DPRN REPORT NO. 20

Regional expert meeting

West Africa 2

Final report
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Introduction

For the second consecutive year, the African Studies Centre organised three reflection and discussion days for the regions of West Africa, East Africa and the Horn of Africa within the framework of the regional expert meetings of the Development Policy Review Network (DPRN). The aim of these annual meetings is to bring together different kinds of experts such as policymakers, development practitioners, scientists, journalists and consultants with a view to promoting informal exchange and reflection on the developments in the regions and the role of Dutch development aid in Africa.

This year’s DPRN West Africa day took a different tack. Rather than relying on keynote speakers and people who prepared workshops, the African Studies Centre changed policy and organised an Open Space Conference (see explanation below). The explicit purpose of this conference was to stimulate active participation by the visitors of the conference, and to start up a process of active dialogue between different stakeholders in development policy with respect to West Africa.

It was disappointing that only 22 of the 88 people who registered for the regional expert meeting showed up. The reasons cited for this no-show were (i) the lack of a clear programme for the day and earlier experiences of people with conferences based on open space technology and (ii) the experiences with last year’s West Africa day. Neither of these arguments can sufficiently explain this high number of absenteees. A small investigation into this problem is underway and we will report back to DPRN on this in due course.

Nevertheless, the people who did not show up missed an inspiring meeting, despite the lack of heat in the conference room. During the course of the day a large number of topics were dealt with by the participants. Even though the meeting lasted only one day considerable progress has been made in several domains. At the end of the
day two groups got together to discuss the setting up of two working groups and actions for the future.

A more general assessment of the results of the conference must be subdivided into two parts. On the one hand there are the issues which were discussed during the day. On the other hand there are the (limited) institutional dynamics generated by the conference. In the morning four sessions took place focusing on: labour and entrepreneurship; poverty and vulnerability; making research applicable in practice; and energy. In the afternoon the discussions focused on political stability, effectiveness and sustainability of the Dutch ‘aid cake’, and how we would be able to foster a more productive dialogue with Africans rather than about Africans. The variety of subjects with such a small group indicates the dynamism that can be generated by the Open Space methodology.

The variety of subjects also indicates the breadth and the depth of the policy agenda in West Africa. On the one hand a number of countries are struggling with major problems in the domains of political stability and security. These problems need to be addressed first before sustainable development policies can be implemented with a view to tackling the deep-rooted poverty and the extreme vulnerability to climate change and economic and political turmoil. On the other hand there are a number of countries, some of which are also extremely poor, which are doing relatively well, to the extent that political institutions seem to have stabilised and scope is indeed available to discuss the institutionalisation of labour markets, policies to improve the sustainable supply of energy in the long run, etc. Some very interesting ideas were put on the table during the conference and are also part of the report. Nevertheless, the combination of deep-rooted poverty, political instability and a lack of institutional capacity, ecological problems and simply the lack of means to do something about these problems, puts the region as a whole at risk of further deterioration. However, there are also signs of hope. Liberia, once a failed state beset by extreme violence, now seems to be on the road to stability. Ghana, which has a history of political stability and democracy, is performing well economically. The three poor Sahelian countries – Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger – continue to be an oasis of (fragile) political calm despite facing enormous problems.

This means that there are no clear-cut answers to the issues ahead. Any development strategy will have to deal with this diversity and with the structural conditions that prevail on the subcontinent. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, what is needed is long-term commitment as well as trial and error strategies, based on an incremental body of knowledge, experience and dialogue. We hope that this West Africa day has made its modest contribution to this process.

Participants

88 people registered for this meeting, of whom 22 actually participated. Of these, 31.8 % were researchers, 13.6 % policymakers and embassy staff, 13.6 % were
affiliated to development organisations and other NGOs, 22.7% belonged to the group of independent consultants, and 18.1 % belonged to other groups (journalists, students, the Diaspora, etc.). See Appendix 2 for a list of participants.

The programme and method

The main purpose of the DPRN regional expert meetings is to create a platform for development experts, practitioners and policymakers to exchange views, knowledge and experience in order to increase synergy between their respective activities. In order to create such a platform the convenors of the meeting opted for a methodology that allows for maximum interaction among participants, thus honouring their expertise. This option is in line with last year’s evaluation via which participants suggested more time for face-to-face contacts, in-depth exchanges and open discussions. For these reasons it was decided to organise the meeting as an Open Space meeting.

