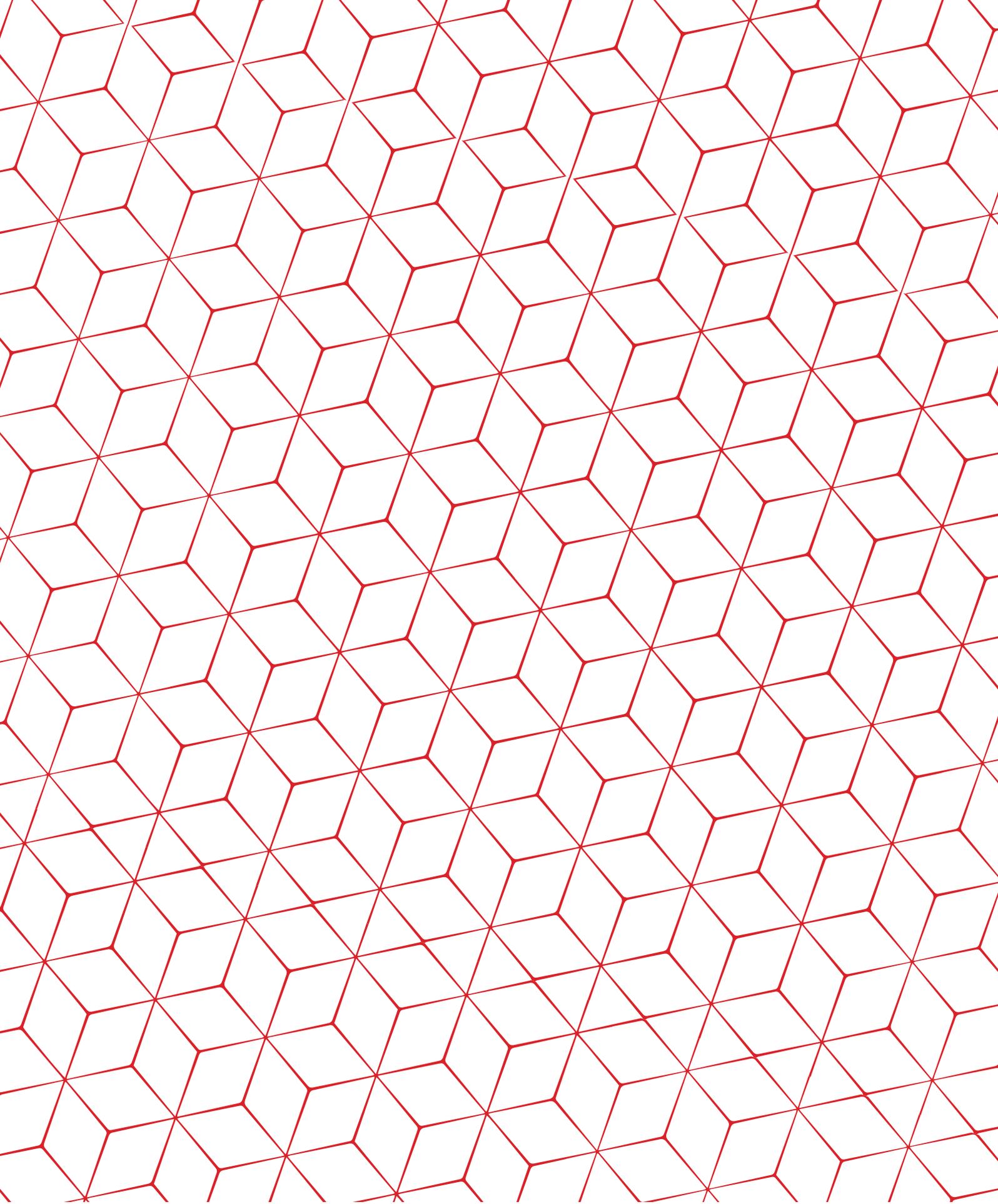


# EVALUATING THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CITIZEN AGENCY CONSORTIUM

End-Term Evaluation of the  
Citizen Agency Consortium





Wouter Hijweege & Pol De Greve,  
**August 2020**



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## List of Abbreviations

A19	Article 19
AM	Adaptive Management
CA	Citizen's Agency
CAC	Citizen's Agency Consortium
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CD	capacity Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
D&D	Dialogue and Dissent policy framework Min. of Foreign affairs
DMEL	Department Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
DW4W	Decent Work for Women
EKN	Embassy of the kingdom of the Netherlands
ETE	End Term Evaluation
GIE	Green Inclusive Energy
GO	Global Office
HIVOS	Humanist Institute for International Cooperation
HUB	Regional HIVOS office
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IMVO	International Corporate Social Responsibility
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department MFA
KSP	Keystone Performance
KST	Keystone Thematic Operational
L&A	Lobby and Advocacy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign affairs
MSA	Multi Stakeholder Approach
MTR	Midterm Review
NPS	Net Performance Score
OC	Open Contracting
OH	Outcome Harvesting
OM	Operational Management
PLL	Partnership Learning Loop
SCSO	Southern Civil Society Organisation
SD4All	Sustainable Diets for All
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Strategic Partnership
TOC	Theory of Change
W@W	Women at Work

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

The end evaluation of Strategic Partnership (SP) of the Citizen's Agency Consortium (CAC) consists of four components: the substantiation of outcome statements, the four thematic evaluations, an evaluation of the internal organization of the SP CAC, and the overarching CAC-synthesis and learning event.

This third part of the evaluation aims to analyze how the internal organization, including partnership relations was designed, functioned, and changed over time and identify how the internal organization has influenced the effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of the programme outcomes.

Based on the Terms of reference a research framework was developed along three levels of analysis:

- **Strategic, or Adaptive management level** including elements of decision making for governance, planning, monitoring, reflection and learning.
- **Operational management level** including decision-making about budgeting, quality assurance, fund use, reporting and accountability
- **Partnership development level**, covering how partnerships have evolved and their influence on effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of L&A changes, CD changes, Inclusivity & Citizen Agency, and Ownership.

## Methodology

The evaluators used the findings from the four draft reports of the thematic end term evaluations (ETE), the exploratory study of partnership relations (Kampen, 2017) and the final reports of 2 consultative surveys by Keystone<sup>1</sup> as the basis for their analysis. Central element of the approach was the harvesting of quotes, consisting of observations, findings or conclusions from these reports.

In close and regular consultation with the HIVOS DMEL coordinators, an iterative process of refinement of categories and sub-categories was followed to cluster these quotes around emerging commonalities and issues. These clustered issues were brought together in a table structured along the outline of the research framework. From there, a narrative report was produced, presenting a comprehensive assessment of the findings and conclusions of the above-stated evaluations and studies. In a webinar with the overall CAC coordinator, the four programme managers (or their replacement) and the 2 DMEL coordinators, some main lines of the report were validated.

It is worth noting some significant limitations. First of all, the ToR for the four ETE's did not include specific research questions related to organizational aspects, resulting in a limited number of quotes and insights from the ETE reports. Furthermore, the evaluators had to use the draft<sup>2</sup> reports of the four thematic end-evaluations as the final reports were not yet available at the time of the assignment. Last but not least, validation of the draft evaluation report was limited in the absence of several key stakeholders due, amongst others to vacation. As a result, the evaluators refrain from drawing specific conclusions, or recommendations and instead offer their analysis as a basis for further reflection and discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting here that the Keystone reports refer to HIVOS partners in general, while LPP and the four ETE reports refer to a specific sub-set of partners, as it relates to partners within the CAC programme context only.

<sup>2</sup> Due a.o. to the Covid pandemic, it took longer than originally expected to finalize the thematic evaluations.

## **Adaptive management**

- The decentralised governance structure, space and flexibility offered to partners has served the programme and its partners well.
- Internally, Hivos staff faced challenges with the dual management lines as well as the multiple functional demands that many staff are facing.
- Among partners, there was a broad appreciation for service provision by Hivos in management and capacity development as well as for their content-related contributions e.g. in policy influencing and learning. Yet, many partners continue to regard Hivos as a donor. Southern partners may not truly own the programme, but they have a warm and robust commitment to making the programme a success.
- the ToC-based dynamics of programme strategy development and planning was an innovative and mostly successful approach. This approach helped in fine-tuning and sharpening the programme approach, contributing to the effective and relevant implementation of capacity development and lobby and advocacy. Challenges were noted in translating the desired strategic change into operational planning using ToC as the foundation for developing sub-strategies (global and local) for important programme features such as inclusiveness, citizen agency, communications and media, and other programme-specific dimensions.
- The ToC based flexible planning mechanism, combined with generally lean and mean programme management procedures and tools, allowed smooth programme implementation and contextualization. Adjustments in strategy and implementation modalities could be made if and when needed. In general, there was more room for flexible and agile steering in programme management than in operational (financial) management. Streamlining communication between Hivos and partners, remains a point of attention.
- Outcome harvesting, demanded substantial time and effort from staff and partners to learn and apply the tool. Nevertheless, once operational, staff and partners appreciated the instrument, its added value in learning, strategic reflection, reporting, and evidence generation.
- Learning was integrated in strategic reflection and planning at programme, country and partner level. Partners may have preferred a more systematic organization of South-South exchange and learning and more focus on organizational capacity strengthening.
- The ETE reports have very little information on learning at CAC level.
- The intentional use of 5C model for capacity development was by and large abandoned and replaced by more contextualized mechanisms which were not necessarily less effective at local / country level but did not lead to the creation of comprehensive programme-wide CD-strategies.

## **Operational management**

- Two operational management elements frequently touched upon in all four programme evaluations are the flexibility (and level of self-control) and the contract duration. To start with the latter, applying custom-made conditions to partner contracts under the risk-based framework, did not allow flexibility in contract duration. All partners got one-year contracts and although financial issues were regularly discussed between country partners, Hivos Hub staff and Hivos Global staff to address bottlenecks, some issues such as the one-year contract could not be solved.
- Some implementing partners recognize that one-year contracts do allow adaptation between project periods, in response to context changes. However, most partners perceive one-year contracts as inconsistent with the partnership ambitions stated by the programme and consortium partners. In general this one-year contracting has added to the administrative burden and led to delays in project implementation.

- Without explicitly saying so, the ETE reports suggest that the one year contract is perceived as a donor requirement, i.e. a condition from MFA. This is only true in an indirect way. The HIVOS partner policy (HIVOS, 2004), aiming for extended term contracts to trusted partners, seems to be overruled by risk reduction considerations at the regional hubs.
- Evaluators also raised questions on the suitability of one-year contracts for L&A programmes requiring sustained efforts and coherent planning of initiatives. The one-year contracts are affecting the L&A capability of partners as they are financially dependent on donors, especially for interventions related to policy influencing where there are no inherent mechanisms to self-generate resources.
- The limited contract period does affect partners' programme agility as they feel limited in their operational flexibility in issues like staffing.
- The actual practice of the newly introduced risk management is hardly touched upon in the ETE reports. As a consequence, it remains unclear to what extent HIVOS new project management and accounting systems have been able to address the perceived shortcomings such as timely information to support decentralized decision making and accountability.
- In the ETE reviews, a distinction appears to be made between reporting and MEL. While reporting is associated with accountability, the MEL has a much stronger association with learning and sharing.
- The introduction of OH and its related CD put more emphasis on learning and reflection but added requirements in addition to the standard (narrative & financial) reporting requirements by the hubs.
- The HIVOS reporting requirement from partners was extensive compared to MFA's SP reporting requirements from HIVOS.
- The partnership relations take time to settle and to develop open communication and smooth working procedures. To what extent the CAC programme inception phase was effective in facilitating the partnership development remains unclear. Staffing, capacity development and staff changes and the related 'transaction costs' are also seen as essential issues in operational efficiency.

In conclusion, we can say that operational management has functioned well in the CAC programme. Good personal working relations, relative flexibility in programme development, budgeting and reporting are compensating factors for the short contracts. Flexibility, to adjust and respond to a highly dynamic environment is the most appreciated characteristic of the partnerships by country partners.

### **Partnership assessment**

In this section, we look at the actual functioning and performance of the different types of partnerships within CAC. We start at the consortium level, followed by the partnerships with country partners and last but not least briefly touch on the strategic partnership with the MFA and embassies.

The functioning and performance of HIVOS, IIED and Article 19 as a consortium gets limited attention in the evaluations. Their functioning is presented either as a collective, for example in the reflection meetings, or in terms of specific roles. Their complementarity is seen in terms of areas of expertise and networks and is reflected in strategic choices on role division and country programmes. Their synergies during programme implementation is mentioned occasionally only.

### **Partnerships with Country Partners**

- Several ETE reports concluded that the mix of well-established partners with specific, complementary expertise proved an essential contributing factor to the effectiveness and relevance of the programme's outcomes.
- The collaboration of Hivos and consortium members with Southern partners has created added value for all parties through increased capacities, access to networks and complementary contributions in the implementation of L&A interventions. There is a wide-spread appreciation among Southern partners for Hivos efforts to ensure co-creation in the design and planning of the programme. Partners equally appreciate Hivos for strengthening their capacities, offering legitimacy to policy influencing, facilitating access to resource persons, institutions or networks, supporting evidence generation, facilitating multi-actor initiatives, and so on.
- partners are more hesitant in accepting Hivos as a co-implementer. The reason not only being the implicit friction that comes with the donor-recipient setting but also because of the finite timeframe and Stop & Go nature of a programme approach. While a programme approach can offer valuable incentives to strengthen L&A initiatives of Southern partners, sustaining policy influencing processes requires a longer-term engagement that a programme may not be able to offer unless Hivos commits itself in partnership relations for longer periods.
- The latter observations do not apply to international lobby and advocacy. In the international lobby and advocacy Hivos (and IIED & A19) can and does play a valuable and appreciated role as (co)implementer of policy influencing initiatives, in support of and collaboration with Southern partners. Here, the consortium partners not only bring in content-matter expertise and L&A experiences, they also create added value by establishing linkages between civil society actors in international policy settings.
- In the KST report, partners seem to feel they are very complementary, especially appreciating the specific knowledge and networks they bring in. Yet, at the same time, they indicate that they all bring similar resources to the table. The nexus and ecosystem approaches of CAC address this issue, and create new opportunities for developing well-structured approaches to L&A, make effective use of networks and create space for younger/ less experienced organisations to benefit from peer learning.
- Regarding capacity development, HIVOS role became more relevant with the adoption of the nexus/ ecosystem approach as partner experiences with policy influencing, L&A were more varied . Diversity of the partner ecosystem is not a guarantee for coherence and synergies, as shown by the DW4W programme. The review team estimated that the level of valorizing partner complementarity and the level of cross-linkages between the different pathways of change, although varying among the countries, is overall rather limited.
- There appears to be a dilemma in the partnership model / philosophy of CAC and for Hivos for that matter. Intentionally, autonomy, independence and complementarity are key values in the partnership. Yet, operationally (and for reasons of risk management) these intentions are not translated into more open-ended long-term partnership agreements/contracts. This practice of one-year contracts continues even though longer term contract are 'permitted' if not encouraged by MFA. This dilemma is not limited to HIVOS as it is also reflected in the IOB study on strategic partnerships.

### **Strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

- The ambition of establishing a strategic partnership between the MFA and CAC only partially materialised. Concrete and significant results from the strategic partnership were achieved in national and global policy development with the MFA (and sometimes other Dutch Government parties), for GIE and DW4W. For these 2 programmes, the interaction with MFA also influenced the programme outcomes as MFA and CAC were directly

involved in L&A in the Netherlands and at the global level.

