to support systematic social change. The information needed to determine this is lacking.
- Relations between Dutch and Southern civil society organisations were good, strong and valuable. However, policy changes and cutbacks have put these relations under increasing pressure since 2011.



## Lessons

- Clarify Dutch policy regarding the strengthening of Southern civil society in a changing policy environment.
- Improve the connection between concrete development activities and achieving strategic policy objectives.
- Improve the practice of monitoring and evaluation at the ministry and encourage civil society organisations to do the same.
- Renew relations between Dutch and Southern civil society organisations.
- Strengthen cooperation among Dutch civil society organisations.

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## Policy review of Dutch cooperation with UN development agencies | IOB evaluation #417

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



Cooperation with UN agencies has contributed to the objectives of Dutch development cooperation policy. The expected comparative advantages of channelling resources via the UN were largely confirmed. The study emphasises expenditures which fall under the four priorities (spearheads) of Dutch development cooperation policy, namely: sexual and reproductive health and rights, drinking water, food security, and security and the rule of law. Those organisations that receive the most money were selected.



## Main findings

- An important objective of Dutch policy is to strengthen the UN in the area of development cooperation and peace-building. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plays a crucial role in this by promoting the substantive and operational coordination among the UN's development agencies. For this reason, the UNDP receives annual general voluntary contributions from the Netherlands. Since 2011, Dutch willingness to contribute financially to these objectives has decreased substantially. Instead, there is now a greater focus on Dutch priorities.
- The expected comparative advantages that underpin the channelling of resources for the implementation of programmes and projects were largely effectuated. However, the degree to which the organisations provided insight into the effectiveness of their activities varied considerably. Those that provided most insight were the programmes for drinking water and sanitation of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the programme for the purchase and distribution of goods and medicine of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the programmes of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- The overhead costs usually remained within the set standards. The biggest efficiency problems were related to costs emanating from a lack of cooperation and overlapping.



## Lessons

- The increased focus on Dutch priorities is at the expense of the traditional major emphasis on strengthening the multilateral system. As it turns out, combining the two objectives well in times of cutbacks on development cooperation proved impossible. Stricter choices are needed for that.
- The need to update policy is especially urgent in the area of conflict and fragility. An integrated strategy of the Netherlands' commitment vis-à-vis the UN is needed to allow for a more strategic and coherent Dutch policy.
- There is still sufficient scope to operate more efficiently by concentrating Dutch support to the UN on fewer activities and freeing up time to monitor the activities and the substantive cooperation.
- It is important to continue to devote sufficient policy attention to UN-wide issues. This should be adequately supported by expertise and contributions from the ministry and the embassies.

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## Policy review of the development aid policy to improve water management (2006-2016). | IOB evaluation #418

*This evaluation falls under policy objective 2.2 of the FTDC budget – Better water management, drinking water and sanitation.*



This policy review aims to provide insight into the effectiveness of the development aid policy to improve water management focused on agriculture and river basin management at the subnational, national and cross-border levels. The integration of the converging policy themes and the intended involvement of the Dutch water sector was examined as well. The latter with an eye to promoting economic opportunities for the Dutch sector. Furthermore, the review identified factors that have influenced the efficiency of the policy processes. The sources of information consist of a series of IOB country studies, available evaluation reports and interviews with informants in the Netherlands and in partner countries for bilateral cooperation.



## Main findings

- In the area of water management, Dutch development policy largely succeeded in achieving the various intended results. It was less successful, however, in terms of the necessary institutional development and the continuation of improvements at the local, (sub)national and cross-border levels.
- There were varying degrees of progress regarding the integration of the converging policy themes of climate change, environmental sustainability, good governance, gender equality and poverty reduction. The slow progress was partly due to shortcomings in the design and/or implementation of projects and partly to local politics, institutional and/or social factors.
- The Dutch government and knowledge institutes have generally built up and maintained a good reputation as development partners in water management. The involvement of the Dutch water sector, however, was overestimated, and the modest scale of activities did not necessarily correspond to the high policy aspirations.
- The policy process was partly efficient. MFA worked well together with key actors and succeeded in strengthening knowledge, contacts, complementarity and synergy of activities. Efficiency was under pressure due to the unrealistic design of many projects and the scope of the coordination tasks as a result of an increase in the number of partners and an accumulation of strategies and instruments. Moreover, the efforts were partly fragmented, and in some cases the approach did not take into account local circumstances. Finally, monitoring and evaluating the policy results was inadequate.



