



Youth Zone Matters?

Third study into the effects of the PSO Youth Zone programme

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Preface by PSO

Youth Zone Matters? Reading this report makes me conclude that the question mark (?) can be deleted and replaced by an exclamation mark (!). So, to put my money where my mouth is:

Youth Zone Matters!

How did I come to this bold conclusion? And to whom does it matter? Allow me to mention three main results of this third study into the effects of the Youth Zone programme, to provide some flesh on the bones to Youth Zone's claim to fame:

- The effect of the posting to the learning and careers of returned young professionals is very positive. A majority of the young professionals argues that their posting has been and still is relevant to their professional career, both within and outside the sector of development cooperation.
- With regard to the young professionals' private lives, much more than the required 60% of the respondents is involved in three or more different types of activities related to development cooperation.
- The Youth Zone programme is highly appreciated by the PSO member organisations and partner organisations and they are able to give concrete examples of the added value of the programme.

Curious about the examples? I invite you to go see for your self and read the report.

Mark-Pieter van den Heuvel
Coordinator Youth Zone

Summary

In order to give young professionals an opportunity to be involved with international development cooperation, PSO is implementing a specific youth programme for its member organisations. The main objectives of this Youth Zone programme are:

1. The personal and professional development of the young professional;
2. Capacity building of the local partner organisation;
3. Increasing public support for development cooperation in the Netherlands.

After two reviews of this programme (in 2005 and 2007), this is a third study into the effects of the Youth Zone programme. The specific result-indicators that have been set by PSO at the start of this programme will thereby act as a reference to verify whether the objectives have been met.

In the study, three research groups (young professionals, PSO member organisations and the partner organisations in developing countries) have been asked to complete a questionnaire. In addition two group interviews were held with young professionals.

The research group of young professionals is subdivided in a group of recently returned young professionals (so-called 'group 2007-2009') and a group of respondents participating in the Youth Zone programme prior to July 2007 (so-called 'group 2001-2007'). Both groups were tested against the result-indicators. Of the total group of potential respondents of group 2007-2009, 63% completed and returned a questionnaire. With regard to group 2001-2007, 50% of the complete group of potential respondents did complete a questionnaire and can be considered as representative for the total group.

For a majority of group 2007-2009, the posting has met their expectations. They are positive about the development cooperation sector as a working environment. However, only 45% of the returned young professionals currently has a job position in the development cooperation sector. Although there are many reasons for this relatively low percentage in comparison to previous studies, the low availability of jobs is probably the most dominant one. In comparison, 56% of group 2001-2007 indicates to currently have work in the development cooperation sector. PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 1 that demands 60% working in this sector has *not* been met for both group 2007-2009 and group 2001-2007.

With regard to the second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator that focuses on the relevance of the posting for their current job, a majority of young professionals believe that the posting is relevant to carry out their current jobs. In other words, despite the fact that the first PSO result-indicator has not been met, Youth Zone matters for the young professionals. Both thresholds that have been set by PSO are met; more respondents than the threshold of 70% indicate that the posting is relevant to the professional career *within* the development cooperation sector. Furthermore, more than the required 30% of the respondents indicate that the posting is relevant to the professional career *outside* the development cooperation sector.

The third PSO Youth Zone result-indicator focuses on the private life of the young professionals and their involvement with development cooperation. Much more than the required 60% of the

respondents is involved in three or more different types of activities in their private life that is related to development cooperation.

Of the PSO member organisations that have posted a young professional between July 2007 and July 2009, 95% returned a completed questionnaire. PSO member organisations consider capacity building and personal development of the young professional as the main goals for the Youth Zone programme. In the previous study of 2005, a majority of the PSO member organisations believed that their partner organisations perceived the Youth Zone programme mainly as a way to get subsidized job positions. Nowadays, all of the PSO member organisations indicate that the arrival of new knowledge is the main quality of the Youth Zone programme. This can be considered as a big shift.

The majority of the PSO member organisations are positive about the capacity building achievements of the young professionals. None of the contact persons indicate that they consider the posting as unsatisfactory, while 83% of the respondents indicate that the capacity building achievements of young professionals are still visible. As a result of these findings, the first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator that demands a minimum of 70% of the involved PSO member organisations appreciating the capacity building result is met. More than 83% of the respondents believe that there is added value of the young professionals and were able to provide arguments. The second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator is met as well. In conclusion: Youth Zone matters for the member organisations.

In general, PSO member organisations do appreciate various aspects of PSO's work, such as communication between PSO and its member organisations and handling feedback. Some concerns were raised about the complexity of the administration involved. The working relation with the partner organisations is maintained through regular contact. Although the frequency depends per organisation, the nature of these contacts is mostly coaching and informing.

The third target group that has been questioned during this study consists of the partner organisations in the developing countries. A total of 14 partner organisations have completed and returned a questionnaire. 85% of them indicate that their expectation of the added value of the young professional is input of new knowledge. This is in line with the answers provided by the PSO member organisations. All of the respondents indicate that the main goal of the Youth Zone programme is the partner organisations' capacity building.

A majority of 88% of the partner organisations rate the capacity building results of the young professional as satisfactory or even more. In addition, they are able to mention some important results achieved by the young professionals at individual level as well as for the entire organisation. As a result, the first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator that focuses on 70% of the respondents appreciating the capacity building results of the young professionals is met. This is also true for the second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator that verifies whether a proportion of 60% of the respondents is able to mention the added value of young professionals. More than the required 60% of the partner organisations confirm the added value and are able to provide examples. Flexibility is the most coined one here. Youth Zone thus also matters for the partner organisations!

Generally speaking, Youth Zone matters according to all stakeholders involved in this research. Respondents are generally positive about its goals, set-up, opportunities and results. Based on these findings, the researchers propose two recommendations in order to improve the Youth Zone programme. First, with the job market in the development cooperation sector under pressure,

enrolling young professionals should be made aware of the career challenges when pursuing a career in the development cooperation sector. Secondly, with the second experience of a low response of partner organisations in this survey, PSO should invest more time in direct contact with partner organisations in order to get more insights in the daily context of capacity development and young professionals of partner organisations.

In addition, three more 'out of the box' recommendations are provided. First, the PSO Youth Zone programme should increasingly focus on South-South postings when the threshold of 60% of young professionals working in the development cooperation sector is maintained while job opportunities move to developing countries. Secondly, the publishing of an article about the PSO Youth Zone programme is proposed in order to reach a greater public with the research findings. Thirdly, it is recommended to discontinue the current bi-annual sequence of broader PSO Youth Zone effect studies, but to focus the research on specific questions. In general, the studies of 2005, 2007 and this year were positive about the effect of the PSO Youth Zone programme. The recommendations of the 2005 and 2007 studies have been implemented successfully. A similar broad Youth Zone effect study in two years from now will have a low chance of revealing new elements and will incur 'respondent fatigue'. Therefore, a more specific research in order to reveal currently unknown factors and results of the Youth Zone programme is proposed.

1 Introduction

This chapter briefly describes the background of this study and the PSO Youth Zone programme that is under review here. The last paragraph provides information about the composition of this paper.

1.1 A quick overview of PSO Youth Zone

In order to give young professionals an opportunity to be involved with international development cooperation, PSO is implementing a specific youth programme for its member organisations. The PSO Youth Zone programme gives the PSO member organisations the possibility to recruit and send young professionals on mission as 'Junior Professional' or 'Starter' and make use of their enthusiasm, flexibility and new knowledge. At the same time, young professionals gain significant working experience and are given the opportunity to get acquainted with partner organisations in development countries and local processes of capacity building. The main objectives of the Youth Zone programme are:

1. The personal and professional development of the young professional;
2. Capacity building of the local partner organisation;
3. Increasing public support for development cooperation in the Netherlands.

Note that at the time of formulation of the PSO Youth Zone programme, '*capacity building*' was the standard term. Since recently, PSO uses '*capacity development*' to refer to this process. In this report, '*capacity building*' will be used as it was formulated as such in the PSO Youth Zone goals, in the terms of reference of this research and in the questionnaires of the respondents.

In recent years, the focus of PSO has moved to the quality improvement and innovation in processes of capacity development. The professional and personal development of young professionals is still the first objective of the Youth Zone programme, while capacity building of the partner organisations in the South has received more emphasis since 2008. As a consequence, PSO has paid less attention to the third Youth Zone objective. The PSO association believes that returned young professionals can play an important role in strengthening public support. However, PSO has decided not to play a pro-active role in this matter and to leave the main responsibility of gaining public support for development cooperation with the member organisations and the young professionals.

1.2 The study

It is not the first time that a study to the effect of the Youth Zone programme has been carried out. In 2004/2005, four years after the start of the Youth Zone programme, a first review of the Youth Zone programme took place. It focused mainly on the young professionals and answered questions such as: 'where do young professionals end up after their posting?' The main conclusion was that a majority of young professionals is working in the international development sector after the PSO Youth Zone mission. The experiences acquired in the Youth Zone programme were one of the main contributing factors to achieve this.

A second study carried out in 2006/2007 included the perspective of Dutch member organisations and their partners in developing countries. Both types of organisations did appreciate the quality of the young professionals and favoured continuation of the Youth Zone programme. The young professionals that were questioned during the first study were approached again during this study in order to be updated about the development of their professional careers.

The studies in 2005 and 2007 have provided the Youth Zone programme participants with useful recommendations. Some recommendations concentrated on the set-up of the study and have been adopted in this study. Examples: questionnaires for partner organisations were made available in Spanish; this report is provided in the English language. Other recommendations focused on the set-up and implementation of the PSO Youth Zone programme itself. Example: better communication to partner organisations on the added value of having Youth Zone young professionals for capacity development. Chapter 5.1 describes whether partner organisations have a better understanding currently on this matter.

This review is the third one in this series. It will include the young professionals who have returned from their posting between July 2007 and July 2009 as well as those who have been approached with a questionnaire in previous years. The aim is to get a longitudinal overview of the careers of young professionals that have been posted in development countries under the Youth Zone programme. PSO member organisations and partner organisations will be asked about their opinion of the Youth Zone programme as well. Clarification on the methodology of this study and the different target groups is found in chapter 2 of this report.

Although the study will focus on similar subjects and target groups as the previous one, there is an important difference that needs to be mentioned. In the previous two studies the questionnaire asked the young professionals about their degree of 'world citizenship'. This refers to the active or passive involvement of the young professional with international and social issues with regards to poverty, inequality and sustainability. PSO wanted the researchers to specifically focus on the three main Youth Zone objectives as mentioned under chapter 1.1. As a result, assessing the level of world citizenship is not a part of this study anymore.

This study has been carried out by two consultants: a junior and a senior one. Maarten Kuijpers, the junior consultant, has been posted under the Youth Zone programme in Papua New Guinea. Paul van 't Wout, adviser in the area of Human Resources Management and involved in the two previous studies, has been appointed as the senior consultant for this study. The views and opinions expressed in this research are those of the researchers and not necessarily in line with the point of view of PSO.

1.3 The report

Chapter 2 provides the reader with information about the used research methodology. It elaborates on the research questions, methods of data collection, analysis and limitations of the study.

The findings are discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Each target group is discussed in a separate chapter. Chapter 3 focuses on the findings among the young professionals. First, basic characteristics are presented about this research group after which the result-indicators set by PSO are checked. Chapter 4 and 5 follows this routine for respectively the Dutch member organisations and the partner organizations in the developing countries. At the end of each of these three chapters, the main conclusions per target group are stated. Chapter 6 will conclude this report with overall conclusions and five recommendations.

2 Methodology

PSO has provided the researchers with a research question for every target group that is involved in this research. This chapter gives a brief introduction of these target groups and the research questions. The last three paragraphs will give an overview of the research methodology and its limitations.

2.1 Target groups of this study

While PSO bears the overall responsibility of the Youth Zone programme and facilitates the implementation, three separate stakeholder groups play a major role as well: the young professionals, the Dutch PSO member organisations and the partner organisations of those PSO member organisations in the South. Since these groups are involved with the Youth Zone programme in a different way, this study reviews them separately. The following paragraphs give some insight in these different groups.

2.1.1 Young professionals

Over the past 8 years, PSO has facilitated 219 Youth Zone programme postings of young professionals in developing countries. These individuals have carried out specific activities in a variety of circumstances and can be subdivided in several subgroups. This research will make a division into two subgroups:

- Recently returned professionals (between July 2007 and July 2009);
- Those who have returned from their posting between 2000 and June 2007.

A second subdivision is related to the type of posting:

- **Starter**, who is posted for a period of maximum 6 months and has less than one year working experience after finishing his/her study;
- **Junior Professional**, who is normally more experienced than a Starter and is contracted for a longer period with a maximum of 24 months.

A third distinction that is significant for this research is between:

- The young professional who bear the Dutch nationality (North-South cooperation);
- The young professionals who come from a developing country (South-South cooperation).

In 2008, PSO has started a programme to stimulate young professionals from the South to take part in the Youth Zone programme. To date, seven young professionals from developing countries have been posted in another developing country under the Youth Zone programme. They are also included in this research.

2.1.2 PSO member organisations

The second group of respondents consists of the 18 Dutch PSO member organisations participating within the PSO Youth Zone programme. The PSO contact persons of these organisations were asked to share their experiences with the researchers. Moreover, they were asked for their cooperation to get into contact with their partner organisations in developing countries who have hosted a young professional between July 2007 and July 2009.

2.1.3 Partner organisations in the South

The third group consists of partner organisations of PSO member organisations, involved with the postings of one or more young professionals in the period from July 2007 to July 2009.

2.2 Research questions

PSO, in consultation with its member organisations, has set specific objectives and indicators of the Youth Zone programme in relation with each target group. The researchers have been requested to verify whether these objectives are met. The following paragraphs give an overview of the targets set for 2010 per research group. These result-indicators function as a guideline to assess the success of the Youth Zone programme and give answer to the main research questions.

2.2.1 Returned young professionals

Main research question: What is the effect of the posting to the learning and careers of returned young professionals?

