



Buitenlandse Zaken

NFP-NPT Newsletter

The Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP)
The Netherlands Programme for the Institutional Strengthening
of Post-secondary Education and Training Capacity (NPT)

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Dear readers,

November is the busiest month in the Netherlands. Traffic is very heavy, trains are very full. Holidays are rare. People are trying to finalise the last issues of their annual work plans. Plans for the next years are ready, yet preparations are underway as well. Getting appointments is extremely difficult. A few weeks remain before the Dutch society comes to a standstill around Christmas time.

At Nuffic we experience the same thing. We are busy doing the regular things. Assessing the NPT plans and budgets (of which too many were late) in order to settle the 2008 invoices and prepare the 2009 advance payments. We are also busy preparing NICHE and the new NFP. A Nuffic core team is discussing a number of documents and approaches with representatives of DCO. The next step is that we can start communicating with third parties. Although we are approaching that stage, we can not yet reveal much in this newsletter.

We hope you can have some patience. During the Christmas period we will all have some time to look back and to look forward. I am pretty sure we will have a thrilling 2009!

Seasons greetings and hope to see you in good health next year.

Joep Houterman
director, Capacity Building & Scholarships



December 2008

Day of the International Student (DIS) 2008 a big success!

On 8 November 2008 Nuffic hosted the third Day of the International Student in The Hague. The DIS is intended as a mark of appreciation for international students who have chosen the Netherlands as their study destination. Nuffic chose Connecting Cultures as the main theme of DIS 2008. This festive event connected various cultures and the world of education, and was visited by over 2,000 international students, including many NFP fellowship holders.

The DIS can best be described as an interesting mix between a huge party, a conference, a study day and a networking session. The opening speeches by the Minister of Education, Ronald Plasterk, Mayor of The Hague Jozias van Aartsen and Nuffic Director-General Sander van den Eijnden emphasized that international students are important for the Netherlands, not only for the internationalization of Dutch higher education, but also for cultural exchange and understanding.

The programme featured a variety of workshops, lectures, debates and entertainment sessions. The students had the chance to attend lectures with an academic content like Reaching the Millennium goals: Are we doing it the right way? and Are you the leader the future needs? Students who preferred active sessions could take part in dance workshops, clog painting, ice skating, a juggling workshop and a quiz about the Netherlands.

Throughout the day students were able to visit DIS Plaza, an information fair where international student associations, alumni associations and the business community all had stands, and there were also scholarship meeting points. At the NFP meeting point Nuffic welcomed enthusiastic fellowship holders who shared their experiences with staff and fellow students.



Kerstin Schweighöfer, president of the Foreign Press Association of the Netherlands, closed the programme with a lecture entitled 'How to survive the Low Countries'.

A dinner and a fabulous party, where some students had the chance to show off their traditional dress during a fashion show, closed the event.

Nancy Barata
programme administrator



The Logical Framework, an obstacle to capacity building projects?

The logical framework (LF) is an important tool for results-based management. Nuffic uses it in its NPT programme management for a number of reasons. Those responsible for implementing projects often perceive it as a straitjacket imposed by donors, however. Their criticisms target its rigidity and the inability to adjust to a changing world and changing development contexts. The report 'The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework Approach' (see box), published by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), sets out the essence of the current criticisms and the rationale for NGOs and donors to use or abuse the logical framework approach. A report on the criticisms, uses and abuses of the LF in the NPT¹ broadly supports the findings in the Swedish report. What is Nuffic's rationale for still applying this tool? There are many reasons.

The logical framework is, or should be, intimately connected to the Logical Framework Approach (LFA), the participatory process approach for planning, monitoring and evaluation, which allows development partners to reach consensus on:

- the objectives of the project,
- the road map for achieving them (the combined outputs and activities),
- means of objectively assessing whether or not the objectives and expected results are being met (through SMART indicators),
- how these indicators can be verified (means of verification),
- the assumptions underlying the approach and project design,
- the risks that may play a role in implementation and influence its effectiveness.

