



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM
 Federal Public Service
**Foreign Affairs,
 Foreign Trade and
 Development Cooperation**

Evaluation of NGO partnerships aimed at capacity development

EVALUATION OF NGO PARTNERSHIPS AIMED AT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



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 Foreign Trade and
 Development Cooperation**

Special Evaluation Office of International Cooperation

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Special Evaluation Office Development Cooperation

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Abbreviations

AGCD	Administration for Development Cooperation
BTC	Belgian Technical Cooperation
CIDIN	Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CD	Capacity Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DGDC	Directorate-General for Development Cooperation
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo
EADI	European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes
HIVA	Research Institute for Work and Society
HRD	Human Resources Development
ID	Institutional Development
IOB	Institute of Development Policy and Management
K.U.Leuven	Catholic University of Leuven
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
LDC	Least Developed Countries
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNGO	Northern NGOs
OD	Organisational Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OCA	Organisational Capacity Assessment
DC	Development Cooperation
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PLAS	Planning, Learning and Accountability System
PLATS	Planning, Learning and Accountability Trias System
RBM	Results Based Management
RC	Reinforcement of Capacities
TA	Technical Assistance
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation

Preface

Capacity building is a priority concern of the Belgian Development Cooperation. "Indeed, the efforts developed in several countries can only produce positive results if more attention is paid to long-term capacity building. [...] Experience shows that successful capacity building depends on improvement of knowledge and competences of individuals on the one hand, and on reforms within the organisations and the institutional context in which individuals operate on the other.¹"

However, the outlines of the concepts 'capacity' and 'capacity building' are not clearly defined. The Special Evaluation Office decided in 2008 to organise an evaluation focusing on this topic with the purpose of obtaining a clear picture of the aspects covered by the term 'capacity building'. It was also decided to perform the evaluation starting from the practices of NGOs.

The Terms of Reference of the evaluation were determined in consultation with the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and the sector. Based thereon, a general call was initiated in accordance with the government procurement regulations. The subsequent selection was carried out according to the common procedures of the Special Evaluation Office that were recently validated in the scope of an international Peer Review. The Special Evaluation Office entrusted the evaluation to a consortium led by HIVA in Leuven, the Research Institute for Work and Society of the Catholic University of Leuven.²

The evaluation covers the period between 1998 and 2008, and the more recent developments surrounding the Agreement between the Minister and the NGOs are therefore only marginally touched upon.

The conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation require our attention. It is important, for instance, that the NGOs prepare a contextual analysis of their partners' working environments to provide insight into the needs of their partner organisations. They must invest in a clear vision on the nature of the capacities that they wish to help build and at the same time, further develop the quality of their partnerships (among other things by making long-term plans and providing exit strategies).

In its assessment of the programmes, the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation or 'DGD', is encouraged to pay particular attention to capacity building. This can be done by developing specific criteria that reflect complex capacity building processes managed by a few NGOs, as well as by stimulating a professional approach by the NGOs with respect to capacity building.

One recommendation from the evaluation is aimed at both the DGD and the NGOs: increased investment is required in knowledge building and learning on the subject of capacity building.

¹ From: Policy Note Minister Charles Michel, 5 November 2008

² Members of the consortium included HIVA as the leading institution, ACE-Europe, the IOB-UA (*Institute of Development Policy and Management of the University of Antwerp*) and Dris-Consult.

The Special Evaluation Office expresses the hope that the findings and recommendations laid down in this report will provide a source of inspiration for future innovations and enrichments of the current policies of both the NGOs and the DGD.

Dominique de Crombrugghe

Special Evaluator of International Cooperation

1. Synthesis

1.1. Introduction

- 1 This report describes the results and conclusions of the evaluation of Belgian NGO partnerships and capacity development (CD) carried out by the HIVA/ACE Europe/IOB consortium at the request of the Special Evaluation Office (SEO) of the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.
- 2 The evaluation is situated within the framework of **major changes** in the Belgian and international development context, especially with regards to the recognition of the central role played by local actors in the development process – with the corresponding new division of responsibilities. Partnerships with local organisations in the South play a central role in the operational activities of Belgian NGOs and these partnerships were the subject of this evaluation.
- 3 The aim of SEO is to determine to what extent and for which reasons the Belgian NGOs' capacity development activities with their partners and final beneficiaries have been effectively successful in the context of partnership relations. The evaluation also assesses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the interventions by the Belgian NGOs with regard to the CD of their partners. It also looks for indications of the effects and impact of CD and the advantages this has brought for the final beneficiaries. The evaluation focuses strongly on the learning aspect of this subject, which has been the topic of relatively little study. The formulation of concrete recommendations is supporting this **learning dimension**.
- 4 The evaluation was done by a group of national and international experts. It comprises 5 major phases covering the period from January 2009 to the spring of 2010 and also included seven field visits (Burkina Faso, Cambodia, India, Peru, South Africa and 2 missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo). The evaluation was based on a **methodology** that:
 - takes into account the large diversity of actors, projects, themes and contexts; the dynamic and non-linear character of CD; and possible shortages of secondary material regarding the period studied (10 years)
 - adopts a systemic perspective. This means that the analysis departs from the partner organisation's changes in capacity and subsequently examines which factors contributed to the partners' CD (including external activities) and whether or not these capacity related changes have contributed to a better quality and effectiveness of the partner organisation
 - is based on a sample of 21 NNGOs³ and 40 partnerships over the period 1998-2008, selected based on specific criteria and negotiation
 - regarding data collection focuses on (i) the contribution of resources by the NNGO (inputs); (ii) capacity development with regard to the partner organisations (and the role played by the NNGO in it); (iii) the outputs and outcomes with the partners and (iv) the impact on the beneficiaries

³ In the text the terms Belgian NGO and NNGO (Northern NGO) are used alternately to indicate Belgian non-governmental organisations who are involved in development cooperation

- was based on 7 evaluation questions (with associated judgement criteria)
 - departs from the Belgian policy framework with regard to partnerships and CD, as embodied in successive reforms (and associated legal frameworks for funding)
- 5 The evaluation relies on a conceptual framework which builds on existing knowledge and the growing consensus on the building blocks of capacity and capacity development. Here CD is viewed as an iterative, non-linear development process which is influenced by internal and external factors.

1.2. Findings

- 6 The evaluation was underpinned by 7 evaluation questions, divided into 4 clusters that differentiated between
- the policy making and strategic choices of the NNGOs regarding partnerships and CD,
 - the approach and management of CD in de partnerships,
 - the effectiveness of the CD,
 - and the adaptivity of the NNGOs and the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC).
 - Each evaluation question provided information for the assessment of one or more OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact). The findings are summarised below according to the four clusters of the evaluation framework.

1.2.1 Policy and strategic questions (cluster 1)

- 7 In this chapter the report analyses the extent to which Belgian NGOs have developed a policy regarding partnerships and CD, and identifies the broad outlines of that policy (evaluation question 1). It subsequently discusses the NNGOs' strategic choices in terms of approach and methods for support to CD (evaluation question 2). We emphasise that these findings are based on the 21 NNGOs that were part of the documentary phase of this evaluation.
- 8 Generally, the policy documents show that the NNGOs consider CD important within their partnerships. However, this attention is seldom translated into concrete operational instructions and strategies regarding CD. There are more policy documents relating to partnerships than to CD support.
- 9 One of the concrete results of the shift from a project approach to a programme approach has been a striving for more coherence (both locally and thematically). Within their partnerships the majority of the NNGOs play a role in supporting the partners' programmes (or the execution of joint activities) based on a shared vision and objectives with the partner. We do not find any extreme examples of pure contracting on the one hand or « mutual governance» (fully shared policy and execution) on the other. On the level of DGDC we find a similar situation as with the NNGOs: a strong focus on the importance of CD but few tools that allow the administration to evaluate the NNGOs' efforts regarding CD.
- 10 Overall, in their CD support the NNGOs adopted a functional approach (focused on strengthening the partners' implementation capacity) rather than an intrinsic one (with CD as an objective in itself), although we often also find a combination of the

two approaches. CD support (still) often takes place within the direct relationship between the NNGO and their partner in the South, but in parallel we identified a growing diversification of the number of actors involved in the CD processes. Regarding this development we must add that although the available CD support (supply-driven) is still a strong determining factor, the CD support set up by NNGOs is increasingly based on the demands of their Southern partners. Training and workshops remain a large part of the support to CD activities.

1.2.2 Approach and management of CD in partnerships (cluster 2)

- 11 In this cluster, the evaluation examines to what extent this (relatively poorly articulated) policy is then put into practice by the NGOs involved. The focus is on how the activities for CD were set up and carried out within the partnerships (evaluation question 3) and on the managerial aspects (evaluation question 4). This analysis yielded a kaleidoscope of CD practices which nevertheless reveal significant patterns.
- 12 Based on the partnerships that were visited, the NNGOs' CD approach in the field can be roughly summed up in five distinct approaches each with its own specific strong and weak points/risks:
 - *Partnerships of technical⁴ (service delivery) NNGOs with specific attention to CD in the design and execution of the programmes* mainly focus on the technical- and managerial capacities of their partners. This approach has the advantage of being explicit and measurable, and facilitates specialisation and knowledge building. On the other hand, few development problems have purely technical causes. Experience also teaches us that an organisation's upstream functioning is important (aspects of governance, resilience, institutional development, etc.). The more political aspect of the changes and, for example, dealing with various values and rationalities within the organisations and their environment are also more difficult to summarise in rigid planning- and monitoring processes (6 partnerships of 4 NNGOs).
 - *NNGOs' Partnerships with a dominant political agenda and with a more implicit approach to CD*, particularly characterised by a strong belief in a critical and strategic dialogue and cooperation on joint action points via pragmatic forms of ID⁵ and HRD (which the partners are allowed to largely work out for themselves). This political approach responds well to the complex character of advocacy, lobby work and political action by entering into a flexible and locally owned relationship. By collaborating on concrete campaigns and activities there is an implicit involvement in CD for processes that are difficult to plan ahead. However, the fact that these CD strategies are poorly documented hampers critical review, testing and knowledge building. There is also a risk that the implicit assumptions on how to set up CD are not shared on an organisational level, but are only known to certain individual staff members. (7 partnerships of 4 NNGOs).

⁴ Technical (service delivery) NNGOs: With this concept the evaluation refers to a group of NNGOs that has specialised within a certain sector/niche (education, health, etc.) and is mainly involved in supporting structures and processes aimed at providing better service delivery. These NNGOs also support lobby work and advocacy activities to a lesser extent, and some organise political campaigns, but the lion's share of their work is aimed at improving service delivery.

⁵ A distinction was made between the development (1) of individual employers' competencies (Human Resource Development, HRD), (2) of the organisation as a whole, or parts thereof (Organisational Development, OD), and (3) of the organisation's position with regard to its environment (other organisations, structures, judicial and institutional framework) (Institutional Development, ID)

- *NNGOs' Partnerships that mainly react to technical needs in society but set these in a wider economic and political framework via a multi-actor approach*; they implement an explicit CD strategy which involves both the partners' technical- and managerial capacity (downstream) and the more strategic and soft capacity (upstream). A diverse strategy containing elements of HRD, OD and ID is generally implemented, and the endeavour is to follow up the CD with various M&E frameworks. Most NNGOs have only used this renewed strategy since a few years. The radical changes in the choice of partners or in the type of relationship entered into have been problematic for some partners or have caused friction with other actors. There is also a risk that the radical changes in approach are not sufficiently understood and supported in the field, with the result that they continue to be too much donor driven (6 partnerships of 4 NNGOs).
- *NNGOs' Partnerships with a weak explicitation of the overall CD policy*, where there are large differences in the CD approach within a single NNGO (3 partnerships of 1 NNGO) or where the CD approach has a limited scope (5 partnerships of 3 NNGOs). This seemed to coincide with the specific experiences and choices of individuals in the field, rather than a systematic policy of the Belgian NGOs involved.
- *NNGOs' Partnerships where only a small measure or no CD is addressed* (6 partnerships of 3 project NNGOs and 3 programme NNGOs).

- 13 The quality of the relationship between Northern NGOs and their partners in the South is generally regarded as an important component of successful NGO collaboration. This evaluation confirms the idea that in a significant number of partnerships efforts are being made not to limit the relationship to financial transfers within a donor-beneficiary relationship, although the extent to which this occurs varied greatly. Only ¼ of the partnerships was described as 'normative', where working on strong partner organisations is an important objective in itself (cf. trade unions and some other member organisations). 3/4 was described as being more 'instrumental'. This means that the strengthening of the partner was mainly in function of the final target groups or the achievement of certain objectives. This dividing line also has consequences for the adopted CD approach.
- 14 Although both the partners in the South and the Belgian NGOs generally speak in terms of equal and open relationships with effective communication, the Belgian NGOs in the sample are more conservative (with respect to a number of other Northern NGOs) when it comes to organising the systematic participation of the Southern partners in their policies and activities. The situation is different with regard to the content of the programmes that are funded and the stakeholders with whom they can cooperate. For that a large majority leaves the initiative and the decision-making rights with the Southern partners.
- 15 The duration of the partnerships was not defined at the beginning of the partnership for all the partnerships in the sample, and it often appeared to be open-ended, thus creating uncertainty for most partners. The average duration for the partnerships in the sample was circa 12 years.
- 16 Most remarkable in the evaluation is the general lack of a systematic analysis of the partner's capacity at the start of the partnership. Also remarkable is the poor harmonisation between external funders (NNGOs and other donors) who work with the same partner organisation, apart from two exceptions. A third difficulty is the lack of underpinned exit-strategies. In some cases it was found that formerly developed capacities were lost when partner organisations had to revert to survival strategies because of an inability to cope with the loss of Belgian funding channels.

17 In the sample of the partnerships that were studied, the CD support only plays a small role, both financially and in volume. There is a great diversity of CD strategies amongst the partnerships ranging from hands-off to hands-on activities, implicit or explicit, downstream or upstream. The diversity of strategies within individual partnerships, however, is limited. Only in about 1/3 of the partnerships is there a balanced approach to CD. Most CD activities are implemented by the NNGO itself, followed by the use of local CD providers. There is, however, also attention to peer-to-peer exchanges and facilitating the partner's access to networks. The NNGOs with a developed Northern network also involve organisations from that network for the strengthening of their partners. The main focus is on training staff (HRD) via conventional training and workshops, followed by support to organisational development (OD). Institutional development (ID) receives less attention.

1.2.3 Effectiveness of the support to CD in partnerships (cluster 3)

18 After analysing the input side of the CD activities of the partnerships of Belgian NGOs in cluster 2, cluster 3 looks at the effects of CD on the partner organisations' functioning (evaluation question 5) and at the achievement of the partner organisations' development objectives at output and outcome level (evaluation question 6).

19 The majority of the partners state that they are more successful in achieving their development objectives. Improvements with respect to the partners' capacity are found for the 5 « core capabilities ». The support to CD involves non-linear processes that are influenced by a multitude of internal and external factors. Nevertheless, in 1/3 of the partnerships we managed to clearly identify contributions by the NNGOs towards strengthening the competences on the level of the individual staff and the partner's organisational level. For 1/3 the contribution was limited and for the rest it was not significant.

20 For a majority the partners' financial dependence on the NNGO is great, which yields complex challenges with regard to sustainability and should be the subject of a debate between the relevant parties.

21 There are indications that an improved partners' performance has influenced the results on the level of the beneficiaries (outcome). Many different domains of change with the beneficiaries were identified, ranging from basic needs to capacities at an organisational level. With respect to improvements in the defence of rights of individuals and communities, we also found changes related to improved trust, non-discrimination and an increased ability to mobilise.

22 The five approaches to CD within the partnerships in the sample which the evaluation team derived from the NNGOs' existing practice (see par. 12), each have their own strong and weak points. Moreover, the evaluation shows that the following factors hamper the strengthening of partner organisations:

- unclear vision and identity of the NNGO
- weak institutional set-up of new partner organisations
- lack of critical mass of NNGO to implement CD
- lack of expertise in the building and sharing of knowledge regarding CD

1.2.4 Adaptive capacity of NNGOs and DGDC (cluster 4)

- 23 In this last cluster we evaluated the capacity of the relevant Belgian actors to adapt their policy and approach regarding CD to the challenges in the field and changes in the North-South context (evaluation question 7). Here the focus is on the NNGOs (because they are the subject of the evaluation). However, it is also necessary to examine the DGDC's adaptive capacity, given the important role the administration plays in the whole process, especially with respect to policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, quality control, etc.
- 24 As for the adaptive capacity of the NNGOs, we see an evolution in NNGOs making the policy and the strategies with respect to partnerships and CD for the 1998-2008 period more explicit. Although NNGOs are open to change, the operationalisation of new ideas concerning CD is slow. NNGO's policy making (with respect to partnership and capacity development) appears to be strongly influenced by the regulatory framework on the one hand and internal consultation (within their own NGO) on the other. There are still only few evaluations (internal and external), and if there are any, attempts to translate the results into the NNGO's policies are not always successful.
- 25 The DGDC regulatory framework towards a programmatic approach has been a significant stimulus for the NNGOs to further develop and/or adjust their policy. With regard to DGDC's policy and vision on support to CD, another picture emerges. The policy framework is much less explicit and in the past, NNGOs have not been held systematically and concretely accountable towards this theme. Before the end of 2008 there were no comparable incentives as seen for the programmatic approach, particularly with regard to knowledge building – which is not consistent with the discourse on the central importance of the CD the NNGOs have been holding over the past ten years.
- 26 Most NNGOs are only at the beginning of a development towards learning organisations. The most popular tool for the exchange of knowledge between partners is partner meetings, South-South exchanges and regional seminars. This usually comprises aspects of content and management (RBM, M&E, PCM). So far little attention has been given to the systemisation of experiences with support to CD. A limited number of NNGOs are clearly investing in knowledge building and reforms of their policy/practices, especially with regard to CD. Staff and resources are made available.
- 27 With respect to DGDC's adaptive capacity there is tension between the evolution of the policy framework with regard to partnership and CD on the one hand and the operational translation of these new policy choices (in strategic frameworks, guidelines, formats, reporting obligations and judgement criteria) on the other hand. This makes it difficult for the desk officers to gain proper insight into the content of the partnership relation and CD in the field and consequently to do the corresponding quality test.
- 28 Finally the evaluators find that the operationalisation of other policy lines⁶ of DGDC can create tension with regard to a policy that wishes to focus more attention on CD:
- To respond to increased pressure to demonstrate concrete and measurable results at the level of the final target groups (as part of RBM, MDGs, poverty reduction), NNGOs are under pressure to focus more on that level at the risk that this will be at the expense of support to CD processes.

⁶ It is important to emphasise here that the other policy guidelines are not necessarily problematic, but that an implementation needs to be provided that is not at the expense of ownership and of the attention to CD processes.

- Increased pressure on accountability makes NNGOs select stronger partners and possibly less innovative programmes (because they pose a lower risk).
- In the policy dialogue many NNGOs are held accountable for the long-term nature of their partnerships. On the other hand support to CD seems to better thrive in a continuous and long partnership relation.
- Finally, there is a risk that the pressure for more coherence in an NNGO's portfolio causes themes or approaches to be forced onto the partners which could undermine coherence in the programme of the Southern partner.

1.3. Conclusions

29 Building on the findings from the 4 aforementioned clusters that were studied, the evaluation team formulates six conclusions with corresponding recommendations:

(1) Quality of partnership is a determining factor for effective support to CD

30 The evaluation confirms the link between the quality of the partner relation and the scope for effective CD partly because this strengthens the ability of the Southern organisations to play a (more) central role in initiating CD processes and decision-making. This gives rise to three recommendations:

- NNGOs could make partner agreements that explicitly address shared values and a vision of CD and include a long-term perspective
- NNGOs should develop more well thought-out exit strategies
- NNGOs can reduce the administrative burden of their partners and increase the relevance of their CD activities by harmonising them more with other funders of the partner organisations

(2) Capacity development as a driving force for reducing poverty and promoting democratic government

31 Improving the quality of service delivery of civil society actors and the support to CD with lobby and advocacy NGOs, trade unions and social movements are essential components of the Belgian NGOs' work. If CD support is given both strategically and efficiently, they can be labelled as very useful (even essential) investments in favour of poverty reduction and good management. This leads to the following recommendation:

- NNGOs must express their support to processes of capacity development in all their dimensions (objectives; values and principles; tools and methods, building blocks) more clearly

(3) CD as an endogenous, non-linear process, vulnerable to interruptions in external support

32 The partner organisations that have grown significantly stronger over the years have done so on the basis of endogenous processes and sustained internal choices and a respect for the non-linear life cycle of each organisation. CD support by NNGOs must be able to take advantage of this by regarding organisations as 'open systems'. This gives rise to three recommendations:

- The support to CD often requires long-term methods and sustained support

- NNGOs must develop adjusted M&E systems to follow up CD methods (as non-linear processes)
- NNGOs must not only invest in technical implementation capacity, but also in other core capacities (vision, strategy, policy)

(4) Conditions for efficient external support to CD

33 Effective CD largely depends on the availability of necessary NNGO capacities (strong identity, vision, capacity to analyse, clear CD strategy and approach, learning capacity) and on the design and implementation of CD processes (creativity/flexibility, ownership, multi-actor approach). There are three recommendations regarding this:

- Add more diversity to CD strategies (more than training and partner meetings) based on strong context- and institutional analysis
- Increased investment in the development of local CD expertise
- Consider pooling TA support on sector level to increase cost efficiency

(5) Growing policy attention with regard to CD, but funding and management tools are still in their infancy

34 The increased recognition of CD on all levels must translate itself even more into existing policy tools and operational processes of the Belgian development cooperation. The possible tensions between CD and other policy dimensions (cf. par 29) should be recognised more as well as the necessary diversity in the approach to CD. Some catching up will have to be done with respect to making the policy more explicit and operational with regard to CD at the level of the DGDC. This gives rise to the following recommendations:

- DGDC could distinguish between NNGOs that are involved in classic, output-based programmes for poverty reduction and those involved in complex processes aimed at 'state building' and good governance
- DGDC can communicate clearly on the various interpretations of the concept "results-based management" in CD processes
- DGDC could construct a proactive policy (suggest standards, experimenting, raising awareness) to stimulate NNGOs to further professionalise their CD approach
- DGDC could provide sufficient flexibility of funding frameworks so that a wide range of CD processes may be funded.

(6) Limited structures and processes for content related quality control

35 The attention to joint learning and qualitative follow-up regarding CD is relatively recent and should be developed and consolidated further. This conclusion leads to the following recommendations:

- The Belgian NGOs must invest in developing their own expertise regarding the management of partner relations and strategies for CD
- The federations can play a bigger role in developing the internal capacity of the members regarding support to CD processes
- Internal knowledge building regarding CD needs increased development and specialisation within DGDC.

2 Introduction

2.1 Evaluation Context

This report reflects the results and conclusions of the evaluation of the Belgian NGO partnership relations and capacity development (CD) carried out by the HIVA/ACE Europe/IOB consortium for the Special Evaluation Office (SEO) of the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

The aim of the SEO is to examine to what extent and for which reasons the capacity development activities of Belgian NGOs with their partners and final beneficiaries have actually been successful. In other words, the aim of this evaluation is: "to gain insight into the way NGO's support to capacity development (CD) can be effective in the context of a partnership relation".⁷ The evaluation also assesses the relevance, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions of Belgian NGOs regarding the CD of their partners. We also looked for indications of the effects and impact of CD and the advantages these bring to the final beneficiaries.

The evaluation is strongly focused on the learning aspect: in this respect the evaluation contributes towards a greater knowledge of the Belgian Government and its non-governmental partners about NGO partnerships, especially on the level of CD of the partners in the South. It formulates concrete recommendations that will further support that learning aspect.

The choice for this evaluation theme is relevant: since the last evaluation⁸ of all partnership relations of the Belgian NGOs carried out in 1999, the Belgian and international development context has undergone important changes. Apart from changes in the work field of the NNGOs⁹ in Belgium and the South, there have also been shifts in NNGO's internal functioning and evolutions in the profile of their partner organisations in the South. These changes highlight the central role the partners play in the change process. The evaluation also examines to what extent the NGOs' partnership relations reflect this changed context and the new division of responsibility.

Despite its political importance and the size of the budget allocated to it (in the world of development cooperation), CD is one of the domains where efforts towards development have met with the least success.¹⁰ However, most of the studies on which one can base this conclusion focus on CD support in the public sector.¹¹ The number of broader evaluations and studies that specifically examine the NNGOs' activities in terms of CD is

⁷ See terms of references N°S4/2008/07 – A general call for tender for the evaluation of NGO partner relations aimed at capacity building.

⁸ Evaluation de la relation de partenariat entre les ONG belges et leurs partenaires locaux, AGCD, 1999.

⁹ We use the abbreviation 'NNGOs' for Northern NGOs and 'partner' for the civil society organisations and local/national governments in the South with which there is collaboration.

¹⁰ The challenge of Capacity Development: working towards good practices, OECD, 2006.

¹¹ Baser H., Morgan P. (2008), Capacity, Change and Performance: Study Report; OECD/DAC (2009), Inventory of Donor Approaches to Capacity Development: What We Are Learning.; World Bank (2005), An Independent Review of World Bank Support to Capacity Building in Africa.

very limited, therefore little is known about this important area in the NNGOs' operations.¹² This evaluation aims to make a contribution to this.

The evaluation took place in five major phases in the period from January 2009 to the spring of 2010:

- phase 1: drawing up a methodological note;
- phase 2: documentary study of 21 NNGOs and the government regarding CD policy and practice, and a web survey on 40 NNGO partnerships;
- phase 3: field visits to 31 partnerships of Belgian NGOs in the South with restitutions and reports within each country;
- phase 4: analysis and drafting of the final report and restitutions;
- phase 5: seminary with all NNGOs and other actors: feedback and looking ahead.

The evaluation was based on a sample of 40 Belgian NGO partnership relations in the period 1998-2008. All NNGOs in the sample received funding for these partnerships from the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The analysis also comprises an analysis of the general policy and practice of the relevant actors (NGOs and DGDC). 31 of them were visited in the field and 9 were studied on the basis of existing documentation and a web survey.

The evaluation was carried out by a group of international and national consultants.

2.2 Methodology

The evaluation methodology was developed in such a way as to take 3 important points of interest¹³ into account.

First and foremost the methodology had to encompass the wide diversity of actors, projects, themes and contexts. This challenge underlined the need for a flexible analytical framework that could be developed inductively. As there was also little material available on the NNGOs' approach to CD, existing practices were mapped in a first phase and used as a basis for drawing more evaluative conclusions.

A second challenge was related to the dynamic non-linear character of CD thus creating a need for a systemic perspective. The evaluation is therefore based on the assumption that the capacity development of organisations is an endogenous, non-linear and complex process that is influenced by internal and external factors, one of which is the support from Belgian NGOs.

A third challenge lay in the fact that the evaluation covers a period of 10 years (1998-2008) and that the further back in time one goes, the less complete the documentation becomes. Moreover, the explicit attention paid to CD within the NNGOs' working activities is more recent, which means that there is less secondary material available before the end of the 90s. This was partly offset by reconstructing the practice over the years through interviews and focus groups.

The evaluation methodology is inspired by considering the effects and causalities according to the ripple model.¹⁴ An NNGOs' CD activity therefore triggers several effects

¹² Does Foreign Aid really Work?, Roger Riddell, 2007: *'Indeed, of all the different ways that NGO-aid is allocated and spent, least is known about the overall impact of capacity-building initiatives, even though, ironically, some sort of capacity-building activity is undertaken by more NGO's than any other activity, and many undertake some form of capacity-building on an almost continuous basis.'*

¹³ This and several additional methodological challenges are discussed in more detail in section 2.4.

which could initially affect those directly involved in the partner organisation, and then possibly spread to the entire organisation and the beneficiaries. The effectiveness of the activity (the strength of the ripple) depends on many internal and external factors. The evaluation examined which conditions need to be met so that Northern NGOs can make an effective contribution to the partners' CD. Because of the systemic perspective, it was decided to base the analysis on capacity changes in the partner organisation (middle-up and middle-down approach). It also examined which factors contributed to capacity changes in the partner, including activities by external actors such as NNGOs (middle-down). Finally, it examined whether or not changes in capacity contributed to a better quality and effectiveness of the partner organisation (middle-up).

Table 1 is a synthesis of the different evaluation activities and their focus. In collecting data attention was paid to (1) the means delivered by Belgian NGOs (input side), (2) capacity development in the partner organisations and the role of the NNGOs within this, (3) the outputs and outcomes of the partner organisations and, in so far that any conclusions could be reached regarding this, (4) the impact this had on the beneficiaries. Furthermore, data were collected on partner relations between the NNGOs and the Southern partners, and the internal and external environment in which the partners functioned was examined

The different evaluation and data collecting activities are explained in more detail in the table below.

¹⁴ Intrac (2010), Praxis Paper 23, p9: the ripple model uses the analogy of throwing a stone into a pond and the spread of increasingly smaller ripples this produces. The ripple can become stronger along the way if it converges with other existing ripples in the water.

Table 1 Overview of evaluation activities

Stage	Evaluation activities	Instruments
Methodological note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exploratory interviews with DGDC and the Federations - analysis of DGDC's database for sample determination - editing methodological note - discussion methodological note in steering committee and with NNGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interviews - document study
Documentary phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short literature study of concepts of CD and partnerships - actualisation of and consultation on the sample and the relevant NNGOs - data collection on policy and approach in terms of partnerships and CD of 21 NNGOs - data analysis of the policy and the approach of 21 NNGOs with regard to partnerships and CD - collection and analysis of documents with regard to the 40 partnerships in the sample 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - study of documents - interviews (individual and group) supplemented with a focus group discussion on the concepts of partnership and CD for each NGO - web survey: one web survey on the policy making of the NNGOs and one web survey to get info on the selected partnerships
Field visits	<p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data collection in Belgium on partnerships in the sample - start data collection in the field with regard to outcome and impact <p>Field visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data collection on capacity changes in the partner, outcome and impact, perceptions of the partnership - Restitutions, for each country visited in, the South and in Belgium - Analysis of 9 partnerships that were not visited in the field phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interviews with the NNGOs and first data collection by partner organisations (MSC and/or web survey) - interviews with staff of the relevant partner - workshop: self-evaluation - data collection via most significant change, focus groups and/or web survey - interviews (individual and group) with beneficiaries and stakeholders - document study - document study
Analysis and report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - writing reports for each country - data analysis of the different phases - editing synthesis report - discussion of synthesis report with steering committee and NGOs 	
Seminary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distribution of findings and recommendations on the basis of a seminary 	

The methodology used in the different phases is described in the methodological report and the documentary phase report and was summarised in the annexes of this report (annex 2). We shall discuss several methodological aspects which are addressed in more detail in the aforementioned reports.

2.2.1 The evaluation framework

The evaluation was founded on seven evaluation questions, divided into four clusters with a distinction made between (1) policy making, (2) approach and management, (3) effectiveness and (4) adaptivity. Each evaluation question provides information for the evaluation of one or more OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact). In annex 2 there is a more detailed account of how the evaluation questions relate to the OECD/DAC criteria.

Table 2 Seven evaluation questions divided into four clusters with corresponding judgement criteria

Cluster 1: policy making and strategic choices	
Evaluation question 1 – What policy was/is developed by the NNGOs and their partners regarding partnerships and CD?	<p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - policy documents comprise a vision of CD and partnerships - objectives regarding CD in partnerships are relevant in the light of the general objectives of relevant partners in the North and South - policy regarding CD in partnerships is result-oriented
Evaluation question 2 – Which strategic choices did the NNGOs make regarding the approach and methods for support to CD?	<p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the intervention strategies regarding support to CD are founded on clear methodological choices - the intervention strategies have evolved together with changing ideas regarding support to partners' CD
Cluster 2: approach and management of CD in partnerships	
Evaluation question 3 – To what extent are policy principles and strategic choices regarding CD in partnerships translated into interventions and cooperation with the partners?	<p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The partner policy of the NNGOs is based on a professional identification and selection process of partners - the NNGO contributes to CD processes in the partners in a relevant way - the NNGO has the necessary resources and capacity to support the processes of CD
Evaluation question 4 – How is the management of the partner relation developed and how are the processes of CD followed up?	<p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sound management of the partnership relation - sound management of support to CD as part of the partnership relation - both partners address "learning in the organisation"
Cluster 3: effectiveness of support to CD in partnerships	
Evaluation question 5 – What changes can be determined regarding the capacity of the partner organisations?	<p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are indications for the development of the partners' capacities - The results of the partner's CD in the partner are long-lasting
Evaluation question 6 – To what extent is the partner organisation better able to realise its development objectives (output and outcome level)?	<p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes regarding the partner's outputs as a result of processes of CD - The support to processes of CD has influenced the outcome of the partner organisation – changes on the level of the final beneficiaries

Cluster 4: adaptive capacity	
Evaluation question 7 – To what extent are the relevant actors (Belgian NGOs and DGDC) able to adapt their policy and approach regarding CD support to the challenges that arise, taking into account a changing context in North and South?	<i>Judgement criteria:</i> – Belgian NGO’s capacity to adapt – DGDC’s capacity to adapt

2.2.2 40 partnerships in the sample

On the basis of the data available in DGDC’s database, all the funded activities of NNGOs and consortia of the NNGOs were listed for the 7 selected countries. For the period 1998-2008 this resulted in a total of 1173 activities for 80 NNGOs and consortia. The NNGOs who had not been active in one of the 7 countries in the period 2005-2007 were filtered from this group. This yielded a new population of 55 NNGOs and consortia. In the end 21 NNGOs and 40 partnerships¹⁵ were selected (see table 3). Annex 4 comprises an overview of the selected partnerships ordered according to the different parameters of the selection process.

Table 3 Overview of the 21 NNGOs and the 40 partnerships in the sample (more details in annex)

Abbreviations NNGO	Full Name NNGO	Partner organisation (Field phase)	Partner organisation (only in docu-phase)
BD	Broederlijk Delen	– Cedep Ayllu (Peru) – ACAT (South Africa) – DPA (Cambodia)	
VE	Vredeseilanden	– Réseau WIMA (DRC) – SYDIP (DRC)	
Oxfam – Sol	Oxfam Solidarity	– TCOE (South Africa) – C.CAWDU (Cambodia)	
Volens	Volens vzw	– ANAG (Burkina Faso)	– Bela Bela Welfare Society (SA)
TRIAS	TRIAS vzw	– GARC (South Africa), – Mbongwana (DRC)	– Cresol-Baser (Brazil)
DMOS	Dienst Missie en Ontwikkelings-samenwerking	– Surabi DO (India) – OFPROP (Peru)	– Bureau Salésien de Projets (DRC)
WSM	Wereldsolidariteit-Solidarité Mondiale	– MOCC (DRC) – C.CAWDU (Cambodia)	– CFTUI (India)
FOS	Fonds voor Ontwikkelings-samenwerking	– CGTP-IESI (Peru) – ILRIG (South Africa)	

¹⁵ Within each funded activity the central partnership was selected in consultation with the NNGO.

