

ADVISORY LETTER

**DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**  
**THE BENEFIT OF AND NEED FOR PUBLIC SUPPORT**

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## **Members of the working group for Development Cooperation: The Benefit of and Need for Public Support**

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# Development Cooperation: The Benefit of and Need for Public Support

‘Solidarity and self-interest dictate that “their problems are our problems”’.<sup>1</sup>

## Foreword

This advisory letter was written in response to the political debate that began in the second half of 2008 regarding the scope, benefit of and need for activities to strengthen Dutch public support for development cooperation. In this debate, the questions arose as to whether or not public support is relevant to development cooperation<sup>2</sup> and whether or not strengthening it is an appropriate task for government.<sup>3</sup> In this letter, the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) concludes that sustainable development requires structural change on a global scale and that long-term poverty reduction calls not only for an effective approach in the South but equally for changes in the North, in government and society as a whole. Creating and sustaining support for the necessary changes is therefore relevant to development cooperation and deserves to be and remain one of the government’s priorities.

This letter makes a conceptual distinction between ‘changes here’ and ‘changes there’. This distinction reconfirms the United Nations’ call in the 1970s for change in the North to help resolve development problems in the South. In other words, the debate on public support should be broadened rather than confined to development cooperation and the work of development organisations (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in the South. This distinction also provides pathways for the ministry to work out its policy on public support. Even though (1) strengthening public support has long been one of the goals of Dutch development cooperation policy and has for several years been a specific criterion in the financing conditions for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and (2) many governmental and non-governmental organisations are engaged in strengthening support in the Netherlands, a clear policy on support, has never been formulated. This is partly why there is no generally accepted and applied definition of public support, and why the criteria used to determine whether an activity or budget strengthens public support are unclear.

This report is presented as an advisory letter in view of the forthcoming consultation with the House of Representatives. It should be seen as a contribution to the debate on the legitimacy and benefit of and need for public support and – in line with that – activities that strengthen public support in the Netherlands. An advisory letter, we should emphasise, does not present an exhaustive analysis but attempts to make a concise contribution to a topical debate in order to draw attention to points that the AIV thinks deserve consideration. This advisory letter first explains certain essential aspects of the concept of public support and then considers three questions: what (the purpose), why (the legitimacy) and who (implementation).

- 1 Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS), Policy Memorandum on Civil Society Organisations: Cooperation, Customisation and Added Value, The Hague, 2009, DGIS, p. 4.
- 2 Arend Jan Boekestijn, ‘Draagvlakdenken stilt geen honger’ [Thinking about public support does not relieve hunger], *Trouw*, 18 June 2008.
- 3 Ewout Irrgang, ‘Stop subsidie aan NCDO’ [Cut off the National Committee for International Cooperation’s grant], *De Volkskrant*, 16 June 2008.

The working group that prepared this advisory letter consisted entirely of members of the AIV's Development Cooperation Committee and was chaired by Dr L. Schulpen. Its members were G.H.O. van Maanen, Professor A. Niehof, Ms A.N. Papma and P. Stek.

The AIV adopted this advisory letter at a meeting on 8 May 2009.

### **The concept of public support**

The Belgian development expert Patrick Develtere defines public support as public 'attitudes and actions, whether arising from knowledge or otherwise, regarding a certain subject'.<sup>4</sup> This definition is widely accepted in the Netherlands. The AIV, however, prefers a slightly different definition: 'Public support comprises positive opinions, attitudes and conduct regarding a certain subject.'<sup>5</sup>

*Opinion* stands for what people think, *attitude* for their consequent actions or omissions and *conduct* for the activities they carry out. Conduct ranges from concrete support – in the form of money, voluntary work or professional participation in projects or organisations – to behaviour as a producer, consumer or citizen or activities to influence other people's thoughts and actions. 'Other people' can range from the government and civil society organisations to the private sector and one's own circle of acquaintance.

