

Bricks, mortar and capacity building

1965 - 2005



40 years of SNV Netherlands Development Organisation



SNV

Connecting People's Capacities

Netherlands

Development

Organisation

1963



1965

Founding of SNV-Foundation
Dutch Volunteers.

1970

Foundation of KNV
(Contact Group of
Volunteers).

1978

JVC se

1963

JVC and JVP start
their activities.

1968



1974

Start of SNV's
'B-objective'
campaign.

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November 2005

SNV

Foreword

This pre-publication offers an introduction to the history of SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, which is currently celebrating its fortieth anniversary. After the initiative was taken by Dr. Jan-Bart Gewald, researcher at the ASC in Leiden, this project was set up as a joint undertaking by SNV and the African Studies Centre (ASC). When we started in February 2005 we could never have anticipated all the support we would receive from so many people. It is not possible to mention everybody who has offered us assistance by name, but we would like to thank everyone involved for their hospitality, help and information.* We trust that we have represented their thoughts and views accurately and we, the authors, are alone to blame for any mistakes or misrepresentations in the text.

* It is with deep regret that we heard the news of the death of Ir. Louk Kortenhorst (19 April 1928 - 7 September 2005). Mr. Kortenhorst was the team leader of the first volunteers' team sent to Cameroon in 1963. Shortly before he passed away, he allowed us to speak with him on the JVP/SNV history.

Contents

Introduction	7
The Merchant and the Preacher (1949-1962)	9
Bricks and Mortar (1963-1972)	13
Self-Reliance (1973-1984)	21
Expertise Expected (1985-1994)	29
Building Capacity (1995-2005)	37
Final Remarks	42
Endnotes	44
Further reading and references	46
Abbreviations	46
Ministers for development cooperation	47
SNV chairpersons/directors	47

Introduction

Not much has been written on the history of development organisations. Some have been operating for over fifty years but very little time or energy has been devoted thus far to their history. If there is any mention of the past at all, it is usually limited to statistics and comments about their bureaucratic, formal history.

This also holds true for SNV Netherlands Development Organisation that was formally established in 1965. There are numerous reports and documents about it, but they do not approach the organisation from a historical perspective. In some publications, the history of SNV is referred to, but no overview is given that traces its past from its inception right through to the present day. The celebratory and commemorative publications that exist offer very little analysis, mainly focusing on administrative and official data. Our objective here is to present SNV's history through the eyes of those involved in the organisation.

A more detailed study, aimed at an interpretation of the socio-cultural history of SNV, will be published in 2006. This initial publication hopes to show the direction subsequent research will take and offer some preliminary insights.

As a prepublication, the booklet will not offer a conclusive interpretation, but rather forms a collage of historical impressions, based on the perspectives of those concerned. Our central concern lies with change and the ways in which SNV has altered over the last forty years in policy and in practice. This forms the central research question of the study. The term 'perspective' has been crucial and further research questions can be identified as follows:

- What were the intentions and expectations of SNV employees, and how do they look back on their time at SNV?
- What were the intentions and expectations of the local communities in which SNV was active, and how do they evaluate SNV's activities?

At this stage of the project, most of the interviewees were people presently or formerly employed by SNV; a state of affairs that will reflect in this prepublication. In the coming months we hope to garner more perspectives of the local communities in which SNV activities took place. Also in terms of archival research, much still remains to be done, but we hope this prepublication already indicates the project's aims and results.

The term 'socio-cultural' refers to a 'history from below'. Rather than concentrating on top-level politics and the Grand Old Men of Dutch politics, the focus is on the changing perspectives of the 'ordinary' participants. These participants include development workers as well as local people in developing countries.¹ Their hopes, expectations, frustrations and evaluations are central to this study.

Such an approach has important consequences. Policy-makers have to make choices and do so after consideration, deliberation, exchange and debate. For people 'in the field', the arguments underlying the choices may be less evident. The views presented in this study therefore do not always explain the background of SNV policies, but rather focus on how changes and decisions were received by the people who had to implement or face them. Relatively little attention will be given to the context in which SNV policies were designed and the circumstances influencing the overall SNV policies.

Socio-cultural history also involves a research element. Instead of presenting a chronicle of the factual bureaucratic developments of SNV, we want to include micro-factors such as personal relations, cooperation between people and the private sphere in our interpretation, as we believe that these – perhaps even more so than formal policies – influence the practices of development work.

In the course of its history, SNV has been under attack from many sides – from the left, the centre and the right. Various people have voiced sharp criticism of Dutch development policies in general, and of SNV in particular. It has been claimed that development cooperation is ineffective and merely leads to ‘building cathedrals in the desert’. This booklet will not always put SNV in a positive light. When interpreting history, there is an inherent tendency to focus on problematic issues: problems after all call for an explanation, while matters that go well draw much less attention. We were not alone in this dilemma and a striking number of those who we interviewed, on reading the interview report, felt that their comments were too negative. Even if the report was a literal transcription of what they had said, several people stated that they had wished to project a more positive image of SNV than the notes gave. For all its faults and for all their critique, they felt that, in general, SNV was a useful organisation that has employed many capable, interesting and positive people.

8

It is not our intention to either condemn or praise SNV for its accomplishments. Our aim is to frame the ideals, hopes, expectations, frustrations and achievements of the local participants and SNV volunteers/workers in their specific context. This approach will not lead to any judgement of SNV and its employees in either positive or negative terms, but hopefully will increase our understanding of what made so many Dutch people chose to go abroad with SNV, and how both Dutch and national SNVers and the people they worked with viewed their relationship.

A study that attempts to interpret the changes of SNV may contribute to the history of development thinking and practice, and to an understanding of Dutch development policies. We should not exaggerate the importance of this study: SNV on average has only been allowed to spend 1% of the annual Dutch development budget and this, in turn, has been less than 1% of the national budget.

All the same, SNV has become in many ways the epitome of Dutch development cooperation. Over the years, thousands of young Dutch people have been sent to work on projects in more than forty-five countries on four continents. SNV is well known in many parts of the world and numerous people, at local, national and international levels, are familiar with its work. For the past forty years, development cooperation has been an integral part of Dutch foreign and domestic policy, and SNV has become one of the most important Dutch development organisations, playing a leading role in development policy-making in the Netherlands.

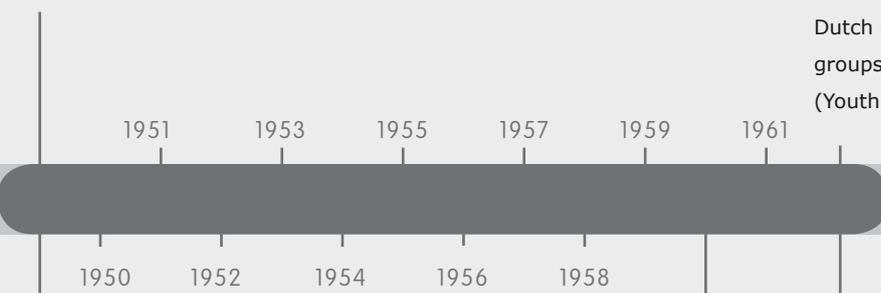
Apart from its international and national fame, SNV has entered Dutch living rooms in a variety of ways. Before the sharp increase in intercontinental tourism in the 1990s, SNV was often the most direct link between the average Dutch citizen and the underdeveloped world. Many neighbourhoods and villages across the country had their ‘own’ volunteer – later called an SNV development worker – who was stationed in some faraway country. Particularly in the 1970s when SNV conducted active consciousness-raising programmes with returned SNVers travelling round the Netherlands and many twin-town bonds were forged by SNV people, popular support for development work was widespread.

Although only a few people spent their entire career at SNV, a considerable number of SNVers remained employed within development circles or in foreign affairs. SNV was in effect a breeding ground for young development professionals in certain developing countries: in Guinea Bissau, for example, a number of people who worked with SNV as counterparts or consultants later took up prominent positions in politics, business, law and other areas.² The same holds for Zambia where local former SNV employees found their way into Zambian NGOs after their SNV experience.³ For all the above-mentioned reasons, SNV’s past merits more attention than it has hitherto been given.

The Merchant and the Preacher

1949-1962

1949
Foundation of Withall
commission.



1949
First start of Dutch
Development Aid.

1960
Foundation of
the Peace Corps
- the American
volunteers
organisation.

1962
Dutch church and youth
groups initiate the 'JVC'
(Youth Volunteers Corps).

1962
Dutch government initiates
the 'JVP' (Youth Volunteers
Programme).



Year: 1963

Country: THE NETHERLANDS

Subscr.: First JVP volunteers were invited to a reception at the royal palace by queen Juliana, short before leaving for Cameroon.

The Merchant and the Preacher

The word 'development' is usually associated with the period after the Second World War. Before the Development Era, it was argued, international relations were hierarchical: the colonial and imperial systems were exploitative, while the new development programme was designed to benefit the world's poorest countries.

There are, however, many historical ties between 'development' as it was implemented after the Second World War and the colonial context. Also in the Dutch context there are obvious links between colonialism and the post-World War II development era. Colonial administrations had started up 'betterment programmes' and 'development schemes', in some cases as early as 1900.

Many Christian development organisations founded in the 1950s and 1960s not only took their inspiration from earlier missionary activities in education and healthcare, but actually cooperated with missionaries who had been working in the former colonies for a long time. Dutch church communities at home took a keen interest in missionary activities: weekly offertories for missions were organised, and the circulars sent from abroad were read with interest by church members. In fact, many of the initial volunteers first learnt about development organisations through these channels.

Post-war Dutch motives for participating in development aid were closely related to the Netherlands' colonial history. It was no secret that Dutch money was meant to improve Dutch-Indonesian relations, and could additionally provide an opportunity for young people to work overseas. After Indonesia attained independence, and especially when Dutch control over New Guinea (later Irian Jaya) ended in 1962, colonial officers, young men following the school for colonial administration and people who had earned a living on the sugar, coffee, tea and tobacco plantations returned to the Netherlands. With many of its colonies gone, the opportunities for young Dutch people to work in tropical regions became extremely limited. In total, some 250,000 people returned to the Netherlands between 1945 and 1962, among them many tropical experts whose knowledge – it was felt – could be used in the new programme.

The historical legacy of a nation of merchants and preachers (Koopman en Dominee) or, to put it in other words, of capitalists and Calvinists, came to play a role in Dutch development aid. In the early days, self-interest was expressed shamelessly: Prime Minister Drees argued at the time that technical assistance 'was of importance to the whole world, but above all to the Netherlands'⁴ At the same time, however, the strong sense of moralism in Dutch history proved an inducement to Dutch development aid, and humanitarian interests – often Christian-inspired – were a crucial factor. The Netherlands was one of the first countries to jump on the new development bandwagon and the percentage of GNP (Gross National Product) that the Dutch have historically spent on development cooperation has been among the highest in the world.