Abbreviations NNGO	Full Name NNGO	Partner organisation (Field phase)	Partner organisation (only in docu-phase)
DA	Damiaanactie (Damian Foundation)	- Min. Health in Delhi and TB Division State Health Society in Bihar (India) - Min health, nat lepra and TBC programmes (DRC)	
DISOP	DISOP vzw	- Prorural (Peru)	- ACOPAMEC (Brazil)
VIC	Vlaams Internationaal Centrum	- BDD (DRC)	- Favos de Mel (Brazil) - DACA (India)
11.11.11	11.11.11 koepel	- Aprodeh (Peru) - Recic (DRC)	- Platforma DhESCA (Brazil)
AADC	Association pour l'Action de Développement Communautaire	- AHEAD (Cambodja)	
ADG	Aide au Développement Gembloux	- JEEP (DRC)	- CWPD (Cambodia)
Autre Terre	Autre Terre asbl	- APIL (Burkina Faso)	
Sos Layettes	Sos Layettes Solidarité et Développement	- AMB (Burkina Faso)	
PROTOS	PROTOS vzw	- PEHA (DRC)	
DBA	Défi Belgique Afrique	- AMB (Burkina Faso)	
CEMUBAC	Centre Scientifique et Médical de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles pour ses activités de Coopération	- DPS Kirotshe (DRC)	
EF	Entraide et Fraternité	- ADECOM (India)	
SLCD	Service Laïc de Coopération au Développement	- MMB (Burkina Faso)	

2.2.3 Methodological Challenges /comments on the approach of the evaluation

The methodological note describes several methodological challenges. It also indicates to what extent these restrictions had a real effect during the evaluation:

Presence of key figures in local organisations – As the evaluation covers a period of 10 years and the CSO sector is very dynamic in most countries, the evaluators assumed it would not prove easy to find the right respondents. In practice however, this did not create any major problems. In a majority of cases there was still someone on management level who was familiar with the whole period being evaluated. Furthermore, the group activities (participatory workshops) proved especially useful in reconstructing the history of the organisations and analysing the evolution of the capacity.

Obligation to preserve old documents – Generally speaking the NNGOs were able to provide the evaluators with key information. In some cases however it was difficult to

acquire more detailed information (budgets, staff situation, etc.) on a period beyond 4 to 5 years ago.

CD snapshot in partner organisations – The modalities of the evaluation allowed only one screening of the organisation during the field mission. This was partly offset by incorporating an historical perspective in the CD workshop. The evolution of the organisations was also evaluated over a 10-year period. This required intensive efforts on the part of the local organisation during the 3-day visit. Whenever this effort proved to be unfeasible, the evaluators replaced participative workshops with the whole team with interviews with individuals or smaller groups (e.g. in Cambodia). In this way the evaluators were able to get the fullest possible picture of the partner organisation. As far as the methods for data collection are concerned, the participative workshop generally seemed to produce the necessary findings and insights. The evaluators always managed to work out the historical perspective of the organisation and this was much appreciated by the local organisations.

Making a cross case partnership analysis based on projects in various sectors and contexts - The analysis of CD in the partnerships was not aimed at arriving at conclusions that would apply to all contexts. The logic of 'what works for who in which context' was always taken as the starting point. In practice the cross case analysis was done in 3 steps: (1) reconstruction of the intervention logic for the CD support within each partnership, taking into account the context, adopted strategy and expected outcome. This was then critically analysed for each partnership and patterns were identified by the team leaders; (2) discussions of the first findings of the cross case analysis in a 2-day workshop with all the international consultants, (3) processing and refining this analysis for the final report with two additional revisions by international consultants.

Linking interventions to findings/results in the field – In most cases it was not possible to establish direct causal links between a certain CD intervention for example and changes in the partner organisation's capacity or the organisation's outputs and outcomes. That has everything to do with the many internal and external factors that influence processes of CD in organisations. Moreover, in not one of the partnerships analysed did we find useful secondary material in terms of impact (e.g. impact studies with control groups or other measurements using baseline data). However the evaluation did estimate the probability of whether or not certain activities had possibly contributed to CD changes and outcomes. This was done on the basis of participatory workshops in the field (where explicit examples and arguments regarding suggested links were asked for), supplemented with evidence from M&E reports and/or the perceptions of external stakeholders.

Introduction of new evaluation methodologies – A methodology was developed for field visits which allowed processes of CD to be mapped in line with the principles of the (see 2.3) To this end a participative workshop was organised with the staff and management of the partner organisation. In the workshop a critical self evaluation was carried out of the processes of CD within the partner organisation and of the external support of these processes. Here the evaluation used the Wall of Wonder¹⁶ technique (mapping the history of the organisation) and the scoring of various capacities in the most important periods in the life of the organisation¹⁷. This methodology received a very positive evaluation from the evaluation teams and the partner organisations. The evaluation also used Most Significant Change (MSC¹⁸) for collecting material on the level of the final beneficiaries. The implementation relied heavily on the input of local consultants and partner

¹⁶ Based on Vaughn O'Halloran (ICA, 1995), adapted by Joep C. de Jong (JLS International) in 2000, 2005 and 2007.

¹⁷ Based on Rick James (2005), 'Quick and Dirty' Evaluation of Capacity Building: Using Participatory Exercises, Praxis Note 15, Intrac.

¹⁸ Most Significant Change is a participative methodology that gathers qualitative information on the level of the beneficiaries (outcome/impact). Stories are written down about changes in the living conditions of beneficiaries. These stories are then discussed in groups before finally choosing the most significant change. More information in Dart, J.J. & Davies, R.J. (2005) The Most Significant Change User guide. Available on <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au>.

organisations. Finally, the MSC methodology was applied to 18 partnerships, half of which with good results (i.e.: that the use of MSC produced useful information for reaching a conclusion about the effects on beneficiaries). The method was not presented to organisations who did not have the capacity to allocate field workers to do this (e.g. unions and advocacy and lobby organisations). The organisations who implemented the technique were generally satisfied with the introduction to this new technique. During the evaluation it appeared that the MSC technique was only being applied correctly by organisations experienced in monitoring and participative techniques. The evaluators organised focus group discussions during all the visits. The MSC results were validated during these focus group discussions. Conventional focus group discussions were organised if MSC had not been used. A web survey was also used in South Africa because the relevant partners were in turn involved in the CD of other local organisations who were easiest to contact by e-mail.

Measuring capacity development – Mapping processes of CD poses several methodological challenges. In the methodology this container concept was further unpacked by discussing various dimensions of it (see 2.3). In practice it proved no easy matter to obtain more detailed information from the partner organisations due to a lack of current data (CD is rarely documented) and the dynamic nature of CD, but also due to the tacit nature of some processes of CD which take place during normal work activities for example.

*Documentary study of 9 partnerships*¹⁹ – The analysis of the 9 partnerships that were not visited in the field was made on the basis of existing documentation supplemented with an email survey or telephone interviews if critical information was missing. The findings were then compared with the outcomes of 31 partnerships of the field phase. It should be pointed out here that this analysis clearly carries less weight than that of the 31 partnerships with field missions. In many cases there was only limited secondary documentation available and there was no insight into the perceptions of the partners and the real situation in the field.

Table 4 Overview of nine partnerships not visited during the field phase

Country	Partnership	Type organisation	Target group	Quality of info
BRA	Platforma DhESCA/11	Network organisation	farmers, workers, students, organisations	good
BRA	ACOPAMEC/DISOP	Service delivery organisation	Children and young people	poor
BRA	Cresol-Baser/TRIAS	Cooperative network (farmer organisations)	Family farmers, members of a saving and credit cooperative	good
BRA	Favos Del Mel/VIC	Service delivery organisation for education	Street children	good
CAM	CWPD/ADG	Service delivery organisation	Women and their families, esp. children	poor

¹⁹ This part of the study was coordinated by the team leader of the evaluation (HIVA), with the support of HIVA employees Bénédicte Fonteneau and Greet Van Dooren for the data collection.

DRC	bureau Salésien de Projets/DMOS	Service delivery organisation for education	Vocational education	good
IND	CFTUI/WSM	union	workers from various vocational sectors	good
IND	DACA/VIC	Service delivery organisation for education	dalits communities	good
SA	Bela Bela WS/Volens	community based organisation	HIV positive people and their families	poor

2.3. Basic concepts

In this section we introduce the main concepts used in the evaluation.

2.3.1 Capacity - capacity development

For some time CD has been receiving renewed attention in the development discourse and this is also translating itself into a growing number of studies and evaluations. Although the findings of all this study material vary, a consensus gradually seems to be emerging regarding the building blocks of capacity and capacity development. These studies show that:

- Capacity develops via endogenous processes from the inside and therefore cannot be controlled from the outside. However, external actors can influence the direction of change;
- The processes of CD are complex, lengthy and continuous processes which, although they are essentially independent of external interventions, can be influenced by them. They do not begin with the appearance of outsiders nor do they end when they leave;
- Capacity is not just about the ability to develop 'hard' or technical, individual or collective skills, but also involves 'soft' skills like self-confidence, legitimacy, resilience and realising a positive organisational culture.

On the basis of this it is argued that CD is an iterative, non-linear development process that is influenced by internal and external factors (Lavergne, 2006). For the definition of capacity and CD we use the OECD-DAC definition of 2006. *Capacity* is understood as the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to successfully manage their affairs. *Capacity development* is the process in which people, organisations and society as a whole develop, strengthen, adjust and maintain capacity over time. The evaluation examines support to capacity development, in this case by Belgian NGOs, of their partners in the South.

Core capabilities

For the CD analysis the evaluation initially started from the core capabilities identified by the local organisations themselves. These formed the basis for a self-evaluation supplemented with the evaluation by externals. For the final analysis the results were

examined using the new ECDPM framework²⁰ for CD. The five building blocks in this framework are summed up in Table 5.

Table 5 Five core capabilities of organisations (ECDPM, 2008)

Core capabilities	secondary building blocks
1. <i>Capability to commit and engage</i>	Volition, empowerment, motivation, attitude, self-confidence
2. <i>Capability to carry out technical, service delivery & logistical tasks</i>	The core functions to execute the mandate and objectives of the organisation/network
3. <i>Capability to relate and attract resources & support</i>	Management of relationships, mobilisation of resources, networking, developing legitimacy, protecting space
4. <i>Capability to adapt and self renew</i>	Learning, strategising, adaptation, repositioning, managing change
5. <i>Capability to balance coherence and diversity</i>	Encourage innovation and stability, control fragmentation, manage complexity, balance capability mix

Although the conceptual framework of ECDPM was only developed fairly recently and as yet has only been applied in a limited number of contexts,²¹ the following arguments justified its use: (1) it comprises new ideas on the complexity of the CD of organisations, (2) the framework is the result of a lengthy study with leading researchers and internationally recognised consultants, (3) it links up with other similar frameworks (e.g. by INTRAC and HIVA) and (4) a similar evaluation exercise that is currently being done in the Netherlands also used the ECDPM framework, which makes the data more comparable.

2.3.2 HRD – OD - ID

The evaluation also examined at which level support to CD is aimed. A distinction was made between the development of (1) individual competences of employees (Human Resource Development, HRD), (2) the organisation as a whole or parts of it (Organisational Development, OD), and (3) the position of the organisation with regard to its environment (other organisations, structures, legal and institutional framework) (Institutional Development, ID). The evaluation gathered information on the subject of CD activities for each level (e.g. technical training or OD with regard to staff policy) and on the approaches used (such as HRD through workshops or through on-the-job-training, or OD through adapting organisation processes or investments in infrastructure). The

²⁰ Baser H., Morgan P. (2008), Capacity, Change and Performance: Study Report. This report makes use of the last definition of the five building blocks from the end of 2008. This differs slightly from the version from the beginning of 2008.

²¹ Also by Baser H. (2009), The Law and Justice Sector Program (LJSP), Papua New Guinea, An Experimental Approach to Monitoring Capacity and Capacity Development, The Case of the Office of the Public Solicitor and in a recent evaluation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Netherlands (2009-2010): Evaluation of Dutch Support to Capacity Development: Evidence Based Case Studies.

analysis framework used to gather information regarding HRD-OD-ID is included in Annex 2.

2.3.3 Downstream and upstream support

To analyse the nature of CD actions it proved useful to distinguish between downstream- and upstream activities within the organisation. Downstream means developing the technical and operational implementation capacity (usually through HRD, technical OD and in certain cases also with investments in the infrastructure). On the other hand, there are CD interventions that focus on upstream processes in the partner organisation, in other words the policy, strategy, vision and mission, the institutional framework, etc. (usually through OD and ID). Depending on the type of partnership, considerably more is invested in one of the two, thus allowing an evaluation of how balanced the support to CD development was.

2.3.4 Six CD routes

The evaluation also examines the organisational routes of the NNGOs' CD actions. The 6 different routes identified in the documentary phase are visualised in figure 1. The smallest ellipse indicates how far the control of the Belgian NGO reaches. The actors in the middle circle (green) are all intermediary organisations which could play a role in various CD routes. They are situated in the NNGO's sphere of influence in the sense that the NNGO can decide whether or not to operate via a certain channel as well as to influence this channel. The final beneficiaries (largest circle) are situated even further away from the NNGO and are in the sphere of interest.

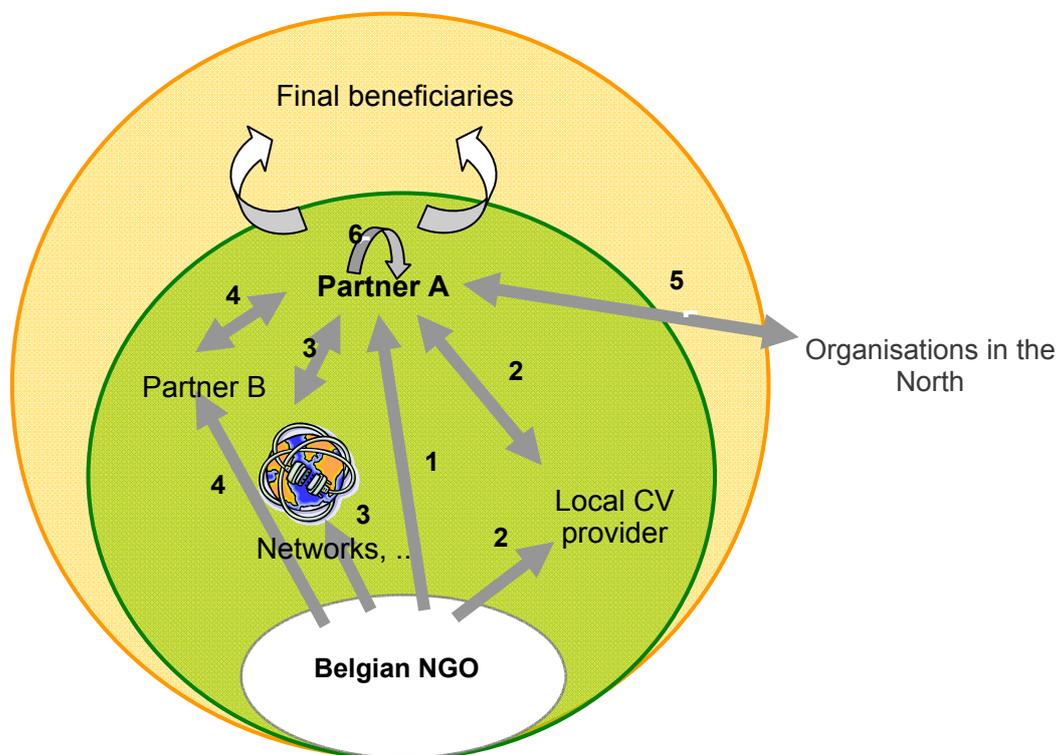


Figure 1 Visualisation of 6 routes of CD support in the partnerships

Below is a summary of the six routes. Concrete illustrations of each route are included in Annex 2.

- Route 1: CD carried out by NNGO
- Route 2: CD carried out by local CD provider
- Route 3: CD through participation in thematic or sectoral networks, alliances, platforms, conferences.
- Route 4: CD through peer-to-peer interaction with the NNGO's partner organisations or other organisations in the South
- Route 5: CD through interaction with similar organisations in the North or training in the North.
- Route 6: Partner organises its own processes of CD (without external expertise)

2.3.5 Instrumental and normative partnerships regarding CD support

In this report we divide the partnerships in the sample between what is described as 'instrumental' or as 'normative' partnerships regarding CD support.²² In terms of CD, instrumental partnerships refer to partnerships in which the main objective of CD is to improve project and programme implementation, achieve outcomes and meet accountability needs. This is in contrast to normative partnerships in which the strengthening of CD has achieving strong CSOs in the South as an objective in itself. Here the emphasis is on the intrinsic value of developing CSO actors, especially in view of their social-political role in society and their role in the pursuit of structural change.

2.4. Policy framework regarding partnerships and capacity development

The Belgian policy framework regarding partnerships and CD will be dealt with in the following sections together with the developed framework on the regional coordination of NNGO actions in the field. In the period 1998-2008 we distinguish three funding periods – three legal frameworks for the funding of NNGOs – of the Belgian government. Depending on the funding period we find ourselves in, we observe an evolution in the definition, the importance and the regulations concerning these central concepts of the evaluation. These changes are described below.

2.4.1 Partners and partnerships

In the Royal Decree of 1991 the government defined stricter criteria by laying down requirements regarding the NNGOs' professionalism and experience, and for the first time distinguished between project and programme funding. These changes were also directed at reducing the large number of NNGOs to larger and more professional units. As a result of these reforms, several NNGOs organised themselves in consortia. The Royal Decree of 18 July 1997 led to the introduction of the second reform of the co-funding of NNGOs. Prior to this the term 'project' was used in the legislative framework in reference to aid activities with local partners. In the Royal Decree of 1997 this was replaced with 'the funding of the partner', thus indicating that the local partner was playing an increasingly important role. Article 1.6 of the Royal Decree of 1997 defined partnerships as: "Organisation or institute with which the NGO cooperates in the partner country." The definition was wide open to interpretation and was refined as a result of the reform of grant regulations in the Royal Decree of 2006.

²² We emphasise that this is not an absolute or definitive division but is only used in this context to put certain findings in a clearer context. In reality the organisations are on a continuum between these two ideal types and, depending on the aspect that is highlighted, they balance towards one side or the other.

In 2006 the NNGOs and DGDC in Belgium started implementing a third reform of co-funding with the aim of improving the quality of non-governmental cooperation. An independent agency, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, did an audit of the NNGOs in four areas: financial autonomy, financial transparency, project management and the effectiveness of projects. Many NNGOs received official recognition which allowed them to submit programmes for DGDC co-funding. They then had to present a strategic framework for six years and a three-year programme. This reform was developed in the Royal Decrees of 2005 and 2006 and the Ministerial Decree of 2007. The screening exercise of PriceWaterhouseCoopers missed its goal however when it appeared that the administration had given programme recognition to a total of 58 NNGOs, far more than was originally intended.

In the Royal Decree of 24 September 2006 on funding the programmes and projects of recognised NNGOs, the concept of 'partner' was further specified under Article 1.9: "a representative association of civil society or institution of public benefit in the South linked to an NGO by way of a contract". According to Article 11.5 and Article 18.6 applications for a grant also had to include a partner agreement formalising the relationship between the NNGO and its partners. According to the Ministerial Decree of 30 May 2007 Article 2, the strategic framework of the NNGO requiring funding also had to specify choices regarding partnership profiles.

During the years that followed the question regularly presented itself as to whether further specification of the concept of 'partner' in the context of NNGO funding was necessary, but in a note of 29 June 2009 the Joint Consultative Committee between DGDC and the NNGOs determined that it was not necessary to change the definition of partners: the NGO federations and DGDC appeared to agree on its interpretation and that the regulations sufficiently specified the concept of "partner":

- it is an organisation, not a private person;
- it is a non-profit organisation or a company with a social objective;
- it is an organisation in the South, not an organisation in the North;
- it can be a public welfare institution (such as a local government);
- it is a representative organisation of the civil society in which being representative is determined in relation to the civil society which comprises the following three things:
 - the organisation is supported by and represents a local social embedding or members in the partner countries; the decision-making bodies are local;
 - through its objectives and activities the organisation is socially relevant in the society or societies in the South where it operates;
 - in the partner countries the organisation is part of the civil society or the social midfield and is regarded as such by other organisations.
- it is an organisation whose activities are aimed at improving the social-economic living conditions of disadvantaged population groups in a perspective of sustainable development;
- the partner forms a separate unit with regard to the Belgian NNGO. This is included in the notion partnership agreement. This involves two sufficiently different entities who determine the modalities of their cooperation;
- it involves an organisation that is capable of committing to a contract: that is able to effectively commit to a partner agreement and is therefore able to cooperate and adhere to the cooperation agreement, such as adhering to spending periods and financial accountability.²³

In the same period an agreement was also reached between the government and the NNGOs on how the concept of 'partnership' should be viewed. This was the result of the renewed debate on the effectiveness of NGO cooperation which the Ministry of Development initiated in the spring of 2008 following the approval of the 2008-2010 three-year programmes. A dialogue was set up between the policy cell of the Minister for Development Cooperation, DGDC and representatives of the NGO consultative bodies to set up agreements for improving Belgian non-governmental cooperation. The result was

²³ Source: note of the Joint Consultative Committee (Paritair Overlegcomité), *Het concept partner*, June 2009.

an agreement between the Belgian NGOs and the Minister for Development Cooperation²⁴. This can be viewed as an initiative to reach a consensus on the definition of aid effectiveness of the different roles the NNGOs play and the need for specialisation of NNGOs based on their own specificity and comparative advantages. Consultations between the NNGOs and the government were also translated into three consensus notes which further examine various elements of this agreement including the concept of partnership. The key elements that are presented as building blocks for balanced partnerships are ownership, mutual accountability, transparency and results-based management.

2.4.2 Regional coordination

Several NNGOs operate with regional offices. The nature of tasks carried out by these regional offices has evolved in recent years and is translated example in them playing a greater role with regard to CD. The evolving role was described in the Ministerial Decree of 1998 and adjusted in 2001, namely in articles 3 and 9. The legislator saw a possible double role for a regional office: on the one hand the coordination of activities within external placements and partner funding, and on the other hand, monitoring partner relations in countries or a bigger region.²⁵

Article 3, §7 states: "A recognised NGO can, either alone or together with other NGOs, receive a grant for the regional coordination of activities of 'external placements' and 'partner funding' and monitoring partner relations in the same country or in a bigger region. The ratio between the costs of the regional coordination and the financing of the activities to be coordinated must be justified in the action plan.

The grant for operation costs relating to the regional coordination of NGO worker is regulated by Article 9, 2°. A subsidy will only be granted if regional coordination activities meet the condition stated in § 1, 2° of this article."

Regional coordination is no longer mentioned in the current regulations (Royal Decree 2006 and Ministerial Decree 2007). An NGO representative/representation is also eligible for funding.

The agreement between the Minister for Development Cooperation and Belgian NGOs states the following: Article 2.2.6. stipulates that: "The NGOs coordinate their local offices amongst themselves and/ or with their international networks. To this end the NGO consultative bodies will promote the coordination of the Belgian NGOs in this."

2.4.3 Capacity development

As stated before, CD is receiving more international attention as a policy theme. This is visible for example in the consensus statements of the OECD/DAC donors. The Paris Declaration (2005) mentions the importance of CD in the light of realising ownership and sustainable development. In the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) CD is even more explicitly included as a major point of interest for international donors. In recent years these developments have filtered through in the Belgian policy framework. Nevertheless, until the end of 2009 this framework was more limited than that for partnerships. In legal terms, the International Cooperation Act of 1999 explicitly mentions the importance of

²⁴ Agreement between the Ministry of Development and Belgian Non-Governmental development organisations, 4 May 2009

²⁵ DGDC wanted the DGDC's missions in 2009 to focus more on addressing the role of the Belgian NGOs' local offices. The administration thought it would be an interesting theme to examine transversally through various external placements. The administration wished to formulate recommendations concerning the possibilities offered by various NGOs and partners bringing together human, material and financial resources. At present, ways are still being sought as to how to draw these conclusions. Consultation with the sector regarding this is still in full swing.

CD for the first time. Art. 2 states: "In the South a specific objective is directly or indirectly aimed at the CD of the partners and/ or supporting their activities aimed at improving the social-economic living conditions of disadvantaged population groups in a perspective of sustainable development". According to art. 5.1 an NGO development worker ('coöperant') is deployed 'to monitor a programme or project or to strengthen a partner'. It is also assumed that the coöperant is deployed to a partner, art. 5.3: "before a partner takes on a staff member, the NGO signs a partner agreement with the partner concerned".

In the context of negotiations on the new NGO agreement of 2009 between the government and NNGOs, CD is also finally addressed. The note "The different roles of the NNGOs" describes the specific role of NNGOs with regard to 'strengthening' the local development actors. Belgian NGOs can cooperate on capacity building of organisations in civil society in the South so that they are better able to shape their own role.²⁶ Here the support of capacity development is linked to sustainability. In the new Agreement between NGOs and the Minister of Development Cooperation, under the heading "ownership and alignment" Belgian NGOs promise that the analysis they make in each country will be better aligned with the partner country and among themselves when they are active in the same country. They undertake to reduce their role as service providers in favour of their role as capacity developers with a special focus on strengthening the quality of advocacy and lobby work.²⁷

²⁶ In: The different roles of NGOs in the North: consensus note, April 2009. p. 3.

²⁷ Art. 2.1.2.: "The NGOs will apply themselves more to developing the capacities of their partners. Intervention in which goods and services are supplied directly are limited to (i) situations in which the target groups are in a weak position and there are no other auxiliary (Non)-governmental organisations, (ii) pilot experiments which explicitly have a renewal function, (iii) countries in conflict with vulnerable countries or (iv) emergency situations. In cases like this NGOs will apply the shared mappings of good practices. "

Art. 2.1.3.: "Developing the capacities of the civil society in its role as a 'watchdog' and with a special focus on democratic control."

Art. 2.1.4.: "The missions of NGO workers and the corresponding modalities are justified and determined by deep reflection on the development of the capacities of partners and the balance in partner relations. From the next strategic framework onwards, and no sooner than 2004, NGOs will co-fund the NGO workers to the same degree as other programme and project activities (20/80). From their next programme or project onwards NGOs will provide strategies that will give them the opportunity to achieve this objective."

3 Findings

3.1 Introduction

We will now describe the findings according to the four clusters of the evaluation framework:

- cluster 1: policy and strategic choices;
- cluster 2: approach and management of capacity development in partnerships;
- cluster 3: effectiveness of capacity development in partnerships;
- cluster 4: adaptive capacity of the NNGOs and DGDC.

The first cluster deals with the NNGOs' policy and strategic choices regarding partnerships and CD, and comprises evaluation questions 1 and 2 of the evaluation framework.

3.2. Cluster 1: policy and strategic choices

Before we describe the results of the case studies in the six countries of this evaluation, we will briefly recapitulate the results of the analysis of the Belgian NGOs' policy and strategic choices with regard to partnerships and CD (see report documentary phase).

Evaluation question 1 analyses the policy developed by the Belgian NGOs with regard to partnerships and CD and the broad outlines we find in these policy documents. Evaluation question 2 analyses which strategic choices the Belgian NGOs made with regard to the approach and methods for the support to CD. This analysis refers to the 21 Belgian NGOs that were part of the documentary phase in this evaluation.

3.2.1 Evaluation question 1 – What policy was/is developed by the NNGOs and their partners regarding partnerships and capacity development?

Here we describe the results of the analysis of the policy documents with regard to partnerships, followed by those regarding CD.

JC 1.1 Policy documents comprise a vision of CD and partnerships

Types of partnerships

To describe the partnerships between the Belgian NGOs and their partners (based on the information obtained and the NNGOs' policy documents) we use two complementary typologies of partner relations developed by Alan Fowler (2000) and Mark Leach (1997) respectively.

A first typology, as presented by Fowler, focuses mainly on the subject of the partner relation, whereas the second typology focuses mainly on the conditions and modalities of the relationship between both parties.

Table 6 Typology according to Fowler and Leach

Object of the partner relation (Fowler)	Modalities of the partner relation (Leach)
<p><i>Partner:</i> a joint commitment to long-term interaction, shared responsibility for achievement, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power.</p> <p><i>Institutional supporter:</i> focus on the partner's capacity and efficiency.</p> <p><i>Programme supporter:</i> focus on specific part of the development work, for example a sector or theme.</p> <p><i>Project funder:</i> focus on a specific project, limited in time.</p> <p><i>Development ally:</i> focus on a specific development agenda, or a specific objective both parties wish to realise and collaborate to this end within a definite time frame.</p>	<p><i>Mutual governance:</i> each organisation has substantial decision-making power over policy and practice at both organisational and programme levels.</p> <p><i>Collaborative operations:</i> there is a shared decision-making. Joint programmes are implemented by the Southern NGO with support and funding from the Northern NGO.</p> <p><i>Visionary Patronage:</i> there is a shared vision and joint goals. The Southern NGO (partner) implements and the Northern NGO provides funding and other resources.</p> <p><i>Spin-off NGOs:</i> the dependent franchise or field office is expected to become independent over time.</p> <p><i>Dependent franchising:</i> the local NGO (partner) acts as a field office, operationally independent but dependent on the Northern NGO for direction and funding.</p> <p><i>Contracting:</i> the local NGO (partner) provides a well-defined package, determined by the Northern NGO, for payment.</p>

We can classify the Belgian NGOs from the documentary phase in these two typologies. Most of the NNGOs have partner relations in which they play the role of 'programme supporter' or 'institutional supporter' (Fowler) based on 'visionary patronage' or 'collaborative operations' (Leach). This is confirmed by the NNGOs' selection criteria in which the shared mission, vision, values, objectives, themes and type of partner play a central role, and these NNGOs mainly support existing programmes with their partners in the South.

Table 7 Situation of the 21 Belgian NGOs from the sample according to Fowler's (2000) and Leach's (1997) typologies

		Typology Fowler				
		Develop-ment ally	Project funder	Programme supporter	Institutional supporter	Partner
Typology Leach	Contracting		AADC SOS Layettes			
	Dependent franchising					
	Spin-off NGOs					

Collaborative operations (Joint programmes and joint decision making)		- VIC - DBA - ADG	- Oxfam Sol (1) - Volens - TRIAS - Damiaanactie - SLCD	- FOS (2) - Volens - VE (1) - DMOS (2) - CEMUBAC - DISOP - PROTOS	TRIAS (1)
Visionary patronage (shared vision and goals)		- DISOP - ADG - DMOS	- Oxfam Sol (2) - BD (1) - EF (1)	- FOS (1) - VE (2) - 11.11.11 - BD (2) - EF (2) - DMOS (1) - WSM (1) - Autre Terre	WSM (2)
Mutual governance				- FOS (3)	TRIAS (2)

We find few NNGOs who answer the description of “partner” which, according to Alan Fowler’s definition, is an authentic partnership characterised by reciprocity or by “mutual governance” (mutual governance means that the partner in the South does not only participate in the joint programme that is undertaken but also participates in the NNGO’s policy making). Although some NNGOs (Trias, WSM) evolve to this type of partner relation, the NNGOs who were interviewed indicate that a true reciprocal partner relation is hampered by the financial relationship that characterises this partner relation.

Half of the NNGOs studied indicate they provide the « core funding²⁸ » of their partners. However, only in the FOS and DMOS policy documents we find indications of actual core funding. This differs greatly from the situation in the Netherlands where the larger NGOs support many of their partners with core funding.

Vision with respect to capacity development

The NNGOs’ policy documents show that they generally focus on CD in their partner relations but only translate it to a limited degree into concrete policies and strategies. Of the 21 NNGOs that were studied there were generally more policy documents available with regard to their partner relations than there were on CD. About half of the NNGOs, especially the larger NNGOs and some technically specialised NNGOs (such as Protos), can refer to policy notes with regard to partner relations and actually delivered these to the evaluators. The other NNGOs do not have separate policy documents, but refer to sections in the funding applications that were drafted for DGDC (logical frameworks, programme applications, etc.). With respect to CD, 8 NNGOs from the documentary phase (FOS, Broederlijk Delen, Volens, DMOS, Vredeseilanden, Trias, Protos, DISOP)

²⁸ “Core-funding” refers to basic funding that covers the administrative and organisational costs apart from the traditional costs linked to the execution of programmes. It is funding that allows the organisation to execute its own programmes with a considerable degree of freedom. This type of funding is the opposite to funding that is limited to the financing of project or programme costs. In the latter case, organisations are permitted to freely use a part of their administrative costs linked to a programme, but then according to strict rules of what is allowed and what is not. Consequently, a clear distinction can be made between the funding of projects or programmes on the one hand and core funding on the other, in terms of the organisation’s autonomy regarding the use of their funds.

appear to have separate policy documents at their disposal in which the vision, concepts and strategies with regard to the role of CD in partnership relations are described.

The documentary study identified various tendencies in the NNGOs' strategic choices. For instance, in a number of NNGOs we see a tendency to invest less in strictly bilateral relations (1 to 1) and to evolve to more complex forms of cooperation with various stakeholders. This occurs in the form of a multi-actor approach²⁹ for instance. From 1998 this evolution was also stimulated on the basis of the DGDC policy regarding NNGOs, particularly via the evaluation criteria in which the strength of the programme regarding the multi-actor policy was also taken into account. A number of NNGOs such as Volens, Broederlijk Delen, WSM, FOS and 11.11.11 have taken this on board and, in an initial phase, are trying to increase the interaction between their existing partners by bringing them together on the basis of specific transversal themes (decent work, gender, and so on). In this we recognise more of a programme-approach from the perspective of the NNGO. Some NNGOs (PROTOS, TRIAS, and Vredeseilanden) have resolutely opted for a multi-actor approach and work with a large number of stakeholders, including local NGOs, government actors, and private actors on a local theme that links these organisations (coffee, water, etc.). This is a programme-approach from the perspective of the southern partner organisations. Some contexts appear to be better suited to this approach than others. TRIAS for instance does not fully implement its "*Local Economic Development*" (LED) approach and PROTOS does not fully implement its multi-actor approach in DR Congo because the local government is thought to be too weak.

Increasingly, the NNGOs have been supporting advocacy and lobby activities. And some NNGOs explicitly no longer choose service delivery organisations as their partners and prefer to collaborate with member organisations.

Reading the policy documents we see a clear evolution from a project approach to a programme approach. This means there is greater coherence in the partner policy (e.g. a decrease in the number of partners at Broederlijk Delen or an improved specification of the partner profile at DMOS/COMIDE). The influence of the DGDC guidelines is very apparent. However, here too we notice differences between the NNGOs. Some NNGOs are seeking a thematic coherence in their programmes and partners are selected in function of this. Other NGOs depart from local needs and strive for thematic or geographic coherence on a local level. It is becoming increasingly important to find partners who are close to the beneficiaries (e.g. via community based organisations) and to the political agenda in the partner relation in function of advocacy and lobby work.

Policy with regard to capacity development

Most NNGOs emphasise that CD lies at the core of their operation and almost all NNGOs state that they contribute to the organisational development of their partners. This approach is more of an implicit approach to CD. Only 9 of the 21 NNGOs have developed an explicit policy with regard to CD (DMOS, DamiaanActie, CEMUBAC, DISOP, TRIAS, Vredeseilanden, PROTOS, Autre Terre, FOS).

The beneficiaries of CD are very diverse, ranging from community based organisations and member organisations (farmer organisations, umbrella organisations, trade unions and other social movements) to service delivery organisations (training providers, micro financing organisations, etc.), local governments and various types of NGOs.