Three result-indicators were defined to be used as reporting criteria:

1. In 2010 a minimum of 60% of the young professionals that have returned in the period 2007-2009 are working in the development cooperation (DC) sector in the Netherlands or abroad.
2. A certain proportion of the returned young professionals indicate that gained knowledge and skills during their posting are to a great degree relevant to their current career. A minimum of 70% in relation to the career within the DC sector, a minimum of 30% in relation to the career outside the DC sector.
3. Of the returned young professionals, 60% indicate that they use skills and knowledge on at least three different ways for development cooperation.

2.2.2 PSO member organisations

Main research question: What are the appreciation and the added value of the Youth Zone programme?

Two result-indicators were defined to be used as reporting criteria:

1. In 2010 a minimum of 70% of the involved member organisations indicate that they appreciate the results that were accomplished in the area of capacity building.
2. In 2010 a minimum of 60% of the involved member organisations can formulate what the added value is of the young professionals.

2.2.3 Partner organisations

Main research question: What are the appreciation and the added value of the Youth Zone programme?

Two result-indicators were defined to be used as reporting criteria:

1. In 2010 a minimum of 70% of the involved partner organisations indicate that they appreciate the results that were accomplished in the area of capacity building.
2. In 2010 a minimum of 60% of the involved partner organisations can formulate what the added value is of the young professionals.

2.3 Methods of data collection

The previous studies have used questionnaires as the principal method of data collection. The results of this method were satisfactory. As a result, this year's study made use of written questionnaires as well. The survey is designed to give answers on the questions asked in the previous paragraph. These questions are subdivided by a number of thresholds giving clear amounts of required percentages. For one part, the questionnaire has a quantitative character in order to gather clear data to put the threshold to a test. However, to understand the situations and views of respondents it was necessary to ask additional clarification. This is done in the second part of the questionnaire where open-ended questions were asked.

The survey was sent to all respondents (e.g. Returned young professionals, contact persons of PSO member organisations and contact persons of partner organisations) by the end of August 2009. Member organisations and partner organisations received a document with the request to complete and return these by e-mail or regular mail. The partner organisations were contacted through the contact persons of the PSO member organisations.

The Youth Zone young professionals received the questionnaire through e-mail. They were given the choice to either complete the document attached to the e-mail and return it or complete a web based questionnaire. Before the collection of answers closed around October 15th, three messages were sent by e-mail to remind the respondents about the questionnaires.

All questionnaires were drawn up in English. Reason is the international character of the Youth Zone programme. As mentioned earlier, Youth Zone also accommodates young professionals that originate from developing countries and do not master the Dutch language. In addition to the English survey, a Spanish version was made for the partner organisations in the Spanish language area. In the previous survey it was found that a number of partner organisations in South America were not included in the research since they were not able to understand the English questionnaires. However, this report is only published in the English language.

In addition to the questionnaire of the young professionals, two group interviews were held in Utrecht on October 5 and 6, 2009. A total of eight young professionals joined these interviews and discussed and clarified a number of issues that emerged from the first analysis of the surveys.

2.4 Clarification of concepts

In the research, respondents were explained about the definitions used in the survey. The *development cooperation sector* is defined as 'all companies, organisations, associations and private initiatives that focus on contributing to development cooperation'. *Development cooperation* is defined as 'sustainable development aimed at reducing poverty with respect for human rights and ecological sustainability'. In this study we view humanitarian assistance as a part of development cooperation.

2.5 Non response

As written above, young professionals were contacted by e-mail and asked to cooperate with this study. A portion of the target group could not be reached because they use a different e-mail address nowadays or, due to a new posting, are not able to access their e-mail account (there were a couple of respondents who apologized for the late reply and explained that they were in the 'field' and therefore not able to use the internet). A last reason worth mentioning is that a few respondents did

not want to cooperate with 'another questionnaire' sent by PSO. One person indicated to feel that the posting belongs to the past and did not want to be confronted with that period again.

With regard to the PSO member organisations, there are two reasons worth mentioning why questionnaires were not completed and returned by the contact persons. First, some PSO member organisations involved in the Youth Zone programme have not posted a young professional in recent years. As a result of this lack of experience, contact persons are not in a position to provide founded views to the researchers and have therefore not returned a questionnaire. Secondly, the questions could not be answered due to the inexperience of the contact person of the PSO member organisation with the Youth Zone programme. Again, as a result no knowledge within the organisation was available about the (process of the) posting of the young professional to complete the questionnaire.

Non response is also an issue for partner organisations. Although the questionnaire in the Spanish language has improved the chances for completion, the distance between researchers and partner organisations remains relatively big. In addition, partner organisations in French or Portuguese language areas do not always master the English or Spanish language and are therefore still left out in this research. This was however a deliberate choice since it concerns a limited amount of respondents only. It was considered to be 'not worth the investment' to translate the questionnaire into these languages. Contact with the partner organisations is hugely dependent upon the contact persons of the PSO member organisations. When these contact persons have other priorities and are too busy, it proved to be difficult to get in contact with the partner organisations.

2.6 Limitations of the study

It is the ambition of the researchers to present a truthful account that gives a clear presentation of the effects of the Youth Zone programme. Although this is not a scientific study, the researchers believe that the essential questions have been asked in the questionnaires and group interviews and that sufficient analysis is done to test the PSO result-indicators.

The relatively small group of young professionals from developing countries (7) forms a certain limitation. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions based upon the experiences of those limited numbers of young professionals. However, it does still provide the research an indication of their opinions.

3 Findings – Young Professionals

The following chapters present the research findings per target group. The main focus of these chapters is on comparing the answers provided by the various groups with the PSO Youth Zone result-indicators.

This chapter considers the group of young professionals. In order to present the findings in an orderly fashion, the young professionals are split into two subgroups. One is the group that returned from their posting recently: between July 2007 and July 2009. Subgroup two consists of all the young professionals who returned before July 2007. This report refers to these groups as respectively group 2007-2009 and group 2001-2007. The following paragraph gives further details of these groups after which the result-indicators are discussed.

3.1 Basic characteristics

3.1.1 Basic data on group 2007-2009: young professionals who returned between July 2007 and July 2009

A total of 73 young professionals returned from their posting between July 2007 and July 2009. They were all approached to cooperate with the survey. Six respondents were unreachable, which means that almost 92% of the total group has been contacted and requested to complete a survey. As a result, 46 young professionals have completed the questionnaire. Of those 46, three respondents have not fully completed the questionnaire. They are included in the analysis only with regard to the questions they have completed. The following two tables provide basic data of the respondents in comparison with the total group.

Table 1: Basic data on group 2007-2009: young professionals who returned between July 2007 and July 2009.

Item	Total group	Respondents
Number of persons	73 (100%)	46 (63%)
Percentage female	70%	70%
Percentage male	30%	30%
Percentage Starter	39%	36%
Percentage Young Professional	61%	64%
Average duration of the posting	<i>Data not available</i>	14 months
Average age at the start of posting	<i>Data not available</i>	27.2 years

With a majority of people returning their questionnaire (63%) it can be concluded that the sample is a good representation of the total group of potential respondents. When looking at the basic characteristics, the group of respondents shows a great similarity with the complete group of young professionals having returned between July 2007 and July 2009.

When taking a glance at the findings of the previous study (two years ago), the average age of the young professionals that returned between July 2005 and July 2007 was 25.7 years and they were posted for an average of 11.3 months. These numbers are probably influenced by the relatively high number of persons that have been posted as Starter. This group of people is relatively young and is posted for a relatively short period (6 months).

The following table shows the division of respondents in relation to the PSO member organisation. From this total of fourteen, nine PSO member organisations are represented by respondents in this study. Unfortunately, five PSO member organisations are not represented by their young professional in this part of the study.

Table 2: Number of respondents posted between July 2007 and July 2009 in relation to the PSO member organisations.

Organisation	Total posted	Total responded	Percentage
Agriterra	1	1	100%
CARE Nederland	4	3	75%
ETC Foundation	2	0	0%
GZB	1	0	0%
HIVOS	3	1	33%
ICCO	23	14	61%
Interserve Nederland	2	0	0%
Mensen met een Missie/ CMC	6	4	67%
NIZA	16	13	81%
NRK	2	1	50%
Social Trade Organisation (STRO)	1	0	0%
Theatre Embassy	1	1	100%
VSO Nederland	12	8	67%
ZOA Vluchtelingen zorg	1	0	0%

The last table of this paragraph shows the spread of the young professionals and the respondents of group 2007-2009 around the globe. With regard to the (scale of) poverty, it seems reasonable that a majority of the young professionals has been posted in Africa. The responses are geographically distributed within satisfactory proportions.

Table 3: Number of young professionals (total and respondents) versus country and continent of posting.

Africa	39	28	Asia	24	13	Americas	10	5
Angola	1	1	Cambodia	6	3	Bolivia	2	0
Cameroon	1	1	India	1	0	Brazil	2	1
Ethiopia	1	1	Indonesia	5	2	El Salvador	1	0
Ghana	3	2	Kyrgyzstan	1	0	Honduras	3	3
Kenya	3	2	Mongolia	2	2	Nicaragua	1	1
Madagascar	3	1	Nepal	2	2	Peru	1	0
Malawi	2	2	Pakistan	1	1			
Mozambique	3	2	Philippines	3	2			
Namibia	3	3						
South Africa	13	11	Papua New Guinea	2	1			
Sudan	1	0	Vanuatu	1	0			
Uganda	1	0						
Zambia	1	0						
Zimbabwe	3	2						

3.1.2 Basic data on group 2001-2007: young professionals who returned before July 2007

Due to the longer period, group 2001-2007 consists of a greater number of potential respondents. Originally, the group consisted of 143 persons, but during the distribution of the questionnaires it was found out those three members of this group either were abroad again with the Youth Zone programme or recently returned from a posting. Therefore, these individuals have been considered

members of group 2007-2009. As a result, the complete group that was eligible for this survey numbered 140 individuals. A total of 91 persons returned between July 2005 and June 2007. The remaining 49 were posted with PSO Youth Zone and returned in the period 2001 to June 2005.

Of the total group of 140, 24 respondents could not be contacted. Their e-mail addresses were invalid and it proved too difficult and time-consuming to acquire their new contact details. Of the 116 persons that could be contacted, 70 persons completed the questionnaire. Two persons have not fully completed the questionnaire. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, these respondents will be included in the analysis in so far they have answered the questions.

Table 4: Basic data on group 2001-2007: young professionals who returned between 2001 and June 2007.

Item	Total group	Respondents
Number of persons	140	70 (50%)
Percentage female	66%	60%
Percentage male	34%	40%
Average duration of the posting	<i>Data not available</i>	15 months
Average age at the start of posting		26.1 years

Given the experience of the response percentage in the previous two surveys (42% in 2005 and an average of 47% in 2007) and the fact that some of the respondents have returned already a considerable time ago, a response percentage of 50% is rather satisfactory. In this group of respondents, there is a slight overrepresentation of male respondents. Fortunately, it is within limits so that the sample group of respondents is still representative for the total group. This is a sufficient sample size to represent the total group of young professionals who have returned in this period.

There are limited differences between the two subgroups of young professionals with regard to their age and length of their posting. Group 2007-2009 was more than a year older on average and stayed abroad one month shorter than the young professionals of group 2001-2007. The proportion of male young professionals is smaller in group 2007-2009 than in group 2001-2007.

The following statements can be formulated about the basic characteristics of the respondents:

- ✓ Of both subgroups, at least 50% of the total target group has responded.
- ✓ The group of respondents shows great similarity with the complete group of young professionals having returned between July 2007 and July 2009 with regard to age and sex. Additionally, this is also valid for the geographical distribution of young professionals
- ✓ The respondents of group 2007-2009 have been posted with nine PSO member organisations from the total of 14 PSO member organisations that were active during the past two years.
- ✓ On average, young professionals from subgroup 2007-2009 are a year older and stayed abroad one month shorter than the young professionals of group 2001-2007.

3.2 Background and expectations of group 2007-2009

This paragraph considers the background of the group of young professionals who returned between July 2007 and July 2009. Using data from the previous surveys, this group is compared with the recently returned groups of young professionals from previous years.

3.2.1 Study

In total, 66 percent of the group respondents (2007-2009) have finished a Master of Science or Arts, while 32 percent has completed a Bachelor of Science or Arts. One person has entered the Youth Zone programme with a PhD. A considerable variety of disciplines exists.

The respondents were asked whether their education was related to development cooperation. Their answers are presented in the following table:

Table 5: Relation between study and development cooperation.

Type of study	Percentage 2009	Percentage 2007
Programme was directly related to Development Cooperation (DC)	34%	39%
Programme had a clear international and/or multicultural orientation	39%	44%
Study was not specifically related to DC nor did it have an international orientation	27%	17%

In comparison with the study of 2007, the group that followed a study without any specific relation to development cooperation is larger this time. For the group of young professionals that returned between July 2005 and July 2007 the proportion was 17%.

In the survey of 2007, 54% of the young professionals who had recently returned from their mission indicated that they went on their posting with Youth Zone within 6 months after completion of their studies. Today, the numbers are quite different as is demonstrated in the table below. As a reference the percentages of 2007 are stated in the right column.

Table 6: Period between completion of study and posting.

How many months after study did posting commence?	In 2009...	In 2007...
1-6 months	27%	54%
6-12 months	16%	21%
12-24 months	24%	15%
More than two years after completion	23%	10%

It is striking to see in the table above that almost half the respondents has started with a posting under Youth Zone more than 1 year after completion of their study, while this was only a quarter of the respondents in 2007. Possibly, this is due to the fact that nowadays during application, organisations are looking more stringent whether applicants for Junior Professional positions possess one to three years working experience. In the previous survey it was concluded that many young professionals did not always meet this criteria.

3.2.2 Previous experience abroad

Of all respondents, only one Starter did not have any previous experience in a developing country. As presented in the table below, a vast majority of the respondents had travel experience and/or lived in a developing country prior to their posting.

Table 7: Previous experience abroad of young professionals.

Preceding the posting the respondent... (more options possible)	Percentage
travelled in a developing country	86%
worked and lived in a developing country as part of a traineeship/graduation project	73%
worked and lived in a developing country as a volunteer	27%
studied in a developing country	23%
lived (with parents/family) in a developing country	20%
worked and lived in a developing country as a paid employee for an (N)GO and/ or company	14%

3.2.3 Expectations

A majority of respondents indicate that their main expectation preceding the posting was ‘to gain working experience’. A Junior Professional from a developing country writes:

‘I wanted to gain experience in a developing country other than my own and also wanted to get more exposure to international development issues.’

