



# Strengthening Civil Society

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## Result area 1 - CSOs improve their capacity and legitimacy to lobby and advocate

### Civil Society Development

**RESULTS**  
The Netherlands supports a strong and independent civil society, as civil society is essential in fighting inequality, protecting human rights and augmenting democratic processes. Civil society organisations (CSOs) advocate for the rights and concerns of citizens that are otherwise excluded and are most in need and hold governments and businesses accountable for their responsibilities. Human rights defenders, climate activists, journalists and labour unions thus have a vital role to play in achieving sustainable and inclusive development. .

This makes CSOs important partners in the implementation of Dutch policy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Under the policy framework Dialogue & Dissent, the Netherlands invest in the lobby and advocacy role of CSOs in low- and lower middle-income countries by engaging in 25 strategic partnerships, i.e. international and southern alliances of CSOs, working on themes such as women's rights, conflict prevention, environmental protection and sustainable trade. A broad range of CSOs are included ranging from larger international NGOs with local offices, such as Oxfam Novib and Action Aid, to environmental activist organisations, trade unions, grass roots organisations and global and regional networks. In addition to programs under Dialogue & Dissent, the embassies are reaching great results in strengthening civil society in their independent role through decentralized funds. More information on this, could be found on the country pages. The Netherlands is one of only a few donors that supports the independent role of civil society and calls for an open civic space for them to operate

For civil society to fulfill its crucial role, CSOs need to have the capacities and expertise to raise their voice and ensure that the rights and needs of citizens are protected. In 2018-2019, CSOs therefore strengthened their lobby and advocacy capacities through a variety of different activities, such as: trainings that inform people on their rights, providing toolkits to CSOs and citizens on lobbying and advocacy strategies and peer-learning events to exchange lesson-learned. In the third year of the policy framework Dialogue & Dissent, strategic partnerships increasingly invested in the sustainability and legitimacy of the programs and the partner organisations by providing trainings on leaderships-skills, planning and funding, harvesting lessons-learned for the future and active consultation and participation of constituency in the formulation and implementation of advocacy strategies.

In 2018-2019, the Netherlands has reached more than 10.000 CSOs in more than 60 countries. 6.069 CSOs have strengthened their independent and political role by gaining lobby and advocacy capacities.

INDICATORS	Baseline	Target	Result	Source
ST_# of CSOs included in SPs programmes	x	x	10372	27550; 27542; 27534; 27557; 27552; 27554; 27556; 27545; 28761; 27758; 29496;4000000330; 4000001328; 28441; 4000003052; 27550; 27542; 27534; 27557; 27552; 27554; 27556; 27545; 27544; 27553; 27559; 27539; 27540; 29475; 29481; 27546; 27531; 27555; 27538; 27551; 27558; 27549; 27543; 27548; 27537
ST_# of CSOs with increased L&A capacities	x	x	6069	27543; 27548; 27537

## Result area 2 - CSOs play an important transformative role in influencing norms and decision-making by governments and private sector

### Civil Society Development

**RESULTS**  
In 2018-2019, CSOs contributed to social, economic and political transformation towards more inclusive and sustainable societies. They focused on mobilising support and creating networks with likeminded actors through for instance online consultations, research on human rights violations or advocacy claims and collaborating with media, public authorities and the private sector. This culminated in successful lobby and advocacy initiatives that ensured that marginalized groups and others affected by policy are included in decision-making processes. These initiatives covered a wide range of forms and took place on sub-national, national, regional and international levels. Examples of more direct and confrontational advocacy strategies included demonstrations, publishing research on human rights violations or other advocacy claims, creating media attention and launching campaigns. More subtle forms of lobby and advocacy initiatives existed of advising government officials and business representatives and engaging in dialogues with governments, businesses and community or traditional leaders. This sparked national debates, put certain topics, such as climate change affecting marginalized groups in Jakarta or youth rights in Uganda on government agendas and resulted in CSOs being invited to decision-making tables.

We observe a worrying trend of shrinking civic space in many countries. The freedoms to express oneself and assembly have been under pressure, making it more difficult and dangerous for citizens and organisations to raise their voice and protect rights. CSOs responded creatively by addressing inequalities and injustices through a less politically sensitive discourse, by for instance advocating for technical topics such as sanitation or focusing on the more subtle forms of lobby and advocacy to voice their concerns. For example, through consultations and workshops CSOs have been able to engage in conversations with community members and leaders on topics such as the importance of women's rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and environmental protection. On a diplomatic level, either through silent diplomacy or in international fora, northern counterparts and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed the importance of engaging with CSOs in decision-making processes and protecting an enabling environment for civil society.

These activities of CSOs and their counterparts have strengthened inclusive policy-making processes, ensuring that previously excluded people have an opportunity to voice their concerns and influence the decisions that affect their lives. In 2018-2019, the Dialogue & Dissent Strategic Partnerships and partners of embassies have been successful in supporting lobby and advocacy initiatives and creating space for CSOs demands and positions. 7.377 lobby and advocacy initiatives took place to strengthen inclusive and sustainable development. In addition, CSOs managed to set the agenda, influence the debate and/or create space to engage with decision-makers at least 5.460 times.

