



Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

IOB Terms of Reference

Periodic Review: Social Development (2018-2024)

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*Periodic Review of the development
cooperation expenditure on Social
Development in 2018-2024*

December 2024

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Acronyms

| | |
|---------|---|
| BEMO | Activity Appraisal Document |
| BHOS | Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| D&D | Dialogue and Dissent |
| DSO | Department for Social Development |
| ECW | Education Cannot Wait |
| FEZ | Department for Financial Economic Affairs |
| FLOW | Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women |
| GPE | Global Partnership for Education |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MIBZ | Management information system of the ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| NAP1325 | National Action Plan 1325 |
| NFP | Netherlands Fellowship Programmes |
| NICHE | Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education |
| ICNL | International Centre for Not-For-Profit Law |
| IRF | Inspectorate of the Budget |
| IOB | Policy and Operations Evaluation Department |
| LfS | Leading from the South |
| LGBTIQ+ | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons plus other people whose identities are not heterosexual and cisgender |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OKP | Orange Knowledge Programme |
| PDP | Product Development Partnership |
| PoV | Power of Voices |
| PoW | Power of Women |
| PR | Periodic review |
| RPE | Regulations for periodic evaluations |
| SCS | Strengthening Civil Society |
| SEA | Strategic Evaluation Agenda |
| SGBV | Sexual and gender-based violence |
| SRHR | Sexual and reproductive health and rights |
| STIs | Sexually transmitted infections |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| TVET | Technical and vocational education and training |
| UNFPA | UN Population Fund |
| WPS | Women, Peace and Security |

1 Introduction

The national budget of the Netherlands is divided into budget articles, which each reflect a policy theme.¹ The 'Regeling Periodiek Evaluatieonderzoek'² prescribes that every four to seven years, a periodic review is published for each budget article. Periodic reviews bring together the findings of existing evaluations on the policy theme during this period.

This periodic review focusses on article 3 ('social development') of the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.³ The aim of the periodic review is to provide insight in the (conditions for) the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy instruments and expenditure under article 3, for the period 2018 to 2024. These insights can help the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a) account to parliament for the expenditure on social development; and b) inform the design and implementation of future policies.

The periodic review will be carried out by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB); the independent evaluation service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. IOB conducts evaluations on the effectiveness and efficiency of Dutch foreign policy.

This terms of reference document sets out the ministry's instruments and expenditure on social development, as well as the periodic review's scope, research questions, methodology and organizational aspects.

2 Aims, instruments and expenditure on Social Development

2.1 Social Development: Aims and expenditure

The general aims of Dutch policy under budget article 3, social development, are "human development and the promotion of social equality and inclusive development".⁴ The Department for Social Development (in Dutch: DSO⁵) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the policy. The department invests in "voices and choices", particularly for young people, women and marginalized groups, in order to build inclusive societies in which healthy people have the opportunity and

¹ See for more information, 'Public Finance in the Netherlands', Ministry of Finance [public-finance.pdf \(rijksbegroting.nl\)](#)

² 'Regulations for Periodic Evaluation Research', accessible through [wetten.nl - Regeling - Regeling periodiek evaluatieonderzoek 2022 - BWBR0046970 \(overheid.nl\)](#) (in Dutch)

³ On the 2nd of July 2024 a new government took office, whose first budget will be effective from 2025. In this, the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation was renamed into the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Aid.

⁴ In Dutch: "Menselijke ontplooiing en het bevorderen van sociale gelijkheid en inclusieve ontwikkeling". Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2024, Memorie van Toelichting, 36 410 XVII, nr. 2, p. 52.

⁵ Directie Sociale Ontwikkeling

skills to shape their future.⁶ These overarching policy aims unite the four sub-articles and corresponding policy themes under article 3, which are:

3.1 Global health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

3.2 Women’s rights and gender equality

3.3 Civil Society

3.4 Education

Below is an overview of the total expenditure on the four sub-themes of article 3 between 2018 and 2024.⁷ As the table shows, most of the expenditure is allocated to the sub-theme of Global health and SRHR, followed by Civil Society. Considerably less expenditure is allocated to the themes of Education and Women's rights and gender equality, although some of the activities that fall under Civil Society and Global health and SRHR are also intended to contribute to the aims on Women’s rights and gender equality.

Table 1: Expenditure Article 3 budget Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation 2018-2024 (x € 1.000)⁸

| | Expenditure 2018 | Expenditure 2019 | Expenditure 2020 | Expenditure 2021 | Expenditure 2022 | Expenditure 2023 | Budget 2024 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Obligations | 464 862 | 675 971 | 1 781 617 | 687 598 | 782 314 | 527 161 | 309 676 |
| Program expenditure total | 814 757 | 780 599 | 747 424 | 825 433 | 901 132 | 830 675 | 802 998 |
| 3.1 Global health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights | 445 026 | 438 689 | 423 151 | 533 472 | 579 156 | 515 235 | 508 537 |
| 3.2 Women's rights and gender equality | 53 344 | 49 790 | 49 239 | 52 077 | 51 675 | 51 930 | 47 609 |
| 3.3 Civil Society | 228 809 | 216 306 | 195 272 | 165 842 | 200 486 | 206 413 | 182 859 |
| 3.4 Education | 87 578 | 75 814 | 79 762 | 74 042 | 69 815 | 57 097 | 63 993 |

⁶ DSO lens, 2021 (internal document), p. 1; Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, 36 200 XVII, nr. 2, p. 52.

⁷ This excludes the expenditure on Education Cannot Wait and part of the expenditure on Nexus Skills and Jobs, which are mentioned in the next sections. These instruments were (partly) funded through other articles of the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. The Dutch contributions to Education Cannot Wait fell under budget article 4 (Peace, Security and Sustainable Development). The expenditure on Nexus Skills and Jobs fell partly under article 3 and partly under article 1 (Economic Development, Trade and Investments). Both instruments will be covered in the periodic review, as they were both intended to contribute to the aims of the education sub-theme of the social development policy, and considered by DSO as part of this policy.