The NNGOs have indicated a number of evolutions in their policy with regard to CD (or better said, of the practice as there is little evidence of an explicit policy). However, we cannot generalise here for all the NNGOs from the documentary phase. For an overview see the table below

²⁹ A multi-stakeholder or multi-actor approach "comprises the idea of bringing together various stakeholders (actors) who have an interest/concern in a particular problematic situation, and involving them in processes of dialogue and collective learning which improve innovation, decision making and action." (Facilitating Complex Multi-Stakeholder Processes: A Societal Learning Perspective, Jim Woodhill, 2007 (Working document))

Table 8 : Evolution domains with regard to the Belgian NGOs' CD policy

Evolution domains with regard to CD	Practical examples of the NNGOs questioned
Amendments to the working procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing importance of organisational development: e.g. FOS; - From organisational development to business development and institutional development: e.g. Vredeseilanden; - Focus on behavioural changes: e.g. Vredeseilanden; - More attention to networking and links to Belgium: e.g. WSM, Trias; - Introduction of the thematic approach: e.g. WSM; - More attention to complementarity and alignment: e.g. Damiaanactie; - More attention to advocacy and lobby: e.g. Trias.
Tools and methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of « participatory strategic planning: DMOS; - Monitoring of the 5 core capabilities (ECDPM) with partners: e.g. Oxfam Solidarity; - Improved partner selection and partner operations: ADG; - Introduction of PCM: e.g. DISOP; - More structured: e.g. SLCD.
Changes in the organisational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional offices: e.g. Broederlijk Delen ; - Collaboration amongst interventions: e.g. Volens; - Use of development offices: e.g. DMOS; - Integration of the South division in the policy division: e.g. 11.11.11.
Types of partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More community based organisations, fewer service delivery organisations: e.g. Vredeseilanden, Trias ; - Operations at three different levels (incl. local governments): e.g. Protos.
Principles and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Striving for equal partnerships: e.g. Trias, Oxfam Solidarity.
More emphasis on monitoring and supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g. Entraide et Fraternité.

Evolution with regard to the DGDC regulatory framework with regard to CD and partnerships

In the introduction we mentioned that CD has been a transversal point of interest for Belgian development cooperation for a long time, but that the necessary concrete strategies and monitoring mechanisms appear to be lacking in the implementation of the policy. Although the significance of CD is constantly emphasised on a policy level, for now the administration seems to have difficulty in implementing this policy in concrete strategies and actions. So far for instance, there are no policy documents which attempt to shape ways in which the DGDC could steer, monitor or support the NNGOs with regard to CD. Group discussions with the NGO desk officers from DGDC also revealed that the capacity and expertise at DGDC is limited with regard to this theme. On the basis of the M&E reports or evaluations the desk officers find it difficult to form a picture of the

evolution of the capacity of the Belgian NGOs. According to the desk officers the evaluation and monitoring reports provide insufficient information for evaluating the outcomes: it often concerns output-oriented indicators (number of people trained, participants in a workshop) and no sound qualitative indicators are formulated. According to the desk officers the NNGOs should make more effort to find sound indicators that also clarify the link with the target group (focus group, May 2009). Desk officers question the final purpose of the NGOs' actions with regard to CD. The DGDC evaluation services also indicate that it is difficult to draw conclusions about partnerships and CD and/or the increased value of the indirect cooperation from current evaluations.

JC 1.2 Objectives regarding CD in partnerships are relevant in the light of the general objectives of the partners

In documents on CD a distinction is usually made between NNGOs with a functional approach to CD and those who emphasise the intrinsic value of CD (Intrac, 2007). The functional approach focuses on the programme of the actions that are jointly carried out by the NGO and its partner in the South. In this case CD is regarded as a means to realise objectives and often translates itself into a strengthening of purely administrative aspects of the partner (drawing up narrative and financial reports, strengthening accounting, working with logical frameworks, etc.). The intrinsic approach goes beyond the strengthening of capacities that are linked with the implementation of joint activities. It is about the strengthening of a broad range of capacities, and therefore focuses on the partners in itself based on the argument that strong civil actors are needed for the development of the country.

A large group of NNGOs (17 of 21) from our sample clearly states that CD is mainly a means to realise the ultimate objectives: increasing the farmers' incomes, better water management, and better control of leprosy, and the quality and accessibility of education. The fact that the partners are mainly a link for reaching the target group is sometimes even emphasised in the language used, as with Broederlijk Delen, that speaks of 'target group-oriented partner operations'. A functional approach to CD is often applied to activities that attempt to increase the partners' absorption capacity (training in PCM, financial management, project management, etc.) especially with a view to the successful management of the resources the Belgian NGO brings in.

NNGOs with « normative » partnerships (WSM, Oxfam Solidarity, FOS, 11.11.11) mainly emphasise the intrinsic value of strong partner organisations in the South. These NNGOs indicate the importance of CD for increasing the autonomy of the organisations in the South. The differences in approach are also applied to the partners' profile, where service delivery organisations are generally approached functionally and member organisations are strengthened more for their intrinsic value.

JC 1.3 Policy regarding CD in partnerships is results-oriented

Via the web questionnaire, the majority of the NNGOs (14 of 19)³⁰ indicated that they have separate results areas for CD. However, the outcomes of the interviews indicate that most of the NNGOs view the support to CD mainly as an implicit strategy. The interviews confirm that less than half of the NGOs have formulated explicit objectives with regard to CD. Of this group only 8 NNGOs state they have separate budgets for CD coupled to specific objectives and outcomes.

³⁰ Two NNGOs did not complete these questions in the web questionnaire.

3.2.2 Evaluation question 2 – Which strategic choices did the NGOs make regarding the approach and methods for support to capacity development?

JC 2.1 The intervention strategies regarding support to capacity development are founded on clear methodological choices

We will now describe the various strategic choices we identified in the NNGOs' documents.

Various actors involved in CD

We identified six routes that describe the various NNGOs' strategies with regard to CD (see chapter 1).

Table 9 Description of 6 routes of CD support

Route	Examples
Route 1 CD executed by NNGO	All NNGOs
Route 2 CD executed by local CD provider	All NNGOs
Route 3 CD by participation in thematic or sectoral networks, alliances, platforms, conferences	Broederlijk Delen, FOS, WSM, Vredeseilanden, 11.11.11, Entraide et Fraternité, Oxfam Solidarity, Trias, Protos
Route 4 CD through peer-to-peer interaction with NNGO partner organisations or other organisations in the South	Broederlijk Delen, FOS, WSM, Vredeseilanden, 11.11.11, Entraide et Fraternité, Oxfam Solidarity, Trias, Damiaanactie, Protos, Volens
Route 5 CD through interaction with equal organisations in North or training in the North.	FOS, WSM, Vredeseilanden, 11.11.11, Oxfam Solidarity, Trias
Route 6 Partner organises own processes of CD (without external expertise)	Various examples in the field visits (see below)

Based on the interviews with the NNGOs and the document study we can conclude the following (also see JC 3.2).

Route 1 is used by all NNGOs for CD. However, some NNGOs, like Vredeseilanden, TRIAS, 11.11.11, DISOP and Oxfam Solidarity, use this route less than other NNGOs, which is an evolution compared to practices in the past.

Route 2, in which use is made of national or regional experts from the South to support CD, is also used frequently by all NNGOs and unequivocally demonstrates the increasing availability of experts in the South.

Linking partners with (sectoral) networks, alliances or coalitions (route 3) for support to CD is a route mainly used by NNGOs with a strong political orientation (FOS, WSM, Vredeseilanden, 11.11.11, Entraide et Fraternité, Oxfam Solidarity, Broederlijk Delen) or specific technical NNGOs (Trias for micro financing, Protos for water).

CD through “peer-to-peer” interaction or the linking of similar organisations in the South – and then especially linking partners of the same NNGO – is mainly used by normative NNGOs (FOS, Vredeseilanden, Oxfam Solidarity, 11.11.11, Entraide et Fraternité) and technically specialised NNGOs (Damiaanactie, Trias, Protos). For one NNGO (Volens) this route forms the most important strategy for CD, especially for the linking of its partners in the same country.

Finally, for route 5 we note that it is mainly normative NNGOs (FOS, WSM, Vredeseilanden, Trias, 11.11.11, Oxfam Solidarity) who stimulate the interaction between organisations in the North and those in the South.

This analysis shows a strong tendency to strengthen the capacity of partners in the South via direct interventions of the Belgian NGOs. However, we also see a tendency to diversify the routes for CD and to involve more actors (from the North and the South) in CD, more particularly concerning certain national, regional or international problems or themes. However, we do not always find this approach described explicitly in the Belgian NGOs’ policy. We managed to determine the diversity in approach on our field visits (see JC 3.2).

Supply- versus demand-driven CD

In designing interventions regarding CD, in the past many NNGOs opted for a supply-driven approach. The NNGO would supply its partners with certain modules or training which were then implemented by the NNGO’s own collaborators or by local service delivery NGOs in the countries in the South. This approach is still used by various NNGOs, particularly for transversal themes e.g. gender (WSM, Entraide et Fraternité, FOS, 11.11.11) or for project management (Entraide et Fraternité, DMOS, Volens and DISOP).

On the other hand in various NNGOs we find policy intentions aimed at stimulating the demand side for CD. Over the years some NNGOs (Vredeseilanden, Entraide et Fraternité, Broederlijk Delen and to some extent Trias) for instance, have abandoned the structural support of Southern NGOs without members (service delivery NGOs) and increasingly deploy these service delivery NGOs functionally or instrumentally to support community based organisations (e.g. farmer organisations). This shift also means that now the funding goes directly to the community based organisations, who then draw on the expertise or support of service delivery NGOs in a manner that is more demand-driven.

Strong focus on training

The analysis of the 40 partnerships and the interviews with the Belgian NGOs show that training and workshops are still the most important component of their activities regarding CD. It seems that other tools, such as organisational development (OD) and institutional development (ID) via, for instance, the investigation of organisational procedures, exchanges, coaching or mentoring, and action research, are used far less frequently.

JC 2.2 The intervention strategies have evolved along with the changing ideas regarding support to the partners’ CD (see also evaluation question 7).

Among the NNGOs that were studied we found no great changes in the partners’ intervention strategies for CD (with a few exceptions). This evaluation criterion will be discussed in detail under evaluation question 7.

Conclusions cluster 1

With regard to the cluster on policy and strategies regarding partnerships and CD we can say that although the NNGOs have policy documents that contain a vision on partnership and CD, these policy principles are not always translated into specific strategies. The

search for more coherence in the partner operations (both at a local level and thematically) appears to be the most concrete result of the evolution from a project approach to a programme approach. In the partnerships the NNGOs particularly take on the role of “*programme supporter*”, based on a “*visionary patronage*”, or the joint execution of activities. With regard to type of partner relations we do not find any form of partner relationship in which the partner carries out activities “in sub contract” on the basis of a contract or of “*mutual governance*” in which the partners influence each other’s policy and practice on an equal basis.

For DGDC we see a similar situation as for the NNGOs: a strong emphasis on CD regarding policy, but a lack of tools that allow the administration to assess the efforts of the Belgian NGOs regarding CD.

The NNGOs use an approach to CD that is more instrumental (with the emphasis on carrying out activities) than intrinsic in the sense that the partners’ CD is an objective in itself. However, both these approaches are often combined. Following this we found that that support to CD usually concerns direct support from the Belgian NGO to the partner in the South. Nevertheless there is also a tendency towards a greater variety of actors becoming involved in CD. In the following evaluation questions we examine how these findings from the documentary phase are put into practice.

3.3 Cluster 2: approach and management of capacity development in partnerships

In the last cluster we concluded that there is a broad consensus among the NNGOs and DGDC that the partners’ CD is important. On the other hand, it was clear that the policy with regard to CD was poorly articulated for most of these same actors. The analysis was mainly based on material collected at the NNGOs’ head offices (interviews, focus groups, web questionnaire, document study). In cluster 2, we examine operations in the field on the basis of the evaluation of 31 partnerships of the same 21 NNGOs with 19 partners in the South. This yielded a kaleidoscope of practices of CD. Nevertheless, we can identify a number of significant patterns. Evaluation question 3 focuses on how the actions for CD were organised and implemented within the 31 partnerships and analyses both their strong and weak points. Evaluation question 4 mainly focuses on the managerial aspects of the same story.

Based on the partnerships that were visited, we can roughly distinguish between 5 different approaches in the NGO’s approach to CD in the field. The classification according to these five groups is the thread running through the analysis of evaluation questions 3 up to and including 6. Following the discussion of evaluation question 6 everything will be collated in a comprehensive analysis of the approach to CD within the five groups and the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches will be evaluated. Table 10 describes the five groups and indicates which NNGOs are in these groups. To simplify our reading of the following evaluation questions, we will first summarise the broad outlines of the CD approach determined per group. This will be followed by a detailed analysis with concrete examples.

The classification in 5 groups is based on the evaluation of 31 partnerships of 21 NNGOs and the study of the policy framework of the NNGOs involved. Due to the low number of cases per NGO it is not possible to evaluate the entire operation of an NGO with regard to CD. When, in the following sections, we talk of the approach of a certain group of NNGOs we are only referring to the partnerships of the NNGOs in the sample.

Table 10 Overview of the five groups of partnerships studied

CD approaches	Registered in partnerships of following Belgian NGOs
Partnerships of technical (service delivery) NNGOs ³¹ with an explicit focus on CD in the design and execution of the programmes	DamiaanActie, DMOS, CEMUBAC, DISOP
Partnerships of NNGOs with a predominantly political agenda, ³² and with a more implicit approach to CD	FOS, WSM, 11.11.11, Oxfam Solidarity
Partnerships of NNGOs that mainly respond to technical needs in society, but which make use of a multi-actor approach to frame their actions within a broader economic and political framework ; they use an explicit CD strategy	Vredeseilanden, Trias, PROTOS, Autre Terre
Partnerships of NNGOs with a not very explicit overall CD policy, where the differences in the CD approach are large within one single NNGO (Broederlijk Delen), or where the CD approach is limited to certain elements of the three groups above	Broederlijk Delen, Volens, Entraide et Fraternité
Partnerships of NNGOs where there is little or no support for CD	SOS Layettes, SLCD, DBA, AADC, ADG, VIC

Summary of the determined CD approach of five groups of partnerships:

(1) *Partnerships of technical (service delivery) NNGOs with an explicit focus on CD in the design and execution of the programmes (6 partnerships of 4 NNGOs).*

These NNGOs use specific tools and methods for the planning and monitoring of CD support, and focus mainly on the technical and managerial capacity of their partners (also known as downstream support), particularly via education and training in (HRD) and/or organisational development (OD). Their strong technical focus gives them the advantage of specialisation and being able to make their outcomes regarding CD more explicit, at least within the partnerships in the sample. Occasionally they appear to be less focused on the more structural factors that limit the partner's capacity development, on the political dimensions of capacity development problems regarding their work, and/or on broader multi-stakeholder issues. For instance, the partnerships of DMOS, DISOP, DamiaanActie, and CEMUBAC focused less on lobby and advocacy work, and there was only one type of stakeholder involved. At DamiaanActie and CEMUBAC there was also little involvement in the strengthening of the partner's strategic capacity, and the embedding of the partner at the institutional level.

(2) *Partnerships of NNGOs with a predominantly political agenda, and with a more explicit approach to CD (7 partnerships of 4 NNGOs).*

This implicit CD strategy is based on a strong commitment and shared agenda of both partners. The strategy does not adhere to the traditional CD analysis

³¹ Technical (service delivery) NNGOs: The evaluation uses this description to refer to a group of NNGOs that has specialised within a certain sector/niche (education, health, etc.) and is mainly involved in the support of structures and processes aimed at improved service delivery. These NNGOs also support lobby and advocacy activities to a lesser extent, and some set up political campaigns, but the major part of their work is aimed at improved service delivery.

³² NNGOs with a predominantly political agenda: the evaluation uses this description to refer to NNGOs who focus mainly on supporting the watchdog function and the lobby and advocacy function of CSOs in the South whose aim is to realise structural changes in society.

frameworks, but is particularly characterised by a strong belief in critical and strategic dialogue and cooperation on certain joint action points through pragmatic approaches of institutional development (ID) and HRD. The focus is on strengthening the partner's policy for example through improved strategies, policy, and networking (also called upstream support), which the partners are largely allowed to work out themselves. This strengthens partner ownership. These NNGOs can use their (grassroots) supporters and corresponding networks for the partners' CD, and also have the advantage of specialisation. In this group, there is an increasing focus on CD but it is generally poorly documented and systematised and is therefore difficult to critically review or test. Consequently, the CD expertise appears to be strongly dependent on the quality of individuals and is less shared within the NNGO. This group comprises FOS, WSM, 11.11.11, and Oxfam Solidarity.

- (3) *Partnerships of NNGOs who mainly respond to technical needs in society, which make use of a multi-actor approach to frame their actions within set them against a backdrop of a broader economic and political framework account via a multi-actor approach; they use an explicit CD strategy (6 partnerships of 4 NNGOs).*

In these partnerships explicit CD activities are used, and there is usually a range of tools with which to plan and monitor CD support. There is a focus on HRD, OD and ID, and there is a commitment to both the technical- and managerial capacity (downstream) of the partners and the more strategic capacities at policy level (upstream). There is an attempt to develop the CD activities in function of certain economic objectives (e.g. market access or certification) or political objectives (e.g. increased lobby capacity for fair trade). This approach has only recently been crystallized out and the corresponding radical changes with regard to the type of partners and the operation method cause implementation problems in the field in some cases. This group comprises Vredeseilanden, Trias, PROTOS and Autre Terre (we found some elements in the latter with regard to the partnership studied, but this not backed by policy documents of Autre Terre).

- (4) *Partnerships of NNGOs with a weak explicitation of the overall CD policy, where there are large differences in the approach to CD within one single NGO (Broederlijk Delen), or where the CD approach is limited to certain elements of the three groups above (5 partnerships of 3 NNGOs).*

The three Broederlijk Delen partnerships in the sample showed significant variations in the approach to CD and were situated between group 1 and group 2.³³ The Entraide et Fraternité partnership with ADECOM in India comprised support to the management capacity (group 1) and linking in networks and with other partners (group 2), but the CD support had mainly been set up implicitly and did not appear to play a central role. The partner ANAG of Volens in Burkina Faso was also strengthened on a technical level in the past and recently, to a limited extent, with regard to OD too (group 1), but the support was poorly designed and developed, and there was little regard for critical preconditions (ANAG's identity and basic capacity).

- (5) *Partnerships of NNGOs where there is little or no CD (6 partnerships of 3 project NNGOs and 3 programme NNGOs)*

Apart from the strengthening of the managerial capacity (PCM, accounting, financial sustainability), there was little focus on the partners' CD in these partnerships, either explicitly or implicitly. In 3 of the 6 partnerships the Belgian NGO had even less implementation capacity than the partner organisation (SOS layettes and DBA in Burkina Faso, AADC in Cambodia). The ADG partner organisations in the DR Congo (JEEP) and SLCD in Burkina Faso (MMB) had structural problems and were struggling

³³ Until the end of 2005, DPA in Cambodia was explicitly supported through a significant organisational change. The approach to CD appeared to be situated between that of group 1 and 2. CD support in ACAT in South-Africa was mainly implicit (as for group 2), but focused mainly on downstream capacities (as in group 1). CD support for CA in Peru was very limited and particularly aimed at the partner's managerial capacity.

to survive. The VIC partner in the DR Congo (BDD) received large budgets but was not much supported by CD actions.

The following sections underpin the classification above, based on the various judgement criteria of the evaluation framework. Per criterion there is an indication of the number of cases we were able to gather information from.

3.3.1 Evaluation question 3 – To what extent are policy principles and strategic choices regarding capacity development in partnerships translated into the interventions and cooperation with the partners?

JC 3.1 Professionalism of the partners' identification- and selection process

Partnerships

For a large majority (28) of the 31 partnerships in the sample, there is no systematic and documented process for the partner's initial selection (based on clear preset criteria which are evaluated in a way that is both transparent and objectively verifiable).³⁴ For some partnerships that were started up more recently (APIL/Autre Terre and C-CAWDU/WSM) the selection process was more clearly documented. In recent funding periods, more strategic thought has been given by the NNGOs to the (discontinuation or continuation of) the partnerships. Some NNGO's have introduced drastic changes in the choice of partners (Vredeseilanden, PROTOS, Trias). Other NNGOs have changed the modality of their interaction with existing partners (WSM, DMOS), or attempt a more coherent choice of partner per country or region (Volens, 11.11.11, Broederlijk Delen, Entraide et Fraternité, Oxfam Solidarity). Damiaanactie does not really have to choose its partners in a region, because the organisation always collaborates closely with existing government structures in the field of health.

In all partnerships in the sample the duration of the partnership was not specified at the beginning of the partnership and was often open-ended. Most partners realise that the commitment has been formally contractually determined and only runs to the end of the funding cycle; however, it is implicitly expected to continue for longer than one contract. As this is not explicitly expressed by the NNGOs and the future commitment is hard to predict, in practice most partners are confronted with insecurity about what will happen after the current funding period.

The average duration of the partnership in the sample was about 12 years. The average is increased significantly by a number of very long partnerships in health, trade union operations and community work (without the 5 longest partnerships the average drops to 9.8 years):

- Damiaanactie in DR Congo: 35 years;³⁵
- DPS-CEMUBAC in DR Congo: more than 25 years;
- MOCC – WSM in DR Congo: 21 years;
- Trias-Mbongwana in DR Congo: more than 22 years;
- Damiaanactie in India: 20 years.

Most partnerships were still ongoing, so that the evaluation had no idea about the total duration of the partnership. Durations of more than 10-15 years can be regarded as long

³⁴ An important remark to this judgement criterion is that 'a professional and transparent selection process' as a concept and operational instrument is really quite new in the typical NGO collaboration. From a historical perspective, NNGOs have often chosen partners based on personal ties, or partnerships were established due to coincidence, connections, and much less on a basis of objective screening.

³⁵ The intensity of the collaboration evolved during that period, and during some periods there was no partnership between Damiaanactie and the Ministry of Health. The same is true for the partnership between Trias (formerly ACT) and Mbongwana (formerly Soyapro).

compared to the bilateral aid for instance. Nevertheless in a number of large NNGOs' policies (cf. Broederlijk Delen, WSM, Entraide et Fraternité) there is a observable tendency to evolve away from an 'historic, never-ending partnership' to partnerships that clearly respond to realising specific objectives. Other NNGOs (Vredeseilanden, TRIAS, PROTOS) evolve towards a multi-stakeholder approach or operate more via networks and in this way also move away from long-term exclusive 1 to 1 partnerships. In only one of the six partnerships which have since been terminated there is still contact between the NNGO and their partner in the South.

In the field we were occasionally confronted with the dramatic consequences of drastic changes in the choice of partners. Although attempts are made to announce the exit in good time, in many partnerships there are structural lacunas with regard to the exit-strategy (see evaluation question 5.2).

Capacity development

In two-thirds of the 31 partnerships of the field phase of the evaluation we do not find a systematic analysis of the partner's capacity at the start of the partnership. In many partnerships there is a rough analysis of some of the partner's 'hard' technical- or implementation capacity (accounting, M&E, planning capacity). This is true for the older partnerships, but also for the partnerships that are less than 7 years old. DMOS (Peru and India), TRIAS (Congo and South Africa), DamiaanActie (India and Congo), Vredeseilanden (DR Congo), Autre Terre (Burkina Faso), and PROTOS (Congo) did carry out a more in-depth capacity analysis. The upstream capacities (strategic thinking, vision development, political work, etc.) and soft capacities (leadership, teamwork, etc.) are generally included to a lesser extent, or not at all, except implicitly in the group 2 NNGOs with a political orientation (normative partnerships).

For more recent funding periods (2003-2007, 2008-2010) there is a slight increase in NNGOs who, on the basis of a limited analysis, include CD activities in the logical frameworks (FOS, Oxfam Solidarity, Entraide et Fraternité, Broederlijk Delen, 11.11.11 from 2009).

Seven partner organisations were co-established by the Belgian NGOs, which led to mixed outcomes with regard to CD. In some cases things came to a bad end (GARC/TRIAS, MMB/SLCD, Mbongwana/TRIAS). The evaluation concludes that establishing new organisations is still not sufficiently thought through. Below, the situation of these partners is briefly discussed.

- GARC by TRIAS (IVA) in South Africa: despite extensive CD reinforcement during the 1998-2003 period, GARC went bankrupt in 2009 due to institutional problems (unclear governance structure and changes in the TRIAS policy);
- MMB by SLCD in Burkina Faso: For a number of years SLCD has tried to make MMB function on a commercial basis but the organisation now has no projects and the 11 staff are virtually unemployed;
- Mbongwana by TRIAS in the DR Congo: Over a long period TRIAS has supported Mbongwana (evolved from the former partner Soyapro, created with the support of ACT), both technically and strategically. TRIAS had a distinct influence on strategic developments in the Mbongwana programmes (a more economic approach in agricultural programmes and orientation towards local economic development). Mbongwana is regarded as a very strong partner by the stakeholders who were studied. However, since the termination of the TRIAS funding in 2008 (with a 1-year phase-down, i.e. 2009), Mbongwana no longer has a significant donor and the staff is technically unemployed;
- PEHA network by PROTOS in the DR Congo: The PEHA network was established with the aid of PROTOS. Over time it developed the necessary recognition and credibility but is vulnerable due to the limited development of PEHA's central structures;
- DPA by Broederlijk Delen (CIDSE) in Cambodia: DPA is the local NGO that arose from the CIDSE department in Cambodia. The transformation of a CIDSE department into an autonomous local NGO department was based on a successful CD strategy co-facilitated by Broederlijk Delen;

- Surabi DO by DMOS in India: DMOS successfully supported the transformation of the mainly administrative structures into a fully-fledged programme-implementing and – management body;
- OFPROP by DMOS in Peru: same process as Surabi DO with DMOS in India.

JC 3.2 Contribution of the NNGO to the partner’s processes of CD

This second judgement criterion analyses the NNGOs’ CD approach in view of six significant dividing lines that were identified within the 31 partnerships:

- a) role of context in CD;
- b) explicit versus implicit CD strategies and activities;
- c) hands-on approach versus hands-off approach;
- d) downstream versus upstream orientation of support to CD;
- e) frequency of use of the 6 routes for CD;
- f) use of HRD – OD – ID.

These disparities are helpful in distinguishing the differences in the approach of the 5 partnership groups (see introduction to cluster 2). Where relevant, the possible differences between the normative and instrumental partnerships, between the countries and between the various types of partners will also be highlighted.

By way of introduction it should be mentioned that in most of the partnerships support to the partners’ CD plays only a minor role in the collaboration, both in financial terms (5% to 20%)³⁶ and in the frequency of activities. Although in 22 of the 31 partnerships we found objectives relating to CD support of the partners, ambitions and approach were very limited in a significant number of them. Moreover, the great differences between the partnerships (see documentary phase) can be explained by the NNGOs’ broad definition of CD. In the partnerships where CD constitutes a significant share of the budget, it almost always concerns activities the Southern partners carry out with their partners or target groups. Although one could regard this as CD in a broader sense, it was not included in this evaluation which focuses on the relationship between the NNGO and its immediate partners.

a. Role of context in CD

The context within which processes of CD occur determines to a large extent what is possible and what is not. We find that each partner organisation in the sample has specific capacity requirements. For some smaller organisations they were urgent and critical, but even the larger and more stable organisations with an abundance of funding channels faced significant challenges in the medium-term. The fact is that most of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) operate in difficult environments and on the basis of short-term funding. In the evaluation we see that the following factors determine the CSOs’ stability:

- transparency of the political regime;
- presence of international donors;
- maturity of civil society;
- presence of local CD providers.

These elements also determine the degree of difficulty in setting up certain CD strategies in a partnership. Depending on the context, the Belgian NGO who wants to support partners in terms of CD needs to have more in-house expertise. The evaluation shows that the transparency of the political regime, the strength of the partner³⁷, and the downstream or upstream orientation in particular, determine the degree of difficulty. In fact it is generally more difficult to organise/facilitate CD support for the stronger

³⁶ The evaluation was not able to make a detailed calculation of investments in CD. The charting of the cost structure is hampered by the relevant NNGOs not having budget categories and the implicit character of a number of processes of CD.

³⁷ Strength of the partners: this refers to partners who are generally in balance with regard to the various core capacities of the ECDPM framework.

partners than for the weaker partners. For weaker partners quick results can be achieved through relatively simple interventions (improvement in planning and management, good accounting, etc.), and no specialised capacity is required to analyse these requirements and consequently attract the right expertise. The situation is different for strong organisations with more complex capacity requirements. Apart from this it appears easier to organise downstream CD support because it only involves technical and operational dimensions which are usually politically less sensitive. CD support that is directed upstream is generally more sensitive. It is especially more difficult to organise in authoritative systems, particularly if it concerns the lobby- and advocacy capacity. In that case there is a good chance that the CD support is regarded as a confrontation with government policy. Consequently, in very sensitive situations we see that a number of NNGOs resort to pure service delivery activities as a kind of survival mechanism (e.g. in Eastern Kivu, the DR Congo).

Another important context factor that emerged from the evaluation concerns the timing of CD actions. Organisations who find themselves confronted with important challenges (e.g. a crisis in the external or internal environment) will generally be more open to CD and be the demanding party for CD, at least if the partnership relations allow this.³⁸

b. Explicit versus implicit CD activities

The NNGOs' approach to CD distinguishes itself in the extent to which they organise their CD activities either explicitly³⁹ or more implicitly⁴⁰. As far as CD activities are concerned, being implicit or explicit does not automatically say anything about their effectiveness or relevance. Certain implicit activities appeared to be very effective and important within the partnerships (see evaluation question 5). Table 11 is an overview of the classification of the partnerships according to their use of implicit or explicit CD activities.

Table 11 Classification of partnerships according to the implicit or explicit nature of the activities

		Explicit CD activities				
		very few	few	regularly	many	very many
Implicit CD activities	very few	AMB/SOS LAYETTES AHEAD/AADC	AMB/DBA MMB/SLCD ANAG/Volens			
	few	CA/BD	JEEP/ADG BDD/VIC Adecom/EF GARC/Trias (after 2003) DPA/BD (after 2006)	Mbongwana/TRIAS	PNEL-PNET/DA DPS/CEMUBAC PEHA/PROTOS Min Health India/DA Prorural/Disop	

³⁸ This, for instance, was not the case for the TRIAS partner in South Africa (GARC). GARC management found that TRIAS had changed its policy within the partnership, and was more interested in starting up a new member organisation than strengthening GARC.

³⁹ *Explicit CD activities* are activities where the partner's CD is the main objective. Examples are training, partner meetings, OD activities, coaching and mentoring, conferences, etc.

⁴⁰ *Implicit CD activities* are activities performed as part of the collaboration between the NNGO and the partner, in which CD may be regarded as a by-product. Examples include interaction during visits from NNGO staff, an NNGO and its partner engaging in teamwork during a project/action, an activity in which the partner is used to support other partners, or actions where partners are included in a network/coalition.

Explicit CD activities						
	regularly		RECIC/11* MOCC*/WSM ACAT/BD TCOE/Oxfam* ILRIG/FOS*	APIL/Autre Terre WIMA/VE SYDIP/VE (before 2007) DPA/BD (before 2006)	Surabi DO/DMOS OFPROP/DMOS GARC/Trias (before 2003)	
	many		Aprodeh/11* CGTP/FOS*	C-CAWDU/ WSM* C-CAWDU/ Oxfam*		
	very many					

* = Normative partnerships.

Table 11 yields the following important information:

- In about one third of the partnerships support to CD is a marginal activity. There are few or very few explicit and/or implicit CD activities taking place within the partnership;
- In only one third of the 31 partnerships the evaluation finds many CD activities (explicitly and/or implicitly). In another third support to CD is not core-business but more of a sideshow;
- In the partnerships where there is support to CD this is generally done either via explicit CD activities (group 1: the technical/service delivery NNGOs), or via implicit CD activities (group 2: the political NNGOs /normative partnerships);
- A minority (7) of the partnerships is regularly involved in both explicit and implicit CD (APIL-Autre Terre in Burkina Faso, C-CAWDU with WSM and Oxfam Sol in Cambodia, WIMA and SYDIP-Vredeseilanden in the Congo, OFPROP/DMOS in Peru and Surabi/DMOS in India).

c. Hands-on versus hands-off approach

The involvement of Belgian NGOs in processes of CD differs greatly. Whether it is done consciously or not, they choose to distance themselves from actively addressing the plans and executing their partners' processes of CD (hands-off), or they play a more active role (hands-on). In a hands-on approach the NNGO plays a stronger role in the processes of CD. This could be in the planning phase where they ask the partner to undergo a capacity screening, or in the execution phase where they offer certain training modules, provide TA support, etc. In practice we can situate NNGOs on a continuum between those extremes. Although NNGOs also play various roles for various types of CD activities, certain patterns emerge. The motivation for specialised technical NGOs (group 1) to work hands-on appears to be linked to the identification of certain technical needs of the partners for which they have the appropriate expertise. The motivation for choosing a hands-off approach varies (and is not necessarily conscious). Some of the NNGOs (FOS/ILRIG, 11.11.11/APRODEH, Broederlijk Delen/ACAT) do not find it appropriate to interfere too much with the partners' internal affairs, and are mainly involved in implicit forms of CD (aimed at ID and partner exchanges). Others consider their partners so strong that there is not so much that can be done regarding CD (Oxfam Solidarity/TCOE). A third group thinks that they have little to offer because of their own limited capacity (SOS Layettes, AADC, DBA).

Table 12 is an overview of the roles the NNGOs play with regard to CD support, ranging from completely hands-off to completely hands-on (adapted from Intrac⁴¹, 2007), and an appreciation of the partnerships of the field phase within this framework.

⁴¹ Lipson B., Hunt M. (2007), Capacity Building Framework: A Values-based Programming Guide, Intrac, Praxis Series No.3.

Table 12 Classification of partnerships according to hands-on and hands-off approach

Hands-off←			-> Hands-on		
Funding of CD activities without setting conditions	Introducing contacts and information	Funding of deployment of local CD providers	Facilitating partner exchanges, networks, partner meetings, visits Belgium, critical dialogue with regional coordinator	NNGO organises training, TA, OCAs	NNGO supervises the full process of CD
TCOE/Oxfam* (1) ACAT/BD(1)	APRODEH/ 11*(1) CGTP/FOS*(1) RECIC/11*(2) ADECOM/EF GARC/TRIAS(1)	APIL/Autre Terre* SYDIP/VE WIMA/VE	ILRIG/FOS* C-CAWDU/WSM* C-CAWDU/Oxf am* APRODEH/11*(2) CGTP/FOS* (2) MOCC/WSM* RECIC/11*(2) TCOE/Oxfam-Sol* (2) ACAT/BD (2) DPA/BD ANAG/Volens (1)	PRORURAL/ Disop ANAG/Volens(2) GARC/TRIAS(2)	DPS/CEMUBAC MBONGWANA/TRIAS PNL-PNT/DA Min Health India/DA OFPROP/DMOS Surabi DO/DMOS PEHA/PROTOS

* = normative partnerships.

Note: some partnerships have both hands-on and hands-off aspects. These were indicated with (1) and (2).

This classification yields the following conclusions:

- NNGOs in the sample play roles that vary strongly from purely hands-off to hands-on, and everything in between⁴². In the partnerships of the more technically specialised NNGOs (group 1 and group 3) there is a clear preference for a strong hands-on approach, for instance in the partnerships of Damiaanactie, DMOS, Trias, PROTOS and CEMUBAC. The normative partnerships⁴³ (group 2) in the sample find themselves somewhere between a hands-on and a hands-off approach with a clear preference for partner exchanges, network/platform development, visits to the Northern network of the NNGO, etc;
- for the development of the partners' managerial capacity (project work, accounting, results based work, and so on) most of the NNGOs used a hands-on approach.
- the evaluation identified examples of both successful hands-on partnerships and of those that were somewhere in between hands-on and hands-off.
 - o The great danger of a strong hands-on approach is a weaker ownership of processes of CD due to powerful steering by NNGO. The DamiaanActie interventions face this risk due to the heavy steering and coordination by the local offices. However, there are examples in which a strong hands-on was not at the expense of ownership. DMOS' CD interventions in Peru and India, for instance, were very hands-on, particularly during the initial years, but they proved effective and sustainable. This can probably be explained by the fact that both DMOS and the development agencies are part of the same structure and family, and that consequently the CD interventions were not regarded as being external.
 - o The quality and effectiveness of the partnerships that are largely hands-off such as 11.11.11, EF, BD, FOS, and Oxfam Sol (group 2) appear to mainly depend on the NNGOs' regional coordinators' strategic ideas to identify and facilitate opportunities for CD support and on the local partner's strength to coordinate its own processes of CD. Therefore a hands-off approach does not necessarily mean that there is no CD support.
 - o The interventions of WSM and Oxfam Solidarity with C-CAWDU in Cambodia are mainly hands-off, but contain hands-on elements via advice, links with

⁴² The partnerships where there were few or no CD activities are not included in the table (AHEAD/AADC, AMB/SOS Layettes, CA/BD, AMB/DBA, JEEP/ADG, BDD/VIC, MMB/SLCD).