The Open Space Technology is a meeting methodology developed in the 1980s by Harrison Owen (USA). Participants are invited on the basis of a specific theme about which they feel passionately. The day’s agenda is set by the participants themselves after which they self manage a large number of the workshops. Information from the different workshops is shared through reports written in real time. Depending on the purpose of the conference, action groups are created to focus on selected issues.

At the start of the regional expert meeting participants raised the following points for discussion:

- How can we evaluate the success of an intervention?
- How can we contribute to political stability in West Africa?
- Effectiveness and sustainability and the division of the Dutch Aid Cake;
- Poverty and vulnerability;
- In establishing priorities, speak with Africans rather than about Africans;
- Support African initiatives which are intended to reinforce governance;
- Labour and entrepreneurship;
- Make research applicable in practice;
- Energy.

The points were discussed in nine different workshops and reports were produced and published during the day. Those reports can be found in the following section of this document.

Once all the issues had been discussed the participants carried out a ranking exercise to select three main issues that they considered to be most important. The following issues were chosen:

- In establishing priorities, speak with Africans rather than about Africans;
- Support African initiatives which are intended to reinforce governance;

1 More info on the Open Space Technology can be found at http://www.openspaceworld.org.
• How can we contribute to political stability in West Africa.

Two action groups were created which will take up those topics in an on-going exchange and dialogue.
Workshop reports

ISSUE: In establishing priorities, speak with Africans rather than about Africans

CONVENORS: Jan van der Kolk

REPORTER: Jan van der Kolk

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 1

KEY POINTS

- Development agendas are to a large extent still donor driven: money and support is available for issues and themes that are high on donor agendas and do not necessarily reflect the priorities of receiving countries.
- Donors often change priorities for reasons that have not resulted from a dialogue with Africans.
- Concepts of good governance are essentially those of the World Bank, with a strong bias towards Western formal models, (formal) economic growth and reduction of the public sector, putting less emphasis on education, independent justice, conflict prevention, social security.
- There is a disparity between the donor–receiver dialogue in ‘development forums’ and broader issues in a country. It is very difficult for those not involved in the development planning process to gain access to places where the development priorities are determined, both in the North and the South. One example in the North relates to the difficulties of getting environmental issues, including sustainable development, higher up on the development agenda of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One example in the South (many countries) is the difficulty of acquiring access to the planners in government because of an inability to speak the language of the donor–recipients dialogue (the international donor language).
- The donors appear to be slurring their speech since they formally commit to support local initiatives, but do not contribute in reality if it does not fit in with the official priorities. Examples abound! One example from recent experience is that Minister Van Ardenne and State Secretary Van Geel committed themselves during a Ministers Conference in Dubai in February 2006 to support the implementation of SAICM (the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management) – including such issues as the Proba Koala. In reality, not one euro nor any other support (expertise) has been made available, as it does not tie in with Dutch priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTIONS
Not discussed.
ISSUE: How is it possible to evaluate development projects (what indicators; who evaluates)

CONVENOR: Ab Drent

REPORTER: Ab Drent

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 4

KEY POINTS

Quality, output, outcome, listening and stakeholders.

A key point that one participant indicated from his experience is ‘quality’ and the capability to recognise and acknowledge the quality of a project.

It is relatively easy to measure and evaluate project goals. However, it is more difficult to measure project consequences, especially in the long run.

We defined 'output' as the concrete objectives which are established at the beginning of the project and which are achieved or not achieved. For example, in the case of a project to build a school it is easy to see if the building is there at the end of the project. This is the ‘output’ of a project.

The ‘outcome’ of a project is, however, more difficult to estimate. To return to the example of the school, you need to ask whether there are also teachers and schoolbooks so that the physical building can actually fulfil the function that it was intended for at the beginning of the project?

Therefore, the ‘quality’ and the consequences of a project are very important but more difficult to measure. With this in mind, one needs to open up and go out and listen to the stakeholders on a continuous basis during the entire duration of the project. ‘Listening’ is another keyword. It is important to listen to the opinion of stakeholders in an environment where they feel free to express. If, for example, women are not used to talking in the presence of men, it is important to take them to one side to talk with them.