⁸ Figures until 2023 from annual report: figures 2017-2018 from [Jaarverslag en Slotwet Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2020 \(overheid.nl\)](https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/buitenlandse-handel-en-ontwikkelingssamenwerking/publicaties/rapporten/2018/07/11/jaarverslag-en-slotwet-buitenlandse-handel-en-ontwikkelingssamenwerking-2018), figures 2019-2023 from [Jaarverslag en Slotwet voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2023 \(eerstekamer.nl\)](https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/buitenlandse-handel-en-ontwikkelingssamenwerking/publicaties/rapporten/2023/07/11/jaarverslag-en-slotwet-voor-buitenlandse-handel-en-ontwikkelingssamenwerking-2023). Figures for 2024 are not expenditure, but budgeted expenditure, from [Visuals | Ministerie van Financiën - Rijksoverheid \(rijksfinancien.nl\)](https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/buitenlandse-handel-en-ontwikkelingssamenwerking/publicaties/rapporten/2024/07/11/visuels-ministerie-van-financien-rijksoverheid-rijksfinancien.nl).

The next sections give an overview of the aims, key instruments and expenditure on each of the four themes.

2.2 Global Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Aims

The budget describes the overall aim of the policy under article 3.1 as to “contribute to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all and to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.” A more detailed description of the aims of the policy is given in the SRHR policy framework’s Theory of Change:⁹ to promote the universal fulfilment of SRHR, by achieving 1) greater freedom of choice for young people about their sexuality; 2) an increased demand and provision of acceptable and affordable reproductive health commodities (including medicines) for women, young people, and key populations; 3) available, good quality reproductive and sexual healthcare and services for all, including for women and men in crisis or in humanitarian situations; and 4) retained and strengthened sexual and reproductive rights, and ensured compliance with these rights. In addition, in 2023, the Netherlands adopted the Dutch Global Health Strategy. This strategy aims to improve public health around the world, with a focus on improved access to primary healthcare and SRHR.¹⁰

Some of the assumptions behind the policy are that supporting communities and networks enables them to effectively advocate for, amongst others, better service delivery; and that if better services are provided, maternal mortality will decline, as will the number of unwanted pregnancies, (unsafe) abortions and STIs (sexually transmitted infections).¹¹

Key instruments¹²

As part of its policy under article 3.1, the Netherlands finances a number of different policy instruments. Below follows an overview of those that received most funding between 2018 and 2024.

Firstly, the Netherlands contributes to a number of (inter-)national organisations, including the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis; and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Other important instruments are two consecutive SRHR Partnership Funds (2016-2020 and 2021-2025).¹³ As part of the SRHR Partnership Funds, the government twice formed strategic partnerships with seven consortia of civil society organisations in the Netherlands and abroad. These partnerships aim to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations and their networks for lobby and advocacy in the area of SRHR, and, to a small extent, service delivery (see also section 2.4 below).

⁹ DSO, Theory of Change Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, 2018, available via [this link](#).

¹⁰ Government of the Netherlands, Dutch Global Health Strategy 2023-2030, <https://www.government.nl/documents/publications/2023/03/29/dutch-global-health-strategy>

¹¹ Description of the policy framework’s Theory of Change, available via [this link](#).

¹² Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2024, 36 410 XVII, nr. 1, p. 56-57

¹³ Description of the policy framework’s Theory of Change, available via [this link](#).

Moreover, the Netherlands contributes to a number of Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) via the PDP III (2015-2021) and PDP IV (2022-2027) Funds.

Lastly, under article 3.1 there is a delegated embassy budget, through which Dutch embassies directly fund interventions, in particular in SRHR focus countries.¹⁴ This includes amongst others two SRHR and HIV/AIDS regional programmes, one in the Great Lakes region and one in Southern Africa. It also includes embassy programmes with for instance NGOs or national offices of multilateral organisations.

In addition to these financial instruments, the Netherlands undertakes diplomatic activities intended to contribute to the aims on global health and SRHR. For instance, the Netherlands lobbied for stronger wording on promoting access to SRHR in the outcome documents of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development.¹⁵

Table 2 below shows the expenditure on the key policy instruments on global health and SRHR between 2018 and 2023 (the figures for 2024 are not yet available). As can be seen, the budget under article 3.1 was primarily spent on multilateral and international organisations (63%) and NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) (29%), and to a smaller extent on PDPs and the private sector (5%).

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | Total |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Multilateral and international organisations | 265 | 262 | 235 | 363 | 400 | 310 | <i>tbd</i> | 1,836 |
| UNFPA | 72 | 71 | 64 | 85 | 89 | 61 | | 442 |
| Gavi and IFFIm | 53 | 52 | 44 | 103 | 67 | 40 | | 359 |
| Global Fund | 56 | 64 | 42 | 69 | 62 | 60 | | 353 |
| GFF | 19 | 10 | 26 | 36 | 63 | 40 | | 194 |
| WHO | 23 | 22 | 18 | 32 | 51 | 33 | | 179 |
| UNAIDS | 20 | 10 | 31 | 20 | 23 | 27 | | 131 |
| <i>Other</i> ¹⁷ | 22 | 33 | 10 | 18 | 45 | 49 | | 178 |
| NGOs and CSOs | 119 | 125 | 138 | 127 | 155 | 186 | <i>tbd</i> | 850 |
| SRHR partnerships (2016-2020) | 43 | 52 | 21 | 0 | 2 | 0 | | 118 |
| SRHR partnerships (2021-2025) | 0 | 0 | 40 | 31 | 79 | 93 | | 244 |
| <i>Other</i> ¹⁸ | 76 | 73 | 77 | 96 | 74 | 93 | | 488 |
| PDP and private sector | 33 | 29 | 31 | 33 | 12 | 11 | <i>tbd</i> | 149 |
| PDP III fund (2015-2021) | 21 | 14 | 9 | 21 | 1 | 0 | | 66 |
| PDP IV fund (2022-2027) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 8 | | 17 |

¹⁴ The SRHR focus countries varied over the years, but have included included Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda and Yemen. See IOB, [Consistent Efforts, Persisting Challenges. Evaluation of Dutch contribution to sexual and reproductive health and rights \(2012-2022\)](#), p. 21.

¹⁵ IOB, [Consistent Efforts, Persisting Challenges. Evaluation of Dutch contribution to sexual and reproductive health and rights \(2012-2022\)](#), chapter 4.

¹⁶ MFA Financial Administration system (MIBZ).

¹⁷ This residual category includes funding for UNICEF as well as delegated funding for embassies in the MENA region and in sub-Saharan Africa.

