

Reciprocity in North-South cooperation is gradually gaining importance. It is especially in the promotion of sustainable development that the North and South countries have started to recognise that they can and should contribute to each other's development process and learn from each other. In this respect, the thinking behind reciprocity differs from that on conventional development aid. Finding practical ways to implement reciprocity remains a challenge.

In 1994, the Dutch government signed Sustainable Development Agreements with Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica. These agreements are based on reciprocity, equality and participation and create a unique platform to learn more about reciprocity and how it can be achieved. More than 200 reciprocal projects have been implemented since 1994. This publication analyses the lessons learned in these projects and the factors that play a crucial role in addressing reciprocity. This publication will aid organisations and people when applying the refreshing and demanding concept of reciprocity.

The most important lessons is that reciprocity in sustainable development needs leadership, programmatic coherence and a learning platform:

- Leadership is crucial in any innovative process. The Sustainable Development Agreements have learned that leadership can provide policy support, credibility, tangible results and a good profile. These are of utmost importance when creating an enabling environment for reciprocal projects.
- In order to improve the track record of reciprocal projects, it is important to avoid a wide range of scattered project initiatives and to focus on promoting coherent programmes. If projects fit into programmes, they can reinforce each other by interactive learning, contributing to programme objectives and be more easily replicated and upscaled.
- Identifying successes and failures in the implementation of reciprocal projects helps to learn lessons, formulate best practices and build up institutional memory. In addition to learning at the level of the Sustainable Development Agreements, one may also think of learning in an international context, exceeding the boundaries of the agreements. Learning is the most powerful sustainability tool there is and can be fostered by the creation of learning platforms.

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Reciprocity in sustainable development

Lessons from The Netherlands, Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica

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Lessons from the Netherlands, Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica

NIPS is the *Netherlands International Partnership for Sustainability*. NIPS is responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agreements in The Netherlands. These agreements between The Netherlands and Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica were signed in 1994 and are based on reciprocity, equality and participation.

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List of abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CoP	Conference of Parties
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
NC-IUCN	Netherlands Committee for the IUCN (IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIPS	Netherlands International Partnership for Sustainability
NM	National Mechanisms
OBEPAB	Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique
RIVM	Netherlands Institute for Public Health and Environment
SDA	Sustainable Development Agreements
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
UAF	United Air Fund
VNG	Association of Dutch Municipalities

Foreword

This publication was written by Jan Joost Kessler, Bart Romijn and Robin Pistorius of AIDEnvironment. The authors were requested to describe projects that have contributed to the objectives of the Sustainable Development Agreements (SDAs) and to analyse factors making these projects successful.

The authors interviewed many people involved in one or more projects. This publication would not have been possible without the valuable information and reflections they provided.

The authors would like to thank Brecht Paardekooper (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Wim de Ridder (SMO, Foundation Society & Enterprise), Hans Bolscher (formerly of Max Havelaar Foundation), and Jeanne Bettenhausen (Dutch Rural Women's Association) for their comments on an earlier draft of this report. The draft was also reviewed by the Directors and other representatives of the National Mechanisms (NMs) from the other three SDA countries, Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica.

The authors worked in close collaboration with staff of the Royal Tropical Institute, especially Charles Gerhardt, Herman Verhagen and Inge Voss.

1. Introduction

In 1994, the Dutch government signed three bilateral Sustainable Development Agreements (SDAs) with the governments of Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica. The treaties had two aims: to promote sustainable development and to establish a new pattern of relationships between a Northern country and three Southern countries. The most important part of the treaties is Paragraph 1 of Article 1, which can be considered as the SDA mission. It reads as follows: *‘The two governments hereby agree to establish long-term cooperation between their countries based on equality and reciprocity as well as consultation and mutual assistance in order to pursue effectively and efficiently all aspects of sustainable development, thereby promoting the participation of all interest groups in their respective countries’.*

The SDAs were conceived as treaties and thus are the responsibility of the government, but their implementation can be delegated to external organisations. To facilitate the proper implementation of the SDAs, National Mechanisms (NMs) were established in each of the four countries. These NMs were placed beyond the government. Foundation Ecooperation was the Dutch National Mechanism until the summer of 2002.

Thematic programmes emerged from the various projects as well as from policy dialogue. These programmes form the basis of the projects presented in this publication. For more information on the SDAs and the evolution of programmes, see Box 1.

After the review of the SDAs in 2001, discussions in the Dutch parliament led to changes to the mandate of Foundation Ecooperation. After a selection process, the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) took over Ecooperation and the implementation of the SDAs. In the summer of 2002 this evolved into the Netherlands International Partnership for Sustainability (NIPS), now charged with facilitating the SDAs between The Netherlands, Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica. Under the new arrangements between the Dutch Government and KIT, the latter will assume the role of NM.

Many SDA-funded projects have been completed since its inception in 1994. This includes about 250 Type 3 projects wherein reciprocity between the four SDA countries is a guiding principle. These projects constitute the greatest innovation and challenge of the SDA and generated much knowledge. However, this knowledge is not readily available. It is largely implicit and dispersed

(in the minds of the various actors, some of whom have left), and not documented or made explicit.

With the new beginning of the NIPS, it is time to document and reactivate this valuable knowledge base. This also conforms to the intention of KIT to turn the agreements into actions with tangible results for sustainable development. The focus is on Type 3 projects as these most specifically address the SDA vision, and are most innovative and useful for the international orientation and objectives of the NIPS.

More specifically, the main objectives of this publication are:

- To provide a broad overview of (Type 3) projects and tangible results that contributed to or failed to realise the SDA vision and main objectives;
- To present critical success factors and practical guidelines of a general validity for future SDA-type activities.

The overview and guidelines should help KIT and its partners to advise on, develop, implement and learn about successful activities, processes and collaborative arrangements in pursuit of sustainable development. In a general sense this will help NIPS fulfil its mission, have greater impact by scaling up successes, and intensify collaboration with partners and other actors to become more effective in the field of sustainable development.

Box 1. Some background on the SDAs and thematic programmes

To implement the SDA treaties, two related channels exist:

1. *Policy Dialogue*, to discuss progress in the implementation of the treaties and to decide on priority issues or themes as a basis to identify projects. The consultations occurred on a regular and bilateral basis. Delegation members represented either a ministry or other organisations: NGOs, research institutes, business community.
2. *Projects*. The most tangible aspects of the SDAs were the projects. The SDAs distinguished between three types of projects to promote sustainable development:
 - Type 1 Projects: actions carried out in Costa Rica, Bhutan and Benin.
 - Type 2 Projects: actions carried out solely in The Netherlands.
 - Type 3 Projects: actions carried out in one of the partner countries and The Netherlands.

The projects, the main subject of this publication, evolved from 1994 onwards:

- From fragmentation, diversity and heterogeneity to focus and homogeneity.
- From a reactive to a pro-active approach.
- From a project-by-project to a more programmatic approach.

Thus, the programmes emerged from the projects and also from policy dialogue. With its limited capacity to guide programmes, Ecooperation focused on three thematic programmes, leaving other themes for others to coordinate. The programmes coordinated by Ecooperation were:

- Economic relations (with a special emphasis on sustainable chain management);
- Biodiversity and natural resources management;
- Climate change and energy (elaborated as United Air Fund [UAF]).

Some projects from other thematic fields will also be presented in this publication.

2. Preparing this publication

This publication was established through the following five steps and associated questions.

1. 'When is an SDA project successful?' This is an important question when deciding what projects to select.
2. 'What are the tangible results?' Once selected, the projects were analysed using available documents and selected interviews with key persons to correlate results (successes and failures) with the success criteria. Most were Type 3 projects, some Type 1 or Type 2 (see Box 1).
3. 'Which factors influenced success or failure, and what can be learnt from them?' Analysing the projects also generated critical success factors. These were translated into a set of principles and practical guidelines for future use.
4. Consultation of a group of sustainable development experts by way of a peer review of the draft publication. The reactions of this peer group were used to improve and finalise the publication (see Appendix 2 for the members of this peer review group).
5. Facilitation of a meeting of the Directors and representatives of the NMs about the content of the publication. The outcomes were used to improve and finalise this publication (see Appendix 3 for a summary of reactions).

2.1 Success criteria and tangible results

The first step was identifying success criteria for the projects. Discussions with KIT staff led to agreement on ten success criteria defining success in an SDA project. Success is considered here in a broad sense, beyond the strictly defined objectives of the project. It also looks at general aspects of long-term viability and wider applications. Success criteria can be relevant at three levels: policy level (the SDA mission as a whole), programme level, and project level. The key question at both policy and programme level is if the projects had positive impact.

It is important to realise that the success criteria were identified after the projects were completed. In other words, the analysis using these success criteria is not an evaluation but an attempt to extract lessons from these projects by using a broader overview.

The following table shows all ten success criteria. It also shows at which level these criteria are relevant.

	A Policy	B Program	C Project
1. Strengthens public-private-civic collaboration (participation of civil society in public or private undertakings)	++	++	+
2. Integrates national and international policies (implications of international programmes at national level, or vice versa, and communication aspects)	++	++	+
3. Integrates social, economic and environmental perspectives of sustainable development	++	++	+
4. Contributes to development of an SDA program including its objectives (contributed to the gradual evolution of programmes)		+	++
5. Has tangible and attractive results		+	++
6. Has results that are used for upscaling and diffusion or replication by others		+	++
7. Contributes to influx of highly skilled partners (during the project or programme other parties often came 'on board')		++	++
8. Contributes to interactive learning	++	++	+
9. Contributes to replication of SDA thinking (i.e., use of principles: equality, reciprocity, consultation, mutual assistance, wide participation)	++	+	
10. Has a mirror function (intercultural learning and self-reflection, mainly linked to reciprocity principle)	++	+	+

A number of projects were selected partly based on these success criteria. The focus is on Type 3 projects as these most specifically address the SDA vision, are most innovative, and correspond to the international orientation and objectives of the NIPS. But there are also a number of associated Type 1 or Type 2 projects (see Box 1). More detailed information on project numbers and funding can be found in Appendix 1. The projects are classified by the following programmes:

- Sustainable chain management
- Biodiversity and sustainable resource management
- Culture and gender
- Agro-biodiversity and regionally-based sustainable production systems
- Climate change and energy

2.2 Success factors and guidelines

Apart from describing results of each project, project results were analysed to identify main factors contributing to their success or failure. This yielded lessons and insights useful for the future. The insights were based on project documents and interviews, resulting in a set of success factors for SDA projects in general.

Guidelines were developed based on insights into tangible results of projects and the underlying success factors. These are discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, the meeting with NMs from the four countries generated interesting recommendations (see Appendix 3).

3. Project descriptions and results

3.1 Thematic field: Sustainable chain management

3.1.1 Organic cotton production and marketing in Benin

Projects and funding

Seven projects were involved in this programme with a funding of Euro 951.221. The projects focused on the production of organic cotton (i.e., cotton grown without pesticides or fertilisers) in Benin and its marketing chain. One project is ongoing.

Background

The SDAs support the development of an organic cotton market chain by a number of projects that addressed cotton production and its marketing in Benin. Studies on the potential for marketing organic cotton in The Netherlands started in 1996. This was followed by studies of Beninese textile industries. In 2001 an alliance was formed between textile industries working with organic cotton in Benin and The Netherlands. This alliance includes the Linda Lu firm in The Netherlands and partners from Beninese cotton production and textile industries. The production of organic cotton by farmers was encouraged from 1998 onwards by project support to the Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique (OBEPAB) through the Dutch consultancy Agro-Eco Consultancy. The aim was to show that organic cotton production in Benin is a viable alternative to conventional cotton. The second phase of this project is ongoing, with attention paid to production and marketing aspects.