It should be clear that the number of people with positive opinions on development cooperation, poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals is greater than the number that actively express such opinions, and not all of those who are vocal will manifest their attitudes in the form of activities that promote development. Those that do are not only supportive but committed.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the AIV thinks that public support exists only where there are positive opinions on the benefit of and need for the subject at issue. Negative support is a contradiction in terms. The public, however, may support contrary opinions or actions, such as reducing development cooperation, if they do not appreciate its benefits and necessity.

### **Decline in public support?**

Political support seems to have eroded somewhat recently. Some political parties, for example, have expressed critical views and called for cuts, in some cases substantial cuts, in the development cooperation budget. As the voices of opponents and sceptics grow louder, it might also be thought that public support is declining. This is not necessarily the case, however. In the case of development cooperation, in particular,

4 Patrick Develtere, ed., *Het draagvlak voor duurzame ontwikkeling. Wat het is en zou kunnen zijn* [Public Support for Development Cooperation: What it is and what it could be] (Antwerp: De Boeck nv, 2003).

5 The knowledge component, according to Develtere, is an important but not essential condition, never mind a touchstone, for the emergence or existence of public support. People undoubtedly base their opinions, attitudes, conduct and actions with regard to a particular subject on the knowledge they have of it, but that knowledge can be significantly more or less than that of others. Opinions do not require a minimum level of knowledge. Nevertheless, the AIV believes that the transfer of knowledge is integral to strengthening public support.

6 See also Context, 'Inventarisatie draagvlakversterking voor internationale samenwerking in Nederland' [Building Public Support for International Cooperation in the Netherlands: A Survey], Soesterberg, 2005.

opponents are probably drawn from other parts of society than supporters. The facts show that there has been little if any decline in the number of supporters. Year in, year out, surveys find that such goals as poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals can count on broad support in society. Moreover, neither the number of Dutch donors to international causes from year to year nor the amount of money they give suggests that there has been any decline whatsoever in public support. Data from a project carried out by VU University Amsterdam entitled 'Giving in the Netherlands' indicate that international aid is one of the main causes supported by Dutch donors.<sup>7</sup> Measured by size of gifts, donations and contributions, two of the top ten Dutch charities are involved in nature conservation (€50 million), one in cancer research (€30 million) and seven in international aid (€190 million).<sup>8</sup>

The International Cooperation Barometer for 2008 did not reveal any decline in the percentage of Dutch donors to organisations or campaigns for developing countries. The average amount given by each donor between 2005 and 2007 was €145 per annum.<sup>9</sup> The six largest development cooperation charities together had nearly 2.4 million donors in 2007.<sup>10</sup> Along with the growth in 'do-it-yourself' private initiative projects (currently estimated at about 8,000 donors), this all points to undiminished support for development cooperation at a level that few other social causes can match.<sup>11</sup> The government is right to sustain such substantial support if it gives high priority to development cooperation. Unfortunately, the AIV knows of no reliable comparative figures from other European countries; such figures should in fact be determined.

The Social and Cultural Planning Office's latest survey of public perceptions found that 58% of the population were in favour of keeping the aid budget for poor countries at its current level (0.8% of Gross National Product (GNP)) or increasing it, whereas 39% were in favour of reducing the expenditure. That 58% is lower than public support for

7 Theo Schuyt et al., eds., *Geven in Nederland 2007. Giften, legaten, sponsoring en vrijwilligerswerk* [Giving in the Netherlands 2007: gifts, legacies, sponsoring and voluntary work] (Amsterdam, Reed Business BV, 2007, pp. 12-9).

8 Database of the Central Bureau on Fundraising Organisations (<[www.cbf.nl](http://www.cbf.nl)>). Half of the top 35 charities focus on international aid. The other half focus on health, nature, the environment, etc. Together they raise €470 million, of which €250 million goes to international aid. These figures do not include the €200 million raised to help the tsunami victims at the end of 2004/early 2005.