¹⁸ This large residual category encompasses various expenses by embassies, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. It also includes funding to INGOs such as Marie Stopes International, IPAS and the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Health Insurance Fund ¹⁹ | 10 | 10 | 18 | 10 | 0 | 0 | | 48 |
| <i>Other</i> | 2 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | | 18 |
| Other | 28 | 23 | 18 | 10 | 12 | 9 | <i>tbd</i> | 100 |
| Total | 445 | 439 | 423 | 533 | 579 | 515 | <i>tbd</i> | 2,935 |

2.3 Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Aims

The general aim of the policy under article 3.2 is to promote women's rights and gender equality.²⁰ More specific aims are: 1) increased participation of women in (political) decision making and female leadership; 2) economic empowerment and an improved economic climate for women; 3) prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls; and 4) a strengthened role of women in conflict prevention and peace processes, and protection in conflict situations. The policy assumes that these goals are interdependent and that women's organisations and civil society organisations are crucial for achieving them.²¹

Key instruments

To achieve the policy aims, the Netherlands supports gender-specific programmes via three bilateral instruments:²²

- The Leading from the South (Lfs) I (2017-2020) and II (2021-2025) programmes. These directly support women-led organisations in the global south via four southern-based funds, and aim to strengthen southern ownership.²³ Lfs grants support women's rights work across these priority areas: climate change and environmental justice; leadership, voice-agency and women's political participation; violence against women; women's economic justice.²⁴
- The Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women II (FLOW 2) programme (2016-2020) and the subsequent Power of Women programme (2021-2025). These programmes consist of strategic partnerships aiming to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls; strengthen women's leadership and women's participation in (political) decision-making; and/or improving women's economic empowerment and the economic climate for women.²⁵
- The third Dutch National Action Plan 1325 (2016-2020) and the subsequent Women, Peace and Security (WPS) instrument (2021-2025). Both include

¹⁹ Since 2022, the Health Insurance Fund is financed through article 1 of the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation budget (Economic Development, Trade and Investments). Hence, expenditures from 2022 onwards are not included in this expenditure table.

²⁰ Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, 36 200 XVII, nr. 2, p. 90.

²¹ ToC Women's rights and Gender Equality, [pdf \(overheid.nl\)](#)

²² Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2024, 36 410 XVII, nr. 1, p. 57; ToC Women's rights and Gender Equality, [pdf \(overheid.nl\)](#)

²³ Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2024, 36 410 XVII, nr. 1, p. 57

²⁴ Leading from the South 'What we Fund', n.d.

²⁵ 'Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society: Power of Women', p. 10, <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documenten/policy-notes/2019/11/28/policy-framework-strengthening-civil-society/Grant+Instrument+Power+of+Women+FINAL+%28update%29.pdf>

strategic partnerships aiming to protect women and girls in (post-)conflict environments; address harmful gender norms which are obstacles to sustainable peace; and/or to create equal leverage in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, relief and recovery.²⁶

The ministry also provides co-funding to international organisations under article 3.2, most notably UN Women. This is the UN entity tasked to support inter-governmental bodies on the formulation of policies, standards and norms on gender-equality; help Member States implement these; and hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments.²⁷

In addition, the ministry undertakes diplomatic activities, with the director of DSO also functioning as Ambassador for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality. Moreover, the Task Force Women’s Rights and Gender Equality within DSO supports activities towards gender mainstreaming in all the ministries’ policy areas.

Table 3 below shows the expenditure on women’s rights and gender equality instruments between 2018 and 2023. As can be seen, a majority of the funding went to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) programmes²⁸ (74%) and considerably less to multilateral organisations (20%).

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Programmes | 30 | 33 | 35 | 38 | 38 | 35 | <i>tbd</i> | 209 |
| Leading from the South I (2016-2020) | 12 | 10 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 | | 31 |
| Leading from the South II (2021-2025) | 0 | 0 | 12 | 4 | 16 | 17 | | 50 |
| FLOW II (2016-2020) | 13 | 19 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 0 | | 48 |
| Power of Women (2021-2025) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 12 | 14 | | 45 |
| NAP 1325 (2016-2020) | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | | 13 |
| WPS instrument (2021-2025) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 10 | 4 | | 22 |
| Multilateral and international organisations | 12 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 9 | <i>tbd</i> | 61 |
| UN Women | 9 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 9 | | 54 |
| <i>Other</i> | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 7 |
| Other | 11 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 8 | <i>tbd</i> | 38 |
| Total | 53 | 50 | 49 | 52 | 52 | 52 | <i>tbd</i> | 308 |

²⁶ ‘Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society: Women, Peace and Security’, p. 10, <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documenten/policy-notes/2019/11/28/policy-framework-strengthening-civil-society/Grant+Instrument+Women+Peace+Security+FINAL.pdf>

²⁷ UN Women, [UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth](#)

²⁸ With ‘MFA programmes’ we mean programmes that are fully funded by the Dutch MFA, as opposed to contributions by the MFA to international funds, or co-funding to multilateral organisations.

²⁹ MFA Financial Administration system (MIBZ).

2.4 Civil Society

Aims

The aim of the policy under article 3.3, Civil Society, is to strengthen the lobby and advocacy capacity of CSOs and to promote and protect their political and civic space in low and middle income countries.³⁰ This, in turn, is expected to contribute to a reduction in poverty, inequality and exclusion. Some of the assumptions behind the policy are that poverty, inequality and exclusion are caused by power asymmetries; and that strengthening CSO's capacity and space for lobby and advocacy will thus indirectly contribute to countering these problems. Other assumptions include that CSOs need to be locally rooted and that local ownership is crucial for the success of the policy.³¹

Key instruments

The period under review saw two consecutive policy frameworks focussed on supporting lobby and advocacy. The first framework was called 'Dialogue and Dissent' and was in place from 2016 to 2020.³² The second, and current, framework is called 'Strengthening Civil Society' (SCS) which is in place for the period 2021-2025.³³ Both frameworks offered grants to CSOs through 'strategic partnerships'³⁴ between the ministry of Foreign Affairs and (consortia of) CSOs. These strategic partnerships involve multiple interventions directed at strengthening capacity and supporting lobbying and advocacy at grassroots, country and wider levels. Moreover, the interventions that are part of a strategic partnership usually cover a large geographic area.³⁵

As part of the Dialogue and Dissent framework, the government confirmed 25 strategic partnerships.³⁶ This excluded the strategic partnerships for SRHR (see section 2.2 above), which were not part of the framework.³⁷ The Dialogue and Dissent partnerships ranged widely in thematic focus, including for instance climate, child labour, water, free press and HIV/AIDS. In addition to the partnerships, the Dialogue

³⁰ Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2024, 36 410 XVII, nr. 1, p. 52, 58, 89.

