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Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen

Development in the 'Africa for beginners'

Dutch Private Initiatives in Ghana and Malawi

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Foreword

Discussions about development cooperation in the Netherlands are often said to be ‘much about little and nothing about much’. To put it differently: a large part of the discussion seems to be taken in by the so-called non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) with the major five agencies that receive(d) substantial government funding at the forefront: Cordaid, Icco, Hivos, Oxfam Novib and Plan Nederland. In the meantime, the changes in the subsidy rules of this so-called civilateral channel (taking up some 25% of the development budget) only contributed to even more debate. Discussions about the bilateral and, certainly, the multilateral channel (which together represent some 75% of the governmental development budget) are much more rare. In the case of bilateral aid these discussions often seem to be restricted to which countries should be eligible for aid while multilateral aid is hardly discussed (and certainly not in more public debates).

In this aid-discussion a new channel has emerged and this time one that only represents a fraction of the development budget but for the rest is essentially self-reliant: private initiatives (PIs). Only those who never go on the internet, never read a newspaper, weekly or magazine, never watch TV and never listen to the radio can still be surprised when discovering that good causes have become something of a new hype. An increasing number of people obviously feel the need to become active themselves, also in the field of development cooperation. Naturally there is widespread discussion about this hype. Are these ‘good causes’ indeed what people in developing countries are waiting for: are they effective or is that the wrong question to ask because we should consider such PIs first of all as an ‘expression of good will’ and thus as part of an active public support for development (cooperation)?

Whereas the civilateral discussion can potentially be held on the basis of a vast number of studies, that on PIs is mainly based on hearsay and gut feelings. Considering this not a very good basis for discussing PIs, this report (and the underlying study) is aimed to further our understanding of the role of Private Initiatives (PIs) in development. It departs from the idea that PIs are first and foremost development organisations which have been set up and are managed by (a collective of) private citizens, working together with partners in developing countries and aimed at assisting people in their daily fight against poverty. It is not an evaluation of the work of PIs in the more strict sense of the word but a first fact finding and explorative study – a study, moreover, that was felt necessary because of the utter lack of insight in the ‘world of PIs’ and particularly their activities in developing countries. As such, this report and the underlying field research in Ghana and Malawi should be regarded as means in the ongoing debate about international cooperation and the specific role that PIs can play in this.

No research is possible without the support of numerous people. Thanks are due to the Radboud University Nijmegen for its financial contribution but particularly for allowing me to use my sabbatical to do what I like best. Thanks also to my colleagues at the CIDIN for taking over my duties at the Centre during my absence. A special thank you to all the Private Initiatives in the Netherlands which cooperated selflessly, opened their work for me and in return had to wait longer than anticipated for my individual reports (or are even still waiting for them). Your dedication and seal for your work, your organisation and the people in ‘your’ country is like a warm bath. I can not thank all the partners in Ghana and Malawi and the people they work for and with enough for their warm welcome and hospitality and for enduring my endless questioning. I recall with pleasure the somewhat tired probing of some partners whether I still had more questions. Together you have reminded me that development work starts with passion.

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Summary

There is little doubt that PIs can be viewed at in different ways depending on one's perspective. This, for instance, means that PIs might be viewed or assessed in terms of their contribution to public support for international cooperation or, alternatively, as a separate channel for development cooperation. This study departs from the second perspective and thus views PIs first of all as development organisations. It is aimed (1) at providing a better understanding of what PIs are actually doing in the field of development and (2) to explore the extent to which PIs adhere to basic pre-conditions for effectiveness from a development cooperation perspective. Data was gathered in the Netherlands, Ghana and Malawi using a variety of research methods.

The group of PIs in this study can be divided in many ways. One could for instance, divide them along sectoral lines, on the basis of where they work, the specific objective or target group. One could also look at where they mainly get their funding from. All these issues are important and all these division lines create definition problems as well as major problems in placing the PIs in any of these groups. The same holds for the dividing line chosen here as many of the PIs may have characteristics of both types.

Nevertheless, the most clear dividing line is the one between PIs active in what I would call brick-and-mortar activities and between more complex interventions. Not surprisingly, most PIs are active in the first field and particularly in education and health. Construction of schools, renovation, supply of fertilisers, seeds, medicines, etc. have undoubtedly been instrumental for the concerned schools and health facilities as well as for those people using these facilities. In that sense, these types of activities provide important incentives for improving service delivery and, in the case of for instance seeds and fertilisers, create a possibility of higher agricultural production. At the same time, no changes take place in the structure that is responsible for these services and materials not being available. This also means that these brick-and-mortar activities are almost by definition temporary assistance – perhaps one could even call it emergency assistance which will have to be repeated time and again.

Naturally, in some of these brick-and-mortar activities, PI try to build in more sustainable elements such as group formation. This brings us to the second group distinguished here. Several of the PIs over the year move into more complex interventions such as micro credit, group formation, extension services to farmers, animal revolving funds, etc. And it is particularly this group, which in contrast to the first is more concerned with development instead of one-time assistance, which experiences some of the major challenges in international cooperation. They generally experience that 'doing development' is not an easy job. Particularly in this last group, but certainly not restricted to it, a few issues can be raised – issues that are often regarded as important elements for effectiveness and issues in which also PIs have to go through a certain learning process. Seven of these issues or elements are discussed in the third chapter of this report and are summarised below:

1. Partnership – often seen as one of the main pre-conditions for effective development cooperation – with PIs is often about very personal relationships leading to a high trust in the local partner. The question remains whether that local partner always has the capacity to guide a development process, make a planning based on a proper analysis of the context. In many cases, the personal, friendship or even family relationship between the partner and the PI seems to stand in the way of a proper questioning of each others strategies and decisions. Entirely on the other side, there is a high distrust in PIs with regard to the local population sometimes even leading to a rather paternalistic attitude. In both cases, there seems to be little incentive to spend a lot of energy let alone funds in strengthening the local organisation through capacity building.
2. Whereas the former already means that the contribution of PIs to local organisational capacity building is limited, this is even further lowered because PIs tend to set up

parallel structures in developing countries instead of linking up with what is already there. Others again work through individuals instead of organisations. While essentially adding another actor to the civil society these parallel structures (so-called mirror organisations of the PI) are also much closer to the PI and thus create a possibility for a bigger direct influence in the interventions supported from the Netherlands while not necessarily diminishing the distance between the target group and the organisation. The fact that many PIs essentially depend on individuals without much of organisational backing creates not only a high dependency on one person but potentially also limits the possibilities for organisational strengthening which is generally regarded as an important element for effectiveness.

3. These first two points indicate that the relationship between PIs and partners on the one hand and other actors in society on the other hand is often (extremely) weak. In many cases, PIs seem to be unaware of what other actors are doing and what government policies there are which impact on their own work. Simultaneously, the work of PIs and their partners is equally unknown to most of the other actors. This is exemplified by the fact that only part of the PIs/partners in this study is officially registered although there generally is an obligation to do so.
4. Although PIs certainly learn, one can hardly speak of an institutionalised learning process based on a proper monitoring and evaluation system which tries to move beyond the question whether the activities are implemented to the question what the meaning of these activities are for the lives of the target group. This is not only important with development interventions but also with the brick-and-mortar interventions. There are only a few PIs which have ever tried to evaluate their programme in a structured manner. Important is also that this is an isolated learning in the sense that PIs tend to keep their learning process to themselves and tend to learn by doing but not by learning from others.
5. PIs are perhaps among the strongest critics of more traditional organisations in that they insufficiently show what they reach and what the meaning of their work is with regard to the fight against poverty. In that regard, it is strange to see that PIs not only are a stranger to evaluation studies themselves but also that their accountability to their own back donors leaves much to be desired. Besides, their communication is mainly restricted to success stories and to showing what has been done but not what has been reached.
6. Cooperation with others (and thereby creating a possibility to learn from others as well) is almost non-existing among PIs. Whether this is due to a strong belief in themselves and their own solutions, to lack of time or to a kind of felt competition for funding, the fact remains that linking up with others is generally considered to be extremely important also to create a value added.
7. Targeting is hardly done. Most of the PIs simply depart from the idea that everybody is poor so there is no need to target. Their activities are general activities and as such it is not that strange that some of the PIs simply state that all Ghana belongs to their target group. It leads to a situation where mainly those that are more capable, more entrepreneurial and perhaps more outspoken and empowered come forward and make use of the activities on offer.
8. Sustainability is, not surprisingly perhaps, a major issue with the work of PIs and one that is also widely regarded as a problem by the PIs themselves. This certainly holds for those PIs mainly or principally working in what has been called 'emergency interventions' above. Without any more structural changes, the chances that the concerned schools, hospitals and health centres will manage to continue without outside assistance are meagre. But it also holds for the more development-oriented activities.

