



ANUAL REPORT IN BRIEF

Learning from North-South relationships

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Foreword

The chairman's foreword

All PSO activities focus on reinforcing Dutch development cooperation organisations so that – properly equipped – they can facilitate their southern partners in the latter's growth towards becoming strong actors in civil society. In 2009, PSO underlined its position and function as a knowledge centre in the field of capacity development. Clear steps were taken which enabled more and improved learning from partner relationships between North and South. There are fascinating cases studies in this annual report on the results of that learning in development practice.

In 2009, PSO took a step forward in its cooperation with southern counterparts, but also in the provision of a participative method for planning, monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, the thematic learning programme developed into a tool which enables PSO to better fulfil its bridging function between research institutes and the field. This enables Dutch development organisations – under capable supervision – to truly learn from practice, assess existing knowledge in practice and generate new knowledge together with their southern partners.

Naturally, as the chairman of PSO, I am active in the current development cooperation debate. We are in talks with the Directorate General for International Cooperation concerning the future and how to best structure the knowledge landscape surrounding development cooperation. PSO is a learning organisation with strong ties to its members' work in the field. This makes it valuable as a knowledge and practice centre in the field of capacity development for the entire development sector. And, PSO has the ambition to increase its importance in the sector. The capacity development work PSO undertakes is generally indirect, yet works in the long term.



Be inspired by the examples in this annual report. Read how changes in behaviour and organisations have their effect enabling people and communities do justice to themselves and develop. I, for one, am proud of PSO's contribution!

Marnix van Rij, Chairman

The director's foreword

In 2009, I undertook various trips to visit our member organisations' partners. The wide variety of organisations that cooperate with our members was surprising. Whereas church organisations for example, with their direct aid in Nairobi's slums often constitute the only glimmer of hope of a better future for the vulnerable, other organisations focus on research, advocacy and action. Now that the debate rages on whether Dutch social organisations provide sufficient added value or not in development cooperation, I can reiterate, on the basis of my own experience, that southern social organisations benefit a great deal from the efforts of an international network of social organisations which provide advice, action and funding. Funding which the southern NGOs and community-based organisations are insufficiently able to obtain from their own societies. Local fundraising is however increasingly becoming a point of attention. Now the middle classes seem to be developing in a number of countries, even in Africa, the opportunities for local fundraising

are also on the rise. This is already more commonplace in Latin America, Asia and South Africa than, for example, in Ghana or Kenya. Dutch organisations would do well to recognise this and help their partners to develop their capacities in the field of this type of fundraising.

A large number of experiences were shared and lessons learned by the PSO Association in 2009. A fabulous highlight was the Innovation Award whereby TEAR, STRO and the World Population Foundation (WPF) showed their colleagues in the Netherlands how they studied new capacity development methods with their partners in the South. Another milestone was the Moshi Dialogue. A meeting between staff from Dutch, Danish and East African social organisations. North-South relationships were central to the agenda, as were the influence of the development aid system, behaviour in relationships, cultural differences and prejudices. PSO will incorporate the results of this dialogue into its work in 2010.

2009 was also characterised by the preparations for a new phase after 2010. Many member organisations explored opportunities for entering into alliances with Dutch counterparts after the ministry's call to do so. In principle, this harmonisation is a good thing, particularly in the countries in which Dutch organisations are active. However, it is even more important for harmonisation to take place in the countries themselves with the relevant organisations there and not just with the Dutch ones.

PSO is also engaged in a fascinating discussion with its members and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning its future. During these talks, PSO has – together with Partos (the interest group for the development sector) – made it clear that it is essential to associate learning and knowledge

with daily practice. This is precisely what PSO is working on with its learning-working paths, collective learning activities and the new, thematic learning programmes. PSO is busy bridging the divide between science and practice, and wishes to continue doing so.

This brief annual report provides a summary of the progress and results of PSO activities. The new forms of working, introduced in 2007, are starting to bear fruit. While our mission is to bring about change in the South, changing things within our own organisation demands a great deal of capacity. As an association, PSO has put collaborative learning high on the agenda. I hope this report provides you with an impression of the efforts PSO, its members and their southern partners make to improve performance and to provide increased results for their target groups.