- In none of the programmes, there has been a real strategic collaboration, let alone partnership, with the embassies. Often embassies had other policy and programme priorities and did or could not allocate time and resources to collaborate on policy matters covered by the specific programmes. Consequently, there are no significant impacts or implications that the assumed partnership at the country level may have had on either design, implementation modalities or outcomes of the respective programmes (in Southern programme countries).

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The end evaluation of Strategic Partnership (SP) of the Citizen's Agency Consortium (CAC) consists of four components: the substantiation of outcome statements, the four thematic evaluations, an evaluation of the internal organization of the SP CAC, and the overarching CAC-synthesis and learning event. This report covers the third component, i.e. the evaluation of the internal organization of the Strategic Partnership Citizen's Agency Consortium.

The internal organization refers, among others, to the way the consortium functioned, its quality assurance requirements, administrative and financial procedures. Partnership relations of the SP CAC form a resultant of SP CAC's internal organization and are therefore a direct focus of attention in this evaluation. Under the SP CAC, this refers to the following types of partnerships:

1. As in "Strategic Partnership", i.e. the Ministry's terminology, which should be limited to the relationship between **the Ministry and the CAC**, and especially Hivos
2. As in **the consortium**, i.e. about the relationships between Hivos, IIED and Article 19 (steering committee, the project team)
3. As between the **CAC consortium partners- and organizations from the global South**, often referred to as '*country partners*'.

The aim of the internal organization evaluation is:

1. Identify lessons regarding the way the internal organization, including partnership relations at all three partnership types, was designed, functioned, and changed over time, as well as niches of divergence, their reasons and effects.
2. Identify how the internal organization has influenced the effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of Lobby and Advocacy (L&A) changes, capacity development (CD) changes, Inclusivity & Citizen Agency (CA), and Ownership.

Findings of this internal organization evaluation will contribute to answering the evaluation questions as detailed in the TOR for the end evaluation, such as, factors and processes influencing changes that occurred.

## Setup of the report

As further explained in the following paragraph, we distinguish three interrelated levels of organizational management, **Strategic, or Adaptive, Operational, and Partnerships**. The main part of this report follows this distinction to structure the information and analysis. But first, in chapter two, we clarify the applied methodology for this evaluation, how this evolved and we identify its boundaries and limitations. The short third chapter provides an overview of the findings, some features and statistics that give an impression of the size and content of the quotes harvested. The chapters four, five and six form the piece de resistance of the report, offering a narrative analysis of the relevant references on organizational issues in the CAC programme. Each of these three chapters concludes with a paragraph offering some comparison and possible conclusions.

## 2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Based on the Terms of reference (ToR see annex 1) a work methodology and research framework were developed along with three focus areas:

- **Strategic, or Adaptive management level** including elements of decision making for governance, planning, monitoring, reflection and learning.
- **Operational management level** including decision-making about budgeting, quality assurance, fund use, reporting and accountability
- **Partnership development level**, covering how partnerships have evolved and their influence on effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of L&A changes, CD changes, Inclusivity & Citizen Agency, and Ownership.

The evaluators used the findings from the four draft reports of thematic programme evaluations (Geert Phlix, 2020); (Huub Sloot, 2020); (Tap Room consultants, 2020); (Pol de Greve, 2020) to identify (1) overall patterns of influence in the design, functioning, and changing over time of the internal organization including partnership relations, and (2) niches of divergence, the reasons and effects. This study also builds on the findings of the 2017 exploratory study of partnership relations (Kampen, 2017) and final reports and follow-up dialogue sessions of 2 consultative surveys by Keystone (Keystone, 2019) and (Keystone, 2019). Where relevant some additional literature references are mentioned.

The approach that was followed developed iteratively in close and regular consultation with the DMEL coordinators of Hivos.

The central element of the approach was the harvesting of quotes (in excel file) from the four draft end-term evaluations reports, the PLL report and the 2 Keystone reports<sup>3</sup>. Quotes are short statements of one or two sentences, taken from the reports that are either an observation, finding or conclusion of the evaluation. All selected quotes related to the three focus areas mentioned above. Subsequently, the quotes were classified under a number of different categories and sub-categories. This allowed the evaluators to cluster quotes around combinations of issues to explore. These clustered issues were brought together in a table structured along the outline of the research framework. From there, a first narrative report was produced, presenting a comprehensive assessment of the findings and conclusions of the above-stated evaluations and studies.

In the next step, the report was shared and discussed with the DMEL coordinators. Subsequently, a webinar was held with the overall CAC coordinator, the four programme managers (or their replacement) and the 2 DMEL coordinators. This webinar was meant to validate the findings of the assessment and discuss possible adjustments or additions to the report.

### **Scope and Limitations**

The evaluation methods developed in an iterative process in which the text analysis of the draft thematic end-evaluations, the PLL and keystone reports took centre stage. The evaluators were not able to collect first-hand data themselves. As the ToR for the four ETE's did not include specific research questions related to organizational aspects, the quantity and insights from the ETE reports are limited.

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting here that the Keystone reports refer to HIVOS partners in general, while LPP and the four ETE reports refer to a specific sub-set of partners, as it relates to partners within the CAC programme context only.

Furthermore, it is worth emphasizing that the evaluators had to use the draft<sup>4</sup> reports of the four thematic end-evaluations as the final reports were not yet available at the time of assignment. A two-hour validation webinar on Monday 13 July with some of the most directly involved actors replaced the focus group discussions that were initially planned. Last but not least, validation of the draft evaluation report was limited in the absence of several key stakeholders due, amongst others due to vacation.

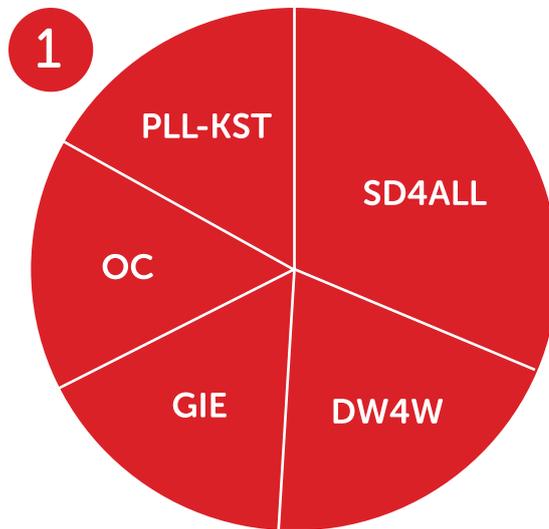
As a result, the evaluators refrain at this stage from drawing specific conclusions, or recommendations and instead offer their analysis as a basis for further reflection and discussion.

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<sup>4</sup> Due a.o. to the Covid pandemic, it took longer than originally expected to finalize the thematic evaluations.

# 3. SELECTED FEATURES OF THE HARVESTED QUOTES

A total of 344 quotes were harvested, of which 294 came from end-term evaluation (ETE) reports, and 50 from the PLL and Keystone reports.



**Figure 1. Number of harvested quotes by source**

Among the 294 ETE quotes, 105 (31%) were harvested from SD4All report, 70 (20%) from DW4W, 59 from GIE (17%), 60 from OC (17%) and 50 (15%) from PLL and keystone. The break-down by focus area was:

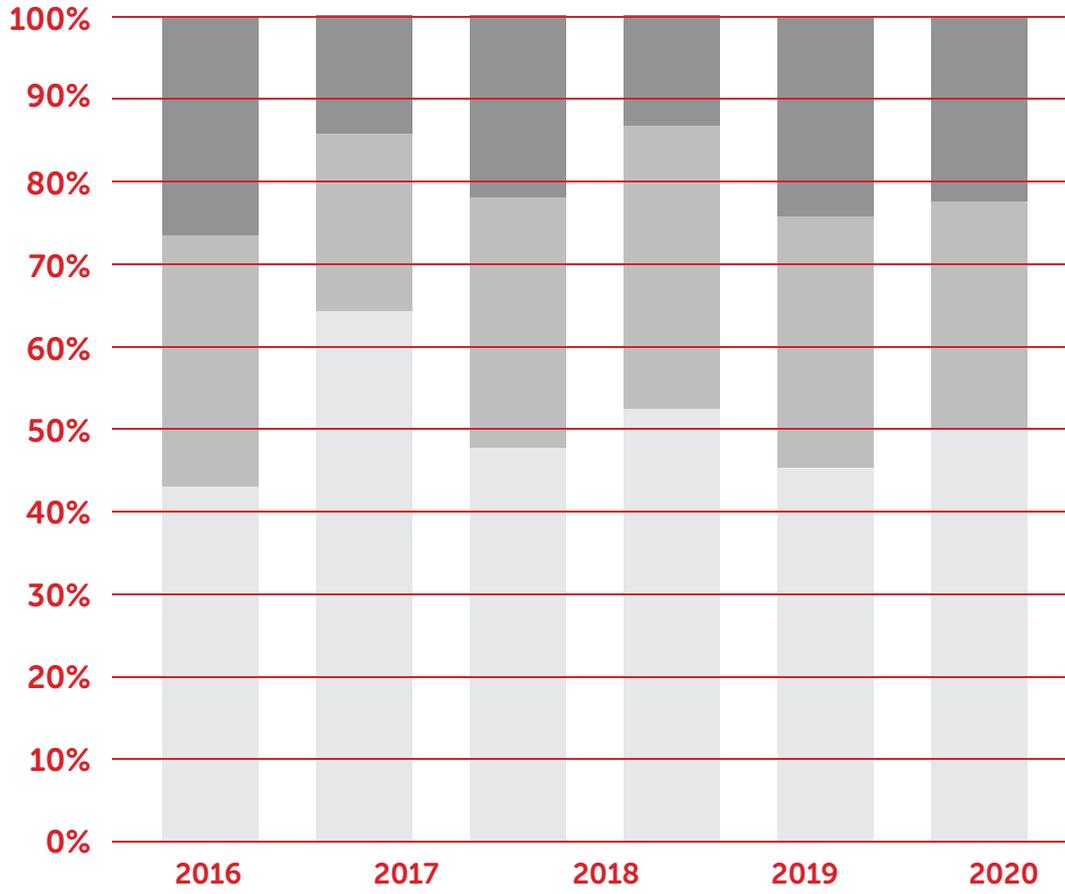
- Adaptive management: 50% of quotes
- Operational management: 28%
- Partnership: 22%

The share of adaptive management quotes ranged between 44% (OC) and 63% (DW4W), for operational management the range was between 20% (DW4W) and 35%; OC) and for partnerships, this was between 13% (OC) and 27% (SD4All).

Looking at sub-categories, issues that have been given quite some attention in the narratives are

- strategy, design and planning
- implementation
- monitoring and learning
- finance, accountability and reporting
- governance and ownership.

The issue of risk management, is remarkably under-represented in the quotes.



# 4. ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

## 4.1. GOVERNANCE

- None of the ETE reports (primary sources) mentions the higher-level governance structures like steering committee or programme team, let alone comments on the dynamics and interactions of these structures with other governance levels. This is understandable as each evaluation focused at the theme level.
- The **governance** structure in the four programmes appears to be working along similar decentralized lines with a global coordination team in the Netherlands and regional managers who manage staff teams at hubs. Core staff were line managed within their respective global or regional offices and program managed by the Programme Managers at the Global Office (matrix structure). This structure also explains differences in management processes (frequency of reporting, reporting formats, consolidating reporting, management of partner relations, etc.) among regions. In one programme (OC) the governance was initially more centralized but changed significantly later on allowing for the programme to become more embedded with a more context-relevant approach in respective programme countries.
- The Keystone performance report suggests that Hivos should take note of variance in scores between regional offices and should learn from positive experiences and seek specific areas of improvement. This issue of regional divergence does not surface in the thematic evaluation reports.
- The four evaluations agreed that the governance setup gave a lot of **autonomy and responsibility** to the regional Hivos offices and regional programme teams to shape the programme. For country partners, this flexibility in programme development is highly valued and appreciated in the CAC programme. This might well clarify the broadly shared satisfaction with the programme governance structure and related procedures (CAC). There are a few dissonant voices, such as partners complaining about the lack of transparency in the decision making by Hivos, i.e. claiming not to know the Hivos management policies that were referred to for justifying certain decisions.
- On a more critical note, however: the Keystone reports (thematic & operational) indicated that while partners feel involved in decision making on programme activities, they feel less engaged in funding decisions. Even more critical was the Keystone performance survey on co-creation and programme implementation. Here, Hivos was rated poorly (-4) and showing a downward trend over time in appreciation in terms of its willingness to listen and respond. Admittedly, the evaluation reports do not reflect such a negative rating nor trend. Possibly the CAC programme has a more positive 'vibe' in this respect?
- All evaluations (GIE possibly somewhat less) pointed at some risks or challenges related to dual **management lines** (functional versus line management). The SD4All ETE report states that an essential reason for having a dual line was to allow adequate consideration of local reality in line management of staff. The report also observes that the downside of it is a less efficient and more complex management model with some overlap in responsibilities for instance in performance appraisal. Furthermore, the dual management line holds a risk of a disconnect between functional and operational considerations on matters that may affect the efficient implementation of the programmes.

- Three out of four reports (SD4All, DW4W & GIE) also point at the challenges that come with having officers working part-time in different programmes such as communications or DMEL. This often implied a delicate balancing act between demands and expectations of up to 4 to 5 **functional** leads in addition to their own line manager. Similarly, while it is recognized that country-based programme managers are the *spiders* in the programme web for handling all functional programme lines (e.g. planning, finance, communications, operations, M&E, and so on) that pass via them to the implementing partners. In terms of time management, this puts a lot of pressure on the coordinators. They invariably indicate facing high workloads if only to respond to such demands and expectations. At the same time, they regret having too little time to engage as 'co-implementer' in Lobby and Advocacy with and for partners.
- This latter observation then relates to the issue of the **role of Hivos** (which will be a recurrent feature in this report). In the evaluations, the more common perception was that many partners still regard Hivos as the "donor" while they (partners) are the "recipients". The Keystone assessment provides a blended picture as to how partners would wish Hivos to evolve, by pointing out that *some partners are in favour of more autonomy over decision-making and for Hivos to take a step back from a traditional funder role. Still, others feel the need for Hivos to maintain a presence in-country and continue to publicly support them to show legitimacy.* The Keystone report continues by stating that: *while partners appreciate Hivos' capacity as a facilitator and convener, they are still not in full agreement about whether Hivos should become a network organization.*
- The different reports do point at many programme **interventions that Hivos** staff are involved in, in different settings. The range of interventions varies widely and can be complementary with or directly supportive of what partners do (more coverage to follow in the chapter on partnership). There were a few critical remarks on the perceived or envisaged role of Hivos as implementer, e.g. regarding possible implications of a strong role of Hivos in implementation for the agility and strength of the partner networks. The different evaluation teams do not truly take a position regarding the ambition of Hivos to be more than a donor, programme manager and capacity support provider but also to be actively engaged as an implementer and interlocutor in programme-related dynamics. However, overall, there was an appreciation for Hivos in all evaluation reports. Often this appreciation emanated from proper personal relationship management by Hivos staff with partners, the perceived flexibility in programme development, its service provision and from collaboration on content. In SD4All ETE report this was phrased as follows:  
There was an appreciation for Hivos for open consultations, willingness to learn and adapt, flexibility in planning and budgeting, guidance in context analysis, facilitation of policy processes, connecting and aligning with 3rd parties, sharing technical knowledge, support in M&E and related tasks, Management support, among others.
- This - overall positive - observation does not necessarily imply that partners have a strong feeling of ownership. On **ownership**, perceptions seem to differ between partners and country teams. All reports indicate that the flexibility that Hivos allows in programme planning and implementation by partners and in the decentralization of decision-making has contributed to a feeling of local ownership<sup>5</sup>. In the Keystone report, partners suggest that strengthening local ownership would require (even) more autonomy in decision-making and flexibility in budgeting. But presumably (from observations of the evaluators) the programme has meanwhile evolved further in this direction. In the Keystone survey (thematic and operational) there was a call from partners for more local leadership with

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<sup>5</sup> The evaluators assume that ownership here first of all refers to the partnership project under implementation, and secondly to the CAC thematic programme with its shared ToC and envisaged outcomes.

higher core funding and more institutional development. The evaluation reports offer limited coverage on specific events in this respect.