Naturally, all these elements do not hold for all PIs in this study and certainly not for all PIs in the Netherlands. Some (and perhaps even many) PIs will not recognise themselves in the picture drawn here and there are sufficient examples of PIs in this study which do have a much clearer planning, try to strengthen civil society, try to influence (local or even national) policy, link up with any number of other actors and/or have a clear monitoring system in place.

Most, if not all, of the above more critical issues should not come as a surprise as they are also problems that traditional development organisations experience. Although that is indeed not a very surprising conclusion, there are also several other problems which traditional organisations either have overcome over the years or in which they could guide the PIs. There is as such no need to reinvent the wheel. Unfortunately, many PIs seem to do just that and for a large part this seems to be due to a certain stubbornness or perhaps even (misplaced) self-consciousness. It might be given in by a feeling that development cannot be that difficult or a feeling that they do not want to be involved with traditional development players. Such feelings can easily be strengthened by the fact that several of the PIs are run by experts in specific fields (particularly in health) leading to the idea that there is little they can learn from others. Finally: there is always the possibility that PIs simply do not think about looking for experience elsewhere because they are busy enough as they are. Whatever the reason, the strong impression from this study is that what Develtere & Stessens (2006) concluded for Flemish PIs also holds for their Dutch colleagues: PIs ‘smell like donorship’; they feel they have something to offer. Continuing along that line one could also say that PIs simply want to ‘do good’. There is essentially nothing wrong with ‘doing good’. At the same time, there are specific issues that emerge when looking at these do-it-yourself development organisations. Issues that perhaps could lead to ‘doing good’ a bit better.

The conclusion of this report is NOT that PIs are by definition ineffective. To reach such a conclusion (or the opposite of course) requires a much broader and more in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness (and perhaps impact) of their work than was possible in this study. What can be said, however, is that many PIs insufficiently adhere to pre-conditions for effectiveness. For some of the PIs the question of effectiveness is perhaps irrelevant: their aim in development is to lighten the lives of some people in developing countries now by providing those things that they lack. But even then, and certainly if the ambitions of the PI is to contribute to a more lasting development process, there are lessons to learn from this study. To put it differently: the intention of this study has never been to say the final word about the work of PIs. On the contrary, the intention has been to say one of the first words and to base these words on the realities on the ground. It is only hoped that this study provides a start of a more informed debate about the potential role of PIs, about their true weaknesses and strengths in the hope that we can debate it in an open way without either of us being too defensive. It is my belief that only such an open debate on development cooperation can bring us any further. And, as always, it is hoped that many studies will follow.

List of abbreviations

CBO	Community-based Organisation
CIDA	Canada International Development Agency
CIDIN	Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DFID	Department for International Development
DGIS	Directorate General International Cooperation (the Netherlands)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoG	Government of Ghana
GoM	Government of Malawi
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
IDA	International Development Association
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFS	Co-financing system
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
NCDO	National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NGDO	Non Governmental Development Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OOF	Other Official Flows
PI	Private Initiative
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Introduction

'The drawbacks of government-to-government aid are now obvious, but private individuals and charities continue to make an important contribution to the development of Africa. People-to-people contacts convey values and set an encouraging example surpassing the immediate effect of small projects. Private aid is not always more efficient than public assistance, but its motives are clear and it is delivered with pluck and determination' (Calderisi 2007: 172-173).

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking at a low 166 in the 177 counting Human Development Index. It is landlocked (bordering with Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania), periodically haunted by famines, densely populated (with a population of some 13 million), suffering from a devastating HIV/Aids pandemic and, according to many of the development workers interviewed for this study, in many ways extremely conservative. It is also the African country with the third largest lake of the continent on its eastern border (Lake Malawi), with a sometimes stunning natural beauty, and with such an easy-going and friendly population that it is viewed as 'Africa for beginners'.

Table 1 Comparing Ghana and Malawi: selected development indicators

	Development indicator	Ghana	Malawi
1	Population (million), 2004	21.7	12.6
2	Annual population growth rate (%), 1975-2004	2.6	3.0
3	Human Development Index rank, 2004	136	166
4	GDP per capita (PPP US\$), 2004	2,240	646
5	Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and older), 2004	57.9	64.1
6	Adult literary rate, female (% ages 15 and older), 2004	49.8	54.0
7	Net primary enrolment ratio (%), 2004	65	95
8	Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births), 2004	112	175
9	HIV prevalence (% ages 15-49), 2005	2.3	14.1
10	People undernourished (% of total population), 2001-03	12	34
11	Urban population (% of total), 2004	47.1	16.7
12	Population under age 15 (% of total), 2004	39.5	47.3
13	Life expectancy at birth (years), 2000-05	56.7	39.6
14	Total fertility rate (births per woman), 2000-05	4.4	6.1
15	Public health expenditure (% of GDP), 2003	1.4	3.3
16	Health expenditure per capita (PPP US\$), 2003	98	46
17	Population with sustainable access to improved water source (%)	75	73
18	Population with sustainable access to improved sanitation (%), 2004	18	61
19	Net ODA total (US\$ millions), 2004	1,357.6	476.1
20	Net ODA per capita (US\$), 2004	62.7	37.8
21	Net ODA as % of GDP, 2004	15.3	25.3
22	Net foreign direct investment inflows (% of GDP), 2004	1.6	0.9
23	Other private flows (% of GDP), 2004	0.3	- 0.1
24	Total debt service (as % of GDP), 2004	2.7	3.2

Sources: http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_GHA.html + http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_MWI.html

The latter is the same expression used for a second African country: Ghana. And in line with Malawi, Ghana seems to deserve this qualification mainly on the basis of its relatively easy-going and friendly population making it a perfect country for a first (and second) experience of Sub-Sahara Africa. Bordered by Burkina Faso, Togo and Ivory Coast, Ghana overall is considered less poor than Malawi. At the same time, this West African country seems to be catching up with the HIV prevalence, has a lower adult literary rate and receives substantially more foreign aid than Malawi (also see Table 1).

However, the qualification of 'Africa for beginners' for both countries seems to be correct for another reason as well. Over the years, both countries have attracted not only an uncountable

number of young volunteers who wish to experience working in a developing country (and hopefully learn something for themselves in the process) but also numerous foreign well-doers (including from the Netherlands) funding and implementing a large number of development programmes. Not surprisingly, both countries feature in the top-10 of Linkis organisations in the Netherlands.

It are these do-it-self aid activists – in the Netherlands generally referred to as Private Initiatives (PIs) – that are central here. Their work, their relationships with their Southern partners and their potential contribution to development and poverty reduction are the core focus of this report. The main aim of this report is therewith to present one of the first more systematic insights in what is considered to be the central aim of these PIs: to fight poverty in the world. This already shows that this report, as well as the underlying research, departs from the idea that PIs are development organisations first of all and as such are part of the broader discussion on international cooperation.

Whether this is a correct point of departure is discussed in section 1 below. Furthermore, this section provides a taxonomy of PIs and a presentation of the main discussions around PIs. Section 2 provides a short overview of development cooperation with Ghana and Malawi distinguishing first of all between multilateral, bilateral and civilateral aid channels and then adding Dutch PIs as a fourth channel. This latter part is mainly based on an analysis of the Linkis dataset and on a survey among 118 Dutch PIs. Finally, section 3 provides the main findings from the field research covering a total of 28 PIs (15 active in Ghana and 13 in Malawi). But first, the objectives, central research questions and methodology are presented.

Objectives and methodology

The CIDIN study of PIs started several years ago when a few students at CIDIN tried to get a better understanding of the world of PIs. A few studies since then (Brok & Bouzoubaa 2005, Valk 2005, Hidde Donker & Spronk-van Grootheest 2006, Oost 2006) have been conducted the majority of which concentrated on the ‘Dutch world of PIs’. Whereas the CIDIN studies provided a growing insight in what was behind PIs they did not provide a further understanding of what they were actually involved in the South. This also meant that there was as yet insufficient insight in what is called here the actual work of PIs: their activities in developing countries. This lack of insight became a growing agony particularly since private initiatives increasingly moved to the forefront of the discussion on developing cooperation in the Netherlands. Within that discussion essentially two viewpoints fought with each other: those that felt that PIs are part of the solution to the problems of poverty in the world against those that felt that PIs were perhaps more part of the problem than the solution. Unfortunately, neither side had much to base their viewpoint on.

Departing from this, it was decided to conduct an explorative study into the ‘Southern world of PIs’. The aim of this study was (and is) to provide (1) a better understanding of what PIs are actually doing in the field of development and (2) to explore the extent to which PIs adhere to basic pre-conditions for effectiveness from a development cooperation perspective. These pre-conditions then are principles of partnership, target group focus, cooperation with other actors, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and sustainability. These elements have proven themselves over decades of international cooperation and belong, to the best of our present knowledge, to the list of ‘best practices’. Data for the first objective were principally collected through a survey under, and interviews with, Dutch PIs active in Ghana or Malawi (October 2006 – January 2007). The field research (February – June 2007) primarily provided data that addressed the pre-conditions for effectiveness.