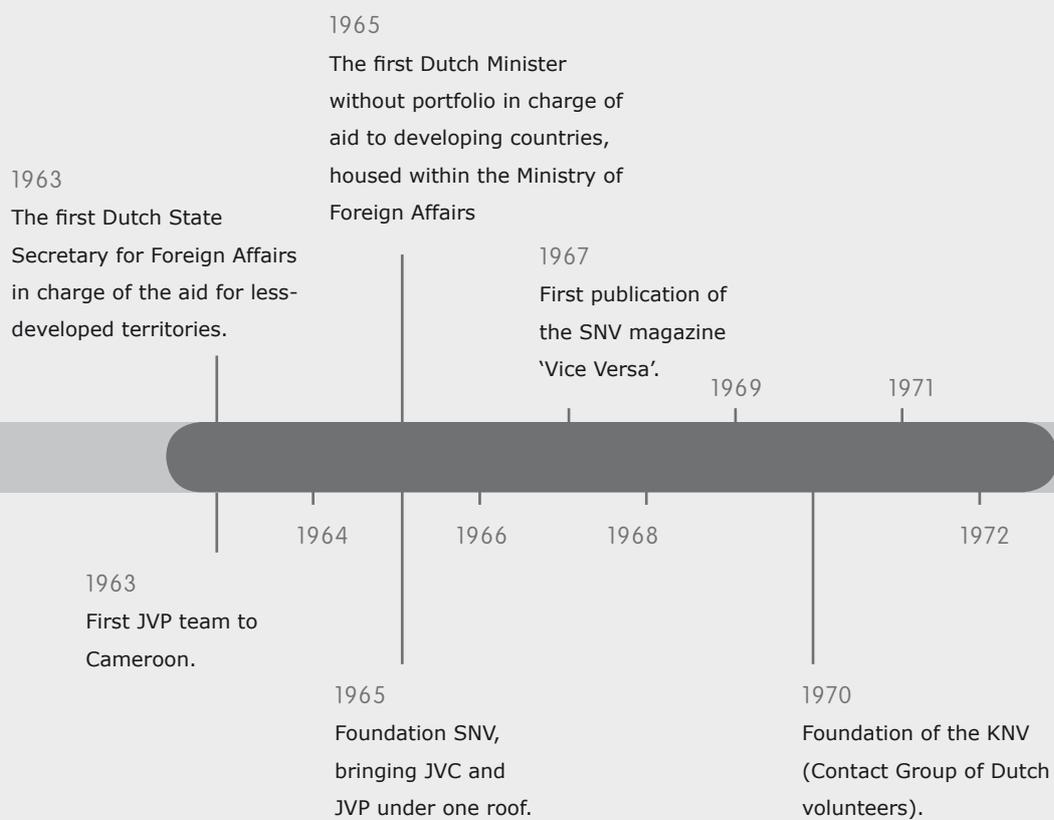
The first Dutch development money was spent in 1949. In the same year, Withall (Werkcommissie Inzake Technische Hulp aan Laag Ontwikkelde Landen) was founded. Withall was primarily concerned with advising the government on its policy vis-à-vis the United Nations. Aid took the form of technical cooperation, with the Netherlands offering expertise and technical knowledge that would contribute to the development of Third World countries. Bursaries were offered to students from underdeveloped countries, while at the same time tropical experts were dispatched from the Netherlands to these countries.

During the first years of Dutch development aid, there was little theoretical thinking about what development should entail. Policy plans or strategies were lacking and the programme depended heavily on the man on the spot. Longterm planning was regarded as unnecessary, as it was expected that developing countries would soon catch up with the rest of the world.

Public interest in development aid started to increase in the 1950s. In 1956, for example, NOVIB (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand) was founded. Numerous other initiatives were also taken, mainly by church and youth organisations, but these were mostly small-scale and short-lived, although some did form the basis of the larger organisations of the Third World Movement in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵

Bricks and Mortar

1963 - 1972





Year: 1968
.....
Country: COLOMBIA
.....
Subscr.: Young volunteer gives information
about agriculture.
.....
.....

Bricks and Mortar

To find SNV's predecessor, we need to cast our minds back to 1963. This was a memorable year, because for the first time in Dutch history a State Secretary for Foreign Affairs was appointed to be 'charged with the aid for less-developed territories'.

Following the foundation of the Peace Corps – the American volunteers' organisation – in 1960, Dutch church and youth groups took the initiative and copied the American example. They envisaged a volunteer service, under the name of JVC (Jongeren Vrijwilliger Corps: Youth Volunteers' Corps), in which youngsters would live and work in Third World countries for a period of time. Shortly before its official foundation was announced, the JVC applied to the Dutch government for financial assistance. When news of this reached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there was a knee-jerk reaction, as it was felt that an organisation such as this ought to be a state affair, not something left to private initiative.

The subsequent conflict between private and state activities in the voluntary sector was never completely resolved. In the following quote, the biographer of Prince Claus, who was chairman of SNV from 1974 to 1980, explained the origins of the conflict as follows:

15

" From the start already the two were in conflict: when the highest development official Jan Meijer heard that the private organisations were about to found the JVC, he, on the very same day rented a building, had a placard 'JVP' hammered on it, staffed it with an official and had Luns (Joseph Luns, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs) announce it all festively in a press conference."⁶

On 19 November 1963 the first JVP (Jongeren Vrijwilligers Programma) team left for Cameroon. To add grandeur to the occasion, the volunteers were invited to a reception at the royal palace some days before leaving, and Minister Luns personally saw them off on the train to Paris. Upon arrival, however, it became clear that the promised housing facilities for the eleven men and ten women were not available. In order to resolve this, a number of villagers were forcibly removed from their homes, whereupon

the volunteers entered their new abodes. Furthermore, it turned out that the school buildings in which they had been supposed to work, no longer existed.

The volunteers then took the initiative of starting agricultural instruction in the nearby villages. Harry Sesink-Clee, one of the field staff members in Cameroon, explained: 'In those days it was all rather informal. If somebody said: "Yeah, this is what I would like to do", then they just set out to do that.'⁷ Since a first report on Cameroon indicated that expectations had been too high, promises had not been kept and language problems were difficult to overcome, it can hardly be said that the mission was a great success. All the same, by 1969 satisfaction was being expressed about the 'viability of the Dutch programme'. Several volunteers were invited

of their organisation. From the start, SNV was a complex administrative construct, combining the responsibilities of SNV directorate, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the new 'Minister without portfolio in charge of aid to developing countries'.⁹ The new minister had taken up office in 1965 but his was a post without portfolio and from then onwards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs housed two ministers. By the time the JVP was founded in 1963, most of the direct links to the colonial era had waned. All the same, the fact that the Dutch had lost New Guinea to Indonesia in 1962 certainly contributed to the foundation of the JVP. A considerable number of people active in the JVP had formerly worked in the colonies, people who saw no contradiction whatsoever between their former job and their new role in development. As the first field director in Zambia remembered:

16 " For me it was a logical choice. I came from New-Guinea, I was a civil servant. There were others with me who were without jobs because New Guinea was handed over to Indonesia. That was in 1963, when JVP was founded. JVP was looking for staff people, and people with four or five years' experience in the tropics came from Indonesia. New people, not those out of the old colonial mould, but people with a more modern outlook."¹⁰

to return and at least one of them received a Cameroonian knighthood.⁸

Between 1963 and 1965 JVC and JVP existed side by side. The Dutch government, however, insisted on cooperation and in July 1965 SNV (Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers: Dutch Volunteers' Foundation) was founded to bring the JVC and the JVP under one roof. Although both organisations had an interest in amalgamating, pressure was clearly brought to bear on the JVC to accept the new arrangement. Relations between the JVC and the state part of SNV continued to be characterised by mutual distrust, uncertainty over the division of responsibilities and, especially on the private side, by fears about losing control

Ties with churches remained important. This was still the age of compartmentalisation (verzuiling) in the Netherlands when political parties, education, the media and Dutch social life were all divided along denominational-political lines. While on one of the introductory courses, some Catholic youngsters went to a Protestant wedding ceremony: 'They were simply astonished to recognise each other as Christians'.¹¹ In the teams, people from various backgrounds met and for many this was a unique experience. The volunteers could be posted by the government or other development organisations but in quite a number of cases they were involved in church activities. This was a logical choice: 'What we realised immediately was the mission:

those fathers had been there for a hundred years'.¹² In other cases, the missionaries were the only Dutch people familiar with the context in the countries where the JVP, and later SNV, started activities. As matters were difficult to organise from the Netherlands, the missionaries' support was much appreciated, while the missionaries in turn hoped to benefit from the volunteers' work. The 1960s and early 1970s can be characterised as the bricks-and-mortar era of SNV.

Development work largely consisted of practical aid: SNV volunteers were active in building, farming, repairing and carrying out medical tasks. This roll-up-your-sleeves approach was prompted by the realisation that advice alone did not suffice. At this stage, so many felt, it was time for action:

separate for boys and girls, consisted of 'a little bit of everything. They were themselves not very sure as to what to do.' What was most important was that the team grew into a close-knit unit during this introductory phase.¹⁵

The idea was that, although some countries were at a different stage of development, they would soon catch up and achieve the same level of development as countries in the West.

This process would inevitably take place along the same lines as it had done in Western countries. Countries were seen as a whole and development was largely seen in macro-economic terms, with GNP being an important indicator. The aim was to bring 'the underdeveloped people' into the modern era; 'The educational task of the

" When after the Second World War, technical assistance started, this in the first place took the form of sending advisors and of allowing young people to come over in order to follow courses in the developed countries (...) After some years the opinion started to gain ground that it is not sufficient to give advice about how to solve a problem or to fill a lacuna (...) Then people were sent out who subsequently converted the given advice into practice for the concerned government."¹³

'Do good and don't look back' (doe wel en zie niet om) – an old Dutch expression – was being interpreted literally. The young volunteers were expected to bring about major changes in the villages. It was assumed that the people would resist their attempts at first but eventually even the elderly would see the benefits of the new techniques being demonstrated by the volunteers. It was a matter of know-how and of show-how, as an SNV publicity film of 1969 put it: 'a helping hand to a developing land'.¹⁴

Preparation before going abroad was not very extensive. The Royal Tropical Institute provided a course of about three months during which time a team of volunteers would stay in the nearby youth hostel and receive training, primarily in English or French. The rest of the course, partly

volunteer is no easy one, but very rewarding: to bring light in matters that are still complete darkness to the other'.¹⁶

It was expected that many obstacles would await the young volunteers. In Vice Versa, the SNV magazine that had been around since 1967, it was explained that the volunteer might discover 'that in or around the hut nothing is encouraged or forbidden and nothing is undertaken that is not entrenched for hundreds of years in a fixed pattern. Then he understands that there can not be much enterprising spirit and originally little initiative'.¹⁷ The volunteers would have to alter the age-old 'wrong' traditions, customs and practices, overcome the sceptical attitude of the conservative Africans, and teach responsibility and cooperation. There was no question about the

superiority of the knowledge and techniques used by the development worker.