It can be concluded that generally speaking the decentralized governance structure, space and flexibility offered to partners has served the programme and its partners well. Internally, Hivos staff faced challenges with the dual management lines as well as the multiple functional demands that many staff are facing, often even emanating from different programmes. Thanks to good relationship management by Hivos staff, these challenges did not affect partnership relations in any serious way. Among partners, there was a broad appreciation for service provision by Hivos in management and capacity development as well as for their content-related contributions e.g. in policy influencing and learning. Yet, many partners continue to regard Hivos as a donor. Southern partners may not truly own the programme, but they have a warm and robust commitment to making the programme a success. The section on the partnership has more reflections and conclusions related to the role of Hivos and how the partners perceive the organization's ambition in this respect.

## 4.2. STRATEGY, DESIGN AND PLANNING

- Many observations in the different evaluators relate to the **use of Theory of Change**. There seems to be a noticeable **difference** between the programmes<sup>6</sup>. In the GIE and SD4All programmes, the ToCs have continued to take a central place in programme design and implementation at different levels and were effectively revised and adjusted recurrently to steer and manage the programme strategically. An example from SD4All policy influencing in the Netherlands:

*Iterative reflections of the ToC led to insights and learnings in the dynamics of lobby and advocacy in the Netherlands. They were at the basis of a strategic focus on the collaborative lobbying in the AgriProFocus Policy Advocacy Group.*

- In the DW4W programme, on the other hand, the ToC was initially guiding for design (global and derived country-wise) but has not changed since<sup>7</sup>. No specific country ToCs were developed (see further). Finally, the report on Open Contracting makes less mention of ToC or its use in strategy development and planning. Still, reportedly ToCs were indeed used and adapted 'along the way' using programme-level and in-country experiences, as evidenced by the following quote from the report:

*PM unpacked the local OC theory of change to include value propositions and impact pathways for business that had been missing in the original programme TOC.*

- In all programmes, TOCs was a new concept for many staff and partners. It took time and effort to roll out fully and operationalize ToC at the country-programme level and with consortium & implementing partners. In SD4All the complex nature of the food system made application of ToC more difficult and led to a rather complicated ToC at the start. More focus and clarity was brought into the ToCs in subsequent reflections and adjustment meetings. In GIE Indonesia the ToC was used as a general programme framework but not for strategic guidance because it was thought to be too ambitious, politically sensitive and civic space was restricted.
- Eventually, as indicated above, in three out of 4 programmes, TOCs have guided adjustment of strategies and interventions to the changing circumstances, and verification of assumptions. This flexibility was much appreciated by both the country teams and the

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<sup>6</sup> According to the DMEL officers, this difference results from the different steer the GO DMELs gave to the use of ToC

<sup>7</sup> the evaluator hereby observed that this [= no change in ToC] confirmed the relevance of the programme

partners (see also 1.3). SD4All and GIE also indicated that ToC dynamics helped partners to capture their contribution to interventions and outcomes better, and thus strengthened the feeling of ownership.

- Although in DW4W, ToC was not used as a recurrent mechanism to adjust intervention strategies for its pathways of change, these strategies were also adapted to the country context regularly. Operational adaptations were based on lessons learned during programme implementation and discussed in reflection meetings at national, regional and international levels.
- The four ETE reports provide many examples of how the ToC-based mechanism of strategy development and planning (or related processes for DW4W) steered and adjusted programme implementation in Capacity Development as well as in Lobby & Advocacy. It is fair to say this **impacted** strongly and favourably in **terms of outcomes**. Many 'corrections' were made in response to learning or external developments that have led to sharper foci, more robust priorities or adjusted intervention approaches and thus contributed to improved effectiveness and relevance of the programme.
- SD4All, GIE and OC evaluation observed either **under-specification** of specific causal pathways in TOCs or **weak linkages between ToC and sub-strategies** like on citizen agency<sup>8</sup>.

This is partly explained as the original ToC was formulated in broad and generic terms allowing for its localization to local contexts. The OC approach to program design was to not over-specify things upfront, to enable local actors to decide what emphasis they want to put on aspects like the private sector, citizen agency or GEDI and then to adapt the ToC as needed. Before the mid-term review, the ToC was reviewed at a global level adding pathways (private sector, agency, inclusion) and assumptions.

In the GIE evaluation, it was observed that the program did not work with country-level annual plans, nor written L&A country strategies. This observation could indicate a weak connection towards operationalization, and activities were implemented in an ad-hoc manner and not necessarily strategically linked with other interventions (from other partners and allies).

It was also mentioned that in some countries there were many interventions on strategies that were not very explicit in the TOC, for example, on clean cookstoves or pilot villages. In SD4All evaluation it was observed that initially the programme's communication strategy was not well integrated into or aligned with the ToCs even though it was strongly stated by management<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, a lack of comprehensive strategies and weak integration in ToCs was observed regarding inclusiveness and the programme's climate change response (SD4All).

- Finally, although not directly related to ToC, two evaluations (SD4All and DW4W) had critical observations about the program approach having too much of a **project-based stop & go mechanism with finite time horizons**. The SD4All evaluation pointed at the fact that Citizen Agency needs time to emerge, mature and become effective especially in complex processes of policy influencing and that the programme may have underestimated time and effort required to realize its ambition in this respect. In the DW4W evaluation, it was stated that the project-based approach resulted in a scattered approach in programme implementation, whereby projects started at different moments and were not aligned to each other. These observations are in line with the findings of

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<sup>8</sup> This complements the findings of the ToC study

<sup>9</sup> In year 2 the ToC were adjusted with a stronger integration of communications and media in the L&A strategies

Keystone (thematic & operational) where it was stated that partners call for more extended programme periods.

It can be concluded that the ToC-based dynamics of programme strategy development and planning was an innovative and mostly successful approach. This approach helped in fine-tuning and sharpening the programme approach, contributing to the effective and relevant implementation of capacity development and lobby and advocacy. These dynamics also improved the feeling of ownership among the partners and served as an inspiration and driver for learning by Hivos, IIED and country partners alike. While all four programmes used extensive monitoring, reflection and learning, they used different management approaches in making ToCs truly comprehensive and country context-specific. Challenges were noted in translating the strategic change into operational planning using ToC as the foundation for developing sub-strategies (global and local) for important programme features such as inclusiveness, citizen agency, communications and media, and other programme-specific dimensions.

### 4.3. IMPLEMENTATION

- The four ETE evaluations perceived the programme management procedures and tools as lean and mean (DW4W, SD4All), with exception of the M&E-outcome harvesting methodology. As stated earlier, Hivos provided good relation management and adequate support to partners. There were also a few challenges in programme implementation. It must be noted, however, that there are considerable differences between programmes and even among partners within one programme, so few of the (more critical) observations can be generalized.
- A common thread in all evaluations was the conclusion that the **flexibility** at country levels to design and adapt contextualized pathways of change is possibly a strong feature of the programme's adaptive management system. A few quotes to illustrate this point :

*A lot of flexibility is experienced regarding project management (adaptation of activities, outcomes, changes in budget and even in time of reporting, (DW4W)*

*The freedom to plan every year was welcomed by Hivos staff as there are no set activities to achieve, so there is more space for flexibility and adapting to the opportunities brought about by the context (OC).*

*Financial issues were regularly discussed between partners, Hivos Hub and Hivos Global. This contributed to the identification of bottlenecks and best practices, experiences were discussed and exchanged and were solved, also due to the flexible nature of the program. (GIE)*

- Nevertheless, there are also **critical observations** related to flexibility especially with relation to the contracting periods as phrased in the GIE report (see also 2.1):

*The (one year) partner contracts make agile manoeuvring difficult as they cannot build the necessary flexibility into their operations.*

- Challenges were also encountered in **communication** between Hivos and partners, especially so in relation to communication on contracting (see further 5.1) and fund disbursement (see further in 5.3). Similar remarks on poor communication were raised by

partners in relation to slow response on approval requests of (revised) projects (see 5.1) as well as in slow feedback on (quarterly) reports (both in DW4W).

- The OC programme went through a more radical change in the way in which the programme approached its governance and implementation. After one year of experimentation and identification of entry points, the reflection and learning process resulted in a shift towards the ecosystem approach for partnerships and more local ownership. This reflected partners and country staff experiences and a desire to see the programme take a more embedded and context-relevant approach in the focus countries. It is exemplary for the flexibility that characterized the CAC programme as a whole.
- In the Keystone survey (performance), it is suggested that more regular light-touch engagement of Hivos with partners, might help to improve communications and allow all stakeholders to check *whether, and to what extent, the changes programme managers are making are responding to these [read: partners'] expectations*. On the appreciative side, the report also indicated appreciation among partners for the use of different communication media (e.g. Whatsapp) by Hivos and for frequent reflection moments with programme managers. The latter observation (on regular reflection) was confirmed in (all) the evaluations.
- For all four themes (GIE<sup>10</sup>, DW4W, SD4All, OC) **linkages between national programme implementation and international programme** interventions (in L&A) were part of the programmes' core strategy and ToCs. In practice, this ambition proved difficult to accomplish. In Dw4W, linkages between national and international DW4W L&A were rather limited and international L&A included only a limited number of partners. Involvement of partners in preparing international A&L interventions could be improved, currently being limited to 'quick' consultation processes on joint propositions but not embedded in a comprehensive L&A strategy.

In GIE and SD4All more progress in linking local to global levels. In both programmes, a common mechanism was the representation of Hivos staff and partners at international conferences and events at high-level meetings. In Sd4All, there was a specific appreciation for Hivos efforts in widening the international debate on food systems beyond food security, advocating for more inclusive and participatory food policy-making with particular attention being paid to women and youth. The GIE report states that regional L&A interventions gave more visibility to the program at both local and international levels as examples and experiences from these levels were used.

However, in general, it proved difficult for Hivos / IIED to find and consolidate a meaningful role and position for Southern partners in international and global policy dynamics and in the interface thereof with local and (sub)national programme dynamics, as evidenced by the following statement from a self-evaluation by Hivos global advocacy officer SD4All.

*Hivos also acknowledged that although it has helped SD4All partner CSOs in some cases to further advance their national advocacy efforts, the 'sandwich approach' of pushing nationally and using the SFS Programme as an international mechanism/lever to push for domestic change has remained somewhat of an artificial construct*

It can be concluded that with a flexible planning mechanism (ToC-based mostly) and generally lean and mean programme management procedures and tools, programme implementation went smoothly and contextualized. Adjustments in strategy and implementation modalities could be made if and when needed. In general, there was more

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<sup>10</sup> For GIE - one of new L&A strategies that were added later on in the updated GIE TOC included connecting national, regional and international L&A agendas.

room for flexible and agile steering in programme management than in operational (financial) management. Streamlining communication between Hivos and partners, remains a point of attention.

#### 4.4. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

- Generally speaking, the evaluations concluded that the monitoring cycle worked well for most countries and contributed to an improved implementation. Even though there is more to **M&E** than outcome harvesting alone, many observations and findings in the ETE reports in relation to M&E concern outcome harvesting. OH was indeed a central element in the M&E system.
- All evaluations confirm that the rigorous outcome harvesting approach introduced at the start of the programme proved quite challenging for most partners and staff.

*Programme management procedures and tools as these were perceived as lean and mean, with exception of the M&E-outcome harvesting methodology that required substantial time investment from the DMEL officers. (DW4W)*

- For most partners and programme staff, outcome harvesting was new, and many had limited experience of similar M&E approaches (OC). Consequently, it took some time and effort for Hivos staff and partners to get to learn and apply the tool (DW4W). In response to challenges in getting partners to articulate and submit quality outcome harvests, the programme shifted to convening write shops in which partners came together to write and discuss the outcomes they'd achieved. This was documented in 3 out of 4 ETE reports (GIE, OC, SD4All) but presumably, it happened in all four programmes.
- Eventually, however, partners (learned to) appreciate the tool for various reasons as stated in the ETE reports:
  - OH shifted the focus from outputs to outcomes and made programme actors look more sharply and analytically to what has been achieved and how this contributes to realizing envisaged changes,
  - Outputs of OH not only served as the basis for reporting. It was also as input for the annual reflection and planning exercises, and as a basis for Hivos and partners storytelling and the learning and adaptation process (OC)
  - OH was appreciated for collecting evidence of what has changed in a complex programme such as SD4All and OC.
- Appreciation was also evidenced by partners stating they started or planned to apply this methodology in other projects too (OC, DW4W).
- But maybe even more importantly, OH also had an impact on strategy development and planning Capacity Development and for Lobby and Advocacy. Hence it contributed to realizing the programmes' envisaged objectives in these areas (See also section 4.1 on ToC).
- The SD4All report mentioned a possible flaw in the application of OH, as it did not always capture the contribution of certain intervention types (such as communication or capacity development initiatives) to the realization of stated outcomes.
- The ETE reports present overall positive findings on learning in the different programmes. For instance, it was stated that the programme was able to convene effective spaces for

peer learning, where partners provided insight and advice to each other to inform their projects (OC). The GIE report stated that

*Continuous and mutual learning cycles within the program contributed to transforming it into a learning program with the necessary systems and procedures in place and above all the necessary attitudes to learning and self-reflection from Hivos staff and partners.*

Similar observations were presented for DW4W and SD4All in observing that obtained learnings were integrated into strategic planning and implementation.

- Learning took place at different levels and through different mechanisms. Important recurrent learning events were the annual ToC reflection events and the outcome harvesting workshop (or write shops) (SD4All, GIE), but learning also took place in other settings such as when staff and partners meet up for L&A during international conferences, hands-on learning by being engaged in policy influencing and advocacy activities, even by being engagement in design and implementation of research/evidence generation, to name a few. For more detailed listing and description of learning events and mechanisms, reference is made to the respective ETE reports. Opportunities for peer learning among Southern partners were created in most programmes. These were much appreciated but these were less numerous and less structurally conceived as partners may have wished (SD4All).
- **Learning at CAC level** wasn't mentioned in ETE reports except in one reference (in SD4All) to exchange and learning on the concept and approach of citizen agency between the 4 programmes. It was stated that the SD4All (and IIED) was in the lead of mutual learning on citizen agency within the CAC consortium. It was stated that CAC level learning happened for example, in the project team, in specific learning sessions and in the MTR. However, as this has not been covered in these assessments, it remains unclear what learning took place at CAC programme level, and whether it had any impact or implications for programme planning and implementation. This is still a **gap** in this assessment of the internal organization.
- The DW4W report drew the attention to the balance **between individual and organizational learning stating**

*The focus was placed on enhancing knowledge and competencies of individual staff members, and to a certain extent on institutional development. It was a deliberate choice of Hivos not to invest in organizational development processes (maybe understood as not allowed within the Strategic Partnership framework). ... Partners mainly regret the lack of support for organizational development processes.*

While this specific issue was not mentioned in other reports, the findings presented in DW4W may still be valid for the other programmes as well<sup>11</sup>?