More in detail, the following methodological steps were taken in the study:

1. Based on information gathered through internet search and/or provided by several Linkis-organisations (i.c. Impulsis, NCDO) and Wilde Ganzen a list of 257 Dutch PIs was made

of which it was fairly certain that they were active in either Ghana (187 organisations) or Malawi (70 organisations).

2. All these PIs received an electronic survey in which basic data was collected. The survey consisted of three parts: (1) background (name, year of establishment, core activities); (2) development cooperation (number of staff/volunteers, main objectives, countries active in, annual budget, sources of funding; and (3) activities in Ghana and/or Malawi (year started, sectors, partners or own implementation, type of support. Finally, respondents were asked whether they would be interested in contributing to the field phase of the research. Of the 118 PIs that returned the questionnaire a total of 88 (74.6%) were willing to contribute to this field phase.
3. Out of these 88 a total of 35 (20 active in Ghana and 15 in Malawi) were selected for an interview. The aim was to select a cross-section of PIs based on such criteria as the starting year, the sector(s) in which work, the type of relationship they have with the partner(s), the number of partners and the annual budget. In these interviews with representative of Dutch PIs specific attention was paid to their relationship with their partners, decision making processes, problems encountered, communication with the back donors of the PI and sustainability.
4. A final selection was then made based on the same type of criteria used earlier and the specific area in Ghana and/or Malawi in which the PI was active. This led to 15 PIs being selected for Ghana and 17 for Malawi. All selected Ghana-PIs have indeed been visited during the field research, whereas 13 Malawi-PIs could be included. The total number of PIs in the field research was thus 28.
5. During the field research, the partners of the PIs were visited for a period ranging between one to three days. Interviews were held with staff members, board members and with as many members of the target group as possible. In all cases, visits to specific project locations were included. Besides, interviews were held with bilateral and civilateral donors, local NGOs and government officials, while documents pertaining to specific sectors in which PIs were active were included in the analysis.

Although the structure of this report is perhaps self-evident it is important to stress what this report does not provide. First of all, as agreed with the individual PIs, none of them will be named in this report. Each of the PIs and their partners received a short individual report with the main findings pertaining to their specific intervention.¹ This report thus provides the 'broader picture'. Secondly, this report should not be regarded as an impact evaluation of the work of PIs active in Ghana and/or Malawi and as such it does not provide a final assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. For this, the time available for each of the projects was far too limited. Moreover, many of the PI-interventions taken up in the field research were still at an early stage of implementation.

It is imperative to sound a warning bell regarding the possibilities of generalising these findings to all PIs. Our knowledge about that sector as a whole is still limited. Although some preliminary data have been included in this report there is no comprehensive overview of the PI-sector in the Netherlands. Despite these constraints much effort has been made to ensure representativeness for Ghana and Malawi as much as possible using the three step approach mentioned above.

2. Private Initiatives in the Netherlands

'During this trip I have often wondered that everybody talks so easily about improving the world [...] Look, if you want to become a lawyer you have to study law. Pure logic. And those who want to cure people also need a proper education. Naturally. But improving the world? Obviously, anybody can do that. And that is dangerous nonsense: if I learned anything than it is that improving the world is a science on its own [...] Improving the world can sometimes best be left to professionals' (Van Kleef 2007).

Most Dutch citizens 'believe in the principle of development cooperation [or international cooperation as it is nowadays preferably called]' (Motivaction 2006: 11). As several EU studies show (e.g., EC 2005), they share that belief with many of their European counterparts. To conclude from this that these same citizens are well-known with development issues or even regard development cooperation as important in their lives would be a huge exaggeration, however. For most citizens the belief expressed in 'the principle of development cooperation' seems to be just an opinion not based on any specific knowledge about the subject² nor leading to any specific action in contribution to the lofty goals of development cooperation.³

True, many people in the Netherlands contribute financially to numerous development-related actions and organisations and many do that on a regular basis.⁴ Schuyt (2005) showed that the total Dutch 'philanthropist sector' had a turnover of €5.2 billion in 2003 (or 1.2% of GNP) and that 42% of this amount was donated by households and 43% by companies. Naturally, not all this money went into development cooperation: 'international aid' (as it is called by Schuyt c.s.) received 9% of this amount.⁵ Buying fair-trade products already seems to be a step too far for many people. 'Only' 15% is said to have bought something 'conscientiously' in a Fair-trade shop (Onze Wereld 2007: 29), although a recent Motivaction (2007) study showed more than half of Dutch citizens to be willing to pay up to 10% more for fair trade products. Fewer still feel that it is time to act by starting their own initiative and become what is referred to in this research as Private Initiative (PI).

The emergence of PIs: reasons and triggers

According to Termeer (doe-het-zelvers in ontwikkelingshulp), PIs are the visible form of 'structural changes in the public opinion about international cooperation. After the increasing professionalisation and institutionalisation of the last thirty years, the development sector is now facing privatisation – whether they like it or not'. This calls into question what are these 'structural changes in the public opinion' and whether they are indeed the main reasons behind the emergence of privatised development cooperation?

Although meant to describe different types of 'givers', the distinction made by the Donateursvereniging (www.donateursvereniging.nl) between four groups forms an interesting starting point. The first, and still biggest group, is formed by the 'trust me'-givers: the people that react positively to the message of 'trust us and leave everything to us'. The second group, called 'tell me', then emerged and demanded at least that the good goals would tell them what they were doing with the collected donations. This group was not looking for an exhaustive or detailed answer but principally was satisfied with statements such as that the target group was not being provided with fish but with a rod and learned to fish themselves. Even more recent is the group called 'show me'. This group is no longer satisfied with such general statements but wants to see in more detail what the organisation is doing (i.e., they want to see evidence of what is being done and decide on the basis of such evidence whether or not they want to support it). The fourth, smallest and youngest, group goes one step further. Called the 'involve me'-group, they want to be active themselves. They are no longer satisfied with donating but want 'to put their shoulder to the wheel' and 'physically do something themselves'. It will be clear that PIs generally fall into the fourth category of 'involve me'. At

the same time, this distinction between four groups does not tell as yet of where this call for greater accountability and even the desire to be active themselves comes from.

The *Donateursvereniging* itself mainly states that these developments not only reflect changes in the relationship between supporters and ‘good goals’ but changes in society at large. In determining the ‘start’ of PIs it is important then to distinguish between societal developments, individual triggers and personal circumstances. Increased communication possibilities (as part of globalisation), growing individualism and de-segregation (*ontzuijing*) of Dutch society are then often seen as such societal developments leading to an increased active engagement (Beerends & Broere 2004: 175, Develtere & Stessens 2006: 12, Van der Velden 2007: 6).⁶ At the same time, this socialisation of international cooperation is facilitated and strengthened by a government that emphasises the responsibility of citizens and creates subsidy mechanisms (i.e., the front offices) to support those that indeed take this responsibility. The former Dutch minister for development cooperation Van Ardenne, for instance, declared: ‘our solidarity is wearing out. More and more people feel that the Dutch welfare state has gone too far. I feel that development cooperation suffers from the same defect. Own responsibility is too easily rolled back to collective responsibility’. What is necessary then is a ‘cultural about-face’ in order to return development cooperation to where it belongs: the society. The most visible way in which the government supports PIs is through their assistance to the so-called front offices (see Box 1 and below).⁷

Box 1. Front offices and Linkis

Although some (traditional) development organisations already had subsidy possibilities for PIs, this type of subsidy got a real boost from 2001 onwards with the establishment of so-called front-offices with five Co-financing Agencies (Cordaid, Hivos, Icco, Oxfam Novib and Plan Nederland) and the public support organisation NCDO. With this, these organisations became important ‘serving hatches’ of government funds for development activities of Dutch citizens and at the same time sparing partners (or perhaps competitors) to organisations like Wilde Ganzen (see note 14). Although it took some time before the six front-offices managed to start their combined portal Linkis, this website (and the connected organisation) now forms the main entrance for PIs in search of funding for their development activities.

Despite the communal portal, the six Linkis-organisations have their own structure and their own criteria for subsidies to PIs. Even the name of the front-office differs between the organisations. The NCDO, for instance, indeed calls it front-office, but with Icco (since 2006 in combination with Edukans and Kerk in Actie) it is called *Impulsis*, Cordaid calls it the Private Initiatives Fund and Oxfam Novib refers to it as Linkis/Oxfam Novib. Perhaps more important, these front-offices have their types of subsidies, their own criteria and their own programmes in which the PI-activities should fit. Common again is that all depart from the idea that Dutch PIs work together with local partners (and as such are not directly implementing agencies themselves). With this, the front-offices are in line with the Dutch (and their own) tradition.