A lot of respondents combine this with an aspect of learning like a young professional who wrote that she:

‘Wanted to see what development work meant in practice and wanted to gain experience in working and living in a developing country.’

These expectations are all related to the posting as a step in a professional career in the development sector. One respondent sums up her expectations like this:

‘Professional training for personal growth in the field of grant writing and fundraising/ have a nice time/ a great learning experience/building further on an international network/potential career options.’

As a matter of fact, there are quite some respondents who just want to experience a developing context. A Starter stated that she expected to:

‘Improve my English, expand my journalism skills, and get experience as a journalist working abroad.’

Table 8: Expectations met by posting?

Did the posting meet the expectations?	Percentage 2009	Percentage 2007	Percentage 2005
Completely	21%	33%	21%
To a great degree	56%	59%	54%
To a limited degree	23%	8%	17%
Not at all	0%	0%	8%

A majority of respondents of group 2007-2009 feel that their expectations have been met completely or to a great degree. With regard to the previous studies, it is interesting to see that in 2007 the recently returned professionals were more positive about the way expectations were met than in the surrounding years. An explanation for these phenomena cannot be presented here.

It is interesting to take a closer look at the clarifications provided by the group of respondents that feel that the posting has met the expectations for a great part. A substantial group of respondents state a similar remark as below:

'The posting has really met my expectations up to a great extent. I got a lot of opportunities to develop myself further. However, at some moments it was difficult to develop further.'

Or others state similar remarks to this one:

'Due to a lack of local guidance, I did not learn as much as I had expected on project cycle management. However, I learned by own trial and error. And I did learn about some set-backs you may encounter working with youth volunteers etc. and of course about Zimbabwean culture.'

Those who consider that their expectations were met to a limited degree either indicate that they have still gained experience but the impact of their work was limited due to various reasons. One respondent wrote:

'I have learned a lot regarding Cambodian work culture and research in a country with much less development and resources, but was hardly able to build/improve research capacity of the local NGO.'

Another respondent wrote:

'Professionally, I did not learn much as it was a chaotic NGO. It was due to my own effort that I gained lots of knowledge. Personally, I learned LOADS and enjoyed it very much.'

There is a group of respondents that reflect upon their posting in relation with their future career and feel that it is difficult to improve the chances for employment. One respondent wrote:

'I had many responsibilities and was happy to carry them out. However, it is still really difficult to find employment in the DC sector.'

However, a substantial amount of these respondents indicate that they have learned and done a lot, yet the impact of their work is limited. This is sketched by the following respondent:

'Environment was indeed very interesting, but I found it hard to implement the skills and experiences that I was hoping to implement.'

The following can be stated about the background and expectations of group 2007-2009:

- ✓ In comparison with the previous study, a larger portion of respondents have followed a study without any specific relation to development cooperation.
- ✓ Another comparison with the previous study leads to the conclusion that substantially more respondents started a PSO Youth Zone posting more than a year after completion of their study.
- ✓ A majority of respondents of group 2007-2009 feel that their expectations have been met completely or to a great degree.

3.3 End of the posting, now what?

Before the PSO Youth Zone result-indicators are tested, a closer look is taken to the period right after the posting when young professionals decide upon the next step in their career. A majority of them was looking for a job in the development cooperation sector as shown in the next table.

Table 9: Type of career pursued by returning young professionals.

Did you pursue a career in the DC sector when the posting was finished?	In 2009...	In 2007...	In 2005...
Yes	66%	68%	63%
No, however career related to combating poverty in the Netherlands.	5%	11%	13%
No	29%	22%	20%

Those respondents of group 2007-2009, who were not (primarily) interested in pursuing a career in the development cooperation sector, are not only Starters (for who might apply that a short posting serves as an introduction to international development and developing countries). Half the respondents who did not pursue a career in the development cooperation sector are Junior Professionals. In previous years, slightly the same amount of respondents indicated they pursued a career in the development cooperation sector after their return.

Related to this issue is the question whether the posting has influenced the opinion of the respondents about development cooperation as a professional working environment. Many respondents have indicated that they are positively influenced. One respondent stated:

'I know that I want to pursue a career related to nutrition issues and child care in developing countries.'

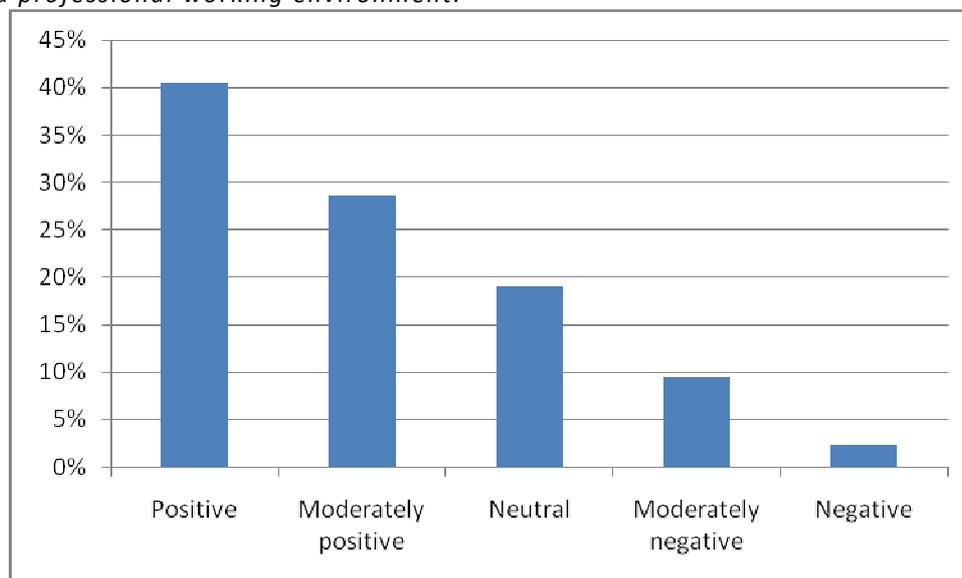
Some respondents are neutral or negative towards the sector. One respondent considers the posting as a good opportunity to go abroad and points out:

'Keep in mind that not every Young Professional is acquainted with the DC sector and is looking for a career in it. I wanted to do something with my knowledge and skills for others in a different part of the world.'

One respondent indicated that:

'The posting made me aware that I don't want to work abroad, and don't want to work in the development sector.'

Graph 1: Whether the posting influenced respondents' opinion on development cooperation as a professional working environment.



In their search for jobs, there was not much support from the PSO member organisations. Only three respondents indicated that the PSO member organisation assisted in finding a paid job by writing a reference, giving contacts or

'Giving hints on which organisations to contact for possible employment.'

The rest of the respondents indicated that PSO member organisations did not assist in any kind.

A majority of the returned young professionals is several months without a job when they return from their posting as is demonstrated in table 10. However, 83% of the respondents has been able to find employment within three months after their return. This is a higher percentage in comparison with the amounts found in the studies of 2007 (73%) and 2005 (79%)

Table 10: How long were young professionals unemployed?

Were you unemployed after your return from the posting?	In 2009...	In 2007...	In 2005...
No	44%	42%	46%
Yes, for 1 – 3 months	39%	31%	33%
Yes, for 3 – 6 months	2%	8%	0%
Yes, for 6 – 12 months	12%	5%	13%
Yes, for more than a year	0%	0%	8%
Other	22%	14%	0%

The respondents who answered 'other' to the question above indicated that they are either studying or doing voluntary work and look for paid positions at the same time. Half the respondents, who were directly employed after their posting, currently have a job in the development cooperation sector.

Whether or not the young professionals have worked abroad since the end of their posting is answered in table 11. The table shows the proportion of the complete group of respondents as well as within the subdivisions of Starters and Junior Professionals.

Table 11: Proportions of respondents who have worked abroad.

Have you worked abroad since the end of the posting?	Percentage Junior Professionals	Percentage Starters	Percentage total group
Yes, in a developing country as a (semi) volunteer.	21%	13%	19%
Yes, in a developing country as a professional in the DC sector.	25%	0%	16%
Yes, in a developing country in business or other professions	14%	27%	19%
Yes, but not in a developing country	4%	13%	7%
Yes, with another youth programme	0%	0%	0%
No	36%	47%	39%
<i>Totals</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Directly noticeable from this table is the 25% of the Junior Professionals who have been abroad in a developing country as a professional, while none of the Starters have been in that position. The Starters are better represented in the category of business and other types of work in developing countries. Another observation is the substantial amount of people who have not been abroad since their return. The 39% found here for the whole group is comparable with the 38% found in 2005. However, at that time 50% indicated to have been abroad as a part of their job in the development cooperation sector. Nowadays, a much smaller percentage indicates to have been abroad as part of their job in the development cooperation sector. Unfortunately, there is no data available on this subject from the survey in 2007. However, other data is available on job participation of the young professionals in the development cooperation. The next paragraph elaborates further on the current job situations of the returned young professionals in order to put the first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator to the test.

With regard to the first steps of the career of the recently returned professionals, the following remarks can be made:

- ✓ A majority of 66% pursued a career in the development cooperation sector after return, which is roughly the same proportion found in the previous two studies.
- ✓ As a result of the posting, a majority is positively influenced in their opinion on development cooperation as a professional working environment.
- ✓ Only three respondents were assisted by their PSO member organisation in finding a paid job.
- ✓ 83% has found paid work within three months after their return, which is a substantial higher proportion in comparison with the results in 2007 and 2005.
- ✓ In comparison with 2005, substantially less respondents have been abroad after their return as a professional in the development cooperation sector.

3.4 Result-indicator 1: 60% of young professionals work in DC sector

The first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator that was defined at the start of the Youth Zone programme focuses on the job situation of returned young professionals. It states that at least 60% of the young professionals who returned between July 2007 and July 2009 are working in the development cooperation sector. The definition of this concept is provided in section 2.4. This current paragraph analyses whether group 2007-2009 has reached this result-indicator. Later on, attention is paid to group 2001-2007 and a comparison is made between the two groups.

3.4.1 Group 2007-2009

A first analysis of this indicator reveals that at the moment of completing the questionnaire, 45% of the total group has a job related to the development cooperation sector. This is shown in the table below.

Table 12: Respondents employed in the development cooperation sector, group 2007-2009.

Do you have a job in the development cooperation sector?	In 2009...	In 2007...	In 2005...
Yes	45%	60% ¹	62,5%
No	55%	40%	37,5%

In short, the first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator has *not* been met, because a lower proportion than 60% is currently working in the development cooperation sector.

A first explanation could be found in a smaller group of respondents interested in working in this sector. Earlier, table 9 showed that a total of 34%² of the respondents did not pursue a job in development cooperation sector, and this percentage is not very different from previous years. In addition, even a larger proportion is currently not holding a job position in the development cooperation sector. This means that the low percentage in table 12 cannot be blamed to a larger group not pursuing a career in development cooperation.

In 2007, the researchers concluded that 60% of young professionals who had recently returned from their posting found a job within a year after completion of the posting. In 2005, the researchers found that a majority of the 24 young professionals that were posted in the previous years were working in the development cooperation sector. From these percentages an impression emerges that smaller proportions of recently returned young professionals are working in the development cooperation sector in consecutive years.

To get a better understanding why the threshold of 60% is not reached, a subdivision is made between the Junior Professionals and the Starters. In the following table, the proportions within each subgroup are presented between those who have a job and those without one.

Table 13: Relation between type of posting and current job position.

	Junior Professional	Starter
No job in the DC sector	40%	80%
With job in the DC sector	60%	20%
Totals	100%	100%

¹ Percentage is based upon estimations by the researchers in 2007.

² This proportion consists of 29% not pursuing a job in the DC sector + 5% pursuing a career related to combating poverty in the Netherlands.

Within the subgroup of Starters the differences of percentages are much bigger. Only one in five returned Starters has a job in the development cooperation sector. This is three in five for returned Junior Professionals. One may say that being a returned Starter will more likely result in not having a job in the development cooperation sector than for a returned Junior Professional. The different profiles of the two types of posting are a first obvious reason that explains this difference. On average, Junior Professionals have more working experience and have postings for a longer period of time. Due to a lack of data from previous studies, it is not possible to compare these proportions with the recently returned groups from earlier years. And although the PSO Youth Zone result-indicator concerns the whole group irrespective of type of posting, it can be said that the group of Junior Professionals does meet the threshold of 60%.

Although interesting to see the differences between Junior Professionals and Starters, it does not explain why the threshold has not been met while it did previously. What has changed recently? In order to get an understanding of that, a subdivision is made between those respondents who are currently working in the development cooperation sector and those who are not. In this way, it is easier to capture the motives of the respondents. The following table gives an indication whether respondents are still looking for a job in the development cooperation sector.

Table 14: Percentage of persons looking for (another) job in the DC sector, group 2007-2009.

Are you still looking for a job within the DC sector?			
Currently having no job in the DC sector		Currently having a job in the DC sector	
Yes	61%	Yes	42%
No	39%	No	58%

Of those respondents who do not have a job in the development cooperation sector (55%³) a majority of 61% is still looking for a job in the development cooperation sector. Thus a majority of this group still has an interest in working in the development cooperation sector. Disinterest is therefore not an explanation for not meeting the first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator. Other reasons have to be found in order to explain the proportions presented in table 12.