Related to this question is the very critical assessments by HIVOS partners in general in the Keystone performance assessment. In reply to questions on how Hivos and associates did contribute to (1) strengthening the partners' management and leadership skills, and (2) the partners' technical skills including M&E, the assessment scored very negative Net Performance Score (NPS) ratings<sup>12</sup> (respectively -21 and -18 ) and also showed a significant downward trend as compared to previous assessments. We take this as a confirmation of the above-cited observation in DW4W that partners regret the limited support to organizational development.

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<sup>11</sup> The OC programme manager indicated that the OC programme did prioritise organisational over individual capacity development support

<sup>12</sup> For an explanation on the NPS rating see the (Keystone, 2019)

- Learning and **capacity development** are very closely and directly linked with each other. All ETE reports mention that capacity development needs were initially identified through capacity self-assessment exercises conducted by the partners inspired by the **5C model**.

All reports indicate that the 5C model was considered too complex, too conceptual, not user-friendly, difficult to contextualize and that (in the perception of partners) it was limited to assessing core capacities in various dimensions of policy influencing. Few partners have given follow-up on 5C assessment in later years, and the model was modified (GIE, OC) or abandoned altogether (SD4ALL, DW4W).

Having concluded that the 5C model was not adequate for data collection and self-assessment, the programme and country teams switched to contextual reflections on capacity needs and CD planning, often in the regular reflection meetings at national, regional and global levels, as indicated in the SD4All report:

*Annual Reflections of ToC & OH workshops were a platform to explore capacity development needs, i.e. from adjustments to pathways of change, Hivos and partners would jointly identify capacity gaps that may hamper the realization of the revised pathways to change. These mechanisms were also important as they established the – otherwise little pronounced – linkage between programme achievements (and goals) and capacity development needs and priorities.*

Reportedly, these 'alternative' mechanisms for CD needs assessment, and CD planning worked reasonably well at the local/country level. Being localized and contextualized, the resulting insights and CD plans were meaningful and relevant and thus contributed to more effective CD orientation and implementation. The downside might be that there are no comprehensive CD strategies at the programme level (observed in ETE DW4W and SD4All) and presumably limited alignment among strategies between countries. In ETE DW4W the question was posed whether this was a conscious choice to focus on functional CD (and not too much emphasis on transformative CD)? On the other hand, having no long-term CD strategies would go against the spirit of the D&D SP.

It can be concluded that the monitoring cycle went well with mostly lean and mean programme management except for outcome harvesting, which demanded substantial time and effort from staff and partners to learn and apply the tool. Nevertheless, once operational, staff and partners appreciated the instrument, its added value in learning, strategic reflection, reporting, and evidence generation. The programme had a good focus on learning at different levels and loops. Learning was integrated into strategic reflection and planning at programme, country and partner level. Partners may have preferred a more systematic organization of South-South exchange and learning and more focus on organizational capacity strengthening. The ETE reports have very little information on learning at CAC level. There was a lot of attention and significant realizations in capacity development, being one of the two key outcomes of the CAC. The intentional use of 5C model for capacity development was by and large abandoned and replaced by more contextualized mechanisms which were not necessarily less effective at local / country level but did not lead to the creation of comprehensive programme-wide CD-strategies. Finally, there is some discrepancy between the limited references to reporting in the ETE as compared to the critical outcomes of Keystone and PLL assessments. This anomaly may require further exploration.

# 5. OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The program management and coordination relationship between HIVOS and country partners are based on contractual commitments, which to most southern partners, is not much different from the common donor-recipient contracting.

What isn't clear is to what extent the contracts go beyond the financial, accountability and risk management of the partnership and how they differ for a partnership from sub-contractor contracts. A contract formalizes the partner relationship and crystallizes not just the current situation as well as longer-term ambitions and goals about the partnership and collaboration. As such, we can use the contracting issues as an indicator of partnership relations.

The lead up to the contracting stage offers critical opportunities to clarify ambitions. HIVOS, in its partner policy documents (2004), aspires to seek leveraging partner efforts and to go beyond funding in its partner relations in terms of solidarity, seeking diversity of ideas, trust and mutual understanding. As mentioned, for country partners the contractual relationship seems not to differ from other donor-recipient relations as they fail to address partners' demand for longer-term relationships, higher core funding budget lines and institutional development to be less dependent on foreign aid.

Two operational management elements frequently touched upon in all four programme evaluations are the **flexibility** (and level of self-control) and the **contract duration**. To start with the latter, applying custom-made conditions to partner contracts under the risk-based framework, did not allow flexibility in contract duration. All partners got one-year contracts<sup>13</sup> and although financial issues were regularly discussed between country partners, Hivos Hub staff and Hivos Global staff to address bottlenecks, some issues such as the one-year contract could not be solved (GIE).

## 5.1. CONTRACTING & RISK MANAGEMENT

- HIVOS offers one-year<sup>14</sup> partner contracts that enabled adaptation between project periods so to answer adequately to changes in the context. (DW4W) Partners are aware that their collaboration with Hivos on the program can, in principle, extend beyond one year, although there was no contractual commitment signed between the two parties to this effect. (SD4All). Some implementing partners recognize that one-year contracts do allow adaptation between project periods, in response to context changes (DW4W).

However, this limited timeframe is seen as time-consuming and an administrative burden for partners (GIE). In some instances, lack of clarity on contractual requirements and the length it takes to complete the process resulted in significant delays (i.e. up to 6 months) which had a negative effect on relationships as well as planned activities (OC). After all, the time spent on administrative issues could have been spent on the L&A work (GIE). The significant delays may have been partly a result of the introduction of a new Risk-Based Grants control and management framework in late 2017. This increased workload and led to delays in contracts and payments of/to partner organizations. (Hivos annual report 2017). The newly imposed assessments also entailed applying custom-made conditions to partner contracts, depending on the risk level of the collaboration. Another factor in delays, according to the

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<sup>13</sup> Only the DW@W evaluation refers to a possibility for two year contracts. Feedback from OC pointed at the intention to use longer term contracts after the first phase of working with partners in 2017. However, this was not followed equally in all hubs and for all partners.

<sup>14</sup> In the DW4W program there were some multi-year contracts, but these still required intensive annual checks.

PLL report, are gaps in communication from Hivos during the agreement process that contributed to uncertainty and delays in fund disbursement. (CAC)

Evaluators also raised questions on the suitability of one-year contracts for L&A programmes requiring sustained efforts and coherent planning of initiatives.

*“Influencing policy and behaviour change on sustainable diets and nutrition cannot be achieved through a programme with a short and finite timeframe. It is a task that requires sustained effort”. (SD4All)*

The one-year contracts are thus affecting the L&A capability of partners as they are financially dependent on donors, especially for interventions related to policy influencing where there are no inherent mechanisms to self-generate resources.

- The actual practice of the newly introduced risk management is hardly touched upon in the ETE reports. Few references are made to some ‘failed bids’ in the OC programme as the grants advertised in calls for research proposals were too small and too short-term to attract the kinds of organizations needed to achieve the programme’s aims. However, the ETE also mentioned several examples where risky or unsuccessful projects were stopped in a timely manner.

An important question is whether the delays were a temporary thing related to the “introduction” of the new grant procedures and related risk management framework, or whether they are a permanent feature of that framework. A particular case is the OC programme as the focus was less on partnership and more on implementation sub-contractors. The initial granting model and phasing of the budget did not adequately consider the optimization of resources. Although there were substantial opportunities for improvements with the 2018 shift to an ecosystems approach, these opportunities were not fully used because of weaknesses in the grant-making/regranting procedures and financial management system. Missing such opportunities was particularly inefficient as Hivos was repeating mistakes it should have learned from during the Making All Voices Count programme.

## **5.2. FLEXIBILITY**

- Besides the one-year contract issue, flexibility is the second issue raised by implementing partners. This flexibility is considered necessary to respond to changing circumstances in the country context, and essential in making use of opportunities as part of L&A programmes such as policy reform (GIE). More implicitly the flexibility also refers to the level of decision-making power and authority over the use of funds. This is illustrated in the KST report, linking the issue of flexibility with ownership. It was in response to Hivos question about how it could support partners facing shrinking civic space that partners’ suggestions were linked to themes of increasing local ownership by allowing them more autonomy in decision-making and being flexible with budgets. All four ETE reports mention partners’ appreciation of the budget flexibility at the country level. Even though this budget flexibility was subject to terms and conditionalities specified in the individual contractual agreements, partners and regional hubs were allowed to adjust plans and tactics quite easily (GIE, SD4ALL).

The overall feeling among country partners was that the one-year contracts limit their ability for agile manoeuvring, as they cannot build the necessary flexibility into their operations. The contract duration also seems to contradict the framing in terms of partnerships. Expectations

are generally higher for partnerships in terms of longer-term relations with a higher level of (strategic) alignment, trust and confidence. The GIE evaluation indicated, for example, that the short term contracting leads some partners to be hesitant to report on adverse outcomes (GIE).

Differences among the four CAC programmes in partnership approaches, seem not to be reflected in different contracting practices. From the evaluations, the SD4All and GIE appear to be slightly more pronounced in their critique on the one-year contract and its impact on programme outcomes.

### 5.3. REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Whereas OH and CD-assessments were a centralized feature in the whole SP reporting, this was not the case for the 'regular' narrative & financial reports required from partners. These reporting requirements were formulated in a decentral manner in each Hub/theme
- Reporting (programme narrative – for financial reporting see next chapter), there are few observations in the ETE reports. Overall, reporting formats are not perceived as complicated or cumbersome. The frequency is sometimes questioned, notably for regions with quarterly reporting standard which are considered too burdensome. The Keystone and PLL reports are much more critical about reporting. One of the critiques was that formats could not be adapted to the needs and context of different types of partner organizations, such as for reporting requirements of partners working in rural areas or with vulnerable communities where getting formal documentation is difficult.
- Also, procedures and measurement framework were not catered to their thematic area. For example, some partners working in specific theme reporting that was required around media advocacy focused more on numbers of events and expenditures rather than qualitative metrics around engagement.
- A recommendation presented in Keystone was to rethink reporting and include the element of how reporting can be useful for the different partners and can help to steer the program rather than only focusing on donor requirements.
- But, as stated above, there were few critical remarks indeed on programme reporting in the ETE reports which does not invalidate the Keystone recommendations.
- The programme's reporting routine is closely linked with accountability issues and concerns. No special operational procedures were considered, beyond ensuring Hivos management systems a) assessed and monitored risk associated with different partners and b) checked that certain unit costs, e.g. consultant fees, were followed. Although these management and reporting systems were designed in a way that minimizes traditional rigid spending and reporting (GIE) Hivos partners feel they have a bigger and positive influence on project implementation than setting priorities or allocation of funds.
- From the review documents, a distinction appears to be made between reporting and MEL. While reporting is associated with accountability, the MEL has a much stronger association with learning and sharing. Accountability, rather than to be seen as a donor requirement, needs recognition as an essential value and organizational quality in country partners, especially in an L&A programme like CAC.
- In 2018, because of previous malpractice by Hivos grantees and Hub staff<sup>15</sup>, HIVOS

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<sup>15</sup> This does not relate to the strategic partnership programme!

introduced a grants management process with tighter controls at the country, hub and global level. Hivos also decided to replace the financial and project management system in order to be better equipped for global entities with decentralized operations. This increased the burden on Hivos staff at different levels. Partners were not immediately affected. (SD4A, DW4W)

- IOB concluded in the overall D&D SP evaluation<sup>16</sup> that accountability has mainly been upward, from Southern CSOs to Northern CSOs to MFA. Southern CSOs complained about the lack of feedback.
- In contrast with the keystone report conclusions, evaluation reports indicate that partners were generally satisfied with the contractual and financing relationship with HIVOS. Some complained of delays in funds disbursement due to extended reporting and accountability modalities. These delays hamper partners to act timely on opportunities. (GIE, DW4W, CAC, OC, SD4A). Longer-term, such financial disbursements delays undermined trust and caused reputational and relationship damage to CED/PMs (OC) such as the (potential) inertia and inaction as a result of fear by the financial and contracting staff of doing the wrong thing (OC). In 2019, partners felt the burden when reporting requirements kept shifting, and the delays in contracting and disbursement of funds were even more significant (OC).
- In the PLL report's recommendations, it was stated that Hivos should rethink reporting and include the element of how reporting can be useful for the different partners and can help to steer the program rather than only be focused on donor requirements

In the ETE reviews, a distinction appears to be made between reporting and MEL. While reporting is associated with accountability, the MEL has a much stronger association with learning and sharing. During the webinar, participants agreed that accountability, rather than being presented/ seen as a donor requirement, need to be recognized as an essential value and organizational quality among partners, especially in a policy influencing programme like CAC. For some, the CAC practice of reporting as required from partners was considered an extra burden, yet, it did combine elements of learning and accountability.

The introduction of OH and its related CD put more emphasis on learning and reflection but added requirements in addition to the standard (narrative & financial) reporting requirements by the hubs. While the GO was initially unaware of this additionality, it was also unable to address let alone change it. Besides the issue of coordination, HIVOS GO and Hubs could benefit from using more tailored reporting protocols such as the OH methodology.

The HIVOS reporting requirement from partners was extensive compared to MFA's SP reporting requirements from HIVOS. Programme managers agreed that the SP requirements on narrative reporting were remarkably light. On the other hand, the accountability requirements from MFA, such as audit protocols, were (very) strict and financial risks were squarely in HIVOS' court.

## 5.4. STAFFING & COMMUNICATION

- Although efficiency concerns primarily related to reporting and fund management, we also need to address issues like personnel management and communication. Financial staff from the Hivos Hub offices were in regular and in direct contact with partner organizations when developing and reporting on budgets and to coordinate possible changes in budgets before seeking approval from the Global Office<sup>17</sup>. Besides ensuring

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<sup>16</sup> IoB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands, 2019

<sup>17</sup> GO approval was required for country budgets, not for partner budgets

the efficient use of available resources, this contributed to the identification of bottlenecks and best practices, experiences were discussed and exchanged and issues solved. Yearly reflection meetings, organized regionally or per country offered an excellent opportunity to address and sort any outstanding program management, coordination and or financial matter. Efficiency improved over time as partners developed functional communication lines. Fluid channels of communication such as WhatsApp groups and regular phone calls contributed towards flexibility. Nevertheless, the importance of face to face interaction is reflected in the GIE remark that financial and administrative procedures more complex when partners are not in the same country as the Hivos Hubs (e.g. Central America, Zimbabwe).

- Partners appreciated the budget flexibility at the country level, even though Hivos determined budgets ceilings. During implementation, Hivos informed implementing partners on the budget margins for their respective organization and adaptation of budgets were discussed bilaterally (DW4W, SD4All). Nevertheless, downward communication (from GO) on the status of funds spent towards the country level appeared to be a challenge, complicating financial management (DW4W). Out of the four evaluation reports, only GIE comments on the new project management and accounting system introduced in 2018<sup>18</sup>.