Another type of explanation refers to the growing negative judgement by citizens of the public sector in general and of the traditional development sector in particular. Thus, Termeer (2005) sees the hope expressed by ‘nearly every individual donor’ during the Tsunami campaign in the Netherlands that the money will be well spent as a sign of ‘major distrust’ in traditional aid agencies. Koch (2007) adds that ‘traditional aid organisations [...] have paid attention mainly to relations with their [Southern] partners and have turned their back on the Dutch society themselves’. This neglect then is seen as essential in the breach of trust with the general public. In that sense, PIs seem to be regarded as the consequence of neglect by the traditional agencies.

Consecutive public support studies in the Netherlands show that Dutch citizens regard development cooperation as important but also that there is (far) less trust that development aid is being used effectively. This relatively low trust in the effectiveness of aid translates into trust in different channels of aid. The 2007 Barometer study of the NCDO (Motivaction 2007)

showed an improvement: whereas in 2006 only 43% of the Dutch were of the opinion that development aid contributes to an improvement in the situation of people in developing countries, this was 52% one year later. In 2007 some 33% felt that government aid generally is not spent well (up from 37% in 2006). Only 17%, however, was of the opinion that government aid is generally spent (very) well. The lack of trust in government aid is also clear from the finding that 64% of the Dutch public regards the assistance provided by professional development organisations (e.g., NGOs) as '(very) useful' against 48% who feel the same towards the Dutch government. PIs (described as 'smaller voluntary organisations' in the study) are regarded as '(very) useful' by 43% of the Dutch public (Motivaction 2007).⁸ It are also these reasons why in more recent years the Dutch government (and in its wake also the traditional agencies) have become much more result-oriented in their research and communication strategies.

More direct, people start PIs because they experience a 'moral case for aid' and because of 'some sense of responsibility or duty to help people suffering and in need' (Easterly 2007: 119). For some, this moral case is based on their religious beliefs and contacts (as is the case with many of the PIs active in Malawi) while for others the trigger is a direct confrontation with poverty. Naturally, the immediate cause to start a PI is in reality quite diverse. Some of the PIs in this research were, for instance, set up because the founder(s), friends and/or relatives used to work (e.g., as a volunteer) in the concerned country. In other cases, the founder fell in love, moved to Malawi and decided to start an orphanage or a specific, and accidental, meeting during a holiday trip to Southern Africa led to a programme that nowadays covers several villages. Others again decided to dedicate their live to assisting the poor and after a training by chance end up in Malawi. Part of the PIs active in Ghana was principally started because the founder originates from that country and uses his contacts (often relatives) to support development interventions.

The above already indicates that the trigger for PIs principally has to be found 'within' the founders themselves. Brok & Bouzoubaa (2005) showed that founders and supporters of PIs often act out of a feeling of 'solidarity' or 'a felt need to mean something for others, to contribute to poverty reduction and to let others share in their own prosperity'. Important triggers are also 'self-development motives', 'feelings of guilt'⁹ and a 'sense of duty' (often strengthened by religious persuasion). Although acknowledging that a negative attitude towards more formal development organisations (whether government or NGOs) is certainly a characteristic of PIs, this study concludes that this can hardly be seen as a primary reason why PIs are formed in the first place.

True as that may be, the link between the emergence of the 'fourth channel' and the (negative) opinions about traditional development agencies remains wide open. Context (2005), for instance, although not explicitly acknowledging a direct link with the emergence of new development actors, stresses that the 'moral authority and legitimacy of private [traditional] development organisations is under pressure'. Van Voorst (2005: 8) further shows that many regard 'aid and aid organisations as rather abstract [making] identification with projects difficult'. And according to Termeer (2005), today's 'individualist citizens [...] are not immune to the needs of the world [...] As mature, critical citizens they give a highly personal interpretation to their aid. They want to see results, as fast and concrete as possible. And if the established organisations are not capable to answer to this call, they will take control themselves'.

The latter points at another element in the PI-NGO relationship of importance in our understanding of the emergence of PIs. A study by Man & Van Hemert (2006) concluded that the PI-initiators, confronted with a specific need contact traditional organisations, receive no support for their idea and then decide to start an own organisation. Despite the fact that the empirical basis for this rather firm conclusion is perhaps a bit flimsy, it points at a less than

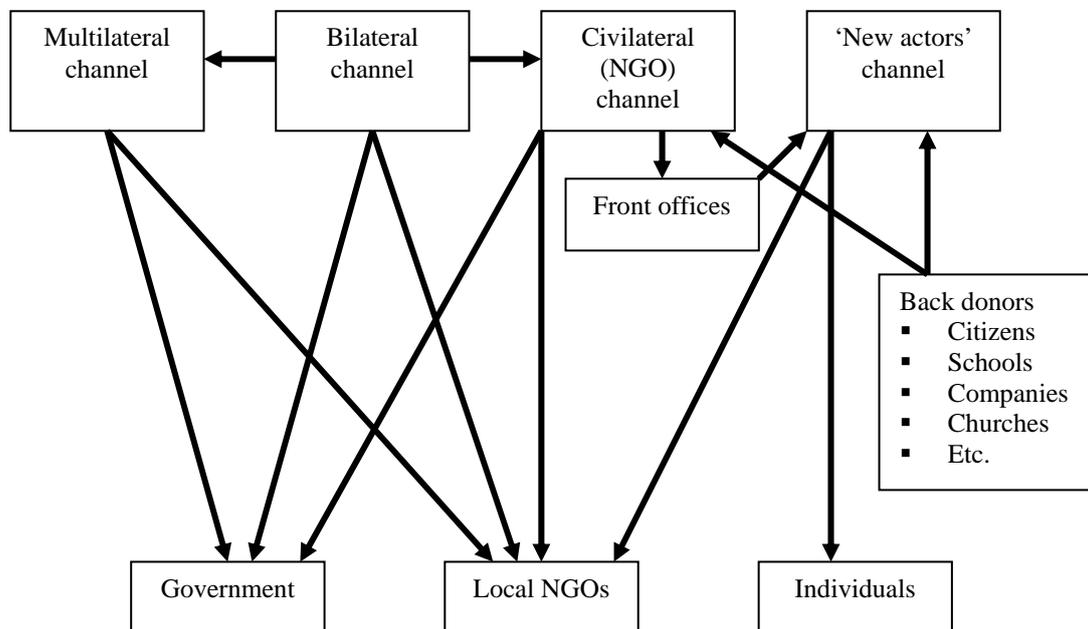
cordial relationship between PIs and their bigger ‘brothers and sisters’ which might be yet another element in understanding the materialisation of PIs.

Finally, more personal circumstances might trigger such materialisation as well. The long-term societal processes as distinguished by the SCP (i.e., individualisation, informatisation, intensification, informalisation and internationalisation) are in turn seen as influenced by an increasing ‘average educational level and growth in welfare’ (Dekker et.al 2007: 70). This calls into question whether such elements as age, (economic) welfare, well-being, and religion are determinants in the growing number of PIs. As far as known, no specific study has yet been undertaken aimed at understanding the relation between PIs and such personal circumstances although some shed a bit a light on this issue (see below).

Box 2. Four channels for development cooperation

Figure 1 provides a simplified aid chain¹⁰ depicting (at the top) the four channels of international aid (multilateral, bilateral, civilateral and ‘new actors’) and at the bottom the direct recipients (governments, local NGOs and individuals). All arrows present lines of funding (and in cases more content-wise relationships as well). The figure then shows that the bilateral channel (e.g., the Dutch government) contributes financially directly to the multilateral (e.g., through annual contributions as well as specific programme-based contributions) and to the civilateral or NGO-channel. In the Dutch case, the latter refers to the subsidies provided under the MFS (Co-financing System) but also to more programme- or project-based contributions through, for instance, the Dutch embassies in developing countries. The fourth channel of ‘new actors’ receives its funding from its own back donors such as individual citizens, schools and companies (a group that also provide support to the civilateral channel) and from the so-called front offices. These front offices are part of five of the six former MFOs (i.e., Cordaid, Hivos, Icco c.s., Oxfam Novib and Plan Nederland) and the public support organisation NCDO. Nearly all funds distributed through the front offices to the ‘new actors’ derive from the Dutch government and they are as such part of the subsidy agreement between the NGOs and the government.