³¹ These, and more assumptions behind the policy are set out in a Theory of Change, available at [Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society | Policy note | Government.nl](#), annex 5.

³² See [Policy framework: "Dialogue and Dissent" | Regulation | Government.nl](#)

³³ See [Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society | Policy note | Government.nl](#).

³⁴ A strategic partnership is intended to be more far-reaching than the traditional relationship between grant provider and grant recipient. The selected organisations partner with the Minister in order to achieve a jointly defined strategic goal. Each partner in the partnership has its own networks, expertise and capacities. The idea is that the change of success is boosted by joint learning and combining each other's qualities— i.e. the Ministry's diplomatic experience, contacts and networks with Civil Society Organisations' specific expertise, contacts and networks. (Dialogue and Dissent Policy Framework, p. 5, [Policy framework: "Dialogue and Dissent" | Regulation | Government.nl](#))

³⁵ Global development network, The effectiveness of support to lobby and advocacy: synthesis of evidence from Dutch MFA programme support, p. 8 ([The effectiveness of support to lobby and advocacy — A review of evaluation methodologies | Report | Policy and Operations Evaluation Department \(IOB\) \(iob-evaluatie.nl\)](#)).

³⁶ Letter to Parliament, 'Selectie strategische partnerschappen "Samenspraak en Tegenspraak"' (Selection strategic partnerships "Dialogue and Dissent"), 30 January 2015, parliamentary document, 33625-150.

³⁷ However, there were also Dialogue and Dissent partnerships that did focus on SRHR themes, even though they were part of the Dialogue and Dissent partnership framework instead of the SRHR partnership framework.

and Dissent framework included a fund through which Dutch embassies could directly support local CSOs: the Accountability Fund.³⁸

Alongside the Dialogue and Dissent Framework, DSO started the grant programme 'Voice' in 2016, which aimed to support marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities; LGBTIQ+ people; women facing exploitation; vulnerable youth and elderly; and ethnic minorities.³⁹

From 2021, the Strengthening Civil Society framework brought together different instruments that were funded through budgetary articles 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. The framework includes seven programmes. Four of these are grant instruments for, in total, 42 strategic partnerships:⁴⁰

- Power of Voices (POV): 22 strategic partnerships aiming to strengthen civil society organisations' capacity for lobby and advocacy, focused on one of seven⁴¹ themes.
- Power of Women: six strategic partnerships related to the theme of Women's Rights and Gender Equality (see section 2.3 above).⁴²
- Women, Peace and Security: seven strategic partnerships related to the theme of Women's Rights and Gender Equality (see section 2.3 above).⁴³
- SRHR Partnership Fund: seven strategic partnerships on the theme of SRHR (see section 2.2 above).⁴⁴

The other Strengthening Civil Society programmes are:

- Civic Space Fund: A fund that could be used by Dutch embassies to offer direct support to local Civil Society Organisations. The successor of the Accountability Fund mentioned above.
- Leading from the South (see section 2.3).

In addition to the instruments of the SCS Framework, the ministry funds a small number of other organisations as part of its policy on civil society, including CIVICUS and the International Centre for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL).

Table 4 below gives an overview of the expenditure on the Civil Society instruments, showing that almost all of the expenditure was on MFA programmes within the Dialogue & Dissent and Strengthening Civil Society frameworks (91%).

³⁸ [Activity Appraisal Document Accountability Fund](#), June 2018.

³⁹ SCIO, VOICE programme final evaluation report, 2023, p. 11 ([Voice Final Evaluation Report - Voice.Global](#)).

⁴⁰ [Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society | Policy note | Government.nl](#); Letter to parliament 14 July 2021, annex: definitive selection SCS partners. Parliamentary document 34952-140.

⁴¹ 1. Climate mitigation and adaptation 2. Trade and making value chains more sustainable 3. Food security, sustainable water management and/or WASH (including water, sanitation and hygiene) 4. Women's' rights and gender equality 5. Freedom of speech or Freedom of Religion and Belief 6. Equal rights LGBTI; 7. Security and Rule of Law ([Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society | Policy note | Government.nl](#)), grant instrument: Power of Voices Partnerships, p. 10).

⁴² ' Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society, grant instrument: Power of Women', p. 10 ([Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society | Policy note | Government.nl](#)).

⁴³ ' Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society, grant instrument: Power of Women', p. 10 ([Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society | Policy note | Government.nl](#)).

⁴⁴ Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society, grant instrument: SRHR Partnership Fund, p. 10 ([Policy Framework Strengthening Civil Society | Policy note | Government.nl](#)).

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | Total |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Dialogue & Dissent (2016-2020) (total) | 206 | 195 | 103 | 5 | 1 | 0 | <i>tbd</i> | 510 |
| Partnerships | 199 | 186 | 98 | 5 | 1 | 0 | | 489 |
| Accountability Fund | 7 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 21 |
| Strengthening Civil Society (2021-2025) (total) | 0 | 0 | 73 | 143 | 184 | 190 | <i>tbd</i> | 590 |
| Power of Voices partnerships | 0 | 0 | 73 | 135 | 174 | 179 | | 561 |
| Civic Space Fund | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 10 | 11 | | 29 |
| Voice | 14 | 10 | 10 | 14 | 10 | 10 | | 68 |
| Other | 9 | 11 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 6 | <i>tbd</i> | 45 |
| Total | 229 | 216 | 195 | 166 | 200 | 206 | <i>tbd</i> | 1,213 |

2.5 Education

Aims

Unlike some of the aforementioned sub-themes, the policy on education between 2018 and 2024 was not captured in a single publicly available policy framework or key strategy document. In the budget, the aims of the policy are described as:

- strengthening education and thereby contributing to increasing opportunities and perspectives for young people;
- an increase in the number of well-trained professionals, strengthening vocational and higher education and promoting policy-relevant research⁴⁶

In an earlier internal DSO document,⁴⁷ the aims of the policy were also described as:

1. General education: Improving equitable access to primary and secondary education, with special attention to the most marginalized groups.
2. Learning outcomes: Improving education quality to ensure that learning outcomes are improved in mathematics and reading as well as in a wide range of skills that lead to empowerment and improved life prospects.
3. Education in conflict-affected countries: Improving access to good quality education and training opportunities among children and youth in conflict-affected countries.
4. Skills development for youth: Investing in skills development for youth for empowerment and increased opportunities for economic participation, including wage employment and self-employment.
5. Gender equality and inclusion for all: Supporting inclusive education policies to improve educational equity, with particular attention to gender equality.
6. Higher Education: Improving individual and institutional knowledge and capacity development in higher education, and senior vocational and technical education.