*“as the current financial and administrative system (Osiris) is limited as it does not provide the necessary information timely (e.g. on time management) to make informed management decisions” (GIE)*

- The four programme evaluations agree that the flexibility of the program was highly appreciated among partners. Counterpoints include the high workload (of country-based programme coordinators and staff) combined with high expectations and limited staff time, that were recurring issues. A high turnover of staff further aggravates the limited staff time allocated in budgets. Delays in financial controlling occurred due to limited time availability of the financial officers at the regional hubs and global office. (GIE, OC, DW4W, CAC). This applied in similar ways to other HIVOS staff support such as Communications and M&E as officers work time is assigned to multiple projects.

## 5.5. EFFICIENCY

- Communication and coordination played a role in the efficiency of resource use. At the program level, efficient use of available resources was ensured and monitored through regular communication between financial officers, program leads/advocacy managers from the Hivos Hubs and the financial officers at Hivos Global. Furthermore, there was regular contact between the different program leads and the program manager at the Global Office. (GIE) Developing efficient working methods does take time, however, so it should not come as a surprise that the thematic evaluations do point at inefficiencies due to a lack of coordinated action, specifically during the first years of the programme (DW4W)

For example, as the grant budget phasing had not been thought through, several communication roles that wouldn't become relevant until later in the programme were appointed too early, and therefore resources were used sub-optimally.

Another example relates to frequent staff changes and changing reporting requirements causing different people in Hivos to keep asking for documentation that had already been sent by partners.

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<sup>18</sup> Decentralization can also decrease efficiency as illustrated by the observation in the DW4W review on misalignment of the financial reporting system used at the Southern Africa regional office with the system applied at Head Office. This complicated communication between the respective financial officers and the feedback to be provided to the implementing partners.(DW4W)

- Over time, with improved communication lines and increased role clarity, efficiency gains have been introduced in the course of programme implementation. These gains related for example to the use of local researchers focus on regional partner exchanges (Africa), critical assessment attendance to international conferences
- An excellent example of efficiency concerns was the adaptation of the Outcome Harvesting (OH) exercise in East Africa as explicitly mentioned by GIE. Initially undertaken twice yearly in all GIE countries and at the global level, OH proved not always an easy process. Partners would submit, and the DMEL officer would respond, resulting in quite some back and forth going to formulate outcomes. Using guidance from the global office, the East Africa hub decided to alter the process by organizing a writing workshop instead, where they harvest the outcomes together. All four programmes and regional hubs widely adopted this practice.

### Comparative efficiency analysis

- Efficiency rating methodology uses the intuitive perceptions of programme stakeholders of the effect of different interventions as well as of their resource-intensity. It is thus not rocket science but very much founded on a subjective valuation by individual/teams. The methodology was applied in GIE for Tanzania, in DW4W in Kenya and Zimbabwe, and in SD4All for all four countries and for the international and Netherlands lobby activities. The OC evaluators did not present an efficiency rating in their draft report.

The interpretation and relevance of the results of the efficiency analysis exercises can only be positioned and interpreted within the context of the specific country programme (or international policy work) for a few reasons:

- Selection of interventions, the assessment and the weight of each criterion was set by the group of participants and thus differed for each setting.
- Relevance and effectiveness of a specific intervention will differ depending on the particular focus of the programme, say interventions that are efficient for working at UN platforms may not be very relevant nor efficient for capacity development of citizen groups in lobby and advocacy.

Keeping these reservations in mind, a few general observations can be drawn nevertheless:

- Assessment of effectiveness and efficiency of a single intervention is relevant, but often a combination of different methods and interventions creates added value. In carefully designed lobby strategies, the interventions are often interrelated (SD4All, GIE, DW4W) For instance, combining top-down and bottom-up approaches in contributing to improved working conditions for women (DW4W)
- Some interventions can only be realized after other interventions have paved the way for their implementations. As an example: in order to recruit influential people as food champion, one first need to reach out to potential influencers with evidence-based argumentation.
- Some interventions may generate effect over a longer sustained period, and others may yield result sooner but possibly at a higher cost. This balancing is not easy to capture in the analysis. In many instances, it was still early days to assess whether a particular strategy worked well (GIE)

One common finding in the comparative analyses was that in general, most efficient are interventions that trigger a multiplier effect (GIE). Furthermore:

- The champion strategy used by different countries could be very efficient if others copy the approach (GIE, SD4All).

- In DW4W, “informal and formal engagement with public or private actors” “working in partnerships” and “the provision of training to workers” are considered efficient. Involvement in “social dialogue” was considered less costly than “public or media campaigns”, but it requires a lot of energy and staff time investment. “Training” was considered less efficient as outreach was somewhat limited. The less efficient appeared to be the “participation in conferences” and “litigation”. Both interventions are very costly and contributed little to realizing the desired outcome (DW4W)
- In SD4All, some interventions that were thought to be very effective but also resource-intensive, rendering them less efficient. This was the case for multi-stakeholder platforms and capacity development. An utterly different picture was found for food champions. Food champions were considered to be very effective and, because of their relatively low use of programme resources, also proved out to be efficient.

In conclusion, we can say that operational management has functioned well in the CAC programme. One-year contracts are perceived by country partners as inconsistent with the partnership ambitions stated by the programme and consortium partners. And although this one-year contracting is felt like an administrative burden and delaying factor, partners consider it a price worth paying, and some even frame it positively allowing flexible adjustment to changing circumstances. Without explicitly saying so, the ETE reports suggest that the one year contract is perceived as a donor requirement, i.e. a condition from MFA. This is only true in an indirect way. The HIVOS partner policy (HIVOS, 2004), aiming for extended term contracts to trusted partners, seems to be overruled by risk reduction considerations at the regional hubs.

Good personal working relations, relative flexibility in programme development, budgeting and reporting are compensating factors for the short contracts. Flexibility, to adjust and respond to a highly dynamic environment is the most appreciated characteristic of the partnerships by country partners. The limited contract period does affect partners’ programme agility as they feel limited in their operational flexibility in issues like staffing. What remains unclear is to what extent HIVOS new project management and accounting systems have been able to address the perceived shortcomings such as timely information to support decentralized decision making and accountability. The partnership relations take time to settle and to develop open communication and smooth working procedures. To what extent the CAC programme inception phase was effective in facilitating the partnership development remains unclear. Staffing, capacity development and staff changes and the related ‘transaction costs’ are also seen as essential issues in operational efficiency.

# 6. PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT

## 6.1. PARTNER SELECTION AND MODEL

- Preliminary note: the partnership dynamics in OC are thought to differ from those in the other programmes. In the OC call for project proposals, it is stated that this is an offer for a partnership, not a funding opportunity, and from late 2017 the programme went through a learning process, developed joint L&A and various peer learning initiatives. Yet, in our interpretation, partnership dynamics in OC have different characteristics and modalities than in the three other programmes. We could not fully assess this assumption as the OC ETE report has no section that covers explicitly the OC partnership model. Possibly we need some additional background information to determine the relevance for OC of observations and findings presented in this chapter.
- A common thread in all countries (and programmes) is that **relevant implementing partners** have been identified and selected. All ETE reports indicate that a significant contributing factor to the effectiveness and relevance of the program is the mix of well-established partners with specific, complementary expertise. Moreover, there were shifts in partnership composition in the course of the programme to allow capturing new areas or levels of influence in advocacy. For instance: in SD4All outcomes in policy influencing were enhanced by adding a partner with strong expertise in gender and another one who could successfully bridge local level L&A to a national level policy forum.
- The partner-ecosystem in-country and internationally generally shows a wide **diversity**<sup>19</sup>. This diversity reflects the strategic choices made to respond to opportunities for policy influencing and address possible challenges in civic space. For instance: in GIE, there are partners from the energy sector, media, youth and women's groups, consumer rights organizations, the health sector, and a diversity of partners working at the local, national, regional and international levels. In SD4All partners span different dimensions of the food system from production to consumption from local to the global level. In DW4W and OC the partnerships appear relatively less diversified (but certainly not homogenous).
- In most countries, a balance was sought between well-established experienced partners and younger, more grass-root organizations. The exact nature of this balance will also, to some extent determine the balance between investments and outcomes in capacity development versus lobby & advocacy. With more experienced partners (betting on the strong) implicitly, the focus will be more on realizing policy outcomes than on capacity strengthening. With younger, less established partners, the emphasis is likely to be more on capacity development (be it still to strengthen the policy influencing and related capacities of these partners). We (evaluators) consider any combination to have its specific merits depending on the policy context and strategic choices teams have made.

A relevant point of attention in partner selection is the CSO's constituency. In SD4All, the evaluation concluded that the programme, in view of its objective to reach out to poorer urban consumers, should have sought to identify and connect with groups / CBOs of poor people or with CSO's that have natural ties to the low-income population. Similarly, the OC evaluators noted the unwillingness of the first batch of grantees to engage with marginalized people. This was considered by some as a sign of being an elite NGO, being disconnected from realities on the ground, and some even being too close to those in power.

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<sup>19</sup> It is worth distinguishing partnerships from the wider (and often even more diverse) network of actors and collaborators.

- Probably the programme would have benefitted from a good (longer) inception process, among others to make clear strategic choices that affect its partnership policy and model and thus have more time for fine-tuning partner selection (SD4All).
- The **partnership model** of Hivos and its implementation modalities may have evolved in programme practice over the years since it was last formalized in December 2004 (HIVOS, 2004). The basic principles still stand and are acknowledged in the partnership practice of CAC programmes; that is:

*Hivos considers itself and its partners to be independent and autonomous organizations with their own responsibilities and accountabilities in the local or national context in which they operate. Hivos' partner policy is based on transparency and clarity regarding rights and obligations in order to minimize the negative effects of inequality inherent to donor-recipient relationships.*

*(Hivos partnership Policy – December 2004)*

- Observations and findings in the ETE reports appear to confirm that CAC's partnership model meets these principles, including the implicit potential friction that comes with a partnership in a donor-recipient setting (see also other sections of this report on the role of Hivos). In the SD4All it was pointed out that this friction may be particularly challenging in CAC because partners are financially more dependent on donors for policy influencing interventions as compared to programmes that yield more concrete and tangible short-term outputs and outcomes. Such financial dependency is particularly intense where there are no inherent mechanisms to self-generate resources and often limited opportunities to access external funding.
- A revisit of the partnership policy today would probably put more emphasis on ownership and **co-creation**. In the ETE reports mention is made of co-creation in relation in the design phase (e.g. in developing and adapting ToCs at different levels) and also implicitly assumed (but not explicitly mentioned in any of the reports) in policy influencing processes and outcomes. There is ample evidence in the ETE reports that often L&A initiatives have been developed and implemented in close collaboration between Hivos & other consortium members on the one hand, and partners on the other.
- But there were also some more critical observations such
  - in ETE SD4All where it was stated that initially some partners might have had challenges in getting acquainted with concepts (e.g. food system) and methods (ToC & OH) introduced by the consortium. Among partners, this led to some misunderstandings and consequently limited their say in both the conceptualization and operationalization of the programme design.
  - Also: that more could have been done (maybe in the inception phase) to realize co-creation by learning from partners (and citizens), about their methods and approaches that have sustained the ability of poor people to access healthy affordable food.
- particular dimension of partnerships is with **private sector actors**. This was a very relevant dimension of the programme in GIE as well as in DW4W, and albeit more limited in OC<sup>20</sup>. In SD4All it was decided early in the programme not to pursue the original ToC focus on private sector engagement (except for SMEs in the informal sector) in order to bring more focus in the programme strategy.

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<sup>20</sup> While it proved to be difficult to engage with private sector actors in many cases, the OC programme also had very positive experiences and learnings, e.g. the collaboration with local private sector actors in the integrity circles in the Philippines

Partnership with the private sector was not an easy feat. For instance: even where GIE partners managed to establish relations with private sector stakeholders, it was not always clear how these partnerships could be designed or managed in a strategic manner. Also, often it proved to be difficult to engage private sector stakeholders more actively.

There appears to be a **dilemma in the partnership model / philosophy of CAC** and for Hivos for that matter. Intentionally, autonomy, independence and complementarity are key values in the partnership. Yet, operationally (and for reasons of risk management) these intentions are not translated into more open-ended long-term partnership agreements/contracts. This practice of one-year contracts continues even though this is 'permitted' if not encouraged by MFA.

This dilemma is not limited to HIVOS as it is also reflected in the IOB study on strategic partnerships, that states:

*"The long-term commitment and flexibility that MFA provides to Northern CSOs is not always transferred to Southern CSOs, many of which are still bound to annual contracts, activity-based budgets and strict reporting requirements" (IoB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands, 2019)*

None of the ETE reports mentions the options MFA is offering in this respect but rather creates the impression that 1 (or possibly 2) year contracts are the rule under the SP agreement.

During the webinar, programme managers and DMELs confirmed the dilemma between the transformative vision and ToC and the pragmatic handling of partnership relations. Recognizing that in a five-year programme partnership relations can and need to evolve and grow, this was realised more by adjusting and adapting the network/ ecosystem of partners rather than in operational terms such as contract duration. The limited time frame for transformative change, the high level of operational challenges to be solved and the high level of external dynamics requiring flexibility and adaptative programme management also played a role and justified for some the continued use of one-year contracts. In some programmes like OC, longer-term contracts (up to 3 to 4 years) were made possible, yet regulations at regional Hubs prevented them from materialising.

## **6.2. PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE**

Work in partnerships is mainstream in international development, believing that doing so increases the positive impact: fostering a sense of local ownership, improving project sustainability. It is also assumed that sharing with and learn from each other, partners complement each other, filling the gaps in knowledge, capacity or skills.

In the following section, we look at the actual functioning and performance of the different types of partnerships within CAC. In doing so, we further unpack assumptions about partnerships. To what extent did complementarity work in producing synergies, were expectations and roles clearly defined and effective in realising outcomes in L&A, Citizen Agency and CS capacity? We start at the consortium level, followed by the partnerships with country partners and last but not least briefly touch on the strategic partnership with the MFA and embassies.

### **The partnership among Consortium Partners**

- The overall impression on the partnerships emerging from the four evaluation reports is quite positive. Country partner organisations are very appreciative about the support provided by Hivos concerning project management and capacity development and the

quality of the partnership. (DW4W). IIED support in shaping the programmatic approach and strengthening partners' performance, notably in policy influencing (SD4All) and action research (SD4ASII, GIE) is well appreciated as well. The role appreciation of Article 19 is less explicit in the OC programme evaluation. Yet, they are mentioned several times together with HIVOS in positive references to the partnership.