Figure 1 The Aid Chain



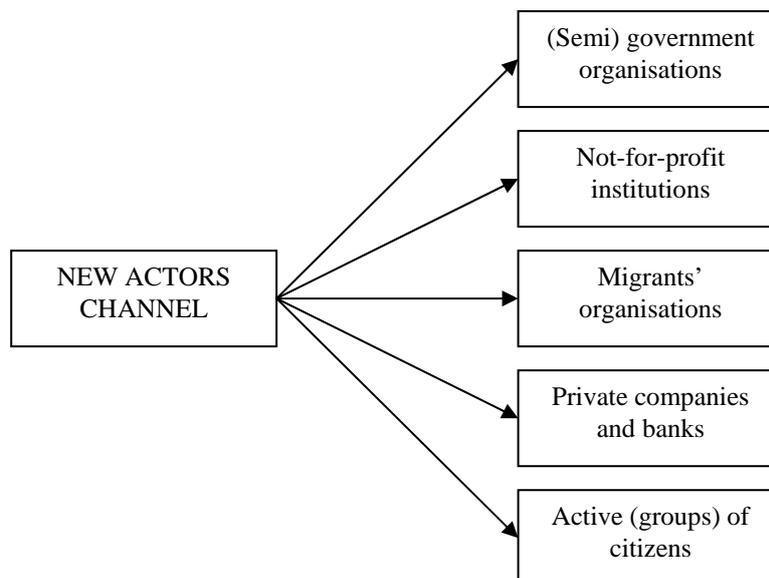
All these aid channels finance development interventions in the South. Although multilateral and bilateral donors principally work through governments, they also provide direct funding to local NGOs. The civilateral channel principally finances activities of local NGOs but occasionally ventures into direct funding of government departments in developing countries. With using a broad definition of local NGOs (e.g., including local churches which are also active in development activities), PIs principally work through these local NGOs. Occasionally, ‘new actors’ fund individuals in developing countries, an area in which none of the other channels ventures.

Classifying Private Initiatives

Up to some ten years ago, the Dutch development community was fairly surveyable with essentially three types of players: bilateral, multilateral and civilateral (i.e., development NGOs) donors. Since then, this 'development field' has been shaken up with the emergence of a large group of societal organisations active in the field of development (assistance) (Context 2005: 9). Develtere & Stessens (2006: 4) show this group (which they refer to as 'the fourth pillar' or the fourth channel for development aid – also see Box 1) to be very diverse consisting as it does of, for example, 'support groups for missionaries or volunteers, trade unions, health insurance organisations, farmer' organisations, private companies, co-operatives and social economy organisations, schools, health care institutions, youth organisations, local authorities, migrants' organisations, etc.'

Within this socialisation of development cooperation,¹¹ five types of non-traditional 'new development actors' (also see Beerends & Broere 2004) are generally distinguished (also see Figure 2).¹² Context (2005: 8-9) distinguishes between (1) (semi-)government organisations (e.g., local councils, police, harbour authorities, auditor's office and land registry); (2) not-for-profit institutes (e.g., in health); (3) migrants' organisations; and (4) private companies and banks. These four actors fall under the category of '(mostly already existing) organisations which do not have development cooperation as key task but which are active in that field' (Brok & Bouzoubaa 2005). The second category, described as 'organisations with development cooperation as key task and which have been set up specifically to fulfil that task'. This latter category shows that a fifth 'actor' should be added. It is this actor that is central here: active (groups of) citizens.

Figure 2 New actors in development cooperation



In this study, the term PIs is then reserved for those citizens who, often but not necessarily organised in (small) groups, are truly active in striving for 'a better world' (Schulpen 2007).¹³ As such, they form the active part of the public support for international cooperation and within that broad group of active civilian supporters at least six types can be distinguished (also see Table 2).¹⁴ (Political) lobby groups (type 1) covers, for instance, anti-globalists who protest against the international policy of the World Bank, the IMF, WTO and/or the Dutch government.¹⁵ Type 2 PIs are formed by those (groups of) citizens who focus on collecting and raising funds (and/or goods) which are then donated to (traditional or non-traditional) development organisations. This type is not involved in the actual implementation of development interventions and normally also has no direct contacts with organisations or

people in developing countries. These type 2 PIs were extremely active during the SHO fund raising campaign following the Tsunami but there are many more structural groups.

Table 2 Private Initiatives – a taxonomy

Type	Description
1 (Political) lobby groups	Private citizens who (in the Netherlands or abroad) try to influence international policy with regard to developing countries and international cooperation.
2 Fundraising activities (in cash and/or materials)	Private citizens who set up fund raising activities for development interventions supported and/or implemented by others (e.g., traditional NGOs or PIs of type 6).
3 Philanthropists / Charitable foundations	Wealthy citizens active in the good goal sector often with their own organisation and programme(s).
4 Volunteers	Private citizens who work as temporary development workers in a developing country (or with a development organisation)
5 Individual sponsoring	Private citizens who (financially) support a specific individual (or family) in a developing country.
6 Development organisations	Private citizens who are directly linked (for funding, expertise and/or implementation) to concrete development interventions in developing countries which cover more than one individual or family.

Source: adapted from Schulpen 2007.

Type 3 initiatives are the ‘millionaires’ – a group of wealthy citizens who are active in the good goal sector. Probably one of the first names popping up is Bill Gates who’s Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently joined up with Warren Buffet to form (with a budget of some US\$ 60 billion) probably the biggest good goal in the world. But also in the Netherlands, more of these wealthy philanthropists have emerged and/or have become more visible. A recent article by Van Immerzeel in the magazine *Miljonair* (p. 68-75) portrayed 25 Dutch philanthropists. Naturally, not all of the activities supported by these millionaires’ foundation are aimed at developing countries but many are. Table 3 provides some examples of such foundations set up by the ‘happy few’ in the Netherlands supporting activities in developing countries.¹⁶ In some cases, these foundations also act as a source of subsidy for other development organisations (whether of a PI or traditional nature).

Table 3 Ten Dutch philanthropists and their foundations active in the field of development cooperation

Foundation	Financial endowment (million €)	Fields of support (e.g.)
1 Turing Foundation	100	Leprosy, education
2 De Waal Foundation	250	Destitute children and mothers Latin America
3 Foundation for Earth, Mankind through Inspiration and Initiative	100	International development cooperation
4 Oikonomos Foundation	n.a.	Education, Private Sector Development, micro credit
5 Breukhoven Foundation	n.a.	Orphans
6 D.O.B Foundation	n.a.	Private Sector Development, meso finance
7 Andromeda Management Services	n.a.	Private Sector Development
8 Stichting Wereldfoundation	n.a.	Housing
9 Stichting the Good Shepherd	0,15	Water supply, old aged
10 Dirk Kruijt Foundation	n.a.	Sport projects for destitute youngsters

Source: Van Immerzeelen 2007: 68-75

Type 4 is a common sight in many developing countries and concerns (often young) citizens who voluntarily work in development projects for any duration of time (ranging from a few weeks to months or even years). In the Netherlands alone, there are dozens of organisations (whether commercial or not) offering ‘voluntary work’ (see, for instance, Van Gastel et.al. 2005 and Schulpen 2006). Type 5 are those citizens who, often because they simply met that person during their travels abroad, support (a) specific person(s) for instance with education. The final, and for this study most central, PI-type 6 is formed by those citizens who are involved in concrete individual-exceeding development interventions.¹⁷

Apart from the fact that Type 6 PIs cover a very broad arena of (groups of) individuals, there are three issues that should be stressed in this typology. First: it often concerns collective action with Type 4 and 5 being the obvious (but not necessary) exceptions. Certainly not in all cases this concerns officially registered organisations, although many (if not most) of the Type 6 are officially registered (mostly as *stichting*). Second: the PI-types distinguished here are not necessarily mutually excluding. Practically all Type 6 PIs are, for instance, involved in fundraising (albeit principally for their own organisation) and might use any number of volunteers. Following this, and third, people and organisations may switch from one type to another over time. The most clear switch is one towards type 6 (e.g., citizens starting out as volunteers working in a specific country and ending up with starting their own development organisations or citizens starting as type 5 and gradually moving into development interventions covering a broader target group). It shows that the start of PIs central here can be quite different.

The PI-discussion

Particularly since the Tsunami hit the shores of several Asian countries at the end of 2005 and in the Netherlands the stunning amount of Euro 200 million was raised from the general public for relief and development aid, Private Initiatives (PIs) have been at the centre of attention in the development debate. Initially, they were mainly regarded as an expression of public support for development cooperation and for development in general. The fact that the public support organisation by excellence (i.e., the NCDO) was one of the main subsidy provider to the work of PIs in the Netherlands and abroad is a clear indication for that viewpoint.