The logical framework itself is no more and no less than a summary of the project narrative which results from the participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation sessions between the project partners. It serves project managers in a number of ways:

- as a quick guide to the project's components and budget,
- as a monitoring and evaluation tool (are we achieving/did

¹ Nuffic administers the NPT programme on behalf of the Dutch Government. Nuffic is not a donor itself, but an intermediary organisation which qualified for this operation through a tendering procedure. The management agreement between the Dutch Government and Nuffic stipulates the monitoring and reporting requirements and rules.

we achieve what we intended?),

- as a quick guide to the assumptions and risks that were identified at the start, allowing for structured reflection on the following questions: How did the assumptions and risks evolve, and what measures are needed to control or influence them? Is the project design still valid or is there a need for change to cope with changes in the external or internal environment (context)?

Due to its structure, the logical framework facilitates the calculation of the required inputs. As such, it is a powerful tool for planning and for measuring efficiency and effectiveness. It allows project managers and Nuffic to account to the body commissioning the project and to taxpayers. For Nuffic, the logical framework is an important management tool which:

- helps it deal with the numerous projects in the NPT programme in a relatively standard way,
- is a relatively quick instrument for external monitoring and evaluation,
- helps to aggregate the components of different projects into the overall programme outcomes and outputs,
- helps generate information on the success, effectiveness and efficiency of the programme.

Indicators, assumptions and risks

Thinking about and reaching consensus (in advance) over 'what exactly it is one wants to achieve' and 'how it can be measured and verified', is essential for any project. SMART indicators (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**ime-bound) are an extremely important and useful way of identifying intended achievements in the project summary. They are basic units of the project planning phase, and the monitoring and accountability process. What we often see, however, are indicators with a strong focus on deliverables only, such as: 'by 15 December 2010, 23 people will be trained in problem-based learning, including 12 women', or 'by January 2009, two workshops on curriculum development will have been held'. NPT project logframes rarely list indicators that express qualitative progress towards capacity-building such as positive change in attitudes, skills, or the ability to perform a certain task. Applying such indicators to the above examples, the first would then, for example, read: '23 three staff members obtained skills enabling them to incorporate problem-based learning in their teaching practices', or '23 staff have incorporated problem-based learning in their teaching practices'. To measure and verify that this has been achieved, one could look at lecture plans or perform classroom peer observations.

Having argued that assumptions and risks are crucial to the project's success, they too deserve full attention in project management. However, they tend to evaporate from the project monitoring framework and management, and rarely appear in reports.

The monitoring of indicators, particularly qualitative indicators, and of assumptions and risks is a time-consuming part of project management, requiring long sessions of participatory reflections and dialogue. So do project managers and Nuffic make full use of the time available to jointly reflect on them in the reporting and planning stages?

How does Nuffic encourage the flexible use of Logical Frameworks?

Having designed a project and a logical framework in a participatory process with stakeholders, regular monitoring sessions during implementation are just as important, affording the opportunity to reflect on achievements, and on the validity of the logical framework components.

In any country, the context and circumstances are subject to change. On the supply side, too, new insights or new technologies may emerge. Project objectives, planned outputs or activities may become outdated or less relevant than expected. Changing contexts may also give rise to new assumptions and, quite likely, new risks. NPT therefore allows for changes in the logical framework objectives, results and activities during the implementation phase. How projects should deal with such changes is explained in 'What to do with changes in projects'.

Miriam Langeveld
programme administrator

The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework Approach (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005) is available at:

www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=LFA-review.pdf&a=21025

What to do with changes within NPT project can be found at:

www.nuffic.nl/nederlandse-organisaties/docs/npt/What_to_do_with_changes_within_NPT_projects.pdf

*From left to right:
Ms Anne-Marie Schreven,
Honorary Consul of the Netherlands in Bhutan;
Dasho Dr Sonam Tenzin, Hon'ble Secretary,
Ministry of Labour and Human Resources;
Mr Bert van Rheenen,
programme administrator Nuffic*

“Dutch-Bhutanese relations have become more diverse”

an interview with Anne-Marie Schreven, the Honorary Consul of the Netherlands in Bhutan

Dutch-Bhutanese relations started about 23 years ago. What kind of relations do the two countries share now?