- The functioning and performance of HIVOS, IIED and Article 19 as a consortium gets limited attention in the evaluations. Their functioning is presented either as a collective, for example in the reflection meetings, or in terms of specific roles, such as the IIED role in coordinating research and providing technical support to the country teams (GIE) or Article19 leading on high-level international advocacy and linking the open contracting agenda strategically with the Freedom of Information agenda (OC). Their complementarity is seen in terms of areas of expertise and networks and is reflected in strategic choices on role division and country programmes. Their synergies during programme implementation is mentioned occasionally only. An excellent example is the Energy Change Lab training as it merged the Hivos methodology on how to conduct creative workshops with the IIED research expertise. Similarly, in SD4All, the long-standing expertise of IIED in the informal food sector amplified the efforts of Hivos and partners to develop L&A implementation strategies around the important role that informality plays in the food systems of the poor.
- The HIVOS role in the consortium was mainly geared to programme coordination, with the exception of capacity development and partner support and the international L&A parts. Interestingly, the GIE evaluators observed that the partner network seemed more robust, more cohesive and proactive in those countries where Hivos is not in an implementing role (for instance in Malawi, Tanzania and Nepal).  
While HIVOS is the leading consortium partner, some interesting role diversions are mentioned in the GIE and SD4All programme reviews. In the development of partner capacities in issues of Citizen Agency and L&A, IIED takes a more prominent role in developing an L&A toolbox (SD4ALL), developing capacities to strengthen the relation with beneficiaries (to enhance legitimacy - citizen agency) and in promoting citizen science in participatory action research (GIE and SD4All).  
Also worth noting is the observation that HIVOS contribution to developing GEDI capacities amongst partners was inconsistent (DW4W, SD4A). These areas, regularly associated with HIVOS' areas of expertise, did offer opportunities for HIVOS to develop a stronger 'thought leadership' role. The use of ToC and its regular updating in annual reflection meetings are mentioned by partners as a highly appreciated capacity developed by HIVOS that allows partners to strategically steer their L&A interventions (GIE).
- Regarding capacity development, HIVOS role became more relevant with the adoption of the nexus/ ecosystem approach as partner experiences with policy influencing, L&A were more varied<sup>21</sup>. This increased HIVOS 'role in contributing to the envisaged outcomes of partner capacities in L&A<sup>22</sup>. At the same time, partners expressed a preference for peer to peer learning as they perceived this as the most effective. (SD4A, GIE OC, DW4W) HIVOS and IIED struggled to find and consolidate a meaningful role and position for Southern partners in international and global policy dynamics and in the interface thereof with local and (sub)national programme dynamics (SD4A). In the GIE and SD4All programme HIVOS took a leadership role by making the consortium partners implement the international L&A components in a Multi-stakeholder approach. The interest of Hivos being to leverage influence on the international institutions through the collective voice and effort of the MSA. This did not exclude linkages with national country partners.

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<sup>21</sup> This applied not just to CD but also to HIVOS' role as programme coordinator: "Following the shift to the ecosystems approach in 2018, Hivos played a greater role in supporting more effective coordination and coherence of partner projects." (OC)

<sup>22</sup> A clear example is provided in the OC review: Partners in Asia and Africa who had no previous experience of OC benefited most from gaining an appreciation of open contracting that they were able to apply and are keen to take forward in their work.

- o The GIE program, for example, ensured links between local and global levels via its internal mechanism, particularly the regular GIE program meetings;
  - joint GIE research agendas at different levels (coordinated by IIED) and consultancies by GIE partners to inform other organizations on GIE issues
  - Linking national to international was not always successful, for instance in Eastern Africa -Kenya and Tanzania- where it did not work very well since the partners were not interested to work at the regional level.
- o Another example comes from the OC programme engaging at a series of international conferences varying from the Information Commissioners to the Combres de las Americas, or the East African Public Procurement Forum. In any of these Hivos and A19 played a lead role in linking and brokering but at the same time giving country partners the opportunity to engage and raise their voice to influence global agenda-setting and policy.
- In countries like Uganda, Hivos played a crucial and necessary role in connecting local level policy advocacy to national (and international) platforms and fora, either by connecting levels themselves or by establishing new partnerships (like FRA) to bridge the institutional gaps. (SD4All)

### **The Partnerships with Country Partners**

- Evidently, partners at the country level know each other. They may have worked together previously or even competed with each other. Indeed, not all implementing partners involved in the various CAC campaigns considered themselves as natural allies. Distribution of roles based on each partner's strengths facilitated the implementation of the program, and sustainability (GIE, DW4W).  
Time was needed to get to know each other, develop trust and to find appropriate ways of collaboration. (SD4A, DW4W, OC, GIE). The effectiveness of the inception period in developing a team approach is questioned by some of the reviews. The SD4All programme, for example, would have benefitted from a good (longer) inception process to make clear choices and develop related research, strategizing, partner selection, initial capacity building, and setting up the framework for DMEL. In short, a longer inception period would allow a more robust and more coherent partnership approach.
- Partners, cited in the ETE reports refer to enhanced cooperation and networking among country partners and the reviews illustrate this by providing examples of complementarities and the use of each other's network (DW4W, GIE, SD4All). The crucial role of HIVOS as programme coordinator is illustrated in programme modifications to avoid silo's (GIE in Indonesia & Nepal), to create spaces for peer learning and where necessary selecting new partners.  
In the functioning partnerships, partners appreciate each other, respect each other's capacities and complement each other. Partners capitalize on each other's strengths. Besides working together, they also have fun together.
- In DW4W, the added value of different types of partners was eventually acknowledged by campaign partners, e.g. private sector enabling access to and mobilisation of farms; trade unions having access to workers and experience in workers education and mobilisation, and CSOs having specific thematic knowledge and expertise (DW4W). Evidently, there were tensions in these relationships (CSO-private sector-trade unions). Time was needed to get to know each other and to find appropriate ways of collaboration (DW4W)
- We see the adoption of a nexus or partner ecosystem approach, as a follow-up and response to the critical Keystone report findings. In the KST report, partners seem to feel

they are very complementary, especially appreciating the specific knowledge and networks they bring in. Yet, at the same time, they indicate that they all bring similar resources to the table. The nexus and ecosystem approach address this issue, and create new opportunities for developing well-structured approaches to L&A, make effective use of networks and create space for younger/ less experienced organisations to benefit from peer learning.

*The partner-ecosystem differs greatly across the GIE program; there is a wide diversity of partners from the energy sector, media, youth and women's groups, consumer rights organizations, the health sector, and a diversity of partners working at the local, national, regional and/or international levels. This reflects the strategic choices, based on the civic space, opportunities and limitations in each country.*

The evaluators of the GIE programme go as far as stating that the establishment of energy-nexus networks was one of the main contributing factors to achieving the outcomes.

- Diversity of the partner ecosystem is not a guarantee for coherence and synergies, as shown by the DW4W programme. The review team estimated that the level of valorizing partner complementarity and the level of cross-linkages between the different pathways of change, although varying among the countries, is overall rather limited. They blame this on the scattered project-based approach, the lack of alignment between partners and of concerted action (except for Zimbabwe to a certain extent). Another example is the apparent contradiction in the DW4W programme. The programme partners experienced enhanced collaboration at the national level and considered this a strong feature of the partnership. Despite this improved collaboration, the lack of alignment and coordination between programme partners also led to duplication of activities and fatigue on the part of the flower farms (DW4W). Similarly, the SD4All review concludes that in Bolivia, partner complementarity was the strength of the "Partner Ecosystem". Yet, the partner network did not generate synergies nor added value beyond this complementarity.

It can be concluded that the mix of well-established partners with specific, complementary expertise is an essential contributing factor to the effectiveness and relevance of the programme's outcomes. The collaboration of Hivos and consortium members with Southern partners have created added value for all parties through increased capacities, access to networks and complementary contributions in the implementation of L&A interventions. There is a wide-spread appreciation among Southern partners for Hivos efforts to ensure co-creation in the design and planning of the programme. Partners equally appreciate Hivos for strengthening their capacities, offering legitimacy to policy influencing, facilitating access to resource persons, institutions or networks, supporting evidence generation, facilitating multi-actor initiatives, and so on. While partners are supportive of Hivos ambition to assume the role of co-creator of L&A programmes, they are more hesitant in accepting Hivos as a co-implementer. The reason not only being the implicit friction that comes with the donor-recipient setting but also because of the finite timeframe and Stop & Go nature of a programme approach.

A programme approach can offer valuable incentives to strengthen L&A initiatives of Southern partners. Yet, sustaining policy influencing processes requires a longer-term engagement that a programme may not be able to offer unless Hivos commits itself in partnership relations for longer periods.

The latter observations do not apply to international lobby and advocacy. As a matter of fact, in the international lobby and advocacy Hivos (and IIED & A19) can and does play a valuable

and appreciated role as (co-)implementer of policy influencing initiatives, in support of and collaboration with Southern partners. Here, the consortium partners not only bring in content-matter expertise and L&A experiences, they also create added value by establishing linkages between civil society actors in international policy settings.

During the Webinar, participants broadly agreed that HIVOS role is rather complex, and can vary depending on the context. On the one hand, HIVOS is able to strengthen grassroots CSOs and bring them to higher-level platforms (also as an organisation). On the other hand, HIVOS should avoid roles in which it risks imitating what SCSO's do. The short term impact may sometimes be an overriding argument (*"Hivos has an internal drive to take on implementation"*). Yet, in the majority of cases, longer-term sustainability concerns should make HIVOS modest, allow local partners to set the agenda and refrain from occupying spaces that belong to SCSO's. Having said this, participants also agreed that HIVOS role as a donor is very valuable for SCSO's and there is "nothing wrong in being a (strategic) donor". Awareness and appropriate use of power dynamics make it necessary to 'problematise' and dialogue on HIVOS role as implementer as exemplified in the successful international L&A examples (DW&W, SD4All and GIE).

### The partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>23</sup>

- The **strategic partnership** between civil society and the **Dutch Government** is at the core of the 2015 "Dialogue and Dissent" Policy Framework of the Government (Min. Foreign Affairs, 2015). *Strategic partners were expected to achieve a jointly defined strategic goal requiring cooperation, alignment and commitment from both sides.* Conceptually, the role of MFA was perceived as very important to promote the increase the willingness and capacity of governmental institutions in Southern countries to engage with and listen to civil society stakeholders (HIVOS, IIED, A19, 2016). We distinguish on the one hand the partnership of CAC and the Netherlands Government (The Hague), mainly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and on the other hand the in-country partnerships with the embassies (EKN).
- In the **southern countries**, as a rule, Hivos (and occasionally country partners) participated in the annual information sharing on the Strategic Partnerships, by embassies. In all programmes, there was an intermittent collaboration with the embassy such as e.g. in programme-related initiatives and events, or with contributions of the embassy to programme seminars and alike. For instance: in Kenya, W@W partners offered training on sexual harassment for embassy staff and advised them how to revise their internal sexual harassment policy, or in Uganda where Hivos served as co-chair of the embassy's high-level policy forum on food and nutrition security.
- With a few exceptions, there was very little interaction on L&A and only limited policy-related dialogue between programmes and Dutch embassies. The complementary roles envisaged in the D&D policy did not materialise, not from the side of the embassy nor Hivos<sup>24</sup> (Dw4W).
  - The DW4W media campaigns in the Netherlands on labour conditions in flower farms are one of the few examples that opened up a dialogue with the embassy in Nairobi. This dialogue was raised as Dutch commercial farms pushed the embassy to defend their interest, fearing reputational damage because of the DW4W campaigns.
  - For GIE, the evaluation could not find to what extent GIE country partners acted as sparring partners for the Dutch embassies. GIE ETE reported no engagement at all in Indonesia. At the same time, in other countries, the Netherlands embassy was too

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<sup>23</sup> Note: this section is based on the ETE reports of GIE, DW4W and SD4All. The OC report does not have specific coverage on this issue.

<sup>24</sup> Implementing partners in DW4W tended to perceive the Dutch embassy as a defender of the growers. The ETE GIE states that Dutch embassies are often not obvious partners to work with.

small to have energy representatives, making it difficult for partners of staff to connect or collaborate.

- Collaboration between the embassies and the programme was also affected by staff changes at the embassy, with officers showing varying degrees of interest in the programme. This was the case for all four programmes.
- The set-up of the Strategic Partnership was also a factor at play, especially the limited ownership and capacity of the programme at the Embassy level. Existing commitments and continuity in embassy programmes were often more important than addressing the Dialogue & Dissent Strategic Partnership. This observation is in line with a finding of the IOB evaluation of the Strategic Partnerships that *MFA has insufficient staff, in some thematic departments and in many embassies, to fully play out its partnership role in the SP.* (IoB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands, 2019)

A very different picture emerges of **collaboration between Hivos and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands**, at least for DW4W and GIE.

- Here, Hivos is perceived by MFA as a reliable partner with relevant hands-on expertise. A good working relationship was established which resulted in concerted action as evidenced, among others, in IMVO sector covenant for the flower sector, and in the joint establishment by MFA and GIE of the Brooklyn Coalition, as part of their strategic cooperation at international platforms.

In both programmes, the MFA participates both as a regular sparring partner for Hivos to ensure strategic alignment, as well as an implementing partner in terms of advocacy with the targeted international institutions.

- For 3 out of 4 programmes (OC, DW4W, GIE), the ETE observed that annual policy dialogues (*beleidsdiscussies*) with MFA were held in an open-minded and constructive setting of exchanging views and insights.

As far as SD4All is concerned, annual policy dialogues were equally constructive although one can hardly consider the relationship to have grown over the years into one of a strategic partnership. Before anything else, a *jointly defined strategic goal (a prerequisite from the D&D Policy Framework)* was never developed, let alone spelt out by either 'partner' in their strategies or policies.

This gap in alignment goes back to the programme design stage when the SD4All programme focus on food system was not (yet) at the core of the -- then -- food security policy of DGIS or Ministry of Agriculture. Over time, however, policy views of Government and CAC have come closer to each other. SD4All claims that this shift in Government position can (partly) be contributed to its L&A work<sup>25</sup>.

- The GIE programme developed a strategic collaboration with the Dutch Foreign Aid and Trade Ministry. This collaboration has been strong, with an extensive exchange of information to enhance each other's role in the energy field. MFA interest to participate in the Brooklyn Coalition was to see decentralized Rural Energy solutions anchored in the Sustainable Development (SDG7) process. Hivos and ENERGIA were leading the process.
- On the other hand, there have been some affirmative collaborative initiatives and developments at the global level, mainly in relation to SFS programme (such as MFA or LNV support/contributions to SFS Global Conferences).

It can be concluded that looking back at the programme dynamics over the years, the ambition of establishing a strategic partnership between the MFA and CAC only partially

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<sup>25</sup> the MFA representative somehow plays down this claim – see specific case study for details

materialised. Concrete and significant results from the strategic partnership were achieved in national and global policy development with the MFA (and sometimes other Dutch Government parties), but only for GIE and DW4W. For these 2 programmes, the interaction with MFA also influenced the programme outcomes as MFA and CAC were directly involved in L&A in the Netherlands and at the global level.

In none of the programmes, there has been a real strategic collaboration, let alone partnership, with the embassies. Often embassies had other policy and programme priorities and did or could not allocate time and resources to collaborate on policy matters covered by the specific programmes. Consequently, there are no significant impacts or implications that the assumed partnership at the country level may have had on either design, implementation modalities or outcomes of the respective programmes (in Southern programme countries).