⁴⁵ MFA Financial Administration system (MIBZ).

⁴⁶ [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, p. 54.

⁴⁷ 'The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Theory of Change, Education and International Development', p. 4, year of completion unknown, but likely 2019 or 2020.

Key instruments

MFA programmes⁴⁸ on education

To contribute to the above aims, DSO had three education programmes in the period 2018-2024, in particular on higher education/TVET (technical and vocational education and training) and on the connection between education and employment. These are:

- Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP): A programme aimed at capacity strengthening of higher education and TVET organisations and systems, as well as developing individual and organisational knowledge in certain priority sectors.⁴⁹ OKP involves a) Institutional Collaboration Projects to support capacity development of educational institutions; b) Group Training for professionals working in policy priority sectors; and c) Individual Scholarships for professionals to study in the Netherlands.⁵⁰ The programme is managed by Nuffic.
- Nexus Skills and Jobs: A fund for activities that promote links between education and employment. The available budget is allocated through Dutch embassies in nine countries in focus regions.⁵¹ This programme is partly funded through under article 3 of the budget (Social Development) and partly through article 1 (Economic Development, Trade and Investments).

Co-funding to global funds

In addition to the above programmes, the Netherlands provided co-funding to the following global funds and partnerships during 2018-2024:

- Global Partnership for Education (GPE): The largest global fund and partnership for education, hosted by the World Bank. It supports national governments in around 90 lower-income countries in reforming primary and secondary education.⁵²
- Generation Unlimited: A public-private (multi-stakeholder) youth partnership with the aim of strengthening young people's skills and employment opportunities.⁵³ Generation Unlimited works at country level; the Dutch funding is partly earmarked for Niger and Kenya (2020-2025). It focuses on increasing opportunities for vulnerable young people, especially young women, with an emphasis on digitisation.⁵⁴
- Education Cannot Wait (ECW): A global fund that focuses on education in emergency situations, such as conflict, natural disasters and epidemics. The

⁴⁸ With 'MFA programmes' we mean programmes that are fully funded by the Dutch MFA, as opposed to contributions by the MFA to international funds, or co-funding to multilateral organisations.

⁴⁹ Nuffic, Orange Knowledge Programme Theory of Change ([theory-of-change-orange-knowledge-programme.pdf \(nuffic.nl\)](#))

⁵⁰ Ecorys, Mid-term Review Orange Knowledge Programme, p. 8-9.

⁵¹ [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, p. 44.

⁵² [Global Partnership for Education](#)

⁵³ [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, p. 60; [What We Do | Generation Unlimited](#)

⁵⁴ [Education - Rijksportaal \(overheid-i.nl\); BEMO - GenUnl- MINBUZA-2020.383800 4000003838_EN publieksbemo.PDF \(buzaservices.nl\);](#)

Fund is hosted by UNICEF.⁵⁵ The Dutch contributions to Education Cannot Wait fall under budget article 4 (Peace, Security and Sustainable Development) instead of article 3 (Social Development).

In addition to these financial instruments, another initiative that receives funding under article 3.4 is the ‘Youth at Heart’ strategy. With this initiative the Netherlands aims at “putting youth at the heart of its development policies”, amongst others by the launch of a Youth Advisory Committee.⁵⁶

Table 5 below sets out the main expenditure on the instruments that are financed under article 3.4, Education, as well as instruments that form part of the education policy but are financed through another budget article. It shows that most funding under article 3.4 was allocated towards MFA programmes OKP and its predecessors Niche and NFP (59%) as well as the global fund GPE (35%).

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Education funds and programmes financed under art. 3.4 | 87 | 72 | 77 | 72 | 68 | 53 | <i>tbd</i> | 428 |
| Orange Knowledge Programme (2018-2024) | 19 | 29 | 33 | 47 | 29 | 39 | | 196 |
| Global Partnership for Education | 50 | 10 | 40 | 10 | 33 | 12 | | 155 |
| NICHE (2002-2017) and NFP (2009-2017) ⁵⁸ | 18 | 32 | 1 | 13 | 3 | 0 | | 68 |
| Generation Unlimited | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | 8 |
| Other⁵⁹ | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | <i>tbd</i> | 17 |
| Total art. 3.4 | 88 | 76 | 80 | 74 | 70 | 57 | <i>tbd</i> | 444 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Nexus Skills & Jobs (2019-2024) | 0 | 1 | 6 | 14 | 21 | 18 | | 60 |
| Education Cannot Wait | 6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | | 15 |
| Total education not art. 3.4 | 6 | 4 | 9 | 16 | 22 | 18 | <i>tbd</i> | 75 |

3 Scope of the Periodic Review

3.1 Thematic scope

The periodic review will consider all four sub-themes of the SEA theme Social Development. For the most part, this corresponds to expenditure under article 3 of the budget for foreign trade and developmental cooperation. However, in two instances — Education Cannot Wait and Nexus Skills and Jobs — instruments will be

⁵⁵ www.educationcannotwait.org/about-us/who-we-are

⁵⁶ See [Youth at Heart | Youthatheart](#).

⁵⁷ MFA Financial Administration system (MIBZ).

⁵⁸ NICHE and NFP were the predecessors of OKP. They ended in 2017 and as such will not be incorporated in the periodic review. However, some payments were still made after 2017.

⁵⁹ Activities such as INCLUDE (the knowledge platform on inclusive development policies), the Youth at Heart Forum and Youth Advisory Committee fall within this category.

incorporated in the periodic review that are partly or fully funded through another budget article (see above). Both instruments are intended to contribute to the Social Development policy aims, responsibility for the instruments lies at least partly with DSO, and DSO considers these instruments part of its Social Development policies.