The definition of relevant stakeholders was also an issue of debate. In the end there was relative agreement that, in identifying the relevant network, a very important factor is the researcher’s skill as regards being sensitive to stakeholders, which skill was not evident at first sight. A method of random sampling and a snowball method can be used in this context.
We also agreed that, although donors often require quantification, sometimes (or often?) it is less clear and less valuable than a qualitative evaluation. A quantitative approach does not always express the range of perspectives, values and opinions of the different stakeholders. However, projects can be considered successful to some degree if the opinions of the stakeholders are consistent.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTIONS
See above.
ISSUE: Labour and Entrepreneurship
1. Formalisation of the labour market (more jobs)
2. Entrepreneurship and micro credit
3. Child labour

CONVENORS: Elizabeth Fanoiki, Roelien Timmerman, Martin Keijzer

REPORTER: Elizabeth Fanoiki

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 4

KEY POINTS

1. It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of child labour, wherever it contributes to the personal and economic development of the individual child and his/her family.
2. There should be more support for local grass roots organisations that fight for an improvement in working conditions.
3. There should be more support for the improvement of vocational education, with special attention being paid to the transfer of knowledge using local expertise and local entrepreneurs. The core focus should be on the improvement of knowledge and skills, and how this facilitates local (economic) development.
4. Small projects and initiatives that stimulate economic growth should be supported, but need to be expanded and approached from a regional perspective. At the same time, this should not be done at such a high governmental level because of ineffective governance, and the division between the national government and local people.
5. Local educational needs should focus more on the needs of the local economy and the labour market, and how these contribute to local development. For example, vocational education should provide new skills in business management to help develop local businesses. Local businesses should be made partners in developing jobs and training programmes for young people.
6. The relationship between the West and Africa should focus more on the facilitation and support of local initiatives with a view to countering the traditional donor dependence relationship.
7. ICT and mobile telephone technology should be acknowledged as a crucial way of sharing ideas and generating a more integrated approach to sharing knowledge, and also to creating new ideas for development.
8. More use should be made of members of the African Diaspora who are willing to contribute to their countries of origin. There initiatives should also be supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTIONS
Included in the points above.
ISSUE: Political stability

CONVENORS: Frits van Bruggen, Paul Litjens and Han van Dijk

REPORTER: Han van Dijk

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 8

KEY POINTS

Good governance is a pre-condition for receiving bilateral aid because it is argued that policymaking is about making choices and that aid is spent more effectively in countries with a certain level of good governance than in countries with bad governance. This may be true, but this approach leads to the creation of a number of ‘aid orphans’, that is situations in which all donors have pulled out and the population has been left to its own devices and at the mercy of the vices of their rulers. A prominent example is Guinea Bissau where a window of opportunity was missed to promote democracy because no donor considered the regime trustworthy. Other examples are Chad and the Central African Republic where a very unhealthy relationship exists between France and the regime. This is bound to destabilise the country even more. Liberia is an example of how, with the right support, things can improve and money can be spent effectively, However, neighbouring Sierra Leone as well as Sudan are examples of regional risks.

More attention needs to be paid to post-conflict reconstruction after emergency aid because there is always the risk that conflicts will flare up again once the flow of emergency aid has dried up because of a lack of follow-up and perspective. A topical example is that of Mozambique.

One must also make a distinction between bilateral channels, NGO channels, multilateral channels and even military interventions. The choice of aid channels is secondary. First of all the problem has to be defined and the decision has to be taken to address the problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTIONS

1. Do not ignore the real issues. Define the real problem and prevent countries from becoming ‘donor orphans’ or from becoming embroiled in unhealthy relationships.
2. This requires more international coordination. The focus should not be on Liberia, where the basic needs are covered, but try to deal with countries that are not being taken care of. As a donor community we should ensure that specific problems are dealt with (such as Guinea Bissau and the situation around Darfur).
3. Channels should be chosen on a flexible basis. Lobbying the UN can be just as effective as sending in NGOs. Analyze situations properly.

4. Good governance can be a policy goal, but not a pre-condition, for development cooperation.

5. The neutrality of the Dutch (and Scandinavians) is an added value which should be used in specific conditions. However, there should also be international back-up (peace-keeping interventions).