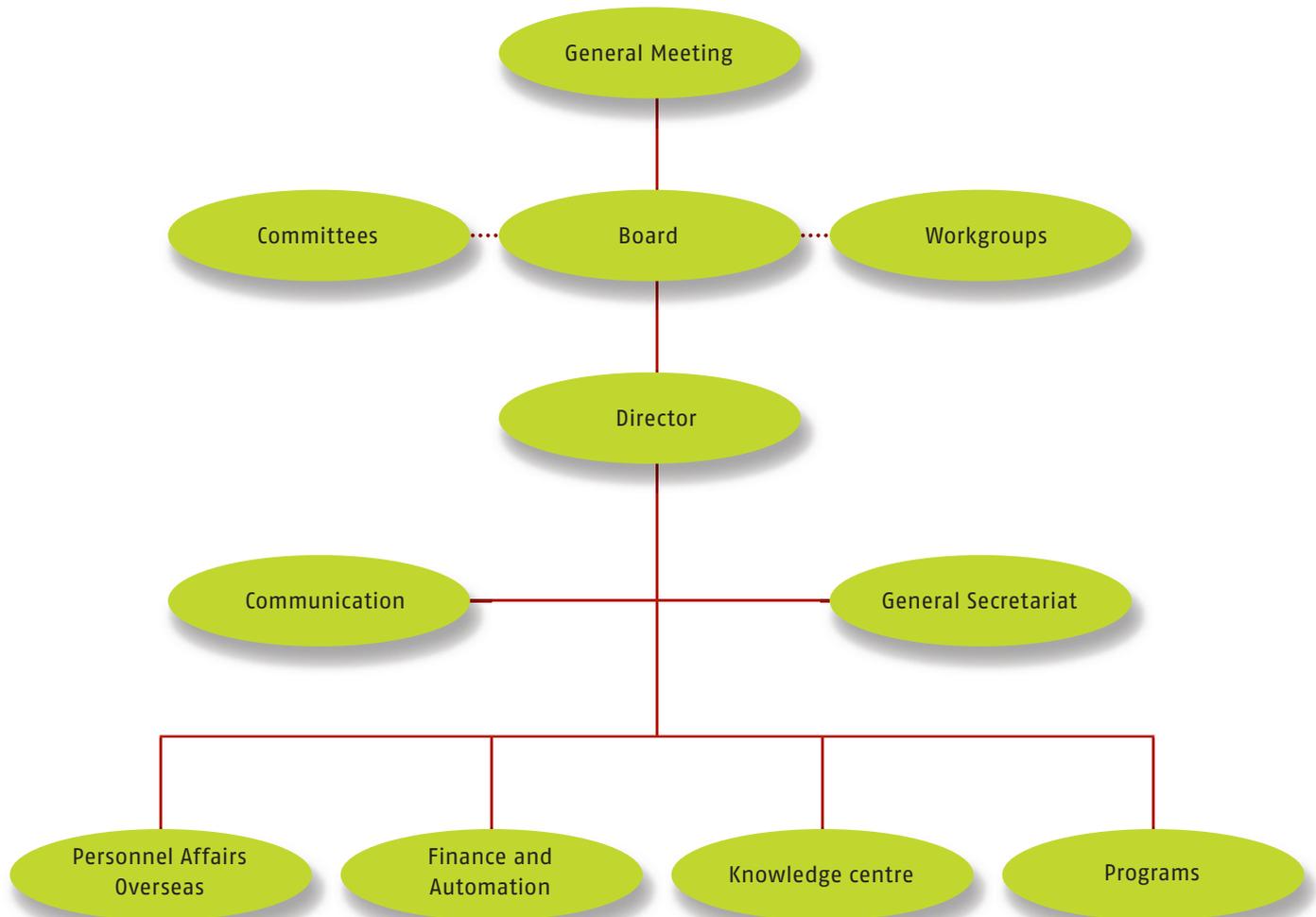
Margo Kooijman, Director



PSO 2009 facts and figures

- In 2009, the PSO Association had 53 Dutch development organisations as members.
- In 2009, the PSO welcomed four new members: dance4life, SOMO, Waste and SOS-Kinderdorpen.
- PSO supervised 39 organisations in individual learning-working paths aimed at developing their southern partners.
- 899 people participated in a PSO collective learning activity aimed at expanding their knowledge of capacity development.
- PSO developed a tool for thematic learning: the thematic learning programme which enables capacity development research and practice to better harmonise with one another.
- An innovative planning, monitoring and evaluation system was developed during the year under review.
- PSO organised its knowledge function around contemporary themes in capacity development.
- PSO carried out 9 mid-term reviews and evaluations.
- PSO facilitated the posting of well over 600 development experts in 2009.
- PSO funded 382 activities in the field of member organisation capacity development in developing countries.
- PSO received € 22.9 million in subsidies for its activities. € 19.8 million went straight to the funding of member organisations' projects and programmes.
- The board acquired two new members: Leen Verbeek, Queen's Commissioner for the Province of Flevoland and Antoinette Gosses, former journalist and senior advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- In total, 44 staff worked at six PSO departments.

Organisation chart



Learning from North-South relationships

This is the brief annual report of the PSO Association for the year 2009. This report provides a description of the results and concrete examples of what PSO does and achieves. Please refer to the full-length annual report at: www.pso.nl for the financial report. 2009 is the third year of the 2007 – 2010 period, for which a monitoring protocol has been agreed upon with our financier, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2009 PSO had € 22.9 million to spend. € 19.8 million of this went to funding member organisations' programmes and projects.

PSO is an association of 53 Dutch development organisations who – together – wish to learn how they can effectively help to reinforce their southern partners. By focusing on the development of a strong civil society with room for sustainable economic initiatives, PSO contributes to structural development. PSO collaborates increasingly intensively with international partners. The southern partners' perspective leads to a shared concept of what constitute worthwhile interventions. How does PSO work on its mission?

What PSO does: learning from daily practice

PSO views experiential learning (experiencing – reflecting – conceptualising – experimenting – experiencing) as the approach to optimising processes such as capacity development. The learning cycle has been visualised in the following figure:

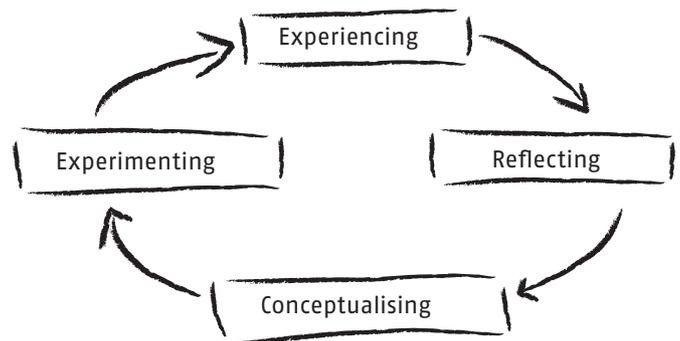