3.2 Types of instruments

The periodic review will specifically focus on the programmes, funds and partnerships that are financed as part of the policy theme social development. As described above, DSO also undertakes additional activities intended to contribute to the aims on social development, in particular diplomatic activities, activities towards gender mainstreaming within the ministry, and the Youth at Heart strategy.

These activities will not be incorporated in the synthesis (research questions 3 and 4), for a number of reasons. First, the expenditure on these activities is limited compared to the expenditure on other policy instruments, as it mainly consists of personnel and travel costs. Second, few evaluations are available of these efforts. In terms of diplomatic activities, only the IOB evaluation of the SRHR policy addresses diplomatic efforts at some length.⁶⁰ This means that it will not be possible to provide overarching lessons on this instrument, which is one of the purposes of periodic reviews.

The same applies to gender mainstreaming and the Youth at Heart strategy. These initiatives have received limited funding, compared with the total expenditure on social development. Moreover, there is only one evaluation available on these themes, on gender mainstreaming,⁶¹ so it won't be possible to provide any overarching lessons. Furthermore, while gender mainstreaming is supported by the Task Force Women's Rights & Gender Equality within DSO, it is a ministry-wide policy. This policy was further built upon in the ministry's 'Feminist Foreign Policy', launched in 2022, which has been identified as a separate SEA theme, to be covered in a separate periodic review.

3.3 Evaluation period

The periodic review will focus on the instruments and expenditure that were part of the policy on social development from 2018 to 2024. The RPE prescribes that a periodic review is carried out every four to seven years. The completion of a previous periodic review is the starting point for the next one.⁶² However, budget article 3 on social development has not, in its entirety, been the subject of a previous periodic review. In the past, periodic reviews of some of the sub-articles of article 3 were published. The most recent ones are from 2013 (3.1 SRHR), 2015 (3.2 women's rights and gender equality), 2017 (3.3 civil society) and 2011 (3.4 education). Because there is not one logical starting point for all the sub-articles, this current periodic review will cover the maximum period of 7 years, i.e. from 2018 to 2024.

⁶⁰ IOB, [Consistent Efforts, Persisting Challenges. Evaluation of Dutch contribution to sexual and reproductive health and rights \(2012-2022\)](#), chapter 4.

⁶¹ See IOB, [Gender Mainstreaming in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Beyond 'add women and stir'?](#)

⁶² [Regeling periodiek evaluatieonderzoek 2022](#) (Regulations for Periodic Evaluations), article 2.1 en 5.3.

4 Research questions

The main research question is:

What insights exist regarding the (conditions for) effectiveness and efficiency of the Netherlands' development cooperation policy instruments in the field of social development between 2018 and 2024, and what lessons can be learned for future policy?

The main question will be addressed through the following sub-questions, which are based on the requirements set out in article 4.5 of the Regulations for Periodic Evaluation Research 2022.⁶³

1. Policy description: What did the policy on social development between 2018 and 2024 look like and, if applicable, how did it develop between 2018 and 2024? Which instruments were used to implement the policy?
2. Financial overview: What was the expenditure on the policy theme social development between 2018 and 2024?
3. Based on existing evaluations, what conclusions can be drawn about the degree of effectiveness and efficiency of the policy instruments and expenditure on social development and about the extent to which the conditions for effectiveness and efficiency are met?

When answering this question, we will use the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria:⁶⁴

- “effectiveness” refers to the extent to which policy instruments achieved their goals at output⁶⁵ and outcome⁶⁶ level. We will also present any conclusions that can be drawn from existing evaluations on sustainability⁶⁷ and impact,⁶⁸ insofar as available.⁶⁹

⁶³ [Regeling periodiek evaluatieonderzoek 2022](#). Article 4.5a (a description of the knowledge gaps that were identified at the start of the SEA timeframe for the policy theme) will not be included because in 2018, the start for this periodic review, the SEA system did not yet exist and no knowledge gaps were identified for the theme of Social Development as a whole.

⁶⁴ OECD, [Evaluation Criteria](#)

⁶⁵ The products, capital goods and services which result from development interventions (OECD, [What are results?](#)).

⁶⁶ The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term change and effects of intervention outputs (OECD, [What are results?](#)).

⁶⁷ The extent to which the benefits of the policy instruments continue into the future.

⁶⁸ The extent to which the intervention has generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. ‘Impact’ refers to social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion.

⁶⁹ However, measuring the impact of developmental policies or programmes in a reliable way is complicated, hence we expect that few of the available evaluations will have done so.

- “Efficiency” means the extent to which policy instruments delivered their results in an economic⁷⁰ and timely⁷¹ way.
 - Exactly which “conditions for effectiveness and efficiency” we will discuss in the report depends on the content of the existing evaluation reports. However, this will include, as a minimum, the policy instruments’ relevance⁷² and (internal and external) coherence,⁷³ as defined in the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria.
4. What lessons can be learned for improving (the conditions for) the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy on social development?
 - a. What are possibilities for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy with the same use of financial resources?
 - b. What is at least one effective option that can achieve savings of 20% or other significant savings?
 5. What are the most important remaining gaps in knowledge and insight about the effectiveness and efficiency of the social development policy theme?

5 Methods

This study will predominantly be built on evaluation reports and policy documents, using qualitative synthesis methodology in order to combine and integrate research results. The next sections will give a more detailed overview of the proposed methodology as well as the limitations of the research.

5.1 Overview of research methods

Table 6 below gives an overview of the research methods and data sources that will be used to answer the five research questions.

⁷⁰ ‘Economic’ refers to the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, in the most cost-effective way possible, compared to feasible alternatives.

⁷¹ ‘Timely’ means within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the evolving context. This may include assessing operational efficiency: how well the initiative was managed.

⁷² The extent to which it met the needs of the target group, was focused on tackling the causes of the problem and was based on what has been proven to be effective before?