INDICATORS	Baseline	Target	Result	Source
ST_# of advocacy initiatives carried out by CSOs, for, by or with their membership/constituency	x	x	7377	29501; 4000000330;4000001328; 28761; 27550; 27542; 27534; 27557; 27552; 27554; 27556; 27545; 27544; 27553; 27559; 27539; 27540; 29475; 29481; 27546; 27531; 27555; 27538; 27551; 27558
ST_# of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or creating space to engage.	x	x	5460	29501; 29496; 4000000463; 29113; 4000000330; 4000001328; 4000003052; 27550; 27542; 27534; 27557; 27552; 27554; 27549; 27548; 27558; 27556; 27545; 27544; 27553; 27559; 27537; 27539; 27540; 29475; 29481; 27546; 27531; 27555; 27538; 27551; 27543

## Result area 3 - Contribute to peaceful and just societies

### Civil Society Development

**RESULTS**  
As CSO's gained capacities, mobilised support, influenced public debates and political agendas and gained a seat at the decision-making table, they were able to foster inclusive decision-making processes and laws that protect the concerns and rights of marginalized groups. CSOs acted as watch dog; they held governments, private sector actors and communities accountable for laws, policies and norms that foster inclusive, sustainable development. CSOs also offered trainings to government officials to enable more coherent implementation of existing laws and regulations. Through advice or pressure, governments and businesses have changed their behaviour, for example, by supporting land rights of women or reallocating budget to activities that inform youth on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). In addition, communities have also changed their way of thinking and acting, for instance around the role and rights of women and girls in their community. In 2018-2019, the Dialogue & Dissent partnerships successfully contributed to at least 1404 changes in laws, policies and norms in support of citizens to access their rights, services and opportunities. This accounts for the creation of new ones, as well as for the blocking of harmful ones and the improvement of existing ones. Just as important is that CSOs have been able to ensure proper implementation of such laws, policies and norms in 1539 cases.

INDICATORS	Baseline	Target	Result	Source
ST_# of laws, policies and norms/attitudes, blocked, adopted, improved for sustainable and inclusive development	x	x	1481	27554; 27549; 27548; 27558; 27556; 27545; 27544; 27553; 27559; 27537; 27539; 27540; 29475; 29481; 27546; 27531; 27555; 27538; 27551
ST_# of laws, policies and norms, implemented for sustainable and inclusive development.	x	x	1539	4000000463; 4000000330; 27550; 27542; 27534; 27557; 27541; 27552; 27554; 27547; 27549; 27543; 27548; 27558; 27556; 27545; 27544; 27553; 27559; 27537;27539

## Assessment of the results achieved across three results read for Civil Society Development

Assess achieved results compared to planning:	Investing in social, economic and political transformation is a long-term process that requires behavioural and political changes of individuals, social groups and authorities. This process is country- and theme-specific, and may include various unexpected factors and thus does not allow for a precise planning. Therefore, all strategic partnerships work with a Theory of Change (ToC) reflecting specific goals and strategies. The ToC is adapted to different contexts and annually reviewed in light of changing circumstances. This flexible approach is key for supporting advocacy processes, as advocacy can only partly be planned in advance, and advocates need the ability to quickly respond to sudden opportunities and threats. Increasing restrictive trends affecting civic space and physical, digital, psychosocial attacks on human rights defenders and CSOs have been a great challenge. For many of the CSO partners worldwide it has been more difficult to remain safe and reach certain advocacy goals. CSOs responded by adapting their strategies where needed. Advocacy on sub-national level and around technical topics and working in broader coalitions are some of the newly identified opportunities that CSOs focus on more strongly.
Reasons for result achieved.	<p>The Netherlands supports an independent civil society to ensure they can fulfil their vital role in the political and public domain. By investing in their lobby and advocacy capacities, working together in strategic partnerships, encouraging adaptive management, strengthening networks and organizing linking and learning events, CSO partners were further strengthened in their independent role and advocacy efforts, and could adapt their strategy where needed. The partnership relationships are substantiated through in-country workshops with Embassies, videoconferences between parties in the Netherlands and abroad, strategic policy dialogues between CSOs and thematic departments of the Ministry, and formal and informal meetings with individual or multiple partnerships.</p> <p>Strengthening partnership relations between the Ministry and CSOs, between CSOs within a consortium, and between different consortia is key for seeking synergies and improving strategies. Good communication and strategic thinking are essential elements to build strong partnership, especially since the partnerships operate at different levels and involve multiple actors (i.e. Dutch CSOs, Ministerial departments in The Hague, local CSOs, Embassies). This process requires significant time and energy from both sides, but is important for jointly promoting more inclusive and sustainable societies through achieving complementarity and realizing strategic potential.</p>
Implications for planning.	<p>The Ministry itself also has a ToC which guides the strategic direction of the policy framework. The underlying assumptions of this ToC are scrutinized and lessons-learned have been harvested in a research trajectory with NVO-WOTRO, through an IOB evaluation on strategic partnerships, and Mid-term reviews of partners. The results achieved with the Dialogue &amp; Dissent policy framework and the harvested lessons-learned have underlined the importance of local ownership, inclusivity, working in strategic partnerships, integrating a gender-focus, building on lessons-learned, enhancing flexibility and putting civic space at the core of our policy.</p> <p>The outcomes have been used to improve the implementation of the current policy framework, and inform the design of the future policy framework for Strengthening Civil Society. To stimulate learning between different partnerships and between the Ministry and CSOs, the Ministry continues to host linking and learning sessions where the Ministry and partners exchange lessons-learned.</p>

\* Find more information on the projects on Openaid.nl with the activity numbers listed under 'Source'