⁴³ In which CD is more in function of the organisation as a whole, rather than as a tool for reaching the target groups more effectively.

international networks, etc. This balanced combination of actions strengthened and took good advantage of endogenous processes of change.

*Cooperants*⁴⁴ and *regional coordinators* are presented by the NNGOs as important tools to support or facilitate processes of CD. The evaluation specifically examined their presence and attempted to chart their contributions to CD. Cooperants are expatriate staff, regional coordinators may include either international or national NNGO staff. Table 13 illustrates the fact that NNGOs deploy far fewer cooperants than in the past. Only 5 in 31 partnerships used cooperants. On the other hand, 25 of 31 partnerships use regional coordinators⁴⁵.

Table 13 Presence of cooperants and regional coordinators in the 31 partnerships

Land	Partnership	Coop	Reg Coord	Land	Partnership	Coop	Reg Coord
BF	AMB/SOS Layettes			India	Surabi DO/DMOS		X
BF	ANAG/Volens	X	X	India	Adecom/EF		X
BF	APIL/Autre Terre		X	India	Min DA India/DA		X
BF	AMB/DBA			Peru	Cedep Ayllu/BD		X
BF	MMB/SLCD			Peru	Prorural/DISOP		X
Cam	C.CAWDU/WSM		X	Peru	CGTP/IESI/FOS		X
Cam	C.CAWDU/Oxfam Sol		X	Peru	OFPROP/DMOS		X
Cam	AHEAD/AADC			Peru	Aprodeh/11		X
Cam	DPA/BD		X	SA	TCOE/Oxfam Sol		X
DRC	JEEP/ADG			SA	GARC/TRIAS	X (to 2003)	
DRC	BDD/VIC		X	SA	ILRIG/FOS		X
DRC	PEHA/PROTOS		X	SA	ACAT/BD		X
DRC	WIMA/VE	X	X				
DRC	SYDIP/VE	X	X				
DRC	MOCC/WSM		X				
DRC	RECIC/11		X				
DRC	Mbongwana/TRIAS	X	X				
DRC	DPS Kiro./CEMUBAC		?				
DRC	PNEL-PNET/DA		X				

On the basis of the field missions, the evaluation concludes the following with regard to the roles of cooperants and regional coordinators in processes of CD:

- partnerships (5) that are not supported by regional coordinators and/or cooperants, in practice also appear to focus much less on CD, or are not very successful in facilitating CD actions⁴⁶;
- the partnerships (5) in the sample with cooperants could not really show any better CD outcomes than partnerships with regional coordinators⁴⁷;
- the regional coordinators (25) played many varied roles with regard to CD in the partnerships:
 - more hands-on (from facilitating to steering): 21x;

⁴⁴ International development workers (technical assistants) in the Belgian NGO sector are called cooperants

⁴⁵ in a minority of the cases, those in charge of programmes at the NNGO head office in Belgium visited the partner several times a year and this supplemented or even replaced the role of the regional coordinators;

⁴⁶ The limited number of this type of partnership in the sample makes it difficult to draw broader conclusions

⁴⁷ Here too, the same comment applies regarding drawing broader conclusions.

- more hands-off (from purely administrative monitoring to moral support): 4x (BDD/VIC, ADECOM/EF, CA/BD, TCOE/Oxfam Sol).
- about half of the regional coordinators (12) played a significant role in supporting the partners' processes of CD.
- although various NNGOs indicated the regional coordinators as important contacts for CD support, the coordinators in the sample had no professional background in managing processes of CD and had received little or no explicit professional training/supervision from the NNGO for this role;
- in some countries the lack of strong local CD providers who are not only able to provide technical inputs but can design and facilitate whole processes of CD explains why regional coordinators remain important for NNGOs whose aim is to give CD support a central role.

The evaluation concludes that the regional coordinators can play an important role in CD support, but they are hardly prepared or receive little guidance for the role. In their job responsibilities, CD support (in the broad sense) is generally only a task with limited volume. In practice, however, they do regularly play a role that can be described as a type of 'soft-interface'. Both literally and figuratively they bridge the communication between the partners in the South and the head offices. In the best cases (12 partnerships) they enter into a critical dialogue with the partner and, depending on the situation, they play a role in which they are supportive, critical, innovative, networking and seek opportunities.

d. Downstream versus upstream

A fourth useful way to classify CD support in the partnerships is according to the orientation of the CD approach. On the one hand there are CD interventions that are focused *downstream* on the partner organisation and mainly strengthen the technical, operational and implementation capacity (usually through HRD, technical OD and in some cases investment in infrastructure as well). On the other hand there are CD interventions that are focused on *upstream* processes in the partner organisation, in other words the policy, strategy, vision and mission, the institutional framework, etc. (usually through OD and ID). Table 14 gives a rough estimate of the 31 partnerships with regard to the implemented strategies.

Table 14 Division of the 31 partnerships according to the orientation of the CD strategy: upstream or downstream

	Downstream		Upstream		
Normative partnership with regard to CD			C-CAWDU/WSM C-CAWDU/Oxfam MOCC/WSM	ILRIG/FOS TCOE/Oxfam APRODEH/11 CGTP/FOS RECIC/11	
Instrumental partnership with regard to CD*	OFPROP/DMOS PRORURAL/Disop PEHA/PROTOS ANAG/Volens PNL-PNT/DA	Min Health India/ DA DPS/CEMUBAC	ACAT/BD DPA/BD GARC/Trias SYDIP/VE WIMA/VE Surabi DO/DMOS APIL/Autre Terre Mbongwana/ Trias		ADECOM /EF

* A number of instrumental partnerships were not included because there were few or no CD activities: AHEAD/AADC, AMB/SOS Layettes, CA /Broederlijk Delen, AMB/DBA, JEEP/ADG, BDD/VIC, MMB/SLCD.

The analysis yields the following picture:

- normative partnerships (group 2) generally concentrate more on upstream support than the instrumental partnerships (of group 1, 3 and 4). In group 2, CD support

makes less use of conventional transfer of knowledge, but rather works through joint construction of knowledge and exchange of knowledge.⁴⁸ This approach could also be described as 'joint practice development'⁴⁹. The reverse is true for downstream support, which plays a central role in the instrumental partnerships. Here the transfer of knowledge occupies a central position and regularly takes the form of HRD or, to a lesser extent, OD, ID.

- partnerships of group 3 (NNGOs with multi-stakeholder approach) mostly strive for a balanced mix of downstream and upstream actions;
- in practice, a number of partnerships have clearly undergone an evolution. For instance:
 - the support of GARC (TRIAS) in South Africa evolved in 2003 from a strong hands-on approach with both downstream and upstream activities to a mainly hands-off approach with some upstream support here and there;
 - Until 2006-2007, SYDIP and WIMA (Vredeseilanden) were mainly strengthened in technical and operational areas (downstream), but are now supported less intensively and mainly upstream.
- Under the pressure of making their partners operate in a manner that is more results-based we see an evolution from a focus on upstream to a stronger interest in what is happening downstream within a number of partnerships, but then with a special focus on the partners' outputs and outcomes. However, here the 'black box', i.e. the organisation itself and the structural changes that are needed, are too easily ignored. Consequently, there is too little focus on organisational development which will allow the organisation to realise outputs and outcomes in the long term as well.

e. Frequency of use of routes 1 – 6

In the documentary phase of this evaluation, support to CD was also described on the basis of six routes⁵⁰, which included looking at which actors are involved in the process of CD and how (see chapter 1). The presence of the 6 routes was scored systematically for the 31 partnerships (criteria: sporadically, regularly, extensively). The evaluators based this estimate on the lists of CD activities that were drawn up during the field missions. This only concerns CD actions that were set up with Belgian NGO funding. As it was difficult to measure many CD activities this can only be regarded as an indication of the current reality in the field. Figure 3 shows the relative weight of the various routes but does not indicate the quality of the actions within the routes (this will be dealt with in evaluation question 5).

⁴⁸ Aprodeh in Peru, for instance, was supported by 11.11.11 to improve its capacity to shape the socio-economic and cultural dimension within its broader human rights work. Together they examined whether, for example from a gender perspective, it was best to work on the statute of female domestic workers. Another theme that was approached in the same way involved the problems in the mining sector. Consequently these strategic discussions give rise to more operational choices: will operations proceed via actions with the target groups, or through political actions, or both? The support of 11.11.11 with regard to those themes regularly took on the form of ID. We also saw similar support in the 11.11.11 partnership with RECIC in the DR Congo where the regional coordinator participates in RECIC's strategic discussions.

⁴⁹ Joint practice development: The NNGO or other partner organisations collaborate with the partner on a certain action/theme, and in that intensive process the capacity of the various parties involved is strengthened. In practice, this often is a more realistic scenario than the transfer of best-practices (in partner meetings for example) where there is too little focus on the local context and capacity to implement this best-practice.

⁵⁰ Route 1: CD carried out by NNGO; Route 2: CD carried out by local CD provider; Route 3: CD through participation in thematic or organisational networks, alliances, platforms, conferences; Route 4: CD through peer-to-peer interaction with NNGO partner organisations or other organisations in the South; Route 5: CD through interaction with similar organisations in the North or training in the North; Route 6: Partner organises its own processes of CD (without external expertise)

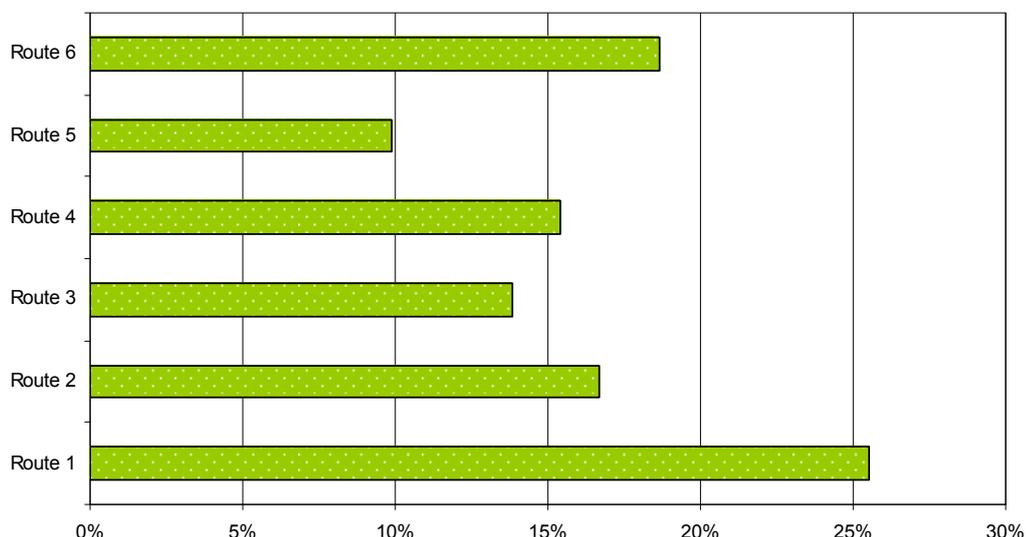


Figure 2 Frequency of 6 routes in 31 partnerships.

Although the Belgian NGOs use all 6 routes some are clearly used more than others. Route 1 is used in most partnerships and comprises the largest share of the CD activities. This route is somewhat broadly defined and comprises the visits of the regional NNGO coordinators, the input of cooperants, training supplied by NNGO staff, etc. It is interesting to note the frequent occurrence of route 6 too; the route in which the partner sets up its own CD processes⁵¹ without any significant outside supervision or external expertise (reflection-exercises, internal evaluations, etc.). The fact that the NNGO funding can create room for this kind of internal processes appears to be important. CD through interaction with similar organisations in the North or training in the North, only comprises about 10% of all the CD activities. This is most evident in NNGOs with strong north operations, and/or those who are part of a social movement, or NNGOs who regularly register their partners for courses in Europe.

The scores of the frequency of use of the 6 route were also shown in table 15 with regard to the 5 groups of partnerships defined at the beginning of this cluster. The scores vary between '0' (does not occur) and '3' (occurs extensively).

Table 6 Overview of the use of the routes by the 5 partnership groups (see beginning cluster 2): scores between '0' (does not occur) and '3' (occurs extensively)

Group 1-5	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4	Route 5	Route 6
Group 1: technical- and service delivery NNGOs	2,3	1,1	0,3	0,7	0,7	1,1
Group 2: NNGOs with a political orientation	1,9	1,0	1,6	1,4	1,1	2,1
Group 3: NNGOs with a multi-stakeholder approach	2,2	2,0	1,7	2,0	0,9	1,2
Group 4: NNGOs with a less coherent CD approach	1,7	1,4	1,1	1,2	0,5	2,0
Group 5: NNGOs with minimal CD activities	1,3	0,8	0,2	0,3	0,3	0,3

We see that group 2 and group 3 use partner exchanges, alliances and networking significantly more often than the NNGOs in group 1. The NNGOs in group 3 have the most diversity in their CD approach. The NNGOs in group 5 (group that is hardly doing

⁵¹ In practice, it is not always easy to separate internal processes from actions that are either indirectly steered or not by other donors or stakeholders.

CD) only use route 1 and a little of route 2, but otherwise they show little or no variation in their CD approach.

There is little difference in the use of the six routes between the normative and instrumental partnerships. Only the operations with local CD providers (route 2) are used significantly more often in instrumental partnerships, and the use of networks and alliances is (route 3) higher than in the normative partnerships. There are hardly any differences in the use of the 6 routes between weaker and stronger partners, apart from a slightly higher use of route 1 and a lower use of route 6 by the weaker partners.

f. Use of HRD – OD - ID

A sixth parameter to map the CD approach is via the distinction between CD activities that target the development (1) of individual staff competencies (HRD), or (2) the organisation as a whole, or parts thereof (OD), or (3) the position of the organisation in its environment (other organisations, structures, legal and institutional framework) (ID).

In the 6 countries quantitative and qualitative information was collected to get an idea of the subjects and approaches of HRD, OD and ID.

HRD-activities

Table 16 below describes the use of various types of education and training (HRD) and the corresponding approaches.

Table 7 Summary of the use of various subjects and approaches of HRD activities (31 partnerships): from `` to `xxxxx`

HRD activities (31 partnerships)	Method		
Subject	Formal learning: training, workshops, conferences	Informal learning: on-the- job learning, coaching, mentoring, peer- to peer	During normal work activities with learning as a by-product
Management skills	xxxx	xx	xx
Technical skills	xxxxx	xx	xx
Attitude, motivation, values, expectations	x	x	

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- most of the HRD activities involved technical and management themes. Only about one sixth concerned the softer capacities (attitudes, motivation, values, etc.);
- about half was set up as training, workshops, and/or conferences (formal learning activities). A quarter was set up via more informal learning activities (mentoring, coaching, peer-to-peer, etc.), and another quarter was set up via specific work activities (working on a joint project, interaction with colleagues or beneficiaries, etc.).

OD-activities

The analysis of the OD activities is presented in table 17 below.

Table 17 Overview of the use of various subjects and approaches of OD activities (31 partnerships)

OD-activities (31 partnerships)	Approaches		
	Training/ education	Adjusting procedures/ processes	Investments in infrastructure
Subject			
Organisational learning/knowledge management	xx	xx	
Structure of the organisation		X	
Internal processes of the organisation		xxx	
Staff policy	x		
Management style	x		
Organisational capacity			xxx
Organisational culture			

We see that:

- most of the OD activities involve strengthening the organisational capacity through the improvement of infrastructure and the development of internal processes and procedures. Organisational learning was also addressed, but to a lesser extent. The remaining four subjects were addressed significantly less;
- about one third of the OD actions were set up via HRD, one third through adapting procedures and processes and one third through investments in infrastructure.

ID activities

Table 8 Overview of the use of various subjects and approaches of ID activities (31 partnerships)

ID activities (31 partnerships)	Approach			
	Training/ education	Adapting processes/ procedures	Exchange of knowledge and experiences	Setting up activities together
Strategic harmonisation (harmonisation between organisations that operate in the same region or sector/networking)			xx	xx
Operational harmonisation (harmonisation of programmes and collective programme development)		x	xx	
Strengthening external influence (advocacy/lobby)	Xx		x	xxx

Of the ID activities:

- most of them involved the strengthening of lobby- and advocacy activities through HRD, the exchange of knowledge and experiences (partner exchanges) and the joint setting up of activities;
- In second order, there was attention for strategic and operational harmonisation.

If we compare the results for HRD, OD and ID, we reach a number of additional conclusions.

- (1) Despite the growing criticism in studies and evaluations of the effectiveness of traditional education and training for the support to CD, the NNGOs continue to invest significantly more in this than in other forms of HRD, OD or ID. Support to CD remains strongly associated with the organisation of training workshops or courses. The NNGOs in group 3 on the other hand have developed conscious strategies to move away from traditional education and training (this was also partly the case for DISOP and DMOS in group 1 as well). The NNGOs in group 2 also make less use of traditional training and focus more on partner exchanges, coalitions and networks, and implicit forms of CD (for instance through supporting the regional coordinators or setting up joint activities)
- (2) Overall, there are more organisational strengthening (OD) activities than in the past, but they often do not go further than improving infrastructure or strengthening implementation capacity (planning, M&E, etc.). Eleven partnerships do go further: DMOS (Peru and India) and DISOP (Peru) in group 1; WSM and Oxfam Sol (Cambodia) in group 2, Autre Terre (Burkina Faso), TRIAS (DR Congo and South Africa up to 2003), and VE (DR Congo) in group 3, and BD (Cambodia) in group 4. Examples of this can be found in the country reports;
- (3) There are a few examples of partnerships with a dynamic balance between the three components, which adapts to the changing context. For instance in the normative partnerships with a regular strategic dialogue (WSM, Oxfam Solidarity) in Cambodia there was an emphasis on the various CD dimensions (HRD, OD, ID) also adapted to the partner's evolving needs. The broader vision of CD was largely present at the start of the collaboration, but the specific support is modulated in function of the partner's institutional cycle. This explains why the ID component gradually becomes stronger;
- (4) In line with a shift towards the support of multi-stakeholder processes, the NNGOs in group 3 move away from the HRD- and OD support of individual partners, and experiment⁵² with forms of CD support to groups of actors and networks (e.g. chain development support in agriculture, operations via networks and temporary coalitions for campaigns, etc.). Due to the interdependent nature and structural dimensions of many development problems there are strong arguments for evolving towards a multi-actor approach, but this requires radical adjustments with regard to partner choice and the management of programmes. Based on the field visits, we conclude the following:
 - in the sample we found a few examples of multi-actor approaches in Vredeseilanden in DR Congo, TRIAS in DR Congo, PROTOS in DR Congo, and WSM and Oxfam Solidarity in Cambodia. From a CD perspective, we conclude that it is very important for a multi-actor approach to be based on the logic of the field (as in the partnerships listed above);
 - in some cases the partner organisation pursues its own multi-actor approach, but this did not translate into the specific partnership with the Belgian NGO (e.g. Aprodeh/11.11.11 in Peru);
 - in various cases rapidly changing NNGO strategies have led to a lack of predictability and abrupt adjustments in the partner policy (Vredeseilanden in Eastern Congo, TRIAS in South Africa);
 - a multi-actor approach does not automatically mean more coordination between donors of the same southern partner. Such coordination was non-existent or weak in the partnerships that were visited.

⁵² Vredeseilanden, for instance, participates in a survey and learning trajectories with regard to the CD support of multi-stakeholder processes in collaboration with Wageningen University.

A qualitative estimate of which type of CD activities were found to be effective and which not, is discussed in evaluation question 5 (JC 5.1).

JC 3.3 Resources and capacity to support CD

In most of the partnerships the expenses for the support of the partner's processes of CD are only 5 to 10% of the partner's funding as a whole. This could not be calculated precisely as the necessary information for some partnerships was lacking and because some – more implicit – types of CD are hard to quantify.

Generally speaking, we found that in the planning of processes of CD elements of efficiency are taken into consideration by the NNGOs. There is a relatively strong reliance on local CD providers if they are available. The deployment of Belgian cooperants continues to decrease in most NNGOs. In DR Congo cooperants are still widely used, however local expertise was clearly visible in several areas of expertise.

The number of NNGOs with specialised staff in Belgium or in the field with regard to CD is very limited. Knowledge building on this theme occurs mainly via practical experiences in the field or is based on short training sessions that are set up by the federations or specialised centres. With the exception of TRIAS, Vredeseilanden, PROTOS, DMOS (and to a lesser extent CEMUBAC, FOS, WSM, Autre Terre, and Broederlijk Delen) we found few examples of knowledge building among the NNGOs. This means that this central component of NNGO operations is handled rather badly.

The evaluation identified only two partnerships (C-CAWDU/WSM-Oxfam Solidarity in Cambodia, and DPA/Broederlijk Delen via the CIDSE consortium in Cambodia) that show attempts towards harmonisation between the various funders in the development and management of the partner's processes of CD.

Findings of analysis 9 partnerships of document study – evaluation question 3

In seven of the nine partnerships the NNGOs did not use pre-determined selection criteria to select the partner. The selection in these partnerships was mainly based on previous collaboration or historic/normative ties. It is interesting to note that 11.11.11 chose its partner Platforma DhESC for its fairly high level of capacities among other things (needed for the lobbying work that formed the core of the partnership). The emphasis on CD in identification/selection phases was mentioned in 6 of the 9 partnerships. All NNGOs state that the selection of the partners coincides with an analysis of the context in general (not always specifically of the context of civil society and of the partner organisation's position in this civil society). Two NNGOs (WSM with CFTUI in India and TRIAS with Cresol Baser in Brazil) indicate that they regularly renew this analysis so they can adapt their programme to the context. In half of the case studies the term of the partnership is undetermined.

The relevant NNGOs stress that their support is demand driven and that all the decisions concerning CD are made in mutual consultation. ADG particularly stresses the complementary nature of their CD support (in function of what their partner CWPD does itself in that respect).

In seven of the nine partnerships the NNGOs say that they do not align their interventions regarding CD with the partner's other funders. This is the case sometimes because the NNGO is the only funder, sometimes merely because of a lack of time. On the other hand TRIAS states that it has indeed attracted new donors (Rabobank, BRS) for its Brazilian partners so that they could play a complimentary role.

In six of the nine case studies the share of the budget (as part of the partnership) for CD is between 0 and 25%. In the two other cases (Chaka ADG/CWPD in Cambodia and TRIAS/Cresol Baser in Brazil) this share increases to 51-75%. Some NGOs (e.g. DMOS) indicate that in the past (particularly at the beginning of their partnership) the share should have been larger.

The route used most frequently to work on CD is clearly route 1 (direct CD by NNGO). The second most frequently used route is route 4 (CD through peer-to-peer interaction) and then, in order of frequency: route 2 (CD by southern CD providers), route 3 (CD through participation in thematic or sectoral networks, platforms, etc.) and route 5 (interactions with similar organisations in the North). The presence of route 6 could not be deduced from the existing documentation.

Comparison with 31 partnerships

The findings for evaluation question 3 for the 9 remaining partnerships not visited in the field phase follow the line of the analysis for the 31 partnerships. The relevant NNGOs all have one or more partnerships in the 31 of the field phase as well. Once again, in most cases the partners' initial identification- and selection process was not systematic. Renewal for new funding cycles is increasingly based on underpinning criteria. The frequency of 5 of 6 CD routes was comparable to the rest of the sample as well. There was insufficient information to reach conclusions regarding the hands-on/hands-off character, upstream/downstream, explicit-/implicit CD. The NNGO's contribution to processes of the CD was also hard to determine on the basis of secondary data, apart from more anecdotal evidence here and there.

3.3.2 Evaluation question 4 – How is the management of the partner relation developed and how are the processes of capacity development followed up?

JC 4.1 Sound management of the partnership relation

Partner agreements

In evaluation question 2 we also looked at the underlying values and principles of the partnerships and found that in many of them reference is made to a relationship that goes beyond the purely financial with the use of terms like equality, openness, shared agenda and vision, etc. In other partnerships we saw a more instrumental relationship with a special emphasis on the expectations and obligations with regard to the partner organisation.

This relationship is formalised in all 31 partnerships. The DGDC obligation that in all partnerships an agreement must be signed was followed-up by the NNGOs, albeit in a wide variety of forms and with varying content. The agreements usually span a term of one year and minimally comprise the partnership's financial framework and agreements regarding reporting. In about 2/3 (21) there are also indications with regard to the content of the partnership, the objectives and possible milestones. There are many references to the logical framework and corresponding objectives as a type of technical terms of reference for the collaboration. This puts pressure on the partners. Many partners were under the impression that unless the outcomes were realised they were committing a 'breach of contract'.

Only in a minority of cases (8 of 31) are references to CD included in the agreement (Surabi/DMOS, ILRIG/FOS, PEHA/Protos, GARC/TRIAS, Surabi/DMOS, OFPROP/DMOS, PLET-PLEN/DA, C-CAWDU/Oxfam Sol and WSM, and very summarily for Mbongwana/Trias and JEEP/ADG).

Critical dialogue and decision-making in the partnership

NNGOs draw some of their legitimacy from the image that they, more than other development actors, can bring an added value through their partnership relations. A significant challenge that presents itself here are the imbalances of power that arise as a result of the donor-receiver relation. Strong instrumental partnerships are less sensitive to this fact than the more normative partnerships; however, most NNGOs strive for a form of equality and reciprocity in their relations. They try to develop this by creating a critical dialogue, allowing the partner a voice and organising transparent decision-

making. Elbers and Schulpen⁵³ conclude that the rules for participation in decision-making play a determining role in the endeavour for more equality in partnerships. These authors also claim that the quality of the partnership is an important factor in successful CD support.

Formal and informal communication between the partners generally seems to run smoothly. There are regular field visits and communication via e-mail and a correct reporting from the partners to the NNGO. The frequency of interaction varied greatly in the field. For instance, organisations that have no regional on-the-spot coordinator, or organisations who manage many partnerships at the same time are generally less able to be with their partner. The quality of the dialogue is difficult to evaluate. We realised a general appraisal of the partner dialogue and examined 19 factors in particular⁵⁴ with regard to participation in the partnership, as developed by Elbers and Schulpen (see annex 2).

Most of the partners are positive about the dialogue with NNGOs, and there is mention of equal and open relations, and good and regular communication. The most important complaints made by the partners about the dialogue are:

- A lack of feedback on M&E reporting (GARC/Trias, JEEP/ADG);
- A lack of insight and participation in the decision-making process within the NNGO (TCOE/Oxfam Solidarity, ACAT/Broederlijk Delen, Mbongwana/Trias);
- Misunderstandings with regard to problems concerning intercultural communication (APIL/ Autre Terre, AMB/DBA);
- Inadequate understanding of the organisation's activities and why certain choices are made (JEEP-ADG, ANAG/Volens, WIMA and SYDIP/VE, PEHA/PROTOS);
- inappropriate communication at crucial moments (termination of funding via email with AHEAD/AADC);
- No structural dialogue at policy level (Ministry of Health, DRC and India/Damiaanactie).

The participation in agenda setting⁵⁵ for the 19 factors was studied, plus the participation in the final decision-making (see also annex 3).

For a number of factors, almost all of the Belgian NGOs are on the same wavelength regarding their (occasionally implicit) participation rules.

No participation for local partner in the final decision-making:

- *reporting*: style of narrative and financial reporting, and frequency of the reporting;
- *funding*: amount and period of funding (for ¼ of the partnerships there is participation via agenda setting);
- *NNGO policy*: selection of partners on a country level, allocation of funds on country level, the NNGO's country strategy, the NNGO's thematic priorities (for 1/4 to 1/3 of the partnerships for agenda setting).

Full participation for the local partner in final decision-making:

- *Programme content*: target group, theme and strategy;
- *stakeholders*: selection of the stakeholders for the programme.

For other factors, there are large differences between the partnerships in the sample. Depending on the context and the NNGO a partner will or will not be allowed to participate with regard to these factors:

- *capacity development*: activities to strengthen the partner's organisational capacity;

⁵³ Elbers W., Schulpen L. (2009), Partnerships between Private Aid Agencies and Partners: Sitting at the Decision-making Table or Standing at the Side Line? CIDIN, unpublished.

⁵⁴ This was systematically discussed in 28 of the 31 partnerships. In three partnerships the consultant did not check this list systematically.

⁵⁵ Agenda setting: this refers to the extent to which the partner organisations can determine or influence the agenda on a certain theme.

- *planning, implementation and monitoring*: the implementation and the choice of methodology for monitoring;
- *funding of core-costs*⁵⁶: the use of NNGO funding to assist in the payment of rental- and maintenance costs, staff salaries and other overhead costs.

For these three factors, in only half of the partnerships the partner is fully participating in the final decision-making. In about one third of the cases the partner is allowed no participation and for the remaining section occasional participation is allowed.

From this analysis, we can conclude the following:

- (1) almost all NNGOs give the partners the initiative and decision-making power with regard to the content of the programmes and with whom there will be collaboration;
- (2) in one third of the partnerships the partners do not get final decision-making power about the content of the CD approach (*4x in Eastern Congo, 1x Peru, 2x Burkina Faso*);
- (3) only a small number of the NNGOs (FOS) is open to the partners' structural participation in the policy of their own NNGO. Consequently, in most partnerships, reciprocity as a central building block in the partnership is very limited.

JC 4.2 Sound management of the support to CD as part of the partnership relation

In about half of the partnerships (15 of 31) there was a dialogue about CD in the partnership.⁵⁷ In some cases it is quite structured and is underpinned with tools such as in a few specialised/technical NNGOs like DMOS, Trias, PROTOS, CEMUBAC, and to a lesser extent Vredeseilanden. These are also the NNGOs who developed a policy regarding CD (evaluation question 1). In several normative partnerships (DISOP, FOS, WSM, Oxfam Solidarity, Autre Terre) CD is also on the agenda, but it is less structured in terms of communication and interaction, or takes place via networks or training linked to the movement of which the NNGOs and the partner are a part.

In these same actors, there was usually also a form of M&E of CD, sometimes quite detailed (Trias, DMOS, Vredeseilanden), but usually rather limited. The NNGOs with a developed and detailed M&E system invest in setting up sound M&E systems themselves, and are supported in this by external consultants who are hired for ad hoc assignments. The PLAS⁵⁸ system of Vredeseilanden is briefly explained in the box and it demonstrates how the monitoring and evaluation of CD can be realised.

The number of Southern partners with a strong M&E system appears to be increasing especially among the strong partners (Aprodeh/11.11.11, Prorural/DISOP, ACAT/Broederlijk Delen, Ministry of Health India/Damiaanactie).

Outcome Mapping as method for CD M&E in Vredeseilanden (PLAS)

For all its country programmes (period 2008-2013) Vredeseilanden (VE) introduced a new planning and M&E system that is focused more on learning. It was decided to apply Outcome Mapping and this was integrated into a broader Planning, Learning & Accountability system (PLAS). VE could build on and further develop existing expertise with regard to Outcome Mapping in one of its country offices (Indonesia) and with regard to organisational learning at head office. Apart from this, external expertise was attracted from the Outcome Mapping Learning Community (www.outcomemapping.ca). Outcome Mapping focuses fully on the planning and monitoring of changes in the key-

⁵⁶ The Belgian NNGOs mainly operate on the basis of project and programme funding. However, we find that in some cases the partner organisations perceived this as core-funding. These were cases in which the modalities were relatively flexible, the partnership long-term, and little management/ steering with regard to content.

⁵⁷ In evaluation question 3.2 we indicated that we were able to find explicit CD objectives in 18 partnerships. There is a large overlap between both groups of NNGOs.

⁵⁸ PLAS = Planning, Learning and Accountability System.

partners in a programme (meso or outcome level), rather than on the impact level. The objectives, indicators (progress markers in OM) and the strategies are developed in function of facilitating CD within these partners. This forces the methodology to focus on processes of CD from the very beginning of the design of a new programme. Outcome Mapping offers users several frameworks to help them include CD in a way that is realistic. Progress markers are designed to describe gradual changes (from simple to ambitious and difficult) for the partners. For the planning of the CD strategies Outcome Mapping has a matrix that can be used with 6 different strategies to support CD. M&E in Outcome Mapping is aimed at discussing the progression or the partner's processes of CD with the key-partners in a participative manner via self-evaluations. Most NNGOs who implement Outcome Mapping, integrate the methodology with the logical framework. This is also true for VE, because for the DGDC reporting, VE gathers separate information on indicators on the level of the final beneficiaries.

A third of the NNGOs' partners (DMOS, DBA, FOS, Broederlijk Delen, WSM and Oxfam Solidarity) complained about an increase of pressure in M&E reporting, with an increase in the frequency and level of detail. Especially for partners with a rapidly changing working environment this tends to undermine their flexibility. DGDC sets few conditions for narrative and financial reporting, but we see that the NNGOs use this in various ways in their communication with their partners. Some just send on the formats, others request information that can be integrated perfectly in the formats. There were also some examples (ILRIG/FOS, CGTP/FOS, Recic/11.11.11) where the NGO respects the partner's reporting logic and translates the information to the imposed DGDC formats, itself.

A second very important element that could increase the workload of the partner organisations in the South is the lack of mutual harmonisation between the various funding donors. The problem relates to the form and frequency of planning formats and M&E reporting. A large group of partner organisations was confronted with this problem as most of them had more than 2 donors (half of the partner organisations even had more than 5 donors). The NNGOs complain about a lack of time for harmonisation and about the reporting conditions of the back donors which are difficult to align⁵⁹. However, the evaluators were able to identify surprisingly few attempts at mutual harmonisation⁶⁰. An interesting good practice with regard to donor harmonisation is the partnership with the trade union organisation C-CAWDU in Cambodia, in which WSM and Oxfam Solidarity act in a way that is very complementary and effective with regard to the effect of the programme and the strategies for CD (see box).

Harmonisation between Belgian NGOs in C-CAWDU
(From evaluation report Cambodia)

We could consider the division of tasks and responsibilities between the C-Cawdu external partners as "good practice". This division of tasks had not been prepared in advance, but came about naturally on a basis of the specificity and complementary value of WSM and Oxfam respectively within the partnerships. This is even more relevant now as C-Cawdu is at the beginning of a new phase in its institutional life cycle. This re-structuring process will require various forms of external support (financial and non-financial). A new division of tasks between WSM (incl. ACD), Oxfam Solidarity and CNV is being developed to meet these changes.

⁵⁹ A southern partner (namely in South Africa) is rather reserved with regard to extreme harmonisation between the northern NGOs and other donors for fear that forms of bureaucracy will emerge with a high concentration of power on the donor side. The latter could then lead to forms of 'gate keeping', where the intermediaries acquire great power as to whether CD activities should be funded or not.

⁶⁰ Harmonising has various gradations, from light to intense: (1) exchange information, (2) making joint analyses and diagnoses, (3) division of labour, (4) streamlining procedures (reporting, per diems, etc.), (5) joint missions, evaluations, (6) joint funding. (1), (2), and (3) appear attainable in most cases.