## Lessons

- The Dutch government is rightly taking upon itself a portion of the funding for better water management in poorer countries. This funding is vitally important to maintain the role of the Netherlands and Dutch knowledge organisations as respected partners in development which can contribute to knowledge building and good bilateral and multilateral relations.
- Differentiate more clearly between the different circumstances and relations that have been built up. This also requires making more subtle distinctions in the aid agenda, which partly focuses on commercial opportunities for Dutch organisations. The question of what the options are for synergy depends on the specific circumstances.
- Aim for a realistic balance in intervention levels – between feasible and at least for the medium to long term sustainable local improvements and contributions to institution building of which the results are less certain. For cross-border water management, depending on the circumstances, this could mean supporting those countries, that have the most to lose and that are in a weaker negotiation position.
- Develop multi-annual country plans for cooperation in water management that provide a coordinated summary of everything the Dutch government wants to do in, with or for the country in question. This means providing an explanation of both the central and delegated work package of MFA and the instruments outside of MFA.
- Ensure that there is a good understanding of the local context and local support through a good mix of professional, political-economic, social and institutional expertise.
- Finally, opt for a systematic and coordinated approach to monitoring, evaluating and reporting on results, which does more justice to the (qualitative) project objectives. Among other things, this will reduce the risk of missing out on lessons learned in the past.



## Policy review of Dutch commitment to global food security (2012-2016). | IOB evaluation #419

*This evaluation falls under policy objective 2.1 of the FTDC budget – Increased food security.*



Food security is one of the four spearheads of Dutch development cooperation policy. The food security policy notes from 2011 and 2014 can be summarised in three policy objectives: 1) increased sustainable agricultural production, 2) access to better nutrition, and 3) a better business environment. During the period 2012-2016, the Netherlands spent 1,5 billion euros on 248 food security projects and programmes. IOB evaluated Dutch food security policy during that period by assessing all of the projects, analysing the available evaluations, country studies in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda, and the wider literature on the effectiveness of similar projects.



### Main findings

Good results were achieved at the level of the three Dutch policy objectives:

1. Many agricultural projects, especially in the field of research and knowledge, have contributed to higher production and higher incomes.
2. Projects that focus on nutrition through social safety nets, food enrichment and training activities were successful in reaching vulnerable groups.
3. Projects that improve the business environment, especially through the building of rural roads, have contributed to agricultural development and food security.

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Results were less convincing at the level of global challenges to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and efforts to develop sustainable food systems that can also feed the world in the future. First of all, most agricultural projects did not focus primarily on healthy food or on food-insecure people. Second, projects often devoted insufficient attention to the analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation of specific sustainability problems in agriculture.

Little is known about the cost effectiveness, the scaling up of pilot projects, and the conditions under which public-private partnerships contribute to development objectives. Dutch embassies play an important role in guaranteeing the relevance of the food security programme, and could play a larger role in promoting greater coherence within the programme.



### Lessons

1. Distinguish between different groups of small farmers: those who can scale up commercially, those who can find work outside of agriculture, and those who are forced to rely on agriculture as a survival strategy for the time being.
2. Expand the orientation of the programme from agriculture and value chains to a coherent approach towards broader food systems, from production to consumption.
3. Use the strength of a value chain approach to make food systems more sustainable.
4. Give embassies more options for setting up a coherent food security programme in partner countries.



## Impact evaluation of Aid for Trade: 'Better ways of Trading'. | IOB evaluation #420

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



IOB examined the impact of interventions funded by the Netherlands to improve trade policy and trade regulations in developing countries, also referred to as Aid for Trade in the strict sense of the term. The Netherlands spent 163 million euros on this in the period from 2007 to 2016, with the aim of enabling developing countries to benefit more from the opportunities offered by trade. Trade policy and trade regulations are keys to the success of Dutch development policy, where it focuses on synergising aid, trade and investment. That is why the study is extremely important for the planned policy review of article 1.

Based on the expenditures, IOB distinguished between three main categories of interventions funded by the Netherlands: trade policy (28%), trade facilitation (44%) and standards (28%). The interventions were evaluated on their direct impact and on the likelihood that the interventions have helped to increase trade and the diversity of trade.



### Main findings

- The Netherlands' contributions to improving developing countries' trade policies and negotiation capacity has increased developing countries' knowledge and skills, as a result of which these countries' participation in the WTO and in national and regional trade policy has improved.
- The degree to which the improvements mentioned above have affected the scope and nature of trade, depends on the implementation of reforms, trade facilitation and the ability of economies to benefit from trade opportunities.
- The trade facilitation supported by the Netherlands has reduced transaction costs and is believed to have significantly increased trade and its economic benefits in recipient countries.
- The continuity and the success of trade facilitation depends on the degree to which the recipient government and the private sector are involved and the degree to which donor coordination and alignment with the Private Sector Development (PSD) policy are addressed.
- Dutch support to the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) has contributed in developing countries to the recognition of the importance for trade of standards and institutional capacity for standardisation and enforcement. This has led to more effective participation in the WTO and better alignment between national and regional policies on standards.
- The introduction of standards by Dutch NGOs, often in the framework of agreements with the private sector, have had no or barely any effect on the scope or nature of trade in developing countries.