When looking at the clarifications many people indicated that they are studying and looking for jobs at the same time. One respondent wrote:

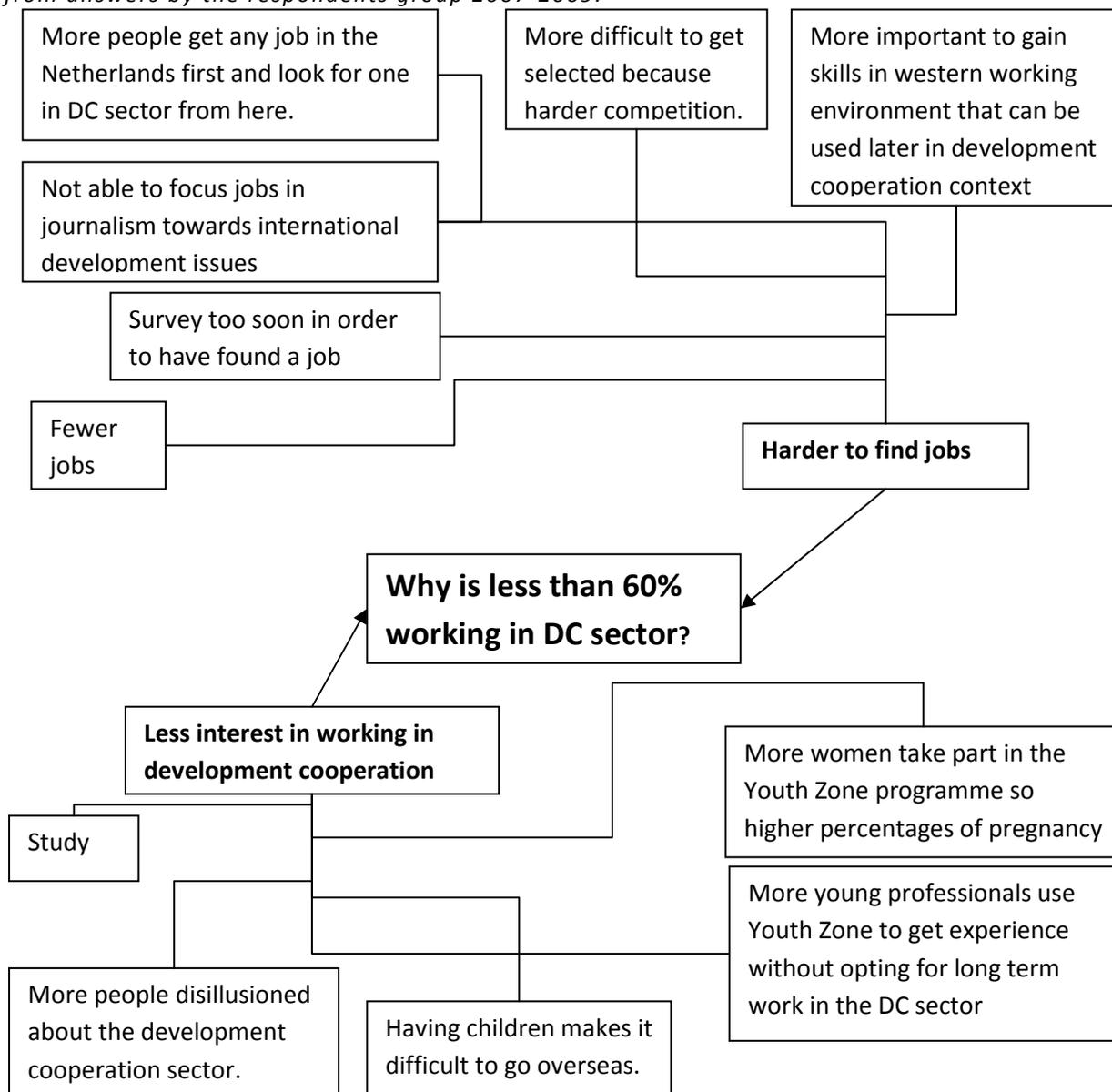
‘Yes, I would very much like to work in / for development cooperation. However, I believe that to really be able to contribute it is necessary for me to develop my technical skills more first and gain experience in a health care organisation. But I do always check the development cooperation job postings and when I finish with my current training I really hope to work for e.g. the KNCV, the (Dutch based) international TB foundation that focuses on public health in developing countries’.

Based on the data from the questionnaires, it is not possible to calculate the size of this group of students and to compare that figure with data of the previous surveys. Lack of data from previous surveys is a problem for identifying other potential reasons to explain the relatively low percentage of those who have no job in the development cooperation sector. At the time of the 2005 and 2007 studies, the percentage of respondents working in the development cooperation sector was not considered as problematic, since it met the standards. Therefore, no previous analysis is available exploring the reasons why people were not working in this sector. As a consequence, the only

³ See table 12

possibility is taking a look at the provided answers of the current research group. Based on these answers, the researchers have summed up the provided reasons in the picture below in order to give the reader some insight on this matter.

Picture 1: Possible reasons why PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 1 has not been met, compiled from answers by the respondents group 2007-2009.



Apart from external factors, it could be a theoretic possibility that the quality of the young professionals is lower in comparison with previous years. However, as is revealed in the next two chapters, both PSO member organisations and partner organisations are very positive about the quality of the young professionals and their background.

The impression that emerges from this exploration is that on a whole, less jobs are available. The picture of a competitive labour market evolves. Some returned young professionals simply cannot find a development cooperation job while others prefer to work in a Dutch context first, in a non development cooperation job, in order to improve their skills and thus their chances. In their opinion,

they are better prepared to re-enter the development cooperation labour market again on a later moment.

A reason for the low availability of development cooperation jobs is an overall decrease in development cooperation jobs in the Netherlands, while more job positions are created in the developing countries for national staff. The following table shows that a majority of the respondents that do have a job position in the development cooperation sector is posted in a developing country. This reinforces the hypothesis that fewer jobs are available in the Netherlands.

Table 15: Respondents with a job in DC sector and their location

Place of work	Percentage
Netherlands without much travel	26%
Netherlands with significant travel abroad	16%
In a developing country	58%

To get more information on this matter, this issue was also raised during the two group interviews. During one interview, the discussion focused on the low availability of jobs. However, as one participant pointed out during a group interview:

‘Or the supply of jobseekers is too big. You cannot blame the sector for that.’

Another participant explained that she faces a mixed picture since a part of her fellow development cooperation related students ended up in Western consultancy firms while another part is working in the development sector. According to her, this last group has done a lot of effort to get there.

Looking at table 14 again, it is striking that quite a lot of respondents who have a job in the development cooperation sector are still looking for another position as is shown in the two columns on the right of table 14. When asked for clarifications, one respondent explained that:

‘My current job is not a full-time one and not permanent. So, I’m still looking for a position in the DC sector.’

Others indicated that they are:

‘Happy with the job I have in the Netherlands in the development cooperation sector, but would like to go work in a developing country again’.

Overall, people who are working in the development cooperation sector look for another job in the sector either because their current (volunteer) contract is ending or they prefer to go abroad. However, a significant group has less trouble in finding the desired job. This is witnessed by the group of people who currently hold a job position in the development cooperation sector. Half this group has not been unemployed since their return.

The following can be concluded for group 2007-2009 with respect to result-indicator 1:

- ✓ The PSO Youth Zone result-indicator that focuses on a proportion of 60% of the respondents currently working in the development cooperation sector has **not** been met for the total group 2007-2009. As a whole, only 45% of the returned young professionals have a job in the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ Only 20% of the returned Starters, but 60% of the returned Junior Professionals have a job in development cooperation.
- ✓ 61% of the returned young professionals currently having no job in the development cooperation sector prefer to have a job in this sector.
- ✓ There is a mix of reasons why people do not have a job in the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ One main reason seems to be the low availability of jobs.
- ✓ Many respondents with a job in the development cooperation sector are still on the lookout for another position partly due to the insecurity of their current position.

3.4.2 Group 2001-2007

To get a better understanding of the results for this PSO Youth Zone result-indicator, this paragraph takes a closer look at the current job situation of group 2001-2007. The same questions were asked in their questionnaire, thus the same tables can be produced for the group 2001-2007.

Table 16: Respondents employed in the development cooperation sector, group 2001-2007.

Do you have a job in the development cooperation sector?			
Yes		56%	
No		44%	
Group 2005-2007		Group 2001-2005	
Yes	57%	Yes	50%
No	43%	No	50%

A larger proportion of this group is currently working in the development cooperation sector than group 2007-2009. However, it is still less than the 60% set by the PSO Youth Zone result-indicator. Both subgroups 2005-2007 and 2001-2005 do not meet the PSO Youth Zone result-indicator. In the comments of respondents delivered in the questionnaires a similar mix of reasons as group 2007-2009 were provided. The remarks of the respondents underpin the impression of the low availability of jobs in the development cooperation sector. However, for this group it is not perceived as ‘a big issue’ as it is perceived by group 2007-2009. For example, there is a substantial amount of respondents who have a situation such as stated below:

‘My family situation is such - young child and second one coming - that I currently prefer to work in the Netherlands with as little travel abroad as possible.’

However, others are still on the lookout for a job in development cooperation, which is illustrated in the following table.

Table 17: Percentage of persons looking for (another) job in the DC sector, group 2001- 2007.

Are you still looking for a job within the DC sector?			
Currently having no job in the DC sector		Currently having a job in the DC sector	
Yes	43%	Yes	26%
No	57%	No	74%

The numbers in this table differ a bit with those of group 2007-2009. A comparison with table 14 reveals that people, working outside the development cooperation sector for a longer time, are less interested to switch back to the development cooperation sector. This is shown by the smaller percentage of respondents without a job in the development cooperation sector looking for a job in this sector in table 17. However, 43% could still be considered a substantial proportion.

With regard to the respondents with a job in the development cooperation sector, a smaller percentage is on the lookout for another job here. This might indicate that as years go by, job security increases.

Those respondents who are working in the development cooperation sector and looking for a job are either studying (finishing a Master or a PhD) or close to the end of a contract and are already looking for job opportunities in the nearby future.

‘After being a JPO (end 2010) I will be on the market again and I would search a new job, in the Netherlands or abroad but most probably I will continue in the development sector.’

In almost all the clarifications given by the respondents there is no sense of urge. People are relaxed about their search for job opportunities:

‘I am working with Haskoning and quite a lot abroad. However, Haskoning is a very commercial company. I might rather want to work for NGO's or local position.’

Apart from those with a genuine interest to work in the development cooperation sector, there are people who are ‘not interested in that field’, or: ‘lost’ their ‘belief in assisted development’ which is the reason that they are currently not working in this sector or looking for a job in that direction.

‘I am more interested in my original field (agriculture and land use) and more oriented towards solving problems in northern Europe.’

Others say:

‘I experienced too many difficulties in finding a challenging job in development. I am happy in my current position.’

A last proportion worth mentioning is the group of respondents that is working in the development sector and feels comfortable in their positions. The proportion of this group in group 2001-2007 is much higher than in group 2007-2009. As time is passing and experience is built, people are able to secure permanent contracts and are not on the lookout anymore for a job opportunity. They wrote that:

‘I have a good position in the development cooperation at the moment’.

And:

'I am happy with my current job.'

The following statements can be made about group 2001-2007 in relation to the first result-indicator:

- ✓ The threshold of 60% has also not been met by group 2001-2007, since 56% currently has a job in the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ 43% of those not having a job in the development cooperation sector are still interested to get a job in this sector.
- ✓ Like group 2007-2009, a mix of reasons exist why this percentage is below the threshold.
- ✓ As a result of the increased working experience, job security rises. Meanwhile, less respondents outside the sector are on the lookout for a job.

3.5 Result-indicator 2: young professionals find posting relevant to current job

The second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator for the young professionals verifies the relevance of the posting in their jobs, irrespective whether these jobs are in the development cooperation sector or outside. The two thresholds set out by PSO are:

- 70% of the young professionals indicate the posting is relevant for their current job within the development cooperation sector;
- 30% of the young professionals consider their posting relevant to the way they carry out their current job outside the development cooperation sector.

The following paragraphs take a closer look to the two sub-result-indicators per group of respondents.

3.5.1 Result-indicator 2a: At least 70% consider their posting relevant for their current job within the development cooperation sector: group 2007-2009

Asked about the relevance of the posting to their current job, respondents from group 2007-2009 answer:

Table 18: Relevance of posting to current job, group 2007-2009.

To what extent do you believe that the PSO Youth Zone posting was relevant to the way you carry out your current job?			
Completely	28%		
To a great degree	48%	Relevant	76%
To a limited degree	14%		
Not at all	10%	Not or not so relevant	24%

The two columns on the right show the relevance versus the relative irrelevance of the posting to the current jobs of the returned young professionals. A majority of group 2007-2009 is of the opinion that the posting was indeed relevant for carrying out the current jobs, irrespective of the sector they are currently working in. However, the PSO Youth Zone result-indicator does differentiate between the two working areas (e.g. within development cooperation and outside). In addition, the

information above does not provide any information whether respondents are working within or outside the development cooperation sector. The following tables take these considerations into account. The first table verifies the relevance for the posting for jobs within the development cooperation sector. A subdivision is made between the types of jobs people hold.

Table 19: Relevance of posting to career within the development cooperation sector, group 2007-2009.

To what extent have the skills and knowledge you gained during your posting been relevant to your further professional career WITHIN the DC sector?			
All respondents		Relevant	82%
		Not or not so relevant	18%
Respondents working in DC sector		Respondents not working in DC sector	
Relevant	95%	Relevant	70%
Not relevant	5%	Not relevant	30%

A vast majority of respondents working in the development cooperation sector find their posting relevant to the way they carry out their current job. Even the respondents who are currently not professionally active in the development cooperation appreciate the relevance of the posting. A part of this group however, has not been able to find a job in the desired direction and is somewhat disappointed about the appreciation of the posting by employers in order to get a paid position.

The type of skills and knowledge that are acquired during the posting and can be used in a profession in development cooperation differ from person to person:

'I learned to speak Bahasa Indonesia, and I learned a lot about the Indonesian culture and the ins and outs of the development sector which is very useful for my businesses.'

'Regarding the technical aspects of my job, I have not gained much during my PSO posting. However, my knowledge of working in a Khmer society increased significantly.'

Other respondents reflect upon the technical skills they improved during the posting:

'Proposal and report writing, dealing with donors, advising partners. General work experience that I would have gained in any other job, like dealing with colleagues and managers, functioning in a team, learning how to make decisions, planning and prioritising etc.'

And:

'Working with a counterpart and coaching skills will be relevant for the rest of my career whether in DC sector or not, monitoring and evaluation skills, idem, Knowledge of topics that I had to develop curriculum for, will be useful for any future teaching or curriculum development that I would do in future positions.'