The support to CD by both Belgian NGOs, is managed soundly using relatively informal but practicable agreements. Decisions on support to CD were taken in a reciprocal and open dialogue with an adapted and transparent flow of information. There are systems to regularly monitor the progress and the obstacles. The M&E systems of both Belgian NGOs and their partners produce sufficient information for monitoring how their activities are carried out, but they could improve the mapping of outcomes of CD. At present the dialogue is organised mainly bilaterally. Ideas are being considered for exploring forms of mutual dialogue to facilitate coordination and coherence.

A final important conclusion with regard to M&E is the very low number of external evaluations⁶¹ within the 31 partnerships that were visited. In the period 1998-2008, only ten partnerships were externally evaluated at least once. Not only did this make this evaluation more difficult due to the lack of secondary data for the verification of the findings, but is also an indication of the relatively limited use of evaluations as a tool for modifying the programmes. In the evaluations that were available there was little emphasis on processes of CD in most of them.

JC 4.3 Both partners address "learning in the organisation"

The evaluation teams found forms of learning processes on CD in less than half of the partnerships (12 of 31). Once again these were the NNGO partnerships where CD is an active part of the relationship which uses various forms of knowledge building for the management and documentation of the partners' processes of CD. For a minority this was very systematic and methodologically strongly underpinned. Interesting forms of systemising lessons with regard to CD are:

- Broederlijk Delen with DPA (in collaboration with CIDSE) in Cambodia (see box below);
- Vredeseilanden with PLAS. Vredeseilanden has added a fourth strategic learning objective to all its programmes; it is aimed at supporting the learning processes and documenting them better. An example of this is the activities for a better charting of how the processes of CD can be managed in a multi-actor approach;
- TRIAS with a toolbox regarding CD support. A few years ago TRIAS invested in an R&D unit in head office. This unit has provided much methodological and policy development support regarding the management of partnerships, CD, and more themes regarding content (agriculture-related and regarding member organisations). A number of methodologies were also identified and a corresponding toolbox developed for the management of processes of CD with their partners. For instance, in collaboration with the international partner Agriterro they developed a specific module for the monitoring of processes of CD in agricultural organisations (cooperatives and other member organisations);
- DISOP with Prorural in Peru. DISOP regularly brings its regional partners together and has developed a specific methodology for drawing lessons with regard to the operations of the agricultural schools they support. It takes thematic subjects and subjects related to CD into account.

⁶¹ External evaluations – this means an evaluation carried out by someone from outside the organisation involved (see also: Cracknell (2000) *Evaluating Development Aid. Issues, Problems and Solutions*. London, SAGE publications).

Action research of important organisational changes DPA-CIDSE Cambodia

(From evaluation report Cambodia).

CIDSE decided to document the process of becoming an independent organisation (localisation) of a Cambodian NGO from the CIDSE group. An in-house research project was initiated aimed at canvassing views of all the actors involved (i.e. programme beneficiaries, stakeholders and partners, member organisations, former CIDSE staff, government representatives) on the change process towards organisational self-management. The support to CD in function of the successful process of becoming an independent organisation/ localisation process was managed well by the CIDSE group, and within it a central role was played by Broederlijk Delen. The resulting document: 'Towards Empowerment. A Case Study of CIDSE Cambodia's Transition to Local NGO'⁶² provides for fascinating reading of the process steps followed, the internal debates and tensions incurred, the outcomes as well as the lessons learnt, both at organisational level and programmatic level (as CIDSE also continued to adapt its intervention strategies to shifting views on development and evolving needs in the field⁶³). It also examined the fear of staff regarding possible job losses, salaries, advantages, safety, funding, leadership, reputation, etc. Underlying this localisation process was a critical dialogue in the various phases that addressed the area of capacity development. In this localisation process we see a "hands-off" approach to CD with a focus on both downstream issues (e.g. capacity for financial management) and upstream issues (e.g. strategic planning).

All in all, we find little strategic reflection on the NNGO level with regard to CD. This explains why a number of Belgian NGOs too often modify their policy under external pressure (reactive and maladaptive to the needs of the field/ strategy) or they sometimes make changes that are not founded on a certain vision or strategy.

On the side of the partner organisations the staff turnover was studied as well, since this was quoted as a sore point in national and international evaluations and studies. Time and again staff turnover causes the carefully constructed partner staff capacity to disappear, and there is little chance of knowledge building due to the rapid changes. For this indicator we were able to get the necessary information from 21 of the 31 partnerships. Generally speaking with an average of about 8% staff turnover was very reasonable for the relevant organisations. As a comparison, studies of the non-profit sector in Flanders come up at around 11%, while in the private sector it is as high as 15% (Peeters et al, 2004). A limited number of partners did have a significant staff turnover. Our analysis does not differentiate between staff turnover on a managerial level or on the level of middle management as opposed to the more operational functions, which gives us only a limited idea of the problem. The figures differed widely per country, but the number of cases per country is too small to link strong conclusions to it. Staff turnover was very high in South Africa, high also in Peru, lower in the DR Congo and very low in Burkina Faso. The presence (attractive with regard to conditions of employment) of other interesting clients like large international NGOs, international organisations (FAO etc.), relevant Ministries of the country in the region where the

⁶² Following an initial period of inactivity and uncertainty (1997-1999), after 2000 a more structured approach was adopted with regard to the situation. In an initial phase (2000-2002) a strategic approach was adopted to develop the capacity of the staff and to chart the positions of the staff. During the second phase (2003-2005) the work focused on the development of a vision and mission for the new NGO, for instance by clarifying the values of the organisation, putting the necessary structures into place on a policy level and re-defining the group of donors that supported DPA.

⁶³ One of the important changes in the approach to CIDSE with regard to Integrated Community Development was the shift from a direct executive role to a role that put more emphasis on the development of partnerships and strengthening the partner's capacity in terms of self-government. The future DPA staff had to be trained and strengthened in this matter so that they could familiarise themselves with this new approach.

partner organisations are located, could be a determining factor. In South Africa the NNGOs involved were in Cape Town or in the vicinity of Durban. It is safe to conclude that there is a relatively larger job market in these locations than in a rural setting in Burkina Faso⁶⁴, for instance.

The programme units of the Belgian NGOs had a turnover with an average of about 9%, which is acceptable (some individual NNGOs had been faced with a relatively high staff turnover over the past few years).

From these figures we can conclude that processes of CD in certain regions and for certain specific contexts were undermined by staff turnover, but that it was not a fundamental problem for all 21 partnerships.

Findings analysis 9 partnerships of document study – evaluation question 4

The relevant NNGOs assess the quality of their partnership relations in the nine partnerships to be high. They refer mainly to the agreements, clear-cut procedures, and the specific objectives related to the partnership relation. Communication is also evaluated as being good. Contacts via e-mails, regular visits by the NNGOs, and the presence of cooperants facilitate the relationship between the partners.

There are no great problems in terms of the division of tasks between the partners. The division looks clear on paper. Some partners are demanding that this division be regularly evaluated and modified. All in all, there seems to be much emphasis from NNGOs not to play the a substituting role with regard to their partners.

All NNGOs give the impression that a critical dialogue between the partners regarding CD is possible at any time due to participative mechanisms and workshops. The dominant logic that determines the weight of CD within these nine partnerships seems to be linked to the partner's strength. The size of the funding for CD is adjusted to the partners' progress: the greater the partners' capacity, the smaller the NNGOs' funding or other support for CD.

Based on the information gathered it was not always easy to determine the quality of the M&E systems with regard to the monitoring of the results on CD. Some NGOS (TRIAS, DMOS, WSM, VIC) have developed specific indicators for CD that allow the monitoring of elements such as, for example, developments in the methodological approach of the partner, administrative capacities, internal democracy, financial autonomy, expansion, etc. On the basis of the telephone interviews (5) we find that M&E is not perceived as a learning tool by some of the partners, but rather as an obligatory administrative task. DMOS has established a complex and quantifiable M&E system with clear indicators regarding CD.

In four (VIC, TRIAS, WSM, DMOS) of the nine partnerships the NNGOs were able to demonstrate that they emphasised learning in the organisation. This happens through best practices (e.g. as a regular subject in the reports), and via discussion/exchange in formal discussion frameworks between the partner and the NNGOs or between the partners of the same NNGO. Sometimes these "lessons learned" focus strongly on the output level and not enough on complex processes (alliances, networking, ...). Increasingly, south/south exchanges are encouraged, but not always put into practice. Standard regular meetings between the partners of the same NNGO were mentioned a few times. Some NNGOs also determine a clear evolution in terms of focus. In the past the focus was mainly on organisational capacities, however due to partners who are growing stronger and with more complex needs regarding CD they see a shift towards the institutional capacities of the partners.

⁶⁴ In 2 organisations the staff turnover gave a distorted view of reality. The 11 MMB staff in Burkina Faso were still under contract, but technically speaking practically unemployed because of a lack of new projects.

Comparison with 31 partnerships

The assessment of the partnership relation is not complete without hearing the perception of the partners. From the existing documentation and the interviews with the NNGOs, no problems could be identified in the partnership relations. Again the evaluation of the quality of M&E and the learning of the organisations corresponds with earlier analyses. The assessment of the two VIC partnerships in this analysis does differ from that of the VIC partnership in DR Congo. In these two partnerships VIC appears to play a more active role with regard to CD.

Conclusion cluster two

The quality of the relationship between Northern NGOs and their partners in the South is generally considered as an important component in successful NGO collaboration. This evaluation confirms the view that for a significant number of partnerships attempts are made not to limit the relationship to financial transfers within a donor-beneficiary relationship, although the extent to which this happens varies greatly. Only a quarter of the partnerships were described as 'normative', where working on strong partner organisations is an important objective in itself (cf. trade unions, and some other member organisations). Three quarters were mainly described as 'instrumental'. This means that the development of the partner was mainly in function of the final target groups or realising certain objectives. We concluded that this disparity also has consequences for the approach used to support CD.

Although both the partners in the South and the Belgian NGOs generally speak in terms of equal and open relations with effective communication, the Belgian NGOs in the sample are rather conservative (compared to a number of other Northern NGOs) in organising systematic participation of the southern partners in their policies and actions. The situation is different with regard to the content of the programmes that are funded, and the stakeholders who are up for collaboration. A large majority leaves the initiative and the decision-making power to the Southern partners.

The systematic lack of harmonisation between the external funders (NNGOs and other donors) who collaborate with the same partner organisation, is remarkable. A second difficulty is the lack of underpinned exit-strategies. In a number of cases it was noted that formerly established capacities were lost after partner organisations were forced to resort to survival strategies because they were unable to cope with the departure of Belgian funding channels.

In the sample of studied partnerships CD activities only play a small role, both financially and with regard to volume. We have described a diversity of strategies for CD, ranging from hands-off to hands-on activities, implicit or explicit, downstream or upstream where various routes can be adopted. There is a tendency for technically oriented NNGOs (group 1) to mainly offer hands-on activities, usually aimed at the development of the technical and operational implementation capacity of the partner. Normative NNGOs (group 2) mainly support upstream processes, or the development of policy, strategy, vision, positioning, networking, and advocacy and lobby of the partner organisation. Most CD activities are carried out by the NNGO itself, followed by the local CD providers. However, there is also an emphasis on peer-to-peer exchanges and facilitating the partner's access to networks. The NNGOs with a developed Northern network also involve organisations from that network for the strengthening of their partners. The focus is mainly on training staff (HRD), followed by support to organisational development (OD). Institutional development (ID) is addressed to a lesser degree.

3.4. Cluster 3: effectiveness of the support to capacity development in partnerships

After analysing the input side of the CD activities of partnerships of Belgian NGOs in cluster 2, cluster 3 looks at the effects of CD on the activities of the partner organisations. The evaluation makes indicative statements regarding the realisation of

CD objectives if they have been explicitly defined. Wherever possible an evaluation is made of whether the NNGOs' CD activities have contributed towards a significant improvement of capability of the partners in the South. An analysis is also made of which CD activities appear to be more effective than other activities. Finally, conclusions are drawn regarding the sustainability of the CD activities in partners in the South.

3.4.1 Evaluation question 5 – What changes can be determined regarding the capacity of partner organisations?

JC 5.1 There are indications for the development of the partners' capacity

Realising CD objectives

In 22 of the 31 partnerships objectives regarding CD were found in the logical frameworks. It is important to point out here that the CD objectives within this group of 22 partnerships vary strongly. Half of them comprise only references to the partner's management capacity, focusing mainly on ability to meet the reporting requirements of the back donor. On the basis of this conclusion we can state that about one third of the 31 partnerships in the sample have substantial objectives regarding CD.

10 of these 22 partnerships with CD objectives largely succeeded in realising them. They were partly realised in 8 partnerships and were not realised in 4 partnerships.

Capacity changes in the partners

In the methodology section we explained how the partners' CD was analysed from an historical perspective. Here the evolution of significant capacities (identified by the partner organisation itself⁶⁵) was plotted on a time axis and the whole analysed in the light of major developments in the internal and external environment of the partner organisation.

The 29 partner organisations in the sample also placed a varying emphasis in the listing of significant capacities in their organisation:

- Partner organisations with a strong political mission focus significantly more attention on capacities aimed at their emancipatory task (being able to give the socially weak a voice, participate in political lobbying, critically analyse the policy, etc.);
- Partner organisations with a more technical task often emphasise these technical capacities and the quality of the services provided or ability to reach the target groups;
- Member organisations attach great importance to their capacity to represent the members, to the democratic character of the organisation;
- Some faith-based organisations regard their spiritual values and their organisation's capacity to propagate this, as being of central importance.

This specificity has consequences for the use of tools for analysing and monitoring CD and illustrates the restraints involved in striving towards a uniform approach. The analysis also shows that not all partner organisations meet the basic conditions needed to function as a real organisation, in some instances because there is no longer any funding (MMB in Burkina Faso), or because identity is still unclear (ANAG-Burkina Faso),

⁶⁵ We consciously did not base the analysis on a specific predetermined framework in recognition of the fact that these basic building blocks touch on the identity/special nature of the organisations.

The language used was also adapted to the context. In some cases, rather than speak of capacities, we spoke of the important features/characteristics/indicators of the organisation, to make it more intelligible.

or because little is invested in the central structures (e.g. networks: PEHA in DR Congo⁶⁶).

The ECDPM analysis framework was used to analyse (a) in which areas the partner organisations situate the evolution of their capacity and (b) on which “core-capabilities” the NNGO’s CD strategies are mainly oriented (see table 19). Here we examined the organisation’s capacity as a whole rather than just the processes of CD that are funded or supported by the NNGOs. Most partner organisations were able to give concrete examples of evolution/ changes in capacity and then with regard to the five core capabilities. Below are some examples of capacity changes (more examples for each partnership can be found in the country reports).

Table 19 Overview of examples of capacity change

5 core capabilities	Examples
1. <i>Capability to commit and engage</i>	<i>Mbongwana (Trias) in DR Congo</i> – through the introduction of participative planning methods the target group is more involved in the programmes and the organisation is able to implement more relevant programmes.
2. <i>Capability to carry out technical, service delivery & logistical tasks</i>	<i>Mbongwana (Trias) in DR Congo</i> – the introduction of a more economic angle in the approach resulted in improved outcomes for the beneficiaries <i>Prorural (Disop) in Peru</i> – the organisation improved and developed its administrative systems, internal structures, management tools and developed a PME system resulting in a more systematic approach
3. <i>Capability to relate and attract resources & support</i>	<i>TCOE (Oxfam Sol) in South Africa</i> – over the years TCOE has developed its capacity to network with a wide range of stakeholders within and outside South Africa. Networking and building coalitions with organisations that share the same values and agenda are a core activity for the organisation. TCOE has also built up a growing portfolio of funders and had more than 20 donors at the end of 2009
4. <i>Capability to adapt and self renew</i>	<i>Surabi (DMOS) in India</i> – the introduction of a decentralised management style increased the participation of stakeholders and beneficiaries so that the programmes could be better adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries and the changing context.
5. <i>Capability to balance coherence and diversity</i>	<i>Surabi (DMOS) in India and OFROP (DMOS) in Peru</i> – both cases revealed the importance DMOS has attached to the further institutionalisation of its partners in recent years. Here great importance was attached to a coherent vision and mission within the Salesian community which increases the operational coherence in the programmes of both partner organisations.

⁶⁶ The specific situation and needs of networks differ from those of organisations but were not studied in detail in this evaluation. However, the current evaluation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands (2009-2010) does specifically examine this (see reports ‘Evaluation of Dutch Support to Capacity Development: Evidence Based Case Studies’). A useful application of the ECDPM framework for CD in networks can be found in the master thesis of R. Wuite (2008) ‘What makes the Net Work? -A conceptual network capacity analysis’, PDOO, Supervisor: dr. A. van Eerdewijk.

In a self evaluation exercise we asked for examples of changing capacity. Striking was the fact that the weaker or young organisations mainly mentioned operational and basic capacities (bookkeeping, staff management, etc.) while stronger or more mature organisations who were more oriented towards outside activities (networks) found more complex capacities important (managing networks, lobbying, etc.).

All partner organisations evolve over the five core capabilities. It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to get a detailed and documented picture of the evolution over all 5 core capabilities. However, the exercise with partner organisations clearly showed how internal and external factors influenced the evolution of the organisation. Table 20 gives an overview of the external and internal factors, mentioned by the partner organisations which influenced the organisation's capacity development. Here we see that the funding of the partner by the NNGOs is a very important external factor in capacity development. The funding mainly enables organisations to implement programmes (core capability 2) and to relate (core capability 3). The more the partner depends financially on the donor, the more important this funding becomes. We also see that in organisations who are strongly dependent on one or two donors the various phases of evolution coincide with the funding periods (and policy and strategic choices) of the NNGOs.

Table 20 Overview of internal and external factors that influence CD (based on site missions of 31 partnerships)

	External factors	Internal factors
Burkina Faso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse but poorly structured civil society - Few channels for structural interaction with government - Competition between CSO organisations - Lack of coordination between donors - the NNGO does not respect the partner's salary structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong financial dependence on donors - inadequate involvement of the members and/or staff of the organisation - unclear mission - high staff turnover - leadership problems
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recovery from the civil war which has severely damaged social/institutional capital - authoritarian government - limited room for advocacy work - competition between CSOs in a context of a decreasing number of donors - corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very strong financial dependence on donors - hierarchical structures within NGO - limited capacity to renew with risk of takeover donor agendas
DR Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recent history of violence and war - funding mechanisms switch between humanitarian and structural aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high dependence on individual donors - death or departure of staff - restructuring - strong leadership - commitment of staff

India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dynamic civil society - relatively open and democratic government - professionalism of the CSO sector - limited resources of local governments - wide range of CD providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong competition for funding by donors - changes in strategy - openness to participation in international forums - documentation of good practices
Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - switching from less (dictatorship Fujimori) to more democracy - economic crisis - decrease in number of international donors - restrictive funding policy donors (no core funding) - little willingness to fund cross programme evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shared values and norms - commitment that extends beyond 9-5 jobs - changing/continuity leadership - transparent and efficient management of resources - staff policy that guarantees job security and growth opportunities (CD)
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decrease in number of international donors - complex relationship between governments and political NGOs (former partners) - lack of harmonisation between donors - few donors provide core funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shortage of black middle management - staff turnover - maintaining coherence as a result of tension between specialisation and broadening - transformation of NGO into social movement - from programme funding to project funding

The NNGOs' CD strategies strikingly often focus on strengthening core capability 2 (*to carry out technical, service-delivery & logistical tasks*) and core capability 3 (*to relate and attract resources & support*). Only a minority (DMOS, Trias, Vredeseilanden, WSM, and so on) focus explicitly on the other capacities but often do so relatively tentatively.

Contribution of Belgian NGOs

In 13 of the 31 partnerships evaluators found clear indications that the Belgian NGOs had contributed to the partners' CD. In 12 others only a small contribution could be linked to the funding of the NNGO. No influence was found for in rest (6).

The evaluation made a rough assessment of the effectiveness of individual CD activities. This was done on the basis of the findings of the participative workshop during the field mission, supplemented with relevant information from project documentation, interviews and observations by the evaluation team. A systematisation of this information for the 6 field missions resulted in table 21. The table describes the most successful CD activities for the 6 routes (see chapter 1) and the critical conditions for them. In the same table we also list less successful CD activities. It also indicates important transversal factors which influence the success of CD activities.

Table 21 Overview of the forms of CD which work well and CD activities that are less successful in the partnerships

	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4	Route 5	Route 6
Which forms of CD worked?	<p>TA for technical training/advice/OD /ID: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ demand-driven, in clear trajectory, within NNGO area of expertise, no route 2 expertise available <p>Partner visits by regional coordinator/Prog officer of NNGO: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ strong regional coordinator with strategic insight, ✓ supported by network of NNGO, ✓ possibly in collaboration between NNGOs <p>Explicit recognition and use of expertise of Southern partner, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ use of partner for CD of weaker organisations ✓ commissioning tasks with international recognition and visibility ✓ Executing projects/ activities together <p>Innovation approach and/or introduce tools: e.g. M&E</p>	<p>Technical and methodological training/OD: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ demand-driven, ✓ in clear trajectory, ✓ support for M&E <p>Participation in audits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ learning-oriented audit ✓ strong interaction with partner organisation 	<p>Participation in networking, coalitions: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ theme is alive in partner organisation ✓ similar work environment (positive identification) ✓ partner can contribute to network ✓ possibility to strengthen identity of partner ✓ working towards concrete outputs: (e.g.: code foncier, code de l'eau, campaigns, etc.) ✓ greater efficiency through joint action (in research, advocacy, campaigns) 	<p>Partner visits & exchanges: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ field visits with follow-up activities ✓ theme is important in partner organisation ✓ similar work environment (positive identification) ✓ partner can contribute to interaction <p>Partner meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ theme is important in partners and has clear focus ✓ partners have something to offer each other ✓ partners can contribute to meeting 	<p>Training in the North: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ in trajectory with concrete application in work situation ✓ with stipulation that person remains x number of years after training <p>Participation in NNGO North activities: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ introduction in relevant networks ✓ partner can contribute to activities 	<p>Organisation of internal reflection/evaluation workshops: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ sufficient presence of evaluation culture ✓ leadership that supports good governance ✓ expertise available in partner to do these types of processes <p>Organisation of activities with CD as a by-product, if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ challenging events that push the partner to innovate/ renew activities with methodologies that support these CD processes (e.g. action research)
<p>Transversal elements that strengthen CD: (1) balanced partnerships; (2) NNGO has clear identity and value; (3) NNGO capacity on site, (4) vision of CD and translation into methods/ tools, (5) capacity to learn from CD processes, (6) creativity and flexibility in CD support, (7) respect ownership of CD</p>						
Which types of CD were less successful?	<p>TA for technical training/advice: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ donor-driven, too much steering, unclear institutional set-up, too many TA switches <p>Partner visits by regional coordinator/Prog officer of HQ: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ themes and policy changes are enforced 	<p>Technical and methodological training / OD: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ one-off training without pre and post trajectory ⊗ donor-driven ⊗ bad timing 	<p>Participation in networks, coalitions: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ no commitment required (free of obligations) ⊗ no contribution of partner possible 	<p>Partner meetings: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ partners with vague overlap in themes especially assembled for execution NNGO programme ⊗ too little focus in meetings ⊗ partners have too little say in NNGO policy 	<p>Training in the North: if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ training is locally available ⊗ persons who are trained no longer have a contract ⊗ long-term training in high staff turnover 	<p>Organisation of internal reflection/ evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ lack of funding for strategic reflection exercises
<p>Transversal elements that hamper CD: (1) lack of exit strategies; (2) Rapid changes in NNGO policy; (3) Lack of OD and ID strategies; (4) creation of new partner organisations without sustainable institutional embedding, (5) NNGO has no critical mass to support CD</p>						

In the table we can highlight the following points:

- spread throughout the group of partnerships, successful CD activities were identified for the 6 routes. This produced a wide range of possible CD strategies which, subject to follow-up of the necessary success factors and depending on the context and needs, can be implemented for the partner's CD;
- the successful CD practices were only found again in a limited number of partnerships and rarely in different combinations. Consequently there is a wide margin for enriching the NNGO's current CD practice;
- within routes 1, 4, and 5 we find examples of effective and less successful CD practices:
 - o route 1: Although in several cases the work of regional coordinators clearly contributed to CD, there were also examples of less successful interventions. The table describes several conditions that must be met to offer meaningful support to CD via this route;
 - o route 4: Many Belgian NGOs regularly bring together their partners in a certain region through partner meetings with a view to an exchange of knowledge, training and consultation. This type of CD activity was repeatedly quoted as being unproductive and its value was questioned. However, if in organising the partner meetings specific conditions were taken into account (see table) the experiences were positive. The same applied to training in the North (route 5). Partner exchanges (route 4) were considered to be more positive, especially if there was strategic reflection on the approach and partner choice (see table).
- the evaluation only found a few examples of strategies explicitly aimed at gender aspects in processes of CD (TCOE/Oxfam Sol in SA and APIL/Autre Terre in BF) while this is eminently a domain in which gender relationships play a role. More generally we conclude that in the sample there were as good as no CSOs who are specifically committed to women's themes.⁶⁷

The evaluation also produced several less conventional but very effective examples of CD activities.⁶⁸ In many cases these relate to more implicit forms of CD development.

- route 1: use of partner for CD of other partners (ILRIG/FOS en ACAT/BD in South Africa). This resulted in the recognition of the expertise, a systematisation of the partners' experiences, growing self-confidence to take on new challenges and an opportunity to profile themselves further internationally;
- route 1: strategic advocacy and lobby in FOS partner in Peru (CGTP/FOS). In a critical dialogue, strategic support was given to the women's department of the union over a period of several years through informal consultation, specific inputs and strategic advice by the regional FOS coordinator. This strengthened the profiling, position and the content of the work of the department with regard to the big umbrella trade union organisation;
- route 1: cooperation between donors in C-CAWDU (WSM and Oxfam Sol in Cambodia). Both Belgian NGOs strengthened the Cambodian trade union partner in mutual consultation in a manner that was flexible, creative and demand-driven and did so on the basis of their own specific identity and value. This also had a beneficial effect on the support process of the local partner in its search for its own CD strategy (Route 6). (also see box in evaluation question 4.2);
- route 1: international recognition of expertise of partner (ILRIG/FOS and TCOE/Oxfam Solidarity in South Africa). By deploying the partner for high profile tasks (research in ILRIG and contribution to international networking in Oxfam) new

⁶⁷ In the analysis of the sample we found that there were no partners in the sample who had explicit gender activities or were explicitly a women's organisation. The ToR of this evaluation had no specific gender criterion. In the original sample there was a NNGO project which worked explicitly on gender (le Monde Selon Les Femmes), but this was removed from the sample as it had only just started activities in the South. The DGDC data base could be analysed further regarding this variable.

⁶⁸ More examples can be found in the country reports.

expertise was tapped into within the partners and there was a growth in the partner's self-confidence and legitimacy;

- route 4: partner meetings by DISOP in Peru (Prorural/DISOP). DISOP organises lively partner meetings in which the exchange between organisations with similar values and objectives plays a central role. The partner meetings also examine certain themes such as the alternating education system implemented by Procural. These meetings were frequently quoted as being crucial for the partner from a CD perspective;
- route 6: Action research of TCOE/Oxfam Solidarity – South Africa. TCOE strengthened the internal capacity to mobilise, organise and support farmer groups and farmer movements by setting up action research together with the farmers. The research also produced important insights into the structural causes of the situation and gave opportunities to claim their rights;
- route 6: Introducing Buddhist elements in the programme to challenge the cast system (ADECOS-Entraide et Fraternité). The position of weaker subgroups within the Indian target groups of ADECOS was strengthened by referring to certain Buddhist customs and values. This insight strengthened ADECOS in its approach to refine the structural social and cultural dimensions of its work;
- route 6: Action research in major organisational change (DPA-Broederlijk Delen/CIDSE in Cambodia). A complex and sensitive process of transforming a Cambodian branch/ section of CIDSE into a fully-fledged independent Cambodian NGO was carefully documented via action research. This also allowed the process to be managed and monitored and conclusions to be drawn;
- route 6: Retreats in which the values that drive the organisation were addressed thus guaranteeing consistency in its functioning (Mbongwana-Trias, RD Congo). At regular times of the year Mbongwana organises retreats where the staff consider the spiritual values that drive the organisation and where principles such as honesty and transparency are addressed. These retreats have a huge motivational effect on the staff.

JC 5.2 Results of the partner's CD are long-lasting

In most of the partnerships in the sample CD is an endogenous process in which the partner takes the lead. In about a quarter of the cases the NNGO was steering strongly or the NNGO's contribution was more negative or destabilising so that the partner no longer had the initiative. In previous sections we also indicated that the NNGOs' approach is focused strongly on core capability 2 (capacity to deliver on development objectives) and 3 (capacity to attract funds and relate) and far less on other core capabilities. From a sustainability perspective there is a risk that this poorly balanced approach will result in an instrumentalisation of the partners and an undermining of other strategic capacities. There were also indications of a lack of harmonisation between the various funders of the partners in the South. We shall now introduce several additional elements regarding sustainability.

Other funds for CD

Although most partner organisations (about two-thirds) have access to other budgets for their own organisation's CD, these are substantial in only half of the cases. Especially in countries where smaller or weaker partner organisations were included in the sample, and which were also strongly dependent on Belgian funding (such in Burkina Faso and DR Congo), the partners had little access to other CD budgets. This also applies to the government partners of Damiaanactie.

In the interviews various partner organisations reported the lack of more flexible funding modalities/ arrangements (e.g. in the form of core funding) of their external funders (all the partners' funders). The partner organisations argued that many funders are only prepared to finance activity-related costs and contribute very little to central overhead costs. To date this has been less of a problem with funding via the Belgian NGOs. Most partners saw them as being relatively flexible and not too rigidly subject to carrying out prearranged activities (somewhere in the middle bracket). Various partner organisations

did refer to a gradual tightening of funding modalities of the Belgian NGOs (in which budgets are closely linked to detailed logical frameworks), and voiced concern about this evolution.

Dependency on NNGO

In a significant number of partnerships there is a strong financial dependence on Belgian NGOs. In this case the partner organisation depends for more than a third of its funding on the funds it receives from its Belgian partner. This dependency increases if it involves funding which also covers administration and personnel costs as these are much more difficult to replace. Table 22 provides an overview of the financial share of NNGO funding. Depending on the year, we were able to collect data for half of the partnerships in the sample.⁶⁹ For the other partnerships we only had qualitative or partial data, but these are in line with the information below. Extremely high percentages (65% and above) have been marked orange.

Table 22 Overview of financial dependency in 17 partnerships (in %)

Partnership	Share of NNGO 2003	Share of NNGO 2004	Share of NNGO 2005	Share of NNGO 2006	Share of NNGO 2007	Share of NNGO 2008
Autre Terre-APIL (BF)	55%	80%	65%	24%	54%	
DBA-AMB (BF)						31%
SOS Layettes -AMB (BF)						36%
11.11.11-RECIC (DRC)	54%	32%	36%	39%	30%	24%
Damiaanactie-PNEL/PNET (DRC)	18%	18%	18%	18%	18%	24%
Trias-Mbongwana (DRC)	96%	93%	92%	85%	70%	67%
WSM-MOCC (DRC)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100	100%
ADG-JEEP (DRC)	85%	85%	54%	33%	30%	
PROTOS-PEHA (DRC)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Vredeseilanden- WIMA (DRC)	95%		100%	100%	100%	100%
11.11.11-Aprodeh (Peru)	11%	12%	13%	11%	6%	5%
Broederlijk Delen -Cedep Ayllu (Peru)	8%	10%	15%	18%	20%	27%
Disop-Prorural (Peru)	45%	57%	64%	82%	47%	35%
FOS-CGTP-IESI (Peru)	14%	18%	24%	32%	18%	20%
Broederlijk Delen -ACAT (SA)		11%	9%	6%	8%	11%
FOS-ILRIG (SA)		30%	23%	24%	28%	19%
Oxfam Solidarity-TCOE (ZA)	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Trias-GARC (ZA)	43%	45%	48%	69%	67%	
Number of entries	14	15	16	17	17	16
Average	52	46	48	50	47	44

⁶⁹ The detailed data of Cambodia, India and Burkina Faso were not collected in the field for various reasons (lack of time, difficult to obtain, etc.). Moreover data on partnerships in the other countries are missing here and there.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this:

- with a general average share of almost 50% in the 17 partnerships, financial dependency on Belgian funding is generally large;
- there are large differences between the regions. In South Africa and Peru dependency is small. For the DR Congo on the other hand dependency is very large;
- the stronger partners in the evaluation (RECIC, Aprodeh, Prorural, ACAT, TCOE) have generally succeeded in reducing dependency or maintaining low dependency over time. In partners who are in difficulties, such as GARC (in SA), dependency has increased in recent years and the organisation finally had to close the books when TRIAS departed at the end of 2007.

The financial dependency of CSOs in the South is a difficult theme. It opens several crucial questions to which there are no simple answers. C-CAWDU in Cambodia and MOCC in DR Congo are an example. C-CAWDU attempted to collect membership fees, but in the current political context and Cambodia's very young trade union culture it is quasi impossible to achieve financial autonomy in the short term. MOCC also works with membership fees but did not succeed in collecting these because of the weak financial position of its members. The evaluation concludes that there is need for a debate between the NNGOs, DGDC and the partners in the South on what can be expected with regard to sustainability in various contexts and what role processes of CD and exit strategies should play in this (also see following section).

Exit strategies

In most cases there is no exit strategy. In the best case a departure is announced early on, or the NNGO tries to encourage the local partner to find alternative funding partners, but it usually does not go further than this. The evaluators sometimes heard distressing examples of NNGOs who encourage their partners to rent out the project cars or to use the photocopier to generate income and compensate for the decreasing budgets of the NNGO. Local partners were also constantly encouraged to seek additional funding, but sometimes the NNGOs appear to underestimate how difficult it is for a Southern CSO to develop the necessary networks and credibility to attract funding. Generally speaking the partners are given very few concrete handles via specific processes of CD for example, or via opening the NNGO's own networks. This in combination with the high financial dependency of many partnerships and the lack of clarity regarding the duration of the partnership creates huge dramas in the field. In the following cases the lack of a clear exit strategy has contributed to the problems of a partnership organisation and in some cases even to its complete dissolution:

- GARC/Trias in South Africa;
- MMB/SLCD in Burkina Faso;
- ANAG/Volens in Burkina Faso;
- JEEP/ADG in DR Congo;
- Mbongwana/TRIAS in DR Congo;
- PEHA/TRIAS in DR Congo;
- WIMA and SYDIP/VE in DR Congo.

Findings analysis 9 partnerships of document study – evaluation question 5

In almost every case (excepting 11.11.11 and platforma DHESC due to the dynamic and rapidly changing political nature of this partnership) the NNGOs reported that the objectives relating to CD support have largely been achieved. There was relatively little evaluation material available for the evaluation to confirm this with clear evidence. For Favos Del Mel and DACA/VIC, Platforma DHESC/11, Cresol Baser/TRIAS, CFTUI/WSM there was relatively much secondary material available. The table below gives a few examples of the identified changes in terms of CD.