## Lessons

- The effectiveness of programmes aimed at improving trade policies and negotiation capacities of developing countries can be enhanced by pledging support for at least ten years.
- Strengthen the coherence between trade policy and PSD policy and general development policy.
- Establish requirements for participants in training programmes regarding preliminary training and follow-up.
- Improve coordination and monitoring of the Dutch programmes that support developing countries' trade policies by delegating these to the permanent representation in Geneva.
- Beware of the uneven effects of trade facilitation. This risk is present when support focuses solely on fast results, on the formal sector (and not on the informal sector as well), on trade in goods (and not on trade in services), and on imports or exports instead of both.
- Harmonise trade facilitation programmes better with the trade policy of the recipient government, involve the private sector and ensure coherence with the PSD policy.
- Improve donor coordination to prevent duplication and working in silo and to unburden the recipient government.
- Take vested interests and the political context into account.
- Invest in a thorough analysis of the magnitude of the impact of the trade facilitation programmes on trade.
- Improve capacity building regarding standards aimed at trade by a) having STDF focus more on its network function and aligning the selection of projects to that as well; b) connecting capacity building to concrete trade facilitation; and c) focusing capacity building on both import and export.
- Do not only focus capacity building for standardisation and enforcement on goods and services that are being traded, but also on domestic products and services. The introduction of international standards for the domestic market has a positive impact on trade.
- Involve governmental organisations in activities aimed at private standards and certification, such as covenants.



# Ongoing studies

## Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)



### Policy review of disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms export policy

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

The policy review of operational objective 2.3 ('Promote disarmament and arms control, fight the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and implement a transparent and responsible arms export policy') of the budget of the MFA concerns different forms of international cooperation aimed at fighting the spread of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, as well as other potentially dangerous goods and knowledge, and reducing the potential threat they represent.

The policy review focuses specifically on four priority subjects:

- the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT);
- the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT);
- the Chemical Weapons Treaty (OPCW); and
- the export control policy of strategic goods, that is to say controlling the export of military goods (conventional weapons and surplus defence materials) and so-called dual-use goods.

Specific attention will be devoted to a number of the policy's converging themes:

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

The central evaluation questions are phrased as follows:

1. *How has the MFA 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 MFA implemented the export control policy for strategic goods and to which results has it contributed in this area?*

As far as any other Dutch institutions were involved in the policy, the focus is specifically on their relation with the MFA.

In the subquestions, the policy review follows the required elements of the Regulation on Periodical Evaluation Studies, including a reconstruction of the policy and its motivation, an overview and analysis of the available and used resources, and an analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy. Special attention is devoted to the different international forums with which the Netherlands cooperates to achieve its policy objectives, including the European Union and the United Nations. The policy review will be completed in 2018.



## Policy review of the Dutch and the European Neighbourhood Policy

*This evaluation falls under policy article 3 of the MFA budget – European cooperation*

Research for the policy review 'The Netherlands and the European Neighbourhood Policy' continued in 2017. The European Union attempts to contribute, by means of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), to a stable, secure and prosperous neighbouring region, sometimes referred to as a 'ring of friends'. In doing so, the Union offers its eastern and southern neighbours 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. The ENP was revised in 2015. Since then, there has been more emphasis on stabilising the region, differentiating between neighbouring countries, and creating more equality and ownership. This policy review concerns two policy objectives of the MFA's budget: 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').

The study design consisted of the following components:

- a literature review 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;
- an analysis of the way in which the Netherlands 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 (with a focus on Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia). Both evaluations serve as a building block for this policy review, which will be finalised in 2018.

On 8 March 2017, a literature review<sup>1</sup> commissioned by IOB (which can be downloaded from IOB's website) was discussed at a seminar of experts in Brussels and presented at a public gathering.



## Evaluation of the Netherlands as a host country for international organisations

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

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In 2008 IOB carried out a policy review of the Netherlands' policy on hosting international organisations. The aim of the current evaluation in 2017 is to assess this policy has evolved since 2008. The results of the study will be used as input for a future policy update. The evaluation will also serve as a building block for the policy review of article 4 of the MFA budget in its entirety.