Of late, the ‘do-it-yourself’ sector of international cooperation seems to have gone through a process of ‘adulthood’ with the streamlining of government subsidy through the so-called Linkis organisation and, perhaps even more importantly, by political statements of the importance of these PIs not only in light of public support in the Netherlands but also in light of their contribution to the development process in the South. As mentioned above, one of the central themes in the policy of the former minister for development cooperation concerned the socialisation of international cooperation and with PIs she seems to have been well-served.¹⁸ The announcement to set aside the sum of Euro 50 million for ‘public, societal, private and business initiatives’ that contribute to the MDGs can be seen as an agreement by her successor minister Koenders to this policy line.¹⁹

Such political backing of private initiatives in the field of development cooperation probably has to be (at least partly) regarded as a genuine belief that they can make a contribution to development (see below). At the same time, as the Labour-spokesperson for development cooperation stated, ‘the fact that sensible politicians with a heart for development cooperation embrace the private projects has everything to do with the search for public support for international cooperation’ (Samsom 2006). Finally, it should be acknowledged that such backing is also a reaction to the ‘societal reality’ of the increasing involvement of individuals, companies and semi-government agencies in international cooperation. Partly the outcome of government policy, there then seems to no alternative for that same government (as well as for other traditional players in the field of development cooperation) as to further support and

facilitate this reality.²⁰ The fact that a large part of the Dutch public trusts these PIs is only an additional political incentive for this support (see above).

From the above, it could be determined that PIs are considered important by their supporters because they feel that they are (1) crucial in the search for public support in the Netherlands itself and/or (2) an important element in the fight against poverty in developing countries.²¹ Variations on these themes can be heard from the circles of PIs themselves with many emphasising that with them no money is lost. In other words: the rake-off is non-existing.

The public support claim at first sight seems to be the least controversial. Generally, PIs are regarded as the active part of public support and they are generally also seen as important vehicles in strengthening and broadening this public support. Whether particularly the latter is true remains to be seen. Brok & Bouzoubaa (2005), while departing from the idea that PIs are an expression of public support, conclude that they do contribute to strengthening public support but not to broadening it: 'Private initiatives reach large groups of people who are already, in one way or another, involved in development cooperation. Their activities are thus of little importance in enlarging public support thereby strengthening the idea of being "guilty of special pleading"'. The discussion into the relationship between PIs and public support is certainly in need of more fundamental and scientific study. Studies which should then also question the assumption that support to PI development interventions in the South is a legitimate 'tool' for strengthening public support for international cooperation in the Netherlands.

However, it is particularly the second 'advantage' of PIs mentioned above (i.e., their alleged contribution to poverty reduction) that others are critical about. For some, PIs are simply amateurs while what development cooperation needs are experts. In a recent critical article by one of a leading Dutch journalist in the field of development (Koch 2007), PIs are criticised for their focus on activities which 'professionals want to get rid off' (e.g., construction projects for schools and/or medical centres and the provision of goods), for their focus on countries that are also on the list of popular holiday destinations (thereby neglecting much poorer countries that are not favoured by tourists) and for the impression that they as donors are in the driver seat. This latter characteristic is also one of the conclusions of the Flemish study into the fourth channel. According to Develtere & Stessens (2006a) PIs 'smell like donorship'; they feel they have something to offer.²²

Besides, PIs with their alleged focus on direct projects in developing countries could just as easily create the impression with the general public that such projects suffice in creating 'development' (interview director CSC Malawi, 25-7-2007). Particularly since the 1990s, actors within development cooperation at large have realised that such projects are not sufficient and that instead more political, economic, social and perhaps cultural changes at national and international level are required.²³ The change within the bilateral development discourse towards good governance, budget support and international negotiations (e.g., WTO) are a case in point, as is the increased emphasis within the NGO sector on organisational strengthening, capacity building, (international) advocacy and lobby.²⁴ Taking such developments as correct would mean that PIs – with their concrete activities as building a hospitals, schools and water pumps – have to be regarded as a 'supplement' to the assistance provided by the other channels of development aid. Put differently: PIs fill the gap that is left by these other channels in their increased move away from direct poverty reduction projects (also see Vossen in *Vice Versa – Van veldwerker tot professional*).²⁵ At the same time, the question should be asked whether they are essentially not countering the NGO-activities which are increasingly aimed at strengthening the ability of local organisations and (certainly also) the government to take care of service provision in fields as education, health and water supply.

PI's alleged focus on direct poverty reduction projects leads some (e.g., Termeer 2005) to conclude that PIs might be capable of many things but that for structural development more is required. In other words: PIs are restricted to development aid and aid only has limited potential.²⁶ Essentially, this reasoning departs from the dominant ideas within the official international development discourse which values more structural changes, or perhaps better: changes in the structure of the aid architecture as well as in that of developing countries themselves.²⁷

Maxwell (2005) aptly summarises the new aid architecture or aid paradigm: 'it emphasises the Millennium Development Goals as an overarching framework, and lays out the link between the MDGs, nationally owned poverty reduction strategies, macro-economic policy (including trade), effective public expenditure management, and harmonised aid in support of good governance and good politics. It also recognises the concern for security and poorly performing countries, as well as the international trade and finance agenda' (The Washington consensus is dead!). More specifically, the new aid architecture for instance emphasises programme aid as superior to the project-based alternative (e.g., because it lowers transaction costs or because development projects turned out to be unsustainable due to the lack of commitment from recipient governments or other development partners).²⁸

It will be clear that such changes in thinking and acting of traditional aid agencies are often outside the scope of PIs. It can hardly be expected of PIs to contribute directly to such goals as good governance or fairer trade regimes. Many of these lessons are hardly of interest to PIs for the simple reason that they are generally active in development projects and do not have the capacity, interest and/or means to engage in anything that moves beyond concrete interventions within a specific timeframe, target group and locality. This does not mean that all lessons learned in over sixty years of development cooperation are irrelevant for PIs. Particularly those learned in the project type of development aid seem to be of interest here leading to long lists of do's and don'ts in such fields as partnership and cooperation, participation of the target group, sustainability, the learning capacity of organisations, and targeting.

Box 3. A new two-gap idea

The question seem legitimate to what the relationship is between (1) changes in the roles of NGOs which in turn are based on changes in the aid architecture, (2) increased pressure to strengthen public support for international aid leading to pressure to show results and (3) the growing diversity in the supply side of aid (notably 'socialisation'). Perhaps the answer lies in regarding the first two as leading to two gaps and the third one as the answer for filling these gaps.

The reasoning then would be that the changing roles of NGOs (i.e., the traditional development organisations) is given in by pressures from their back donors to harmonise and align with bilateral and multilateral donors as well as by their own assessment of what works and what doesn't work in development cooperation. It leads these traditional organisations to moving away from more concrete development projects with a clearly determinable target group of poor people to more abstract activities such as civil society strengthening and lobby/advocacy. These more abstract interventions in which individual organisations are only one of many players are much more difficult to combine with the call for results (and particularly for showing results) by politicians and the general public in the West. Put differently: given these changing interventions it is far from easy to show to your constituency what you, as an individual organisation, reach with the funds entrusted to you. That makes it more difficult for the general public to trust that these traditional organisations indeed have a positive impact in the field of development and poverty reduction. And, in turn, diminishing trust leads to questions about the legitimacy of these traditional development actors.

This *legitimacy-gap* is then filled by private initiatives who are highly trusted not only because they might be run by your neighbour, your relative or your friend but also because they have far less problems in showing what they are doing and what one Euro entrusted to them leads to. To put it simple: they have a picture to show what they have reached. A picture of a school build with money

collected from the general public, a picture of a water pump constructed, a picture of poor people looking happily in the camera because they receive blankets, seeds, fertilisers, books, clothes, etc. This is definitely a much more powerful tool than a picture of a lobby process or a training in light of capacity building (if you manage to take such a picture at all). Besides, PIs are keen enough to emphasise another Achilles heel of traditional development organisations: the so-called 'rake off'. Prompted by several critical reflections about the salaries in traditional organisations and based on a widely held belief that a large part of the development funds of these organisations never reaches the poor but is spend on travels, DSA and expensive lunches, many PIs are keen enough to emphasise that with them every Euro is used for the poor. Some painstakingly calculate their overhead costs to show that they keep them at a minimum. It probably strengthens the idea with the general public that traditional organisations are a costly (and thus less effective) channel for aid and that PIs on the contrary ensure that they receive value for their donated funds.

A second gap filled by PIs is exactly in that service area which the more traditional organisations increasingly leave behind: the *direct poverty reduction gap*. Without criticising the sincere 'belief' with many traditional organisations (based on their own assessment and backed by substantial scientific evidence) that isolated development projects aimed at service delivery seldom if ever lead to structural changes in the poverty situation of people, the fact remains that there is something terribly wrong with service delivery in developing countries. Many children do not go to school because there simply is no nearby school or because there are no books; many people still have to walk for miles to reach a health posts only to find out that there are no medicines for them or they can simply not afford them; many people would like to receive a micro credit but there are no facilities available; and many farmers are in desperate need for seeds and fertilisers which the responsible government organisations fails to deliver. It are these services which many of the PIs deliver. They thus provide the direct assistance which 'under normal circumstances' they would probably also consider to be the responsibility of, for instance, the government. This would also mean that they often act as a back stop for these services which are often unavailable to large groups of people in developing countries.