Table 23 Examples of changes in capacity within the 9 partnerships

Core capability	Changes in the partner organisations
<i>1. Capability to commit and engage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Platforma DHESC improved its capacity to mobilise people in society - CFTUI: stronger and more inspiring leadership for the staff - CWPD: new building and equipment - CWPD: increased planning capacity
<i>2. Capability to carry out technical, service delivery & logistical tasks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FdM: staff have access to a wide range of courses and training to strengthen their practical skills - CFTUI: undertakes more activities to support its members - CWPD: has increased capacity for self-reliance - Cresol Baser: the organisation has managed to reach more farmers
<i>3. Capability to relate and attract resources & support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CWPD: is regularly consulted by other organisations and for cooperation with the state (credibility) - DACA: is more effective in facilitating the dialogue between advocates, dalit leaders and DACA (platform for networking) - DACA has become a symbol for the Dalits - FdM is now recognised as an organisation that can get government funding (Evaluation 2005) - in 2005 FdM concluded alliances with juvenile courts and committees for the protection of the youth - since 2003 FdM participates more in civil society and seeks alliances to protect children's rights. (Evaluation 2005) - ACOPAMEC: effective in setting up a network - Crésol Baser: better able to do lobbying/advocacy work than in the past. More recognition of external actors. - BSP in RDC is successful in attracting foreign volunteers to support teachers
<i>4. Capability to adapt and self renew</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cresol Baser. Changes in the organisation based on external ratings - Cresol Baser: creation of INFOCOS (training for the coordinators of cooperatives, management, etc.). - DACA: from a project approach to a programme approach and a more results-based approach
<i>5. Capability to balance coherence and diversity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No examples

The contribution of the NNGOs is difficult to determine. The NNGOs argue that it is mainly their role as facilitators (facilitation, alliances and support to networks, workshop, financial etc.) that had a positive effect on the outcomes. Allowing cooperation with local CD providers is also cited as being a positive contribution of the NNGOs.

Half of the partners continue to be fairly dependent on their collaboration with the Belgian NGOs. In eight out of nine cases there is no exit strategy. Two NNGOs (ADG and VIC) report that their partners find these situations confusing (no view on the duration). TRIAS is the only NNGO to develop a phasing out agreement, in which the decision to discontinue cooperation can be made.

Comparison with 31 partnerships

Five of the nine partnerships documented a whole series of changes in their partners which, according to reports were the result of CD. In 31 partnerships about half monitored the processes of CD fairly systematically. Here too there are indications of an evolution from OD to ID in about a third of the partnerships and there are problems with exit strategies.

3.4.2 Evaluation question 6 – To what extent is the partner organisation better able to realise its development objectives (output and outcome level)?

With this evaluation question our aim is not to make a full analysis of the evolution of the partner organisations' capacity to achieve their development objectives. Nevertheless, we considered it important to question the partners, the beneficiaries and other stakeholders about developments in the quality of the operations of the partners and possible important changes in the social environment of the target groups. The challenge was to establish links between these changes and the processes of CD in which Belgian NGOs are involved.

The NNGOs included in the sample did not carry out impact evaluations, nor did we find baseline studies that allowed us to draw conclusions underpinned by qualitative or quantitative data regarding the effects of the actions.

JC 6.1 changes relating to the outputs of the partner as a result of processes of CD

Most of the partners studied indicate that they see qualitative or quantitative improvements in their own operations. The evaluation teams were able to observe several of these improvements in the field, with the major concern that not all changes can only be attributed to the support of the NNGOs that were studied.

The improvements are visible in various ways.

Various organisations relate the relative improvements in their operations to the execution of their work itself. For a platform this means for example that it has become more effective in executing the functions that are expected of a platform (effecting the relationships and the exchange between the participants of the platform) by recruiting specific skills/ techniques through the operations themselves (facilitating meetings, etc.). For other organisations the capacity improvements are translated in terms of their performance and innovation. This type of improvement occurred mainly in organisations that produce goods or provide services. The improvements were the result of acquiring new knowledge and technology (as a result of training or exchanges) or of investments in infrastructure (which made it possible to perform economic activities). As a result of this we determined a clear intensification and quantitative increase of the outputs in several organisations. In others this did not result in an increase in capacity despite the new knowledge and acquired skills. The reason for this was the specific context or occasional organisational inadequacies.

Various organisations refer to the improvement in their capacity in terms of the monitoring and evaluation of their activities and then mainly through a more systematic use of tools for monitoring and evaluation. The contribution of training in terms of results-based management has been frequently mentioned. This improvement is also linked to more functional capacity development (in function of the partnership) of the partners who are mainly focused on setting up financial and narrative reporting.

Various organisations indicated that improvements in the outputs created credibility and a name, either in terms of theme (with regard to other actors working on the same

theme) or in terms of geography (ranging from a local to an international level). In certain cases (for example C-CAWU in Cambodia) the support to CD by the local partner has led to increased legitimacy and development capacity and thus provided the opportunity to play an active role in society.

Sometimes the intensification and increase in the number of activities occurred at a higher rate than the development rate of the organisations themselves. Various partners (APIL/Burkina Faso; C-CWADU/Cambodia; RECIC/RDC) experienced that the high operational pressure resulted in the organisation reaching its limits (means and structures). These findings were also quoted by other NGOs and international programmes. These organisations realise that one cannot simply ignore the necessary processes of professionalization and recognise needs regarding the consolidation of their structures.

Contribution of Belgian NGOs

We were unable to establish systematic links between the support of Belgian NGOs and processes of CD on the one hand and on the other hand, the achievements of their partners. This is a result of the implicit nature of many CD actions, internal and external factors that affect this and the non-linear character of processes of CD. According to our information the NNGOs did not set up any evaluations to chart the effects of the processes of CD they support.⁷⁰

In several cases (AMB/Burkina Faso; WIMA/RD Congo; DA/India and RDC) there is a clear link between the achievements of the partner and the CD processes within the partnership with the Belgian NGO. This is especially the case for several service delivery organisations: the Belgian NGOs provided them with the means to exercise their profession; and the services provided by the partners could not be (fully) paid for by the beneficiaries.

The partners regularly referred to forms of support of the Belgian NGOs as an explanation for the improvements and observed progress in their realisations. Newly acquired knowledge and the introduction of tools lay at the basis of much the observed achievements. The acquisition of knowledge, skills and tools sometimes occurs formally (training, tools, etc.) and sometimes via a transfer of knowledge (from the Belgian NGO to the partner in the South), but in many cases the Belgian NGO appears to play more of a facilitating role. Apart from the more formal aspects of its role as mediator, the Belgian NGO also plays a role in the continuous dialogue between the partners and establishing contact with other actors. Various partners state that the capacity of the employees of the organisation improved especially regarding competencies in terms of following up the activities (monitoring and evaluation).

For some weak partnerships (for example for ANAG/Volens in Burkina Faso, JEEP/ADG in RDC) the partnership is limited to funding activities and there is little, if any, CD. In these cases we find no real improvement in the achievements of the partner: at most maintaining a minimal level of activity, occasionally preserving the existence of the organisation itself.

Apart from the contribution the Belgian NGOs can make in terms of CD, various partners (especially partners who find themselves in an isolated position) emphasise the importance of having the moral support of an international partner. Despite the more symbolic nature of this support, for certain partners it is a source of motivation to keep going and continue to work on the organisation's objectives.

⁷⁰ A similar conclusion was reached in the context of the meta-evaluation commissioned by 11.11.11, in which 20 evaluation reports by Belgian NGOs and several European evaluations were analysed. (Pollet, 2009).

JC 6.2 – Influence of the support to processes of CD on the outcome of the partner organisation – changes on the level of the final beneficiaries

The changes that can be determined on the level of the beneficiaries, both on an individual level and within the community, can never be wholly reduced to one intervention, one external organisation or a specific partnership. Usually a multitude of factors have a positive or negative effect on the economic, political and social living conditions of the population.

Nevertheless, to get a view of the outcomes of partner organisations regarding the final beneficiaries, the evaluation used the Most Significant Change method (see chapter 1). This method does not use quantitative or qualitative indicators, but is focused on questioning the beneficiaries about the most significant changes they have experienced in their living conditions since they came into contact with the partner organisation concerned. Therefore, although the method does not allow analyses to be built up based on shared indicators, it does have the advantage that it allows the persons and groups questioned to freely express themselves on the types of changes they have experienced (which were sometimes not planned by the partner organisations) and how these changes translate into daily life.

This approach was individually adapted according to the type of partnership (see country reports for more details) that was visited. In some cases it could not be used and interviews with beneficiaries were planned and/ or we could base ourselves on information from monitoring and evaluation reports. In the following paragraphs there is a synthesis of the most important domains of changes identified by the persons and groups of the beneficiaries who were questioned.

Changes in the life situation (identified by persons and groups of beneficiaries)

Table 24 Domains of change in the life situations of the beneficiaries questioned

Indicators in terms of health	- increase in the cure rate of TB (DA in RDC)
Access to basic needs	- having money to buy clothing (ANAG in Burkina Faso; Mbongwana in RDC) - better access to water (AMB in Burkina Faso) - improved hygiene due to wells (AMB in Burkina Faso) - reduction of diseases due to access to potable water in wells (AMB in Burkina Faso) - schooling or retraining of children (ADECOR in India)
Access to better quality services	- bringing health services closer for patients (DA in RDC and India) - improvement of technical knowledge (MMB in Burkina Faso; JEEP and Mbongwana in RDC) - improvement in recognising and identifying TB patients (DA in India and RDC) - increased motivation of health personnel due to premiums and training (DPS in RDC) - increased safety regarding transfusions (DPS in RDC) - improved quality of professional training (OFPROP/SOLIMAZ and Prorural in Peru) - renewal of material for training (OFPROP/SOLIMAZ in Peru)

(qualitative) improvement of production/ economic activities/ or work situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diversification/adaptation of activities due to irrigation systems (AMB in Burkina Faso; CA in Peru) - acquisition of new knowledge (ANAG in Burkina Faso; JEEP and Mbongwana in RDC) - better management of economic activities (ANAG in Burkina Faso; Mbongwana in RCD) - improved professional integration (OFPROP/SOLIMAZ in Peru) - improvement of productive systems (Prorural in Peru; Mbongwana in RDC)
Quantitative improvement/ increase of income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possibility to buy means of transport (bicycle, push cart) (AMB in Burkina Faso) - increased production of honey and milk (APIL in Burkina Faso) - less youth migration (AMB in Burkina Faso) - being able to get married, having a second wife (AMB in Burkina Faso; Mbongwana in RDC) - capacity to care for own family members even in emergencies (AMB in Burkina Faso; Mbongwana and Jeep in RDC) - increased number of commercial contracts (Surabi DO in India) - better access to markets and better capacity to negotiate (Mongbwana in RDC)
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - higher participation of women on social level/ in trade union system (ANAG in Burkina Faso; CGTP in Peru) - contribution of women to household expenditure (invoices, payment of school fees) (ANAG in Burkina Faso) - fewer intra-family conflicts due to a better access to water (women are less 'absent') (AMB in Burkina Faso) - becoming an entrepreneur and being a role model for other members of the Dalit community (Surabi DO in India) - increased participation of women in trade union and better cooperation in housekeeping (management and planning) (CGTP in Peru)
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improved technical knowledge MMB, ANAG and APIL in Burkina Faso; Surabi DO in India; OFROP in Peru; Mongbwana in RDC) - higher knowledge of pathologies of health personnel (DA in RDC and India)

Organisational and institutional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improved dialogue on local sustainable development and access to basic services between basic groups and local authorities (AHEAD and DPA in Cambodia) - stronger trade union structures in the textile sector and inter-professionally (C-CAWDU in Cambodia) - improved internal structures, revalorisation of basic organisations (RECIC in RDC; CA in Peru) - learning from working in group (Mongbwana in RDC) - emergence of a social leadership (RECIC in RDC; CA in Peru; Mbongwana in RDC) - professionalization of the organisation (OFPROP/SOLIMAZ in Peru) - strengthening of the organisation and of the relationship with the state (Prorural in Peru) - strengthening of basic organisations in terms of their capacity to demand and get better services (AHEAD and DPA in Cambodia) - strengthening civil society actors in terms of lobby and advocacy (DPA in Cambodia)
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The first conclusion one can draw from table 26 is the diversity of the identified domains of change by the groups/ beneficiaries. Even in deprived and vulnerable areas, such as RDC and Burkina Faso, we did not only find changes regarding basic needs. In these situations too beneficiaries proved to be sensitive to improvements in the quality of certain services.

There is a clear dividing line between changes related to an increase in production (and a corresponding increase in income) and changes leading to more qualitative changes. The increase in income is concretely translated for example into an increased capacity of people to simply live their lives: to get married (or take a second wife), not have to migrate, being able to care for the family and being able to endure emergency expenditures.

The importance that the final beneficiaries attach to the acquisition of new knowledge corresponds with what the partner organisations themselves recognise as a significant advantage of the partnerships with Belgian NGOs.

It is also important to examine to what extent the observed changes express themselves in terms of gender. This does not only concern concluding that women are part of the target groups of an action but also whether this is translated into changes in the role women play in the social field (access to new professions, fulfilling a social role model, acquiring more mobility, being more present in social life, etc.). It is remarkable to find that activities which have contributed to that field are not always indicated and recognised for their contribution to gender. The fact that organisation and institutional development are identified as change by the beneficiaries can be explained by the fact that the partner organisations sometimes have organisations or groups of beneficiaries as their target group.

Changes concerning the defence of rights (identified by persons or group of beneficiaries)

Apart from questions concerning the more material outcomes of the programmes (on outcome level) we also asked the beneficiaries (persons or groups) whether there were changes in terms of their capacity to achieve certain objectives or for example that there is more consideration for their rights (table 25).

Table 25 Overview of examples of outcomes and impact

<p>Self-confidence/no discrimination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - better integration of the sick in society (DA in RDC) - pride in being able to organise meetings (APIL in Burkina Faso) - access to leadership (Mbongwana in RDC; APIL in Burkina Faso) - more confident about speaking in public (Mbongwana in RDC; RECIC in RDC) - recognition by local authorities (ANAG in Burkina Faso; AHEAD and DPA in Cambodia; RECIC in RDC) - knowledge of own rights (APIL in Burkina Faso, RECIC in RDC) - advent of public transport in deprived communities (Surabi DO in India)
<p>Awareness raising</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - developing responsibility of civil society regarding access to water (PEHA in RDC) - number of registrations for the national elections (RECIC in RDC) - more respect for the environment in local fishing (SYDIP/VE in RDC) - sensitisation of citizens about their rights with regard to basic amenities (DPA and AHEAD in Cambodia)
<p>Defence of rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - defending farmers against the landlords (SYDIP in RDC) - reduced number of conflicts on land rights (SYDIP in RDC) - allowing for traditional practices (SYDIP in RDC) - defending the rights of Dalits in a court of law (Surabi in India) - extending the defence of rights to other sections of the population (Aprodeh in Peru) - defending the rights of trade unionists (Aprodeh in Peru) - adopting laws of equality between men and women (CGTP in Peru) - improved defence of the rights of women (CGTP in Peru) - defending the social rights of male/ female workers (MOCC in RDC; CGTP in Peru) - negotiation of conventions for improving the living conditions of employees (MOCC in RDC; CGTP in Peru) - new legal frameworks for social security (C-CAWDU in Cambodia)
<p>Mobilisation capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conviction and dynamism of Noyaux d'action Populaire (RECIC in RDC) - Recognition of right to gather (ADECOS in India) - Better structure of participant organisations in a network. (PEHA in RDC) - Better representation of certain groups in local and international democratic forums (CA in Peru; DPA in Cambodia)

There are large differences between the degree to which partners stand up for the rights of their organisation (and those of the beneficiaries). There are organisations who have created an explicit objective around this issue, while for others this is raised more implicitly.

Despite these differences it is remarkable to find that many of the observed changes are related to an increased confidence of the target groups or to non-discrimination. In various cases one could even state that this (allowing oneself to be recognised as an actor) is a condition for individuals and groups to assert their rights. One can also link an increased capacity to mobilise to these conditions. However an increased self-awareness of your own rights also brings obligations in various other domains (environment, elections).

In short, standing up for the rights of individuals and groups that have been violated or not recognised is clearly a part of the domains of change the beneficiaries identified. The diversity of means and levels used to defend the rights (traditional practices, advocates, changes in law) should also be emphasised. The contribution of NNGOs who work within normative partnerships in this area clearly go beyond those of the NNGOs who focus more on needs (needs-based approaches), in favour of a more political approach and of cooperation based on rights (rights-based approaches). From this perspective significant changes which are translated for example into a strengthening of the organisational capacity of communities and an increased capacity of citizens to make their voices heard have been realised within partnerships.

Findings analysis of 9 partnerships of document study – evaluation question 6

According to the consulted documentation on these partnerships and the stakeholders who were questioned, we note several positive qualitative and quantitative changes. These outputs are translated into various forms: more visibility of the partners, more credibility, more members or beneficiaries reached, increase of own financial sources (membership fees), improved quality of educational activities, methodological improvements, building new shelters for street children, and so on. The link between strengthening the capacities and these outputs are generally difficult to determine, but possible in some cases. For example the creation of a second centre for street children (and close to the most vulnerable groups) by Favos Del Mel/VIC in Brazil is, according to the partner, a consequence of the joint reflection with VIC on their strengths and weaknesses. In the case of Cresol Baser (with TRIAS in Brazil) or the Bureau Salésien de Projets (with DMOS in RD of Congo) several results can be explained by a more professional and effective management.

Comparison with 31 partnerships

For this evaluation question there is insufficient material to make a comparative analysis.

Conclusion cluster 3

Most of the partners state that they are more successful in realising their development objectives. In the partners we can observe improvements in the 5 core capabilities. We find that processes of CD are non-linear and that they are influenced by many internal and external factors. We were able to find contributions of the Belgian NGOs to CD support on an individual level and in the field of organisation and institutional development.

There are indications that better achievements of the partner organisations influenced the results on the level of the beneficiaries (outcome). A multiplicity and diversity of domains of change in the life situation of the beneficiaries was identified, ranging from covering basic needs, strengthening organisational capacities, and so on. On the level of defending their rights the beneficiaries – both individuals and groups – see changes relating to self-confidence, non-discrimination and an increased ability to mobilise.

3.4.3 Synthesis clusters one, two and three

As the visions and strategies of the NNGOs regarding CD in partnerships are only documented and made more explicit in a minority of the cases, they were reconstructed on the basis of various parameters. The result was a division of the partnerships into five groups, depending on the type of partnership, the underlying agenda for CD, to what extent their policy and tools for CD is explicit or explicit and whether they focus on upstream or downstream operations of the partners and the practical application in the projects/ programmes.

An interesting metaphor to describe the various components of a CD approach is that of the 'human body' (Intrac, 2007), as in figure 4. The head of the person represents the agenda of the CD approach, in other words why are the NNGOs involved in CD? The spine comprises the underlying values and principles of the CD approach (both were covered in cluster 1 and partly in cluster 2). The arms represent the concepts used, and the methods and tools of the CD approach. Finally, the legs describe the practical organisation and implementation of the CD programmes (in cluster 1, cluster 2 and also partly in clusters 3 and 4).

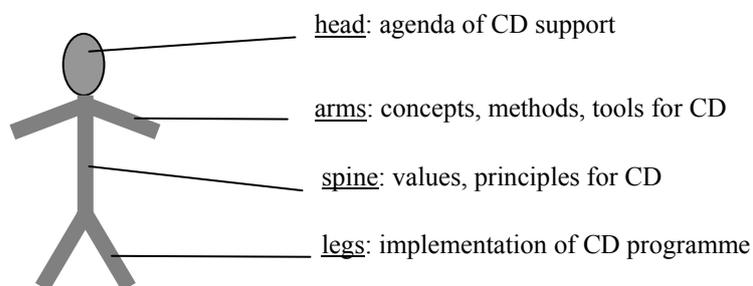


FIGURE 3 Four components of a CD approach (Intrac, 2007)

The metaphor allows visualising the central components of the current CD approach of the 5 groups and indicates what the strong and weak points are (table 26).

Table 26 Assessment of CD approach of 31 partnerships, divided according to 4 components, and strong and risks/weak points

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
	<i>Partnership of technical/service delivery NNGOs with explicit CD approach</i>	<i>Partnership of NNGOs with dominant political agenda and implicit CD approach</i>	<i>Partnership of NNGOs with multi actor approach and tech/pol/econ orientation</i>	<i>Partnership of NNGOs with variable CD approach with elements from groups 1-3</i>	<i>Partnership with little or no CD activities</i>
	Damiaanactie, DMOS, CEMUBAC, DISOP	FOS, WSM, 11.11.11, Oxfam Solidarity	Vredeseilanden, Trias, PROTOS, Autre Terre	Broederlijk Delen, Volens, Entraide et Fraternité	SOS Layettes, SLCD, DBA, AADC, ADG, VIC
Head <i>CD agenda as an answer to..</i>	- technical needs of partners or target groups	- social-political needs in civil society	- technical/economic/ political needs on system level	- needs of final target groups	- reporting needs of back donor (DGDC)
Spine <i>Most important values and principles regarding CD..</i>	- instrumental relationship - results-based - explicit CD objectives	- intrinsic value of strong partners - structural changes - implicit CD objectives	- instrumental relationship - systemic changes - explicit CD objectives	- instrumental relationship - reaching target groups - implicit CD	- very instrumental relationship - execution of projects
Arms <i>Used concepts, methods, tools..</i>	- hands-on - transfer of knowledge - explicit tools	- hands-off/-on - exchange of knowledge - few tools & methodology	- hands-on/-off - transfer of knowledge and exchange of knowledge (multi-actors) - explicit tools	- dependent on partnership to partnership	- strengthening management capacity (logical framework, ...)
Legs <i>Building blocks of CD approach.</i>	- focus on downstream (DMOS and DISOP also partly upstream) - input of technical experts	- focus on upstream - exchange between 'equal' partners	- focus on down- and upstream - input by technical experts (incl. private sector)	- dependent on partnership to partnership	- only downstream
Strong points regarding CD approach	- concrete results - transparent agenda - specialisation	- embedding in international networks - identity and specialisation - CD through joint activities	- System perspective (actors, approach) - concrete results - knowledge building regarding CD	- occasional effective CD in partnerships (for example DPA/BD)	- (little added value for CD)
Risks/weak points regarding CD approach	- lack of social/political dimensions (upstream), and multi-stakeholder perspective - ownership of CD processes	- inadequate knowledge building - impossible to verify CD approach because of implicit character - little attention for downstream processes and CD	- over ambitious CD strategies - risk of donor-driven agenda - rapid strategy changes disrupt partner relationships	- no clear line - dependent on individuals	- too little vision and critical mass for CD

The most important elements in this table are elucidated below (due to the absence of a more unambiguous approach in group 4 and the absence of CD in group 5 they are addressed less in the following analysis):

- the **central motivation for the NNGOs to be involved in support of CD** ('head': CD agenda) largely determines how CD is organised within the partnerships. NNGOs who believe that it is mainly technical capacities that are lacking in the South, also build on this logic in their CD approach. The same applies to the more politically oriented NNGOs in group 2. The NNGOs in group 3 depart from a multidimensional logic which focuses on technical, political and economic capacities lacking in the South. As these capacities go across various sectors and are linked with many different types of actors, NNGOs in group 3 are working towards a multi-actor approach;
- the underlying **values and principles** of the CD approach (the 'spine') within the 5 groups differ greatly. The technical NNGOs of group 1 aim for explicit CD objectives with concrete results and regard the strengthening of the partners as being mainly functional, in view of a better provision of services by the partner to the target groups. In group 2 the organisations in the South see themselves as partners in the same struggle for structural changes in society. This group experiences the classic CD story as being too technocratic. The NNGOs in group 3 extend their broad agenda to the 'spine' and strive for systematic change, but then based on a rational and pragmatic analysis that is applied in an instrumental relationship with the partners;
- this logic is continued for the **concepts, methodology and tools** (the 'arms') used. Important differences between the partnerships of groups 2 and 3 are related to the level of hands-on and hands-off. What is also interesting is the finding that there is a strong emphasis on the transfer of knowledge in group 1, group 2 mainly operates on the basis of an exchange of knowledge and in group 3 there is a mixture of both. The actors in group 2 use fewer methodologies and tools for steering and monitoring CD;
- finally, the 'legs' of the CD person, or the **building blocks of the CD programme**, also have various emphases. In group 1 the focus is mainly on the downstream strengthening of the partner organisations. In the political NNGOs this is more upstream and the NNGOs in group 3 appear to address both.

From the perspective of the CD of the partners the various approaches of the 5 groups each have their own advantages and disadvantages (see table 25):

- the advantage of the **technical approach of group 1** is that it is explicit, measurable and supports specialisation and knowledge building. On the other hand, few developmental problems only have technical causes. Experience teaches us that the upstream operations of organisations are also important (governance aspects, legitimacy, resilience, institutional development, etc.). The more political side of processes of change and, for example, coping with various values and rationalities within organisations and their environment, can also not simply be included in rigid technocratic planning and monitoring processes;
- the **political approach of group 2** takes good advantage of the complex character of influencing policy and political action by entering into a relationship that is both flexible and locally owned. By working together on concrete campaigns and actions it is implicitly involved in CD with regard to processes that are difficult to plan ahead. However, the fact that these CD strategies are rarely documented makes them difficult to verify and allows very little knowledge building to take place around them. There is also the risk that the implicit assumptions of how CD should be set up are not shared on an organisation level but remain with certain individual staff members. The lack of explicitness also makes it impossible to question the CD strategies;
- the **multi-actor approach of group 3** is the most holistic approach and is aimed at strengthening the whole chain of actors on a certain theme. A diverse strategy with elements of HRD, OD and ID is generally implemented and there is an attempt to follow up CD with various M&E frameworks. Most of the NNGOs have

only been working with this renewed strategy for a few years. This is observable in the field in the partnerships in the sample. Drastic changes in partner choice or type of relationship that is entered into have created problems for several partners or caused friction with other actors. There is also a risk that radical changes of course are not sufficiently understood in the field and remain too much donor-driven because of this;

- The practices of the **partnerships of the NNGOs in group 4** were relatively different in CD approach, sometimes more in the direction of groups 1 and 2 (ACAT/BD in SA) and groups 2 and 3 (DPA/BD in Cambodia). This appeared to be associated with the specific experience and choices of individuals in the field rather than with a systematic policy of the Belgian NGOs involved.

The evaluation results confirm the metaphor that a balanced CD approach should focus on the four abovementioned components to strengthen the partner organisation or organisations in a way that is both relevant and sustainable. However this offers no guarantee of success if several other conditions are not met. The evaluation shows that the following factors are a hindrance to strengthening partner organisations:

- Unclear vision and identity of the NNGO;
- Weak institutional set-up of new partner organisations;
- Lack of critical mass of the NNGO for it to participate in CD;
- Lack of expertise in structure and knowledge sharing with regard to CD (cluster 4 see below).

Finally, cluster 3 gives an overview of successful and less successful CD activities. It reveals that many CD activities described as successful are currently rarely implemented by the NNGOs.

3.5 Cluster 4: adaptive capacity of NNGOs and DGDC

3.5.1 Evaluation question 7: To what extent are the relevant actors (Belgian NGOs and DGDC) able to adapt their policy and approach regarding CD support to the challenges that arise, taking into account a changing context in North and South?

JC 7.1 – Belgian NGO's capacity to adapt

We see an evolution in the NNGOs' policy making and strategies with regard to partnerships and CD for the period 1998-2008, becoming more explicit. For CD the increased attention is more recent however and only a small minority of the NNGOs have significantly invested in knowledge building or new methodology in recent years. We see that although the NNGOs are open to change, the operationalisation of new ideas on CD for example is only developing very slowly in most of the NNGOs (see deployment of routes and tools). This creates the impression that there is a response to pressure from the funder (DGDC) rather than to the lessons that are learned from their own actions. For some time now evaluations have indicated what the problems are with CD actions focus too much on the use of training and workshops, or they refer to partner meetings that generate little momentum or describe the failure of other CD activities with the partners.⁷¹

Policy developments (on partnerships and capacity building) in NNGOs appear to be strongly fuelled by the regulatory framework on the one hand and on the other hand, by internal consultation (within the own NGO). There is still little evaluation culture (internal and external) and when evaluations are organised it proves to be difficult to feed the findings back into policy making processes in the organisation.⁷² This can be explained by the fact that so few external evaluations are carried out⁷³ on the themes of CD and partnership, that methodological innovations are not systematically followed up/monitored and evaluated, and that NNGOs do not invest enough in their own knowledge management (also see evaluation question 4). The steering of management processes by partners in the South is also limited.

Adaptation influenced by regulation(s): programme approach and partner operation(s)

From interviews with NNGOs we conclude that the regulatory framework of DGDC has been a significant stimulus for the NNGOs to further develop or adjust their policies. Especially the regulations for NGO funding which since 1992, and particularly since the Royal Decree of 1997, have put forward the programme approach (replacing the project-based approach), prompted most NGOs to operate more programme-oriented and this had an unmistakable effect on partner relations.

⁷¹ Some examples: (1) Blok, L. (2007) *Reviewing the reviews: effectiveness of PSO financed capacity building programmes and quality of the monitoring and evaluation process. Period 2001-2006*. Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam. (2) Blok, L. (2009) *Lessons on Monitoring and Evaluation in capacity Development. Second meta evaluation of PSO financed capacity development programmes 2006-2008*. Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam. (3) Pollet, I (2009), *Drawing lessons from NGO-evaluations – Analysis based on recent evaluations from Belgian and European NGO's, HIVA, Leuven*, (4) 3 notes in preparation for the agreement between the Belgian NGOs and the government, March 2009.

⁷² There are a few examples: Volens, *evaluatie actiebenadering*, 2005; WSM, *externe evaluatie van programma 2003-2007*; PROTOS, *studies over capaciteitsversterking rond bouwweerschap 2005*, TRIAS, *externe programma-evaluatie 2003-2007*.

⁷³ On the basis of a random selection of 15 external evaluations from 2000-2002 (data base of ATOL), we conclude that the concepts 'partnerships' and 'capacity development' are addressed in most of the reports. However, with the exception of one evaluation there is no separate section for these concepts. They are dealt with transversally and generally.

The data we collected via the survey and the interviews with the NNGOs show that most NNGOs have clearly invested in developing a more programmatic approach. The vision of partnerships has evolved with this. The evolutions are reflected in the policy documents of the NGOs: they have adapted their policy texts including those on selection criteria, selection/ choice process, participation of partners or – as was the case in some NGOs – developed such a text for the first time.⁷⁴

In the interviews various NGOs indicate that the switch-over from project-based operations to a more programme-based operation has taken time: and the adaptation of the policy often assumed a different type of partner. Various partnerships were reduced and new partnerships entered into for a better realisation of the programmatic approach and of the new policy of the NNGO.⁷⁵ In the amendment to the Royal Decree in 2005 it appeared though that the requirement for programmatic operations could not be realised by all NNGOs.⁷⁶

Although the new policy was not well received by all NNGOs, generally speaking there was appreciation for the increase in coherence, the recognition of the importance of working in the longer term and greater predictability of funding. The requirement that they limit themselves to a few countries and themes also resulted in more focus and an improved quality of the interventions. The interviewed NNGOs who reacted positively to the reform refer especially to the Royal Decree of 15 December 2005, which introduced the programmatic approach to improve the effectiveness of the funding processes and the granting of subsidies to the NGOs by DGDC.⁷⁷

Regarding the policy and vision of support to CD we see a different picture. The policy framework is far less explicit on this theme (see below) and NNGOs are not called to account for this. Indeed, until the end of 2008 there were no comparable incentives as for the policies on the programmatic approach.⁷⁸ As a result of the preparations for phase two of the multi-annual programme (2011-2013) DGDC did introduce new elements into the judgment criteria to assess the NNGO's funding applications regarding support to CD. As previously stated few NNGOs developed an explicit policy on CD. In addition, the interpretation of the concept of CD varied greatly as were the NNGO's interpretations of the evolutions they were going through in the area of CD.⁷⁹ However, there was some input from the federations, namely on the Dutch-language side by Coprogram. The federation organised several training courses on CD thereby initiating the start of the debate on CD. In 2004 and 2005 the organisation organised two workshops on the theme 'capacity development'. This was done on the basis of an evaluation by an internal working group 'NGO cooperants', which looked at the role of NNGO's with regards to CD. This evaluation showed that although there are CD activities, the NNGOs have no clear CD policy. Representatives of 23 NNGOs, the BTC and DGDC

⁷⁴ See report document phase, page. 15: 19 NGOs refer to policy documents on partnership.

⁷⁵ Executing programmes is more complex than executing projects and makes different demands on the partner's capacities.

⁷⁶ For this reason project funding was included in the current regulations in addition to the programme funding. The sample of 21 NGOs studied for this evaluation includes 8 programme NGOs and 3 project NGOs, namely ADG, DBA and SOS Layettes. These three NGOs belong to the group of NGOs who give little or no support to CD.

⁷⁷ NNGOs with a programme recognition can now receive funding for 3 years while before this the funding – even though it involved a 5 year programme – was reviewed annually. Moreover, both project and programme NGOs have to submit a strategic framework for a period of 6 years to guarantee the sustainability of the project/programme.

⁷⁸ The difference here is that it was relatively simple to translate the policy regarding a programmatic approach into funding modalities (based on a need for coherence). This is more sensitive in a policy on CD, mainly because developing more normative guidelines based on explicated norms and values and including a clear content might interfere with the Belgian NGOs' right to initiative.

⁷⁹ See report document phase, page 16.

participated in a first workshop. In an extension of this workshop Coprogram decided to make two field visits in RDC and Central America, in which the support to CD was analysed by various partner organisations. The result of these two external placements was presented to representatives of 14 NNGOs at a second workshop in 2005. In this context ATOL developed various checklists for the analysis of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Institutional/System Development.⁸⁰ The conclusion of the workshop however was that exchanging and learning from one another was difficult because NNGOs often have different types of partners (with different types of partner relationships). Moreover, other relationships assume a different approach to CD. Consequently, they first wanted to develop a typology of the partner relationships, but this was not acted upon.⁸¹ Later on the theme faded more into the background. It was only in 2008 that CD was once again addressed in a workshop by Coprogram.⁸² A recent screening of 20 evaluation reports by HIVA⁸³ showed that CD is still rarely addressed in evaluations so that the subject tends to receive little attention.

In the agreement between the Belgian NGOs and the Minister of Development Cooperation (May 2009) CD is explicitly mentioned and this will probably stimulate internal reflection even further, also in those NNGOs who still have to catch up. In this agreement NNGOs state that they want to reduce their roles as service providers in favour of their role as supporters of CD, with special attention for the strengthening of the quality of advocacy and lobby work.

Nevertheless, we find that the real operationalisation of the explicit policy focus on CD has been limited and with it the exchange and building of knowledge during the course of 10 years, certainly in the light of the discourse of the Belgian NGOs on the central importance of CD.

Adaptation as an internal process

For the adaptation of their policy several NNGOs relied heavily on internal knowledge building in collaboration or not with their regional offices and partners, and occasionally with the support of external knowledge centres. We see examples of a limited number of NNGOs who – fairly quickly in the new funding period – have intensified their efforts to reform their policy (Trias, PROTOS, WSM, Vredeseilanden, Autre Terre, FOS). These NNGOs have taken advantage of changes in the field (such as the emergence of a stronger civil society in certain countries), importance of ownership and joint responsibility and in their policy generally focus more on the capacity development of the partners.

Various NNGOs even indicated that they were undergoing an evolution from technical support to organisational and institutional support as a result of internal processes of reflection.

The interviews revealed that most NNGOs are still at the start of a development towards learning organisations. Although there appears to be a consensus on the importance of organisational learning and internal knowledge building, in practice most NNGOs appear to be under too much pressure of time. Consequently, the focus tends to be mainly on the implementation of action plans leaving the organisations with too little time, resources and internal expertise building for learning. The most common tools for the exchange of knowledge between the partners are partner meetings, South-South exchanges and regional seminars. These tend to focus on content-related issues and

⁸⁰ http://www.coprogram.be/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39-&Itemid=50.

⁸¹ Regarding partnership 11.11.11 made a note on several routes leading to another partnership. The note never became official. However, 10 NGOs were questioned on the steps they had taken towards new forms of partnership. This resulted in a descriptive brochure for the 11.11.11 volunteers.