The evaluation focuses primarily on the role of the MFA regarding the effectiveness and coherence of the Netherlands' host country policy. The MFA is the formal point of contact for international organisations (IOs), has a number of executive tasks and a coordinating function. These include public relations/communication with IOs, management of headquarters agreements, and overall coordination of policy and its implementation.

The evaluation questions concern the policy's evolution and background, as well as its implementation with regard to hosting existing IO's and attracting new ones. The questions are divided according to three themes: the policy description, the effectiveness of the policy focused on attracting new IOs and the effectiveness of the policy at keeping those IOs already present. These questions will be answered by means of a desk study, interviews, case studies and a survey

<sup>1</sup> Hrant Kostanyan ed. (2017), *Assessing European Neighbourhood Policy; Perspective from the Literature*, Brussels: CEPS/ London: Rowman and Littlefield International.



## Evaluation of Consular services and regulating the movement of people

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

How did the ministry carry out its policy during the period 2011-2016 in the area of consular services and visa services? And how effectively and efficiently was this policy implemented? These are the key questions of this policy evaluation. The focus is on general consular assistance, travel advice, crisis management and response, and visas. The evaluation also looks at the strategic choices made by the management of the department of Consular Affairs and Visa Policy (DCV) during the evaluation period: centralisation, digitisation, outsourcing certain executive tasks and devoting more attention to the relationship between the consular field and other policy areas. The study is based on various sources, including policy documents and interviews with employees at the department and other stakeholders (e.g. other government bodies and the business sector). Two sub-studies are also conducted, on the MFA's so-called 'multi-channel strategy' and on the efficiency of consular service provision. The evaluation will be delivered in the autumn of 2018.



# Ongoing studies

## Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (FTDC)



### Case studies aid, trade and investment

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

The policy note entitled 'A world to gain: a new agenda for aid, trade and investment', published in April 2013, outlined a new policy for foreign trade and development cooperation. To respond to developments in the world and manage the changing relations with partner countries, three key objectives were specified: poverty reduction, sustainable growth worldwide and success for Dutch companies abroad. Eight partner countries were identified as transition countries where the relationship would be based on both aid and trade. 'A world to gain' did not indicate how the integration of aid, trade and investment should take form, nor how this should lead to synergy between the available instruments.

This study focuses on the way in which the policy process aimed at the integration of aid, trade and investment and the transition from aid to trade unfolded in practice in three partner countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Kenya. As such, it will be part of the broader policy evaluation of 2020. The study does not look at the effectiveness and impact of the aid, trade and investment agenda, but provides a policy reconstruction and considers the policy's synergy and coherence in these three partner countries.



## Impact 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 yet 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.

The main research question is: *In what way and to what degree do interventions of an economic diplomatic nature help to strengthen the Netherlands' international trade and investment position?*

The study will be completed in 2018.

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 objectives of Dutch foreign economic policy. Lessons from this evaluation could contribute to the effectiveness of current and future economic diplomatic policy.



## Evaluation of Dutch ICSR policy

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

International Corporate Social Responsibility (ICSR) is an important spearhead of the aid and trade agenda. A key question in this evaluation is whether the ICSR policy has generated concrete results and which lessons we can draw for future policy. The evaluation focuses on five of the policy's pillars: 1) sector covenants; 2) frameworks for business sector instruments, 3) frameworks for government procurement; 4) activities of embassies; and 5) international cooperation and legislation. The evaluation examines the assumption that these activities contribute to better due diligence by Dutch companies in line with OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises and therefore to reduce risk in their global production chains.

In addition to the question of effectiveness, other evaluation questions are also considered. For example, how the results relate to the efforts (efficiency), whether and to what extent the pillars reinforce each other (coherence) and how relevant and additional the ICSR policy is. In addition to desk research, the study also consists of talks with involved parties in the Netherlands, but also with parties abroad. A total of four country studies are planned – Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia and India – in order to gain insight into local circumstances and the impact of policy on the ground. The results of the evaluation are expected to be delivered in late 2018.



## Evaluation of the Reconstruction Fund 2012-2015 and the Strategic Partnerships Chronic Crises 2014-2016

*This evaluation falls under policy article 4 of the FTDC budget – Peace and security for development.*

The Reconstruction Fund (2012-2015) and the Strategic Partnerships Chronic Crises (SPCC, 2014-2016) are instruments that focus on achieving the objectives of one of the spearheads of Dutch development policy: Security and the Rule of Law. These two instruments have provided support worth more than 150 million euros to 36 NGO projects in 26 countries and regions. Both instruments are precursors of the current Addressing Root Causes (ARC) Fund.