Bhutan and the Netherlands maintain close and cordial ties at different levels. We have had bilateral relations between our governments since 1985. The sustainable development agreement has helped develop infrastructure and build capacity in several areas. The programme is continuing under the name south-south cooperation and is still supported by the Dutch government. Strong development ties do exist through SNV. This year, we are celebrating our 20th anniversary in Bhutan. And we offer Dutch scholarships and tailor-made training programmes with government and private sector organizations through the NFP programme. At the moment, we are busy establishing an alumni association. In the Netherlands, we have a friendship organization, Bhutan+Partners, which organizes cultural and other events.

How have relations changed over the years?

The initial contacts between our two countries were bilateral, and centred around development initiatives. However, over the years, contacts have become more diverse. We now have cultural exchanges, and educational and academic exchanges between our universities, Bhutanese cultural groups have participated in a Dutch festival, and we have also forged sporting ties, including with the Dutch archery foundation. And we must not forget our close royal ties: the visit by Crown Prince Willem Alexander and his wife Princess Maximà to Bhutan last year.





Punakha Dzong,
the Monastery in
Punakha Valley

We have been told that the Dutch development focus is shifting from Asia to Africa. How long do you see Dutch assistance to Bhutan continuing?

The focus of Dutch assistance is indeed increasingly focused on Africa, but we still focus on Asia too. Two-fifths of the world's population live in Asia and poverty is still an issue in this part of the world. Since Bhutan is developing rapidly and is set to become a middle-income country, Dutch assistance will be diverted to the least developed countries and eventually phased out. However, that doesn't mean that collaboration will come to an end.

How will relations change with Bhutan becoming a constitutional democracy?

Although we will gradually phase out development assistance, the Netherlands is delighted with the transition to parliamentary democracy in Bhutan. Our Minister for Development Cooperation has decided to continue bilateral assistance to support Bhutan in this process.

Hundreds of Bhutanese have received support from the Dutch government to study and train (through the Netherlands Fellowship Programme). Will this increase in time?

Some 300 Bhutanese have studied for their Master's degree or taken short courses or special tailor-made training in the Netherlands. I must say Bhutan is doing very well. We have about 40-50 candidates receiving scholarships each year. The tailor-made programmes have even more impact than the individual Master's and short courses. Bhutan is a small country and needs support for its organisations to help them make the transition successful on various levels. The NFP provides a way of offering this support, and the Bhutanese are keen to carry on using this opportunity for the time being. So far, we have successfully completed seven tailor-made training courses with different organizations and we have several more in the pipeline. The Netherlands recently decided to continue supporting Bhutan through its transition with bilateral support. The budget support that the Dutch plan to give Bhutan over the next five years is intended as a sign of confidence. This is a chance for both parties to further professionalize and intensify their collaboration.

During a visit in April 2008 Nuffic programme administrator Bert van Rheenen saw the impact that tailor-made programmes have already had. 'It was very satisfying to see how the tailor-made programmes are not only appreciated in words by the organizations whose staff have taken part. Their keenness to use the knowledge and experience gained and to incorporate it into their daily work, thus helping further develop the organizations they work for, has made the tailor-made programme a valuable tool which is in great demand in Bhutan.'

NPT Strengthening of Institutional Management (SIM) Project at the University of Syiah Kuala, Aceh, Indonesia

Long history

Education has a long history in Aceh. The first traders from the Indian sub-continent and Yemen brought with them not only their religion but also books and writing skills. The Acehnese were one of the first communities in the Indonesian archipelago to establish schools and other centres of learning.



Being relatively close to the Arab world and the Indian sub-continent, Aceh has always been an important meeting place for scholars from abroad bringing in new ideas and innovative concepts. The Acehnese Sultans of the 18th and 19th century were particularly enlightened in their ideas on governance and education, fighting for independence and sovereignty.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the University of Syiah Kuala (UNSYIAH) in Aceh is one of the oldest state universities in Indonesia, established in the early sixties.