⁸² Bracke, C. (2008) Capacity building, unpublished thesis.

⁸³ Pollet, I (2009), *Lessen trekken uit NGO-evaluaties – Analyse gebaseerd op recente evaluaties bij Belgische en Europese NGO's*, HIVA, Leuven.

management issues (RBM, M&E, PCM). So far little attention has gone to systematising experiences with CD.

Most NNGOs indicate that evaluations are currently the most important tool for drawing lessons regarding support to CD. In practice very few evaluations appear to have been done within the 40 partnerships in the sample (see above). Within these evaluation reports processes of CD were rarely addressed. We can only conclude that in theory external evaluations can form important benchmarks, but at present they are only planned every few years so that they lack the character of a process and they usually deal with a wide range of criteria so that there is little structural focus on CD. Consequently, they appear to be more limited as a tool for the follow-up of processes of CD.

Some NNGOs focus more strongly on internal knowledge building and appoint staff for this:

- For some time TRIAS has invested in the development of a R&D service which has the task to build internal knowledge in various areas and operate as a support unit to programme staff. Amongst others, a new M&E system was developed by this service (PLATS⁸⁴);
- Vredeseilanden has grouped all its activities on knowledge sharing and learning in a separate objective that was integrated on several levels (field and head office) and which has been translated into annual working plans via a range of secondary objectives. Experiences with these extra objectives have not yet been documented;
- WSM is trying to systematise and document internal knowledge building via thematic workshops and regional seminars. Staff and resources have been appointed to this end;
- DMOS also invests in knowledge management and expertise development and has recruited extra staff for this as well as being counselled by an external office for certain aspects.

JC 7.2. – DGDC’s capacity to adapt

The following section analyses whether the DGDC policy framework has anticipated important developments in the thinking about partnerships and CD.

In the period 1998-2008 three funding periods – three legal frameworks for the funding of NNGOs – can be distinguished in which the concepts ‘partnerships’ and ‘capacity development’ are interpreted differently. The policy framework is clearly the most explicit on the level of partnerships (especially since 2006) but comprises little direction with regard to CD (excepting a statement about its importance and references to co-operators and regional offices). Speaking more generally there are also no discussion notes to be found on the theme of capacity building. Recent consensus notes only give limited information on how DGDC can/ wishes to steer, monitor or support the NNGOs with regard to CD. The question rises as to whether DGDC is currently sufficiently well equipped to develop and/or execute a policy of its own with regards to CD or to play a relevant and stimulating role. The administration attracts specific external expertise to screen the NNGO funding applications but the question remains as to whether this is enough. No specific DGDC staff have been appointed and there is no plan to develop the capacity of the administration with regards to CD.

Moreover it would not make much sense to work out a document describing the vision on CD and partnerships without it being part of a broader vision on what role the indirect actors must or can play in development cooperation. The new agreement with the NNGOs and the accompanying notes (March 2009) are a first step towards this, but the real repercussions of this will only be visible in the future. For the time being it remains difficult for the desk officers and external experts to assess the funding documents in the

⁸⁴ PLATS of TRIAS and PLAS of Vredeseilanden were developed independently of one another and differ significantly in approach and basic principles.

absence of a clear framework regarding what constitutes good NGO cooperation and what role CD plays within this.

We shall now describe the policy framework and its operationalisation by the administration.

Operational application of the policy framework

From the above we see that from 1998-2008 the policy framework went through a certain evolution with regard to the importance (and interpretation) that is given to the concepts partnership and CD. Under this point we would like to examine whether a similar evolution can be found on the operational level (guidelines and formats of DGDC for the submission, assessment and reporting of a project/programme).

The increasing importance that is attached to CD was not applied on an operational level in the current funding period 2008-2010: the tools for assessing funding applications were relatively explicit in the field of partnerships, but contain few points of interest regarding CD. Both desk officers and experts find that there are too few guidelines for an unambiguous interpretation of the judgment criteria. Other DGDC policy staff are however involved in the evaluation of documents (such as theme and sector experts).

Guidelines for narrative reporting contain no elements which might encourage NNGOs to reflect on partnership and support to CD. There were also no incentives from the evaluation unit to stimulate reflection on this theme.

In the *format for the strategic framework* attention to partnership was limited to the question regarding a description of the partner profile: it only states that partnership is a criterion for submitting a programme. What conditions this partnership should meet or what this actually means is not specified.⁸⁵

In the *judgment criteria for the funding applications* there were two criteria⁸⁶ with regard to CD, one of which is specifically aimed at the local partner's CD. For the applications in 2008-2010 there are significantly more criteria which refer to the partnerships. Under the 'partnership' section there are 14 criteria (compared to 3 in the evaluation index card from before the reform). For example there is an assessment of the strategy of the NNGO in choosing its partner; the joint analysis – by the NNGO and the partner – of the situation and the local context included in the joint formulation and the involvement of the partners in the various phases of the programme. Under the 'sustainability' section there is an evaluation of the partners' institutional and management capacities and the extent to which they can guarantee sustainability.

Some judgment criteria regarding support to CD were added for the new funding period (2011-2013).

In the guidelines for the narrative reports of the programmes nothing is mentioned that could promote or hamper the partnerships. In the guidelines for the accounting and financial aspects of the programmes DGDC asks for a detail of the partner's expenditure per specific objective. The terminology used for the budget sections for CD (formulated as 'training') in the financial reports for the 2008-2010 period gave the unfortunate message that CD was the same as training.

Finally, the evaluators in the field found that there were great differences in the obligations the NNGOs imposed on their partners with regard to the form and frequency

⁸⁵ We note that the choice of partner must be justified, but DGDC does not ask any questions about the role the partner plays within the civil society in the partner country. Is it an important role? Are they involved in consultation structures for example?

⁸⁶ 1. « Does the programme comprise a strategy on the level of the empowerment/strengthening of the capacity of target groups via training or other activities? », 2. « Does the programme comprise a strategy on the level of strengthening local partners (developing capacity) via training or other activities? »

of reports on content and funding. Several NNGOs went a lot further than what DGDC formally required. With regard to an increase of this administrative pressure regarding M&E the partners were often told that it had to do with new obligations of the back donor (which was not imposed or asked for by DGDC).

In the interview with the desk officers most of them indicated that in their opinion the operationalisation of the policy frameworks did not go far enough which made it difficult for them to gain insight into the interpretation of partnership and capacity building in the field:

- For example they state that in their opinion the definition of 'partnership in the Royal Decree of 2006 is formulated too generally. Consequently, every desk officer evaluates 'partnership' differently;
- Various desk officers state that since the new programme approach they have less 'insight' into the functioning of the partners. Only if they have known the partners for a long time do they have sufficient insight into the position of the partner in the civil society. Otherwise they rely on the internet and the Ambassador/ Attaché for development cooperation⁸⁷ because they do not find the information from the NNGO sufficiently clear;
- Although the desk officers are stating that they are basing themselves on the results achieved by the partner to obtain more insights about the partner, they are indicating at the same time that the (few) evaluation and monitoring reports they receive, are not providing sufficient information to judge those results;
- The CD activities which the NNGOs fund also remain unclear for the DGDC desk officers. The value of certain tools such as platforms and regional workshops for an exchange is not always clear. It is regarded as very difficult to evaluate partnerships in the context of campaigns or advocacy. Although quantitative output indicators are often mentioned in narrative reports (number of trained people, number of participants in a workshop) good qualitative indicators are scarce. The desk officers state that a clear interpretation of the concept of CD would give them more handles to view partner agreements and the programmes in that light. They add that there is no professional development policy on this level: desk officers sometimes take the initiative themselves (e.g. participation in the training organised by Coprogram).

A good operationalisation of concepts such as partnership and especially capacity building is possibly hampered by the current administrative structure:⁸⁸ to determine whether an NNGO is departing from the needs of the South and provides relevant CD support it is important to know the country in which the NNGO operates. Moreover, to determine whether a NNGO in the partner country makes sufficient efforts to strive for harmonisation, synergy and complementarity both with existing local initiatives and the initiatives of other donors, it is important for the desk officer to have sufficient insight into the various actors who are active in the development landscape of the partner country.

At present the division of tasks within the NGO Relations Unit of DGDC is not done geographically but per NNGO. Every desk officer is responsible for several NNGOs and

⁸⁷ between 2004 and 2007 the offices for development cooperation in the partner countries followed 10 NGOs per year with regard to alignment, partnership (there is a guideline with questions) and effectiveness. Apart from this desk officers also asked them for advice in the evaluation of projects and programmes.

⁸⁸ Degrauwe Katrien, *De Verklaring van Parijs voor NGO's*, July 2008, p. 49-50.

therefore deals with the programmes and projects of those NNGOs irrespective of which countries the NNGO is active in.⁸⁹

Finally the evaluators find that the operationalisation of other policy lines⁹⁰ of DGDC can create tension with regard to a policy that wishes to focus more attention on CD:

- In view of the increased pressure to show concrete and measurable results at the level of the final target groups (in the context of RBM, MDGs, poverty reduction strategies), NNGOs are under pressure to focus their activities more on that level (and so improve the services provided to the target groups), with the risk that it goes at the expense of support to processes of CD in the intermediate structures (including the partners);
- An increased pressure for accountability also forces NNGOs to choose stronger partners and possibly also choose for less innovative programmes (because they involve fewer risks). This was deduced from interviews with the NNGOs in preparation for the field missions, regional coordinators also referred to this;
- in the policy dialogue many NNGOs are criticised for the long duration of their partnerships. This is referred to by various NNGOs in the sample. These remarks by DGDC, together with the professionalization of the identification and selection process of partners, have as a result that NNGOs also look more critically at the duration of their partnerships. On the other hand the evaluation shows that support to CD often needs a long-term perspective and consequently flourishes more in partnerships that are continuous and last longer;
- finally there is a risk that the pressure for more coherence in the global portfolio of a NNGO via a programme approach (with coherence across the countries) results in themes or approaches forced onto the partners, and risk being at the expense of coherence in the programme of the Southern partner. This tension was identified in various partnerships that were visited during the field missions.

⁸⁹ An exception here is the system of focal points. Every desk officer is responsible for 'its' NNGOs as well as being the contact for a certain partner country, for example if the Belgian Embassy in that country asks the NGO unit for information. In practice the desk officers are under pressure of time and are expected to focus most of their time on their main task, namely the NNGOs allocated to them, and very little on their responsibility as a focal point (there are exceptions to this situation such as the DRC focal point).

⁹⁰ It is important to emphasise here that the other policy lines are not necessarily problematic but that care must be taken to find an implementation that is not at the expense of ownership and attention to processes of CD.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

In the discussion of the 4 clusters in the evaluation framework, various dimensions of CD in the NGO partnerships involved were highlighted: (1) the policy, strategy and tools of the NNGOs, (2) the translation of the NNGO approach in the field, (3) the evolution of the partners' capacities and how this is linked to CD activities set up within the partnership and finally, (4) the capacity of the NNGO's and DGDC to adapt their policy regarding CD and partnerships to rapidly changing contexts. In this chapter we will present the most important conclusions and recommendations.

4.1 Quality of the partnership as a determining factor for effective support to capacity development

The quality of the relationship between NNGOs and their partners in the South is generally regarded as an important component of successful NGO cooperation. This evaluation confirms the view that although in a significant number of partnerships attempts are made not to merely limit it to financial transfers within a donor-recipient relationship, this occurs in varying degrees. In the partnerships in the sample, interaction varies from light (moral support for the partner's work) to intense (with a strong involvement of the NNGO in the implementation of the partnership).

Both the partners in the South and the Belgian NGOs generally speak in terms of equal and open relationships with an effective communication. However, we find that compared to NNGOs in the Netherlands or the UK for example, the Belgian NGOs in the sample are more conservative in taking steps to ensure that the Southern partners have a systematic voice in their policy and actions in the North. The system is different regarding the content of the programmes that are funded and the stakeholders with which there can be collaboration. Here a large majority leaves the initiative and decision-making power to the partners in the South. The latter is also generally true for discussions on support to CD (where this support was explicit).

Based on the analysis of the 31 partnerships of the field phase the evaluation concludes that the quality of the partnerships is determined by the following factors:

- a clear vision, mission and niche for the organisation in the South/North or the wish to formulate/ seek this (and the matching of both partners in terms of a shared development agenda, organisation culture and scale size for example, is important);
- imbedding the organisation in the South in broader social and political dynamics and a willingness to understand these dynamics and so be able to influence them;
- respect for ownership and the partner's internal dynamics and harmonising this with the partner's other funders;
- striving for a dialogue that is open and continuous and reciprocal with a focus on conflict coping mechanisms;
- a focus on joint reflection and learning;
- maintaining a flexible process approach to planning and budgeting;

- focus on ownership of outcomes with regard to both the target groups and funding institutions;
- clear added value in the collaboration which goes further than a one-off funding relationship;
- developed strategy and trajectory regarding the duration of the partnership and an underpinned exit strategy.

What is very striking in the evaluation is the systematic lack of harmonisation between external funders (NNGOs and other donors) who work with the same partner organisation, with the exception of two. A second sore point comprises the lack of underpinned exit strategies in a large majority of the partnerships. In some cases it was found that formerly developed capacities were lost after partner organisations were forced to rely on survival strategies as a result of not being able to cope with the loss of Belgian funding channels.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – NNGOs could enter into partner agreements that extend beyond a contract regarding a specific programme/project. The new DGDC guidelines regarding partner agreements for the 2011-2013 programme give an impetus here. Should the NGOs not wish to include this in the agreement, they might consider organising it via a Memorandum of Understanding for example. In agreements like this shared principles and values can be clarified and a shared concept of 'support to capacity development' incorporated. These agreements can include a perspective or trajectory regarding the (maximum) duration of the partner relation.

Recommendation 2 – Within their partnerships NNGOs are faced with the important challenge of developing exit strategies that are more underpinned and go beyond the early announcement of the departure or seeking alternative donors for a partner. This assumes a well thought-through strategy at the start of a partnership, outlining a flexible trajectory for the collaboration, and exploring alternative forms of CD to increase the partners' financial and institutional sustainability.

Recommendation 3 – The NNGOs can reduce their partners' administrative burden and increase the relevance of their CD actions by harmonising them more with other funders of the partner organisations. Here the Belgian NGOs could allow their partners to operate more via their own local reporting systems and the Belgian NGO could translate the information received in to the frameworks imposed by DGDC. This will allow the partner's existing M&E systems to be used in a way that is more flexible.

The NNGOs, with the federation's support, can enter into a dialogue with DGDC and other back donors to lay down reporting requirements that are less formal and based more on the necessary information requirements that must be covered.

4.2 Capacity development as a motor for reducing poverty and promoting democratic governance

The 7 individual country reports illustrate in various ways why the CD of civil society actors in the South deserve more attention in development practice than it currently gets. We identified two important rationales for a greater focus on CD. A first group of partner organisations provides social or other services for groups in the society who are ignored by local governments or took advantage of new needs that had not yet been picked up by the state. The partner organisations in this situation frequently needed CD support, for example so that they could continue to be relevant and face new challenges. A second group works on processes of advocacy and lobby work with a view to a deepening of democratisation or carrying out a watchdog role. Here the partner organisations attempt to give a voice to groups in the society who are not heard, provide a critical reading of the government policy and attempt to influence this policy. In this context too most partner organisations were in need of CD which would for example strengthen their capacity to come into contact with organisations who do similar work or who, on the basis of international networks, can provide them with legitimacy and support.

Consequently, improving the quality of the service delivery of CSO's and supporting CD via lobby work and advocacy, NGOs, unions and social movements are essential components in the work of Belgian NGOs. If support to CD is given both strategically and efficiently they can be labelled as very useful (even essential) investments in favour of reducing poverty and achieving good governance.

However the evaluation finds that a majority of the NNGOs in the sample has no clear or coherent vision of what is precisely understood under CD support despite the fact that all the actors view it as an important part of their work. Some NNGO actors reduce CD to strengthening the partners in such a way that they are able to carry out the agreed activities and meet the reporting requirements of DGDC. Other NNGOs reluctantly use the concept of CD because it is simply a part of the current development discourse but find the underlying principles to be in conflict with the striving for equal partnership relations. Other actors again attempt to steer their partners in such a way that they become a carbon copy of their own organisation.

Many aspects of the way in which the NNGOs are involved in CD support are not explicit and documented (we found an underpinned approach in only one third of the partnerships). The evaluation therefore created its own framework to map the CD approach, and made a distinction between 5 groups. Here not only did it consider explicit CD activities (training, investments in infrastructure, improving organisational processes) but also examined actions whose main objective was not CD but had nevertheless probably made an important contribution to processes of CD. It was found that the reason why NNGOs participate in CD of their partners (the agenda for CD) plays a determining role in the way in which they organise and implement processes of CD. In each group references were made to strengths and weaknesses/risks in the approach.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4 – The NNGOs in the sample showed degrees of explicitness and expertise in the various dimensions of a CD approach. We believe that it is clear that NNGOs must speak out more clearly regarding their support to processes of CD. Strengthening of the head (objectives), spine (values and principles), arms (tools and methods) and legs (building blocks) of the current CD approach, and preserving coherence between these dimensions should also be addressed. The CD approach should be implemented more strongly with regard to the type of actors with which the

NNGOs collaborate and the context within which they function. In the NNGOs in groups 1,2 and 3 good practices can be strengthened and shared.

4.3 CD as an endogenous and non-linear process, vulnerable to interruptions in external support

The evaluation was based on the assumption that CD is an endogenous, non-linear development process that is strongly influenced by internal and external factors. Once again the findings of this evaluation confirm this. Partner organisations who have significantly strengthened over the years did so on the basis of endogenous processes and the explicit and sustained choices of the management of other teams in the organisation. In some organisations there was very little contribution from external funders, in others this did play an important role but was always steered by and with ownership from the organisation itself. In itself ownership is not a sufficient condition for a healthy process of CD. Here a crucial role was played by the critical attitude of the organisations and how willing they are to scrutinise themselves.

There are numerous examples of non-linear CD developments in the partner organisations and the causes are very diverse. Sometimes the policy environment changed, as in South Africa, where after Apartheid the political NGOs had to seek new forms of interaction with the political class as it was now populated with former comrades-in-arms. Sometimes the partner's institutional set up changes thus giving rise to internal opposition against reform plans and sometimes it was the changing policy of the Belgian NGO which had far-reaching consequences for the partner in the South. Since various internal and external factors influence the capacity of organisations and they frequently have no influence on them, it is difficult to establish a direct (linear) and causal link between CD activities and their outcomes. This has consequences for the monitoring and evaluation of processes of CD in which these (internal and external) factors have to be sufficiently monitored and studied.

The time factor emerges strongly as a third point of focus in the evaluation. Most partner organisations were faced with institutional challenges in the short or middle term, and this was true for even the strongest among them. The precarious situation of many actors in the civil society appears to have everything to do with the complex and occasionally hostile environment in which most of them operate so that they are regularly subject to pressure for instance through changing government policy or new international policies. Moreover, most CSOs are relatively small organisations and therefore very sensitive to changes in human resources, funding and so on. Consequently, in the evaluation we argue that in the support to this type of actor it is even more important than with other types of actors to provide continuity and also, if possible and relevant, to set out a long-term trajectory.

The evaluation also showed that in many cases the partner organisations needed support that extends further than merely strengthening their capacity to implement projects and programmes. The CD support must be able to anticipate the many and sometimes unexpected developments in the partner organisations' life cycle. Organisations should be approached as open systems and the CD support should be placed in this perspective. A model that could provide support here is the ECDPM-model with the five core capabilities. In this model the NGO are invited to view the organisation as a system and to look further than the partner organisation's immediate operational needs.

recommendations

Recommendation 5 – CD support often requires a long-term trajectory which could very well exceed the duration of a specific programme. This should be taken into

consideration in the formulation of programmes and drawing up of partner agreements. Moreover, it is important for the partner organisation to continue to receive support for CD trajectories that have been launched, whether it be by the Belgian NGO or another donor.

Recommendation 6 – the NNGOs who wish to focus strongly on CD should develop adapted M&E systems for the monitoring of CD trajectories which are harmonised as much as possible with the partner’s existing M&E procedures and with those of other external funders. Due to the complexity and rapidly changing reality of CD processes there is a need for flexible, participative and process-oriented frameworks which are also aligned to the core capacities and work environment of the partners. These monitoring processes can best be supplemented with evaluation exercises that fulfil more of an external audit and bench marking function, once again developed in consultation with other funders. Experiences with monitoring CD in NNGOs in groups 1 and 3 could serve as a source of inspiration together with recently launched initiatives in other countries such as in the Netherlands (PSO learning-work trajectories, 2010) and the UK (Intrac, 2009, ‘M&E of capacity building’). The federations could support their members in this.

Recommendation 7 – We challenge the NNGOs to not just focus on strengthening their partners’ downstream processes (technical, operational implementation capacity) but also to address upstream processes (policy, strategy, vision and mission, institutional framework, etc.). The ECDPM model with the five core capabilities is a useful tool for looking at current CD practice. With regard to CD we invite the NNGOs not to simply focus on core capability 2 (to deliver on development objectives) and 3 (capability to relate and attract funding) but to look at the five core capabilities as a whole.

4.4 Conditions for effective and efficient external CD support

In all countries we find examples of successful partnerships that have also been able to make a contribution to CD. The following core factors prove to be crucial for Northern NGOs to practice effective CD:

Essential NNGO capacities:

- strong NNGO identity, vision and mission: This results in a clear expertise and makes it possible for the partners’ specific and relevant CD activities to be supported on the basis of its own added value;
- sufficient capacity in the field to make contextual and institutional analysis of their partner’s situation, which, in turn, can be implemented in facilitating the partner’s CD processes;
- clear vision regarding CD and its application in tools/approach;
- capacity to systemise learning processes.

Design and implementation of processes of CD:

- creativity and flexibility in the provision of CD support, adapted to the partners’ changing needs: mixture of explicit and implicit CD activities;
- keep ownership of processes of CD with the local partner;
- multi-actor approach: if a full analysis takes the multi-dimensional character of many poverty-related problems into account this will almost automatically result in CD designs that go beyond an exclusive one to one relation with one partner;

- experimenting with small-scale CD actions, and on the basis of solid M&E processes, learning from what works in certain contexts and then applying it on a larger scale.

Classifying the partnerships in 5 different approaches, and indicating the strong and weak points of each approach provides opportunities for the identification of points that need improving. Various options present themselves:

- *hands-on or hands-off approach* - In most cases an overall hands-off approach is preferable so as not to endanger the ownership and the sustainability of the process of CD. On the other hand, an overall hands-off approach does not mean that a more hands-on approach is adopted for specific aspects of the CD strategy. A joint diagnosis of the CD needs could be useful, possibly in consultation with other funders. In some cases it may also be justifiable to intervene in a more hands-on manner, for instance with regard to certain essential values of the partnership (e.g. regarding the partner's gender policy, etc.). However, the hands-on activities on this upstream level (values, policy, strategy, vision), should not touch on the organisation's identity in any way. Moreover, in a true partnership a hands-on approach comprises a certain measure of reciprocity. The partner should be given the opportunity to intervene in a 'hands-on' manner to defend certain values of the partnership or to identify the NNGO's CD needs through the partner having a voice in the Belgian NGO's policy;
- *transfer of knowledge, learning by doing, advising, joint practice development, etc.* - although there are numerous tools for the support of CD, we still find a strong focus on the traditional transfer of knowledge. In instrumental partnerships in the sample especially, CD is more focused on a transfer of knowledge while normative partnerships operate more according to principles of knowledge exchange and mutual knowledge building. The question is which approach is best. The evaluation shows that more traditional forms of a transfer of knowledge work well for certain technical needs, particularly when the new skills can be directly applied in the new work environment. On the other hand, for the softer capacities (leadership, good governance, etc.) and for more complex capacity requirements for which there is no ready-made solution (e.g. how can I sensitise an authoritative government with regard to a certain theme), other tools like mentoring or coaching are more suitable. We also found some good examples of more collaborative forms of CD, where the various actors pool their expertise and apply it to a practical problem (joint practice development¹¹⁶);
- *use of external technical assistants or local service providers* - there is a noticeable trend towards a decrease in the use of external assistants and cooperants (iBelgina NGO development workers). Most Belgian NGOs do use regional coordinators however. These regional coordinators play very different roles with regard to CD in the partnerships. The evaluation shows that they can play an important role in CD support. We believe that the added value of these regional coordinators should be clearly visible in view of the availability of local service providers. We conclude that too little use is still made of local service providers, who are frequently present even in countries with a weaker civil society. Interviews showed that the added value of about half of the regional coordinators primarily involves providing legitimacy to a local NGO, or facilitating, mediating in politically sensitive documents and providing a 'soft interface' between the partner and the NNGO's head office. Only half also played a supportive or facilitating role in processes of CD.

¹¹⁶ See evaluation question 3 (section on downstream and upstream approach)

Recommendations

Recommendation 8 – Sound contextual and institutional analysis are important conditions for creating successful CD trajectories. We invite the NGOs to invest more in this analysis. With regard to the choice of CD strategies, we recommend that the NNGOs experiment more with the non-traditional or obvious forms of CD support. The model of the various routes and the overview of possible successful CD-strategies could be of use here (see table 26). There is a need to focus on other approaches besides training and partner meetings. It is important to consistently question the efficiency of certain approaches of CD support.

Recommendation 9 – The evaluators believe that the NNGOs should increasingly concentrate on developing local CD expertise (through increased use or by including these partner organisations as partners in the partner portfolio). A sustainable CD policy develops sufficient local CD expertise which in time will be able to take over the roles of the Belgian NGOs and other actors. This is not only necessary for CD expertise with regard to technical needs, but for the whole CD management trajectory, including the design and implementation of complex CD trajectories (multi-stakeholder processes, etc.).

Recommendation 10 – On a sector level, increased pooling of TA support could be considered. Not every NGO is able to provide expertise in all the themes CSOs in the South require. If TAs are linked, all partners will be able to use certain technical expertise more quickly (e.g. water at Protos, local economical development at TRIAS, development of production chains at Vredeseilanden, cooperatives at WSM etc.). This is a role that can be adopted by the umbrella organisation or the federations. For instance, this role is in line with the decisions of the 11.11.11. (2009) future congress, which ascribes a role to the umbrella organisation for Flemish NGOs with regard to an increased coordination of the regional offices.

4.5 Increased policy focus with regard to CD, however financing and management tools still in infancy

The evaluation concludes that there is a consensus on the importance of CD on all levels in the aid chain; the partners in the South, the NNGOs, as well as DGDC. In line with the international development agenda, we find that the Belgian administration and the minister demonstrate an increased focus on CD. This is translated into references in a new agreement between the government and the NNGOs, but also in the intention to integrate CD in existing policy tools. However, there are a number of fields of tension that might hamper this intention:

- As a result of current government policy with an increased focus on results based management, realising the MDGs and other objectives of poverty reduction, the emphasis has been on the changes realised in the final target group, changes that are preferably concrete and quantifiable. This tendency threatens to make the NNGOs opt for supporting downstream processes (e.g. improve service delivery on the level of the beneficiaries at the expense of support to the partner organisations' upstream CD (vision, advocacy and lobbying, etc.);
- A policy that is strongly aimed at accountability on a financial and content level has inadvertently led to the NNGO's desire to minimise risks so that partners with many CD needs are left by the wayside and experimentation with alternative CD strategies is not encouraged;

- The funding frameworks and the assessment criteria of DGCD seem to be particularly focused on partnerships with traditional development NGOs in the South, and show little consideration for the specific reality, limitations and needs of other types of CSOs (trade unions, social movements, human rights organisations, etc.) who sometimes have a more indirect relationship with the final beneficiaries and so find it more difficult to demonstrate the consequences of CD for the final beneficiaries.;
- the NNGOs experience government pressure to limit the duration of the partnerships even though the evaluation indicates that a long-term perspective is essential for more complex forms of CD;
- occasionally the increased pressure to strive for coherence within the NNGOs' programmes has led to the NNGOs' "enforcing" themes and approaches on the partners in the South, which leads to a coherence of NNGO programmes, but might not necessarily be the most relevant (and coherent) approach regarding the Southern partner's programme. There is a real chance that support to CD with regard to supply-driven themes will lead to a CD that is not very realistic.

DGDC has started to catch up with regard to CD. For instance, the NGO department is taking action to introduce CD in the NNGOs' assessment frameworks. This large evaluation is also an important opportunity to learn lessons regarding CD. Nevertheless, the evaluation team recognises the need for further operationalisation of the CD policy towards concrete policies, strategy documents, judgement criteria, development of internal expertise, etc. The pitfall that must be avoided is to limit this to a number of formulaic criteria (e.g. making an organisational capacity evaluation). The evaluation shows that different CD strategies are needed in different contexts and for different kinds of actors. The need for diversity must also be reflected in the policy framework that is to be developed.¹¹⁷ Finally, the NNGOs' budgetary tools also need to be screened with regard to coherence and to the avoidance of budget categories such as 'training'¹¹⁸, which implicitly suggest that CD is the same as traditional training.

¹¹⁷ Because organisations who specifically use political advocacy and lobbying have greater problems planning ahead, many funders have developed modified financing systems to this end: only those organisations that have achieved many results and who meet a number of imposed highly organisational (clear mission, vision, niche, internal and external audit, personal M&E system, transparent and efficient management system, clear organisational chart, etc.), institutional (part of relevant networks, active and valuable role within civil society) standards, receive a 'framework agreement' that guarantees core-funding for a number of years, with a light administrative burden, but with a thorough evaluation at the end of the line. In other words, organisations who have been 'good performers' are given the opportunity to continue their political work. The organisations that are more focused on strict service delivery without getting involved in the complex challenges of the political institutional dimensions of development, often have a better control over the factors that could influence their product. Strict planning and realising preconceived outcomes is less problematic for them than for the organisations in the first category. These service delivery organisations receive funding, but are also burdened with intensive administration. The joint-financing systems of DFID, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden are evolving in this direction.

¹¹⁸ For the division of their budget categories for the reports to DGDC, many NNGOs still use the term 'training' in the category 'operational expenses' or 'functioning' to classify all their actions regarding CD. These terms create undesirable side effects because on certain levels, traditional training comes to mind when processes of CD are being developed (up to now, for certain indirect actors like VVOB and APEFE, DGDC itself has used the category 'training' in financial reports) .

Recommendations

Recommendation 11 – DGDC could consider making a distinction between judgment criteria and the reporting requirements of NNGOs who implement **traditional output-based programmes** regarding poverty reduction and service delivery in social sectors (e.g. medical programmes and some agricultural programmes), and those who are involved with development processes that are more **complex** because apart from development outputs they also focus on 'state building', good governance, the community building and structural CD of CSOs (e.g. CD in a multi-actor approach, CD of political NGOs, trade unions, etc.). There is a growing international understanding based on complexity thinking that the second group should follow a more learning approach with M&E based on what can be realistically measured in this context.¹¹⁹ The 2006 DGDC regulation with regard to the distinction between project and programme NGOs could have evolved in that direction, but in practice it has led to a large group of programme NGOs, resulting in limited possibilities for more flexible frameworks.

Recommendation 12 – DGDC could communicate more clearly that results based management can also imply that: (1) results of processes of CD with direct partners are presented (and so separate results can be formulated concerning the partners' CD), (2) that action must be taken with regard to weaker partners who have legitimacy and are socially relevant and (3) that extended partnership durations are acceptable in cases where there is a clear and sustainable trajectory.

Recommendation 13 – DGDC could develop a proactive policy to stimulate the NNGOs to further professionalise their CD approach (along the lines, for example, of introducing the programme approach). The following possibilities might be considered:

- a) DGDC could set up a number of minimum standards NNGOs must comply with to obtain co-funding for CD programmes: (1) a clear vision of CD, (2) have the capacity to carry out contextual analysis and select relevant partners, (3) have a solid set of partnership principles, intervention strategies and CD tools, (4) indicate how CD will be implemented and evaluated; (5) clear exit strategies. These elements could be included in the assessment criteria and the policy dialogue;
- b) Agreements could be made for NNGOs to spend part of the budget within their programme portfolio on experimentation if they can demonstrate that they are implementing the necessary learning systems to learn what works and what does not, and that there are strategies for increasing the scale of successful pilot projects;
- c) DGDC can adopt a sensitising and exemplary role, for instance, by addressing the importance of CD in the policy dialogue, implementing specific evaluations of CD, participating in professional networks on CD or supporting these networks, supporting a workshop or conference with regard to CD.

Recommendation 14 – Guarding sufficient flexibility of the funding frameworks, so a wide range of processes of CD can be funded. As processes of CD in organisations do not follow a linear trajectory and can only be drawn up to a limited extent beforehand, budget lines for CD need to be sufficiently flexible. Additionally, there is a need for budgets that allow the partner to develop endogenous processes of CD to anticipate future opportunities for CD and those that are difficult to plan (for instance as a result of tapping into new themes, changes in staffing, changes in the policy framework, etc.);

¹¹⁹ Increasingly, based on certain parameters a distinction is made between development processes that are 'complicated' and processes that are 'complex'. (Snowden, 2007; Crawford, 2004).

4.6 Limited structures and processes for content related quality control and knowledge sharing with regard to CD support

The evaluation concludes that NNGOs are moving at different speed with regard to their policies, strategies and activities with regard to CD. A number of NNGOs have spearheaded these developments, but for the time being it is only a small minority who invests either via staff for methodology/quality control or via operations linked to M&E or organisational learning. We find that in the partnerships there is little room for joint learning and the documentation of good practices. However, even for the pioneers, focusing on CD is relatively recent and the expertise needs to be constantly adapted to new views such as multi-actor approaches regarding CD, new social movements, etc.

Recommendations

Recommendation 15 - The Belgian NGOs need to focus on the development of their own expertise regarding the management of partner relations and strategies regarding CD. To this end their learning questions need to be made more explicit and a modified learning trajectory must be developed. In this case learning is best coupled to the practice in which pilot projects or experiments can be implemented, experiences documented and lessons formulated.

Recommendation 16 - Most NNGOs have limited budgets to finance their own learning processes and develop their own learning trajectories. The evaluation could not provide a detailed analysis on whether this is a result of internal policy choices or of a limitation in DGDC's funding modalities. Experience shows that learning trajectories often have low priority when the (limited) budget needs to be divided between programmes and their own internal operations. Considering the importance of professional support to CD and its effect on the civil society in the South, one consideration might be to make the federations' role more explicit and to provide the necessary modalities to take on this role. This means the federations play a bigger role with regard to the members' internal capacity development with regard to supporting processes of CD. In view of the fact that CD will take on such an important role in the development sector in the coming years, it might be a good idea to appoint someone within the federations who could develop and manage learning trajectories regarding CD.

Recommendation 17 - Internal knowledge building within DGDC - The NGO desk officers of the DGDC and employees in the thematic units must acquire more in-depth and specialised knowledge with regard to the specific role of civil society actors in developing countries and how this can be strengthened through CD.

Annexes

Overview

1. Management Response DGD
2. Management Response Acodev
3. Management Response Coprogram

Available on the enclosed CD-ROM or at the Special Evaluation Office:

4. Terms of reference of the evaluation
5. Summary of the methodological note and presentation of the evaluation framework
6. Basic information on the sample: classification according to selection criteria
7. Index cards of the 40 partnerships
8. List of country reports
9. Overview of organisations and consultants in the consortium
10. Reading list of documents

Management Response of the Directorate General for Development Cooperation

1. General

The evaluation of “NGO partnerships in the field of capacity building” is in the first place directed towards NGOs. One significant contribution of this evaluation is that it may serve as a source of inspiration for NGOs to further develop and diversify their policy on capacity building: various trajectories, various levels (the so-called head, trunk, arms, legs...), various approaches (hands off/hands on, upstream/downstream, forms of capacity building other than traditional education and training...), and diverse kinds of capacities that deserve, and call for, attention.