3.5.2 Result-indicator 2b: At least 30% consider their posting relevant for their current job outside development cooperation sector: group 2007-2009

The respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they consider the posting relevant to their professional career *outside* the development cooperation sector. A couple of persons, either working inside the development sector or not working at all, feel they are not in the position to answer this question. It is a small group and therefore the answers in the table below could be considered representative.

Table 20: Relevance of posting to career outside the development cooperation sector, group 2007-2009.

To what extent have the skills and knowledge you gained during your posting been relevant to your further professional career OUTSIDE the DC sector?			
All respondents		Relevant	47%
		Not Relevant	53%
<i>Respondents working in DC sector</i>		<i>Respondents not working in DC sector</i>	
Relevant	29%	Relevant	63%
Not relevant	71%	Not relevant	37%

The complete group achieves the threshold of 30% easily. However, there is a difference between the two subgroups as noted in the table above. The respondents currently working in the development cooperation sector are a bit more pessimistic about the relevance of the gained skills and knowledge than those respondents who do not hold a position in the sector. With 29%, this group does not meet the threshold of 30%. This is not a problem, since their rating is mostly based upon speculation. When asked for examples, respondents of the first group write mostly about the intercultural dimension of the posting:

‘Working in an intercultural context.’

And:

‘Cultural adaptation, facilitating processes for a high variety of people.’

Another example is:

‘Being able to be realistic and put things in perspective.’

The respondents having a job outside the development cooperation sector are able to mention more relevant skills and qualities gained during the posting that are relevant to any job such as:

‘More independent, learned to deal with very difficult circumstances, and still have to focus on the task ahead.’

Based on the acquired data it is not possible to pin down where this difference in perception exactly comes from. It is possible to assume that when the working experience of a posting is put into practice outside the development cooperation sector, the applicability turns out better than expected.

The following statements can be made about group 2007-2009 in relation to the PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 2:

- ✓ The second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator is met: 70% consider their posting relevant for their current job within the development cooperation sector and 30% consider their posting relevant for their current job outside the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ 82% of the respondents indicate that the skills and knowledge gained during their posting have been relevant for their further professional career *within* the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ 47% of the respondents indicate that the skills and knowledge gained during their posting have been relevant for their further professional career *outside* the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ When further analysis is done at the level of those working in the development cooperation sector and those who are not, some significant differences in opinion show up. These differences in opinion are explainable based on the current position.

3.5.3 Result-indicator 2a: At least 70% consider their posting relevant for their current job within the development cooperation sector: group 2001-2007

When taking a look at the respondents from group 2001-2007, in the course of time, the relevance of the posting fades away only to a limited extent. In the research of 2007, 68% of the respondents indicated that the posting was highly relevant to the way they carried out their job. Two years later, quite a similar majority (66%) considers the posting relevant. Again, this is irrespective of the field of work respondents find themselves in.

Table 21: Relevance of posting to current job, group 2001-2007.

To what extent do you believe that the PSO Youth Zone posting was relevant to the way you carry out your current job?			
Completely	22%		
To a great degree	44%	Relevant	66%
To a limited degree	35%		
Not at all	1%	Not or not so relevant	35%

When group 2001-2007 is divided between those who are working in the development cooperation sector and those who are not, and asked about the relevance of the posting to their careers within the development cooperation sector, a more detailed picture comes forward to test result-indicator 2a. Here again, few respondents who are not working in the development sector decided not to answer the question. However, the size of the group that did answer makes the answer sufficiently representative.

Table 22: Relevance of posting to career within the development cooperation sector, group 2001-2007.

To what extent have the skills and knowledge you gained during your posting been relevant to your further professional career WITHIN the DC sector?			
All respondents		Relevant	60%
		Not Relevant	40%
Respondents working in DC sector		Respondents not working in DC sector	
Relevant	77%	Relevant	33%
Not relevant	23%	Not relevant	67%

Probably the most illustrative clarification of this group on the relevance of their posting is:

'I built up the first part of my work experience. Combined with my university background, it made it possible to grow further.'

For many respondents the posting was a first step in their professional career. When this career continues in the development cooperation sector, they are able to directly relate the relevance of the posting with their current job.

'The organisation where I was working for in Honduras is a type of organisation which I finance in my current job. Knowledge of the context in which these NGO's are working is very valuable and skills gained in PME as well.'

At least, the posting gave an introduction to development work in general as clarified by one respondent:

'The PSO Youth Zone posting was important for me in order to gain field experience, i.e. working and living in a different (working) environment and culture, but also experiencing the sometimes hectic and ad hoc NGO (field) atmosphere. I am not sure whether I acquired specific skills and knowledge (besides knowledge on the content and the context) during the PSO Youth Zone posting.'

3.5.4 Result-indicator 2b: At least 30% consider their posting relevant for their current job outside development cooperation sector: group 2001-2007

A similar table is made for group 2001-2007 on the relevance of the posting to professional careers outside the development sector.

Table 23: Relevance of posting to career outside the development cooperation sector, group 2001-2007.

To what extent have the skills and knowledge you gained during your posting been relevant to your further professional career OUTSIDE the DC sector?			
All respondents		Relevant	46%
		Not Relevant	54%
Respondents working in DC sector		Respondents not working in DC sector	
Relevant	53%	Relevant	37%
Not relevant	47%	Not relevant	63%

When looking at the whole group, the proportions are roughly the same as group 2007-2009, and again the result-indicator is met. However, the difference within group 2001-2007 between those respondents who are working and those who are not working in the development sector is precisely in contrast with group 2007-2009. From table 23 it can be concluded that the respondents who are working in the development sector are more positive towards the relevance of the posting than

those who are not working in the development cooperation sector. One respondent who is working within the development cooperation sector considers the posting ‘relevant to a great degree’ but explains that his answer has a high guess factor because:

‘Could have been, but weren't because I have only worked inside [the development cooperation sector]. In principle the experience gained could have been useful anywhere. Management in humanitarian aid is an acquired skill, relevant for different sectors, too.’

Another respondent wrote:

‘So far, I have not worked again outside the DC sector. But I am sure that the experience gained and the wide range of skills learnt, is relevant for jobs outside the sector.’

And another one:

‘Gaining working experience in a different environment is always useful...’

One reason for this change among respondents working in the development cooperation sector is that the relevance of the posting diminishes stronger over time for their career in comparison with their peers working in the development cooperation sector.

Like group 2007-2009, the intercultural and language aspects are stressed in the examples:

‘I strongly developed my language skills, which will be important for future international positions.’

One respondent summarised the posting in the following words:

‘On a personal level, I think you learn a lot from being in a different culture. You start from zero and you learn a lot about yourself in terms of skills and knowledge. For example: improvising, flexibility, language, knowledge about politics, culture, how people live in a developing country. Realising that you can learn from other people as much as they can learn from you. (not just western people who are coming to tell how they should work but exchanging practices and ideas).’

With regard to the second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator the following conclusions can be drawn for group 2001-2007:

- ✓ 77% of the respondents working in the development cooperation sector indicate that the skills and knowledge gained during their posting have been relevant for their further professional career *within* the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ 37% of the respondents who are not working in development cooperation indicate that the skills and knowledge gained during their posting have been relevant for their further professional career *outside* the development cooperation sector.
- ✓ Overall, respondents who are not working in the development cooperation sector are less positive about the relevance of the posting for future careers. They value the relevance much lower than their peers in group 2007-2009.

3.6 Result-indicator 3: 60% is involved with international cooperation in three or more manners

The third PSO result-indicator of the Youth Zone programme for the young professionals takes a closer look to what extent development cooperation plays a role in the social life of the respondents. PSO has set the following threshold:

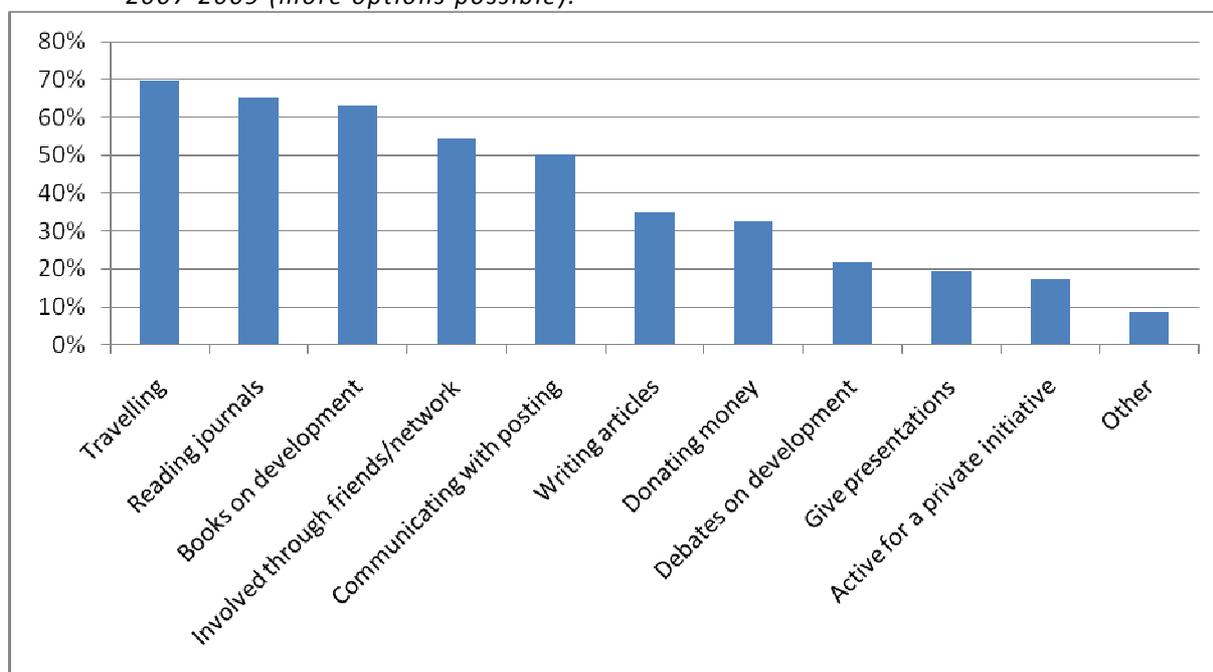
- 60% of the respondents are involved with development cooperation apart from their professional life in at least three different ways.

This threshold is put to the test per subgroup in the following paragraphs.

3.6.1 Group 2007-2009

The following graph sets out various ways in which involvement with development cooperation can be practiced. Respondents were asked whether they are taking up one or more of those activities.

Graph 2: Different ways of involvement with development cooperation in social life of group 2007-2009 (more options possible).



Although this graph indicates that the respondents undertake a variety of activities, it does not tell yet whether a majority is undertaking at least three different activities related to international development in their private lives. When looking into this matter it becomes clear that 90% of the respondents conduct three or more different activities. On average, respondents maintain almost 5 different activities. This is a lot more when compared to the results of two years ago. At that time, 62% of the respondents who recently returned from their posting were involved in at least three different activities. This difference may be easily explained. This year the respondents were presented with some extra options, while two options have been removed.

In this years' survey, 62% of the respondents of the group 2007-2009 indicate that this involvement has grown stronger after the posting in comparison with the period before their posting.

'I've always been interested in DC related issues, however, I feel I have more knowledge and experience now, to also have a proper opinion about it.'

In contrast, some respondents felt a negative change in their involvement with the development cooperation sector. That is sometimes the result of disappointment with the sector, but not always.

'Current job is quite demanding in terms of time consumption.'

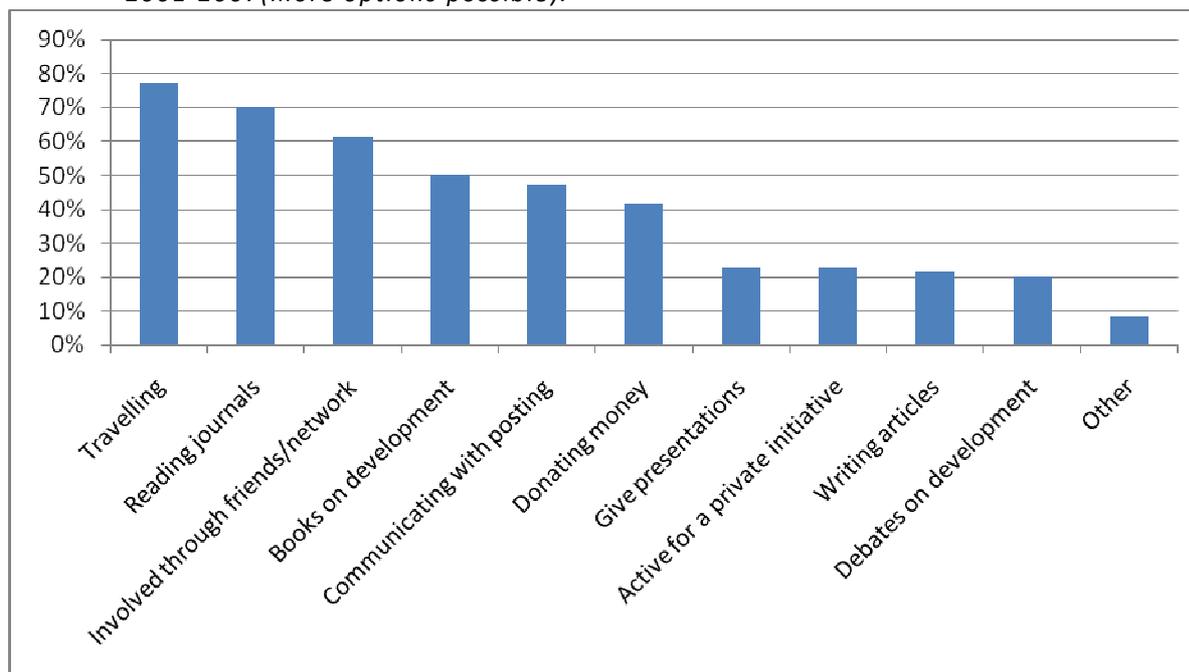
The following conclusions about group 2007-2009 and their involvement with development cooperation in their private lives can be drawn:

- ✓ The third PSO Youth Zone result-indicator of 60% involved with development cooperation in at least three different ways in their private life has been met: 90% of the respondents conduct three or more activities.
- ✓ For a majority, this involvement has intensified after their posting.