Cotton is Benin's major export, currently accounting for 40% of export revenue and providing employment for at least 120,000 farmers. Using more than 80% of all chemicals imported to Benin, cotton is the single largest consumer of agrochemicals. While boosting yields, these chemicals have many negative side-effects. Agro-chemicals cause health problems (poisoning of people and livestock), environmental problems (pest resistance to pesticides, water pollution, death of wildlife such as crocodiles and birds, deterioration of organic soil matter), and economic hardship (indebtedness of farmers, high input costs, delays in payment, financial risks). By far most of the raw cotton materials (98%) are exported to France for processing. World prices for conventional cotton are falling. Moreover, cotton yields and textile industries in Benin are stagnating, making Benin less competitive on the international market. Alternatives should be developed, not only for human well-being but also to prepare for globalisation.

Tangible results

The SDA support has demonstrated that organic cotton is a realistic alternative to conventional cotton. It has socio-economic advantages for farmers and environmental benefits. OBEPAB started working with organic cotton in 1996, but with SDA support the number of farmers involved in its cultivation has now increased from 17 in 1996 to 468 in 2001 (with cotton production increased from 5 to 151 tons). The number of farmers will continue to grow. Farmers are enthusiastic, largely because there are fewer health problems and less financial risk. Women in particular adopt this new technique because they have less cash and are more health conscious. Ecocert International has certified the Beninese organic cotton, which means that it can be bought from the producers with a 20–30% premium compared to conventional cotton.

The production of organic cotton is problematic. Firstly, maintaining soil fertility without using fertilisers is an ongoing study. Organic manure is not available in large quantities to all farmers and is difficult to transport. A diversity of practices appropriate to different types of farmers must be developed. Secondly, yields of organic cotton are lower than conventional cotton: higher prices are thus needed to secure incomes similar to those derived from conventional cotton farming. To increase income security, diversification into other cash crops could be considered. The SDA has incorporated several possibilities (sesame, cashew). Thirdly, OBEPAB is not yet self-reliant, largely because the organic cotton market is still nascent. A savings and credit scheme could be developed. There is great potential for incorporating more farmers in other areas in Benin. This requires training and certification of new farmers, which, in turn, needs external support. As the government will not fund this, donor or private sector support is needed. Lastly, farmers are not well organised, and are therefore dependent on OBEPAB, which holds a monopoly in terms of input supply, extension and the buying of organic cotton.

Quote from Kitche Denis who is one of the farmers in Benin: 'We used chemicals on our cotton crop and we had higher yields than now, but we were often sick and had to spend some of the money we earned on medicine.... This season I grew cotton without any chemical fertilisers or pesticides. We used palm oil cake, ash and cattle manure as fertiliser, and we put organic matter back into the soil through cotton leaves'.

The market for organic cotton textiles in The Netherlands and other developed countries is small. The SDA support helped establish a product chain and an alliance of Dutch and Beninese partners including a consumer agency, producers and textile industries. This is a typical SDA result. However, the product chain is not well organised, mainly because the state-owned textile industries in Benin do not yet cooperate effectively. Local textile industries are preferred because of low transport costs and local employment. However, to establish and develop efficient small-scale textile industries professional support is required, as local organisational and technical capacities are limited. The current quantity of organic cotton produced is still low, amounting to only 0.05% of total cotton production in Benin. This limits the efficiency of the production process

(economies of scale). Negotiations continue about where and how the raw cotton can best be processed and alternatives are being developed.

This program provided experience of the complexities of chain management for a high-value commodity. The coherence and logical sequence of the projects has been vital to success. It is now clear that a good programme on this thematic field should involve projects and activities on the production process (including training, equipment provision, extension packages, producer organisations, product quality certification), and on marketing aspects (including transformation industries, price setting, consumer awareness, organisation of the production line).

The SDA support has given a boost to sustainable agriculture in Benin and demonstrates an alternative to conventional agriculture. The example of organic cotton has been used to show the general public in Benin what sustainable development actually means. It would be interesting to do the same in The Netherlands. Organic cotton is an ideal example with which to demonstrate that environmental and socio-economic benefits can go hand-in-hand, with advantages for consumers in The Netherlands and producers in Benin. It appears that despite an unfavourable cost-benefit ratio, farmers are motivated to adopt organic cotton growing primarily because it is less damaging to their health and reduces financial risk. The Organic Cotton Project also organises farmer's field schools, demonstrating an alternative to the conventional agricultural extension approach. The organic cotton example has a potential spin-off to the agricultural sector in Benin, but needs further support.

Resulting from study tours and a recent international conference, the Benin organic cotton experience receives broad attention and has international spin-off. This is important for OBEPAB and others to network and learn from each other. The Benin organic cotton experience can be found on various websites and has been mentioned by WWF as a good example of reducing the use of dangerous agrochemicals, with positive effects for people and nature.

It can be concluded that this complex SDA programme addressed the product chain from producers to consumers, but a lot still needs to be done to make it work effectively and sustainably. Ongoing SDA support to this project is necessary in tackling the remaining challenges. It would be unrealistic to assume that a new product chain can be established within only a few years. Organic cotton is a newly emerging market with many new developments and uncertainties. Several other international organisations are now involved in similar programmes.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The programme clearly responds to local need. Many farmers had serious concerns about the high level of agrochemical use, causing health problems and financial risks. Secondly, though limited, there is a clear demand for organic cotton textiles in the West. Thus, a win-win situation existed.
2. The projects financed by the SDAs covered the whole product chain, from farmers to consumers. The production aspects strongly involved local farmers.

3. The programme supported an existing organisation (OBEPAB), which had already started work on organic cotton. It did not create parallel structures or organisations.
4. Conform to the SDA vision, the programme stimulated cooperation between Northern and Southern organisations by creating an alliance of Dutch and Benin organisations.
5. The programme provided continuity through long-term support, with a coherent set of activities and projects, and was not a one-off exercise.
6. The programme is not new as similar programmes exist throughout the world, but it is new and important for Benin. Yet, there is great need for supporting sustainable chain management in many places around the world. It is one area where expertise is badly needed.
7. The programme did not work in isolation from other donors. The recent conference where many international parties were invited is a good example. The SDA support was coordinated with other donors. This creates better potential for successful upscaling and is good for international networking and learning.

3.2 Thematic field: Biodiversity and sustainable resource management

3.2.1 Small grants programme for biodiversity in Benin

Projects and funding: Two similar projects were funded by the SDA, one of which is ongoing. The costs amounted to Euro 299.986.

Background

The grants for biodiversity in Benin programme consist of several small-scale projects supporting NGOs in Benin working in the field of biodiversity conservation. The programme is coordinated by The Netherlands Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (NC-IUCN). A rolling programme approach was implemented. This implies some flexibility in implementing projects within a prescribed format. Most projects were short term, lasting less than a year, and had funding ranging between Euro 2500–20.000. In total 27 projects have been proposed thus far of which 20 are worked out and 16 have been completed. Some projects are ongoing.

Large donor-funded programmes implemented by government agencies had thus far mainly supported biodiversity conservation in Benin. Civil society and local NGOs barely participated. It is this niche that this programme aimed to address.

The projects in this programme can be classified as follows:

- Research on biodiversity and environmental components, for example, an inventory of whales or action-research on crocodiles
- Tangible conservation activities, for example, forest management plans or rehabilitation of mangroves
- Publicity, training materials, forums or conferences
- International collaboration, for example, international exchange and studies.

Tangible results

The projects generated differing results, such as publications, press releases, seminars, forest management plans, training, exchange visits, etc. Together, these efforts have raised public awareness in Benin on the implications of biodiversity for society. A similar if limited effect on public awareness in The Netherlands has been achieved by the collaboration of Dutch environmental NGOs. This is an essential starting point for any improvement in biodiversity conservation. In Benin, concrete effects in terms of better conservation efforts at local level are apparent. Follow-up on these projects would help root these initiatives more firmly within society and public institutions. Through ecotourism, for instance, the programme also aimed to demonstrate the economic value of biodiversity. Tourism for whale watching excursions has been successful, but developing other examples of economic revenue from biodiversity requires more time. For these reasons, some programmes have received extended SDA funding.

The projects were identified and worked out by the organisations involved to a well-designed format. For many organisations this was the first opportunity to compile a decent project proposal contributing to capacity building with a long-term positive spin-off.

Biodiversity promotion efforts by NGOs were concentrated in the south of Benin, primarily in the wetlands region. This concentrated approach created synergy and added value to different projects, the whole being more than the sum of its parts. Firstly, there was synergy between the four themes (see above), for instance, by combining research on 'flagship species' in protected areas with publicity and activities to raise international awareness. Secondly, there was synergy in terms of collaboration between the NGOs in Benin, resulting in the development of an informal working group of NGOs in the field of biodiversity conservation. This working group now functions independently of the programme. Recently, the NGOs lobbied against government intentions to grant more fishing licences for Beninese waters, which would be harmful to whales. This shows how the programme has supported the empowerment of civil society. There is also interactive learning between the parties involved, stimulated by the coordination of NC-IUCN. A start was made to extend these experiences to other regions within Benin, but this remains dependent on external funding, as biodiversity is not a government priority. It would be useful to investigate other (additional) funding arrangements for this programme.

Six small-scale projects also strengthened collaboration between Beninese and Dutch organisations. This improved North-South relations on biodiversity issues, such as the protection of migratory birds. Biodiversity problems are often international issues, so North-South networks are important. The projects were also publicised in The Netherlands to some effect; a few also received international publicity at the international conference of IUCN. This is vital in strengthening biodiversity awareness in Benin.

The SDA budget was doubled by IUCN resources. Some projects acquired co-funding from other donors and a number of Dutch organisations participated with their own funds. This demonstrates the principle of 'seed money', whereby limited amounts of well-designed inputs can trigger a multiplier effect.

The programme did not establish contacts between the NGOs and the private or public sector. It may be too soon to do so, given the early stage of development of these NGOs. Collaboration and exchange between NGOs is novel and must be well established before allowing participation by other stakeholders.

The programme was innovative and useful because thus far in Benin few funds have been available to support work on biodiversity by NGOs or civil society. Links with Dutch organisations have helped strengthen Benin NGOs, and vice versa. International biodiversity issues have been thrown into sharper relief.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The programme supported existing local NGOs with limited experience but a great deal of enthusiasm. The programme builds the capacity of civil society on biodiversity issues, and links with Dutch environmental NGOs are helpful.
2. The programme was well coordinated by NC-IUCN, which contribution motivated and supported local organisations.
3. There are well-designed formats for project proposals, including monitoring frameworks. This helped to plan the projects properly and has increased accountability.
4. The programme concentrated on one theme: biodiversity in wetlands in a limited geographical area (South Benin). This stimulated effective exchange and collaboration. The informal network resulting from it stimulated joint actions and learning.
5. The funds per project were limited, but the programme attracted additional funds and thus showed a limited multiplier effect.
6. The projects successfully aimed at showing visible and attractive results within a short time span. The projects have been of too short duration to show whether their effect will endure.

3.2.2 An interactive, pre-consultative conference among the SDA countries on the Internet

Projects and funding

This involved one project with funding of Euro 23,759.

Description

Since the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), many signatories have embarked on the development of national guidelines for the sharing of access to and benefits derived from biodiversity. Most of these biodiversity-rich countries, however, possess neither the financial means, nor the administrative know-how to draft or even discuss such guidelines on a national or international level. This is deplorable. Without access and benefit sharing guidelines they remain vulnerable parties in international negotiations. Benin and Bhutan, and to a lesser extent Costa Rica, belong in this category of countries.

Meetings of the Conference of Parties (CoP) at the CBD are intended to generate a learning process among parties. It appears, however, that the CoP decision-making process is so broad, complex and expensive that many developing countries simply cannot keep up. Many representatives arrive insufficiently prepared and attend the meetings more as observers than participants. Representatives from Benin and Bhutan experienced these problems frequently while Costa Rican and Dutch representatives have more (human) resources to rely on.