The evaluation encompasses the period 1998-2008. It may be noted that many of the recommendations have already been partially addressed in the agreements concluded in the Accord of 4 May 2009 between the Minister and the NGO sector. These agreements in the Accord have likewise already been integrated into the mechanisms that the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGDC) will employ for the new NGO programmes for 2011-2013. These mechanisms, namely the presentation scheme and the evaluation sheet, were at the end of 2009 submitted to the NGO sector. While the final report of this evaluation is only scheduled to be released at the moment when most of the NGOs are already in the process of finalizing the preparations of their new three-year programmes, many of the recommendations therein will nonetheless be available for consideration in the evaluation of these programmes. In some areas, the mechanisms of the DGDC could be further elaborated upon, or new elements might have to be introduced. Such updating will be implemented during the first revision of the evaluation sheet and the presentation scheme for the NGO programmes.

In general, the evaluation concludes that the DGDC indeed judges capacity building to be important for non-governmental cooperation, but that the operational translation of it is missing. The same observation was made by the Peer Review for what concerns governmental cooperation, whereby it was recommended that the DGDC develop a strategic framework for capacity building. Hence, we are of the opinion that it would make good sense to tackle both of the recommendations together, and to provide also for a non-governmental cooperative component when working out such a strategic framework.

Before offering our response to the recommendations addressed to the DGDC, we also wish to voice a number of critical reflections regarding the present evaluation.

Firstly, the DGDC regrets the 6-month delay that slowed the release of the evaluation. Originally, the final report was to be released prior to the closing of 2009, which would have given NGOs plenty of time to integrate the recommendations and conclusions into their new three-year programme 2011-2013. As it is, NGOs had already reached the closing phase in the preparation of these new programmes at the time when the final report of the evaluation was published. If an evaluation of the indirect actors is to prove its usefulness in the future, it will be necessary to more strictly monitor the timing for future evaluations.

Secondly, the DGDC is of the opinion that the role of development-aid workers (technical assistance) as a means towards capacity building has not been examined thoroughly

enough in this evaluation. Yet, the deployment of such cooperative workers is a rather common and frequent resource that, in addition, carries a relatively high cost price.

And, finally, the DGDC is of the opinion that the evaluation lacks sufficient focus and is not concise enough, resulting in too elaborate a final report. In fact, the problem may be found already in the subject matter and the title of the evaluation. An attempt is made to evaluate both partnerships and capacity building and reference is made to capacity building in partnerships rather than dealing with the capacity building of partners.

Then there is also the problem that the evaluators did not confine themselves to the conduct of van NGOs but also have formulated conclusions and recommendations about the role of the DGDC and the NGO federations, whereas the methodology of the evaluation was not actually meant to encompass or entertain such a scope. The DGDC further questions the rationale behind the choice of the tender, seeing that the group of evaluators selected did not submit the lowest offer and further evidences a marked relationship with the NGO environment. This is clear from the final report: the evaluators display a marked receptiveness of the global vision of the NGO sector, which, as a reaction to when things are not quite working out, often points the finger to the administration and to the obligations imposed on them (the evaluators) by the authorities, instead of assuming their own responsibility for what is happening.

Following, we present, per recommendation, the follow-up by the DGDC. In the process, one should not lose sight of the specific roles played by both the NGOs and the DGDC. One must always keep account of a proper balance between policy mandates by the DGDC and the NGOs' right to initiate.

1. Discussion per recommendation

Recommendation 11 – Different evaluation criteria and reporting requirements for non-traditional NGOs

The DGDC might consider drawing a distinction between the evaluation criteria and the reporting requirements of NNGOs that are conducting traditional, output-focused NGO programmes on poverty reduction and service provisions in social sectors (e.g., medical programmes and some agricultural programmes) and those that are dealing with development processes of greater complexity since, aside from development outputs, they are also involved in 'state building', good governance, community building and structural CB of CSOs (e.g., CB within a multi-actor approach, CB of political NGOs, unions, etc.). Complexity thinking promotes, on an international plane, the realisation that this second group needs to pursue a more learning-directed approach, and with M&E attuned to what can realistically be measured and quantified within this context. The DGDC ruling of 2006 with respect to the distinction between project and programme NGOs could have evolved in that direction, but, in practice, has led to a broad group of programme NGOs, which restricted the possibility for making frameworks more flexible.

Follow-up by the DGDC:

Although improving the mechanisms that are employed by the DGDC (presentation scheme, evaluation sheet, financial and narrative guidelines) is an ongoing process, the DGDC is of the opinion that the current set of mechanisms allows for adequate openness for both the traditional NGO service providers and the NGOs that are more geared towards policy impact and community building. As such, the emphasis does in no wise lie only on results achieved amongst the final target groups, but likewise a great deal of importance is attached to partnership and capacity building.

In the Accord of 4 May 2009 reached between the Minister and the NGO sector it has, moreover, been agreed that NGOs will in the future become more deeply involved in capacity building and policy influencing, and less in the direct provision of services. NGOs

would only be allowed to provide services in the four exceptional instances that are provided for within the Accord, specifically 1) fragile target groups and in the absence of any other support organisation, 2) trial experiments, 3) fragile states and 4) emergency situations. The DGDC hence will here also exercise supervision starting from the NGO new strategic frameworks.

Recommendation 12 – The DGDC communication concerning results-oriented management

The DGDC could more clearly communicate that result-oriented management can also mean that: (1) results are being submitted of CB processes with the direct partners (and that there is therefore the possibility of formulation of separate results that relate to CB on the part of partners), (2) that there can/must be efforts devoted to working with weaker partners that possess legitimacy and social relevance, and (3) that prolonged partnership terms are acceptable in cases of clear and sustainable projects.

Follow-up by the DGDC

The DGDC agrees that:

- (1) results can be formulated in the field of capacity building of partners without, however, in the process losing sight of its impact on the ultimate target group. The evaluation sheets for NGO programmes are consequently well-balanced in that respect: the effect on the socio-economic situation of the beneficiaries is examined (question 21 on the evaluation sheet), but, likewise, a great deal of attention is devoted to capacity building (questions 26-31) and partnership (questions 55 to 65).
- (2) it is indeed possible to work with weaker partners. This will depend on the objectives that the NGO advances in its project or programme. In the field of capacity building, even faster results may be achieved amongst weaker than amongst stronger partners (this is being confirmed by the evaluation, see under point 2.3.1, BC 3.2 a).
- (3) prolonged partnership terms are possible in certain instances, if sustainability rather than dependence is being pursued. The DGDC in any event invites the NGOs to cast a critical glance at the duration of their partnership terms, and to pay due attention to well thought-out exit strategies for their termination.

All of this will be evaluated case-by-case, on the basis of the concrete programme or project proposal as submitted by the NGO and using the criteria of the evaluation sheet. The DGDC recommends that the NGOs present in their dossiers adequate arguments to support the concrete choice of, for instance, results at the partner level, fragile partners, or prolonged terms of partnerships.

In addition, the DGDC will participate in the federal working group formed by the NGO federations on the subject of result-oriented management, which is meant to stimulate exchanges amongst the NGOs, the authorities, and other actors regarding the various possible interpretations of result-oriented management. And, finally, the NGO service is also part of the internal DGDC network around result-oriented management, which brings in its wake a greater understanding of result-oriented management by the dossier managers of the NGO service.

Recommendation 13 – The DGDC’s proactive policy

The DGDC could develop a proactive policy in order to stimulate the NNGOs to the further professionalisation of their CB approach (after the example of, for instance, the introduction of the programmatic approach). We are considering in this regard the following possibilities:

- a) the DGDC can establish a number of minimum standards which the NNGOs need to satisfy in order to become eligible for co-financing of CB programmes, for instance (1) a clear vision on CB, (2) possessing the capacity to engage in environmental analyses and select relevant partners, (3) possessing a solid set of partnership principles, intervention strategies, and CB tools, (4) outlining how CB needs to be monitored and evaluated; (5) clear exit strategies. Therefore, these elements will be entered into the evaluation criteria and the policy dialogue;
- b) there could also be agreements to the effect that NNGOs within their programme portfolios can allocate a portion of their budget to trial experimentation, if they can demonstrate that they are establishing the needed learning systems to discover what works and what doesn't, and that there exist strategies for expanding the size of pilot projects that work successfully;
- c) the DGDC can assume a role in raising awareness plus being a model role by, for instance, mapping out the importance of CB within the policy dialogue, setting up specific evaluations about CB, participating personally in professional networks about CB or supporting such networks, or supporting a study day or a conference related to CB.

Follow-up by the DGDC

Thanks to this evaluation, the DGDC also has gained a better insight into the capacities that a Belgian NGO needs to possess in order to effectively engage in capacity building of her partners, plus an understanding of what is meant by a balanced CB approach. The evaluation sheet for the new NGO programmes is now devoting greater attention to CB, but even this will be further fine-tuned in a future revision, based on the recommendations of this evaluation.

The DGDC is favourably disposed to the idea that NGOs, within their programmes, initiate innovative experiments, but approaches this possibility with the needed caution. For instance, the NGO needs to demonstrate its mastery of the required competences to be able to manage such a pilot project; furthermore, it appears advisable that such a project remain limited to a part of the programme. This was also the DGDC's standpoint at the meeting of April 2010 in working group 2 of the Joint Consultation Committee on result-oriented management.

Aside from the suggestions that were retained in the concluding recommendation, the DGDC further emphasizes the importance of examining the following elements in the evaluation of programmes:

- Choice of partner organisation: One of the observations in the evaluation was that a number of Belgian NGOs had themselves collaborated in the formation of partner organisations in the South regions, and that this was often carried out without sufficient thought or foresight. The DGDC thus feels called upon to see to it that Belgian NGOs refrain in the future from starting up their own organisations in the Southern countries, but rather seek out existing partner organisations that have already become embedded within the local civil society.
- Analysis of the capacity of the partner at the start of the partnership: 2 out of 3 NGOs fail to undertake a systematic analysis of the partner's capacity at the start of the partnership, while this is surely an important starting point for engaging in capacity building.
- Diversification of capacities to be reinforced: NGOs pay much greater attention to the hard technical or implementation capacities of the partner (bookkeeping, M&E,

planning capacity), this at the expense of the upstream capacities (strategic thinking, vision development, political work ...) and of soft capacities (leadership, teamwork ...)

- Deployment of development aid workers and regional coordinators for capacity building: only if in the job responsibilities clear attention is paid to capacity building and the individual involved has the appropriate background experience and/or is being relevantly trained.

Recommendation 14 – Flexible financing frameworks

Maintaining sufficient flexibility in the financing frameworks so that a broad gamut of CB processes can be financed. Given that CB processes within organisations do not follow a linear trajectory and can only to a limited extent be outlined in advance, the budget lines for CB need to be kept sufficiently flexible. In this process, there is also need for budgets that will make it possible for the partner to reinforce the endogenous CB processes so as to be able to react appropriately to coming opportunities for which it is hard to plan for CB (for instance, in consequence of starting up a new theme, a change in personnel, a change in policy framework, etc.);

Follow-up by the DGDC

The financing frameworks that are currently used by the DGDC already demonstrate a certain degree of flexibility:

- the final accounting of the budgets is carried out only following the expiration of the three-year term of the programme. As such, within these three years, the NGO is at liberty to distribute and apportion the budget as it deems fit, without feeling tied to a rigorous adherence to the annually provided budget constraints.
- on final accounting at the end of three years, a shift amongst the various budget posts is possible within certain limits (20% between budget entries, and 10% amongst specific objectives). Shifts that exceed these limits are not impossible, but they need to be applied for in advance in writing and have to be approved by the DGDC.
- no restrictions are imposed on the type of capacity building financed by the DGDC. In the current presentation schemes and reporting guidelines, the NGO is free to determine the details within the entries 'investment costs, operating costs, and personnel expenditures'. Hence, the DGDC does not impose a budget category for 'training', which would implicitly give the signal that assistance to CB would automatically imply traditional training.
- the DGDC requests for its programme financing only details up to the level of types of activities, thus no details for each activity separately.

This flexibility is also evident from the evaluation, where 50% of the NGOs report the provision of core funding for their partners (although only two NGOs made mention of this in their policy documents). Also the Southern partners consider the financing via Belgian NGOs relatively flexible and not too rigidly tied to the performance of activities agreed to in advance, in contrast to many other financiers that are only willing to shoulder activity-related costs and are not inclined to contribute much at all to central overhead expenses. Various partner organisations did, nonetheless, report the gradual tightening of the financing modality since the budgets are strictly tied to the detailed logical frameworks, an evolution that, according to the evaluation, causes concern. The logical frameworks imposed by the DGDC do not, however, reach up to the level of the activities.

Recommendation 17 – internal knowledge building within the DGDC

Internal knowledge build-up within the DGDC – Also the NGO dossier managers of the NGO service of the DGDC and other collaborators of thematic services need to further study, and gain expertise in and about, the role of the civil society actors in developing countries, and how this role can be enhanced via CB.

Follow-up by the DGDC:

The DGDC can enhance its knowledge building around the role of the civil society and capacity building through, amongst other avenues:

- active participation in international exchanges with other donors (for instance, with Donor Group on Civil Society and in the Structured Dialogue of the European Commission)
- participation in training courses organized around these themes, whereby one has to take into account the specific role played by the DGDC vis-à-vis indirect actors: the DGDC does not engage in identification and formulation of projects and programmes of indirect actors, but it has to evaluate projects and programmes that have been worked out independently by NGOs and create a framework for them.
- further integration of the findings and recommendations of this evaluation into its own operating instruments.



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Management Response Acodev

ACODEV considers that the evaluation of NNGO¹²⁰ partnerships focused on capacity building commissioned by the Special Evaluation Unit of Development Cooperation is an important milestone in improving the quality of NNGO cooperation by putting the subject of capacity building at the top of the sector's agenda. ACODEV agrees with almost all the recommendations formulated by the evaluation team.

Capacity building is not new for NNGOs. It is a subject which has developed naturally as part of the relationships with their southern partners over the last 15 years. The systematic analysis of practices that are sometimes intuitive or implicit is a rich source of inspiration for the sector which can certainly fuel the discussions of the NNGOs in future years and thus be a part of improving their effectiveness.

This document therefore comprises ACODEV's assessment as a federation, of the recommendations formulated as part of this evaluation. It does not imply an individual or collective commitment of the NNGOs to implement (or not implement) the recommendations relating to them into the way they work, but rather a discussion on the resources that ACODEV, in its role of supporting the professional quality of its members, suggests implementing to improve CB practices, and in doing so, the quality of the work by its members.

Here we are focusing on the recommendations which concern the NNGOs and their federations and not those relating to the DGDC. However, many issues raised by the evaluators go beyond the exclusive responsibility of one or other of these parties. A constructive dialogue must be established between all parties involved (NNGO, federations and umbrella organisations, partners, public authorities) to analyse the measures needed to improve the effectiveness of capacity building. ACODEV will propose practical topics regarding this as part of its consultation with public authorities.

Where appropriate, we can also take advantage of this response to provide variations or additions to the recommendations which we consider useful. These variations will not fundamentally question the assessment of the recommendations, but provide additional clarification.

¹²⁰ NNGO= Northern NGO; within this document, principally Belgian NGOs that are members of ACODEV.

1. The quality of the partnership as determining factor for the effective support of capacity building

R1. Partnership agreements

NNGOs could sign agreements between partners that go beyond the contract relating to a specific programme/project. This is being boosted by the new guidelines from the DGCD on agreements between partners prior to the 2011-2013 programme. When NNGOs do not want to include this in an agreement, they may consider regulating it by using a Memorandum of Understanding for example. In agreements of this type, shared principles and values and a shared concept to "support capacity building" can be developed. This type of agreement can include a position or range regarding the (maximum) duration for the partnership relationship.

Without wanting to bring the partnership relationship back to a purely contractual dimension, it seems interesting to us that each of the partners can express the form of their relationship, beyond the specifically financial involvement of this or that donor.

The widespread introduction of partnership agreements, particularly at the instigation of funding from the DGCD, has allowed clarification on the legal aspects of the relationship as part of the execution of a project or programme. However, given their highly legal nature, these agreements can sometimes be assimilated into the non-negotiable "general partnership conditions" for the Southern partner.

The establishing of concerted and transparent "partnership frameworks", which are broader than the partnership agreements, can therefore improve the quality of the partnerships. They should express the following elements as a minimum:

- The shared values that the partnership is based on
- The mutual objectives pursued
- The division of the roles between partners
- The methods and mechanisms for mutual accountability
- The partnership's development strategy and exit strategies

Partnership agreements as they currently exist would only include administrative clauses specific to the co-funding to which they refer.

This proposal is already part of the draft "Quality" system developed by ACODEV.

ACODEV will continue to encourage discussions on establishing partnership frameworks and the content of partnership agreements among its members by promoting the sharing of practical experiences between NNGOs.

That said, it is also important to recognise that a partnership does not just 'happen', it is built gradually over time. Therefore, we must not favour a single model for standardising the partnership over time since we then risk only signing partnerships with organisations which are already relatively successful or seeing too much standardisation kill the relationship. The partners must be able to give themselves a flexible space for building the partnership so that its content can genuinely reflect the aims of both parties. This building space is already an integral part of the partnership (even if it is not yet formalised) insofar as it is potentially a time for agreements organisational and strategic improvement for the partner organisation. Short-term conventions can therefore make sense within a process of flexible construction for a long-term partnership.

R2. Exit strategies

NNGOs are faced with the important challenge of developing more considered exit strategies within their partnerships, which will go beyond the prior declaration of exit or the search for donors other than their partner. This assumes a well developed strategy at the start of the partnership, the plan for a flexible path for cooperation and the exploration of alternative forms of capacity building to increase the partners' financial and institutional sustainability.

ACODEV supports this recommendation. The fact of having jointly defined the different stages of the partnership and the circumstances for its potential end is a quality element insofar as it encourages the parties to build their relationship in a greater spirit of freedom and capacity building: how can the partner's independence be promoted, how can it be encouraged to achieve results in terms of capacity and services to the recipients,...? Furthermore, defining considered exit strategies will force the NNGO to measure the nature of its commitment (duration, content) and its responsibility and capacity to ensure the continuity of its support with regards its partner. Except in exceptional cases, an abrupt and unprepared end to a partnership is contrary to the values conveyed by NNGOs and detrimental to the effectiveness of the development.

However, talking about "exit strategies" focuses too much on the pure and simple end to the partnership and on financial flows and not enough on its gradual development (both in content and format) and its strategic dimension: this partnership development can itself constitute a CB focus, central to the partnership where the responsibility is shared between two (or more) partners. We would therefore prefer to use the concept of partnership development strategy, a component of the partnership framework, rather than that of exit strategy.

This partnership development strategy proposal is already part of the draft "quality" system developed by ACODEV. ACODEV will continue to support the implementation of considered development strategies by promoting the sharing of practical experiences between NNGOs.

R3. Administrative simplification for southern partners

NNGOs can reduce the administrative burden on their partners and increase the suitability of their CB actions by improving administrative coordination with other donors from partner organisations. At the same time, the Belgian NNGOs could allow their partners to work with their own local reporting systems with the Belgian NNGO subsequently taking responsibility for interpreting the information received within the frameworks established by the DGCD. This should allow the partner more flexible use of the M&E systems. The NNGOs, with the support of the NNGO federations in Belgium, can enter into a dialogue with the DGCD and other donors to establish less formal conditions for reporting and by emphasising the conditions based on the essential information to be covered.

ACODEV supports this recommendation.

The administrative burden placed on their partners by the NNGOs depends to a large extent on their own internal organisation arrangements (What degree of interpretation of the local reporting systems do they provide? What level of accuracy do they demand?) as well as the requirements of their donors. The principles of managing development results which put the reporting emphasis on results rather than activities should lead to a significant reduction in the reporting burden.

ACODEV will continue its training efforts so the NNGOs integrate these concepts more fully and communicate them to their partners.

Secondly, ACODEV will invite its members along with other partners of a southern organisation to consider the possibilities of coordinating their reporting requirements. It will integrate this requirement into its "Quality" system.

Furthermore, ACODEV will continue its dialogue with the DGCD to establish reporting principles that adequately serve the interests of all parties concerned.

2. CB as a driving force in the fight against poverty and promoting democratic management

R4. Explaining its CB approach

The NNGOs taking part in the survey demonstrate a different degree of explanation of expertise concerning the different dimensions of a CB approach. We believe that it would be advisable for NNGOs to speak out more clearly regarding their support for CB processes. Attention must be paid to strengthening the head (the objectives), the backbone (values and principles), the arms (tools and methods) and the legs (construction elements) of the current CB approach, and ensuring consistency between the different aspects. The CB approach must also be better translated in the type of actors with whom the NNGOs cooperate and the context in which they act. The good practices of NNGOs from groups 1, 2 and 3 can be improved and shared.

The evaluation highlights that, for many NNGOs, the need for capacity building in its partners remains an implicit concern, which has not always received adequate attention. ACODEV unreservedly subscribes to the evaluation's recommendation.

The evaluation suggests a theoretical and systematic reference framework which can be used as a basis for training and strategic discussions within the sector, supported by the federations.

ACODEV will quickly participate in the socialisation of this reference framework among its members. This need to strengthen its members should also be given an important place in the ACODEV action plans for the coming years (ref rec. 16).

3. CB as an endogenous, non-linear process, vulnerable to the interruption of external support

R5. Long-term plans

Support for CB often requires a long-term plan which probably exceeds the duration of a specific programme. During the formulation and development of agreements between partners this must be taken into account. It is also important that the partner organisation receives continued support for its ongoing CB plans, either from the Belgian NNGOs, or another donor.

ACODEV subscribes to this recommendation. While it is possible to achieve CB results over the short term, particularly in terms of more technical capacities, in terms of strategic and political capacities, the partners' commitment must effectively be long-term. The partnership relationships must therefore be considered over a time frame consistent with the sought-after CB objectives. NNGOs must be able to guarantee the partnership relationship for the duration (ref. Rec. 2).

At the same time, it is important that these long-term partnerships do not lead de facto to a new dependence for the southern organisations with regards their northern partner and that therefore a partnership development strategy is associated with them.

R6. Suitable monitoring and evaluation systems

NNGOs that want to deal intensively with CB must develop suitable monitoring and evaluation systems to monitor the CB plans, systems which as far as possible are coordinated with the partner's existing M&E procedures and those of other external donors. Due to the complexity and rapidly changing reality of CB processes, flexible, participative frameworks are needed which focus on the process and are also adapted to the partners' essential capacities and the work circle with which it cooperates. It is advisable that these monitoring processes are

regularly complemented by evaluations which perform the role of external audit and benchmarking, these evaluations must be conducted after consultation with other donors. The experiences of CB monitoring in the NNGOs from groups 1 and 3 may serve as inspiration, along with the initiatives recently developed in other countries, for example in the Netherlands (educational work plans by PSO, 2010) and the UK (Intrac, 2009, 'M&E of capacity building'). The federations can support their members in this regard.

ACODEV supports this recommendation. As a general rule, an external critical perspective on the results of the NNGO is needed so that lessons can be learnt and the strict response framework can be improved and extended. Monitoring and evaluation must be central to the learning organisation.

The importance of monitoring, evaluation and learning is already part of the draft "Quality" system developed by ACODEV.

ACODEV wants to improve the culture of evaluation among its members. The forthcoming publication of a dynamic database of experts for evaluation is a step in this direction. Other tools are being considered. Furthermore, ACODEV will continue to support its members in mastering results-orientated methodological management approaches suited to CB processes. Since 2009, its methodological training has included methods that are complementary to the logical framework approach such as mapping impacts.

R7. Diversification of CB approaches

We are issuing a challenge to the NNGOs not to focus solely on their partners' downstream strengthening (technical and operational execution capacity) but that they also pay attention to the upstream processes (policy, strategy, vision and mission, institutional framework, etc.). The ECDPM model with its five core capabilities is a useful tool in analysing current CB practice. We are inviting the NNGOs not only to focus on capabilities 2 (operational capability for achieving development objectives) and 3 (the capability to establish relationships and obtain funds) in carrying out CB but to implement the five core capabilities in their entirety.

ACODEV fully subscribes to this recommendation for balanced CB plans which include both downstream and upstream capacities, even when the partners' requirement is focused principally on downstream capabilities.

ACODEV supports the training needs of its members through a specific CB approaches training programme in its 2011 action plan (ref. rec.16).

To invest in the field of upstream capacities, the different actors must be aware that this is a process requiring human and time resource, and more difficult to sub-contract to a third party. An effective CB project at this level requires a keen knowledge of the partner and its internal process. Furthermore, this process is risky for the partner and the partnership considering that it affects the partner's strategic and policy elements - the heart of its identity - and that it can highlight profound internal differences or differences between the partners.

4. Conditions for effective and efficient external support for CB

R8. Contextual analyses

Good contextual and institutional analyses are important conditions in establishing a successful CB plan. We invite the NNGOs to invest more in these. With regards the choice of strategies, we recommend that NNGOs experiment more with non-standard methods or methods that they have in hand for supporting CB. The model of different plans and the aid-memoire for CB strategies which could be successful may be useful resources (see table 26). Other working methods besides training and partner meetings must be adopted. On this subject, it is important to remain systematically informed about the effectiveness of certain methods supporting CB.

The quality of the context analysis (in a broad sense) is a basic condition for the success of a development action. **This element is part of the draft "Quality" system developed by ACODEV.** Naturally, ACODEV therefore subscribes to this part of the recommendation: NGOs must dedicate adequate resources to ensure the quality of their contextual and institutional analyses.

That said, the institutional analysis requires specific methods to tackle the often complex reality of organisations and their environment. The implementation of these methods could themselves be subject to a CB plan (organisational self-evaluation, action research, ...) rather than an exercise where the organisation is the subject of a study.

ACODEV is also of the opinion, like the evaluators, that CB processes are complex processes which need a methodological, dynamic or creative approach.

In this regard, implementation of these non-standard methods may require a more marked presence of the NNGOs alongside their partners (more frequent assignments, cooperating, regional CB offices, ...), especially when the partners are weak or when local expertise does not allow flexible or non-standard CB approaches to be supported. The NNGOs will have to take steps in order to guarantee that they are part of their partners' strengthening works, notably in terms of upstream capacities. This would constitute a reversal in the trend of recent years of reducing the presence of NNGOs on the ground. The reinvestment of the human resources role in the development cooperation by the NNGOs, cannot in any case lead to a return towards local resources being substituted by NNGO resources. In this regard, the experience of NNGOs who continue to have a strong local presence in CB focused operations would merit further documentation and analysis.

R9. Local expertise

The evaluators are of the opinion that NNGOs must invest more in developing local expertise in CB (through greater appeal or incorporating partner organisations in their partner portfolio). A sustainable CB policy is to develop sufficient local expertise in CB for it then to assume the role of the Belgian NNGOs and others on the ground. This is not only necessary for CB expertise in terms of technical needs, but also for the whole CB support plan, including the design and execution of complex CB plans (multi-actor processes, etc.)

When local skills are available, the NNGOs should of course, for sustainability reasons, rely on them.

This element is already part of the draft "Quality" system developed by ACODEV.

However, as shown by the evaluation, CB processes (principally upstream) are often complex, non-linear processes within which mobilising the internal resources of the partnerships can also be meaningful in terms of effectiveness: greater confidence, better knowledge of the context, greater flexibility in the process, long-term support rather than one shot, ...

R10. Pooling technical support

On a sectoral level, we could think about combining assistance into technical support. Not all NNGOs are able to provide expertise in all the areas that the southern OSC needs. By pooling the technical support, all partners can access a given technical expertise more quickly (e.g. water at Protos, local economic development at TRIAS, the development of production chains at Vredeseilanden, cooperatives at WSM etc.). This is a role that can be adopted by leaders or federations. This role already fits with the framework of the conclusions from the conference on 11.11.11 (2009), for example, which assigns the role of greater coordination of the regional offices of the different NNGOs to the leaders of the Flemish NNGOs.

The tradition of working in synergy is still not highly developed between Belgian NNGOs. Efforts towards greater synergy are currently being developed by the Belgian NNGOs and the federation, supported by the administration. When NNGOs jointly draw on their own specialisations and expertise, they improve the quality of their operations.

While in absolute terms, it is therefore desirable to improve the synergies and complementary features between development actors (not strictly between NNGOs or between actors from the same country of origin), the example put forward in this recommendation does not seem to us to be highly relevant and may potentially contradict previous recommendations. Indeed, the technical skills (more downstream) highlighted in this recommendation are on the face of it, skills for which a local expertise may be identified and external technical support is not always necessary. It is not of course desirable that the NNGOs' technical expertise, even organised as a pool, takes the place of local expertise (ref. Rec. 9). Furthermore, the added value of NNGOs in their partners' CB lies in their keen knowledge of the organisation, its values and internal and external processes. Pooling this expertise is not strictly an efficiency factor; except in the case where several NNGOs have the same partner where, obviously, good coordination between the NNGOs regarding this partner (even the implementation of synergies) is needed for efficiency.

5. Growing interest in CB policy but funding and administrative instruments are still at an embryonic stage

R11. Different assessment criteria and reporting requirements for non-standard NNGOs

The DGCD could envisage making a distinction between the evaluation criteria and reporting requirements for NNGOs who are responsible for standard, output-driven NNGO programmes relating to the fight against poverty and the provision of services in the social sectors (e.g. medical programmes and some agricultural programmes) and those who are responsible for more complex development processes, because apart from their input in the development they are also performing 'state building' and good management, and developing society and structural CB for the OSC (e.g. CB with a multi-actor approach, the CB of political, actors unions, etc.). Internationally, the idea that this second group must follow an approach more focused on learning, with an M&E suited to what can realistically be measured in this context has resulted from the theory of the complexity. The DGCD 2006 regulation relating to the distinction between project and programme NNGOs could have developed in this way, but in practice led to a large group of programme NNGOs which limited the opportunity to relax the frameworks.

For ACODEV, the quality requirements for an NGO are identical whatever its size, whether part of the "Project" or "Programme" co-funding arrangement, "standard" output-driven or CB. Among these quality requirements is that of including its operation in a local empowerment approach which involves a significant investment in capacity building. The "standard" output-driven programmes are therefore all just as concerned by the challenges of CB as the more complex programmes. In suggesting different assessment criteria, we must not be led to believe that in certain scenarios, CB would be important and in others it wouldn't. To the contrary, "standard" NNGO programmes are only legitimate when they are part of a CB process. NNGOs that cannot or will not accept this quality requirement will ultimately, over the short to medium term, have to re-examine their added value for development.

Furthermore, the transformation of NNGOs into learning organisations through the implementation of more effective M&E tools and the development of business culture is a challenge for all types of organisations, whether they fall within project or programme arrangements.

A CODEV cannot therefore support this recommendation.

6. Structures and processes for quality control of the content and the exchange of knowledge relating to CB are limited

R15. Strengthening the expertise of the NNGOs in CB strategies

The Belgian NNGOs must invest in developing their own expertise in relation to the administration of relationships between partners and CB strategies. In this respect, the questions of learning and creating an appropriate learning plan must be expressed. To do so, it would be better to combine education with practice by creating pilot-projects or experiments, documenting experiences and formulating lessons.

ACODEV supports this recommendation.

Since 2009, ACODEV has built up a tool to support its members' quality initiatives. In 2011, a section of this tool will be dedicated to capacity building and will support the internal training efforts of NGOs in this field.

R16. Support from the federations

The majority of NNGOs have reduced budgets for funding their own learning processes and creating their own learning plans. The evaluation was not able to analyse in detail to what extent this is a consequence of internal policy choices by NNGOs or the result of the limitation in funding arrangements by the DGCD. In practice, it seems that educational plans are considered as a lower priority when the budget (reduced) has to be distributed across their own programmes and internal actions. Given the importance of professional support for CB and its effects on the development of civil society in the south, we could envisage refining/adjusting the role of the federations in terms of this, and ensuring that the necessary arrangements are in place for them to take responsibility for this role. The federations could play a greater role in developing their members' internal capacity in terms of support for CB processes. Since CB will receive ample attention within the development cooperation sector in the years to come, it would be useful to consider the appointment of personnel in the federations who are able to create and follow learning plans relating to CB.

Support for the professional quality of the NGOs falls within the federations' mandates and as such, they suggest collective learning plans to their members.

ACODEV will offer its members a training plan specifically dedicated to CB in its 2011 and 2012 action plans (at least) so that CB can occupy a more important place in the strategic frameworks of NGOs from 2014. Contacts with PSO have already been made to this effect. The subjects raised in recommendations 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 can be covered in this framework.

Management response Coprogram

1. In general, members who were evaluated are satisfied about the quality of the evaluation and agree with the recommendations. The evaluation suggests a number of interesting conceptual frameworks for capacity building. This will help the sector further improve its practice and is useful for fine-tuning the evaluation of programmes and projects by the authorities.

2. The evaluated members will follow up on the recommendations in the evaluation, each in their own way and depending on whether the recommendation applies to them. This will soon be reflected in their new programming. This is impossible for members who have not been evaluated. They still have to be informed about the outcome of the evaluation and familiarise themselves with applicable recommendations.

3. Of the 17 recommendations, ten target NGOs, one targets the federation and six target the DGDC. In recommendation 16, the evaluation panel advocates a stronger role for the federations when it comes to developing NGOs' expertise in terms of CB. In this frame they also refer to the importance of funding learning projects on this subject. They suggest that someone be made available within the federations who can develop and oversee learning projects related to CB.

4. Coprogram wishes to respond to this recommendation by incorporating a partial result in terms of capacity building in its operational plan. This partial result comprises:

4.1 The socialisation of the evaluation

We are planning a seminar in autumn 2010 during which we will announce the outcome of the evaluation and its recommendations to members who have not been evaluated. We want to encourage them to take the recommendations into account, to conduct an internal evaluation and to launch improvement projects.

4.2 Training module

The federation already offers a training day for new associates of NGOs. They receive an introduction to the NGO sector in general. Depending on the position of the new associates we sense that there is a need for more specific modules. For the South associates (at headquarters and in the field) we are considering a capacity building module, explaining the key concepts and focusing on a number of cases. We are relying on external expertise to put this module together.

4.3 A learning project focusing on capacity building

Between 2011 and 2013 we will set up a learning project that is accessible to all members operating in the South. We want to specifically focus on three sub-aspects of capacity building, as the evaluation revealed some weaknesses in this regard: the exit strategy, the diagnosis of partners and the tools for measuring CB activities. The latter should be understood as tools for monitoring capacity building or for measuring its impact.

In the frame of this learning project we will use a diversified and step-by-step approach. The members participate in the project in small groups maximising learning capacity: some members can learn a lot from one another with regard to a given subject. We will not tackle all four subjects concomitantly but will spread them in time. To this end we will rely on external expertise.

4.4 Deployment and training of federation employees

Within the secretariat team one employee is responsible for the execution of this partial result in the operational plan. S/he will be assisted by a second employee. The secretariat will receive additional training in order to be able to oversee the training module itself in the long term.

5. Except for the aforementioned points, Coprogram also wishes to take into account the evaluation's recommendations in other ways.

5.1 All recommendations, but those pertaining to partnership agreements in particular, will be incorporated in our daily advice to members.

5.2 The recommendation about administrative simplification will be incorporated in the activities of the Finance working group.

5.3 The Synergy Steering Committee will take the recommendation about the pooling of technological assistance (NGO aid workers) into account.

The Board of Governors of the Federation has decided to include the partial result as set out under item 4 as one of the six strategic projects for the 2011 operational plan, which will be submitted to the DGDC at the end of September.

6 September 2010