Local culture was seen as a hindrance to development and the causes of poverty lay largely with the poor people themselves. Their methods of milking, ploughing and preparing food were all wrong. It was because of 'the religion' that children in India were so pale and thin, people in Africa 'want to take care of cattle, but do not always know how', hygiene was below standard and the people lacked discipline and a sense of responsibility.¹⁸ In the course of the 1960s, these ideas about development, closely related to paternalism and charity, were already undergoing major changes, yet they were part of the paradigm with which SNV started out.

there was also a larger difference. There was a distance, there was no democracy'.¹⁹

That is not to say that the relationship between staff and volunteers was impersonal. Whenever any of the 97 SNV volunteers posted to Zambia had to visit the capital because of illness or some other reason, they would stay at the house of the country's field leader, Willem Zevenbergen: a place to sleep was provided and meals were eaten together. Only when Zevenbergen insisted and explained to SNV/The Hague that this was becoming too difficult to combine with family life was 'the farm' built, a place where volunteers could stay during their time in the capital.²⁰ Few of the volunteers had much privacy. A Cameroon team member explained:

" The other boys ended up in an old farm shed. They had put up cardboard walls so that one could just not look over, but of course they heard every curse and sigh of each other. There we lived together for eight months. The atmosphere was good though."²¹

The teams consisted of young people in the phase of finding their place in society; the ties that developed within the teams were often strong. Several marriages, duly announced in the JVP magazine *Visum*, and close friendships followed SNV team experience. Even today, it is especially members of these initial teams who keep in contact and organise reunions.

A team of volunteers was led by a number of field staff, headed by a field leader. Contact between field staff and the volunteers was usually somewhat more formal. There was often an age gap of about ten years and some field staff went overseas with their families. In addition, the staff members were on the payroll of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the volunteers only received a daily allowance. In the 1960s, being a field leader implied the need to create a certain distance and formality vis-à-vis the volunteer team: 'Contacts were difficult. In those days

With limited medical services, equally limited amenities and transport problems, the volunteers and their staff were dependent on each other for assistance and support. Frequently the circumstances were extremely difficult and the teams could not count on help from the Netherlands. Relations within the teams were often good but could also rapidly turn sour if there were personality clashes. The volunteers 'met' with people in the host countries in various ways. Perhaps because of the close internal bonds within SNV teams, contact with local people was usually classified as good but superficial. The wife of one of the team leaders remembered how they had once organised a potato festival, at which they prepared potatoes in all different possible ways: baked, cooked, mashed, etc, but that none of the local people who had been invited turned up. They all came up with an excuse.²²

The distance between the local culture and SNV volunteers was generally seen as unbridgeable. It was assumed that people in the Third World lived in another time, often called 'traditional', and in another world, often called 'primitive'. Local culture was largely defined in the negative. One team leader remembered that a girl belonging to a strict denomination of a Protestant church was told to remove all things African from her house in the Netherlands after she had had a miscarriage: 'You must remove it all, burn it!' Which she did.²³ This may be an exceptional case but, on the whole, religion and customs in developing countries were not regarded as conducive to development.

The first teams were dispatched overseas in haste and policies and plans were virtually non-existent. As there was hardly any knowledge about the local needs and wishes, the volunteers often just did what they felt was right. Most volunteers left the Netherlands with great optimism: about the possibilities for change, about the local circumstances, and about their own abilities for contributing to development.

Yet, it was not long before some of them realised that 'the struggle against poverty, hunger and ignorance' would not be as simple to resolve as they had anticipated. For one thing, it became clear that the local people might not be prepared to adapt to Western notions of development and that the volunteers might be forced to change their plans. For example, Ms van Helsdingen, a female horticulturalist in Colombia, was not given much opportunity to work in her field of expertise: 'above all, the women in the veredas (villages) ask for cooking and sewing lessons'.²⁴ While the volunteers saw their adaptation to local culture and even their mere coming to the developing countries as a sign of their goodwill,

local people may have seen this rather differently. They showed their goodwill by receiving the volunteers as guests and extending hospitality to them. The volunteers were often wholly dependent on the local people to train young farmers in how to set up an agricultural cooperation in Zambia in 1966, travelled from Lusaka to Solwezi on a tractor that the Zambian government had given to the project. Completely at the whim of the driver, this had taken the young volunteers eleven days. On the basis of the criteria: English speaking and writing skills, under 22 years of age, and single, they then selected 22 young Zambian men for training. (This would neatly make two football teams.) Soon it turned out, however, that half of the young men were married, two did not know any English at all and one was even 36 years old. After the training had been completed and the cooperative was to start, only six men were left. A minimum of ten members was a prerequisite for the formation of a cooperative, and so the remaining four who were needed to make up the numbers were picked at random from the neighbouring villages, even though they were not literate and did not know any English. After his two-year contract ended, Ritse decided to work for the Zambian government.²⁵ Such experiences in the field soon made the volunteers more modest about their role in development.

Over time, contacts between volunteers and the local people amongst whom they lived grew. Placed in a new context, the volunteers learned about local circumstances and aspects of culture. A 1960s picture of Agnes Bijngsi even showed Dutch volunteers in African dress, while the African women sported the latest mini-skirts. Despite the paternalist background, local people appreciated the volunteers' support:

" We were so happy the Dutch came. They helped us with nutrition, hygiene and advising us on how to bring groups together. They brought all kind of stuff for us, like a mill for maize, a sewing machine and a Suzuki motorcycle, which I still have in my garage."²⁶

Some volunteers took great interest in local culture. One volunteer, who was stationed as a poultry farm advisor and later started a farm in Zambia, tried to gather as much information as he could:

“ I felt the work as a volunteer was interesting, because I found the people more interesting than to work with those few chickens. To learn what people thought, what their character was. I collected a lot about that, how the people went hunting, what kind of bows and arrows they had... Also their ceremonies and musical instruments; that is what I found interesting. I learnt a lot about that and later, when I started this farm I benefited from that.”²⁷

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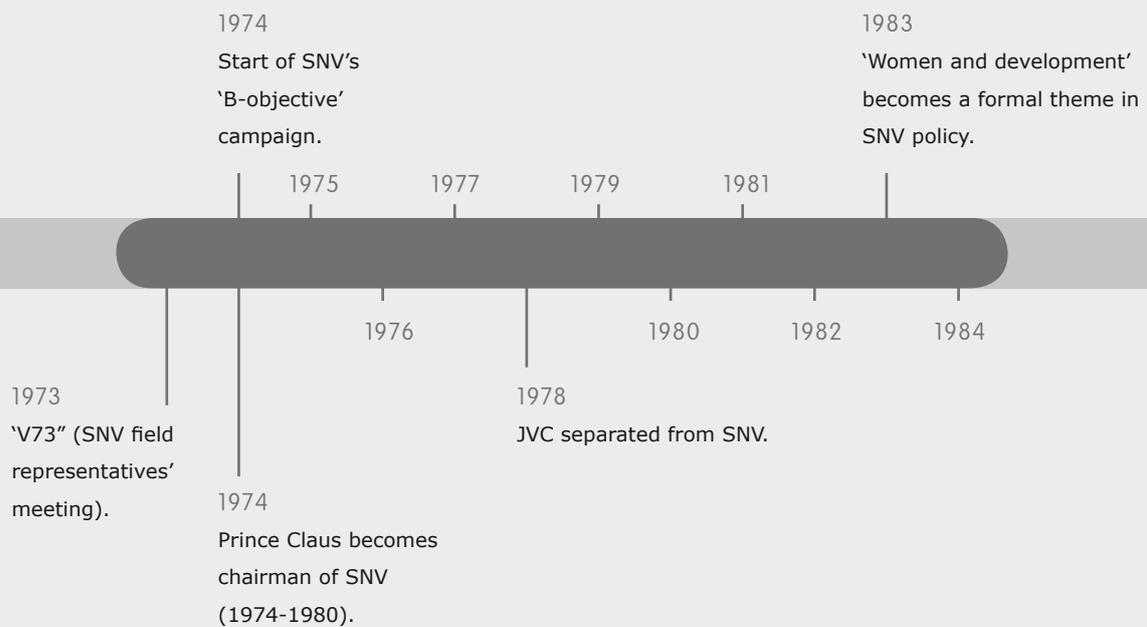
Instead of the notion of an anonymous mass of ‘poor African people’, friendships were made, every now and then weddings were celebrated, and some volunteers even decided to stay in the country. Such contacts made the initial naivety disappear: the distance between the volunteers and local people grew less and development proved more complex than it had seemed at first.

Changes did not only come through experiences in the field. The first teams had received their education in the 1950s but by the end of the 1960s, the incoming volunteers had a different background. A sharp increase in the sale of televisions had brought the war in Vietnam and other news stories into Dutch living rooms. Notions about mobility were changing and students had become familiar with pop music, ideas of revolution and flower power.

Slowly, a discrepancy began to emerge between the formal publicity of SNV and actual practice. Much of the publicity material continued to exude the impression of optimism and naivety with which SNV had started out. Yet in the field, volunteers had come to different conclusions. New, incoming volunteers no longer shared the welfare orientation of SNV’s beginnings. In the 1970s, SNV head office in The Hague could not but take notice of this increasing discrepancy. The times, they were changing.

Self-Reliance

1973-1984





Year: 1980

Country: PHILIPPINES

Subscr.: Eric de Milliano, agricultural instructor, tries to convince landless farmers to form a cooperation.

Self-Reliance

In the second half of the 1960s, a wave of democratisation swept across Europe with students protesting against the establishment and calling for more democratic procedures. Young people in the Swinging Sixties started to enjoy not only radical political change but also a sexual freedom previously unknown. This new revolutionary zeal was slow to reach the Dutch development sector. In Dutch society as a whole, SNV did not play a pioneering role although it gained a progressive image within development circles as an innovative force in terms of democratisation and political engagement.²⁸

Developments in the Netherlands in general were important in this process. Especially during the 1970s and the early 1980s as the Third World Movement grew rapidly in size and intensity, action committees, shops offering products from developing countries and development information centres were set up. At a national level, development politics were also changing considerably. In 1973 the Social Democrat Jan Pronk became Minister of Development Cooperation. His policy was characterised by key words such as 'redistribution of wealth', 'poverty alleviation' and 'self-reliance'. He envisaged a development policy that would not benefit 'states', but the people within them: the poorest of the poor. To select the 'focus countries' (concentratie-landen), Pronk used not only criteria in the field of poverty and need but also assessed countries' human-rights policies as a prerequisite for them receiving aid. This led to considerable debate in parliament.