3.6.2 Result-indicator 3 for group 2001-2007

The following graph demonstrates the spread of different activities undertaken by respondents of group 2001-2007 that are related to development cooperation in their private lives.

Graph 3: Different ways of involvement with development cooperation in social life of group 2001-2007(more options possible).



Graph 3 shows that group 2001-2007 undertakes the same kind of activities as group 2007-2009. Instead of reading books on development issues as group 2007-2009 does, the third most common activity is being involved with development cooperation through friends. In the group 2001-2007 more than 86% is in three or more different ways involved in development cooperation. Although slightly less than group 2007-2009 it is well above the mark of 60% set by PSO. The different options presented this year to the respondents in comparison with two years ago might explain this

difference. Another explanation for this difference is of course a real increase of involvement that has happened over time.

69% of the respondents of group 2007-2009 indicate that this involvement has grown stronger in comparison with the period before their posting, while for precisely 5% it differed negatively. The following reasons were given for this negative change:

'I have less time to read "vakbladen"⁴ although I do a lot of other reading for my work.'

'Because of my work which is not directly linked to development cooperation I tend to see development issues as an area of interest, but not an area in which I will find a job soon. That's why I am not that much active anymore.'

The following conclusions about the private involvement with development cooperation of group 2001-2007 can be drawn:

- ✓ 86% of the respondents conduct three or more activities related to international development in their private lives. The third PSO result-indicator has been met for group 2001-2007 as well.
- ✓ An increase in this percentage is probably due to the different formulation of the question during the survey.
- ✓ For a majority their private involvement has intensified after their posting.

3.7 Final remarks of young professionals on the Youth Zone programme

During the survey, the respondents were given the opportunity to provide recommendations if they felt the need to. The comments below were mentioned by respondents from group 2007-2009. The respondents from group 2001-2007 were not included since they were valid and taken for account during the studies in 2005 and 2007.

'A recommendation: to provide more support on return to reintegrate in Dutch society.'

'The Dutch sending organization should have a thorough knowledge about the partner organization and the project.'

'As for the Dutch sending organisation, they could be stricter in the future in the follow up of certain aspects of the junior posting, such as actual supervision of the junior by a senior and actual on the job coaching.'

'Recommendation: be careful about whom you send out and at what level. If I look at my own case: of course I was, by any standards, a starter in The Netherlands. However if you send a medical doctor to a country with hardly any doctors, then whether you like it or not, you get many responsibilities and you are surely not considered a starter. I think the assessment of experience and job description should be based on assessment of experience in both the NL and the posting country.'

⁴ In English: journal

'I would suggest that PSO or any other DC organisation consider having disability adjustment funds for those who have disabilities and are posted in the field.'

3.8 Concluding: Review of the PSO result-indicators for the Youth Zone programme – Young Professionals

Result-indicator 1: In 2010, a minimum of 60% of the young professionals that have returned in the period 2007-2009 are working in the development cooperation (DC) sector in the Netherlands or abroad.

Although substantial proportions of group 2001-2007 and group 2007-2009 are working in the development cooperation sector, it is less than 60% of the total group of respondents. The result-indicator has not been met.

Result-indicator 2: A certain proportion of the returned young professionals indicate that gained knowledge and skills during their posting are to a great degree relevant to their current career. A minimum of 70% in relation to the career within the DC sector, a minimum of 30% in relation to the career outside the DC sector.

Both thresholds are met by both groups of respondents, even when a distinction is made of those who are currently working in the development cooperation sector and those who are not. The result-indicator **is met**.

Result-indicator 3: Of the returned young professionals, 60% indicate that they use skills and knowledge in at least three different ways for development cooperation.

The third PSO result-indicator for young professionals **is met with great margins**. Young professionals are involved in many ways in development cooperation.

Other essential conclusions on the returned young professionals are:

- ✓ More than 50% of the total target group has returned a survey.
- ✓ A majority of respondents of group 2007-2009 feel that their expectations have been met completely or to a great degree.
- ✓ A majority of 66% pursued a career in the development cooperation sector after return.
- ✓ As a result of the posting, a majority is positively influenced on development cooperation as a professional working environment.
- ✓ In group 2007-2009, there is genuine interest to work in development cooperation sector among those who do not have a job there currently.
- ✓ There is a mix of reasons why people do not have a job in the development cooperation sector. One main reason is probably the low availability of jobs.
- ✓ Overall, respondents who are not working in the development cooperation sector are less positive about the relevance of the posting for future careers. They value the relevance much lower than their peers in group 2007-2009.
- ✓ For a majority of the respondents their private involvement with development cooperation has intensified after their posting.

4 Findings – PSO member organisations

The two Youth Zone result-indicators set by PSO for the Dutch member organisations are discussed in a similar manner as the result-indicators for the young professionals in the previous chapter. After a brief overview of the member organisations, the indicators are separately explained and probed.

4.1 Introduction of the member organisations

In the period from July 2007 to July 2009, 14 PSO member organisations have posted a young professional (a Starter or Junior Professional) abroad under the Youth Zone programme. A distribution of the young professionals over the different organisations is found in table 2, section 3.1.1. The organisations that did respond and complete the questionnaire represent almost 95% of those postings between July 2007 and July 2009.

Table 24: Participating PSO member organisations in the Youth Zone programme.

	Amount
Total participating member organisations	16
Organisations who posted a young professional	14
Amount of completed questionnaires	12

4.1.1 Expectations of the member organisations

The PSO member organisations were asked about their main goals for having the postings. The results are presented in the table below:

Table 25: Main goals of Youth Zone programme for PSO member organisations.

Goal of posting for member organisation (more options possible)	In 2009...	In 2007...
Capacity building	100%	89%
Personal development of the young professional	75%	78%
Introducing new knowledge	42%	44%
Positive (local) impact on the status of your partner organisation	17%	11%
Subsidised employment	0%	11%

All organisations consider capacity building a main goal of the posting of a young professional. Two years ago, the researchers found that 89% saw capacity building as a main goal. Apart from this increase, the other proportions are comparable to the previous study. Except that in the current study none of the PSO member organisations mentions the subsidised job position as a goal. In the previous study, 11% considered this a main goal.

In addition to the provided options, one organisation added that they see the expansion of public support for development cooperation in the Netherlands as another main goal for the posting. More attention will be paid to this matter in paragraph 4.1.2. Another organisation considered the posting as a means to strengthen international networking and communication.

The PSO member organisations were also asked about the expectations of the partner organisations preceding the posting. The following table gives an overview:

Table 26: Expectations of partner organisations according to PSO member organisations.

Type of expectation (more options possible)	In 2009...	In 2007...
Arrival of new knowledge at partner organisation/ an advisor	100%	44%
Interesting exchange of knowledge between equals	50%	22%
Arrival of a kind of trainee	25%	22%
Arrival of personnel paid by your organisation	17%	56%
Arrival of a representative of your organisation	8%	11%

The results here are quite different from the answers given two years ago. At that time, a majority of organisations (56%) believed that their partner organisation perceived the Youth Zone programme as a way to get subsidized job positions. In this study, only 17% marked this option. The introduction and the exchange of knowledge are the most important expectations by the PSO member organisations of their partner organisations.

4.1.2 Profile and selection of young professional

Although the PSO member organisations generally agree about the expectations of partner organisations, it is hard to find a common strategy among the PSO member organisation with regard to the selection of young professionals. There are many different methods for selecting candidates from sharing the application letters and criteria with the partner organisations to organising job interviews with Skype for example. Some do not involve the partner organisation at all:

'Up till now the partner organisation was not so much involved in the selection itself. Of course we did discuss the requirements of the candidates with our partner organisation.'

Other partner organisations play an important role in the selection process:

'The partner organisation is executing selection. We are facilitating in this respect.'

Another respondent wrote:

'The partner decided which candidate to select, based on the CV's.'

The survey did not particularly ask for the reasons to involve a partner organisation to a certain degree in the selection process. Neither do the provided clarifications give insight in this matter. As there is a lot of variety in the role of partner organisations, it is not possible to come with a representative 'average statement'. More attention on this selection is paid in the next chapter when the perspective of the partner organisations is reviewed.

The only limitation that is set upon the Youth Zone programme is a maximum age of 32 years. All but one PSO member organisations indicate that this limitation is good.

'This is a youth zone programme wherein youth can utilise professional opportunities they maybe would not get otherwise. People develop themselves in a different way and pace and I therefore like the max of 32.'

Despite the consensus on this matter, three organisations do indicate that exceptions should be made possible:

'A person with an interesting professional background and knowledge but who is lacking field experience in a developing country should have access to this opportunity as well, e.g. as a sort of traineeship or try-out contract.'

When applicable, PSO member organisations have given their opinion on the importance of three objectives in relation to the two modalities: Starter and Junior Professional. The tallied results are presented in table 27.

Table 27: Importance of objectives in relation to the two modalities.

Objective	Starter	Junior Professional
Individual learning	Very important	Important
Capacity Building	Neutral	Very important
Increasing public support for development cooperation ⁵	Quite important	Important

As found in the previous study, two years ago, the focus for PSO member organisations with Starters is on individual learning while Junior Professionals are ought to carry out capacity building activities. Again, PSO member organisations do make a distinction between the two modalities.

PSO has changed its strategy with regard to extend public support for development cooperation. As described in the introduction of this document, it has moved from the domain (and thus primary responsibility) of PSO to the domains of the member organisations. Table 27 clearly indicates that increasing public support for development cooperation is still considered a major element of the posting.

The following conclusive statements on the PSO member organisations in this study can be made:

- ✓ 95% of the postings are represented by the respondents that have completed and returned their questionnaire.
- ✓ All respondents consider capacity building a main goal of the posting of a young professional.
- ✓ Increasing public support for development cooperation is still an important element of Youth Zone for member organisations.
- ✓ All PSO member organisations expect that their partner organisations consider the input of new knowledge as the most important expectation of the Youth Zone posting.
- ✓ All but one partner organisations indicate that the age limitation of 32 years is good, although some organisations do indicate that exceptions should be made possible.
- ✓ Individual learning is the most important objective for the posting of Starters according to PSO member organisations. For the postings of Junior Professionals, capacity building is the most important objective.

4.2 PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 1: 70% of the PSO member organisations show appreciation on capacity building results

Table 25 shows that all organisations consider capacity building as one of their main goals for the posting of a young professional. This is certainly a good start to measure the PSO Youth Zone result-indicator for PSO member organisations that demands that a minimum of 70% of the involved member organisations indicate that they appreciate the results that were accomplished in the area

⁵ In Dutch: Draagvlakvergroting voor ontwikkelingssamenwerking

of capacity building. When asked what rating PSO member organisations give to the capacity building results, none of the respondents consider the results as unsatisfactory. The PSO member organisations either rate the capacity building results as satisfactory or good. A common reaction of the respondents is:

'It depends on the posting, however in general it can be said that partner organisations have benefited from the posting of a young professional.'

Partner organisations find it quite hard to generalize the postings, certainly for organisations like ICCO, NIZA and VSO that have organized many postings in the previous years.

'Some deployments have not been successful in capacity building, mostly due to the situation at the partner organisation that did not meet required conditions to make a deployment fruitful. Besides, a few times there was a mismatch between the Young Professional and the partner organisation. Working with relatively inexperienced Young Professionals is a risk: one cannot predict well whether (s)he can deal with the (local) situation at the partner organisation, cultural differences etc.'

Nevertheless, PSO member organisations are positive about the results of the young professionals. For example, 83% of the organisations point out that the achievements of the young professional are still visible within the partner organisations. When asked for examples, answers such as the quotes below are given:

'New artistic disciplines are used in classes and workshops for their target groups, Improvements of organisation development are visible for us.'

And:

'The partner organisation had learned from the young professional. Run programmes and tasks have been done. New kind of skills and working sets are implemented.'

In the view of PSO member organisations, capacity building focuses predominantly on the input of new skills and knowledge. A vast majority of contact persons is able to give similar examples. When asked for the appreciation of these results, contact persons admit that:

'It is quite hard to 'transfer' their knowledge to the partner organisation. I think however that for a part, good results have been achieved on this.'

Another respondent points out that:

'It takes time to get settled and build trust to become effective in capacity building. Therefore the junior is most effective in the last part of his contract. We advocate for longer assignments (2 year).'

The general opinion is that the postings have led to satisfactory to good results, while it is good to remember that there are differences between the postings due to a range of factors.

The following can be concluded about the PSO member organisations with respect to PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 1 (70% show appreciation on the capacity building results of the posting of young professionals at their partner organisations):

- ✓ The first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator for PSO member organisations has been met with great margins.
- ✓ All PSO member organisations rate the capacity building results of young professionals from satisfactory to good.
- ✓ 83% of the PSO member the organisations point out that the achievements of the young professional are still visible within the partner organisations.
- ✓ A vast majority of the PSO member organisations provides significant examples to found this opinion.

4.3 Result-indicator 2: 60% of the PSO member organisations can mention added value of young professionals

The second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator for PSO member organisations measures whether a minimum of 60% of the involved member organisations can formulate what the added value is of the young professionals. The PSO member organisations were asked first whether there is an added value at all in having young professionals on postings. A majority of 83% answered that there is indeed an added value. What is more, all of these respondents were able to provide argumentation as to why their answer is 'yes'. Some examples follow here:

'Young people, who left university not very long ago, bring in a lot of new knowledge, enthusiasm, fresh ideas & energy, commitment and flexibility. This is very much appreciated by the partners.'

Another respondent wrote:

'Sometimes a senior professional is too 'heavy' for the requested support in capacity development.' Besides, in programmatic work a deployment of both a Young Professional and a senior (programme coordinator) can be a valuable combination.'

Apart from the added value of the young professional towards the posting and the partner organisation, respondents acknowledge that there is added value for their own organisation as well. One respondent described the added value as:

'To attract young people as volunteers for our organisation in the future.'

Another one responded:

'Contact with a new network and increased support for development cooperation. Have new professionals 'ready' for work in development cooperation.'