The evaluation focuses on both the funding process of both instruments and the impact of the projects. In addition, the evaluation also examines the tender procedure of the ARC Fund, to identify to what extent the lessons learned with both instruments have already been incorporated. The main question of the evaluation is: *'To what extent have the Reconstruction Fund and SPCC contributed to progress on the objectives of the spearhead Security and the Rule of Law in the regions where the projects have been implemented?'*

To answer this question a desk study was conducted on all existing documentation of the projects, and talks have already taken place with the implementing staff of all organisations and the policy officers involved. Given the varying quality of the project evaluations, however, more in-depth research will be necessary. At the moment, a literature review is being conducted on the impact of comparable specific interventions in comparable countries. In addition, field research is being conducted in regions in countries where relatively many projects have been implemented using both instruments.

The selected regions for field research are:

- South Sudan: Western Bahr el Ghazal
- South Sudan: Central Equatoria
- Ethiopia: Oromia
- Ethiopia: Somali Region
- Burundi: Cibitoke
- Burundi: Bujumbura Rural



# Ongoing research

## Other studies



### Transition and inclusive development in sub-Saharan Africa



Extreme poverty has decreased considerably in the past 25 years. In the early 1990s 1.8 billion people lived in extreme poverty (35% of the world population). More than 20 years later that number is less than 800 million (11%). Half of them live in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite high economic growth of 6-8% on average per year, many countries on the African continent have not managed to significantly reduce extreme poverty. In 2013, almost 400 million Africans, 41% of the population, lived in extreme poverty. That number is higher than it was in the previous 10 or 20 years. Forecasts by the World Bank, among others, reveal that the global community will not achieve its goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030, not in sub-Saharan Africa in any case. The same is true for the goal of decreasing inequality in and between countries. Young people, especially young women, belong to the groups with the lowest incomes and the greatest existential insecurity.

The aim of the IOB study on poverty and inequality in sub-Saharan Africa was to outline the structural background of socio-economic development in sub-Saharan Africa for a wider audience. The report analyses the causes of persistent poverty and identifies a number of promising solutions, primarily for the governments themselves, but also for donors. The study is based on reports by international organisations, academic literature and country evaluations studies of Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda.



## Main findings

The impact of economic growth on the reduction of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa was limited in the past 20 years. The causes include an initial situation of high poverty, incomes far below the poverty line, stark inequality and high population growth (approximately three per cent a year). Another cause is the structure of economic growth. Growth is related in particular to a rise in the export of raw materials and agricultural crops. Agricultural productivity remains low, despite the progress. Mining (oil, gas and minerals) has a strong enclave character with limited spillover effects to the rest of the economy. The share of the manufacturing sector in the economy and employment opportunities remains limited in many countries. The causes are an inadequate economic infrastructure and a poorly educated workforce. The services sector has a dual structure: high-yielding services such as banking and insurances are becoming increasingly important, but generate few jobs. The biggest increase in employment opportunities comes from informal and low-yielding services.



## Lessons

Africa is facing the challenge of finding work for 15-20 million young people who will enter the labour market in the coming years. Demographic pressure, extreme poverty, inequality and a lack of perspective are ingredients that are threatening stability in the region. A multi-sectoral strategy is needed to tackle these problems, which prioritises the following elements:

1. *Increase productivity in agriculture* by means of targeted support to small farmers, among other things by improving access to agricultural inputs and tools, supporting mechanisation and providing demand-oriented training in disadvantaged areas;
2. *Strengthen the infrastructure* in disadvantaged areas through investments in roads, energy supplies, water and sanitation and (other) public services;
3. Stimulate a labour-intensive industry (especially agro-industry) by strengthening the transport infrastructure, reliable energy supplies, access to capital and more effective alignment of education to the labour market;
4. To tackle the problem of youth unemployment, extensive investments are needed in *secondary education and vocational training* to achieve the transition to more productive agricultural, industrial and productive services sectors;
5. Sex education and better access to contraceptives are necessary to slow down population growth. Investments in *basic health care* are cost effective and benefit the poorest groups in particular;
6. Support *cash transfer* programmes: conditional and unconditional income transfers are the most effective instruments in the short term to reduce poverty and inequality.



## Literature review on educating refugee children and work opportunities for young refugees

The Dutch government's declaration from 10 October 2017, entitled 'Confidence in the future', announced that additional resources would be set aside for development cooperation. An important part of these would be earmarked for providing relief to refugees in the region. It mainly concerned refugees from Syria, Somalia and South Sudan, many of whom are younger than 18. Education for children and measures to increase employment opportunities for young people were given special attention.