⁷³ The extent to which other existing interventions supported, undermined or duplicated efforts of the initiative, and vice versa. This includes both internal coherence and external coherence. Internal coherence is about the compatibility of a project, programme or policy with other interventions carried out by the same institution/government. External coherence is about the consistency of the project, programme or policy with other actors’ interventions in the same country, sector or institution.

| <i>Table 6: Evaluation Matrix</i> | | |
|---|---|------------|
| Research question | Research method / Sources | Who |
| 1. Policy description: What did the policy on social development between 2018 and 2024 look like and, if applicable, how did it develop between 2018 and 2024? Which instruments were used to implement the policy? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of internal and public government documents • If needed, clarifying interviews or focus groups with policy officers at the MoFA | IOB |
| 2. Financial overview: What was the expenditure on the policy theme social development between 2018 and 2024? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of internal and public government documents and internal financial monitoring system | IOB |
| 3. Based on existing evaluations, what conclusions can be drawn about the degree of effectiveness and efficiency of the policy instruments and expenditure and about the extent to which the conditions for effectiveness and efficiency are met? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of existing evaluations | IOB |
| 4a Lessons: What are the possibilities for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy with the same use of financial resources? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of existing evaluations | IOB |
| 4b What is at least one effective option that can achieve savings of 20% or other significant savings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions drawn by the policy department, based on answers to research questions 3 and 4a | DSO |
| 5 What are the most important remaining gaps in knowledge and insight about the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy theme? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on answers to research questions 3 and 4a | IOB |

5.2 Synthesis of existing evaluations

Questions 3 and 4a will be answered through a synthesis of existing evaluations and mid-term reviews. This will consist of three steps:

a. Identifying existing evaluation reports

Identifying all existing evaluations of the Dutch-funded instruments that fall under the policy theme of Social Development. For this the search system of the archive of the ministry of Foreign Affairs will be used, as well as Google and websites of the organisations involved. In addition, the Department for Social Development (DSO) within the ministry will be asked to provide evaluations known to them, and, if necessary, to facilitate contact with evaluation officers at the organisations involved.

For reports to be included in the synthesis, they need to be:

- Published before the 31st of January 2025;
- End evaluations or mid-term reviews;
- About instruments funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of its developmental cooperation policy on social development from 2018 to 2024.

Annex 1 presents a draft list of the reports that will be incorporated, which may be added to during the research process.

For several of the policy instruments, evaluation reports exist at different levels. For example, evaluations of individual projects within a programme and an evaluation of the entire programme that incorporates the project-level evaluations. In order to avoid duplication and keep the research manageable in the available timeframe, we will in such situations only use the evaluations at the level of the entire programme or fund. However, for programmes or funds where only project-level evaluations exist, or where the higher-level evaluation is dated, we may also include project-level evaluations in the synthesis. Any such choices will be explained in the report's methodology section.

b. Assessing the quality of the evaluation reports found

Only reports that are independent and of sufficient quality will be included in the synthesis. The second step is therefore to determine the independence and quality of the evaluation reports found and, based on this, select which reports are included in the synthesis. The quality assessment will be done with reference to IOB's [quality criteria for evaluations](#). For criteria 9 (research design) and 10 (plausibility of the causal claim) we will make four separate assessments: for the reports' findings on, respectively, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and the conditions for effectiveness. This is because it is possible that an evaluation's methods are not appropriate to draw conclusions about e.g. impact, while the methods are appropriate for drawing conclusions about one of the conditions for effectiveness. In such situations, the synthesis will only incorporate the findings on the type of conclusions for which the methods are appropriate.

c. Synthesizing the findings of the evaluations

This will be done on the basis of research questions 3 and 4a, as set out in section 3.

5.3 Document analysis

Document analysis will be used to answer research questions 1 (policy description) and 2 (financial overview). This will involve both publicly available government documents and internal documents of DSO and other relevant directorates within the

ministry. In accordance with the Minister of Foreign Affairs' decision on 27 May 2019, nr. MinBuZa.2019.3926-31, IOB has full and unhindered access to all data of policy directorates and executive agencies.⁷⁴

Examples of publicly available government documents to be consulted for research are letters to parliament, published policy frameworks, and published information on expenditure on the policy theme. Examples of internal documents that will be consulted are internal documents with descriptions of the (sub-themes of) the policy and internal procedural documents. In addition, we will analyse financial information from MIBZ, the ministry's internal management information system.

5.4 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to help answer research question 1 (policy description). They will aim to fill any information gaps arising after the document analysis. The interviews will be done with MFA policy staff who have been involved in the policy development during the research period. Other stakeholders will not be interviewed, given that the interviews only involve factual questions about the policy development; not questions about e.g. the policy's effectiveness or efficiency. However, a wide variety of other stakeholders has been interviewed in the evaluation reports that will be synthesized.

Notes will be taken during the interviews, and provided information will be triangulated with other sources, such as documents or other interviewees. Participation in the interviews will be on a voluntary basis. The report will not mention the names of anyone who took part in an interview. Notes of interviews will be stored in a closed digital environment, only accessible to the IOB researchers involved.

5.5 Limitations

The assessment of the (conditions for) effectiveness and efficiency will be done through a synthesis of existing evaluation reports. As no additional primary research will be carried out to answer this research question, it will not be possible to validate or triangulate findings from the evaluation reports. Consequently, the study depends on the quality of the existing evaluation reports. Although we will do a quality assessment of the reports and only include reports that meet a certain quality standard (see section 5.2), limitations of the existing evaluation reports will have implications for the limitations of the periodic review's findings. If we encounter any such limitations we will describe them in the methodology section in the report.

The study also depends on the availability of evaluation reports. For some of the instruments described, the number of reports available may be limited or the number of reports with sufficient quality may be limited. In addition, the study depends on the scope of and the topics addressed in the existing evaluation reports. It is possible that not all the research questions mentioned in section 3 can be answered for all the sub-themes of social development.

For some of the policy instruments the available evaluation reports will be older than for others. Some of the findings in the periodic review may therefore be dated; it is possible that the (conditions for) effectiveness or efficiency of instruments

⁷⁴ See <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2019-30885.html> (in Dutch)

changed after evaluation reports were published. It will not be possible to independently verify this in the periodic review.

Finally, the social development policy theme is very broad, covering four different sub-themes. It might be impossible to reach overarching conclusions on certain issues. Where this is the case, we will describe this in the report. Moreover, to keep the report, and the research, manageable, the report cannot go into much detail for any of the policy themes. Nevertheless, reaching overarching, higher-level conclusions is the aim and the added value of a periodic review.