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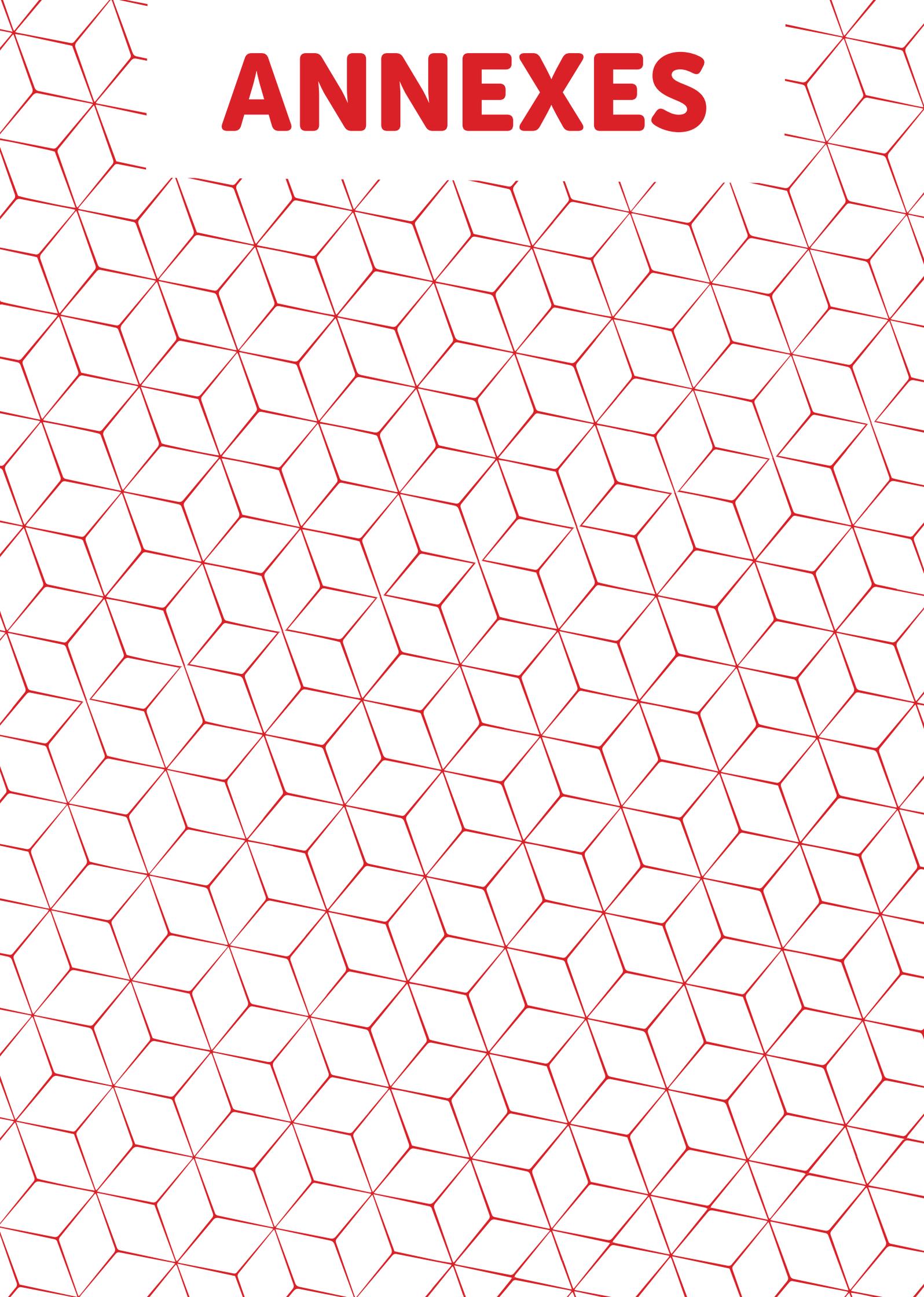
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# ANNEXES



# ANNEX 1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

## Background and Introduction

The end evaluation of SP CAC consists of four components: the substantiation of outcome statements, the four thematic evaluations, an evaluation of the internal organization of the SP CAC, and the overarching CAC-synthesis and learning event<sup>26</sup>. This Terms of Reference refers to the third component of the end evaluation: the evaluation of internal organization of the SP CAC. Internal organization refers, among others, to the way the consortium functioned, its quality assurance requirements, administrative and financial procedures<sup>27</sup>. Partnership relations of the SP CAC form a resultant of SP CAC's internal organization and are therefore a direct focus of attention in this evaluation.

In line with the program's focus on capacity development, the end evaluation is designed to maximize learning, among partners as well as among CAC members<sup>28</sup>. This evaluation of the internal organization follows that same principle.

The internal CAC organization including partnership relations will be studied within the wider context in which the consortium operates. Importantly, during the earlier Co-Financing Agreements MFS (I and II) with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Aid, 'partnerorganisations' were thought of those organisations that received funding, and generally were located in the South. With regard to Hivos, from that MFS framework and also in response to changes in its context, it has moved towards a partnership system where funding has to play a relatively lesser role. More and more, next to a decreased funding role, Hivos is assuming roles as convenor, facilitator and co-implementor. These changing roles have influence on, among others, operative and administrative procedures, and on the way partnership relations are designed and can function.

With regard to, for example, the operative, administrative and financial procedures, various changes have been introduced over the course of the CAC's functioning. With regard to partnership relations, a first exploratory study of partnership relations took place in 2017 (PLL report 2017) and focused especially on the design and start of the consortium. The findings were subsequently used especially by thematic teams to strengthen their way of relating and working at the different levels.

### Objective of the Internal Organization evaluation

A central component of the internal organization evaluation is formed by "Partnership relations". Under the SP CAC, this refers to the following types of partnerships:

4. As in "Strategic Partnership", i.e. the Ministry's terminology, which should be limited to the relationship between the Ministry and the CAC, and especially Hivos
5. As in the Consortium i.e. about the relationships between Hivos, IIED and A19 (steering committee, project team)
6. As between the CAC -but practice, mainly Hivos - and organisations from the global south, and between organisations from the global south.

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<sup>26</sup> see TOR SP CAC evaluation July 2019

<sup>27</sup> Since January 2016, Hivos, IIED and Article 19 collaborate in the Strategic Partnership Citizen Agency Consortium (SP-CAC), supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From the start, the SP CAC Steering committee consisting of the directors of the three organisations expressed its wish to better understand "what we are learning about this (the SP CA) cooperation".

<sup>28</sup> see TOR end evaluation, July 2019: # 3.2

The objective of the internal organization evaluation will be twofold:

Identify lessons regarding how the way internal organization including partnership relations at all three levels were designed, functioned, and changed over time has influenced (positively or negatively, planned or unplanned) to Effectiveness, Relevance, Sustainability and Efficiency of:

- L&A changes that occurred
- CD changes that occurred
- Inclusivity and Citizen Agency
- Ownership

Findings of this Internal Organization evaluation will contribute to answering the evaluation questions as detailed in the TOR for the end evaluation, such as, factors and processes influencing changes that occurred.

### **Approach**

The Internal Organization evaluation will use the findings from the four thematic evaluations to identify 1/ overall patterns at the consortium in the influence of the design, functioning, and changing over time of the internal organization including partnership relations, 2/ niches of divergence, the reasons and effects.

This means that the primary data for the evaluation will come from the four thematic evaluation. A second source of information which will be accessed through a desk research, comes from especially the following documents:

- Hivos own reports and guidelines, including on quality assurance, and documentation of solutions and changes introduced in response or anticipation of issues
- CAC's documentation including on operations, financial procedures etc.
- Keystone research on partners
- PLL survey of 2017
- IOB study "Strategies for partners: balancing complementarity and autonomy", 2019

Key informants can be approached as a third source of information when needed to complement the data obtained through the first two sources.

Foci of study will be:

- Requirements and cycles of (re)design/planning, monitoring & reflection, learning, decision-making, and reporting
- Requirements and cycles of decision-making about budgeting, quality assurance, fund use, reporting and accountability
- Changes introduced over time and reasons behind the changes including factors originating from the external context.

To maximize learning, it is suggested to organize a number of learning events around the findings that emerge from the different sources. Learning events can be in the form of a webinar with a concluding face-to-face event of maximum half day in the Netherlands.

A team of one thematic evaluation lead consultant and one external consultant is expected to offer the required combination of skills and expertise.

### **Methodological requirements and quality control**

As this evaluation of Partnership Relations forms the third component of the end evaluation of SP CAC, it is subject to the same methodological requirements (e.g. to facilitate learning) and quality control issues

### **Deliverables, budget and timeline**

The main deliverable is a report on the internal organization including partnership relations. A second deliverable are learning events, with a minimum two (one webinar, one face-to-face event), and a maximum of five (one webinar per theme - SD4All, DW4W, GIE and OC; one face-to-face event).

The final report is to be submitted by 1st July 2020; if so agreed, the learning events can take place in the first week of July.

The total budget of maximum € 15.000 forms part of the budget allocated to the end evaluation. The maximum consultancy fee is **725 euros** with the number of consultant days expected to be **16** (8 per consultant).

# ANNEX 2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Assignment	Evaluating the internal organization of SP Citizen's Agency Consortium
Implementing team	Pol de Greve & Wouter Hijweege
Supervising team	Karel Chambille & Wenny Ho (HIVOS)
Date	29 May 2020

## Background and Introduction

We now present a research framework for the Evaluation of the Internal Organisation (EIO). This note is an extension / appendix to the workplan that was presented and discussed with DMEL officers end of April 2020.

Preliminary note: As indicated in the additional reflections on the work plan (dated 28 April 2020), the development of a research framework will be an iterative process. A desk study of the documents will not be sufficient basis for formulating the research framework and probably the 4 thematic evaluations themselves will be an ingredient for refining this framework. Therefore, this submission is work in progress. At this stage, we request your feedback on this outline (to be discussed during our call on Wednesday). To ensure that this meets your expectations (and if not entirely, to adjust accordingly). This framework will then constitute the basis for the preparation of item lists by category of respondent, interviews, and focus group discussions

As proposed in the work plan, the study will be developed along with three focus areas:

1. Adaptive management: planning, monitoring & reflection, learning, decision-making, and related reporting.
2. Operational decision-making about budgeting, quality assurance, fund use, reporting and accountability
3. Partnership relations at three levels

We propose to retain this framework for the EIO also because it aligns very well with the main categories that constitute the framework used in in the Partnership Learning Loop as presented below.

The first category of the PLL, Collaborative Mindset and Skills, will not be covered by the present EIO as far as level 3 partnerships between Consortium Partners (CPs) and Implementing Partners (IPs) are concerned because this was by and large covered by the Keystone 2019 research and reports. We assume there is no need to repeat this exercise. Moreover, the four evaluation reports will (presumably) zoom in on functioning and quality of partnerships at all three levels (to be confirmed).

The categories '2. Set-up and Design', and '3. Daily Operations', are very much aligned with the first two focus areas in the EIO, even though the PLL categorizes some of the sub-themes under different headings compared to the EIO framework, e.g. PLL organizes resource-related issues under set-up and design and not under daily operations, while in the suggested EIO this resorts under operational decision-making which is closer to day-to-day operations. This, however, shouldn't pose too much of a problem as long as we specify what aspects are covered in each EIO category. Finally, focus area 3 in EIO covers partnerships and will include

both PLL categories 3. Results and 4. Added Value. As far as results are concerned, we will zoom in on results related to programmatic outcome areas of (1) policy influencing, (2) Capacity Strengthening, (3) inclusiveness and citizen agency, and (4) localization and ownership.

**1. Collaborative Mindset and Skills:**

Collaborative Mindset and Skills is an overarching category describing main principles for collaboration. It includes questions about genuine interest in each other, joint understanding of the partnership process, diversity, openness and transparency, equity and the level of engagement.

a partnering mind-set that leads to partners being willing to explore the unknown, to turn failures into learning and genuinely engage with each other's interests and not just their own.

**2. Set up and Design:**

Set up and Design questions consider how the partnership was designed according to partners: were roles and responsibilities clear, did a joint vision exist, were necessary systems and procedures in place and were there sufficient resources.

**3. Daily Operations:**

Daily Operations discusses how the partnership works in practice: are management, communication and meetings considered effective and efficient, is leadership and decision making adequate.

**4. Results:**

Results is a tailor made set of questions depending on the results your partnership is aiming for. It includes the perceived progress and success of the partnership against program objectives.

**5. Added value:**

Added value regards different levels of added value: for your organization, for the partnership as a whole and for the target group or beneficiaries that the partnership is trying to reach.

Obviously, our assessment will also take along the findings and conclusions of the Keystone research and reports and categorize these under the respective focus areas and sub-themes of the EIO framework.

**Research Framework**

Taking into account the stated objectives of the EIO as formulated in the ToR, we developed the following (draft) outline of a research framework that stipulates key research questions and specific sub-questions.

The following characteristics apply to the framework:

- i. The framework is structured using the three focus areas Adaptive Management, Operational decision-making and Partnership Relations. The report will also follow this structure.
- ii. For the focus areas of 1. Adaptive Management and 2. Operational Decision-making, the research framework is inspired by the Theory of Efficiency (TOE). The ToE of an organization constitutes an assessment of the strategies and procedures used by the organization to ensure the efficiency of its interventions and those meant to monitor efficiency . We have adopted the core framework of the ToE, which addresses three questions, namely:

- . What is the Theory of Efficiency of the organization for a specific programme?
- . How is the Theory of Efficiency translated and upheld in practice?
- . How is the organization improving and/or adapting its efficiency?

We applied the same sequence of questions to the first two focus areas, but in the context of this exercise, this will cover not just cost efficiency issues, but resource efficiency in the broader perspective of internal organization.

- iii. As far as partnership is concerned, Hivos distinguishes three levels
  - a. Between MoFA / Embassies and CAC (Hivos)
  - b. Between Consortium Partners Hivos (GO/Hubs) – IIED – Article 19
  - c. Between Consortium Partners and Partner Organizations in the South, and (b) among the Southern Partners

The research framework presented below (especially part 3 on partnership) will first and foremost be used to assess partnership relations and impacts for level 3 relations between consortium partners (mainly Hivos) and partner organizations in the South. This, in our interpretation, is where the prime interest of Hivos is. We will also look at level 2 partnership relations in a quick scan that is based on the framework.