From this observation, it was a small step to establishing an interactive, pre-consultative conference among the SDA countries on access and benefit sharing. Being aware of the potential learning effects among the four countries, Internet-based dialogue strengthened the position of the SDA countries in preparation for the CoP VI (in The Hague) where access and benefit sharing guidelines were a prime topic. This was realised through a joint statement, which was accepted during the CoP. It demonstrated one medium of participation to other Southern countries. In addition the aim of the project was to investigate the advantages of long-distance online interaction among the SDA countries.

In August and September 2001, more than 20 experts from Benin, Bhutan, Costa Rica and The Netherlands participated in online discussions on access and benefit sharing. The discussion was divided into three rounds. All participants operated from their home bases. Instant online translation services (Spanish-English, French-English) overcame language problems. The output was a joint agenda and statement as input to the CBD CoP VI (April 2002).

Tangible results

Discussions on access and benefit sharing (ABS) of biodiversity is a new and important political area in international relations. Most of the output, however, yielded nothing new to the field. Hence, the implementation of ABS regulation on the *national* level remains slow. Also, most poor and biodiverse countries benefit little from the experiences of frontrunner countries (most rich countries, Brazil, India and The Philippines).

In this project, the Internet assisted in bridging the gap between experienced and less experienced SDA countries regarding the implementation of ABS regulation. In due course, representatives of The Netherlands and particularly Costa Rica started to supply the Benin and Bhutan representatives with information and hands-on experiences on ABS. This process helped the latter become *au fait* with the implementation process.

The ABS Project was the first of its kind in terms of communication between the SDA signatories. Prior contact between the four countries was hindered by a lack of direct contact time for live meetings. Because regular contact between all parties is prohibitively expensive and time-consuming, the Internet was chosen as the medium to create a 'virtual SDA ABS platform'. A brief investigation revealed that all parties had Internet access but barely used it for SDA communications. More importantly, the four countries were most willing to experiment with virtual conferencing.

Discussions on ABS were divided in four rounds: an explorative, agenda-setting discussion, a discussion on 'best practices', and two rounds in which a joint statement was prepared in preparation of the CoP VI. After registration, each participant was able to contribute to the discussion in 'real time' allowing for a continuous discussion covering three time zones. To encourage a personal touch, participants posted photographs of themselves, which could be automatically displayed with their contribution. Delegates also had their own conference room where country-specific documents could be uploaded. There were about 25 participants.



The project team in Amsterdam aimed at transferring the ownership to one of the other parties. In the course of the discussion the Costa Rican delegation took the lead by its many supportive contributions, and also by its willingness to offer the Benin and Bhutan delegations useful information. After three discussion rounds the Costa Rican delegation suggested organising a fourth, a suggestion welcomed by the other three parties. A participant from Costa Rica published his experiences in the international journal *Biotechnology and Development Monitoring*.

The project had two distinct learning effects. First, most participants came to grips with virtual conferencing. The reactions were encouraging, culminating in the initiative of the Costa Rican delegation to take the lead. Another learning effect was related to the rapid exchange of hands-on experience and country-specific documentation on ABS.

A Costa Rican delegate expressed his enthusiasm as follows: 'I am very, very pleased that this e-conference is really taking off! This e-conference will give us very valuable information on the possibilities and impossibilities of this way of communicating. So far much better than expected'.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The idea originated in The Netherlands and the project was agreed upon without clear demands from the other countries. This shows that it may be worthwhile to promote and test new techniques such as the Internet, even if there are some initial doubts among potential users. Costa Rica was the most enthusiastic about the new technique and adopted ownership. This is a good indicator for real learning and will greatly help follow-up in this country and maybe others.
2. The project is one of empowerment through limited means, by providing and sharing information. It is essential that apart from intensive communications there is a tangible result within the short-term, namely, a joint statement by the four countries.
3. A publication on this experience in a scientific journal has increased spin-off among other potential users.

3.2.3 Sustainability indicators: Making sustainable development concrete

Projects and funding

Three different projects were funded by the SDA to prepare for the implementation of a larger project. Costs of the preparatory projects were Euro 295.976. The main project (with a budget of Euro 1.089.073) was never realised.

Background

Sustainable development is fundamental to the SDA philosophy. But to avoid sterile discussions, there is a need to be specific about what sustainable development means in any given situation. Here, sustainability indicators can be very useful, but they must reflect key issues for sustainable development. Monitoring these indicators will show if progress is being made towards more sustainable development. Clearly, these sustainability indicators will differ between the four countries involved. Working on sustainability indicators as a joint effort is ideal in advancing sustainable development and reflection on each other's development visions and priorities.

Work on this subject started in 1994 in a workshop between The Netherlands and Bhutan. The Joint Rinpung Declaration mentions the work on sustainability indicators as a priority, and all four countries acknowledged this. Subsequently, the Netherlands Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM) was requested to develop a compendium on available data and indicators from the four countries as a basis for a larger study. This study also resulted in the brochure *Connect Four: Existing data and indicators for sustainable development in Benin, Bhutan, Costa Rica and The Netherlands* (1997). Subsequent funding was provided to jointly formulate a comprehensive multilateral project 'Multidisciplinary Indicators for Sustainable Development'. This included preparatory consultations and a 1-week joint workshop. It resulted in four separate country proposals and an integration project to be coordinated by the RIVM. Only the integration project would be SDA funded. However, external funding proved difficult, although the main funding agency (DGIS) did agree that it was a useful project. In the end, however, the project did not materialise.

Tangible results

The programme could form a fundamental connection between many other SDA projects. The *Connect Four* booklet presents a multilateral comparison on the state of sustainable development in the four SDA countries using a limited number of social, economic and ecological indicators. It reveals significant differences between the four countries. In addition, a calculation was made of the ecological footprints of the four countries, and a Nature Capital Index was prepared.

In comparing different countries there was a need to rethink the traditional indicators, such as the Human Development Index, which some consider Western-biased. For The Netherlands, for instance, it was useful to realise that sustainability is not only associated with ecological criteria. The countries selected those indicators relevant to their situations, and did not simply use available data. In other words, it was demand-driven. The programme had potential to demonstrate the value of reciprocity by reflecting upon each other's sustainability indicators and progress along these lines.

The projects clearly responded to a need to activate the sustainable development concept, which required a long-term commitment. The *Connect Four* booklet was a starting point from which a larger programme could be formulated. The programme was complimentary to and received great interest from the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as other national and international institutions. At the time (1997) the idea was innovative and progressive. The high costs might be one reason why the programme was not funded.

Quote by Mr van Vuuren: 'The SDA initiative of working on sustainability indicators was ahead of its time. Unfortunately we could not convince the funding agencies. Now everyone is working on this subject as a hot issue'.

The first study was mainly conducted by RIVM, but the subsequent preparation of the larger programme was a joint effort between the four countries. There are few examples within the SDA framework where the four countries cooperated so actively. Evidently, Bhutan initiated work on this subject, Costa Rica had already worked on it prior to this project, The Netherlands followed slowly, while Benin lagged behind.

The subject of this programme is of great importance for the SDA. Since most of the four SDA countries have been working on this subject in spite of the absence of SDA funding, there seems to be a good potential to take up the thread by bringing together the four countries and taking stock. The SDA spirit of reflecting upon each other's achievements and visions of sustainability by comparing sustainability indicators is still valid.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The programme was carefully developed based on initiatives from the different countries and a good exploratory study.
2. The subject responded to needs in all countries, with the possible exception of Benin.
3. Formulation of the larger programme was a joint effort involving researchers from all four countries on an equal basis.
4. Unfortunately the SDA was unprepared to concentrate too much of its funds on a single large programme, although it clearly fitted into the SDA spirit. Other potential funding agencies were equally reticent.

3.3 Thematic field: Culture and gender

3.3.1 Gross National Happiness Seminar

Projects and funding

Two projects organised the seminar and published the results. Total funding of Euro 89.228.

Background

The seminar organised by this SDA project resulted from previous contacts between The Netherlands and Bhutan in the framework of the SDA. On the one hand, these previous contacts were fruitful, resulting in concrete activities and exchange. On the other, it raised controversial issues such as Bhutan's migration policy and human rights issues, and the Dutch policy on ethnic minorities and cultural integration. It was agreed that a seminar would be a good mechanism to show that reciprocity does not need to lead to equality, but can result in mutual insight and respect ('agree to disagree'). The seminar took as it's a central theme the concept of 'Gross National Happiness' to discuss cultural ideologies and assumptions. The three-day seminar was held in January 2001 with Dutch and Bhutanese participants. It was facilitated by the Dutch organisation Kerk en Wereld.

Quote from Mr Lyompo Jigme Y. Thinley: 'We asked ourselves the basic question of how to maintain the balance between materialism and spiritualism, while benefiting from science and technology. The likelihood of loss of spirituality, tranquillity and Gross National Happiness with the advance of modernisation became apparent to us'.

Tangible results

The seminar content was thoroughly prepared resulting in a primer with thirteen contributions of a high conceptual level. During the seminar a model for inter-cultural dialogue was applied and further developed. Using this method, participants clarify their own views but do not try to convince others. The outcomes of the seminar were used to improve the various contributions and to publish a brochure to inform the public in The Netherlands and Bhutan. The national press in both countries covered the seminar. Unfortunately the connection

with the SDA was not made. As a result of the seminar several ideas were developed on follow-up projects and studies involving civil society organisations to further evolve and test the dialogue method for intercultural exchange and conflict resolution. This can have spin-off to other sectors and intercultural relations.

The seminar demonstrated how two disparate cultures can communicate in a positive way. A seminar on cultural ideologies can effectively build up mutual respect despite some controversial issues. The dialogue method used during the seminar helped realise this success.

The subjects discussed during the seminar varied widely, and included ethical, gender, cultural, environmental, economic, political and information technology issues. Exchange on these subjects has helped understand and put into practice the sustainable development concept.

Both countries participated. Regrettably, there were no participants from Dutch political parties or the private sector, though they were invited. In addition, no participants linked to the discussion on intercultural integration in The Netherlands were invited. Apparently there was no sense of ownership within public and private sector, hampering follow-up activities.

Interesting results were achieved and ideas generated, typically in line with the SDA vision. The potential for follow-up will be difficult to realise, as this conference was a one-time event with limited participation, poorly based in the public sector, and without consideration of follow-up plans.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The seminar was thoroughly prepared and facilitated by professional people and use was made of a proven method of intercultural dialogue.
2. Instead of discussing facts and events, the seminar focused on fundamental values and belief systems at a conceptual level. This was a sound basis for understanding human behaviour and attitude to other cultures.
3. Partly due to the catchy title of 'Gross National Happiness', the seminar was well covered by the press.
4. Selected participants from both countries had a positive attitude towards the seminar, and were motivated to make 'the best of it', despite of some controversial issues. This attitude can be traced to the history of exchange between the two countries in the framework of the SDA.
5. The project was clearly a one-off event with limited participation and without consideration of follow-up plans. There was thus little chance for substantial follow-up.

3.3.2 The Mirror Project to foster social action in urban suburbs

Projects and funding

One preparatory and one implemented project were involved with funding of Euro 114.503.

Background

Worldwide there are urban areas characterised by high degrees of poverty, insecurity and marginalisation of certain groups (for example, immigrants). Overcoming these problems is difficult, even if government agencies attempt to do so. Possibly these efforts do not sufficiently take into account the positive social dynamics and initiatives taken by the people themselves. This project aimed to support positive and creative forces within marginalised neighbourhoods in Rotterdam (Charlois) and San José (Barrios del Sur). Even such distant locations have much in common (poverty, crime, drugs), but they also show clear differences, mainly in terms of the approach taken in tackling these problems.

This SDA project investigated and prepared exchanges between urban people from the Charlois and Barrios del Sur neighbourhoods. There were discussions in both countries and a visit by the coordinating organisation in Costa Rica to Rotterdam. The resulting project document for the actual exchange was a joint effort by the coordinating organisations in both countries. The object of the project was to initiate positive change, and stimulate collaboration and interaction between these neighbourhoods, thus supporting a process of social innovation in Charlois and Barrios del Sur. The main activities were exchange visits by ten selected members of civil society from both neighbourhoods. Selected participants were social workers and volunteers from different parts of the neighbourhood who were actively involved in improving neighbourhood amenities, social well-being and security. The project was co-funded by the municipality of Rotterdam.