9 Motivaction, *Barometer Internationale Samenwerking 2008* [International Cooperation Barometer 2008], Amsterdam, Motivaction/NCDO (<[www.ncdo.nl](http://www.ncdo.nl)>).

10 *De Goede Doelen Gids 2007* (Amstelveen: Lenthe, 2006). The charities were the Red Cross (713,000 donors), Doctors without Borders (450,000), Cordaid (430,000), Oxfam Novib (350,000), KerkinActie (300,000) and Plan Nederland (150,000).

11 See also the synthesis report on the 2008 dialogue, 'Development is Change' (2008 Dialogue Steering Committee, 'International cooperation in transition', The Hague, pp. 7-8. (<[www.ontwikkelingsverandering.nl](http://www.ontwikkelingsverandering.nl)>)), which correctly notes, 'Data on public support for the size of the development cooperation budget (0.8[%] of GNP) suggest different trends to those on support in terms of individual action (i.e. willingness to donate and get involved in private-sector initiatives). Some studies would suggest that there has been a slight drop in the former, but a sharp upward trend in support for the latter.'

spending on international environmental problems and climate change, where 74% of the population is in favour of maintaining or increasing the budget and 23% of reducing it. However, it is considerably higher than that enjoyed by international military operations and conflict management, where 36% are in favour of maintaining or increasing the budget and 60% of reducing it.<sup>12</sup> These findings are indicative of support that should be appreciated.

In view of the above, it cannot be said that there has been a noticeable decline in public support. It is true, though, that the current level of public support provides no assurance for the future. Several issues and questions are of specific importance for future support.

Firstly, there is the question of legitimacy, with a distinction being made between the input and output legitimacy of development cooperation. Input legitimacy relates to the public involvement in the development of policy and policy choices. Develtere finds that there is too little interaction between the public and political support for development cooperation. He writes of an 'advocacy void or a democratic deficit', which reflects his conviction that 'development policy [...] is developed without reference to relevant public opinion and, owing to the predominance of organised support, with little input from the public'.<sup>13</sup> Others think that 'international development policy now has a higher public profile than ever before'.<sup>14</sup> The shared opinion is that it is and will remain necessary to conduct the public and political debate as broadly as possible.<sup>15</sup>

Output legitimacy is the most important element of the debate. It refers to policy effectiveness and thus to accountability for effectiveness. The belief that many development activities could be improved and made more effective is a key argument in the debate on public support. It is made not only by opponents and sceptics but also by supporters. It is an indication that widespread public support does not automatically represent approval of all aspects of government policy or of the policies of other development cooperation players. This is understandable because, by definition, development cooperation takes place in a complicated social, cultural and governmental context in which risks cannot be assessed precisely in advance. Furthermore, greater forces are at play such as trade relations, debt, tax evasion, arms dealing, climate change and conflicts. Nevertheless, questions must be asked about policy effectiveness. Is effectiveness the outcome of an organisation's methods, the context in which it has to work, opposition from local forces and powers or a combination of all these factors? It should always be asked what chance an intervention has of succeeding before deciding whether or not to intervene.

12 See Social and Cultural Planning Office, *Kwartaalbericht 2008/4, Continu Onderzoek Burgerperspectieven (COB)*, p. 24.

13 Develtere, *De vrije markt van de ontwikkelingssamenwerking (The Free Market for Development Cooperation)* (Leuven: Davidsfonds Uitgeverij nv, 2009), pp. 254-255.

14 Lindsay Whitfield, ed. *The Politics of Aid: African Strategies for Dealing with Donors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 1.

15 This is necessary if only to avoid reinforcing the 'stereotypical picture [...] that it has become [a] talking shop, a debating and event culture where you always run into the same people' ('Ontwikkeling is verandering' [Development is Change], speech by the Minister for Development Cooperation at the kick-off meeting for the dialogue on the future of international cooperation, CineMec Ede, 22 May 2008).