With regard to PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 2 for PSO member organisations (60% of the member organisations can mention added value of young professionals), the following statements can be made:

- ✓ PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 2 for PSO member organisations has been met with great margins.
- ✓ 83% of the PSO member organisations believe that there is an added value of the Youth Zone programme.
- ✓ All of these respondents are able to provide argumentation as to why they are of that opinion.
- ✓ The added value is not limited to the work carried out at the partner organisation, since the PSO member organisations see specific benefits to their own organisation as well.

4.4 Quality of PSO in relation to the Youth Zone programme

The PSO member organisations were also asked to reflect upon the achievements of PSO within the Youth Zone programme in certain areas. The following table shows the results.

Table 28: Appreciation of PSO by PSO member organisations.

Aspects of PSO's work	Level of appreciation			
	Low	Neutral	High	Very good
Communication with member organisation	0%	25%	58%	16%
Communication with young professional	9%	36%	46%	9%
Handling your suggestions and/or feedback	0%	25%	67%	8%
Administrative issues and accessibility	18%	18%	37%	27%

In general, PSO member organisations do appreciate various aspects of PSO's work where linkages are made between the organisation and members and young professionals. Communication between PSO and its member organisations and handling suggestions is highly appreciated:

'We are very satisfied with our communication and feedback from PSO on the postings of young professionals.'

Another respondent commented:

'Personnel of PSO is always very willing to think with you and give support'

However, two PSO member organisations rate the administrative aspect of PSO's work as low. One organisation gave a low rating on communication with the young professional and pointed out that:

'As long as I am in this position, I have received negative evaluations of young professionals on this.'

Considering the Youth Zone services of PSO and the relation between PSO and their member organisations, the following can be concluded:

- ✓ In general, PSO member organisations highly appreciate PSO's work and services.
- ✓ Two PSO member organisations give a low rating to the administrative aspect of PSO's work.

4.5 Working relation with partner organization

Additionally, a couple of questions in the questionnaire focused on the relation of the PSO member organisation with their partner organisations hosting a young professional. During the posting, all PSO member organisations have contact with their partners, though the frequency depends per organisation:

Table 29: Frequency of contact with partner organisation during posting.

Frequency	Percentage
Regular	67%
Sometimes	33%
None	0%

According to the contact persons, the frequency of contact with the partner organisation is:

'Depending on the placement. In general we did not have a lot of contact during the placement when we knew things were going smoothly.'

Table 30: Nature of contact with partner organisation.

Nature of contact (more options possible)	Percentage
Coaching	83%
Informing	67%
Organisational	58%
Monitoring	17%

Like the frequency of contact is depends on the type of posting, so does the nature of the contact with the partner organisation:

'This depended on the posting. Some needed coaching, some needed information.'

And:

'If starters did not get enough guidance, we would try to encourage the partner organisation to pay more attention to this task.'

In general, the posting has led to the consolidation of the working relationship between partner organisation and the PSO member organisation. However, one respondent indicated that the posting:

'In some cases it even contributed to ending the contract with the partner organisation.'

In some cases, young professionals are used by accident as 'eyes and ears' of the PSO member organisations when problems arise during a posting in order to evaluate the partner organisation.

Since no specific questions were asked during this study, it is not clear how often this happened in the previous years. It might be a good idea to discuss this topic further during one of the meetings of PSO and its member organisations.

In total, 75% of the respondents have experienced their partner organisations asking for more young professionals. This already gives some information about the appreciation of the partner organisations on the value of the young professionals. The next chapter further elaborates on this matter.

Considering the working relation between the PSO member organisation and their partner organisations, it can be concluded that:

- ✓ During the posting all PSO member organisations maintain contact with their partner organisation although the frequency depends on specific circumstances.
- ✓ The nature of the contact with partner organisations is also dependent upon the particular posting.
- ✓ 75% of the respondents have experienced their partner organisations asking for more young professionals.

4.6 Concluding: Review of the PSO result-indicators for the Youth Zone programme – the PSO member organisations

Result-indicator 1: In 2010, a minimum of 70% of the involved member organisations indicate that they appreciate the results that were accomplished in the area of capacity building.

Capacity building is always a main goal for the PSO member organisation to organise a young professional posting. 83% can name capacity building results that are still visible after the departure of the young professional. This PSO Youth Zone result-indicator **is met**.

Result-indicator 2: In 2010, a minimum of 60% of the involved member organisations can formulate what the added value is of the young professionals.

This result-indicator **has been met** as well, since 83% believe that there is an added value of working with young professionals and is able to mention concrete examples.

Other essential conclusions about the PSO member organisations are:

- ✓ 95% of the postings are represented by the respondents that have completed and returned their questionnaire.
- ✓ All respondents consider capacity building a main goal of the posting of a young professional.
- ✓ Increasing public support for development cooperation is still an important element of Youth Zone for member organisations.
- ✓ All PSO member organisations expect that their partner organisations consider the input of new knowledge as the most important expectation of the Youth Zone posting. PSO member organisations appreciate PSO's work and services.
- ✓ The frequency and nature of the contact with partner organisations varies per posting.

5 Findings – Partner organisations

The third target group that was questioned during this study are the partner organisations in the developing countries. The same PSO Youth Zone result-indicators as the PSO member organisations are applicable here: appreciation of results of the capacity building and mentioning the added value of young professionals. Before the report elaborates upon whether these result-indicators are met, a brief introduction of the respondents is provided.

5.1 Introduction and characteristics of partner organisations

In total, 14 partner organisations have completed and returned a questionnaire. These are partners of four PSO member organisations: GZB, ICCO, VSO and Theatre Embassy. Two years ago five PSO Member organisations were represented by 12 partner organisations. The current group makes the representation of the data for the partner organisations as a whole limited because of its limited numbers. Nevertheless, the qualitative part of the questionnaires does provide information that is still interesting to verify the PSO Youth Zone result-indicators for partner organisations.

In total, 23% of the young professionals were posted in the period July 2007- July 2009 at these 14 partner organisations. None of these organisations had a young professional working in their organisation prior to 2007. One organisation indicated that there was no contract with their PSO member organisation before 2007.

5.1.1 Expectations of partner organisations

Preceding the posting, partner organisations have the following expectations about the role of the young professional during his or her posting:

Table 31: Expectations of partner organisations.

Type of expectation (more options possible)	In 2009...	In 2007...
Input of new knowledge	85%	78%
Knowledge exchange at an equal level	77%	80%
A trainee who is still learning	15%	22%
A representative of partner organisation	8%	0%
Extra staff, paid by PSO member organisation	8%	56%

Most respondents expect that input and exchange of knowledge is a major element of the posting. It is remarkable that this is in line with the view of PSO member organisations presented in table 26. When asked for a clarification, one respondent wrote:

'Young professionals can bring a range of skills, though also need to be open to other ways of doing. They will end up learning a lot, but the key to their success is an openness to give and receive.'

Another wrote:

'Although the professionals have academic training in an area of expertise, here we have development experience that complement on their academic training. And in this sense we realise a valuable experience for both.'

Other expectations are less important. The availability of extra staff is mentioned here by a minority of the partner organisations. Elsewhere in the survey, other partner organisations point out that it is beneficial for the organisations to have some additional workforce:

'A welcomed helping hand'

In general, the answers to this question are quite similar to the ones provided during the previous study. The only exception is the decrease of respondents indicating to expect *'extra staff, paid by PSO member organisation'*. Two years ago, 56% of the respondents considered this a main expectation, while it is 8% at present. Due to the small amount of respondents among partner organisations, it is difficult to extract firm and direct conclusions from the comparison of this survey and the survey of 2007. Nevertheless, it is a big difference. There are various conceivable reasons, for example a better understanding of the Youth Zone programme or better instructions from the PSO member organisations. Since the reason behind this change has not been put as a question in the questionnaire, further research is necessary to explain this shift.

Like the PSO member organisations, the partner organisations were asked about the main goals for the posting of young professionals in their organisation. Talled together, the following table presents their answer:

Table 32: Main goals of posting for partner organisations.

Goal of posting for partner organisations (more options possible)	In 2009...	In 2007...
Capacity building	100%	89%
Introducing new knowledge	62%	78%
Positive (local) impact on the status of partner organisation	38%	33%
Personal development of the young professional	30%	56%
Subsidised employment	0%	0%

Capacity building is mentioned by all partner organisations, similar to the opinion of the PSO member organisations. The difference in goals becomes particularly visible with regard to the goals of personal development of the young professionals. PSO member organisations consider this as the second most important goal. Among partner organisations, this goal is of much smaller significance, although they acknowledge that it is an important element in the posting (see table 31). The results are similar with those found two years ago, although the significance of personal development of the young professional has decreased to 30% from an original 56%.

'The most important emphasis of the request for the youngsters is to strengthen the capacities of our own team.'

5.1.2 Selection and profile of young professional

While there is a great diversity among PSO member organisations with regard to the involvement of partner organisations in the selection procedure of young professionals, the partner organisations themselves are more unified in their answer. The following table shows that none of the partner organisations opted for the more extreme answers and generally feel somewhat involved in the procedure.

Table 33: Partner organisations' role in selection procedure.

Role of partner organisation	Percentage
Insignificant	0%
Little significance	15%
Neutral	39%
Significant	46%
Very significant	0%

However, some partner organisations do feel a bit left out of the selection procedure, as stated by this contact person:

'They only send us the CV to give an opinion and we have found no opportunity to participate in an interview, we have not verified the level of Spanish and the interests and knowledge on Honduras.'

However, a majority does feel involved to a certain level. Checking résumés such as mentioned by the respondent above is common. Often, partner organisations formulate the profile of the candidate themselves:

'We decide upon the specialization of the new candidate and appeal to the necessities of our organisation for an artist of contemporary dance.'

Table 34: Specific need for a young professional of the partner organisation

Specifically requested a young professional?	In 2009...	In 2007...
Yes	67%	27%
It did not matter	22%	36%
No	11%	36%

The results of the table above differ significantly with the previous study two years ago. At that time, the researchers concluded that the focus on young professionals in the Youth Zone programme was not so much present among the partner organisations. In contrast, this time a majority sees a special role that can be fulfilled by the young professionals, because:

'We felt that for the type of work that needed to be done, the young professionals would be best suited'.

One respondent answering 'no' to the question at hand explained:

'For the Sudan context age may not be a critical factor. However, many of our postings are best filled by single people or couples without children'.

Tables 31 and 32 on expectations and goals of partner organisations demonstrate some significant positive changes. The outcomes of table 34 confirm the impression that partner organisations are nowadays more aware of the Youth Zone programme and its specific features. Apart from that, the increased awareness of partner organisations on the programme is also reflected in increased knowledge about the distinction between a Starter and a Junior Professional. 78% indicated that they are familiar with this distinction. A possible explanation for this change is the adoption of the recommendation from the survey in 2007 by PSO member organisations. At that time, the advice was to have better communication between the PSO member organisation and the partner organisation about the importance and advantages of having Youth Zone young professionals posted

at their organisation. This impression is also confirmed in the appreciation of the level of expertise of the young professionals as is shown in the table below:

Table 35: Appreciation of level of expertise of young professionals

Professional expertise	Starter	Junior Professional
Beginner	16%	0%
Beginner – Neutral	16%	0%
Neutral	32%	29%
Neutral – very professional	32%	29%
Very professional	0%	42%

It is safe to conclude that respondents acknowledge that starters *are* beginners. There is nothing wrong with that. Partner organisations do appreciate the dedication of all young professionals during their posting. More attention on this matter is paid in the next section.

The following conclusions can be drawn about the partner organisations:

- ✓ 23% of the postings are represented by the respondents from partner organisations. This is too small a number to draw general conclusions about the experiences and views of partner organisations.
- ✓ Most respondents expect that input and exchange of knowledge are the major achievements of the posting.
- ✓ The significance of the expectation of having extra staff (paid for by a PSO member organisation), has dropped dramatically since the previous survey.
- ✓ Similar to PSO member organisations, all respondents of partner organisations mention capacity building as the main goal of the posting.
- ✓ Most PSO partner organisations feel somewhat included in the selection process of the young professional.
- ✓ A majority of respondents believe that young professionals have fulfilled a special role for their partner organisation.
- ✓ A majority of respondents can state the difference between Starters and Junior Professionals.

5.2 Result-indicator 1: 70% of the partner organisations show appreciation on capacity building results

PSO has set similar Youth Zone result-indicators and thresholds for the partner organisations in comparison with those of the PSO member organisations. The first one demands that a minimum of 70% of the partner organisations indicate that they appreciate the results that were accomplished in the area of capacity building. The partner organisations were asked their opinion of the capacity building results and rate this on a scale from 1 to 5. The following table shows the results:

Table 36: Rating of young professionals' capacity building results.

Rating of capacity building results	Scale	Percentage
Weak	1	0%
	2	11%
Satisfactory	3	22%
	4	33%
Strong	5	33%

If only this rating is used to evaluate the first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator, a proportion of 88% of the partner organisations considers the capacity building results of the young professional satisfactory or higher. One respondent wrote:

'The arrival of the young professional has set the ball rolling. A programme that had been dormant has been put in the spot light and attracted more interest by local counterparts.'

When partner organisations have concerns about the capacity building results, their reservations are not only focused on the inability of young professionals. Many respondents argue that failure of capacity building can be blamed upon many factors influencing the success of a posting as explained by the following respondents:

'The experience thus far has been very positive. However, it is also possible for results to be more limited or tempered by factors outside the control of either the individual or the organization. Security issues in Sudan and health concerns have slowed progress to some extent.'

And:

'One person was much more successful than the other. In the first instance, the person was able to use her skills and knowledge well and build on this as she went along. In the second case this was not the case, partly due to the challenge the person had in the subject area and the lack of management support provided.'

The partner organisations were also asked to name some important results that have been achieved by the young professionals for their organisation. Here, capacity building is found in many answers, such as:

'Training of personnel in organizational development, gender equity and basic administration principals.'

'Production of manuals and practical guides in order to skill the local partners, they are already implemented.'

'Additional capacity helping to bridge the gap from the Sudan context to partner / donor requirements.'

'She has improved the capacity of an IT officer. As a result he was able to carry out technical actions which he was not able to do previously.'