The framework will not be used for

- Level 1 relation i.e. between MFA and Hivos. We intend to assess this partnership separately, using the theoretical framework of the strategic partnership as a reference framework for the assessment. – For more details, see section Pointers below.
- Level 3b relations between partner organizations in the South. The reason is threefold: (1) these relations are very much context-specific, i.e. different pictures emerge in other countries depending on the strategy followed by the consortium in each country, (2) the relations are (presumably) already assessed in the four programme evaluations, and (3) a consolidated assessment at this level over the entire CAC would demand excessive time and effort that is beyond the contracted capacity of the evaluation team.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SOURCE - METHOD
<p><b>Research question 1. – What lessons were learned regarding the way in which adaptive management of the CAC was designed, functioned and changed over time, including niches of divergence, their reasons and effects?</b></p> <p><b>Note - adaptive management in this context relates to the requirements and cycles (rules, procedures and systems) for programme planning, monitoring &amp; reflection, learning, strategic decision-making, and related reporting (the programme management cycle)</b></p>	
<p>The adaptive management setting of CAC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. Present core elements of procedures and mechanisms of programme management?</li> <li>1.2. Briefly present core elements of governance structure</li> <li>1.3. Briefly present roles and responsibilities of different governance layers (job positions, management committees, etc.)</li> <li>1.4. How are line and functional arrangements organized?</li> <li>1.5. For all 4 questions: point at differences between the thematic programmes (if any) and with regular Hivos procedures and systems (if any)</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAC documents including on operations, financial procedures</li> <li>• Hivos guidelines on management procedures and systems</li> <li>• Check with DMEL officers to fill in gaps</li> <li>• Check with QA manager to fill in gaps</li> <li>• Check with Global Programme Managers (GPMs) for specific governance arrangements</li> </ul>

<p>How is management implemented in practice?</p> <p>1.6. Are there mechanisms in place to follow up on correct use/ implementation of management systems and procedures?</p> <p>1.7. Evidence of compliance with or deviations /niches of divergence from formal procedures and mechanisms of programme management.</p> <p>1.8. What were the reasons for or causes of deviation(s)?</p> <p>What internal and external factors played a role?</p> <p>1.9. What effects did deviations have on the programme's effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and/or sustainability?</p> <p>1.10. Was space was provided in the programme strategy to accommodate for unexpected dynamics and developments in the policy environment? Did this affect management mechanisms in practice?</p>	
<p>Learning, adaptation and documentation</p> <p>1.11. Have the systems and procedures of programme management changed over time?</p> <p>1.12. What lessons have been learnt from deviations in management procedures and mechanisms?</p> <p>1.13. How have these lessons been translated into new or adapted rules, standards and procedures?</p> <p>1.14. Has the changing role of Hivos with a lesser emphasis on being a funding agency and more on being convenor, facilitator and co-implementor have a bearing on how the programme was managed? If so, in what way did management practice change it (if at all)?</p> <p>1.15. Have changes in management mechanisms and underlying causes been documented? (if applicable)</p> <p>1.16. Have lessons learnt and underlying dynamics been shared for with peers for learning purposes (e.g. other CAC thematic programmes)? (if applicable)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four programme evaluations</li> <li>• PLL 2017</li> <li>• Keystone 2019 – 2 reports</li> <li>• Interview with DMEL officers</li> <li>• Short questionnaire sent to GPMs</li> <li>• FGD with GPMs</li> <li>• FGD with 4 lead evaluators</li> <li>• Validation in webinar 1 General Findings</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research question 2. – What lessons were learned regarding the way in which operational decision making in of the CAC was designed, functioned and changed over time, including niches of divergence, their reasons and effects?</b></p> <p><b>Note: operational decision-making in this context relates to the requirements and cycles (rules, procedures and systems) for budgeting, quality assurance, accountability and related reporting (the grants management cycle and the financial management cycle)</b></p>	
<p>Core elements of the operational decision-making process cycle</p> <p>2.1. What are the core elements of procedures and mechanisms of operational decision making on budget, finance and quality control?</p> <p>2.2. How are operational considerations incorporated in decision making on proposed contributions to change (ToCs) and in budget allocation?</p> <p>2.3. What mechanisms exist in programme development procedures to manage and monitor efficiency and effectiveness</p> <p>2.4. What mechanisms exist in management systems and procedures to monitor manage and efficiency and effectiveness?</p> <p>2.5. How are quality and budget (e.g. over-/under-spending) issues dealt with in the programme's governance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAC documents including on operations, financial procedures</li> <li>• Hivos guidelines on management procedures and systems</li> <li>• Check with DMEL officers fill in gaps</li> <li>• Check with QA manager to fill in gaps</li> <li>• Check with GPMs for specific governance arrangements</li> </ul>

<p>How is operational decision-making implemented in practice?</p> <p>2.6. Are there mechanisms in place to follow up on the correct implementation of systems and procedures for operational management? How is it done?</p> <p>2.7. Evidence/examples of compliance with or deviations/ niches of divergence from written procedures and mechanisms of operational decision-making?</p> <p>2.8. What were the reasons for or causes of deviation(s)? What internal and external factors played a role?</p> <p>2.9. What effects did deviations have on the programme's effectiveness, efficiency</p>	
<p>2.10. Learning, adaptation and documentation</p> <p>2.11. How have the systems and procedures of operational decision-making changed over time?</p> <p>2.12. Have informal mechanisms emerged that either fill in gaps in the formalized procedures and systems or do in practice overrule/replace formal procedures? What are these informal mechanisms? And to what extent have they emerged in response to considerations of effectiveness or cost-efficient use of resources?</p> <p>2.13. What lessons have been learnt from deviations in procedures and mechanisms in operational decision-making?</p> <p>2.14. How have these lessons been translated into new or adapted rules, standards and procedures?</p> <p>2.15. Has the changing role of Hivos with a lesser emphasis on being a funding agency and more on being convenor, facilitator and co-implementor have a bearing on how the operational decision-making took place in practice? If so, in what way did decision-making change (if at all)?</p> <p>2.16. Have changes and underlying causes been documented? (if applicable)</p> <p>2.17. Have lessons learnt and underlying dynamics been shared for with peers for learning purposes (e.g. other CAC thematic programmes)? (if applicable)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four programme evaluations</li> <li>• PLL 2017</li> <li>• Keystone 2019 – 2 reports</li> <li>• Interview with DMEL officers</li> <li>• Short questionnaire sent to GPMs</li> <li>• FGD with GPMs</li> <li>• FGD with 4 lead evaluators</li> <li>• Validation in webinar 3 on efficiency</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research question 3. How did the partnership relations evolve and what was their influence / impact on programme effectiveness towards the primary programme outcomes: policy influencing and Capacity Development, citizen agency and ownership?</b></p>	
<p>Partnership qualities and their development over time</p> <p>3.1. What are the main strengths of the partnership driving the thematic programme and how have these developed over time?</p> <p>3.2. What are the main weaknesses of the partnership and how have these been addressed/ handled over time?</p> <p>3.3. Trust, space for diversity of ideas and inclusive decision making are seen as contributing elements for effective/ successful partnerships. Did the partners address these factors, and if so, how? Alternatively, what investment was made in the partnership relations to ensure its functioning?</p> <p>3.4. How did the partnerships (at various levels) change and develop over time, as part of the internal learning and adaptive management practices and in response to external developments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four programme evaluations</li> <li>• PLL 2017 and follow-up notes</li> <li>• Keystone 2019 – 2 reports &amp; internal memo's/ newsletter</li> <li>• Interview with DMEL officers</li> <li>• Short questionnaire sent to GPMs</li> <li>• FGD with GPMs</li> <li>• FGD with 4 lead evaluators</li> <li>• Validation in webinar 2 on evolving partnership relations</li> </ul>

<p>3.5. How are the qualities and complementarities among the partners been used in support of the policy influencing/ L&amp;A outcome area?</p> <p>3.6. How was the L&amp;A strategy determined, and what was the role of partnership qualities and limitations in designing its approach?</p> <p>3.7. Was this strategy revisited/evaluated and adjusted because of evolving partnership relations?</p> <p>3.8. What was the influence of the partnership (at various levels) on the L&amp;A outcomes? To what extent was partnership a critical and necessary condition for effective policy influencing? Why (and how) was it critical?</p> <p>3.9. What are the partnership complementarities, and how have they been used effectively in the L&amp;A strategy? Did these complementarities evolve/ develop over time?</p> <p>3.10. To what extent was the partnership instrumental (and how successful) to strengthen the sense of ownership of the L&amp;A programme at various levels?</p> <p>3.11. To what extent was the partnership instrumental in creating added value for the L&amp;A outcome area, in terms of citizen agency?</p> <p>3.12. What elements of the partnership acted, or were perceived, as a constraint/ limiting factor on the quality and impact of the L&amp;A outcome area?</p> <p>3.13. What are the three most essential aspects of added value of the partnership for the policy influencing outcome area (in a few key-words)? Please specify this for:</p> <p>3.13.1. HIVOS in relation to the Implementing partners, e.g. in terms of managerial and/or transformative functionalities / organizational characteristics</p> <p>3.13.2. HIVOS as member of the consortium, e.g. in contributing to synergy, role alignment, innovation, learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four programme evaluations</li> <li>• PLL 2017</li> <li>• Keystone 2019 – 2 reports</li> <li>• Interview with DMEL officers</li> <li>• Short questionnaire sent to GPMs to identify specific cases/situations</li> <li>• FGD with GPMs around limited number of case situations</li> <li>• FGD with 4 lead evaluators</li> <li>• Validation in webinar 2 on evolving partnership relations</li> </ul>
<p>3.14. What was the influence of the partnership (at various levels) on the Capacity Development outcome area</p> <p>3.15. How did the selection of consortium/development/implementing partners affect the Capacity Development approach and outcome?</p> <p>3.16. What was the influence and effect of partnership relations in balancing the transformative and managerial CD priorities at various levels?</p> <p>3.17. Was the CD strategy revisited/evaluated and adjusted because of evolving partnership relations?</p> <p>3.18. To what extent was complementarity among partners utilized / functional in CD?</p> <p>3.19. What was the influence of the partnership (at various levels) on the CD outcomes? To what extent was partnership a critical and necessary condition for effective Capacity Development? Why (and how) was it critical?</p> <p>3.20. What element of the partnership acted or was perceived as a constraint/ limiting factor on the quality and impact of the CD outcome area?</p>	

## Pointers in the assessment

1. The CAC consortium as part of the CAC-MFA SP programme. We expect (tbc) that the evaluation reports have in common that there is little reference to partnership relations between CAC and MFA.

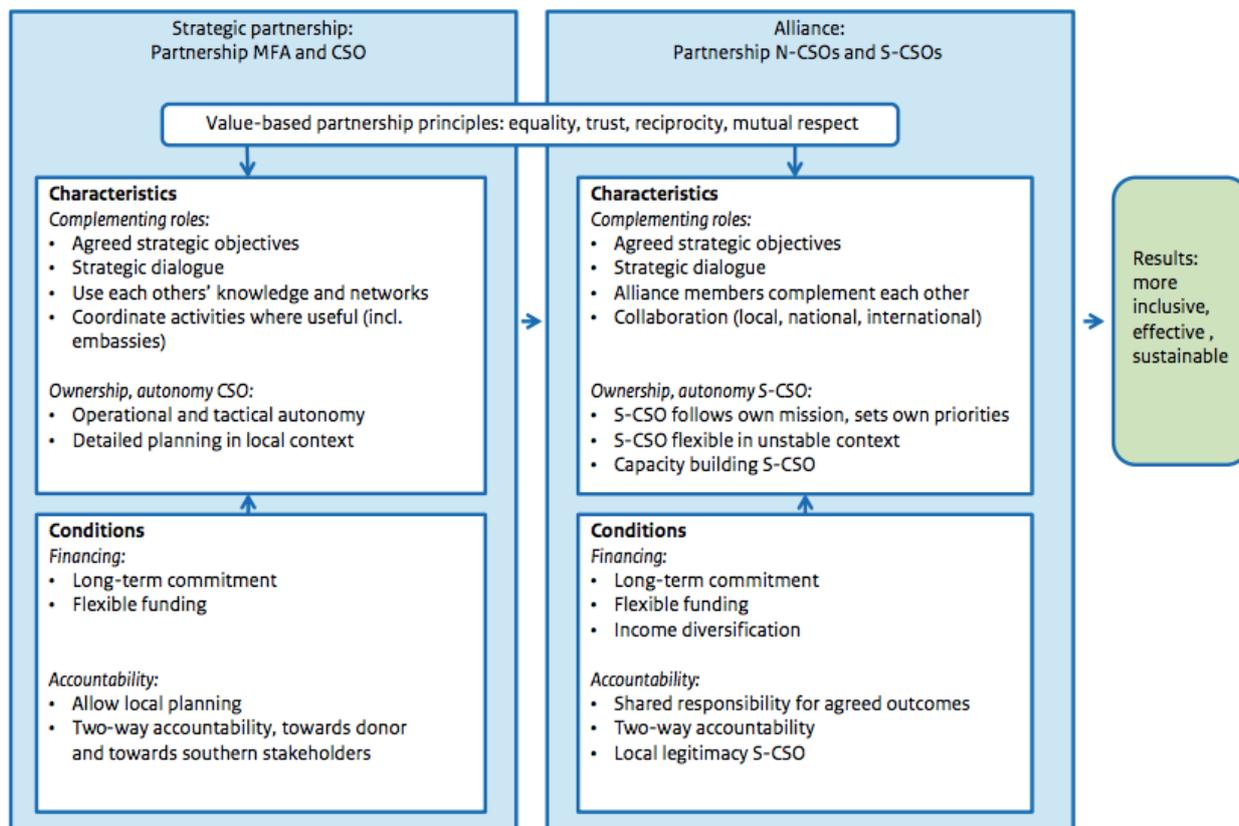
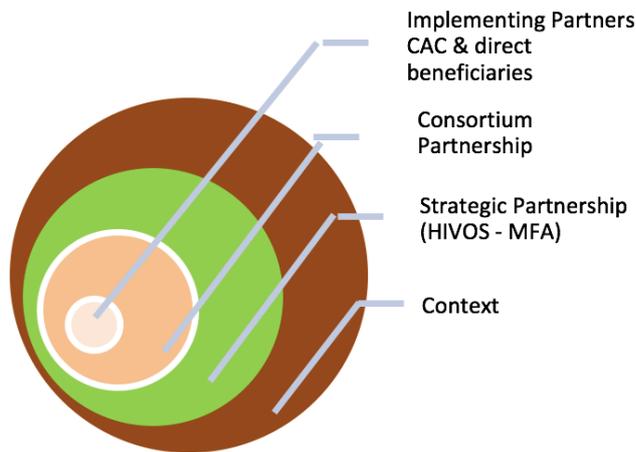
Specific (additional) data collection will be needed to explore the relationships at this level and how these had a bearing on management and implementation of the thematic programmes.

We will need to explore to what extent learning mechanisms and operational systems functioned at the consortium level in interaction with MFA. Consequently, what aspects of the managerial/organizational setting and/or matters of programmatic implementation and dynamics of the CAC programme were affected.

For instance: citizen agency is supposed or expected to be a common thread in the CAC programme. To what extent did HIVOS, as lead partner in the consortium, allow its internal programme systems to be adjusted to CAC requirements to ensure exchanges on experiences and lessons learnt among sub-programmes?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SOURCE - METHOD
<p><b>Research question 4. – To what extent did learning mechanisms and operational systems function at the CAC consortium level among the thematic programmes and in interaction with MFA? Consequently, what aspects of the managerial/organizational setting and/or matters of programmatic implementation and dynamics of the CAC programme were affected (modified/informed) by these learnings and best practice?</b></p> <p><b>What lessons were learned regarding how the Strategic Partnership between MFA and CAC was designed, functioned and changed over time, including niches of divergence, their reasons and effects?</b></p>	
<p>4.1. To what extent did the HIVOS system of programme governance and operational management require adjustments for the CAC programme.</p> <p>4.2. Present core elements of procedures and mechanisms of programme management that needed adjustments for CAC?</p> <p>4.3. To what extent have CAC partnership experiences been incorporated in HIVOS procedures and guidelines?</p> <p>4.4. To what extent was the strategic partnership HIVOS/CAC-MFA instrumental in creating added value for the policy influencing/ L&amp;A outcome area, or in terms of citizen agency?</p> <p>4.5. What element of the strategic partnership acted/ was perceived as a constraint/ limiting factor on the quality and impact of the L&amp;A outcome area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAC programme documents</li> <li>• Hivos guidelines</li> <li>• Check with QA manager to fill in gaps</li> <li>• FGD with Global Programme Managers (GPMs)</li> <li>• SSI with</li> <li>• CAC programme director;</li> <li>• HIVOS Director (as member of SC);</li> <li>• DGIS desk officer</li> </ul>

2. We recognize the interdependencies and conditionalities among the various levels. Higher-level SP's determine the space for manoeuvring for lower levels. In the recent IOB study on strategic partnerships (IoB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands, 2019) this was spelt out in conditionalities and was presented as follows



**Figure 6** *Theoretical framework of strategic partnerships between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CSOs, as conditions for more inclusive, effective and sustainable results*

The four programme evaluations are not expected to assess this generic framework of the SPs. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to determine to what extent the CAC partnership relations and organization align with the framework. Therefore, we will attempt to address this question in the concluding section of the report.