6. Formulate policy from a regional perspective, focusing attention on Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso. In the end, Niger is not sustainable and the rest of the region is in turmoil.

7. An important policy goal should be to ensure that one generation does not have to go through a major violent conflict/civil war. This would break the cycle of violence and ensure that there are people who have learned that violence is not the only way to get what they want.

8. Capacity building should be aimed at political negotiation skills. The Southern Sudanese, for instance, should be supported so that they acquire the skills that allow them to get more out of the regime in Khartoum without having to resort to violence.

9. A change in Dutch policy requires us to lobby through newspaper articles, political parties and scientific research on crisis situations.

10. Ways should be found to close the gap between emergency aid and post-conflict reconstruction and development.

ACTIONS
- Newspaper articles
- E-mails to political parties after the elections
- Scientific research, for instance within the framework of the IS-academy failed states
- International coordination
ISSUE: Poverty and vulnerability

CONVENORS: Han van Dijk

REPORTER: Hans Vellema / Han van Dijk

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 4

KEY POINTS

People are poor because they live in uncertainty. They are not able to manage unpredictable conditions. Ecologically speaking they respond by being mobile, by looking for better conditions and by creating more offspring. Development cooperation could address this lack of security, so as to create a situation in which local people might address poverty themselves.

The instability and unpredictability leads to high mobility (migration) and more offspring.

Instable factors are, for instance, health, food quality, water supply, education, organisation and governance. This situation is very complicated because, in essence, all these factors need to be addressed together and because the relationships between all these different factors are not yet properly understood.

The vulnerability means people have a ‘next day’ time frame. Thus, Africa has a ‘flee market’ instead of a ‘free market’. This flexible approach can be both productive and counter-productive.

People’s skills have to be improved so that they are more able to manage initiatives at their own level.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTIONS

Economic development could be stimulated as it is expected that this could really boost the livelihood conditions. It would be best to link the development to the existing local conditions and people’s knowledge and handling capacity. The aim is not only to create economic development as such, but services instead (reliable power supply, roads, financial services) and conditions that enable people to engage in more productive activities.

1. Markets are of course key, but these cannot exclusively be free markets because trade also needs to be fair.

2. Governance is also key as one of the enabling conditions because there needs to be some certainty regarding the future benefits of initiatives. Governance is also about the supply of information.
3. Investments could be made in infrastructure, processing industries and energy supplies, so that people can develop their own initiatives.

4. The market protection for e.g. cotton and food crops should be reconsidered.

The question is whether this works in remote areas, or whether we have to deal with these areas in an indirect manner, by promoting development in growth poles (enclaves). Another question has to do with establishing the consequences, for example in the form of mega-cities in the wrong places.

Actions: points for sensible progress should be identified, for instance bio-fuel from local crops and solar energy.
ISSUE: Making research applicable in practice

CONVENOR: Martine Poolman, TU Delft

REPORTER: Mirjam Ros, UvA/DPRN

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 3

KEY POINTS

• A lot of technical research is carried out without the results ever being applied in practice. How can this situation be improved?

• The problem lies partly in the attitude of some of the technical researchers (‘My task is to measure what happens – for instance rainfall, evaporation, run-off – and to build a model, not to talk or discuss with local people’), partly in the perception of the target group (‘I communicate the results to the government, it is their task to disseminate the results among peasants, fishermen, etc., not mine’) and partly in the (lack of) communication between experts, responsible policymakers and target groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTION

• Joint learning: consider peasants, fishermen etc. as experts and learn from their perceptions of the problem, their solutions (or the reason of the lack thereof) and their constraints, so that your solutions fit in with their outlooks and way of working.

• Make the most of your position as an ‘expat’ who has access to all groups, more than local experts have, given that they are constrained by hierarchical positions, class, etc. As a young woman you may even benefit, in some situations, from the fact that you are not considered a threat to people’s positions. Use this status to communicate the results of your research to various groups that may otherwise remain ignorant of the outcomes. Film might be a good medium in this context.

• Do not take dissemination of research through local agents for granted. People in key positions may consider knowledge as a means to retain power, and might therefore be unwilling to share that knowledge.