Quote from Jorge Campos, volunteer in Costa Rica: 'The Netherlands is so well organised and social services function well. Citizens are treated as if they are equal. But it is pity youngsters can so easily get drugs'.

Tangible results

The project dealt with complex urban development problems in the two countries. The problems have social, economic and environmental dimensions. Civil organisations from differing sectors were involved, based on mutual interests (for example, NGOs, schools, environmental NGOs). The municipalities were also actively involved: the Rotterdam municipality gave impetus to and even half-funded the project. Unfortunately many supportive counsellors were replaced after elections. This suggests that fostering locally based social action and generating commitment at the local level can be more sustainable than at policy level. Some private sector organisations such as building associations were also involved.

The project generated few tangible results, apart from a booklet, brochure and video. It mainly initiated a societal process that will gradually lead to improvements in terms of the social well-being of both neighbourhoods. For participants of both countries the exchange has given renewed energy and inspiration to their work. It will be instructive to see how in both neighbourhoods the results and impressions of the exchange visits are further discussed, worked out, followed up, supported by civil society and rooted within the policies of municipalities. There are positive signs that these will be realised as some people are highly motivated, even if the recent political changes in The Netherlands are a hindrance to incorporating results and follow-up activities within municipality planning.

There are good potentials for upscaling or replicating the initiative, for instance, in other neighbourhoods in both cities, in other cities, or in existing twinned cities. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has shown some interest in supporting the twinning of towns.

The success of the project is based on the belief that exchanges between people of two neighbourhoods from different countries will foster self-reflection and learning, thus having an added value compared to the conventional 'social action' approach within one neighbourhood or country. Participants from Charlois mainly learned that self-regulation, social dynamics and local initiatives can generate commitment and positive changes provided they are given room to develop. Participants from Barrios del Sur were impressed by the municipality's support, the level of organisation, and the social welfare programmes. For both parties the exchange engendered useful opportunities for self-reflection.

Quote from Erwin Sprott, volunteer social worker in Charlois: 'It stimulated me to look differently at the way people in The Netherlands behave. In Costa Rica, people are committed with heart and body. Here people do their duty'.

The participants were carefully selected, partly to be instrumental in strengthening collaboration between both neighbourhoods. The group from Barrios del Sur included a council member and two teachers; the Dutch group consisted only of social workers. The exchange visits also stimulated coherence and learning within the two groups.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The exchange was based on equality and willingness to learn. While there was sufficient contrast for both parties to learn from each other, the difference in the level of development between the two countries was not that significant.
2. Organising this project was not an easy job, requiring careful preparation, great enthusiasm and commitment by the organisers.
3. The project concentrated on assuring local ownership and links to existing organisations and initiatives. No new or parallel structures were created. The project was not donor-driven. Government agencies played mainly a supportive role.

4. From the outset the organisers realised that this project should not be a one-off exercise but a continuous process. Consequently, a framework was created and attention given to follow-up activities, involving other parties, stimulating ownership and generating broad commitment.

3.3.3 Labour unions and sustainable development

Projects and funding

This involved one fact-finding mission and a project with funding of Euro 436.743.

Background

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) listed seven areas whereby labour unions can contribute to sustainable development. They include raising awareness among members, making labour more environmentally friendly, improving working conditions, and participation and training of employees. Trade unions in the four SDA countries are in a varying stages of development: they don't exist in Bhutan, they are a new phenomenon in Benin, they are well established but weak in Costa Rica, and Dutch unions are strong and have a long history. The Christian Trade Union (CNV) in The Netherlands took the initiative of actively involving labour unions in the SDA.

The project aimed to stimulate active and structural participation within labour unions on sustainable development issues with specific labour issues. The project involved labour unions from three countries: CNV from The Netherlands, CGTB from Benin and CMTC from Costa Rica. The aim was to give training in Benin and Costa Rica and undertake pilot projects in all three countries. In Costa Rica many labourers and union members received training in areas of sustainable development. The seven pilot projects initiated included registering a commission on labour conditions, stimulating active participation, awareness-raising campaigns, publications and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices. In Benin, through a 'training-the-trainers' approach, about 400 workers were reached, but it was difficult to start pilot projects. In The Netherlands a study was undertaken among union members in the textile and municipal waste management sectors on how to support sustainable development (Leiden and Dordrecht), but there were no pilot projects. Finally an exchange visit was organised in The Netherlands with participants from the three countries.

Tangible results

The project had differing results in the three countries. CNV personnel provided the training in Benin and Costa Rica. By far the most successful and far-reaching results were achieved in Costa Rica. No pilot projects emerged in Benin – unsurprising given the youth of the labour movement. Participation in Benin was most appreciated, but companies requested to undertake pilot projects were unwilling, probably fearing dilution of authority. In The Netherlands the project resulted in a training programme for the municipal waste-management sector, but textile industries were unwilling to undertake a pilot project.

The project helped establish links to employment, the environment and labour conditions, mainly in Costa Rica.

The project has potential spin-offs for many more labourers and possibly other sectors, a consequence of the 'training-the-trainers' approach. The CNV, in response to a request from Costa Rican unions, undertook a follow-up project with funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, again with great success. No follow-up activities were undertaken in Benin or The Netherlands.

The trilateral workshop contributed to noteworthy comparisons and self-reflection. However, it appeared very difficult to motivate the Dutch labour union CNV; consequently, members from another union had to be involved. Apparently the three countries had much to learn from each other. Costa Rica mentioned the strong negotiation structures in The Netherlands; Benin noted the fact that Dutch rules and regulations are observed. The Dutch labour unions appeared to have lost some of their established rights. Benin's 'will to tackle bottlenecks' was exemplary.

Quote from a Dutch participant in the trilateral workshop: 'Yesterday we jointly sang militant songs like "Voorwaarts en niet vergeten" (Advance and Never Forget). But then I realised that actually we are not moving ahead anymore, but tend to forget what we achieved'.

In Benin the project has particularly supported women's participating in the labour movement. This has helped stimulate women's emancipation in Benin.

The project was largely a conventional type of technical assistance, and with respect to Dutch participation, it was somewhat 'contrived'. The final workshop where all three countries came together had limited added value.

Why was this programme unsuccessful?

1. A clear demand by the labour union in Costa Rica led to their active involvement whereas on the Dutch side there was no clear demand, resulting in poor participation and few visible results.
2. The gap between the level of development of labour unions in Benin and the two other countries is too great for fruitful exchange. Thus, a conventional technical assistance project emerged that has been useful.
3. Private companies in Benin and The Netherlands did not want to undertake pilot projects for different reasons. This shows that without external pressure it will be difficult to achieve results on sensitive issues.

3.3.4 Rural women's organisations and local government

Projects and funding

This constitutes a programme in which five projects were involved with funding of Euro 758.378. Two projects are ongoing.

Background

In both Northern and Southern countries women play a vital role in managing rural affairs. Their role is often neglected. Men dominate formal decision-making and local government. This is important in Benin, where local government is not yet well established, but is also relevant in Northern countries such as The Netherlands. It has also been demonstrated worldwide that women are generally more willing than men to participate in improving social and environmental sustainability. Thus, the issue of women, local government and sustainable development is appropriate for the SDA.

Gender and sustainable development was subject of a workshop in Cotonou in July 1994, months after signing the SDA. Dutch women from various organisations participated, including the Dutch Rural Women's Association. The affinity of this association with sustainable development can be demonstrated by their projects, such as 'critical consumption' and 'sustainable clothing', established well before this project started. The first SDA project on this subject was initiated during this workshop. Following the UN Women's Conference in Beijing in September 1995, with representatives from both countries, the project formally started in early 1996. Its goal was to undertake activities in both countries that contributed to sustainable development and the role of rural women. Exchange visits were included as a means to attain this goal, demonstrating how rural women tackle problems in both countries. SNV in Benin played an important role in executing the project there. At the end of this project, women from both countries decided that 'women and local decision-making' should be a priority in both countries. Dutch women's participation in local administration is only 20%, while women are entirely new to local government in Benin.

The second project (October 1998–December 1999) was intended to stimulate an equitable participation of women in societal and political decision-making structures and raise awareness in both genders. There were exchange visits and activities, which included awareness raising, networking, information supply, education and training. In this project the organisation representing Dutch municipalities (VNG) played an important role. After this project, the third project continued along similar lines, but also actively integrated men in the exchange visits in order to get their commitment to the required changes. This project has a duration of two years. However, in mid-2000 the project was divided into two parts. One is the collaboration between Dutch and Benin women's organisations: here the role of SNV was taken over by Agriterra. The other is local government, executed by VNG as a separate project from January 2002 onwards. This is done by twinning selected Dutch and Beninese municipalities.

Tangible results

The sequence of activities throughout these projects was as follows: support to women's organisations in both countries, exchange visits and sharing experiences through debate, conferences and publicity. The projects and exchange visits focused on women in decision-making structures and on specific themes.

In Benin the project supported the organisation of women into a regional platform with sub-committees for discussions. Women received training on local government and decision-making. The visits triggered feedback and a public debate on issues such as women's land rights, women's education and family planning. Local councils were also involved. Altogether, this has had great spin-off to the position of women in various societal structures, such as school councils, village councils, and political parties. There was upscaling of the initial results in one region to four more regions in the country. Unfortunately, the project did not lead to women gaining positions in government councils because elections were postponed.

Results in The Netherlands implied strong support for the Dutch Rural Women's Association on the subject of women and local government. Activities included the formation of a national working group on women and local government, workshops, networking and publicity. A range of brochures, videos, newspaper articles and TV reports were produced. An example is the booklet *Experience as a basis*, which lists several cultural differences and similarities between Dutch and Beninese rural women. Women and local government would not have been so firmly on the agenda without this project.

Women's equal participation in decision-making structures was a core principle of the project. Much effort was made to ensure that the results of the exchange visits were shared with constituencies and local stakeholders, including the public sector, for example, the mayor or the *sous-prefet*. This contributed to spin-off, as many more groups, organisations and actors were inspired and involved.

The project focused on the relationship between women's participation and local decision-making structures, but there were other sustainable development themes such as organic cotton and sustainable tourism. These were discontinued because SNV decided to stop supporting these themes. The theme of sustainable tourism may once more be taken up at the request of Dutch women who were enthusiastic about visiting Beninese rural families as part of a tourist programme.

However, an exploratory mission in 2002 also indicated that the improved social position of women in Benin has not led to any economic improvements for them. A new project is foreseen to consider this topic, for example, through savings and credit schemes

At first, collaboration was mainly with SNV in Benin; later, other organisations became involved: Agriterre, VNG, NCDO, *inter alia*. There was co-funding of the project by the Dutch Rural Women's Association, NCDO, VNG and by SNV in Benin.

The exchange component had added value, as it inspired work at a national level in both countries. During the exchange visits, physical contacts with day-to-day reality were important in understanding each other's situations, which the two sides found mutually inspiring. The visits were on the basis of equality between the women: both groups felt they had something to learn from each other. In Benin, the women gained status and self-respect through involvement in an

international project. Those women now have important positions in their societies. Beninese women were impressed by the high level of organisation, education and health services in The Netherlands, which greatly motivated them to become organised.

Dutch women were impressed by the rich social life, pace of living, power and pleasure that Beninese women enjoy. This overcame a Dutch stereotype of African women as poor and pitiful, and triggered discussions about Western lifestyle, values and norms. It also helped the Dutch women realise how little involved they were in local councils, and how unaware they were of such opportunities. This mirror function with Benin motivated them to get more involved in local decision-making.

Quote from a Beninese woman: 'At first many men laughed about women organising themselves. But when they heard I would visit The Netherlands they became interested. And when Dutch women came here they felt proud'.