Diagram of the experiential learning cycle

Because this approach does not end with the lessons learned, but also takes the step of experimenting with new behaviour it leads to actual changes and improvements in practice. Of course, this new practice constitutes the input for the next learning cycle. This experiential learning takes place in practice and involves PSO member organisations, their partners and other parties in the North and the South. PSO agency staff supervise the learning at member organisations. Either at an individual level with a particular organisation, or collectively on the basis of a particular theme.

Knowledge themes in capacity development

PSO bridges the gap between theory and practice, between policy and implementation. In 2009, PSO saw the trend of member organisations' learning questions centring on a particular theme continue. In the year under review, PSO translated this trend into the organisation of its knowledge function in theme groups. This allows the more targeted development of knowledge aligned with questions from daily practice. The following theme groups have been set up: Civil Society, Partnerships, Organisational development, Capacity development PM&E, Gender equality, HIV/AIDS, Fragile States and Migration & Development.

This insight enriches PSO's approach to learning. It demonstrates that – in order to be more effective – 'learning in practice' should be augmented by 'learning from science'.

Learning from partner relationships

PSO can only fulfil its bridging function between the practice and theory of capacity development by being open to continuous learning and change itself. In 2009, it became clearer than ever that strong ties with both southern and northern knowledge and practice centres helps improve the harmonisation of knowledge and skills in the field of capacity development with the daily practice of development professionals. Over the past year, PSO has learned a great deal from and in its southern cooperation relationships. For example, in the field of relational aspects and their consequences in working practice of capacity professionals by collaboratively organising 'The Moshi Dialogue'. This was a conference for northern and southern NGOs about their international working relationships. Southern organisations were also increasingly given roles designing and implementing learning paths. The International Advisory Board provided valuable advice on how to make PSO even more relevant to daily practice in the South. Their recommendations reinforced the development of a new learning tool: the thematic learning programme. This tool offers development organisations a new opportunity to learn through experiencing, conceptualising, reflecting and experimenting together with their southern partners and with the involvement of knowledge institutes. This insight enriches PSO's approach to learning. It demonstrates that – in order to be more effective – 'learning in practice' should be augmented by 'learning from science'.