6 Products

The research will result in a report and a summary. Both the report and the summary will initially be written in English, for several reasons. First, we want to have the option to benefit from the expertise of international external advisory group members. Second, all evaluation reports that will be used for the synthesis are likely in English. Third, English is the working language for most organisations that receive funding for this policy theme, as well as part of the staff at embassies, who are involved in the oversight of some the programmes. Both the report and the summary will be translated into Dutch. The Dutch version of the report and summary will be sent to the House of Representatives. Both the Dutch and English versions of the report and summary will be published on the IOB website.

IOB reserves the right to share reports prior to publication - under embargo - with third parties, including the media.

7 Planning

Table 7: Key milestones

| Milestone | Deadline |
|---|-----------------|
| Draft ToR shared with advisory group | 25 October 2024 |
| ToR approved by Director IOB | December 2024 |
| Draft report shared with advisory group | June 2025 |
| Report approved by Director IOB | September 2025 |
| Report published and sent to Parliament | December 2025 |

8 Organisation and quality assurance

8.1 Research team

The research will be carried out by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This department operates independently of

the policy departments and has its own independent position within the ministry. The research team consists of Wendy van der Neut (team lead), Echica van Kelle and Tess de Rooij.

8.2 Sounding board group

Inter-collegial quality control will be done by a ‘sounding board group’ with the following IOB staff members:

- Wendela Haringhuizen (chair)
- Caspar Lobbrecht
- Zeineb Romdhane
- Ruth van Zorge
- Alexander Otgaar (quality assurance manager IOB)

8.3 External advisory group

The evaluation will be supported and quality assessed by an external advisory group (EAG) with the following members:

Table 8: External advisory group

| Name | Function/organisation | Role in EAG |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Ziad Moussa | Senior Evaluation Specialist, multiple organizations | External expert Civil Society |
| Nkatha Murungi | Acting Director Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria | External expert SRHR, gender equality and women’s rights |
| Moses Oketch | Professor of International Education Policy and Development, University College London | External expert Education |
| Liana Hoornweg | Director Partos | NGO representative |
| Jessica Schiltmans | Senior Policy Officer, DSO MFA | Policy representative |
| Cobi Mars | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, DSO MFA | Policy representative |
| Valerie-Anne Houppermans | Coordinating policy officer, FEZ MFA | Policy representative |
| Sophie van den Bosch | IRF, Ministry of Finance | Policy representative |
| Wendela Haringhuizen | Head of Foreign Trade and Development Aid unit, IOB | Chair |
| Peter van der Knaap | Director IOB | Observer |

The EAG is responsible for external quality control of this evaluation. Its task is to provide methodological and substantive feedback on the draft ToR and the draft report. The EAG advises the research team, IOB's director and IOB's quality assurance manager. Its advice is not binding; the responsibility for approving reports for publication lies with IOB's director. If a member of the EAG continues to disagree with

the content of a report, he/she can inform IOB in writing. If necessary, a statement can be included in the report.

At least one of the external experts will be asked to write a statement after approval of the final text. This statement is an independent assessment regarding the realisation of the periodic review and the way the research answers the central questions.

8.4 Ethical considerations

This study primarily consists of document analysis and a desk-based synthesis of existing reports, most of which are available in the public domain. To the extent that the synthesis will incorporate non-publicly available evaluations or mid-term reviews, we will not include information that can be traced back to individual stakeholders or that might impose security risks to individuals or organisations involved.

The only primary data collection (interviews) will be done amongst MFA policy staff. Prior to the interview, they will receive the necessary information about the study to be able to give informed consent. For example the interview's purpose, its voluntary and confidential nature, and the method of storing interview notes.

Annex 1: Reports to include in the synthesis

Below is a list of reports to be included in the synthesis of existing evaluations, that serves to answer research questions 3 and 4a. This is not a definite list, for two reasons. First, the reports on this list still need to be assessed for quality, as explained in section 5.2. If a report does not meet the minimum quality standards set, it will not be included in the synthesis. Second, during the periodic review research period, more reports may be added to the list.

The reports on the list are categorised on the basis of the four sub-themes of the policy. However, some of the reports may be relevant for more than one sub-theme and hence will be used for more than one of these themes in the synthesis.

| Reports to include in synthesis of the periodic review on Social Development | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Title</i> | <i>Responsible organisation</i> | <i>Publication</i> |
| Sub-theme 3.1 Global Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights | | |
| Case Study Netherlands International COVID-19 Response | OECD/IOB | 2024 |
| 'Consistent Efforts, Persisting Challenges', Evaluation of the Dutch contribution to sexual and reproductive health and rights. | IOB | 2023 |
| Sub-theme 3.2 Women's Rights and Gender Equality | | |
| Final Evaluation of Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (FLOW 2) (2016-2020) | DSO | 2022 |
| Final Report: External evaluation of the Netherlands WPS 2016-2019 and WPS 2020 programmes | DSO | 2021 |
| End evaluation of the policy framework Leading from the South I (2017-2020) | DSO | 2021 |
| Midterm review National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2016-2019) | DSO | 2020 |
| Sub-theme 3.3 Civil Society | | |
| Mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the policy framework Strengthening Civil Society in Uganda | DSO | 2024 |
| Mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the policy framework Strengthening Civil Society in Lebanon | DSO | 2024 |
| Study on the validity of assumptions of the policy framework Strengthening Civil Society in fragile contexts, in particular in the Palestinian Territories, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Mozambique and Iraq. | DSO | 2024 |
| Synthesis Mid-Term Reviews of all partnerships of the policy framework for Strengthening Civil Society | DSO | 2024 |

| | | |
|---|-----|--------------------|
| The effectiveness of support to lobby and advocacy – Synthesis of evidence from Dutch MFA programmes | IOB | 2023 |
| Voice programme Final Evaluation Report | DSO | 2023 |
| ‘Strategies for partners: balancing complementarity and autonomy’, Evaluation functioning of strategic partnerships Ministry of Foreign Affairs | IOB | 2019 |
| Sub-theme 3.4: Education | | |
| ‘A Synthesis of Existing Evaluations of Dutch Spending on Education in ODA countries’ (This study is itself a synthesis of independent evaluation reports that have been published since 2015, and has been commissioned in preparation for this periodic review.) | IOB | 2025 (forthcoming) |

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