A distinction should also be made between public support for the principal development cooperation goals (chiefly lasting poverty reduction and its current elaboration in the Millennium Development Goals) and support for the policies of the various actors (governments, international institutions, civil society organisations, the private sector, etc.). A similar distinction should be made for activities to promote public support. Do they promote support for tackling the main issues, for the policy of one or more actors or – in essence – for an organisation? Support for an organisation, however, can rarely be fully separated from support for its policies and activities. Large organisations such as the Red Cross are supposed to earn support on the basis of the reputations they build up, but a private initiative is supported largely for a specific project; the initiative is seen as a vehicle.

Finally, political and public support is influenced by the relationship between expenditure on support and the level of support. The best starting point to calculate expenditure is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget. Expenditure on ‘support for Dutch foreign policy’ totalled €433.4 million in 2003-2009 (averaging €61.9 million per annum), 43% of which was non-ODA expenditure.<sup>16</sup> Expressed as a percentage of total ODA expenditure, the ODA part of expenditure on public support rose from 0.6% in 2003 to 0.9% in 2007 and 2008. This expenditure includes the National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development (NCDO) and the activities conducted by the ministry itself through its Information and Communications Department. It does not include expenditure to strengthen public support incurred by cofinancing organisations and other civil society organisations subsidised by the ministry.

Activities to promote public support are not clearly defined, however, so their exact size cannot be established precisely. This makes it difficult to understand the relationship between expenditure on support and the level of support, never mind the extent to which support is broadened or deepened. It is equally unclear what criteria are used to classify an activity as a support activity. Furthermore, there is the question of what purpose public support serves and whether surveys of public support (such as those carried out by the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) actually measure the goals that support-related activities are meant to attain. In other words, assessing the relationship between the level of expenditure and the effectiveness of that expenditure depends on the goal (or object) for which the creation, reinforcement or deepening of public support is sought. What is it that the public is being asked to support?

#### **The purpose of support – the ‘what’ question**

The current debate on the benefit of and need for public support for development cooperation seems to be neglecting the question of what purpose public (and political) support is supposed to serve. Without a clear answer to this question, however, no rational debate is possible. To answer the ‘what’ question, it must first be recognised that public support is not an end in itself but a means, a means to contribute to structural changes within and between countries in order to reduce poverty and inequality worldwide.

A clearer conception of public support requires making a distinction between two ways of working on poverty reduction. The Millennium Development Goals make a distinction

<sup>16</sup> Expenditure on public support for Dutch foreign policy is included in policy article 8, ‘Raising the Netherlands’ cultural profile and helping create a positive image in the Netherlands and abroad’.

between what must be done in the South (the developing countries, Goals 1-7) and what must be done in the North (the 'developed' countries, Goal 8). This means that development (or structural poverty reduction) requires changes not only in the South but also in the North. This also refers to the many agreements made at the United Nations in the past 40 years to foster change in the North in order to help solve development problems in the South.<sup>17</sup>

The distinction between 'there' and 'here' should also be reflected in public support and support-related activities. It is important to recognise that changes there (e.g. direct poverty reduction, civil society building, infrastructure, etc.) and changes here (e.g. removing trade barriers, banning hazardous exports, environmental measures, consumer behaviour, encouraging fair trade, etc.) are linked. They reinforce each other and they both contribute to poverty reduction. Both should therefore be worked on and public (and political) support should be created for both. Insights must be broadened and expressed in changed personal attitudes and behaviour towards poverty reduction. Better understanding can strengthen support or lead to useful criticism that prompts policy improvements. The agenda must be widened so that issues, problems and situations that have no direct bearing on the public's own lives are nevertheless placed on their personal agendas.<sup>18</sup>

Such a widening of the agenda rests on two pillars: a cognitive pillar and a moral pillar. Both are essential. The cognitive pillar comprises the concept of growing interdependence in an ever-smaller world. Substantial inequality in well-being between countries and groups leads to tension and conflict. We all benefit from reducing inequality – in the same way that we benefit from the economic development of poor countries – because we too profit in a variety of ways from its favourable effects. This is sometimes known as 'enlightened self-interest'. The moral pillar means taking the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seriously and recognising that all people, wherever they are in the world, have a right to human dignity and that rich countries must help them where they cannot achieve this by themselves. It is this involvement and solidarity that makes the Dutch give so generously to the poor, people in need and victims of disasters, wherever they are in the world.<sup>19</sup> Both pillars are referred to in the quotation at the beginning of this letter.