• Try to find the common ground / common perception of the problem and possible solutions between the ‘experts’ and target groups.
ISSUE: Effectiveness & Sustainability and the division of the Dutch Aid cake

CONVENOR: Hiddo Huitzing

REPORTER: Hiddo Huitzing

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 5–6

KEY POINTS

The discussion was attended by representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Hendrix, Mr Van Bruggen and Mr Litjens; a representative of the University of Wageningen, Mrs Wartena; a representative of the Health Care Industry; Mr Huitzing from the DRC; and an independent participator, Mr Drent. Mr Leborgne from IRC joined the discussion later on.

In the present situation, Dutch Aid is spent through multiple channels. These can be broadly identified as: (1) Government to government aid; (2) Aid through commercial participation programmes; and (3) Aid through the NGOs. Another division of the Dutch Aid is (1) Bilateral Aid; (2) Multilateral Project Aid; and (3) Multilateral Financial Aid.

The four key words which can be used to assess the topics are:
1. Relevancy
2. Effectiveness
3. Efficiency
4. Sustainability

While the Dutch government has identified a certain number of partner or focus countries, in reality a lot of aid is spent outside these countries. The question is whether this has a negative effect on the overall effectiveness. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has just concluded an evaluation of Dutch Aid over the last years. However, there is no clear-cut answer to the above question.

One of the discussion points was whether Dutch Aid should focus on government aid or on Public Private Projects (PPPs). The conclusion was that choosing to focus Dutch Aid on one or the other was not the solution. In certain areas commercial firms can realise goals in a much more efficient way, and be held accountable for the results. In other areas, government responsibility should not be discarded. However, the issue of whether Dutch Aid should focus on the top hospitals in a country rather than on basic health care in the remote villages was not an easy one to discuss. From the point of view of sustainability, however, it was felt that sustainable grassroots health care often posed a problem as soon as the donor aid stopped. As regards good governance, which is one of the spearheads of Dutch Aid, it was concluded that a
working government seems to be a necessary condition for development (although
Somalia was mentioned as a counterexample).

Moreover, a form of democracy, which may not be the Western system of democracy,
is regarded as a necessary condition for development. Here too the NGOs have an
important role to play in developing countries.

Some lessons can be distilled from the discussion and the evaluation of Dutch Aid.
1. Without economic growth there is no development, and the absence of economic
growth causes problems primarily for the poor.
2. A certain macro-economic strategy is necessary for economic development.
   Stability, for example in the financial market, comes to mind as illustrated by the
   situation in Zimbabwe.
3. Crises must be solved and not evaded since they may then spread.

It is, therefore, difficult to define a real ‘Africa’ strategy. Instead, development aid
should be tailored to each and every country and specific situations. For some cases
the government–to–government aid seems to be the more appropriate, while for
other occasions the private market should be stimulated or partnered to achieve the
development goals. The overall conclusion is that we must carry on as we do, while
specific elements of Dutch Aid must be continuously updated and improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTIONS
See the key points above.
ISSUE: Energy

CONVENOR: Martin Zwanenburg

REPORTER: Martin Zwanenburg

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 2

KEY POINTS

There is uncertainty about the appropriateness (cost-effectiveness) of alternative energy.

In a very recent report on ‘energy and climate’ the WRR seems to predict that alternative energy (solar, wind, ...) will not be or become competitive.

At the same time, alternative energy is central to many donor-supported interventions and initiatives to provide access to energy to more people.

This raises issues of cost-effectiveness + sustainability and coherence.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTION

To check whether a common expert opinion exists and to proceed from there. This will not require extra research, but just contacts with relevant agencies like ECN.

The expected and preferred result will be a checklist for the appropriateness of the various energy sources under the various country and location-specific conditions.
ISSUE: Support African Initiatives which are intended to reinforce governance

CONVENOR: Jan van der Kolk

REPORTER: Marloes Kraan

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 8

KEY POINTS

The situation:
- Support comes from donors who set priorities based on their political agendas and assessment.
- Support often goes via governments or via certain groups (such as NGOs) and in both cases it is questionable whether the support reaches the intended groups. Local initiatives do not often qualify for support.
- It is still often the case that the poor are not reached.

Question:
How can we support dialogue on their needs / model of development?
The next question is then: Who are ‘they’?