The Moshi Dialogue

A collective learning activity which PSO organised in conjunction with southern partner EASUN (Tanzania) was entitled 'the Moshi Dialogue'. It consisted of an international conference on North-South relationships. This meeting between northern and southern NGOs aimed to arrive at a mutual understanding of roles, behaviour and the consequences of systems in international relationships through a dialogue that was as open as possible. Half the 50 delegates came primarily from East Africa, the other half were European (Danish and Dutch). After preparatory meetings in Arusha, Copenhagen and Soesterberg, and a joint agenda setting meeting in Arusha, the actual conference took place in November 2009 in Moshi, Tanzania.

During the lead-up, the problems in the cases provided seemed to be more to do with relationships in general than with

cultural problems. However, during the meeting in Moshi, differences in values and perspectives proved to definitely play a role and, moreover, dialogue was shown to be strongly influenced by deep rooted, mutual prejudices. This resulted in heated debates followed by awkward silences and intensive listening sessions. The dialogue meeting – with its inspiring and frustrating moments – had a major impact on all those involved.

Documentation

The Moshi Dialogue was documented in images (photographs, cartoons, video) and writing (poems, blogs by a participant and a report). A great deal of this material can be found at: www.pso.nl/nl/content/dossier-moshi-dialogue. Various sector media (Vice Versa and Capacity.org) are set to publish articles on this remarkable project in 2010.

Activities that participants thought would improve North-South relationships:

- Invest in the pre-contracting phase. This allows you to ascertain to what extent you can actually grow as partners in the field of methods and vision. Furthermore: regularly reflect on the relationship. Does our relationship still provide added value with a view to what we wish to achieve for our target groups?
- We need a revolution in civil society both in the North and the South. Together we should draw up a good development agenda using the space for influencing available to us.
- We should change aid into investment so that the dignity of the recipients and local initiatives are respected.
- We should sit down with our governments and other back donors so they can see how the northern and southern CSOs are being torn apart by the current systems.
- We can agree on the fact that we disagree, but we should become competent at dealing with cultures and the resulting differences and convictions.
- The North should also start viewing the process as a product or output. Furthermore, more planning and reporting flexibility is required. The logical framework in particular should be more open and less rigid.

THE WAY FORWARD...

Love YOU PAL...

Love YOU TOO..

PREJUDICE

Missaad
2009

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Organisations learn individually

The learning-working path

PSO has developed a number of tools for learning about capacity development. The learning-working paths centre on learning questions concerning the capacity development of individual member organisations. In collaboration with PSO, an organisation draws up an framework agreement on these questions, focussing on the learning activities for the coming years. In 2009, PSO supervised 39 learning-working paths.

Strategic funding

PSO employs strategic funding to stimulate learning about capacity development. This entails funding linked to learning-working paths agreed with individual member organisations. In 2009, PSO funded 382 member activities in the field of capacity development in 59 countries. € 19.8 million of the total budget of € 22.9 million was spent on this. PSO provided feedback on 224 requests for projects and programmes from 44 member organisations. Nine evaluations and mid-term reviews were carried out over the past year.

The effects of this funding are ultimately the changes and improvements in international relationships and interventions by members and their partners. PSO monitors the learning and changing or, in other words, experiential learning, during the learning-working path. Insights from the latter are aggregated into follow-up questions which are the focus of collective learning paths (zie p. 16) or thematic learning programmes (zie p. 17). Read what VSO and PSO achieved with a member organisation in a learning/working path.

Stimulation funds

Alongside the strategic funding of projects and programmes, PSO also manages a number of stimulation funds aimed at encouraging capacity development from a particular perspective or for a particular target group. Examples include the Quality Fund, the Innovation Fund and the posting programme for young people: Youth Zone. The Innovation Award enables PSO to provide good initiatives with more exposure in and outside the development cooperation sector, and to stimulate emulation.