#### *Changes there*

'Changes there' require public support for what can be called development cooperation in a narrow sense: the poverty-reduction activities that bilateral, multilateral and civilateral development organisations carry out in developing countries. These include

17 In a 1982 debate on the mandate of the then National Committee for Development Cooperation (NCO), the ministry proposed including the following passage: 'The NCO's goal is to strengthen public support for development cooperation. This requires an information and awareness-raising policy so that the broadest possible layers of society are involved in, aware of and *willing to make a sacrifice to solve the development problem*' (Marc Dierikx et al., *Nederlandse ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Bronnenuitgave Deel 5 1977-1982* (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2007), p. 951) (italics added).

18 'International cooperation in transition', op. cit., p. 8 notes, 'The public needs to understand the relationship between new challenges in terms of climate, raw materials, security, energy and the shared concerns of North and South, and the, albeit limited, contribution international cooperation can make'.

19 As for example the €200 million collected for victims of the tsunami showed.

private initiatives in so far as they support development activities in the South. From a development cooperation angle, support-related activities are concerned principally with creating public support (in whatever form) for development cooperation. In this respect they are in effect intended to show that development cooperation is not only an important part of our relationship with developing countries but is also important for their development.

It must of course also be recognised that there is some scepticism in society (and in politics) about the effectiveness of development cooperation. As noted above, surveys show time and again that most people in the Netherlands support the principle of development cooperation but that a large proportion also have considerable doubts about its effectiveness in reducing poverty. Although the former is gratifying, the latter is an important signal and deserves serious consideration. The AIV thinks more attention should be paid to the effectiveness of various forms of external intervention and cooperation (i.e. development cooperation) in promoting the development of poor countries.

The AIV believes that it should devote a separate report to the question of effectiveness, partly because the issue has many more aspects than can be handled properly in a brief advisory letter. All development cooperation channels (bilateral, multilateral and civilateral) should be considered and assessed in the knowledge that development work usually takes place in unpredictable settings where the chance of success or failure is uncertain. In many cases, in fact, it takes place *because* there is so much uncertainty. It is important to reduce the impact of factors that cause this constant unpredictability and uncertainty. A characteristic of this work is the constant focus on *intended* results in the knowledge that *actual* results may sometimes be better or worse. This knowledge should not be a reason to lower the Netherlands' ambitions but to continually seek greater effectiveness as we work to realise them.

This implies that public support will be strengthened more effectively if it is clearly communicated that a meaningful contribution is being made to resolving stubborn problems. It is important to report transparently what results are achieved, what has gone right and what has gone wrong, why things went wrong and what lessons development organisations can learn from this (i.e. increase the policy's output legitimacy).

Public support for a specific organisation, however, does not necessarily lead to support for development cooperation in general or for other organisations. The example of private initiatives is illustrative. They usually and principally focus on the project or projects that they are known for, without paying attention to broader issues of development cooperation. Others support development cooperation in general without attaching themselves to specific organisations or projects.