We discussed a number of situations which failed for a number of reasons: corruption, lack of contact and communication, people in certain positions of power who defend their own interest, certain governance decisions made without explaining why (example of chainsaw sector in Ghana that was banned without any discussion / explanation).

We are also ambivalent about our own roles and there is a tendency to think for someone else and to come up with solutions that are not appropriate or whose usefulness in the actual context has not been checked.
We should also be aware that it is difficult to really find out what local actors need and wish.

The fact that many problem definitions come from the North is also due to the fact that that is where the notion exists that something can be done. After all, ‘we’ have access to the money to do something and the time to spend on the issue. We also have ‘experts’ looking for ‘job opportunities’. The challenge is to link our ideas to the problem with the ‘target groups’ before we start our projects and propose solutions.
RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTION

1. Look for a link (for instance, the Diaspora) and make time for a dialogue when defining a common goal. Use facilitators according to the needs: the need for a good deal of intercultural listening, the importance of communication, and deal with culture. All in all this will take more time.

2. Start by analysing yourself as a consumer in the West – be aware that your lifestyle contributes to the ‘unfairness’ you might not agree with and might try to solve as a development worker and that fair trade (socially and biological sustainable trade) costs money. The solution can come from the ‘other side’ by changing consumer demands.
Action groups

Through a ranking exercise the participants prioritised the issues as follows:

1. Our contribution to political stability in West Africa
2. In establishing priorities, speak with Africans rather than about Africans
3. Support African initiatives which are intended to reinforce governance
4. Labour and entrepreneurship
5. Making research applicable in practice
6. Poverty and vulnerability
7. How can we evaluate the success of an intervention
8. Energy
9. Effectiveness and sustainability and the division of the Dutch Aid Cake

Action groups were created for two issues, with issues one and two being combined. The participants signed up for the action group of their choice and briefly met to explore ways of developing the issue.

Annexes 2 and 3 contain the list of action group members as well as the list of contact people.

One group handed in a report of their meeting.
ISSUE: Priority setting and action groups: establishing priorities with, rather than about, Africans & Support African initiatives with a view to reinforcing governance

CONVENOR: Jan van der Kolk

REPORTER: Mirjam Ros

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: +/- 8

KEY POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTION

Everyone agrees that there is a need to speak with, rather than about, Africans. However, the reality is different. The question is what are the proposals for change?

- Draw up an inventory of the Diaspora organisations that exist in the Netherlands and where they can be found, and involve them in development planning, network activities like this one, conferences, etc.
- Several efforts are being undertaken to set up platforms of organisations working in the same country (for instance Togo) as well as platforms of Diaspora organisations (see, for instance, www.diaspora-centre.org) – take note of these initiatives and contribute to them!
- Consult websites and discussion forums of African organisations to find out what their concerns are.
- Transfer the lessons of today (and other meetings) to the field / your own working situation and stimulate dialogue with target groups – open stakeholder meetings should be obligatory in any sector.

About follow-up actions:
- Most participants enjoyed the exchange of information during this meeting, and getting to know people from other sectors, and learning from each other’s experiences. However, they do not want to take this a step further and create a new action group. Most people would prefer to apply the lessons of the exchange of information and experience to their own working situation and the field.
- Try to identify other networks to link up with and promote DPRN meetings in your own organisations and networks.

Suggestions for the DPRN:
- Inform Diaspora organisations about the DPRN.
- Increase efforts to involve the participation from people from the South in the Netherlands, for instance those working in international organisations in the Hague (for instance the School of Law around the International Court).
Responses and evaluation

During the closing circle of the Open Space meeting, participants shared their thoughts and feelings about the day. Most participants were positive and appreciated the method used. The following is a brief summary of what was said:

• This was a good networking exercise, I hope we can keep it going;
• I discovered that technical engineers do not or hardly talk with local people; it underlined the importance of communication;
• This was a good exchange of knowledge;
• I am happy with the creation of the action groups;
• Low turn-out, but quality discussions;
• We are now in the position to move things forward;
• The issues were more general topics and less West African;
• This was a great step towards bringing people together and we hope that there will be a bigger African participation next time;
• The small groups enable everyone to have a say;
• Compared to last year we had a lot more to exchange;
• Valuable discussions but we didn’t get an answer to the theme's question;
• How do we make all this operational?
Appendix 1 – The composition of the action groups