WPF winner of the PSO Innovation Award 2009

A programme by the World Population Foundation (WPF) and its partners aimed at combating violence in intimate partner relationships was rewarded with the 2009 Innovation Award. The innovative aspect was that men also received support enabling domestic violence to be combated structurally. This required a change of culture and approach as the original approach and ideology focused solely on helping women. Domestic violence victims themselves asked for intervention for their partners as they want the violence, but not the relationships, to stop. This example attracted our attention

because the partner organisation as a whole changed. For a single issue organisation such as WPF this is an entirely new way of working.



VSO: how to learn together with our partners?

In practice it proves difficult for organisations to substantiate 'learning'. Many organisations learn from their projects, but make insufficient use of those lessons to effect changes within their organisation. VSO International was also dissatisfied with its own organisational learning. VSO posts expert volunteers to partner organisations in 38 countries. Since 2004, organisational learning has been high on VSO's agenda. To this end, VSO developed its own methods for action learning which allow partners and volunteers to reflect on their work and to immediately translate the lessons learned into practice. "However, we kept thinking we could do better," says Nicola Chevis, Planning and Review advisor for VSO International. "Here and there, among our partners we saw very good examples of organisational learning. We wondered how we could translate these into lessons for our organisation as a whole."

Nicola Chevis paid a working visit to PSO in Scheveningen. In early 2009, both organisations set up a learning-working path. VSO's learning question was: how can we best support our partners to become learning organisations? The path started in three West-African countries – Cameroon, Ghana

and Gambia – where partner organisations had already demonstrated a great deal of enthusiasm for organisational learning. They took workshops and attended exchange meetings. Supervised by advisors, they were challenged to reflect on their learning process.

Balance

Just under a year after starting, PSO and VSO assessed the progress so far. Alfred Kuma, VSO's Regional Learning Advisor leads the path's implementation in the three project countries. He has seen what the learning path does for the partner organisations first hand. "In Gambia, for example, we collaborate with a number of organisations for the handi-capped. The distance between the organisations and their members – the handicapped – was considerable. Thanks to the learning-working path's activities the organisations gained more time to think about their relationship with their members. They conducted surveys which gave them a much better impression of what their members wanted. This helped them to set up targeted programmes. They say this project has made them more visible to their supporters." Kuma has also witnessed good effects at other partners. In his opinion, the programme reinforces the ties between VSO, the partner organisations and the volunteers. "Openness has increased as has trust. There is a great deal more discussion concerning the process instead of the results achieved. This makes the 'learning harvest' much more bountiful." Had VSO been able to undergo this learning process without PSO's support? Nicola Chevis does not think so. "PSO brings together the knowledge and experience of a large number of different organisations. But what is equally important is this path forces us to make time for our own learning process. Without PSO's financial and substantive support this would never have happened."



Innovative

"The project with VSO also offers PSO opportunities", says Arja Aarnoudse of the PSO Knowledge centre. "VSO is the first member organisation to – alongside asking the question – submit such a concrete programme on learning together with its partners in the field. This makes VSO's learning-working path innovative and unique. I am very curious as to how this will develop. It also provides us with an opportunity to learn and to share that knowledge with other organisations."

As far as the latter is concerned, VSO and PSO are putting their money where their mouth is. In collaboration with CDRA (Community Development Research Association) from South Africa, they are working on a 'Barefootguide about Learning Practices and Social Change'. This guide is intended for all

organisations that work with organisational learning. "It is more than a toolkit with tips and tricks", explains Aarnoudse. "We really want to propagate another vision on learning. It is not about theoretical models or bookish knowledge, but about practical application in the field. Learning as a social activity which changes both those learning and their context. And we hope to thereby also reach colleagues throughout the sector." Starting in late 2010, the initial version will be tested during action research by organisations in the North and South.

Organisations learn collectively

In collective learning paths, members – supervised by PSO – exchanged practical experiences with regard to a theme and acquired new knowledge and insights.