The democratisation movement within SNV also took place under pressure from those in the field, especially staff members. During V'73 (the 1973 field representatives' meeting) it was concluded that the Field Council, the body representing all the active volunteers in a country, ought to have more than just an advisory role and should be involved in decision-making processes. However, decisions continued to be made by the Board in The Hague and the influence volunteers actually had on SNV policy remained limited. From the beginning, there had been complaints about the lack of communication between The Hague and the field and this did not stop in the 1970s and early 1980s.²⁹ It is interesting that in most cases the call for democracy came from the field staff: the volunteers seemed less worried about what was happening in The Hague and the policies being decided there: 'The Hague was so far away, it was of no concern to us'.³⁰

In addition to appeals for more democratic procedures, views on development were also changing. Within SNV, volunteers were the first to realise that even if their work had undeniable results, it would not alter society's structure or international trade relations. Poverty came to be regarded as an international and structural problem that was caused mainly by unfair trade relations and over-consumption in the West. The West was, in fact, 'underdeveloping' the rest of the world. Within developing countries, there was a 'comprador bourgeoisie' among the elite that helped to maintain existing structures and oppress the local people. Following this line of reasoning, 'countries' were no longer the focus of development concerns: within countries there were vast differences and development work had to be aimed at the poorest members of a society. During this period, quite a number of volunteers joined SNV because of a sense of guilt and feelings of inadequacy. As one volunteer put it: 'We have such a good life because of colonialism in the Third World in former times, and I believe that the Western world has an immense debt here and I will try, in my own way, to repay this debt'.³¹

24

Within SNV too, there were fierce debates about the selection of countries in which development projects were to be undertaken. Some countries, such as Ivory Coast and Nigeria, were considered 'too rich'. In others, especially some Latin American countries, authoritarian rulers led unacceptable regimes and some people felt that SNV ought to stop its activities there as continuation would amount to implicit support for right-wing regimes. Keywords at the time were 'solidarity' and 'political action'. Political action was often preceded and accompanied by much discussion. Apart from political action, this was a time of debate about the aims and ideals of SNV. Some held that it even became endemic in the organisation: 'All according to SNV culture this led to drawn-out discussions and interminable meetings'.³²

In a very different manner to those before them, SNV volunteers of the 1970s still believed that they could change the world. With their radical stance and their principled approach, they often clashed with the pragmatism of the generation before them, or even peers of a more practical nature, both in the head office in The Hague and in the field. Thus for example in Guinea Bissau, intense conflict arose over practice and ideology. Initially volunteers had been recruited through the Eduardo Mondlane Foundation, while DGIS people and SNV volunteers entered the country through standard recruitment channels. In the small village of Buba they were put to work together on a water-supply project. The differences between the various groups soon led to a tense situation. The field director Jan van Maanen felt that it was the intolerant and orthodox attitudes of some of the Mondlane recruits that made life impossible: 'If one of SNV volunteers suggested going fishing over the weekend, the Mondlane people would exclaim: "What?! Fishing? Nothing of the sort! We must serve the people!"'³³

New ideas about development concluded that matters not only depended on actions in the Third World but that changes in Western societies were equally necessary.

'Wie A zegt, moet ook B zeggen' is the Dutch proverb that roughly means 'He who says A, has to say B as well'. This was used as a slogan to introduce a new SNV objective that started in 1974. The 'B Objective' – with the 'B' standing for the Dutch word for awareness (bewustwording) – was implemented in various ways with, for example, returning volunteers touring the country to talk about development issues.

The SNV magazine *Vice Versa* was considered an ideal tool for the new SNV task. In the famous *Socutera* films, the Dutch audience was to learn about SNV's work on television. SNV volunteer Ms Dollekamp participated in the quiz: 'Wat doe je voor de kost?', resulting in various requests for more information and two marriage proposals!

Even an imaginary SNVer was invented, Bram Schutte in Burkina Faso, who was to give information in schools about development work and the Third World.³⁴ In 1985 the B Objective was institutionalised in the name change: SNV (Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers) became SNV Organisation for Development Cooperation and Awareness. Despite investments in the B Objective, the initiative did not enjoy resounding success and in 1985 it was concluded that SNV had not used the possibilities available to the full in its efforts to implement the B Objective.³⁵ The B Objective had, however, an important side-effect. Volunteers who had completed their contracts and returned to the Netherlands stayed in touch with the organisation and the development branch.³⁶ In many cases, returning home proved difficult, as one volunteer explained:

“ Upon coming back, people are full of interest and ask how it was and what you did. But that is all. They are not really interested in the problems that you have experienced, the conditions in which you lived. Conversations are always somewhat superficial.”³⁷

Returned volunteers came to play an increasing role in developing the public image of SNV, but not always in a positive light. The Dutch right-wing press eagerly attacked the organisation. On 19 January 1974, De Telegraaf featured the story of the thousandth volunteer who had, amid much festivity, signed his contract with SNV in the presence of Minister Boertien some years earlier, with the headline: 'Treurige terugkeer van een vrijwilliger uit Afrika: de verloren jaren van Raoul Snelder' (The sad return of a volunteer from Africa: The lost years of Raoul Snelder). Such attacks did not help reduce tensions within the organisation.³⁸

Some volunteers kept in contact after their return and by 1970 the Kontaktgroep Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Contact Group of Dutch Volunteers) was founded. A year later former volunteers were awarded two seats on SNV board. From the start, relations between the KNVers and the rest of the board were uneasy, as in general the KNVers presented much more radical views than most board members. This certainly held for the JVC part of the organisation, which was considered old-fashioned and conservative by many of the KNVers. In the 1970s the unresolved tensions between the private and state branches within SNV came to a head again and after numerous attempts to rescue the union, in 1978 it was finally decided that the private organisations would go their own way under the JVC umbrella, separate from SNV.

On the whole, there was a tendency toward secularisation during this period. This not only showed in concerns within SNV about the JVC position, but also in the actual projects in the field which, by the 1970s, had become more independent of the church and the missions. The case of Bertoua in eastern Cameroon is telling. Although initially the ties between the diocese and SNV were strong, problems arose after a while. Some of the volunteers were thought to be of 'low calibre', as the former Bishop of East Cameroon put it.

Most of the incoming SNV staff were 'of good intention', but there were a few who overstepped the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable behaviour by the missionaries. Relations turned sour and after just seven months, the SNV team leader asked if it would be possible to function independently of the mission:

'The church had come into SNV's bad books'.³⁹

The increased secularisation not only impacted on relations with the missions. In general, the volunteers were sceptical of religious influences. One of SNV volunteers encouraged villagers to take matters in their own hands by saying: 'Allah does not take care of everything', which evoked reactions of shock and laughter from the Malians present.⁴⁰

26

A number of the young and 'alternative' volunteers during this period 'went native'. They learnt to speak the local language, wore local dress, ate local food, drank the local alcohol, played local music and the male volunteers often had local girlfriends. This was the period when up to a quarter of the volunteers came home with a sexually transmitted disease.⁴¹ With the higher qualifications asked, often in technical areas, and an SNV contract providing an alternative for military service, the number of female volunteers sharply decreased during this period, from around 50% in 1965 to a mere 21% in 1980.⁴² Most of the volunteers had a strong wish to integrate into local society and were wary of being associated with colonialism. Willem Zevenbergen was once taken to task by a young radical volunteer, fresh from the Netherlands, who was deeply shocked when he heard that Zevenbergen had previously worked as a colonial official in New Guinea: 'Well Mr Zevenbergen, in that case you have a contaminated past!' Zevenbergen was told. The two men later got on well.⁴³

There was a certain ambivalence among the volunteers about employing cooks and guards as some feared this would be classified as neo-colonialism. The volunteers did not want to have privileges and wanted to live on an equal footing with the local population.

Yet soon after their arrival, many came to realise that they could not manage without some of the amenities they were used to and needed to hire personnel so as to have enough time to carry out the work they had come to do.

During SNV's first years, the volunteers often arrived in teams but by the 1970s most volunteers worked only with a few fellow SNVers in their project location and in some cases functioned as the only SNV volunteer in a vast region. This meant that the volunteers were more dependent on local facilities and contacts, which was often challenging. In Tanzania, volunteers had to queue for hours for sugar and flour and were only allowed a daily ration of three buckets of water. Medical services were completely non-existent in some project locations and Jan Schuthof, one of the first to start work for SNV in Tanzania, made the coffins for several volunteers who died of malaria.⁴⁴ As the Cameroonian field leader wrote in 1978:

'You don't have to be crazy to work here, but is sure helps!'⁴⁵

The new generation of volunteers wanted to show respect for local customs and traditions and the local culture was even idealised by many volunteers. Development could no longer be imposed by the West, but had to be based in local traditions. Whereas in the 1960s local culture was by and large seen as a hindrance to development, now *ujamaa* in Tanzania was praised as 'an age-old African idea', and an SNV project in Peru tried, as far as possible, to 'work in the Inca way' with manual labour.⁴⁶ 'Participation' became a keyword and 'target groups' had to be drawn into the decision-making process.

At the same time, however, the volunteers often had clear ideals about the direction that change should take. Congruent with the wave of democratisation sweeping through SNV as an organisation in the Netherlands, ideals about emancipation, equality, democratisation and human rights were very dear to many of the volunteers. This was no easy dilemma: volunteers frequently felt sandwiched between continuing to show respect for local culture and their personal democratic ideals of emancipation. What further exacerbated this dilemma was the fact that, while during the bricks-and-mortar era of the 1960s SNV volunteers had focused on constructing roads, wells, pumps, bridges and houses, growing importance in the 1970s was attached to education, primary healthcare, and other areas in which 'participation' was even more likely to directly lead to political confrontation.

African communal labour, the project envisaged that villagers would contribute to the project by digging the canals for the pipes. Reality proved less romantic and, faced with too many absentees, fines had to be issued if villagers did not show up when it was their turn to help dig.⁴⁷ The strong emphasis on democracy at times led to conflict between SNV volunteers and their superiors in the ministries or in the organisations in which they had been placed. In some of the societies where SNV was active, hierarchy and status played an enormous role in working relations. The volunteers' ideas about democracy and participation did not go down well in such contexts and often led to conflict with their local superiors. One volunteer wrote: 'Bigger nincompoops than Doufta of course do exist – Our Dear Lord has also created us – but they are few and far between'.⁴⁸ In several instances, SNV volunteers even had to leave the projects they were working on.