So, in 1992 Riddell & Robinson concluded that projects have a higher chance of being successful if the project objectives coincide with those of the target group, the members of that target group are frequently consulted and are involved in all stages of decision making. At the same time, strong and competent leadership is required and well-trained and motivated staff. Arts (1998) in his study on political influence of NGOs adds that their success is mainly dependent on their expertise, while Riddell (1994) and Farrington & Bebbington (1993) emphasise that many NGOs are weak in learning from experiences. Also the need for a contextual analysis is emphasised without which many projects lack a wider perspective and lack the capacity to judge the activities in light of national priorities (Oakley 1999). Surr (1995) simply concludes that small NGO projects, although providing certain benefits to the poor, are not changing the status quo simply because of their small scale. Perhaps then one of the best lessons to be learned is not to be too optimistic about the contribution to poverty reduction.

Finally and analogous to the increased popularity of NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s because of their (assumed) cost-effectiveness in reaching the poor, because they are seen as representing 'the poor and vulnerable' and because of their greater public legitimacy (Nancy & Yontcheva 2006: 5-6), it might be assumed that PIs at present are regarded as an ideal channel because they are seen as having direct contacts with the poor, they provide services that neither the government nor the traditional donors provide and they are viewed as important in creating (a new) legitimacy to development cooperation. If this gap-filling idea has any merits, it might as well be expected that PIs will in future be confronted by the same type of critique as the NGOs were and are. If they are indeed viewed as an integral part of the 'development industry' than it would be logical to suppose that they in future will either disappear or will be pressured to professionalise.

2. Development aid to Ghana and Malawi

In April 2002, the Government of Malawi (GoM) published the final draft of the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The PRSP promised a 'new approach to poverty reduction' recognising 'the need to do a balancing act between measures to promote medium and long-term growth and policies to reduce the short to medium term plight of the majority of the population' (GoM 2002: 16). This 'balancing act' then led to a focus on four pillars for intervention (sustainable pro-poor growth, human capital development, quality of life, and good governance) while ensuring that 'cross cutting issues including HIV/AIDS, Gender, Environment and Science and Technology, are mainstreamed in all four pillars' (ibid: 19).

A few years later, the new government (which took over in 2004) presented the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS)²⁹ which identified 'six key priority areas [for the period 2006-2001 aimed at achieving] economic growth and wealth creation which are critical for immediate improvement in the economic well-being of Malawians': (1) agriculture and food security; (2) irrigation and water development; (3) transport infrastructure development; (4) energy generation and supply; (5) integrated rural development; and (6) prevention and management of nutrition disorders, HIV and Aids. With the underlying philosophy of 'permanent poverty reduction through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development', the purpose of the MGDS is 'to serve as a single reference document for policy makers in Government; the Private Sector; Civil Society Organizations; Donors and Cooperating Partners and the general public on socio-economic growth and development priorities for Malawi'.³⁰

Essentially the same holds for Ghana. Its Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) of 2003 was to ensure continued donor-support and to obtain debt relief under the HIPC initiative. The overarching goal of the GPRS is to achieve sustainable equitable growth, accelerated poverty reduction, and the protection of the vulnerable and excluded within a decentralised democratic environment. The GPRS is based around five pillars: (1) Macro-economic stability; (2) Production and gainful employment; (3) Human resource development & basic services; (4) Vulnerability & exclusion; and (5) Governance. Whereas the 'employment' - pillar identifies several sectors crucial for Ghana, the emphasis clearly is on agriculture; not surprisingly considering the fact that 60% of the working force consists of farmers and that food crop farmers are the poorest group in Ghana.

Human development – a pillar of specific interest to PIs – covers such areas as health, HIV/Aids control, population management, water and sanitation, and education and training acknowledging that significant gaps exist in access to and utilisation of these basic services by the poor. Main problems in these fields include poorly equipped and supervised public basic schools and low quality of health care in combination with high user fees discouraging many poor people from consulting qualified health personnel.

In Ghana various groups of extreme poor are identified – groups which for a large part could almost be copy pasted to the situation in Malawi: small farmers and agricultural labourers, children in difficult circumstances, people living with HIV/Aids, elderly without access to family care and pension, people suffering from chronic diseases and disadvantaged women. Perhaps for Malawi undernourishment should be added as a major problem periodically affecting large groups of people. What holds for groups of poor also seems to hold for many of the elements grouped under governance with the Ghana PRSP emphasising the lack of effective institutional structures, roles and procedures, the lack of enforcement, and the unacceptably poor conditions of service.

As mentioned, the national poverty reduction policies and frameworks are supposed to provide guidance not only for the government, but also for its development partners. This

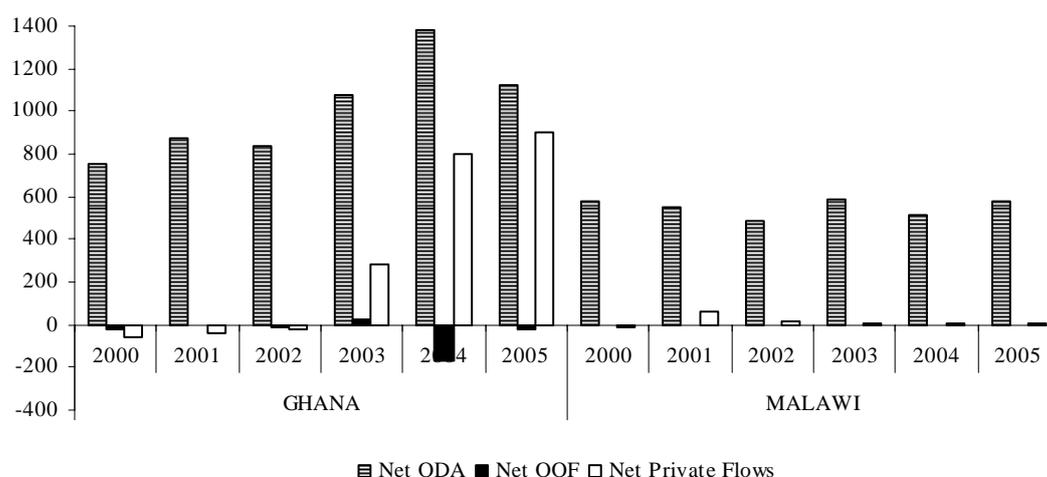
means that, as the Government of Malawi states, '[i]t is expected that donors and co-operating partners will align their support and activities to the MGDS'. Naturally, this then should hold for all such partners whether of bilateral, multilateral or civilateral nature. It will be clear that this requires an alignment and coordination process for which one of the first requirements is that there is a clear idea what the different development partners are doing. It remains highly unlikely, however, that the activities of all development partners are known. Perhaps one could even say that the more one steps down through the different channels of development aid, the less clear it is what these channels are supporting. In general, it is to be expected that information about the bilateral and multilateral donors is substantially less obscure than those of the civilateral channel and that the activities of the PIs (as fourth channel) are the murkiest.

Apart from the many similarities between the Ghanaian and Malawian PRSP, there are several differences one of which directly concerns the way foreign donor agencies are viewed. The 2002 Malawi PRSP severely chastised foreign donors for their assumption that 'everything they do is in the best interests of Malawians and they are above criticism'. The donor community is then said to 'not effectively use their resources for poverty reduction' or worse to 'help to exacerbate poverty by undermining Government's planning and priority setting and adding to Malawi's debt burden'. Moreover, donors 'still make the crucial decisions on funding [pressurising the] Government to conform'. Although it remains unclear whether the proposed solutions to these problems (e.g., changing the mindset of aid dependence, creating ownership, more budget support, etc.) have indeed materialised, these critical notes at the address of the donor community (including the NGOs) remain important if only because the ultimate goal of a Malawi not relying on donors is seemingly still far away.³¹

With 70% of government spending in 2001 coming from foreign donors, the situation in Ghana is not much better. Interestingly, the 2002-2005 PRSP of Ghana is substantially less critical of donors and restricts itself to remarks in the order of '[...] multilateral and bilateral donors make a significant contribution to development expenditure in favour of health and education'. However, at the same time it is recognised that the levels of 'donor support for poverty reduction and growth [ranging from 72% of total expenditure for industry in 2001 and 90% in energy] represents an unsustainable situation in the long term' (GoG 2002: 2). Thus, although donor funds are certainly not only applauded in the PRSP,³² there is no frontal attack on donor's behaviour vis-à-vis the government as in the case of Malawi. It is, however, emphasised that the management of donor funds has to be improved substantially as there is 'no comprehensive list of donor funding' and it is doubted whether donors truly respond to national development policies and priorities.³³

Considering the lack of an overview of bilateral and multilateral development aid by the Malawian and Ghanaian governments, the DAC (Development Assistance Committee) is one of the few organisations one can turn to. Net ODA to Malawi over the period 2001-2005 accounted for nearly 20% of GDP, while it is projected to increase to 24% over the period 2006-2010 (IMF 2007: 13). ODA thus provides an important part of government and development spending in the country and as far as total capital flows³⁴ into Malawi are concerned by far the most important one. Net ODA to Ghana in 2005 accounted for a total of 10.6% of GNI showing that foreign aid is also important for this West African country. However, with private flows picking up since 2003, foreign aid lost part of its over-importance for Ghana. Table 4 clearly shows that certainly for Malawi ODA was and remains of paramount importance; over the period 2000-2005, 98.2% of foreign flows to Malawi were on account of ODA.