Dramatic changes

UNSYIAH lost many of its lecturers, staff and students in the tsunami, and survivors often lost most of their belongings and many of their relatives.

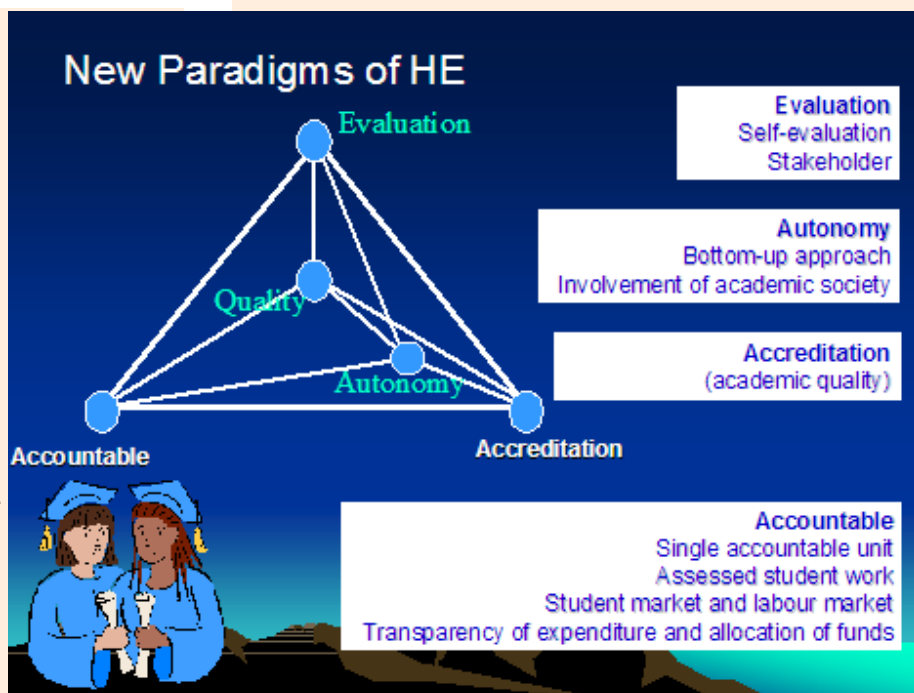
“The effects of the tsunami have shaken our society and will require many years of psychological and physical recovery,” comments UNSYIAH’s Rector, Dr. Darni Daud. “At the same time we have to move ahead. The university, as a centre of intellectual resources, must not only play a primary role in the tsunami rehabilitation effort but also join forces with the Acehnese community, the NGO sector and the Provincial Government to act as a prime mover for development. With

the development of science and technology and high-quality graduates, we are convinced we can make a significant contribution.”

Self-evaluation

In this respect, the Nuffic NPT Project Strengthening of Institutional Management (SIM) started at just the right moment. Following internal self-evaluation involving all levels of the university, UNSYIAH’s Top Management concluded that increased autonomy in university management and income generation would solve most of the current problems UNSYIAH is facing. These problems derive from limited funding, ineffective and inefficient university governance, high dependency on central government funding and administration, and inadequate asset and human resources management.

On the basis of this self-assessment, new paradigms for future development were established, comprising autonomy, evaluation, accreditation, enhancing academic quality, accountability and quality.



These paradigms form the basis of the four-year (2007-2010) NPT SIM Project in UNSYIAH and areas of intervention presented in the Nuffic NPT - UNSYIAH Cooperation Document signed in 2007. By the end of 2010 all targeted systems with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) need to be in place.

Changing mindsets

In January 2007 a Technical Assistance Team from BMB Mott MacDonald of the Netherlands and PPA of Indonesia started with the implementation of the project following an Inception Phase. It

became obvious that for UNSYIAH to effectively mobilize and use its intellectual resources, a dedicated functional office for the implementation of its autonomous status (Kantor Persiapan Operasi Otonomi (KPO2) – Office for the Preparation of the Autonomy Operations) needed to be established, rather than a typical project management office. The management and members of KPO2 are taking the lead and the external BMB/PPA consultants are playing an advisory role. As with any institutional development or capacity building programme, change has to come from within and be supported by all levels of the institution.