**ISSUE:** Political stability

**CONTACT PERSON:** Han van Dijk

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ab Drent</td>
<td><a href="mailto:abdrent@gmail.com">abdrent@gmail.com</a>; tel. 06-42340432</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martijn Keijzer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:martijn.keijzer@plannderland.nl">martijn.keijzer@plannderland.nl</a>; tel. 020-5495361</td>
<td>Plan Nederland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frits van Bruggen</td>
<td><a href="mailto:frits-van.bruggen@minbuza.nl">frits-van.bruggen@minbuza.nl</a></td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiddo Huitzing</td>
<td><a href="mailto:huitzing@drcmedical.com">huitzing@drcmedical.com</a></td>
<td>DRC BV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Élia Esmeijer-Furtado</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elia.furtado@wanadoo.nl">elia.furtado@wanadoo.nl</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Litjens</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pjm.litjens@minbuza.nl">pjm.litjens@minbuza.nl</a></td>
<td>Ministry for Foreign Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han van Dijk</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dijkh@ascleiden.nl">dijkh@ascleiden.nl</a>; 071-5273360</td>
<td>African Studies Centre</td>
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**ISSUE:** In establishing priorities, speak with Africans rather than about Africans

**CONTACT PERSON:**

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martine Poolman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.i.poolman@tudelft.nl">m.i.poolman@tudelft.nl</a>; tel. 015-278-4772</td>
<td>TU Delft, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geosciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roelien Timmerman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ertim@xs4all.nl">ertim@xs4all.nl</a></td>
<td>Ertim + Microkreditmarkt.nl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marloes Kraan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.l.kraan@uva.nl">m.l.kraan@uva.nl</a></td>
<td>Centre for Maritime Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van der Kolk</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Janvanderkolk@ecoconseil.nl">Janvanderkolk@ecoconseil.nl</a></td>
<td>UMTAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona Klein Klouwenberg</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Fklein@ascleiden.nl">Fklein@ascleiden.nl</a></td>
<td>African Studies Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirjam Ros</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.a.f.ros-tonen@uva.nl">m.a.f.ros-tonen@uva.nl</a></td>
<td>DPRN/AMIDSt-Universiteit van Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doortje Wartena</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Doortje.Wartena@gmail.com">Doortje.Wartena@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>Universiteit Wageningen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewen Le Borgne</td>
<td><a href="mailto:LeBorgne@irc.nl">LeBorgne@irc.nl</a></td>
<td>IRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Geerling</td>
<td><a href="mailto:earnbee.consult@hetnet.nl">earnbee.consult@hetnet.nl</a></td>
<td>Werkgroep Ecologie &amp; Ontwikkeling, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Fanoiki</td>
<td><a href="mailto:efanoiki@yahoo.com">efanoiki@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>De Derde Kamer</td>
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</table>
Appendix 2 – List of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Family name</th>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Given name</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Geographic expertise</th>
<th>Thematic expertise</th>
<th>Organisational affiliation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ahmed</td>
<td>Ms</td>
<td>Sahro</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sahro.m@gmail.com">sahro.m@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>Scientist / researcher; other</td>
<td>Zambia; Somalia; Kenya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bruggen, van F.L.</td>
<td>Drs.</td>
<td>Frits</td>
<td><a href="mailto:frits-van.bruggen@minbuz.a.nl">frits-van.bruggen@minbuz.a.nl</a></td>
<td>Policymaker / ministry staff</td>
<td>Liberia; Sierra Leone; Mali; Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Van Bruggen</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Dijk, van</td>
<td>J.W.M.</td>
<td>Dr Ir</td>
<td>Han</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dijkh@ascleiden.nl">dijkh@ascleiden.nl</a></td>
<td>Scientist / researcher</td>
<td>Mali; Sahel; Chad</td>
<td>Climate change; environmental management; forestry; land tenure; land use; natural resources; pastoral economy; resources management; social participation</td>
<td>African Studies Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Drent</td>
<td>A.K.</td>
<td>Ir Ab</td>