The question is whether all support-related activities carried out by development organisations deserve official financial or other backing from the government. The same question can be asked about activities that focus mainly on fundraising. The AIV agrees with the ministry's principle<sup>20</sup> that fundraising activities should not be subsidised. Although there is undoubtedly a grey area, elaboration of this principle should take account of the obligation that development organisations must raise 25% of their

20 Policy Memorandum on Civil Society Organisations, op. cit, p. 18.

income from sources outside the Dutch government. It is troubling that this obligation has forced large and small organisations to compete against each other to raise the required funds. The design of the new financing system does not pay sufficient attention to factors that might reduce public support. We therefore recommend that the ministry formulate more clearly the relationship between its cofinancing requirements and its NGO policy goal of increasing public support, and avoid making public support an object of competition among development organisations.

#### *Changes here*

Although it is assumed that ‘changes here’ are directly related to ‘development cooperation in a narrow sense’, this is not necessarily so. Such changes are not concerned with providing material, physical or financial support for development organisations’ activities, budgets and policies in developing countries. On the contrary, the activities are targeted primarily at raising public awareness that development cooperation is only one of the means to reduce poverty and that other policy fields also determine the effectiveness of development cooperation.

Specifically, public support is needed for ‘changes here’ in government policies, such as the Dutch or European position on issues at the World Trade Organisation, Dutch policy on licences to export hazardous goods and agricultural surpluses to developing countries and environmental policy incentives to prevent a further increase in the global climate problem. Such policy should also include a dialogue between enterprises and governments on the coherence of their conduct at home and abroad. Policy on public support should also include efforts to directly influence consumer behaviour and/or the way in which we look upon and deal with the ‘other’ – whether the ‘other’ is part of Dutch society or not. Regardless of whether a cognitive or a moral approach is taken, ‘changes here’ affect all manner of attitudes and conduct in our own society: in the Dutch government, the private sector, civil society and individuals who may be expected to make a contribution to a sustainable world for people here and there.

In effect, consideration of ‘changes here’ involves a deeper understanding in the Netherlands itself of a broader concept of policy coherence for sustainable development and the role that governments, enterprises, civil society organisations and individual members of the public can and must play. A recent advisory report by the AIV stressed the importance of policy coherence in donor countries in such areas as agriculture, the environment, trade and migration, and recognised the value of the measures that the Netherlands and EU have taken to institutionalise the processes necessary to bring this about. More and better policy coherence (for ‘changes here’) will make a major contribution to the effectiveness of development cooperation policy.<sup>21</sup> This policy coherence can be achieved only if society grasps that poverty must be reduced not only by what happens ‘there’ but also by what happens ‘here’. Policy coherence must therefore be a criterion for all policy development and the actions of individual actors in society. This requires winning public support here in the form of opinions, attitudes and conduct.

#### **The legitimacy of public support – the ‘why’ question**

There are shared and separate reasons for working on both sorts of public support. A principle of a democratic society that applies to every aspect of government policy is that government action must be legitimised by public support, as expressed in

21 AIV, *The Netherlands and European Development Policy*, Advisory Report no. 60, The Hague, May 2008, pp. 24-26 and 49-50.

political support. Reality, however, is more complex. The government's responsibility for appropriate short- and long-term policies may sometimes lead it to take actions enjoying political support but not much public support.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, reaching political agreement in a coalition depends on more factors than just the presence or absence of public support. Nevertheless, government policy will eventually be untenable in a democratic society if there is little or no public support for it.

This leads to the conclusion that a government that takes its own policy priorities seriously must work on winning and retaining public support. This is particularly true if the priorities do not directly touch upon the everyday interests of the public but nevertheless deserve consideration (in the government's opinion).<sup>23</sup> When organising the referendum on the European constitution, the government assumed too readily and for too long that support for Europe was as widespread as it always had been. The price the government paid for this should be borne in mind in the debate on public support.

It could be argued, however, that the government should be restrained in spending substantial sums to win approval for its own policies. The government should not use taxpayers' money to garner support for itself. The issue at stake here, however, is the government's seeking approval not for its own policies, but for priorities that it believes represent the core values of our society. These core values (the rule of law, democracy, human rights, poverty reduction, non-discrimination and a free press) are laid down in the Constitution and are regularly reaffirmed in speeches from the throne. Furthermore, they are anchored in international instruments that the Netherlands is a party to, such as the Global Partnership for Development, the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus, the Paris Declaration and international human rights conventions. All these values deserve to be anchored in government policy, including policy to maintain or increase public support for them.