Volunteers' attempts to integrate into the local society were much appreciated by the people with whom they worked, especially the fact that they accepted the local food, took the trouble to learn the local language and sometimes even married into the local community. These were regarded as signs of unreserved acceptance: quite a number of respondents made comments to the extent of: 'The Dutch adapted quickly, they ate everything, they were easy-going. They loved to live in Africa. They really took root, it was not that they just did something'.⁴⁹ Of course comical situations also arose:

'The music goes to the right and all the Dutch go to the left!
We laughed till we cried when they danced'.⁵⁰

Participation hardly ever worked in the way SNV volunteers anticipated it would. For example, a project was initiated in Tanzania in which bamboo pipes and wooden tanks were used for supplying and storing water. To conform to the ideals about

Partial integration also led to considerable dilemmas for the local people. House staff were embarrassed by attempts at equality; a former servant of a Dutch volunteer in Cameroon remembered:

Self-Reliance

'The man I was living with asked me when I served his food to sit with him at the table and share the meal. As a servant I didn't understand this. I was not used to this.

He wanted me to eat with him, as if I was not his servant'.⁵¹

The dire circumstances in some cases made volunteers wary of local products.

Thus volunteers in Mali were at a loss as to whether to accept and drink the dirty water they were offered, water that they as health workers advised the locals against drinking, or to accept it out of politeness. Malians teased them by saying:

'Il faut boire! Il faut boire'

(You must drink! You must drink!).⁵²

Expertise Expected

1985-1994

1985

Name change:
SNV becomes 'SNV
Organisation for
Development Cooperation
and Awareness'.

1987

1989

1991

1993

1985

Process of profes-
sionalisation starts.

1986

First policy
Plan Development
and Environment.

1988

Introduction of
a formal system
of remuneration
within SNV.

1990

SNV becomes a 'quango'
(quasi-NGO).

1992

1994



Year: 1989

Country: SUDAN

Subscr.: SNV'er Pierre de Kock is having a conversation with the fellow workers of the city hall of Gedaref.

Expertise Expected

In 1985 SNV changed its name. As 'SNV' had already gained some recognition, this was preserved and the acronym was followed by the description: 'Organisatie voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Bewustwording' (Organisation for Development Cooperation and Awareness).

The name change brought with it the institutionalisation of the B Objective. As the word 'volunteer' was no longer used, the professionalisation of SNV was also emphasised.

The concept of the volunteer had been coming under increasing attack and, while some continued to argue that people working for SNV ought not to have a salary, others felt that it was only right if people earned a decent income.⁵³ Over the course of time, daily allowances increased until they reached the equivalent of a paid salary. By 1988 a formal system of remuneration was introduced. SNV had gradually moved from being an organisation of volunteers to a professional organisation employing highly qualified experts who often had working experience behind them before they joined. On average the new staff were older than SNV volunteers who had gone before them and in many cases they had families to take care of too. The number of youngsters working for SNV who had a lower level of education and no working experience steadily decreased.

The increasing professionalisation was not always received positively. The strongest argument against it was that in the past SNV had been 'more fun' and that the organisation was becoming 'too serious'. Local people complained that the new SNV development associates were more remote: people passing by in large four-wheel drive cars were no longer close to the local people who they were purporting to help. 'SNV has changed from a sociable to a professional organisation', one former SNV administrative worker said and in Cameroonian culture this was certainly not meant as a compliment.⁵⁴

Of course, in practice, much of the flexibility and the humour continued as before. The Tanzanian music band Tatu Nane, which had been founded by SNV volunteers, continued rehearsals behind the national office in Dar es Salaam.

SNV development workers still took their bicycles to every corner of the world. And the informal and open atmosphere in SNV offices, where directors were relatively accessible and did not stress hierarchy or etiquette continued to be appreciated.⁵⁵

Despite the more professional approach, relations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SNV continued to be plagued by the latter's image of amateurism. Sometimes SNVers complained of being regarded 'as greenhorns without experience and as real idealists' by personnel directly employed by the Ministry.⁵⁶ These tensions were not restricted to the field; and the 1989 annual report openly expressed unhappiness about the organisation's cooperation with DGIS. SNV board felt that it did not have enough manoeuvring space to develop a sound personnel policy, and complex procedures hindered the effective management of projects.⁵⁷ To resolve this, SNV gained more independence from the Ministry and became a quango (a quasi-NGO) – not fully independent, but not as closely linked to the Ministry as before. SNV was also given the chance to manage the finances of some of its small-scale projects itself. The control and supervision of such self-managed programmes were a source of continuous debate. Some of these projects operated quite independently, even of the country office. In one case in Nepal, the country director could not visit such a self-managed programme, as he was not welcome!⁵⁸

In general, management skills became more important for SNV personnel. In the 1980s technical expertise was essential to the work of SNVers but in the course of the 1990s less emphasis was placed on the execution of projects, and more on guiding the development process. 'Empowerment' became a keyword in

SNV policy: the poor had to decide about their own development. This also showed in attempts to introduce the 'process approach' that focused on 'the opportunities and the ambitions of the poor and oppressed themselves'.

The development worker would coordinate matters until the local people could manage without outside assistance.⁵⁹

The projects SNV experts were engaged in were usually of a larger scale than before.

It was believed that a more structured effect could be gained if SNV activities were not restricted to small projects at the village level, but took the form of programmes that included various groups of people and covered a larger area. Attempts were made to engage in more sustainable development work. The period of young volunteers in the village came to a close and contacts with the target groups in many cases instead took on the form of field visits of varied lengths. Another new aspect of SNV policy was 'Women and Development'. The very first team in Cameroon had carried out a project with a special focus on women but only as of 1983 did women and development formally become a theme in SNV policy. It was not until 1986 that a first policy plan was formulated and even within the Dutch development landscape, this was relatively late. SNV's first steps in this area were not radical. Over the years, the organisation had learnt by experience that pushing for radical change without the support of people in the local community would lead nowhere:

"Of course, in the relationships between men and women there remains much that one would like to see changed. I very carefully indicate how I would like things to be by asking, every now and then, how their wives are. Would he not like her to learn how to read and write? I am not going to shout that all veils and headscarves must go. It makes no sense and I do not feel the need."⁶⁰

In the 1990s, the word 'gender' was used more often to indicate that the existing hierarchical relations were not based on biological differences, but were a consequence of the socially constructed differences between men and women.

Also in the 1990s the environment became an important aspect of development work. In some countries the issue had been raised much earlier: 'SNV/N (SNV Nepal) was about 10 years ahead of SNV/The Hague in the field of environment by producing its first Ecology Input Policy Plan in 1986'.⁶¹ Over the years concern about the environment also grew in the Netherlands development sector, and an issue of *Vice Versa* in 1990⁶² was devoted to environmental issues. Initially the focus was on environmental issues per se but it was soon realised that such an approach would not lead to a profound concern for nature:

"A development worker who says: "Plant trees, because that is good for the environment", will not get any farmer into motion."⁶³

Later a more integrated approach emerged that was aimed at community development and protecting the environment at the same time.

Despite all attempts at poverty alleviation, the gap between rich and poor only increased in many developing countries. This also meant that the experiences of SNVers became ever more differentiated. In some towns, especially capital cities, everything had become available: luxury hotels and restaurants, sporting facilities, supermarkets, expensive but excellent medical services, etc. For those with a family, educational opportunities for their children and possibilities for social and recreational activities for the accompanying partner became important criteria in deciding whether or not to accept a job with SNV. People with families were less likely to 'go native' and they built up their social networks according to their own preferences, often within

the ex-pat community. Some SNVers who had started out as idealist youngsters with strong ideas on what they saw as over-consumption and neo-colonialism slowly moved towards accepting life with a car, good housing and even a swimming pool.

These SNV families might easily integrate into the local society, but in a number of cases, SNVers just lived in an enclave of white people and did not establish contacts with people from the country where they were living and working. Other SNVers lived in very different circumstances: one couple suffered severe attacks of malaria, saw their computer melt because of the heat and had a fridge that never got cooler than 24°C. As there were only few Westerners in the area, their contact with local people was intense,

but at the same time they were also confronted directly with the cultural, social and economic differences. Local people thought that they had a money-making machine, as they always had crisp new bank notes of, by local standards, large denominations (that the SNVers had received from the bank in the capital).⁶⁴

Family circumstances, personal relations and cooperation between people could be of crucial importance. There were cases where partners could not find a niche for themselves and returning to the Netherlands was the only option. For some couples this was reason to look for a place where two contracts were available: 'What struck us during our travels was that if there were two partners and one was without work, the latter would completely wither away, especially if it was in the countryside, in the back of beyond'.⁶⁵

Fortunately such cases were few and far between. A more general pattern was that families returned to the Netherlands when their children got older as it could be difficult to combine a SNV posting with the high-school education of children.

Often the workload of the professional SNV personnel did not allow for intensive study of the local culture, history and language. Administration, report-writing, evaluation and planning could take on enormous proportions and left little time for field visits, communication and building up social networks within the local society. Some felt SNV was asking too much: 'Life seems to exist of SNV only', a female regional representative complained from eastern Cameroon. The 'monomania', as she called it, was only broken by the presence of her child. She did not consider it right that the range of responsibilities she was charged with presupposed the presence of an unemployed partner who would ultimately share in fulfilling SNV tasks.⁶⁶

SNV became a rather strongly decentralised organisation and the influence of local circumstances on the various SNV offices increased. SNV Nepal became more 'Nepalised', SNV Mali more 'Malinised', etc. This ultimately did not make it easy for SNV The Hague to design an overall policy and any general guidelines were likely to be criticised for either not acknowledging the local context or for being too general. This also resulted in a growth in the influence of local politics in SNV programmes, starting at village level. In one village that was participating in the Buba Water Project in Guinea Bissau, for example, the project pump became a source of conflict between the chiefly family and the rest of the villagers. The son of the village founder ensured that the pump was built in his compound and that his son became the pump technician. In order to 'make the pump last longer', as he argued, the technician closed down the water for several hours during the day. The villagers did not agree and reacted angrily:

'The pump belongs to the state, you have no say over it,' they claimed.⁶⁷

These developments had a great deal to do with the fact that during this period the number and responsibilities of SNV field staff were increasing. In the framework of a process of decentralisation, SNV country offices were expected to draw up five-year plans, annual documents and project documents.