The TA Team is fortunate to include experts from the Agricultural University of Bogor (IPB). IPB was one of the first universities in Indonesia to achieve autonomous status. Dr. Adil Basuki, for many years Head of IPB's KPO Office, has firsthand experience of autonomy issues. "The challenge in introducing autonomy is not in the implementation of technical instruments to improve financial and other systems, but in changing people's mindset," he explains.

Hans Rolloos
SIM SKU team leader
BMB Mott MacDonald

Notes from the field

Some random thoughts at the end of a day in the life of a gender consultant

We have come to the end of another gender review day in Ethiopia, where the weather is reasonably cool. This allows us to put in more hours of work. Between the three of us we have seen five different people/groups today. In any tropical country, where the weather is usually much hotter, this would have been very exhausting. I order a well-earned beer which is brought to my hotel room as I mull over the day's findings.

I am personally impressed by the level of engagement with gender issues in this country. It appears that the people have driven themselves to address the issue of gender without very much assistance from Nuffic. The government is committed to gender as a development issue and supports institutions in mainstreaming gender. I have the impression that these people are doing more than paying lip service to the issue.

We have found that each country comes with its own specific context, a very specific level of commitment and different challenges. But everywhere we find lots of people who are very committed and passionate about gender. Both donors and policymakers should seek out such groups and involve them in decision-making processes.

Tomorrow we will hold a debriefing workshop. Hopefully it will be well attended. Our experience with these end-of-week workshops has been that they do not generally attract full attendance since people want to get away for the weekend. Yet we are hoping to have a useful and stimulating – even provocative – discussion with participants, who we hope will come up with some practical recommendations.

Soon we shall move to our final review country: Yemen. An African proverb sums up my feelings about the manner in which gender issues are dealt in the countries where we have already conducted the Nuffic gender review: "The moon moves slowly, but it soon covers the town".

Mansah Prah
member of the Nuffic Gender Review Team

The country reports will be distributed by the review team members, where possible, using the NPT email forum of the country involved in the review. The final report, which is expected early December will be disseminated by Nuffic around mid December 2008.

Transition from old to new programmes

For nearly half a century, the Dutch government has financed several international cooperation programmes aimed at the sustainable strengthening of institutional capacity for post-secondary education and training in developing countries.

In October 2008 the government launched two new international cooperation programmes: the **Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP)** and the **Netherlands Initiative Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education Institutions (NICHE)**. The overall aim of the two programmes is to help alleviate qualitative and quantitative shortages in skilled manpower, and to do so within the framework of sustainable capacity-building geared to reducing poverty in developing countries.

Some €300 million has been earmarked for these programmes for 2008-2012. Both programmes are funded from the development cooperation budget of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The programmes are administered by Nuffic on behalf of the Dutch government.

The two programmes will be phased in gradually to replace the Netherlands Programme for the Institutional Strengthening of Post Secondary Education and Training Capacity (NPT) and the old NFP. The aim is to achieve a better than ever fit between the activities funded by the two programmes and the development policy of the recipient countries and to make sure they match local priorities.

Detailed information will be available on the Nuffic website as soon as possible.

¹ TVET= Technical and Vocational Education Sector

Schokland Pact: a boost for the TVET¹ sector in Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Ethiopia.

In mid-2007, the Dutch Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGIS) gave the Millennium Development Goals a boost in the form of the 'Schokland Pact'. Schokland, a former island now reclaimed and integrated into the Dutch mainland, was chosen as the location for the signing of the pact between the Dutch government, civil society and the private sector, in which they undertook to make an extra, joint effort towards achieving the MDGs. Under the Pact, joint initiatives by public organisations, private companies and civil society may be eligible for additional government funding.