The ongoing VNG Project examines local government by twinning and exchange between three Dutch and three Beninese municipalities. Twinning is based on equality and solid sustainable development pilot projects requested by both parties. This is to overcome earlier criticism on twinning being too supply driven.

Thus, the exchange of women between The Netherlands and Benin was a catalyst for both parties, which would have been less had the exchange been within a country or between comparable countries. The results and impacts varied much between countries and strongly depend on context, such as the slow decentralisation process in Benin.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The exchange was effective, even for women from countries with great differences in levels of development, because there was equality and a common interest. Both parties had something to learn from the other on the subject of women's organisations and societal action. The subject of women and local decision-making was well chosen. The subject of women and economic activities was unsuitable, as the differences here are more difficult for the women to tackle. This is now a subject of exchange within the West-African region under one of the two ongoing projects.
2. Continuity of this programme through a range of subsequent projects.
3. The programme was demand driven. The new VNG Project involving six municipalities is based on specific demands from these municipalities and is not an external initiative.
4. SNV and VNG played an important role in coordinating the project in Benin. This was essential because the Dutch Rural Women's Association had neither international development experience nor personnel in Benin. Local assistance is vital to success. But it was also a disadvantage because support strongly depended on the motivation of individual SNV personnel. In 2000, SNV changed its policy of working directly with local women's organisations. This created a fracture in the project. Agriterra now continues the work.

5. The exchange visits whereby women could meet and observe each other's circumstances greatly motivated them to push for changes that would otherwise not have occurred. This contact can never be replaced by any long-distance communication. There are still many useful personal contacts between women from both countries.
6. The project linked to ongoing activities in both countries, and used professional experience where necessary. In Benin, SNV had already undertaken women's projects for several years.
7. A negative factor was that elections in Benin were postponed. Therefore, the initial idea of helping women become elected to local councils did not occur.
8. Another negative factor was that sustainable tourism activities were stopped by the SNV, although women from both countries considered this a promising theme.

3.4 Thematic field: Agro-biodiversity and regionally-based sustainable production systems

3.4.1 Working on agro-biodiversity and regionally-based production systems

Projects and funding

Three sequential projects at conceptual and coordinating level with funding of Euro 252.566. These three projects are closely linked to the projects at operational level. One project is ongoing.

Background

The modernisation period of economic development in Western countries such as The Netherlands focuses on high productivity. This includes breeding high-yielding grain and other crop varieties. Consequently, current agricultural systems are characterised by uniformity and monopolised seed centres and marketing chains. The new seed varieties replaced regional crop varieties, often with lower yields but having other beneficial characteristics (for example, taste, baking qualities, pest resistance). This erosion of genetic agro-biodiversity is undesirable because farmers have less choice in selecting varieties that can be farmed more sustainably. The reduction of agro-biodiversity is also risky because of the high dependency on one or a few seed varieties. The subject is closely connected to the loss of identity and autonomy of producers and the overall dislocation between producers and consumers within the agro-processing industries and market chains.

Dutch society increasingly calls for changes in agricultural production systems towards those that are regionally-based, environmentally and socially more sustainable. These initiatives are greatly hindered by many existing institutional systems and practices originating in the modernisation era. The discrepancy between social initiatives and existing practices is clear, and has been at the root of projects in the field of 'Agro-biodiversity and regionally-based production systems'. These problems are most pronounced in The Netherlands as modernisation processes are strong, but similar problems have occurred in

other SDA countries, where hopefully modernisation can be adjusted in time to avoid these.

Support of this subject by the SDA aims to stimulate processes of change to more sustainable agricultural and regional development models than the predominant modernisation one. It responds to societal initiatives for (re-)establishing and maintaining more diverse, regionally-based production systems having more agro-biodiversity and marketing chains.

The following projects took place: Part I of the 'Working on Agro-biodiversity' project ran from February 1998 to April 1999; Part II from October 1999 to December 2001. The change that took place within this project was strongly linked to the first Rinpung Project supporting the Zeeuwse Vlegel. These projects mainly consisted of bringing together key actors in the agro-industrial production chain for consultations, debates, workshops, pilot projects, etc. The subsequent project, which started in February 2002, was explicitly based on societal demands, which led to a focus on marketing regionally-based products with more sustainable and diverse production systems.

Tangible results

The issues dealt with by this programme have evolved strongly, a result of interaction and learning. Work on agro-biodiversity initially focused on genetic and plant material aspects; then shifted to marketing within the agro-processing industry. The subsequent project focused on promoting regionally-based products as a stimulus to increase their market share. There is now a more holistic approach to the development of regionally-based rural products and social services.

Consultations, debates and workshops during the first project resulted in the signing of a declaration of intent (for example, for improved access to genetic resources by farmers) and recommendations for follow-up. The first breakthrough was on legal aspects: old varieties could again be registered and a 'Green Variety List' was published in 2000 that informs farmers on specific cultivation properties. The second project focused on processing and marketing issues, such as eco-labelling, product certification, developing chains for eco-products. This was a complex field and there were fewer tangible results. Resulting insights had a rather scientific character and did not lead to subsequent action.

The project developed a methodology for monitoring regional pilots, before actually starting promotion activities through the regional pilots. This methodology is a useful and generally applicable management tool.

Apart from these results, all of these projects contributed to awareness raising and improved mutual understanding.

Quote from a baker working with Zeeuwse Vlegel: 'There is also some idealism involved. Some want to protect the environment; others want to support the local farmers. I am proud to be involved in this project to strengthen regional development'.

This SDA programme has been in the frontline of work on regionally-based production and marketing processes. It is now a well publicised issue in The Netherlands. Projects and activities funded by other parties emerged from this programme. However, the market share of regionally-based and sustainable products is still meagre and in most cases shows only a small increase. Also, formal institutions and policies have been little influenced; the modernisation model is still mainstream. There seems to be growing commitment within some municipalities and provincial governments to support these initiatives.

There has been continuous influx of partners from civil society and the private sector, mainly gene banks, plant breeding companies, producer groups, retailers, research institutes, shop owners. The projects brought together the various players within the agro-industrial complex to create awareness and forge new relations, particularly between social and technical stakeholder groups, which were once entirely separate. Government agencies, most notably the Ministry of Agriculture, became more involved, contributing to the establishment of a national platform for regionally-based products. This was a major achievement.

The first project specifically mentions the interest agro-biodiversity has for The Netherlands and Bhutan. There are links to this programme and an agro-biodiversity project was executed in Bhutan. The implications of the projects executed in The Netherlands for the other SDA countries have gradually faded. The final reports are in Dutch and do not refer to the SDA context or countries. The ongoing project has no international component.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The first projects addressed small clearly defined sub-themes within a more complex problem area. This is useful in building up coalitions between stakeholders. A step-by-step approach implies the formulation of feasible aims and quick results. Many small steps in a certain direction might constitute a big change, but this pre-supposes agreement on the direction. Declarations of intent are also small steps. The projects under this programme were too short or of too low intensity to effect large-scale changes.
2. Bringing together socio-economic and technical interest groups was part of a critical and constructive process. Apart from concrete results this leads to the building up of networks. However, as the interests grow, it is more difficult to achieve concrete results. An underlying reason was that the coordinating organisation was less familiar with marketing aspects.
3. The international component seems to have disappeared. While it might be reasonable to concentrate on obtaining concrete results on small issues in The Netherlands before taking into consideration the international dimension, it seems that the other SDA countries could clearly benefit from the

experiences and results of this programme. A minimum of international information exchange would link up SDA thinking and benefit the other countries.

3.4.2 Rinpung Project 1: Zeeuwse Vlegel agro-biodiversity

Projects and funding

One project, the Rinpung Project of Bhutan, was funded with Euro 81.033.

Background

For a general introduction to the subject of agro-biodiversity and regionally-based product development, see the programme description.

This was the first Rinpung Project by which Bhutan used US\$ 100,000 to execute activities promoting sustainable development in The Netherlands. The aim of the Bhutanese project was to financially support farmers from the Zeeuwse Vlegel organisation in finding wheat varieties with improved baking qualities that can be farmed sustainably without chemicals. The project lasted three years and was directed at finding desirable wheat varieties, seed testing and multiplication, certification and registration of the new seed variety and developing new products. The evaluation of this project by a Bhutanese delegation contributed to further development of the programme.

Tangible results

First, the project provoked much discussion and publicity on the subject of reciprocity, which raised awareness of the concepts of development and development aid. The project and the Zeeuwse Vlegel have benefited from publicity promoting the organisation and its products.

In concrete terms, the project showed that farming with regional wheat varieties is economically viable, technically feasible and environmentally more sustainable. A regional wheat variety with improved baking qualities that can be grown in an environmentally sustainable way was selected. The local wheat variety was formally registered, a major breakthrough. The 25% lower yield of the regional variety and the 25% lost due to low quality are offset by the 100% higher price of the baking wheat (apart from the environmental and social benefits). The project developed links between farmers, the food processing industry, distributors, marketing entities and consumers. Thus, a platform was created to articulate collective needs and aspirations. This stakeholder platform helped ensure that the Zeeuwse Vlegel is still active.

Quote from Dutch newspaper: 'The appallingly poor and small country of Bhutan has made the province of Zeeland happy with a gift of US\$100,000. This is the first time in history that our nation has received development aid from a developing country'.

This project introduced a new wheat variety to the market and assured its certification and registration and thus also enlarged consumer choice. It raised awareness among consumers on environmental aspects of wheat production. It raised the morale of regional bakers and their sense of worth in society. Provincial government capitalised on produce symbolising regional identity, resulting in product certification on regionally-based products. These are important conditions for upscaling. However, the acreage and market share of the regional wheat variety is still very small, and shows little increase. The Bhutanese evaluation raised campaigning and education among consumers as a priority for obtaining a greater market share. It also mentioned the need for a more attractive logo.

This project is part of a larger programme on agro-biodiversity in which the Zeeuwse Vlegel was and still is involved. It helped identify other priorities in order to reach the programme's goals. The evaluation of this project clearly indicated the need for improved marketing and campaigning, the subject of a follow-up project.

A Rinpung project is a concrete reflection of SDA thinking. This first Rinpung Project aroused much publicity and debate. The notion of Bhutan sponsoring a Dutch organisation was seen by many as a contradiction in technical assistance. It made people discuss the concept of development and development aid ('What exactly is poverty?'). However, it did not lead to a better understanding, there were opposing views and the project had no impact on public sector institutions or thinking. The idea of using exchange visits to learn from each other was not internalised, nor was it followed-up.

Bhutan benefited from this project by learning about methods and policies to maintain its own rich but threatened agro-biodiversity, and develop and maintain sustainable agricultural practices. The Bhutanese-led evaluation has been instrumental in developing the programme. The international dimension has added value, as confirmed by the Zeeuwse Vlegel, generating publicity and providing professional advice. The Bhutan delegation consisted of highly qualified staff, not representatives from civil society. There have been no exchange visits by Dutch farmers to Bhutan, largely because its added value was considered uncertain. At present the Zeeuwse Vlegel is still involved in an SDA project, but without international dimension.

Success factors and recommendations

1. The project was innovative in presenting a new idea on development aid. This initiated a rich public and political debate, which also promoted the project itself. In combination with the previous project, this has had positive spin-off up to policy level.
2. The activities undertaken by the project were part of the ongoing development of the Zeeuwse Vlegel, and not a one-off event. The organisation has a clear long-term vision. Activities included the development of a stakeholder platform from various sectors, and the involvement of provincial government. This has greatly contributed to the viability of the organisation, despite diminishing returns.

3. The reciprocity of technical assistance was consistent with SDA thinking. Bhutan also evaluated the project. This had added value for both parties through exchange and mutual learning. It is unclear why this method was not applied to other SDA projects.
4. The existence of a clear demand for this project and presence of qualified staff contributed to the success of the project.
5. Much attention was given to publicity. This was not only useful for the SDA as a whole, but also for the project itself.