These new struggles about control also took place at a meso and macro level. The Tanzanian bamboo project was initially met with much scepticism in the national Ministry of Water and its architect, Mr Lipangile, was dismissed. But after appropriate technology had become the new 'in thing' in development circles, the project

was praised by international donors, foreign and national politicians and even Tanzania's President Nyerere. Although SNV project leaders soon found that it would be next to impossible to resolve problems with the durability of the material, the stakes had become so high that there was no way back. The critique of his colleagues notwithstanding, Mr Lipangile at a certain moment had an entire floor in the Ministry of Water. When the project was finally discontinued, Mr Lipangile did not mention practical problems as a reason for its demise. According to him, it had been the jealousy of other politicians envious of his success that had destroyed the project.⁶⁸

Expectations were sometimes unrealistically high. When SNV started to address the issue of the water shortage in the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania, the local people hoped that all their problems would be solved:

'The farmers thought we were magicians who would miraculously make water appear again'.⁶⁹

In many respects development organisations functioned as states within the state, just as the mission stations had done before them. Because in many cases, the governments of developing countries proved unable or unwilling to provide the services needed by the population, development workers were often first forced to create conditions in which they could work. Thus, a project aimed at supplying an area with water was doubly appreciated as it provided the village with an access road, a bridge, transport for the duration of the project, and labour and training opportunities.⁷⁰

Often, the benefits of a project were entirely unintended and unforeseen and did not bear any resemblance to those stated in the original aims of the project. In Cameroon, local field workers, all male school leavers, received motor-bikes from the project so as to facilitate their work. Instead of going into the field, however, they went racing through town.⁷¹ The unintended benefits and advantages demanded tactful answers when evaluating projects. If a project failed entirely in the realisation of its aim, some of the participants might still strongly wish for its continuation. For example, local people in Nepal saw that mistakes were made during the planning phase but did not dare to say anything in case the project was withdrawn entirely.⁷²

Development projects could radically change the local context. In the south of Guinea Bissau a water project was started in 1978. Before the project started, Buba had been a small village of some 200 inhabitants and there were no schools

Expertise Expected

Slowly these people grew into a new community:

‘We all came from outside Buba,
but the project turned us into
real Buba people’

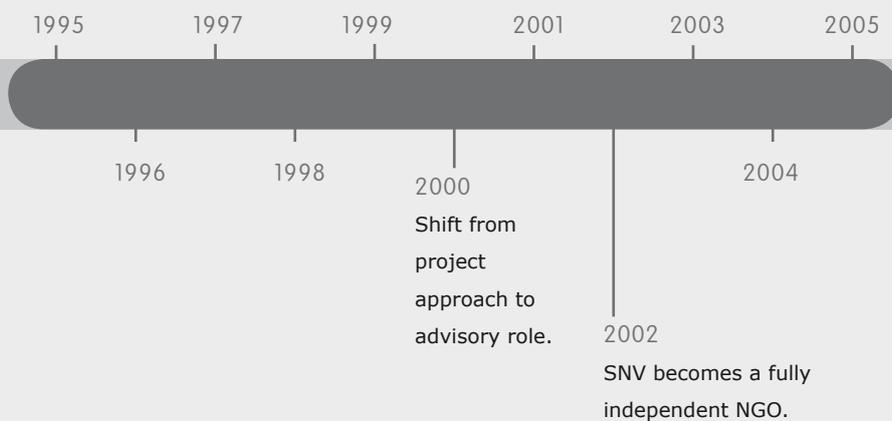
a former project employee explained.⁷³

The fact that SNV had started a project in Buba made all the difference. At a certain stage, Guinea Bissau’s capital was without electricity, while the project generators in Buba ensured a continuous power supply.⁷⁴

The presence of foreigners and local people with an income made it profitable to start a shop in the village and Buba is now a sprawling town of a few thousand people, with schools, some shops, a daily market, a military base and two hotels. In 2003, an opposition politician even suggested moving Guinea’s capital to Buba.⁷⁵

Building Capacity

1995-2005





Connecting People's Capacities

38

Year: 2005

Country: LATIN AMERICA, WEST AND CENTRAL
AFRICA, EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA,
ASIA AND EASTERN EUROPE

Subscr.: Impression of today's SNV.

Building Capacity

Over the last ten years, SNV has again seen many changes. A development that has profoundly influenced the workings of the organisation is the sharp increase in the number of local personnel employed. In the 1980s the recruitment of local people began hesitantly and matters were not always easy for these pioneers. Meetings and correspondence were all in Dutch and in some cases, the new local SNV people felt excluded.⁷⁶ Remuneration for local personnel was a dilemma. A difference in income for local and Dutch staff would be detrimental to the integration and cooperation between staff members, but levelling wages might lead to a brain-drain of local intellectuals into the development sector.

This is still an issue of intense debate in many countries where SNV is active. The 1990s saw the percentage of local SNV staff rise steadily and by 1999 the figure was 40% to grow to 67% in 2004: SNV had changed from being a purely Dutch organisation to a multicultural organisation with Dutch roots.

Another important change was the end of the project approach: SNV would henceforth no longer be active in the actual implementation of development projects. Both changes – the increase in local personnel and the end of the project approach – were related to the introduction of the concept ‘ownership’; instead of viewing people as beneficiaries of aid, the SNV sought to cooperate with local people as agents in their own development.

As is always the case when profound changes are introduced, the end of the project approach created unrest in some instances.

Some people were well prepared and knew that SNV was planning to end its activities. In other cases, however, local people felt that SNV had abandoned participants without adequately preparing them to fend for themselves.

In western Cameroon, for example, people were expecting a project to continue for fifteen years until SNV called a meeting at which it was announced that it would finish in three years’ time instead. Less than two months later, people were called in again and told that the project was now going to be abandoned within three months. This created uncertainty among the local people, as one local man put it:

“While appreciating the advice – because you can still advance through advice – we very much appreciate the funding. That funding and advice could go hand in hand. We very much appeal that funding must continue. We were in shock when we heard SNV stopped funding. When you are feeding a child, and you suddenly stop feeding the child, that child must feel that impact. That’s exactly what happened to us.”⁷⁷

Even if people were prepared for the end of a project, it could be a bitter pill to swallow. In many cases it was only a matter of time before everything the project had achieved ran down or disappeared, and in addition it meant a period of unemployment for those who had been connected with the project. In the course of our visit to Guinea Bissau, 42 ex-workers presented us with a letter asking 'in the name of all the workers of the water supply Project in the regions Quinara, Tombali and Bolama Bijogos with head office in Buba', 'the Dutch research delegation to submit to SNV and the Dutch government the request to compensate the project workers of phase 1, phase 2, phase 3, phase 4, phase 5, phase 6, phase 7, phase of the years 1978 to 1995'.⁷⁸

40 Apart from these relatively dramatic examples, there are also contexts in which the changes ran more smoothly. In Mozambique, for example, it was decided that the project approach would only gradually be abandoned. As Mozambique was still in the phase of post-war reconstruction, the SNV felt that only through a twin-track approach – in which the project approach co-existed with the new advisory role of SNV – the changes could be introduced.⁷⁹ In Guinea Bissau, the changes were not at all received in a uniform manner: in contrast to Buba, people in Bafata were far more positive about the transformations. While the SNV was in the process of involving local cadre in an agro-forestry project in the Bafata region, war broke out and all foreigners were obliged to leave the country. During the war of 1998 and 1999, the local personnel continued working on the programme despite all the hardships and insecurities. This experience prepared them well to take over in 2001 when the SNV project ended, and they formed a local NGO active in the same area. While acknowledging the encouragement and support received from SNV, they were very proud of their achievements: 'We continue SNV, even in our own small form, but it still exists'.⁸⁰

With its new approach, SNV focuses on strengthening meso-level organisations that are aimed at furthering development and alleviating poverty. SNV gives advice to these clients so as to build up

their capacity as an organisation, but demand for advice ideally has to come from the organisations themselves. This approach, revolving as it does around capacity building, has a number of consequences. The most important is that SNV will not come with any funding; unlike most development organisations, the proverbial bag of money no longer plays a role and a more equal and honest relationship is aimed at. SNV does not have an easy task explaining its new policy. Many people appreciate the greater responsibilities given to local people, but are unsure as to what an advisory role may mean in practice. One of the drivers with a great deal of experience within SNV asked what the word 'advice' actually meant. After I had tried my best to describe it, he exclaimed: 'So it is just polite education?!'

In relatively rich northern Tanzania, the advisory approach is understood quite well: 'Advice is better than money. Money will be finished, even the next day, but an idea will remain forever, for the future'.⁸¹ In poorer areas, however, people do not agree with this view. 'Why have they become tired in the world? Because I know that they not only fight in Mali, they fight everywhere against poverty. Now the world knows that Holland is tired. When the Dutch were alone, there were only a very few intelligent Malians. Now there are many Africans who can give them a hand to help but in order to develop, one needs money'.⁸²

In poorer areas, there are hardly any meso-level organisations that could become SNV clients, and general policy has to be adapted to fit the local situation. The flexible nature of SNV as an organisation allows for such adaptations and in these areas SNV advisors develop alternative strategies that suit the context. Areas with enough potential clients are, on the whole, better-off and less in need of poverty alleviation. The meso-level organisations in these areas often employ people of the same calibre as those working within SNV and as a rule receive advice and training from the donors that fund them. The idea of SNV advisors stepping into such an organisation and saying: 'We are experts, we will give you advice!'

is felt to be inappropriate, but it is deemed very useful that SNV and similar organisations can exchange ideas and information as partners. Some are of the opinion that people in need do not benefit sufficiently from SNV's activities; and those who handle the development discourse with skill and play to donor fashions set the agenda. Many organisations claiming to represent the poor restrict their activities to the development market. Although cases occur where SNV reportedly cooperates with organisations that are hardly more than a façade for attracting donor money, SNV has developed evaluation strategies to ensure that the local NGOs it works with are genuinely interested in reaching poor people. Some people hold that SNV visits to villages are very short and contact with the local people is restricted to the elite. Others, however, argue that this is a logical consequence of the changing working context: by now there is sufficient local cadre in the countries where SNV is active to organise programmes and projects aimed at poverty reduction in the local communities. Instead of having expats 'fixing it', as in the past, SNV, with its multicultural and inter-national expertise, seeks to strengthen local organisations that serve poor people in their own country.

Despite the decentralisation process and the increased number of local staff, events in the Netherlands have continued to influence SNV. After a period when Dutch economic interests were strongly defended by the Minister of Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk reintroduced a strong emphasis on human rights and freedom. His decompartmentalisation (ontschotting) policy resulted in many issues, which had formerly been dealt with by the Ministry, now coming under the responsibility of Dutch embassies around the world. In the second half of the 1990s, cooperation between SNV country offices and local Dutch embassies was of crucial importance. As a rule, SNV could count on government support because Jan Pronk had known the organisation for a long time and was kindly disposed towards it. However when Eveline Herfkens took over in 1998 and after her the Christian-Democrat Agnes van Ardenne

became Minister for Development Cooperation, this support became less self-evident.