<td><a href="mailto:abdrent@gmail.com">abdrent@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>Scientist / researcher</td>
<td>Cameroon; Nigeria</td>
<td>Ecology; anthropology; anthropometry; pastoralists</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Esmeijer–Furtado</td>
<td>E.A.</td>
<td>Drs.</td>
<td>Elia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elia.furtado@wanadoo.nl">elia.furtado@wanadoo.nl</a></td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Angola; Guinea–Bissau; Mozambique</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fanoiki</td>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Drs.</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td><a href="mailto:efanoiki@yahoo.com">efanoiki@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>Policymaker / ministry staff; consultant</td>
<td>Africa; West Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Geerling</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td><a href="mailto:carnbee.consult@hetnet.nl">carnbee.consult@hetnet.nl</a></td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Africa; Ivory Coast; Kenya; Kazakhstan; Indonesia; Ussr; West Africa;</td>
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<td>Hendrix H.G.M.</td>
<td>Policymaker / ministry</td>
<td><a href="mailto:huub.hendrix@minbuza.nl">huub.hendrix@minbuza.nl</a></td>
<td>Africa South of Sahara; Burkina Faso; Namibia</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Huitzing H.A. Dr</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td><a href="mailto:huitzing@drcmedical.com">huitzing@drcmedical.com</a></td>
<td>Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Keijzer MA</td>
<td>Staff non-governmental (development) organisation</td>
<td><a href="mailto:martin.keijzer@planederland.nl">martin.keijzer@planederland.nl</a></td>
<td>Africa; West Africa</td>
<td>Plan Nederland</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Kolk, van er J. Dr</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jan@vanderkolk.net">jan@vanderkolk.net</a></td>
<td>West Africa</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Kraan M. Drs. Marloes</td>
<td>Scientist / researcher</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.l.kraan@uva.nl">m.l.kraan@uva.nl</a></td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Fishery management; migration</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Le Borgne E. Mr</td>
<td>Staff non-governmental (development) organisation</td>
<td><a href="mailto:leborgne@irc.nl">leborgne@irc.nl</a></td>
<td>Burkina Faso; West Africa; Latin America</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Poolman M.I. Ir</td>
<td>Scientist / researcher</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.i.poolman@tudelft.nl">m.i.poolman@tudelft.nl</a></td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geosciences</td>
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<td>Ros-Tonen</td>
<td>M.A.F. Dr</td>
<td>Mirjam</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.a.f.ros-tonen@uva.nl">m.a.f.ros-tonen@uva.nl</a></td>
<td>Scientist / researcher</td>
<td>Latin America; Amazon Region; Brazil</td>
<td>AMIDSt (Universiteit van Amsterdam) / DPRN</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Vellema</td>
<td>H.C. Drs</td>
<td>Hans</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hans.vellema@tropenbos.org">hans.vellema@tropenbos.org</a></td>
<td>Staff non-governmental (development) organisation</td>
<td>Ghana; Viet Nam; Colombia</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Wartena</td>
<td>D. Dr Ir</td>
<td>Dorothea</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Doortje.Wartena@wur.nl">Doortje.Wartena@wur.nl</a></td>
<td>Scientist / researcher</td>
<td>Benin</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Wumbla</td>
<td>W.B.K. Mr (student)</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wbenk@yahoo.com">wbenk@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Zanen</td>
<td>Sj. Dr</td>
<td>Sjoerd</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sz@mdf.nl">sz@mdf.nl</a></td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Afghanistan; Africa; Burkina Faso; Asia; Mali; Nepal; Netherlands; Sahel; Sudan</td>
<td>MDF Training &amp; Consultancy</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Zwanenburg</td>
<td>M. Drs.</td>
<td>Martin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:marzwan@hotmail.com">marzwan@hotmail.com</a></td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Africa; Latin America; Asia; Pakistan; India; Bangladesh</td>
<td>ETC Energy</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
General: CERES-office, Utrecht University, Faculty of Social Sciences
P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, Netherlands
Tel.: (+31) 30 253 5842, Fax: (+31) 30 253 7482, E-mail: ceres@fss.uu.nl
Website: http://www.dprn.nl; www.global-connections.nl

Regional expert meetings: Dr Mirjam A.F. Ros–Tonen, Universiteit van Amsterdam
Nieuwe Prinsengracht 130, 1018 VZ Amsterdam
Tel: (+31) 20 525 4179 / 4062, Fax (+31) 20 525 406 4051, E-mail: m.a.f.ros-tonen@uva.nl