3.4.3 Rinpung Project 2: Support to regionally-based products from the Waddenzee area

Projects and funding

Apart from the Rinpung Project by Benin, two other projects were involved which focus on the wetland component of this project. These projects, one of which is ongoing, cost Euro 126.545.

Background

For a general introduction on the subject of agro-biodiversity and regionally-based product development see the programme description.

In the Waddenzee area there is still a sense of pride in the natural environment, culture and social values. But developments in surrounding areas, for instance, in Germany and Friesland, are increasingly threatened by large-scale tourist developments. The Stichting Waddengroep is a foundation aiming to strengthen relationships between producers and their local production means, thereby strengthening the sense of identity in the region. Evidently, this formula works. Several regionally-based products are marketed with a special logo of 'Wadden delicacies'. But strong pressures on nature and regional culture remain, mainly from large-scale agriculture and tourism. The Waddengroep aims to offer alternatives and integrate these interests in their approach.

This is the second Rinpung Project by which Benin used US\$ 100,000 to undertake activities promoting sustainable development in The Netherlands. The aim of the Benin project was to support the Waddengroep Foundation on its sustainable development efforts in the region. The concrete objectives were expanding the area of regionally-based products, discouraging unsustainable exploitation, strengthening employment by regional processing and marketing regionally-based products, and involving tourists in sustainable production systems. The project ran from December 2000 to December 2003. A reciprocal visit from the Waddengroep to Benin was organised in May 2001 and was separately funded. The aim was to identify feasible exchange projects on the subject of wetland management.

Tangible results

Firstly, the project inventorised all existing regionally-based products and small-scale processing initiatives. Subsequent activities focused on priority issues, including production, marketing, processing and communications.

One concrete result was the development of cosmetics using ingredients from regional fruit, which is strategic as their health impacts are good for promotion. Some historical crops were revitalised and regional grains, fruits and derived products were produced and promoted. New commercial companies are involved in the production processes and keenly promote regionally-based products. Financial support was given to develop an educational centre. Altogether this strengthens and broadens public commitment to maintain the Wadden identity.

The project has a potentially wide spin-off because the products from the Wadden region are marketed on a national scale, with labels that have a story to tell. Attempts were also made to enlarge the scope of the Wadden project in similar areas in Germany and Denmark, which would correspond to the ecological boundaries of the region. New external funding was generated while this project was ongoing, demonstrating the multiplier effect of the Rinpung investment.

The project is part of a larger programme on agro-biodiversity, which exposes issues requiring immediate action if the programme's objectives are to be realised. There are also strong links to the wetland management programme.

Understandably, this second Rinpung Project raised less publicity than the first. The connection between the two countries and its mirror function was through regionally-based products and wetland management, both relevant in Southern Benin and the Waddensee region. A more specific connection is the migration of birds between these two localities, giving rise to the slogan 'the birds were ahead of us'. Following the presentation of the funds for the project by a Benin delegation, in return people from the Waddengroep visited Benin. During this visit the two delegations sought projects and opportunities to strengthen links between the two wetlands. One result was the identification of CECODI as a local counterpart organisation. The Waddengroep now actively raises money for their Benin partner. Several projects with mutual benefits were identified, such as promoting Beninese products in The Netherlands.

Reciprocity became apparent when the Beninese commented on the new strategic spatial plan for the Waddensee (Planologische Kernbeslissing - PKB) published by the Dutch government. Additionally, their participation in a regional planning workshop underlined their reciprocal interests in good management of the Waddensee area.

Success factors and recommendations

1. This project differed from the Bhutan Rinpung Project by being more 'open'. Firstly, an inventory was made and an action plan developed with concrete targets and monitoring indicators. Note that the Waddengroep was quite new to the SDA programme, unlike the Zeeuwse Vlegel.
2. The theme of 'regionally-based products' was a good choice, as it covers development priorities and problems in both countries. It is a good theme for exchange on an equality basis. But to have significant impact, i.e., for regionally-based products to acquire an important market share, greater efforts are needed.

3. The project linked up to an existing organisation and initiative and was clearly demand driven. The Waddengroep is a strong organisation with a clear vision and a large network of participants.
4. The project was initiated in The Netherlands. Gradually, initiatives are being taken up in Benin, such as support to CECODI and the identification of concrete projects with reciprocal characteristics.

3.4.4 Rinpung Project 3: Support to Service Centre Waterland

Projects and funding

One project was involved, the Rinpung Project of Costa Rica with funding of Euro 90.904.

Background

For a general introduction to agro-biodiversity and regionally-based product development, see the programme description.

The Waterland area north of Amsterdam is a popular tourist destination, having outstanding cultural and agricultural features. It is also highly biodiverse. The area has the status of National Landscape, with corresponding restrictions on land use. Farmers formed cooperatives to market products with a quality mark certifying that it was grown sustainably. About 50% of the region's farms are currently involved, integrating nature and landscape values into their management systems. The cooperative also supplies so-called green services, such as nature education, care for needy people and tourism. The cooperative formulated a project called 'Waterland Green Service Centre', aimed at developing a service centre near Amsterdam. It will be multi-functional, providing a variety of agricultural products and social services. It intends to raise funds in the private and public sectors.

This is the third Rinpung Project by which Costa Rica spent US\$ 100,000 promoting sustainable development in The Netherlands. The aim of the Costa Rica project was to support the Waterland cooperative in developing its service centre. The financial support is part of a larger support project, with the provincial government providing secondary funding. Activities are in information supply, education and awareness raising, infrastructure for the service centre and feasibility studies for new products and services, for example, a vegetable garden with old seed varieties and tourist services. The project started in January 2002.

Tangible results

After six months, the Waterland group established partnerships with the private sector for distributing its products and a public sector agency for its promotion campaign. A communication strategy was devised. A one-day educational programme was established with a variety of field visits. A promotion strategy was also developed. These are important elements for a viable and sustainable regional initiative.

Participation of consumers and clients in the service centre is central to the project. The aim is to re-establish connections between consumers and producers.

The project emphasises the need to develop a single reliable quality mark including a logo. This is crucial to developing credible, regionally-based products. It is a milestone in this programme's lifespan.

The project collaborates with comparable projects under this programme to increase the diversity of products to be supplied and to learn from each other. Collaboration is strengthened through the coordinating umbrella project and the national organisation on regionally-based products.

This third Rinpung Project deliberately avoided publicity in view of the sensitive position of Ecooperation when it started. It is impossible to detect from the available documentation that it was funded through Costa Rica. The project does not elaborate its international context. This reticence was evident only at the start of the project.

Success factors and recommendations

It is too early to state if this programme has been successful, but some of the success factors appear to be:

1. The project typically takes a holistic approach, by developing regionally-based agricultural products and social services. This adds to the experiences of the Waddengroep. Together, this provides a greater chance of raising interest and creating commitment.
2. The project seeks partnerships in private and public sectors.
3. The project is located in a favourable area near Amsterdam with a high demand for agrarian products and social services.
4. The project has visibly benefited from earlier projects by collaboration and learning from these.
5. The cooperative has a professional business plan, essential for success.

3.5 Thematic field: Climate change and energy

3.5.1 United Air Fund (UAF)

Projects and funding

Twenty-one projects covered this large programme with funding of Euro 513.559.

Background

The world is characterised by unequal use of fossil fuel with resulting differences in greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing this issue can be a catalyst for change and is a precondition for the long-term success of global climate policy. Yet the issue is often declared taboo in international negotiations. Following various discussions on climate change, in June 1997 the Joint Committee of the SDA asked the NMs to develop 'experimental mechanisms for transferring funds to compensate for unequally distributed environmental space'. This resulted in the

concept of UAF, which was supported by the Joint Committee in 1999. Instead of being taboo, equity is at the centre of the UAF's proposal.

The UAF considers low per capita CO₂ emissions as an ecological service that helps to preserve clean air. Giving this ecological service an economic value weakens the connection between economic growth and an increase of CO₂ emissions, in other words, it promotes a sustainable energy strategy. Whereas the UAF rewards countries with low per capita CO₂ emissions, countries having high per capita CO₂ emissions have to compensate for their clean air deficits.

The UAF aims to bring 'production' and 'consumption' of clean air into balance through a global market mechanism that puts a value on clean air and a cost on fossil energy use and subsequent high CO₂ emissions. Putting this approach into practice on a voluntary basis depends on the willingness of Dutch stakeholders. It was decided that at first the focus should be in The Netherlands, where funds compensating for Dutch clean air deficits should originate.

Countries emitting less than 2 tons of greenhouse gas per capita receive vouchers (called *shaires*), which can be exchanged for clean energy technologies (for example, solar energy). In countries emitting more than 2 tons of greenhouse gas per capita interested parties should finance the *shaires*. These parties are the *shareholders* of the UAF. The UAF is a mechanism for financial compensation for unequal use of global clean air reserves. The construction is comparable to that of Ecotax, also having a direct relationship between the high emitting countries and the resulting clean technology investments.

Ecooperation undertook various activities to develop the UAF. It also initiated some pilot projects intended to garner experience. When these projects started, however, they all suffered from a lack of infrastructure following an Ecooperation board decision not to approve start-up funds. Consequently, the UAF was never officially launched. Thus, it is now a dormant programme. New initiatives are being undertaken, but these are still piecemeal in character. Attempts were made to acquire funding from the private sector and government subsidies. Ultimately, almost all these efforts failed or could not be pursued following prohibition by the board of Ecooperation.

Tangible results

The UAF programme is a typical example of an emerging strategy, with many contributing activities. Along the way, strategic partnerships were formed with a number of private sector and governmental organisations. It did not involve large players. The aim was to form a strong coalition of founder members, with Ecooperation overseeing coordination, quality control and networking. Despite interest in the concept and the presence of a business plan the coalition was not formed.

The UAF links ideas and initiatives within Dutch policy (for example, in Dutch Environmental Policy). Various international institutions were enthusiastic, including leading agencies such as OECD, UNEP, EU, Friends of the Earth, and ISD. They approved the concept.

Quote from Ms. Waller-Hunter, then director of Environmental Department OECD: 'The Kyoto protocol is only an early though significant step towards a global solution to the problem of climate change. The UAF and the issues it raises concern a longer-term solution to addressing global emissions, and one based on active involvement of all countries. Your proposal helps to keep this long-term view in sight'.

The UAF concept establishes a link between the problems of climate change and unsustainable energy use and global economic inequality. The UAF concept is a clear reflection of SDA thinking, it is sound and highly strategic. It touches on the core of 'people, planet and profit'. It links North and South. By using the CO₂ barometer it contributes to raising awareness. Central to the concept is that full responsibility for doing something about climate change rests with people and organisations. However, the concept has remained abstract, with no concrete projects or products and no official launch.

The UAF concept is now well established. It has a CO₂ barometer, business plan, website, brochure, client certificates, and clear legal and fiscal procedures. Some projects were funded to implement the UAF: 'Youngsters involving companies', 'Participating organisations at local level', 'Energy for Africa', and 'Commercial strategy for companies'. The first two projects have been or are being implemented, but results are meagre. Many more project ideas are available. The website is presently dormant. It was hoped that by the year 2002 there would be 5000 *shaireholders*, a target that has not been met. There is no evidence of *shaires* having been invested in energy-saving technology.

The project with Young Works aimed at building a website especially for young people and in recruiting and training them to approach companies to buy *shaires*. Youngsters were considered good partners for the UAF because of the assumed interest in their own future and their orientation towards solutions instead of problems. Four schools participated and approached 130 companies. Only six became *shaireholders*, and this was largely based on personal relations. Apart from raising awareness among students, the results are disappointing. The final report explains this disappointment in terms of the UAF and Ecooperation's low profile and the concept remains underdeveloped. The project could have shown better results if the launch of the UAF had generated publicity. Students had to advertise, promote and sell a concept simultaneously. Undertaking more promotional activities, developing tangible products and focusing on front-runner companies.