In the case of development cooperation, the primary goal of promoting public support is to further structural poverty reduction and to strengthen the channels used by the government (multilateral, bilateral and civilateral) for this purpose so that they can continue their work in developing countries (or more generally: their development work). This assumes that their working methods, effectiveness and choice of target groups are transparent. The scepticism and questions raised about the effectiveness of development cooperation and development organisations are an additional reason to work on output legitimacy.

If we agree on the benefits of and need for development cooperation, retaining public support is a legitimate part of this work. This is also true (perhaps especially so) if we see public support as winning approval (in whatever form) for 'changes here'. The principle applies in this case, too, that positive public attitudes and conduct towards development-relevant change in our own society contribute to a sustainable world. From the point of view of ethics and enlightened self-interest, and starting from the realisation

22 As with Dutch political support for the intervention in Iraq and its support for the fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

23 See the recent advisory report in which the AIV reiterates its advice to the government to 'make every effort to mobilise the greatest possible public support for each military operation'. AIV, *Crisis Management Operations in Fragile States: The Need for a Coherent Approach*, advisory report no. 64, The Hague, March 2009, chapter IV.

that broad coherence without public involvement is neither tenable nor practicable, positive opinions, attitudes and conduct must be strengthened at all levels of Dutch society. This may take more effort: it is usually easier to demand change elsewhere than to consider change 'in our own ranks'.

An additional benefit of simultaneously working on public support for development cooperation and public support for changes here is that it can prevent the Dutch public from seeing development cooperation as the only solution to global problems. By definition, development cooperation is just one part of the solution. Creating a sustainable world calls for far more, such as changes in the governance of developing countries and in the relative weight given to Northern and Southern interests in national, European and international frameworks. A major goal of winning public support is therefore to raise awareness that we cannot content ourselves as a society or as citizens with supporting only development cooperation.

### **Winning public support – the 'who' question**

The distinction between public support for development cooperation and public support for 'changes here' is also relevant to the 'who' question. Responsibility for support for development cooperation lies principally with development organisations, both civil society organisations (NGOs and private initiatives) and the government (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Since they support activities in developing countries, winning support for development cooperation in the form of knowledge, attitudes and conduct (e.g. donation patterns and voluntary work) logically lies in their remit, because it concerns their legitimacy and their activities.

In these support-related activities, development organisations have a duty of accountability and awareness-raising. Accountability refers to the creation of output legitimacy by providing transparency on the relevance and effectiveness of their work in developing countries. This offers the best guarantee of retaining and strengthening support. The same is also true of fundraising activities. Awareness-raising refers to the provision of information on development work and development processes, chiefly to show that development is a complex, multi-dimensional, non-linear and long-term process. This prevents people from seeing development cooperation as a panacea that can solve all development problems and helps them realise that development cooperation without wider coherence in policy and practice is limited in what it can achieve. To prevent individual organisations from using support-related activities to raise funds, activities should be subsidised only if they are carried out jointly by several organisations.

Public support for 'changes here' is not one of development organisations' compulsory tasks. Nevertheless, their direct relationship with their partners makes them perfectly suited to let the Southern voice be heard in their support-related activities. Furthermore, various development organisations have extensive experience in both dimensions of public support (for example through their involvement in fair trade or environmental campaigns). Support-related activities that are integral parts of Dutch and European development organisations' activities, such as campaigning and lobbying, are therefore eligible for public funding because they take both a bottom-up and a top-down approach to 'changes here' to reduce poverty.