Examples of themes include Capacity Development and Networking, Qualitative Methods for Monitoring and Evaluation, and Cultural Diversity. Dutch or foreign experts are regularly involved in these paths to provide the latest insights. Collective learning paths have a relatively short throughput time and multiple collective learning paths can be taken within a single learning-working path. These collective paths can take on various guises: thematic (closed) networks, action research or multi-day meetings often supported by online learning environments. In 2009, almost 900 people participated in a collective session. Of the 53 PSO member organisations, 49 took part in at least one collective activity and furthermore some 74 representatives of other organisations participated. 64 percent of participants in collective learning activities indicated that the effect of participating was 'definitely' more widely noticeable within the organisation than if only one person had taken part.

Anchoring collective learning in the daily practice of member organisations has been promoted since early 2009 by means of intakes with candidates, prior meetings with candidates' supervisors, and more attention during reflection meetings with members on how this experience can be fed back into the organisation.

In 2009 collective learning paths concerned the following subjects:

Networking
Cultural Diversity
Capacity Development in Fragile States
Balancing between an advisory and a funding role
Basic path Capacity Development and Civil Society (3x)

Other events/activities for network support:

Event Governance in Southern and Northern NGO
Café Humanitaire, network for humanitarian aid professionals
Moshi Dialogue (and preparatory meetings in North and South)
Organisational Learning Network
Planning Monitoring & Evaluation Network
Event and Pit Stop Outcome Mapping
Event Barefootguide to working with organisations for social change (2x)
Events Most Significant Change and pit stop for advanced experts on this subject
Community Based DDR Event
Humanitarian Sector Reform Event
Local Governance in Fragile States Event
Humanitarian Accountability Event
PSO Planning Monitoring & Evaluation System
Gender Event; from good intentions to action
Migration and Development Orientation Meeting
Expert Consultation Sport & Development

From learning from daily practice to generic knowledge

New learning instrument

Advice from the International Advisory Board stimulated the thematic organisation of PSO's knowledge function. As a result, the abovementioned 'thematic learning programme' tool was developed in 2009. Thematic learning programmes provide organisational and financial space for members to learn together with their partners and knowledge institutes. In 2009, the PSO theme groups formulated a number of learning questions which constitute the basis for the thematic learning programmes which started in 2010. This tool is the logical

bridge between the results of individual learning processes (in learning-working paths) and the collective learning paths as they link joint learning to knowledge development for capacity development themes.



Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

In 2009, PSO started to use evaluations in a more educational manner. PSO wishes to promote evaluations leading to the increased reflection of the parties involved in the processes of capacity development as these have been shaped in the field. This means that PSO stimulates the use of qualitative and participative methods in evaluations and that it encourages PSO and member organisation staff to participate in these field evaluations and to not always leave them to external experts. The manner in which TPO Nepal was evaluated by Healthnet TPO is an example of this new method. Nine evaluations and mid-term reviews were carried out in 2009.

The five capabilities

The 'European Centre for Development Policy Management has developed a model that indicates which factors determine the capacity and performance of an organisation. These factors are described in the five core capabilities. Every core capability consists of a number of 'hard' and 'soft' organisational characteristics and the trick is to find the right balance between the five capabilities and per capability between 'hard' and 'soft' characteristics. This concerns the five following capabilities: Capacity for drive and commitment, Capacity for the execution of technical, logistics and service tasks, Capacity for entering into relationships and to mobilise funds and support, Capacity to adapt and to innovate and, finally the Capacity to balance diversity and coherence.

In the new-style evaluations the emphasis is no longer on the efficiency or effectiveness of interventions. Instead, the ECDPM organisational model (the five capabilities as a measure of capacity development) is used to examine the extent to which partners have been strengthened. This examines the changes in the relationship between the member organisation and partner, how this influenced the capacity development process and the changes the member organisations and PSO have made in order to better facilitate capacity development in the South. Five of the nine evaluations were based on the new PM&E system. In 2010, PSO wishes to experiment with various participative, qualitative methods. At the end of 2010, PSO wishes to gather the lessons learned from the experience acquired and share these with the sector. PSO wants to monitor the progression with regard to member organisations' learning questions and the effect on their southern partners. The new evaluation method involves PSO and member organisations' staff much more intensively. This reduces the risk of reports being left unused.



Midterm review HealthNet TPO

HealthNet TPO carried out a learning-working path with PSO in the framework of global programme decentralisation. How can the local offices be developed in such a way that they can operate independently and can simultaneously continue to be part of the organisation internationally? That is the main question of the learning-working path the strategic funding was tied to. At the end of 2009, a mid-term review was conducted into the development of TPO Nepal, an organisation that HealthNet TPO founded locally in Nepal.