In order to ensure that the ministry was in a better position to make decisions about where and how to invest these additional resources, IOB decided, in consultation with the involved policy departments, to conduct a brief literature review. This study focuses on two key questions: (i) what are the main problems facing these target groups with regard to education and employment opportunities; and (ii) what do we know about achieved results in these areas and what is effective? The literature review focuses on countries in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa where refugees from the countries mentioned above are being given relief. The study will be completed in February 2018.



# 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 newsletter with each report. These contain the most important findings and lessons and report on the evaluation research. Newsletters usually appear in Dutch.

IOB has further increased its reach and visibility by actively using Twitter. After having passed the mark of 1,000 users last year, the number of followers increased considerably again in 2017 to more than 1,480. Followers 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.



## Anniversary

IOB celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a symposium on 14 December 2017, entitled 'Changing Directions in Foreign Policies. IOB at 40: Learning for Performance'. During the celebration, IOB reflected on the past but also discussed new issues for the future. Several interactive parallel sessions took place, varying from counter-terrorism to the future of the UN system, and from adapting to climate change to aid and trade.

The anniversary celebration was extremely well attended with 300 visitors. IOB managed to put itself on the map both internally and externally. For a full report of the speeches, presentations and parallel sessions, see: [www.iob-evaluatie.nl/lustrumsymposium](http://www.iob-evaluatie.nl/lustrumsymposium)



## Lectures, presentations and conferences

### January 2017

- *Conference 'Unintended effects of international cooperation'*  
Organised and ran one of the sessions

### February 2017

- *Policy review of budget article 2.3*  
Presentation for head of NZAID's evaluation department

### March 2017

- *What prospects for an effective and coherent European Neighbourhood Policy? Looking back to look ahead, Brussels*  
Participation in expert seminar and panel discussion
- *Evaluating arms exports*  
Guest lecture, MA programme in European Public Affairs, Maastricht University

### May 2017

- *Research at Foreign Affairs*  
Guest lecture, Master programme in History, Utrecht University

### June 2017

- *Evaluating military interventions in Afghanistan*  
Presentation for DACH Treffen, Scheveningen
- *The Netherlands.*  
Presentation for Webinar Monitoring and evaluating the role of business in the SDGs, Global Value, EU, Brussels
- *Financing development*  
Presentation and panel discussion at Eurodad International Conference
- *Evaluating Foreign Policy*  
Guest lecture at ISS

## September 2017

- *Development cooperation in conflict-affected states. Lessons from evaluations*  
Presentation and panel discussion, Deval, Bonn.
- *The evaluation annual review*  
Panel discussion, Evaluation Day, The Hague
- *How do you measure the impact of International Corporate Social Responsibility (ICSR) policy?*  
Workshop, Evaluation Day, The Hague
- *Impact of stopping development cooperation*  
Guest lecture, BSc programme in Development Economics, Wageningen University

## November 2017

- *The evaluation system: IOB's experiences*  
Presentation and panel discussion at the Anniversary Workshop about the evaluation system, The Hague
- *Evaluating arms exports*  
Guest lecture, MA programme in International Studies, Leiden University



## International meetings and cooperation

### OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation

The Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) is the forum of evaluation departments of members of the DAC (Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). Increasingly, EvalNet is working with new partners (private 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. promote 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. support and actively participate in initiatives by EvalNet that focus on gaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of multilateral organisations and partnerships;
3. promote an effective and efficient division of tasks regarding evaluation departments within EvalNet, including learning and using each other's evaluations and planning joint evaluations. Since 2017, the director of IOB has acted as one of EvalNet's two vice-chairpersons.

For an overview of the tasks and methodologies of the different evaluation departments, please consult EvalNet's website: [www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation)

EvalNet also publishes – by theme, for example – the evaluations of various evaluation boards of OECD/DAC members. See the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre DeRec: [www.oecd.org/derec/?hf=5&b=0&s=score](http://www.oecd.org/derec/?hf=5&b=0&s=score)

## 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 2017, the annual meeting took place in Berlin, where Deval acted as host. The issues that were discussed included the 'big five' evaluation criteria of the OECD/DAC, also in the context of the SDGs, strengthening evaluation capacity, real-time evaluation, evaluating sustainability, and evaluations of the refugee policy and relief efforts in the region.

## 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 hosted this meeting in June. The evaluation themes on the agenda at this meeting included humanitarian aid, an integrated approach to security, a policy for sustainable development and employment opportunity projects.