These remarks demonstrate that capacity building is happening on individual level and sometimes on an organisational level (when the manuals are structurally implemented for example). In general, partner organisations do not only rate the capacity building results satisfactory or higher, they are

also able to provide significant comments and examples. This combination shows the appreciation felt among the respondents. Therefore, PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 1 is met.

With regard to PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 1 (70% of the partner organisations show appreciation on capacity building results), the following conclusions can be drawn:

- ✓ The first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator has been met.
- ✓ 88% of the partner organisations considers the capacity building results of the young professional satisfactory or higher.
- ✓ The partner organisations acknowledge that success depends on both the young professional and external factors.

5.3 Result-indicator 2: 60% of the partner organisations can mention added value of young professionals

The second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator that is applicable to the partner organisations concentrates on the minimum of 60% that can formulate the added value of the young professionals. First, a closer look is taken whether the partner organisations think there is an added value when working with a young professional at all.

Table 36: Whether working with a young professional provide added value

Does working with a young professional provide added value?	Percentage
Yes	77%
Yes and No	15%
No	8%

More than the required 60% of the respondents is convinced that working with a young professional does provide added value to their organisation. Some respondents say it does and does not at the same time because:

‘It depends on the personal interaction and openness’.

Despite the large majority, table 36 does not entirely demonstrate that this PSO Youth Zone result-indicator is met since examples and clarifications on this matter are essential. Almost all organisations, even the one that answered ‘no’ to the previous question, were able to provide examples where special capacities of young professionals were mentioned. A couple of examples follow below:

‘Extra pair of hands; new ideas; energy and openness to be involved in activities beyond their job description.’

‘Energy, hope, optimism and health; Flexibility and a willing attitude to take on challenges; Able to work / live in remote locations without some facilities.’

‘She adapted quickly to the organization. The young professional was permanently present at the local counterpart; as a result it was possible to build sustainable internal and external communication.’

‘They are more flexible, open to learning and bring some level of dynamism.’

From the comments provided by the respondents, adaptability to new working conditions is probably the most significant speciality of young professionals and considered an important added value.

With regard to the second PSO Youth Zone result-indicator (60% of partner organisations can mention added value of young professionals), the following conclusions can be drawn:

- ✓ PSO Youth Zone result-indicator 2 has been met.
- ✓ A majority of respondents, more than 60%, is able to put into writing what the added value is of the young professionals.
- ✓ Almost all partner organisations are able to provide examples where special capacities of young professional were mentioned.
- ✓ Adaptability to new working conditions is the most mentioned example of added value.

5.4 Working relation with the PSO member organisation

Additional questions were asked about the working relation between the partner organisation and the PSO member organisation. The following table shows some aspects of the working relation and the appreciation according to the partner organisations:

Table 37: Opinion of partner organisation on aspects related to the PSO member organisation.

Aspects of working relation	Level of appreciation			
	Low	Satisfactory	High	Very good
Communication with your organisation	0%	25%	75%	0%
Communication with young professional	0%	0%	66%	33%
Handling your suggestions and/or feedback	0%	42%	42%	16%
Administrative issues and accessibility	0%	33%	59%	8%

All partner organisations are positive about the working relation with their PSO member organisation. One partner organisations remarks:

‘The direct communication with the counterpart organisation needs to be improved. Our communication with the PSO member organisation is good, but communication with PSO can be strengthened.’

Table 38: Nature of contact with PSO member organisation

Nature of contact (more options possible)	Percentage
Coaching	69%
Informing	69%
Organisational	31%

The results here are comparable with those presented in table 30 from the point of view of the PSO member organisations. The nature of the contact depends on the specific circumstances of the posting. Some of the partner organisations explained their answer:

‘The contact was principally orientated on the administrative requirements and basic conditions for the young professional and little on informative contact or advice, except in those cases that the young professional had security issues.’

85% of the respondents indicated that the young professional contributed to the consolidation of the relation between the partner organisation and the PSO member organisation:

'The good relationship that existed between the PSO member organisation and our organisation was strengthened as a result of the participation of the young professional'

The following remarks can be made about the working relation between partner organisations and PSO member organisations:

- ✓ In general, partner organisations are positive about the working relation with their member organisation.
- ✓ 85% of the partner organisations indicated that the young professional contributed to consolidating the communication/relation between the partner organisation and the member organisation.

5.5 Concluding: review of the PSO result-indicators for the Youth Zone programme – the partner organisations

Result-indicator 1: In 2010 a minimum of 70% of the involved partner organisations indicate that they appreciate the results that were accomplished in the area of capacity building.

Due to the small sample size, it is difficult to establish with great certainty that this result-indicator has been met for the whole group of partner organisations. However, 88% of the partner organisations that did complete a questionnaire are satisfied about the capacity building results of the young professionals. This result-indicator **has been met**.

Result-indicator 2: In 2010 a minimum of 60% of the involved partner organisations can formulate what the added value is of the young professionals.

With the similar reservations, this result-indicator **is met** as well. 77% of the sample is of the opinion that there is an added value of having a young professional. An even higher percentage of respondents provided concrete examples of the added value.

Other essential conclusions on the partner organisations are:

- ✓ 23% of the postings are represented by the respondents from partner organisations. This is too small a number to draw general conclusions about the experiences and views of partner organisations.
- ✓ All partner organisations mention capacity building as the main goal of the posting.
- ✓ Most partner organisations feel part of the selection process of the young professional.
- ✓ The partner organisations acknowledge that success of the posting depends on both the young professional and many external factors.
- ✓ The young professionals' adaptability to new working conditions is the most mentioned competency.
- ✓ In general, partner organisations are positive about the working relation with their PSO member organisation.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Every last paragraph of the previous three chapters stated conclusions on the specific PSO Youth Zone result-indicators per research group. However, these conclusions do not provide the complete picture of this study. As written in section 2.2, PSO has three main research questions that need an answer. This chapter focuses on these questions. Furthermore, it will summarise the conclusions that are not directly related to the PSO Youth Zone result-indicators. Finally, some recommendations are provided.

What is the effect of the posting to the learning and careers of returned young professionals?

Many young professional respondents acknowledge the importance of gaining working experience. They are of the opinion that the Youth Zone programme is a very good way of improving their résumé. However, the threshold that has been set by PSO with regard to the proportion of returned young professionals working in the development cooperation sector has not been met. There is a variety of reasons that lies underneath this outcome. Despite the interest to work in this sector, it seems that there are fewer jobs available which makes it a highly competitive field. In this study, it remains unclear what the effect is of the Youth Zone posting on the chances of getting a job in the development cooperation sector. Nevertheless, the positive appreciation of the respondents might indicate that one can speak of a positive effect of these chances.

In short, the effect is that a majority of young professionals has a positive attitude towards the development cooperation sector as a working environment. In addition, a majority of young professionals believes that skills and knowledge gained during the posting are relevant to the way they carry out their current job, even when their career develops outside the development cooperation sector. Many young professionals are active in their private lives with development cooperation in a variety of ways. A majority has indicated that the posting had a positive effect on this behaviour.

What is the appreciation and the added value of the Youth Zone programme according to the PSO member organisations?

In short, the appreciation on both elements is high. Some organisations do find it difficult to predict whether a posting will succeed, since many factors influence the success. However, none of the PSO member organisations were completely negative neither about the quality of the programme nor about the young professional. Although some placements were not successful, a vast majority of the PSO member organisations do appreciate the capacity building results of the young professional, which is one of the main goals of the posting according to all organisations. These capacity building results are predominantly focusing on individual and sometimes organisational level. In addition, a majority of respondents indicate that young professionals have an added value compared to senior professionals. Introducing new knowledge to the partner organisation is an important dimension of this added value in the view of the PSO member organisations.

What is the appreciation and the added value of the Youth Zone programme according to the partner organisations?

Unfortunately, the sample size of partner organisations is too small in order to draw generic conclusions. However, those organisations having completed a questionnaire have the same opinion

as their counterparts in the Netherlands. As a matter of fact, some postings fail due to a variety of factors. However, for these organisations this is not a reason to be negative about the Youth Zone programme. On the contrary, a majority of the respondents is positive about the capacity building results of the postings of young professionals. Partner organisations appreciate the input of new knowledge as well as a helping hand for their activities. A majority has asked specifically for a young professional. Reason is the added value, whereby flexibility is most often mentioned. In sum, partner organisations appreciate the added value and the posting of young professionals highly.

Other essential conclusions are:

Young professionals

- ✓ More than 50% of the young professionals has responded with a completed questionnaire.
- ✓ A majority of the young professionals of group 2007-2009 feel that their expectations have been met completely or to a great degree.
- ✓ As a result of the posting, a majority of the young professionals is positively influenced on development cooperation as a professional working environment.
- ✓ In group 2007-2009, there is a clear interest to work in the development cooperation sector among those who currently do not have a job in this field.

PSO member organisations

- ✓ 95% of the postings are represented by the respondents that have completed and returned their questionnaire.
- ✓ Increasing public support for development cooperation is still an important element of Youth Zone for member organisations.
- ✓ All respondents consider capacity building the main goal of the posting of a young professional.
- ✓ PSO member organisations appreciate PSO's work and services.

Partner organisations

- ✓ 23% of the postings are represented by the respondents from partner organisations. This is too small a number to draw general conclusions about the experiences and views of partner organisations.
- ✓ All partner organisations mention capacity building as the main goal of the posting.
- ✓ The partner organisations acknowledge that success of the posting depends on both the young professional and many external factors.
- ✓ In general, partner organisations are positive about the working relation with their PSO member organisation.

6.1 Recommendations

Generally speaking, the Youth Zone programme is successful. On average, respondents (returned young professionals, contact person of a PSO member organisation, partner organisations) are positive about the goals, practical arrangements and effects of the programme. However, despite this positive review, a major drawback of the programme has emerged: the low proportion of young professionals working in the development cooperation sector. As explained in chapter 3, this is probably due to the decreasing availability of jobs as a result of job positions in the development cooperation sector being moved from the Netherlands to developing countries. Based on these findings, the researchers have formulated two recommendations to improve the Youth Zone programme:

Recommendation 1 – Clear and realistic career development of young professionals

The researchers' first recommendation is to provide young professionals with a realistic and longer term view on their career in the development cooperation sector. The current knowledge about the difficulties pursuing a professional career in the development cooperation sector should not be limited to PSO and its member organisations. Young professionals enrolling the Youth Zone programme should be made aware of the challenges they may face after completion of the Youth Zone programme. PSO member organisations should strike a balance between informing young professionals about realistic career possibilities in the sector and inspiring them to work in the sector. The focus of the support on this issue should be prior and during the posting, so that young professionals will be enabled to develop a realistic and longer term view on their career. The methodology for information and support could be discussed at the bi-annual Youth Zone meeting between PSO member organisations and PSO.

Recommendation 2 - PSO more direct contact with partner organisations

The researchers propose that PSO could invest more time in direct contact with the partner organisations than the current annual visit to one of the programme countries to get a better understanding of their context. Reason for this recommendation is the fact that this survey faced a relatively small number of partner organisations returning their questionnaire again. At the same time, a lot of valuable information about the perceptions of partner organisations on the Youth Zone programme was received through these questionnaires. Direct contact with partner organisations provides PSO with a unique view from the inside of a development organisation. It gives PSO an impression of the daily practice of young professionals related to capacity development processes in the partner organisations. A better understanding of daily practice will automatically feed into and further improve the PSO Youth Zone programme. In order to continuously learn from the views of partner organisations, PSO could spend more time in direct contact with the partner organisations. Note that these contacts should not be considered as a method of PSO to control the PSO member organisations. The aim of this contact is to provide PSO with a bird's eye view on the Youth Zone programme and particularly of the context and organisation of partner organisations. Besides, sending out questionnaires will not be that essential anymore since a more substantial part of the knowledge and overview about the perspectives of partner organisations is gained directly in the field.

Due to the successful follow up of previous recommendations, no further recommendations are proposed to improve the Youth Zone programme. However, three 'out of the box' recommendations are stated below.

Recommendation 3 – More South-South postings

Meeting the threshold of young professionals working in the development cooperation sector could be made possible by focusing on South-South postings. Since the first PSO Youth Zone result-indicator has not been met, it is necessary to reflect upon this matter. Some may argue that nowadays, the threshold of 60% is simply too high and that this number should be adjusted. Others may argue that not reaching the threshold is not so much a problem as long as all stakeholders appreciate the (results of) postings of young professionals. However, it is possible to maintain the threshold and focus on South-South postings, since there is a fair chance that they will continue working in the development cooperation sector, considering the fact that more jobs are moving to developing countries.

Recommendation 4 – Publish an article on young professionals in the sector/ Youth Zone programme

The researchers propose to publish an article about the Youth Zone programme in order to cause more publicity on this matter. The target group of this report are closely connected to the Youth Zone programme. There are three reasons why a broader public might be interested to learn about experiences of young professionals entering the development cooperation sector. First, the Youth Zone programme is one of the few methods in the Netherlands for young professional to start their career as a professional in development cooperation. This study contains valuable information for other institutions that are active in this field. Secondly, the effect and relevance of the Youth Zone programme for young professionals is sufficiently proven by the three consecutive surveys. Since the programme has been of constant value in the past 10 years, both successes and lessons learned deserve attention from those readers who are interested. Thirdly, publications on this matter are lacking and can be valuable for the continuous discourse on development cooperation in the broader (Dutch) society.

Recommendation 5 – Next research should have a specific focus

The researchers would like to recommend that a next research has specific research questions in order to reveal currently unknown factors and results of the Youth Zone programme. This study and the studies from 2005 and 2007 were generally positive about the effects of the Youth Zone programme, except for some minor elements. In short: Youth Zone matters! There is a fair chance that if a next study is conducted in two years from now, more or less the same conclusions will be drawn and not much additional information is revealed. Instead, next research could focus on the absorption capacity of the job market in the development cooperation sector, or another possibility is researching the results of postings of South-South young professionals.

Annex I & II: Questionnaires and Data

The questionnaires (used for to the four research groups: young professionals group 2007-2009, young professionals group 2001-2007, PSO member organisations and the partner organisations) and the answers provided by the respondents in two group interviews are available at PSO on request.

PSO member organisations can also request the data of the questionnaires of young professionals and partner organisations (both made anonymous)

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