Since being founded in 2005, TPO Nepal has been reinforced and supported by HealthNet TPO in Amsterdam. PSO has supported this process with an organisational advisor to supervise process management. This process led to an innovative, clearer relationship between the offices in Nepal and Amsterdam. TPO Nepal's dependence has, in recent years, shifted from short-term management support to long-term strategy development in Nepal's changing context. What are the lessons that can be learned for TPO Nepal and for HealthNet TPO's other offices? This question was posed during the review of HealthNet TPO's learning-working path.

The review was carried out at three levels. First of all by a local consultancy, the Organisation Development Centre (ODC) in Kathmandu. The latter used participatory action research to – in conjunction with the TPO Nepal office – examine the process which led to independence with internal learning as its principal goal. The methods used included history mapping, interviews and exchanges, storytelling, a cross office walk, participative observations and a desk study. Simultaneously, a Dutch healthcare organisation consultancy Plexus took part in the review in order to make the link to HealthNet TPO's development in the Netherlands.

Plexus supported HealthNet TPO in its change process and used the experiences gained in Nepal as a test case for the global process. Finally, HealthNet TPO's portfolio staffer in Amsterdam actively participated in the review in Nepal in order to include the head office's vision in the review and to subsequently be able to immediately incorporate the lessons learned into the head office's daily practice.

Learning and not control was the goal of the review from the start. The joint design of the terms of reference and the mutual search for consultants has led to an optimum harmonisation for learning from the experiences. The three-pronged approach also played a major role in this. The recommendations for TPO Nepal are future oriented: how can TPO Nepal, on the basis of the experiences in recent years, improve its capacity development, how can the office be further developed into a learning organisation and how can it indicate priorities in the new role and with regard to the head office. Internationally, lessons are primarily learned from this changing role: a clear Memorandum of Understanding that actually describes the mutual responsibilities and expectations, the manner of communication and the exchange between the offices are important factors for efficient cooperation in the new relationship with the offices around the world.

Posting experts abroad

Facilitating the posting of development professionals was originally PSO's core business. Since 2002, the focus has shifted to capacity development. PSO is slowly developing into a knowledge and practice centre for that field. This is why work started on a business plan and a market orientation aimed at making the Personnel Affairs Abroad independent. In 2009 a lot of processes were also made more efficient with a view to the independent restart of this PSO business unit. Demand continues to exist for international or Dutch experts to provide support to member organisations' activities. PSO has a great deal of expertise and experience in the field of posting which is why the facilitation of hundreds of postings per year is entrusted to the Personnel Affairs Abroad department. In 2009, well over 140 postings were facilitated, funded from

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' subsidy. These services were also provided for around 350 postings that were funded by PSO member organisations and some 120 postings which were financed by third parties.



List of member organisations 31st of December 2009

Agriterra
Aim for human rights
AMREF Flying Doctors Nederland
Both ENDS
CARE Nederland
Centrum Kontakt der Kontinenten
Cordaid
dance4life International
Dorcas Aid Internationaal
Edukans
ETC Foundation
Fair Trade Original
Free Voice
GZB
HealthNet-TPO
HIVOS
ICCO/ Kerk in Actie
IICD
IKV Pax Christi
Interserve Nederland
IRC
Leprastichting
Mama Cash
Mensen met een Missie
Nederlandse Rode Kruis
NIMD, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NIZA
NOC*NSF
Oxfam Novib
Regionaal van Mill Hill
SIMAVI
Social Trade Organisation (STRO)
Solidaridad
St. Medisch Comité Nederland-Vietnam
Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland

Milieukontakt International
SOS-Kinderdorpen
Stichting SOMO
Stichting VSO-Nederland
Stichting WEMOS
Stichting Woord en Daad
Tear
Terre des Hommes
Theatre Embassy
TIE/Transnationals Information Exchange
VluchtelingenWerk Nederland
WAR Child Nederland
WASTE
World Population Foundation
World Vision
ZGG
ZOA Vluchtelingenzorg
ZZG

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L. Geut, vice chairman
H. den Boer, treasurer
D. Faber
A. Gosses
K. Schilte
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Colophon

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