Since (1) working on 'changes here' is not compulsory for development organisations, (2) working on 'changes here' is necessary regardless of what happens in developing countries, and (3) context-specific expertise is required, organisations that are

specialised in ‘public support for changes here’ should be involved. An open system that bases selection on quality is the most suitable and obvious way to involve such specialists (partly in view of European directives). To achieve the interaction referred to above, these specialised organisations must coordinate their work with the development organisations, and people must be engaged who have the authority necessary to help win public support.

Finally, the Minister for Development Cooperation is not by definition responsible for funding these specialised organisations, and their funding does not by definition fall under the ODA budget. The government as a whole – including other ministries – is responsible for ‘changes here’ and thus for the necessary contribution to a sustainable world and a coherent Dutch policy. This letter, however, does not claim to propose the creation of a new financing framework. Greater understanding of interdependences does not mean that accountability for policy promotion and funding will be shifted.

### **Summary and recommendations**

In summary, the AIV’s premises, findings and recommendations are as follows.

- While political support for development cooperation can perhaps no longer be taken for granted, public support in the Netherlands for the principle and goals of development cooperation remains as strong as ever. This does not mean that there is strong public support for all aspects of development policy or for all development organisations. There is some doubt about the effectiveness and greater insight is needed into the considerations behind and impact of different aspects of development policy and practice.
- Development and poverty reduction require structural changes in both the South and the North and in the relationship between South and North. These structural changes are laid down in international instruments to which the Netherlands is a party.
- A conceptual distinction should be made between public support for ‘changes there’ and for ‘changes here’. The debate on support, however, is unbalanced; it is dominated by ‘changes there’. Dutch society (i.e. the government, the private sector, civil society organisations and the public) gives inadequate consideration to policy coherence. To bring about effective and lasting poverty reduction, both sorts of change – and public support for them – are needed.
- Increasing public support is therefore a legitimate part of development cooperation and is a government task in the same way that the government invests in increasing public support for such goals as public health, road safety, agriculture, etc.
- A clear, transparent, efficient and above all coherent development policy is an essential condition for increasing public support in general. The best way to increase public support for activities ‘there’ is to pay close attention to the effectiveness of these activities and give a frank accounting of their results, even when they are disappointing, and of the lessons that have been learnt. This requires further elaboration of a methodology for the valid and reliable measurement of effectiveness in the complex and turbulent conditions that predominate in development cooperation.
- Responsibility for ‘changes there’ lies primarily with the development organisations and the ministry. They have both an accountability and an awareness-raising duty. Responsibility for public support for ‘changes here’ lies in the first place with the government as a whole. Specific attention should be paid to policy coherence. Development organisations should be involved in so far as they are engaged in activities aimed at the North (i.e. campaigning and lobbying).

- Government responsibility does not mean that it must act as an implementer. Since (1) working on 'changes here' is not compulsory for development organisations, (2) working on 'changes here' is necessary regardless of what happens in developing countries, and (3) context-specific expertise is required, specialised organisations and authoritative people should be engaged to work on public support for 'changes here'
- The government as a whole – including other ministries – is responsible for 'changes here' and thus for the necessary contribution to a sustainable world and a coherent Dutch policy. Responsibility for funding one or more organisations specialised in promoting public support therefore lies not only with the Minister for Development Cooperation.
- In the near future, the government must clarify the level of support-related expenditure in the Netherlands. This comprises expenditure both by the government itself and by civil society organisations that are funded directly or indirectly and that are active in whole or in part in increasing public support for development cooperation. The government would also be well advised to investigate the correlation between the level and use of support-related expenditure and the level of public support in the Netherlands. Without a thorough investigation, nothing sensible can be said about the tailoring and effectiveness of support-related activities.
- The AIV agrees with the recent Policy Memorandum on Civil Society Organisations that activities concerned principally with fundraising should not receive government grants.
- In the further elaboration of grants policy, the government should clarify the relationship between the cofinancing requirement of 25% self-funding and the goal of increasing public support, since the requirement could lead to a reduction in support. Public support should not become an object of competition among development organisations.

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