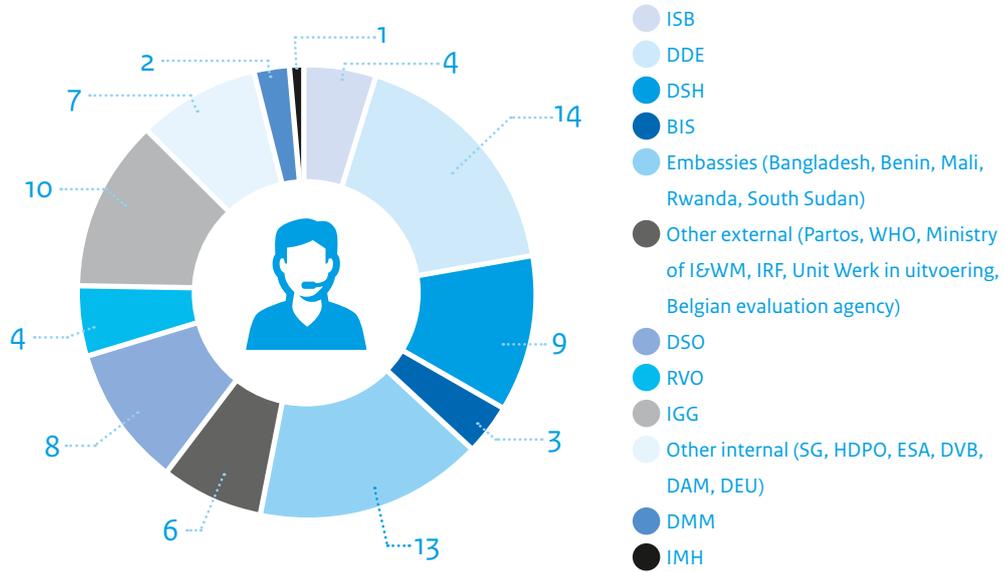
## IOB's help desk

In 2017, IOB's help desk again provided advice to departments and missions about designing and implementing evaluations that they organise themselves (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 evaluation. If requested, IOB also provides advice about evaluation policy and research that is formulated or conducted outside the ministry.

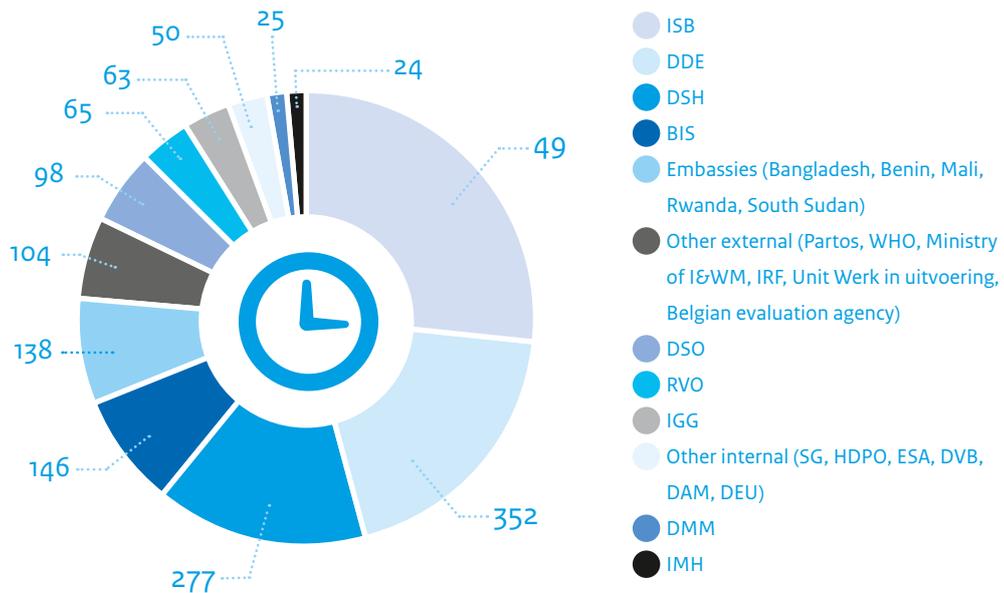
In 2017, IOB's help desk strengthened the ministry's evaluation function in many different ways. The number of requests for advice, and hence the time spent on such requests, decreased slightly compared to 2016: from 95 requests for assistance to 81 and from almost 2,000 hours of advice to more than 1,800.