The Dutch Government expects the Pact to lead to new and innovative partnerships between civil-society, public- and private-sector partners in developing countries and in the Netherlands. Such (sometimes complex) forms of collaboration, which first began to emerge over the past ten years, have proved very successful. Why? Simply because such partnerships cover and interconnect the realm of the policy environment, the market and the people in their daily professional and private lives. This connection is essential for development as it enables partners to jointly reflect on common interests and to take joint action so that a dynamic learning and enabling environment is created between the government, the private sector and the people.

One of the themes chosen under the Pact is the Technical and Vocational Education sector (TVET). About 23 partners signed, including Nuffic. In September 2007, the signatories began work on a proposal involving four countries: Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Ethiopia. In August 2008, their efforts were rewarded with a €2 million grant from DGIS. Proposals for partnerships to strengthen vocational training in the four countries will have to be developed, based on mapping exercises and further needs assessment.

The lead partner and coordinator of the TVET programme is EDUKANS. Other partners include Dutch Universities for Applied Sciences, regional training centres (ROCs), development organisations such as NOVIB and ICCO and, last but not least, a wide variety of partners in the South. Nuffic's role in this programme is to reflect with the partners and to provide advice on stakeholders and other initiatives in the sector in order to bring them together. An advisory committee and an evaluation committee will be set up for the programme. The Terms of Reference and participants will be decided in due course.

Miriam Langeveld
programme administrator

MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Development cooperation is under fire in the Netherlands. For decades, political and public support for development cooperation was unassailable. The Netherlands is one of only a few wealthy countries that actually meet the 0.8% of GNP target for development assistance.

However, for some time now, doubts have been openly expressed in the Netherlands as to the value and effectiveness of development assistance as it has been provided over the past few decades. A recent evaluation of eight years of bilateral support to Africa questioned the effectiveness of the resources spent over all those years. It is difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate real results. This is grist to the mill of MPs who believe that aid is in principle a bad and addictive medicine that only exacerbates the disease. They believe the alternative is to encourage countries to take control of their own economic development through good leadership, good entrepreneurship and market forces.

Support for countries with poor governance, involved in conflict or fostering terrorism has also been drawn into question. Opinion is sharply divided as to whether those countries should be punished by have their aid withheld, or supported in order to bring about change for the better.

These doubts can only be addressed if the effectiveness of aid can be demonstrated. Only with facts can we have a proper debate about whether aid makes sense, or is mere nonsense.

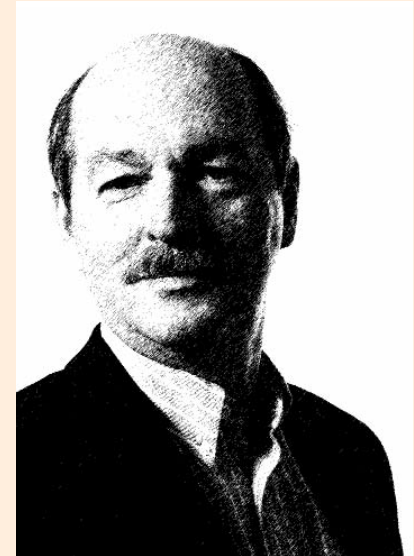
The Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation acknowledges the need for the use of resources to be properly accounted for, and in the past few years has called for a system that highlights visible links between policy objectives, intended results and the resources needed.

The new NICHE and NFP programmes fall under this regime. It is no longer enough simply to report on activities completed, the number of staff trained, or the teaching material developed. Reports will have to show whether such activities have actually helped build capacity, and to what extent. By extension, it must also be clear whether that enhanced capacity has produced better performances in a sector, or helped reduce poverty, and what evidence we have to substantiate such claims.

Clearly, this will be a major challenge for those implementing projects and for Nuffic. They will have to identify indicators that can be used to determine the effects of projects, and to monitor and assess the actual realisation of goals.

If they succeed – and let us assume that they will – this will reassure Dutch taxpayers that the money is being spent well, and those working on projects on the ground will be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work. This will ultimately benefit everyone, and enhance political and public support for development cooperation. The tide is turning, we are moving with the times, but the goal remains the same.

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Ideas and suggestions

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