In 2002 SNV became a fully independent NGO. Apart from a larger degree of independence from the Ministry, this also implied that government subsidies would be more dependent on the organisation's results and effectiveness. During the subsequent re-organisation within SNV, many people – of the administrative staff, advisors and support staff – were laid off and in the country offices as well as in The Hague a considerable number of people had to leave. The head office in The Hague attempted economies by issuing new rules on permitted expenditure. These did not always fit the local context; an example frequently mentioned is the idea of having support staff working on an outsourcing basis. In many African countries this is felt to be impossible or irresponsible.

In the last ten years SNV has seen many smaller and larger changes in its internal structure. As the average age of SNV worker was nearing 40 years, junior positions were formed to give younger, less experienced candidates a chance to work within the organisation.

Cooperation between various SNV countries has been strengthened by setting up regional offices and, within countries, SNV advisors have come to work in interdisciplinary teams organised by region. Attempts have also been made to better assess SNV results in an effort to improve the organisation's management and structure, but this has been no easy task given the intangible nature of advisory practice.

Many view these changes with mixed feelings. 'Now SNV is in constant change: changes are coming too fast. For an outsider or for someone new to the organisation, the speed of change is too rapid. Before an approach is well understood, there is already another approach. I think what we need now is consolidation. People have problems in locating you if you change that rapidly. An advantage of all the changes is that it keeps the staff sharp. It always poses a challenge. I don't hate it'.⁸³

Final Remarks

In the 1960s the general view was of a world that could be controlled and constructed. In the Netherlands this idea was especially popular: man as a motor of events and as a creator of wealth and land had always been a strong notion in the Dutch context. This shows, for example, in the Dutch concept 'de maakbare wereld' (the 'makeable' world). The quick recovery of the Dutch economy after the Second World War strengthened this notion of technological superiority over nature and of man controlling the course of history. In terms of development cooperation, this view now sounds relatively naive but many people working for SNV departed with the idea of 'we'll just fix it'. The people in underdeveloped countries had to change unconditionally in the direction indicated by the developers.

This idea has radically changed and SNV now gives advice and supports local developments. With its focus on advice, SNV has, to some extent, returned to the approach before its foundation; as explained, SNV was first set up because it was felt that advice alone did not suffice. The new approach has further exacerbated a dilemma that has tormented the minds of development workers since the earlier naivety disappeared. On the one hand, more than ever before the focus is on organisations and groups in the countries involved: SNV now seeks to work only at the request of local clients.

The clients' ideas, initiatives and demands offer the lead: they are in the driver's seat, as it was explained in the interviews. Yet, on the other hand, development work by its very nature always constitutes an intervention. Even if the work as such is technical, 'development is fundamentally about changing how people conduct their lives, and the very claim to technical knowledge is itself a political act'.⁸⁴ Also in case no further projects are implemented and an organisation offers only advice to those seeking it, the ultimate goal is change for the better and an improvement in the existing situation.

SNV claims to have expertise on a number of issues; otherwise there would be no need for its activities. This dilemma – between participation on an equal basis and the claim to expertise – knows no solution, yet needs to be addressed as policies are designed.

Over the years, SNV's performance has been positively evaluated by many people in many countries. These evaluations were not always congruent with the assessments based on policy documents, but that does not diminish people's satisfaction with the results. Any sound evaluation of development cooperation ought to take these views into consideration.

Attacks against organisations such as SNV do not usually take this into account and are once again reaching conclusions regardless of the opinions of those concerned. In such cases, people in developing countries are once again being rendered voiceless and denied any say in what is good or bad for them.

Recent changes in SNV policy have meant that many previous activities have been discontinued. From conversations with people who have felt the direct consequences of these shifts in policy, we recognise that they were often not happy with the ending of SNV activities.

Many examples were given of programmes that had closed in haste and projects abandoned without preparing those involved to take over. Such experiences have invariably created feelings of loss. Perhaps the reasons for the dissatisfaction are not always connected with the overall development of a country, yet that does not diminish people's disappointment over the course of events. In many cases cooperation between SNV and these people lasted for years and people nourished expectations about its continuation. Clear information about the reasons for and the contents of the changes in SNV's policies has in many cases not been provided. It would be too simple to classify the notions these people have about development as 'old-fashioned', 'spoon-feeding' and 'non-sustainable'. An easy dismissal of their views would be just as inappropriate as reaching simple conclusions about the development sector as a whole, without taking the views of the local people into account.

During the interviews many people who had worked with SNV indicated that their SNV time was a crucial experience in their life.

Some people stayed in the country where they had been stationed as volunteers, others found the love of their life, yet others continued working in the development sector. They all spoke with engagement and commitment about SNV:

'This work is *more*. What this *more* is, is difficult to put into words',⁸⁵ The interviews with ex-SNVers made it obvious that many people had a lot of fun during their time with SNV.

Former SNVers explained about the unpredictable situations in which they found themselves and that required so much creativity and flexibility. They told hilarious stories of absurd experiences and cracked insiders' jokes about SNV. The gentle irony, sometimes combined with frustration, with which many looked back on their time with SNV is difficult to interpret historically: historical studies have until now left little room for analysis of emotion or even opinion.

Yet, as some interviewees made clear, the notions of idealism, sacrifice and self-denial that so often accompany development work may be important to outsiders, but what makes the people involved tick is the enjoyment and pleasure they have in their work.

Endnotes

- ¹ In this publication, the terms 'Third World', the 'South' and 'developing countries' will be used interchangeably. People living in those countries will be referred to as 'local people', as is customary in development circles. Translations of quotes (from Dutch, French, Portuguese and Swahili into English) were made by the author. Ann Reeves, who edited the English, is heartily thanked.
- ² Conversation with Marc Steen, SNV country director, Bissau (Guinea Bissau) 29 March 2005.
- ³ Interview with Brenda Liswaniso Tambatamba, Lusaka (Zambia) 3 June 2005.
- ⁴ J.A. Nekkers and P.A.M. Malcontent (eds.), *De geschiedenis van vijftig jaar Nederlandse ontwikkelingsamenwerking, 1949-1999* (The Hague 1999) p. 13; also De Jong in *Ibid.* pp. 61-81.
- ⁵ For more information on this period, see: Nekkers and Malcontent (eds.), *Ibid.*, pp. 11-16; Paul Hoebink, *Geven is nemen: de Nederlandse ontwikkelingshulp aan Tanzania en Sri Lanka* (Nijmegen 1988) pp. 47-48.
- ⁶ Frans Bieckmann, *De wereld volgens Prins Claus* (Amsterdam 2004) pp. 131-32.
- ⁷ Interview with Harry Sesink-Clee, Bilthoven (Netherlands) 7 March 2005.
- ⁸ *Vice Versa* 19, 3 (1985) p. 28; *Visum* 5 (February/March 1965) p. 2; Ton Nijzink, *Dag Vrijwilliger! Twintig jaar SNV* (The Hague s.d. 1985) p. 13; Dolly Verhoeven, *Aid – a changing necessity; SNV: from volunteers to advisors* (The Hague 2002) p. 12.
- ⁹ Nijzink, *Dag Vrijwilliger!* pp. 11, 17-19, 53.
- ¹⁰ Interview with Willem Zevenbergen, Herwen (Netherlands) 1 March 2005.
- ¹¹ *Visum* 4 (January 1964) p. 6.
- ¹² Interview with Theo and Coby Huber, Stellendam (Netherlands) 16 March 2005.
- ¹³ Quoted in Kristoffel Lieten and Fons van der Velden (eds.), *Grenzen aan de hulp. Beleid en effecten van ontwikkelingssamenwerking* (Amsterdam 1997) p. 266.
- ¹⁴ 'Ontwikkelingssamenwerking: Raakpunt van twee werelden' (1969) in DVD series: 'Een geschiedenis in beeld' (2000).
- ¹⁵ *Visum* (January/February 1965) p. 13; interview with Theo and Coby Huber, Stellendam (Netherlands) March 2005.
- ¹⁶ 'Ontwikkelingssamenwerking: Raakpunt van twee werelden' (1969) in DVD series: 'Een geschiedenis beeld' (2000).
- ¹⁷ *Vice Versa* 2, 10 (1969) p. 18.
- ¹⁸ 'Nuchter avontuur' (1968) and 'Ontwikkeling samenwerking: Raakpunt van twee werelden' (1969) in DVD series: 'Een geschiedenis in beeld' (2000).
- ¹⁹ Interview with Louk and Liesbeth Kortenhorst, Heelsum (Netherlands) 17 March 2005.
- ²⁰ Interview with Willem Zevenbergen, Herwen (Netherlands) 1 March 2005.
- ²¹ Interview Rob de Coole, Bunnink (Netherlands) 23 maart 2005.
- ²² Interview with Louk and Liesbeth Kortenhorst, Heelsum (Netherlands) 17 March 2005.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Visum* (November/December 1964) p. 6.
- ²⁵ 'Nuchter avontuur' (1968) in DVD series: 'Een geschiedenis in beeld' (2000).
- ²⁶ Interview with Agnes Bijngsi, Bambui (Cameroon) 15 April 2005.
- ²⁷ Interview with Willem Lublinkhof, Mazabuka (Zambia) 2 June 2005.
- ²⁸ Nijzink, *Dag Vrijwilliger!* p. 38.
- ²⁹ Bieckmann, *De wereld volgens Prins Claus* p. 132; Aernout Zevenbergen, *De deskundige: leerling en leermeester. Een halve eeuw uitzending van ontwikkelingswerkers* (The Hague 2002) p. 94; Nijzink *Dag Vrijwilliger!* p. 40.
- ³⁰ Interview with Bert Satijn and Hetty Bloemen, Delft (Netherlands) 15 March 2005.
- ³¹ 'Jubileumfilm – 10 jaar ontwikkelingswerk' (1976) in DVD series: 'Een geschiedenis in beeld' (2000).
- ³² Zevenbergen, *De deskundige: leerling en leermeester* p. 92.
- ³³ Interview with Jan van Maanen, Bissau (Guinea Bissau) 29 March 2005.
- ³⁴ Nijzink, *Dag Vrijwilliger!* p. 59; *Vice Versa* 8, 26 (1974) p. 31; *Ibid.* 8, 29 (1974) pp. 21-23.
- ³⁵ SNV, *SNV goed bekeken!* Programma Evaluatie SNV (The Hague 1985) pp. 6, 31-36.
- ³⁶ Conversation with Yvonne van Vliet, The Hague (Netherlands) 22 February 2005.
- ³⁷ *Vice Versa* 8, 26 (1974) p. 25.
- ³⁸ Nijzink, *Dag Vrijwilliger!* pp. 46-47.
- ³⁹ Interview with Monseigneur Lambertus van Heygen, Rijswijk (Netherlands) 12 May 2005.