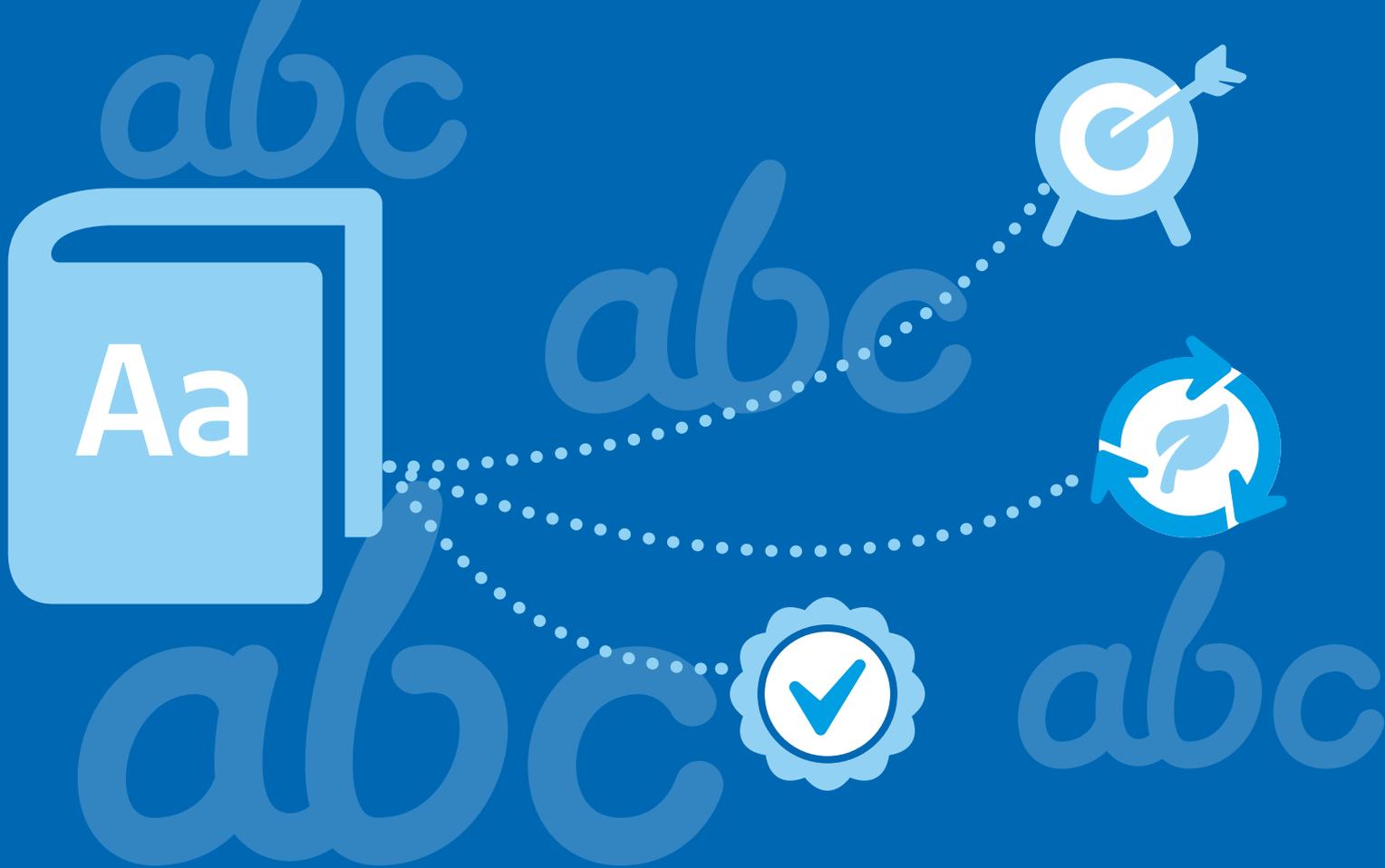
The number of requests from Dutch embassies has increased: from 10 in 2016 to 13 in 2017. These requests were for assistance in designing and outsourcing evaluation studies, for example. Almost a quarter of the man hours spent on these requests went to supporting the Inspection, Risk Analysis and Advisory Unit's (ISB) missions in Bangladesh, Kenya and the Palestinian Territories. More than 40% of the time was spent on requests from the boards of Sustainable Economic Development, Stability and Humanitarian Aid and Inclusive Green Growth. IOB also provided advice outside the ministry in areas that are also important for the Netherlands. For example, IOB participated in peer reviews of the evaluation departments of the World Health Organization and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance. Other partners IOB worked with include Partos and the Belgian evaluation department. IOB also participated in the evaluation of the German evaluation institute Deval.

**Number of requests for advice in 2017**



**Time spent by IOB on requester in hrs**





# Definitions

IOB uses evaluation criteria that largely coincide with the criteria of the *Development Assistance Committee* of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (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*. These, in turn, are derived from the logical model or the result chains based on it, 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 contributes 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 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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Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB)  
Postbox 20061 | 2500 EB The Hague

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