Quote from a Young Works student: 'It is really frustrating to get a 'no' response from each company. I needed a peptalk to keep going'.

Another pilot project aimed at involving local participants in the province of North Holland. There is interest in the concept and willingness to contribute from different municipalities (for instance, Alkmaar), companies and institutions, but concrete partnerships and results are hampered by the absence of a reliable institutional setting, and by the lack of concrete products. It is not easy to sell a concept or refer to a global fund. Concrete products are required, for instance, a solar energy project. The website gives a project portfolio, but these are potential themes for projects without substance or direction.

The UAF concept can be implemented to help realise programme objectives at any level, for example, individuals, companies, municipalities, countries. There are numerous possibilities for upscaling and potential for linking up with ongoing initiatives. However, as long as core funding and organisational structure are not secured, these potentials will not be realised.

Success factors and recommendations

1. No leading international agency expressed any doubts about the value of the UAF concept. It was highly appraised; it is perfect to put into practice. It has been developed into clear mechanisms and procedures. There is general agreement that the concept and strategy are sound.
2. However, concrete products or pilot studies are still lacking. These are required to motivate people into buying *shaires*. Also, the UAF has never been officially launched, another major reasons why people and companies are unwilling to buy UAF *shaires*. Other reasons include the limited marketing efforts, absence of a strong founding coalition and the low profile of Ecooperation.
3. Ecooperation was the wrong organisation to bring this idea to maturity and to create a leading coalition. Ecooperation had internally conflicting opinions, insufficient status and credibility for large business and no experience in handling large programmes such as the UAF. Partnerships were established with organisations such as ECN, Triodos and Business for Climate. Projects were initiated with youngsters and municipalities. Apart from these low profile projects, efforts were made to involve large partners (such as Shell, NUON, and others), which failed due to Ecooperation's low status. Had the UAF been in the hands of an organisation such as WWF, hooking up at high policy levels to get 'buy in', it would have been more successful.
4. Twenty-one projects funded by the SDA contributed to this programme and all four countries assigned it a high priority. Yet Ecooperation did not give final agreement. This raises questions regarding ownership and credibility among the SDA partners and the efficiency of finalising a programme to which relatively large investments have been made.

4. Success factors and recommendations

The preceding project descriptions were based on the success criteria presented in Chapter 2. Analysing the project results identified the main factors contributing to success or failure. These insights are the ‘main body’ of this publication. In this chapter we will examine them in more detail.

4.1 Successes and failures

There are three levels to the overview of success criteria (Chapter 2): policy, programme and project level. How successful were the projects at these three levels?

An analysis of the projects shows some success at the SDA policy level, as the projects were not intended to achieve success at this level. At least some projects did contribute to advancing the key SDA policy elements of strengthening public-private-civic collaboration, integrating national and international policies and integrating social, environmental and economic dimensions. There has also been a contribution to advancing overall SDA thinking, of which the mirror function, international exchange and reciprocity are most characteristic. Interactive learning at SDA policy level has been most limited when viewed from a programme or project perspective.

At programme level, the analysis of the projects shows much that is positive. Most importantly, projects have contributed to the gradual build-up of programmes. There has also been interactive learning within programmes and all three characteristics of the SDA mission were addressed to some extent at programme level. Good potentials for upscaling were created, but these often went unrealised. The mirror function been stimulated, but this has not led to any fundamental organisational or institutional changes.

At project level, the projects show many positive impacts on success criteria. Most importantly, there are tangible and attractive results. This has not been the case for all projects, however. Many projects have also contributed to initiating processes with good potential. Many projects have clearly helped create public-private-civic collaboration, some of which are certainly sustainable, and have been instrumental in building up larger programmes.

4.2 Success factors

Twelve success factors were identified that can be classified into three categories:

- Factors relevant to the SDA mission (policy level);
- Factors relevant to the SDA programmes (management level);
- Factors relevant to the project level (operational level).

4.2.1 SDA policy level

1. *Political support to the SDA mission.* The SDA was innovative, mainly in stimulating reciprocal relations based on equality and transparency. It became clear that it was difficult for projects to pursue this type of innovation because reciprocity in the real sense of countries 'influencing each other' was considered risky, unclear and controversial by the Dutch government. The tension between innovation and ratification/parliamentary control has influenced the project portfolio of the NMs and the possibility of advancing SDA thinking, particularly its reciprocity concept. Bhutan's donation to the Zeeuwse Vlegel (Project 3.4.2) is exemplary, because for the first time it showed clearly how reciprocity could be interpreted. While much publicity and debate was raised, this could not be capitalised on and actually had a negative impact, because the Dutch government decided to apply more stringent controls to the SDA after Bhutan's donation, prohibiting meaningful reciprocity. As a result, subsequent Rinpung projects were less appealing and less strongly promoted. All of this weakened the position and image of Ecooperation in The Netherlands. The lesson learned might be that project aims should be less politically sensitive, one should aim for small gains, while the implementing agency should enjoy greater autonomy.
2. *Profile and credibility of Ecooperation.* A low profile and credibility were major reasons why large programmes with great potential raising much interest among international agencies could not be funded. A low profile and credibility resulted from several underlying factors, including the small size of Ecooperation, its limited capacities, its NGO-like profile, and the absence of critical political rooting as outlined above. The best example is the United Air Fund (UAF). Private sector players who still find the concept very interesting and who could have carried the concept to maturity did not consider Ecooperation a sufficiently high profile partner. The lesson learned might be that to convince powerful private sector agencies, strategic partnerships should be established with high profile partners, such as WWF, UNEP, CBD.
3. *Strategic planning and coherence.* When the SDA was established in 1994, a variety of scattered projects were undertaken. From this, some programmes emerged as promising avenues to reach the SDA objectives (see Introduction). The reviews show that for these programmes results have been achieved, but nowhere has there been a fundamental and

sustainable breakthrough. There were potentials for doing so, however. A good example is the project on sustainability indicators, which did not receive major funding and which subsequently disappeared from the SDA agenda. To successfully support sustainable development, synergy must be created between different projects to integrate the three sustainable development dimensions (ecological, social and economic). This requires a strong vision and synergy between the SDA programmes and projects and other non-SDA entities. A good example is the Waddengroep Rinpung Project 2 and its links to the theme of wetland management. The Rural Women's Project aimed to do the same, i.e., link up to themes of wetland management and to tourism development, but this failed for a number of reasons. In many other projects obvious links with other programmes or projects were not made. The lesson learned might be that stronger guidance, coordination and pro-active planning are required to create coherence and synergy within the programme as a whole. This is not in conflict with participation.

4. *International exchange and learning.* Central to the SDAs are the reciprocal relations between The Netherlands and the other countries and the added value from international exchanges. Intercultural exchange, if properly planned, can have added value for all parties in replicating successes and avoiding mistakes. Even if projects or activities focus on one country, international exchange can have an added value for the programme as a whole. The Rinpung projects were designed on this basis. Most explicitly, the Zeeuwse Vlegel Project was evaluated by a Bhutanese team, which was not only consistent with SDA thinking, but also highly effective. Projects such as the Mirror Project and the Rural Women's Projects were entirely based on the added value of exchange. But even in these cases learning at a conceptual or organisational level did not seem to occur. In other projects, the international dimension is poorly developed. The lesson learned might be that consistent focused attention on the international component requires close guidance and coordination.

4.2.2 Programme level

5. *Continuity and upscaling for replication.* Continuity and upscaling contribute to the potential replication of project results. Continuity can be enhanced if projects are part of long-term programmes. Programmes should have a 'chain of projects' with a logical sequence and coherence in terms of building onto established results, keeping the right people involved, tackling new problems, linking up to earlier results, and so forth. Elements of continuity are organisational learning, alertness to new opportunities and innovations, and responsiveness to social dynamics. A good example is the organic cotton programme, with a sequence of projects that gradually capture all elements of the production and marketing chain. However, there is still much to be done before the whole chain has been changed. The gradual build up of the UAF (involving 21 separate projects) is another example,

although the 'Big Bang' did not occur. The seminar on Gross National Happiness is an example of an interesting but isolated initiative, regrettably discontinued. Linked to the continuity issue, programmes and projects should consider how to expand from the beginning in order to reach programme objectives. This can be made operational through early networking, involving key actors carrying the message (ambassadors), promotion and lobbying, establishing pilots and coalitions. Part of it is starting with small pilots; these might be selected on the basis of their potential. A good example is the Mirror Project, where public- and private- sector parties were involved from the beginning, and the exchanges were organised in such a way as to create maximum publicity, commitment and tangible follow-up. Many other projects only started involving the public at the end of the project. Many projects ended by producing a glossy brochure. However, this should not be considered an end station: a brochure generates neither follow-up nor organisational or institutional change.

6. *Develop broad coalitions.* Linked to the previous success factor, the projects have generally been open to newcomers and stimulated the development of broad coalitions, enhancing continuity and chances for replication. Most useful were coalitions of civil society with partners from the public and private sectors (tripartite coalition), as these parties are clearly compatible. Involving private sector partners requires a good business plan. A diversity of partners is also good for information flow, learning processes, new insights and creativity, networking, replication and follow-up activities. A good example is the third Rinpung Project (Waterland), which involved a good business plan, the establishment of public-civil-public coalitions and working arrangements, along with tangible and highly visible projects. The agro-biodiversity projects successfully involved government thus helping to establish a national platform for regionally-based sustainable products.
7. *Tactics to achieve real change.* To bring about major change on complex sustainable development problems small gains can be effective. Small gains must fit within the sphere of influence of the parties involved. The external context should not be too overwhelming. Within a sequence of projects the scope might gradually expand to tackle issues of greater importance. Starting small-scale, for example, at local or regional level is usually effective. Good examples are the small-scale successes achieved through small-grants projects for NGOs in Benin and the agro-biodiversity projects where well-prepared workshops took small steps in the right direction within a field of conflicting interests. This also helped build up capacities within civic organisations. The Rinpung projects on regionally-based products are also good examples of small-scale activities that are part of a larger programme directed at achieving major changes. But in none of these cases was fundamental change achieved. Regionally-based products still have a marginal market share. To achieve fundamental changes requires major investment for promotion, involvement of key actors, creating a leading coalition, developing a successful pilot, etc.

4.2.3 Project level

8. *Exchange components identified on the basis of common interests and equality.* Exchange between countries so different and far apart can have added value, but only under certain conditions. Effective exchange must be founded on equality and common interests, so that parties feel a real desire to learn and benefit from the others, preferably on the basis of felt needs and perceived problems. On the one hand, differences stimulate creativity, but on the other too great differences lead to apathy or scepticism. Striking a balance has been a guiding principle for the exchange components of successful programmes and projects. Issues on which exchanges take place were carefully identified. These exchanges allowed participants to meet, learn and reflect. A good example is the Rural Women's Project. The theme of women's organisation was well chosen for effective exchange between The Netherlands and Benin and created much improvement for women in both countries. By comparison, the subject of rural credit systems was not useful for exchange between these two countries, as here the contexts are too far apart. It is envisaged that there is now scope for exchanges between private sector companies in different countries.
9. *Well-prepared physical exchange.* Physically meeting each other, observing each other's situation, discussing hot issues, sharing experiences and so forth, has been effective in creating commitment and bonds and stimulating learning. This requires organisation by enthusiastic, highly committed professionals. Good examples are the Mirror Project and the Rural Women's Projects. In both cases parties clearly learned from each other, leading to life-long ties and experiences, but preparation and organisation was difficult.
10. *Demand-driven and demand-pushed.* For many projects, a clearly expressed demand and perceived need by the parties involved is crucial to engendering commitment during the project and follow-up activities. If there is no clearly expressed demand, the project is bound to fail. This can be illustrated by the labour unions project: it was successful in Costa Rica where a clear demand had been expressed, but it failed in The Netherlands where no such demand existed. However, certain demands can also be pushed a little by the Dutch, for instance, a tool such as the Internet (for example, the ABS Project), or for new technologies such as the UAF mechanism.
11. *Seek effective and reliable partners.* Most projects supported existing organisations on specific issues. The organisations involved already had a good track record, a minimum of own funding sources, an ongoing programme, a vision and experienced staff. Thus, the results of the project were seated in a long-term effort, which gives a certain guarantee of sustainability. Good examples are the Rinpung projects, which supported existing civic organisations in The Netherlands, most of which had not been involved in bilateral cooperation. All of these certainly met the expectations of the project and used the project to obtain more funds and support. Using existing structures or organisations with good experience runs the risk of

creating dependency, but this can be reduced if the SDA support is part of a diversity of support mechanisms. Close dependency should be avoided as proven by the Beninese Rural Women's Project. This project stalled when SNV stopped its gender programme.