- ⁴⁰ *Vice Versa* 13, 2 (1979) p. 10.
- ⁴¹ *Vice Versa* 11, 1 (1977) pp. 14-16.
- ⁴² Nijzink, *Dag Vrijwilliger!* p. 34.
- ⁴³ Interview with Willem Zevenbergen, Herwen (Netherlands) 1 March 2005.
- ⁴⁴ Interviews with Bert Satijn and Hetty Bloemen, Delft (Netherlands) 15 March 2005 and with Jan Schuthof, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) 20 May 2005.
- ⁴⁵ SNV Kameroen, 'Jaarverslag 1978' (in: Archives SNV Cameroon, Yaoundé) p. 34.
- ⁴⁶ 'Die streep móet weg' (1972) and 'Peru – wegenbouw' (1974) in DVD series: 'Een geschiedenis in beeld' (2000).
- ⁴⁷ Interview with Mgama village leaders (Tanzania) 23 May 2005.
- ⁴⁸ SNV Kameroen, 'Jaarverslag 1980' (in: Archives SNV Cameroon, Yaoundé) p. 43.
- ⁴⁹ Interview with male Cameroonian former counterpart of an SNV volunteer, Bertoua (Cameroon) 16 April 2005.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with the people of Munhini (Guinea Bissau) 2 April 2005.
- ⁵¹ Interview with Alex Fontana, former cook for SNV volunteer, Bambui (Cameroon) 15 April 2005.
- ⁵² *Vice Versa* 13, 2 (1979) p. 9.
- ⁵³ Nijzink, *Dag Vrijwilliger!* p. 60.
- ⁵⁴ *Vice Versa* 21, 4 (1987) p. 48; interviews with male Cameroonian former SNV office secretary, Bertoua (Cameroon) 15 April 2005 and with male Cameroonian former counterpart of an SNV volunteer, Bertoua (Cameroon) 16 April 2005.
- ⁵⁵ Interviews with male Dutch former SNV development associate, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) 19 May 2005 and male Cameroonian former co-ordinator of counterparts for SNV volunteers, Bertoua (Cameroon) 16 April 2005; *Vice Versa* 25, 1 (1991) p. 6.
- ⁵⁶ Archives SNV Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Box: 'Project visits, '79-'84, etc,' file: RIDEP, Mwanza: report Mwanza, 30-9-1981 (in: Archives SNV Tanzania, Dar es Salaam and Mwanza).
- ⁵⁷ Verhoeven, *Aid – a changing necessity* p. 23.
- ⁵⁸ IOB, *SNV-Nepal* (1985-1995). *Evaluation report 1998* (The Hague 1998) p. 72.
- ⁵⁹ *Vice Versa* 25, 3 (1991) pp. 2-5.
- ⁶⁰ Female volunteer in North Yemen in 1986, quoted in Verhoeven, *Aid – a changing necessity* p. 20.
- ⁶¹ IOB, *SNV-Nepal* p. 189.
- ⁶² *Vice Versa* 24, 2 (1990) pp. 16-17.
- ⁶³ *Vice Versa* 26, 1 (1992) p. 1.
- ⁶⁴ Interview with female Dutch former SNV development associate, Leiden (Netherlands) 23 February 2005.
- ⁶⁵ Interview with female Dutch former SNV development associate, Arusha (Tanzania) 1 August 2005.
- ⁶⁶ Archives SNV Cameroon, Yaoundé, Box: '88/'89: '1e ervaringsrapport', 12 May 1986.
- ⁶⁷ Interview in a village near Buba (Guinea Bissau) 31 March 2005.
- ⁶⁸ Interview with male Dutch former SNV development associate, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) 19 May 2005, and telephone conversation with Mr Lipangile, 23 May 2005.
- ⁶⁹ *Vice Versa* 26, 11 (1992) p. 11.
- ⁷⁰ Interview with Mgama village leaders (Tanzania) 23 May 2005.
- ⁷¹ Interview with Marcus Ndifor, SNV driver, Yaoundé (Cameroon) 18 April 2005.
- ⁷² IOB, *SNV-Nepal* p. 124.
- ⁷³ Conversation, Buba (Guinea Bissau) 1 April 2005; also *Vice Versa* 20, 4 (1986) pp. 13-16.
- ⁷⁴ Conversation with a university teacher, Bissau (Guinea Bissau) 3 April 2005.
- ⁷⁵ BBC News, 23 April 2003.
- ⁷⁶ Interview with Lucy Muyoyeta, Lusaka (Zambia) 31 May 2005.
- ⁷⁷ Interview with people from Andek Cooperative Credit Union, Andek (Cameroon) 14 April 2005.
- ⁷⁸ Letter, Buba (Guinea Bissau) 30 March 2005.
- ⁷⁹ Interview with male Dutch SNV advisor who formerly worked with SNV Mozambique, Buba (Guinea Bissau) 30 March 2005.
- ⁸⁰ Interview with Aprodél management, Bafata (Guinea Bissau) 1 April 2005.
- ⁸¹ Interview with Mama Gladness, organiser of Cultural Tourism Programme, Tengeru (Tanzania) 28 July 2005.
- ⁸² Interview with Ganda Keita, SNV support staff member, Bamako (Mali) 11 April 2005.
- ⁸³ Interview with male John Mlay, SNV advisor, Arusha (Tanzania) 29 July 2005.
- ⁸⁴ Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (eds), *International development and the social sciences. Essays on the history and politics of knowledge* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1997) p. 19.
- ⁸⁵ Interview with male Dutch SNV advisor, Buba (Guinea Bissau) 30 March 2005.

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46

Abbreviations

AJV – Afdeling Jongeren Vrijwilligers (Department Youth Volunteers).

ANV – Afdeling Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Department Dutch Volunteers).

DGIS – Directoraat Generaal Internationale Samenwerking (Directorate-General for Development Cooperation)

IOB – Inspectie Ontwikkelingsamenwerking en Beleidsevaluatie (Policy and Operations Evaluation Department)

JVC - Jongeren Vrijwilliger Corps (Youth Volunteers' Corps)

JVP - Jongeren Vrijwilligers Programma (Youth Volunteers' Programme)

KNV – Kontaktgroep Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Contact-group Dutch Volunteers)

NOVIB - Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand (Netherlands

Organisation for International Assistance), later: NOVIB Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation.

SNV – Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Foundation Dutch Volunteers), later: SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

V – Veldvertegenwoordigersbijeenkomst (Field Representatives' Meeting, of team leaders and field leaders)

WITHALL - Werkcommissie Inzake Technische Hulp aan Laag Ontwikkelde Landen (Working Committee concerning Technical Assistance to Low Developed Countries).

Ministers for Development Cooperation

Dr. I. N. Th. Diepenhorst
(28/11/1963 - 14/4/1965, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs 'charged with the aid for less developed territories')

Mr. Th. Bot (14/4/1965 - 5/4/1967, first Minister without portfolio, 'in charge of aid to developing countries')

Drs. B. J. Udink (5/4/1967 - 6/7/1971)

Dr. C. Boertien (6/7/1971 - 11/5/1973, Minister without portfolio, in charge of development cooperation)

Drs. J. P. Pronk (11/5/1973 - 19/12/1977)

Drs. J. de Koning (19/12/1977 - 11/9/1981)

Drs. C.P. van Dijk (11/9/1981 - 4/11/1982)

Mrs. Drs. E.M. Schoo (4/11/1982 - 14/7/1986)

Drs. P. Bukman (14/7/1986 - 7/11/1989, Minister without portfolio for Development Cooperation)

Drs. J.P. Pronk (7/11/1989 - 3/8/1998)

Mrs. Drs. E.L. Herfkens (3/8/1998 - 22/7/2002)

Mrs. A. M. A. van Ardenne (22/7/2002 - 27/5/2003, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in charge of development cooperation)

Mrs. A. M. A. van Ardenne (27/5/2003 - present, Minister without portfolio for Development Cooperation)

SNV Chairpersons/Directors

Chairpersons of the SNV Directorate

L.J.M. van de Laar (1965-1973)

J.F. van Campen (interim, 1973-1974)

H.R.H. Prince Claus (1974-1980)

H.R.H. Prince Claus (Honorary Chairman, 1980-6 October 2002)

B. Barten (1980-1988)

P.J. de Lange (interim, 1989-1990)

Mrs. M. Leegwater-van der Linden (interim, 1991)

Mrs. A.L.E.C. van der Stoel (1991-1993)

H.J. Simons (1994-1998)

Mrs. T.O. Fierens (1999-2000)

C.J.M Pronk (Chairman Supervisory Board, 2001-present)

Chef/Director/Board of Directors of the SNV Executive*

F.A.M. Alting von Geusau (1963-1964)

Van der Groot (interim, 1964)

W.J.H. Kouwenhoven (1964-1965)

A.L. Schneiders (interim, 1965-1966)

W.D.B.M. van Nierop (1966-1969)

L.P.J. Mazairac (1969-1972)

W. A. Erath (1972-1975)

A.A.M. Hermans (interim, 1975)

W. Zevenbergen (1975-1978)

E.F. Jacobs (1978-1981)

J. Dijkstra (interim, 1982)

M.A. Peters (1982-1989)

D.C.B. den Haas (interim, 1989-1990)

J. Berteling (1990-1995)

J.A. Pelgröm (1996-1999)

Mrs. T.O. Fierens (2000-2003)

Board of Directors

T.J.H. Elsen (Chairman Board of Directors SNV 2003-present)

Mrs. A. Jenniskens (2003-present)

J.A. van de Gronden (2003- present)

* In 1963 the organisation had a Chef JVP, in 1965 changed into Chef AJV (Afdeling Jongeren Vrijwilligers van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken/ Department Youth Volunteers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). As of 1976 the position was called Chef ANV (Afdeling Nederlandse Vrijwilligers van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken / Department Dutch Volunteers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The Chef was at the same time functioning as the Secretary of the SNV directorate. As of 1990 the function was called SNV director.

Colophon

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parated from SNV.

1980



1985

Name change SNV becomes 'SNV Organisation for Development Cooperation and Awareness.'

1989



1988

Formal change from volunteers to professionals.

1990

SNV becomes a 'quango' (quasi-NGO).

2005



2002

SNV becomes a fully independent NGO.

2000

Shift from project approach to advisory role.

SNV