12. *Concrete early results.* There have been early results showing success. Some of these will certainly continue. A good example is the acceptance of a regional wheat variety on the Seed List. Many projects have also initiated processes with good potential and upscaling, but it is often too early to say whether these will be realised. In the Rural Women's Project the increased awareness has certainly led to organisational change in both countries. Building coalitions or strategic partnerships are also concrete results. Unfortunately, in spite of the 21 projects involved, the UAF did not develop any projects.

5. Guidelines

Chapter 4 summarised success factors identified by analysis of the projects, and recounted various lessons learned. Based on these success factors three main principles and associated guidelines were developed, which might be useful to NIPS in further developing the SDA programmes and activities. Success formulae and monitoring indicators can be derived from such guidelines:

- Leadership
- Programmatic coherence
- Learning platform

5.1 Leadership

The first phase of the SDA was characterised by a sceptical political climate, fragmentation, modest tangible results and a lack of credibility and organisational learning processes. Nevertheless a clear basis for furthering the SDA has been laid. The primary requirement for NIPS is to provide for leadership in order to build up policy support, credibility and a good profile particularly in the private sector. NIPS should be both visionary with regard to change and tenacious when pursuing set priorities and tangible results. These should illustrate how NIPS projects differ from conventional bilateral aid projects. While clear differences are to be expected, NIPS will also have to remain realistic, particularly with respect to its policy goal of reciprocity as being the most ambitious and innovative characteristic of the SDAs. It should look for policy windows to advance this principle, but not be dogmatic. In doing so, the SDA should maintain awareness of the urgency of its goal. This includes the development of a leading coalition (credible partners, moral leaders, etc.). Finally, it involves creating an enabling environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, is result oriented and supports learning.

The SDA projects aimed to achieve substantial change through a chain of small gains. However, this has not usually led to substantial change. Adaptive management might be a useful concept to adopt. It refers to flexible regulation and monitoring that help to define actions and experiments to probe the changing reality of the external world. Characteristics of adaptive management systems are careful and limited steering instead of controlling, organisational learning and a high responsiveness to external changes and societal demands through monitoring. Adaptive management regards projects or strategies as 'experiments'. The

focus is on opportunities such as innovation, social action, altering perceptions, establishing new markets, and suchlike. When properly applied, adaptive management gradually links small gains to greater processes of change.

Crucial to adaptive management are programmatic coherence (avoiding scattered initiatives) and supporting innovation and broad learning platforms. These two interrelated issues are discussed.

5.2 Programmatic coherence

The NIPS should build up strong programmes, of which coherence, hitherto largely lacking, is the most important characteristic. Programmes have been developed mainly as a result of projects, but were not well planned. This requires attitude change and strategic planning processes. We suggest that in formulating programmes, NIPS takes account of the following steps for change:

- Develop a vision for the sector or sub-sector involved, including a clear expression of mutual interests;
- Develop a strategic plan with clear priorities and aims;
- Communicate the vision and strategy;
- Formulate projects in line with the strategic vision;
- Build in mechanisms for replication, continuity and upscaling (for example, pilot projects, seed funding, political influence, publicity);
- Pursue partnerships that can help with replication and upscaling, including delegating to others who might have a greater impact;
- Seek mechanisms that can consolidate changes and mainstream new approaches, including good communication, a well-defined marketing strategy and publicity.

This checklist could help:

Requirements	Consequence if lacking
Vision	Confusion and opportunism
Logical framework proposal	Inefficient operations
Skills	Anxiety
Incentives	Slow change or progress
Resources	Frustration
Early actions and successes	False starts, poor visibility
Communication	Misunderstanding, much inefficiency
Marketing	Low profile, lack of goodwill and partners
Strategic partnerships	Loss of credibility and no impact
Monitoring and evaluation	No accountability or inputs for learning
Learning mechanisms and incentives	No adaptation to new contexts and opportunities, no upscaling, no attitudes change
Private sector participation	Lack of drivers and impact
Participation of civil society	Higher transaction costs
Participation of public sector/govt.	No institutional change

5.3 Learning Platform

One of the greatest opportunities for NIPS is to provide leadership relating to learning for sustainable development. In addition to learning at programme and project level, we think of learning in a more international context, exceeding the defined boundaries of the SDAs. Learning is crucial to adaptive management, but can only be fruitful if based on concrete successes demonstrating the SDA vision.

Under the SDA umbrella, there were many activities and processes directly linked to learning. Consider the projects and exchange visits that stimulated intercultural learning and self-reflection, the Mirror Project, Rural Women's Project, and others. Similarly, consider the on-line pre-consultation between the four countries on access and benefit sharing regarding biodiversity.

The NIPS is well positioned within the KIT (primarily an international and intercultural knowledge and training institute on matters directly related to sustainability) to establish SDA learning platforms and mechanisms.

Components of a learning platform to be established might be learning and collaboration on:

- Chain management, eco-tourism, sustainability indicators;
- SDA principles such as reciprocity, participation, building up civic-private-public coalitions;
- Intercultural exchange and reflection;
- Pre-consultation on international policy issues and conferences;
- Multi-stakeholder dialogues.

In addition to actual exchanges, the learning platform facilitates Internet-based collaborative learning. Examples are inventories and assessments of (best) practices and lessons learned. These could be further upgraded and disseminated in the form of online courses or reference guides on sustainable development for certain themes or programmes, for example, content, expertise, guidelines, cases, and so forth.

Appendix 1

Project numbers of reviewed projects

- 1.1 Organic cotton production and marketing in Benin**
 - 96021 Investigating the market for Beninese textiles in The Netherlands
 - 96022 Market study for organic cotton in The Netherlands
 - 97046 Using organic cotton as a case-study for education on sustainable development in Benin
 - 97110 Investigating spinning industries in Benin (Sobotex and Sitex)
 - 98037 Major support to OBEPAB to develop organic cotton production
 - 00010 Follow-up Phase 2 of previous project (ongoing)
 - 00018 Timmermans Confectie to develop an alliance of Dutch and Benin textile industries

- 2.1 Small grants programme for biodiversity in Benin**
 - 99072 Funding for small grants
 - 01063 Extensions of previous or ongoing activities

- 2.2 An interactive, pre-consultative conference between the DOV countries on the Internet**
 - 01025 E-conference on access and benefit sharing

- 2.3 Sustainability indicators: Making sustainable development work**
 - 95001 Workshop on indicators with Bhutan
 - 96018 Developing a system and example of sustainability indicators
 - 97007 Preparing a project on sustainability indicators with the four countries involved
 - 99025 Project on sustainability indicators in the four countries (not funded)

- 3.1 Gross National Happiness Seminar**
 - 00038 Organising the seminar
 - 00040 A publication on the results of the seminar

- 3.2 The Mirror Project to stimulate social action in urban suburbs**
 - 00025 Investigating and planning the project
 - 01007 Exchanges and reflection between the people of San Jose and Rotterdam

- 3.3 Labour unions and sustainable development.**
 - 96012 Fact-finding mission
 - 97001 Stimulating exchange between labour unions on sustainable development issues

- 3.4 Rural women's organisations and local government**
- 96029 Exchange visits by women from rural areas
- 98010 Women in local decision-making and government
- 99039 Formulation mission for a follow-up project
- 99068 Women in local decision-making and government 2000-2 (ongoing)
- 01039 Local government in The Netherlands and in Benin (ongoing)

- 4.1 Working on agro-biodiversity and regionally-based production systems**
- 97022 Working on agro-biodiversity Part 1
- 99037 Working on agro-biodiversity Part 2
- 01029 Strengthening regional supply of regionally-based products (ongoing)

- 4.2 Rinpong Project 1: Zeeuwse Vlegel agro-biodiversity**
- 97027 Rinpong Support Project to Zeeuwse Vlegel in Zeeland

- 4.3 Rinpong Project 2: Support to regionally-based products from the Waddenzee area**
- 00046 Visit by Beninese delegation to Stichting Waddengroep
- 01015 Visit by Dutch delegation to the wetlands in Benin
- 00051 Rinpong Support Project to Stichting Waddengroep (ongoing)

- 4.4 Rinpong Project 3: Support to Service Centre Waterland**
- 00057 Rinpong Support Project to Waterland Groene Dienstencentrum

- 5.1 United Air Fund (UAF)**
- 98015 Identification of pilot projects that fit into UAF in Costa Rica
- 98042 Feasibility study for a climate fund (by Van Dishoeck and Jongbloed)
- 98047 Development of a CO2 barometer (ECN)
- 98052 Preparation of the UAF (Ecostrategy)
- 99001 Marketing and promotion activities of UAF in The Netherlands
- 99006 Identification project UAF for municipalities
- 99012 Youngsters as UAF ambassadors (Codename: Future)
- 99013 Follow-up to 98052, development of UAF (Ecostrategy)
- 99014 Energy and climate policies in the four countries (ECN)
- 99015 Seminar European Business Council for a Sustainable Energy Future
- 99035 Introduction of UAF to Globe network (a network of young people from 6000 schools in 82 countries)
- 99062 Method development for municipalities and companies to determine CO2 emission
- 99073 Development costs for UAF (publications and house style)
- 00015 Block allocation for activities to implement UAF
- 00060 Stand UAF at CoP VI Conference
- 00061 Follow-up to 99062
- 01010 Positioning Energy for Africa as part of UAF
- 01064 English website on UAF
- 01027 Unite youngsters to contribute to UAF implementation
- 01035 Participation of local municipalities and companies in UAF (ongoing)
- 01066 Create a business plan for UAF (ongoing)

Appendix 2

Members of the peer reference group

Mrs. Brecht Paardekooper
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DSI/MY

Mr. Wim de Ridder
Director SMO, Foundation Society & Enterprise

Mr. Hans. Bolscher
Former Director Max Havelaar Foundation

Mrs. Jeanne Bettenhausen
Dutch Rural Women's Association.

Appendix 3

Meeting of National Mechanism representatives

Present:

CBDD (Benin):

Mr Gauthier Biaou (Director)

Mr Frédérique Codilla

Mr N'Tcha

SDS (Bhutan):

Mr Nim Dorji

Mr Karma

Fundécooperacion (Costa Rica):

Ms Liliane Abarca

Mr Antonio Alfaro

NIPS:

Mr Charles Gerhardt

Mr Herman Verhagen

Mrs Inge Vos

AIDEnvironment:

Mr Bart Romijn (facilitation of the meeting)

Mr Jan Joost Kessler

Mr Kessler, main author of the publication, presented the methodology and main findings. In general, the participants appreciated the work done and observed that the results would be highly useful for their own projects. They stressed that the project analysis surpassed the conventional project-type of work, emphasising that a similar exercise would be very useful in their countries. This could lead to exchanges between the four countries, including an evaluation of which success criteria are most important and relevant to all. This could be a basis for defining a common vision of the SDA goals.

During the meeting, several detailed comments were made about the contents of the project analysis, which have been directly worked into the final text. Useful comments were also made on the grouping of the success factors while preparing this publication.

The following recommendations were also made:

- The results of the various policy consultations could also be considered as a project, and thus be analysed on their impact;
- Learning is indeed a priority and should be an built-in element of every SDA project;
- Upscaling can be strongly promoted by inviting new partners;