Table 4 Foreign flows into Ghana and Malawi – 2000-2005 (at constant 2005 dollars)



Source: OECD database (www.oecd.com)

Not surprisingly, (bilateral and multilateral donors in tandem with NGO-) donors take up their place in nearly all priority areas as mentioned in the poverty strategies of Malawi and Ghana from health to private sector development, from micro financing to fighting the HIV/Aids pandemic and from education to agriculture. This section provides a rough overview of development assistance to both countries. First, bilateral and multilateral ODA will be discussed followed by a discussion of civilateral aid. The lack of data on the latter channel of development assistance is compensated by focussing on the Netherlands. Finally, the new actors (i.e., PIs) and their assistance to both countries are discussed. This part is mainly based upon a short survey among Dutch PIs.

Bilateral and multilateral donors

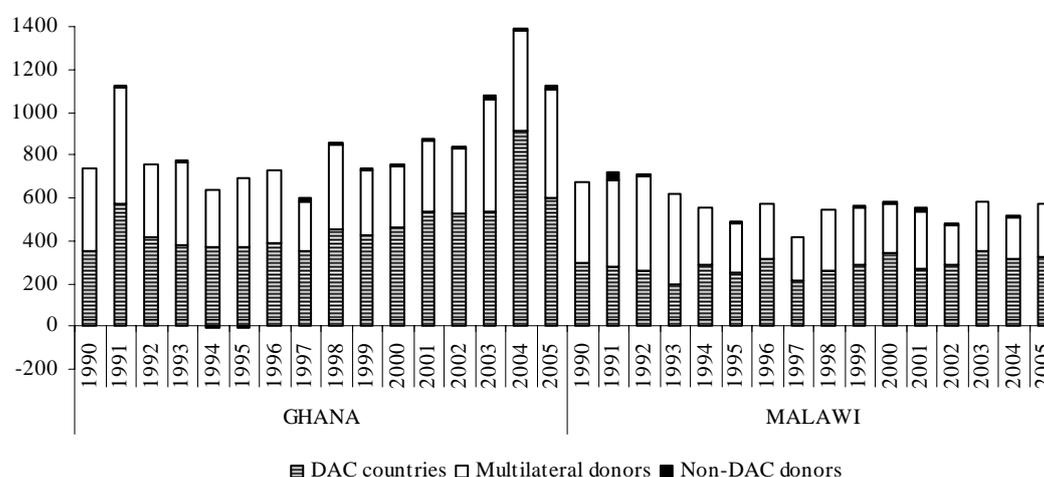
Whereas the Malawian PRSP thus includes many of the issues central in the policies of the international donor community, it is striking that in financial terms the reaction of that community was modest at best with total net ODA declining in 2002 and picking up from 2003 onwards but not reaching the same amounts as were reached in the early 1990s. In that sense, the funding reaction of donors to the PRSP is comparable to that to the first free general elections in an independent Malawi in 2004 (also see Table 5 showing net ODA figures for the period 1990-2005).³⁵

Naturally, the funding reaction of some donors was more in line with expectations. In general, the DAC countries increased their ODA level after 1994 and from 2002 onwards, whereas the multilateral donors and the non-DAC donors reacted exactly opposite.³⁶ Over the period 1990-2005, total net ODA (at constant 2005 prices) to Malawi stood at more than US\$ 9.1 billion with DAC countries providing 49.5%, multilateral donors 49.4% and non-DAC donors (notably Arab countries, Iceland and Korea) the remaining 1.1%. Over the same period, Ghana received some US\$ 13.7 billion of which 55.9% from DAC countries, 43.5% from multilateral sources and the remaining 0.6% from non-DAC bilateral donors.³⁷

Bilateral aid (from DAC countries) to Malawi mainly comes from only a few donors. Over the entire period 1990-2005, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Japan, Norway and Denmark combined provided US\$ 3.781,3 million or 83.5% of the total DAC bilateral net ODA.³⁸ The United Kingdom alone was good for more than 30%. Overall, total bilateral ODA from DAC countries for the period 1990-2005 varied between US\$ 0.03 million (Portugal) to US\$ 1.380 million (United Kingdom). For Ghana, the same applies. Here, eight DAC donors (i.e., Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands,

the United Kingdom and the United States) together sign for 93.8% of all bilateral DAC aid to Ghana between 1990 and 2005.³⁹ In Ghana, the United Kingdom took care of 21% of DAC aid.

Table 5 Total net ODA to Ghana and Malawi (1990-2005) - in million US\$ (constant 2005 prices)



Source: OECD database (www.oecd.com)

Multilateral aid to Malawi is even more strongly concentrated with the EC and IDA providing 60.2% (US\$ 2.873,7 million) of all multilateral net ODA to Malawi over the period 1990-2005. All other multilateral donors stay well below the average net ODA per multilateral organisation. In Ghana, the dominance of IDA and the EC is even more pronounced. Together these two donors take up 80.2% of all multilateral net ODA to the country over 1990-2005.

Finally: the most recent survey on monitoring the Paris Declaration (OECD 2007) shows that only 54% of development aid is reported in the national budget (which in turn is regarded as one of the criteria for the extent of donor alignment with national development priorities). In effect, of the total funds disbursed during FY 2005 of US\$ 493 million only US\$264 million was on the budget estimates of the government. Not surprisingly, the Malawian government is called upon to 'strengthen systems for recording external development assistance'. The same should perhaps be said of donors themselves. In Ghana, a much larger percentage of aid (96%) is reported in the national budget. For some donors (e.g., Germany, EU, Netherlands), the government even has larger estimates than were actually disbursed. Also the latter points at the trouble experienced by the government to keep track of donor funds and, accordingly, to take along development aid in its budget plans. At the same time, it is even more likely that both governments have even less insight in the funds coming in from another aid channel: NGOs.

Civilateral development assistance

Interestingly, such an overview of civilateral aid does not even exist with the DAC. Donors do report to the DAC which part of their budget is channelled through NGOs but these figures are notoriously unreliable. Besides, at best they cover only that part of the aid budget being disbursed through their formal subsidy structures for NGOs. That means that bilateral aid funds disbursed to local NGOs (e.g., through the Dutch embassies) are not included. In some cases, such direct funding of local NGOs is quite substantial. For instance: of the total Dutch bilateral aid funds delegated to the Dutch embassy in Ghana nearly 5% goes directly to local civil society organisations. In Guatemala this percentage is even 42% (Ruben & Schulpen, *forthcoming*). Moreover, several bilateral and multilateral donors have set up specific funds

for (local) NGOs. Canada, for instance, has its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives meant for NGOs and CBOs in Ghana, Danida supports the advocacy work of NGOs through its Civil Society Fund and DFID, CIDA, Danida and the Netherlands together support the Ghana Research and Advocacy Program (G-RAP) which main aim is to ‘enhance the capacity of research and advocacy organisations to carry out evidence based research and advocacy activities in support of pro poor and gender balanced policies’.

Besides, DAC only provides aggregate figures per donor but not per recipient country. That in turn means that the available data do not show how much (let alone for what) money is channelled through Northern NGOs to a specific country. Likewise, when the IMF (2007: 13-14) states that ‘about a third of net official aid [to Malawi] passes through’ NGOs, it is most likely referring to that part of bilateral and multilateral ODA (discussed above) contracted out to (local or international) NGOs but not to the assistance provided by (international) NGOs themselves.⁴⁰ Thus, although it is common knowledge that a large number of these international NGOs are active in Malawi and Ghana overall figures about their financial contribution to development in the country are not available.

Data for the Netherlands shows that none of 42 Dutch NGOs under the TMF programme of the Dutch government during 2003-2007 was active in Malawi whereas twenty were active in Ghana.⁴¹ If the so-called Partos-members are taken here as representing ‘traditional development organisations’ then Ghana is indeed a more important country for Dutch NGOs than Malawi. This does not mean that Malawi does not feature at all. On the contrary even. For Cordaid, for instance, Ghana and Malawi are both concentration countries as is also the case with ICCO. Hivos does not work in Ghana at all but is active in Malawi, whereas Plan Nederland again works in both countries. The latter also holds for Oxfam Novib, VSO and Simavi. Heifer Netherlands is active in Ghana but not in Malawi, whereas Save the Children Netherlands is active in Malawi and not in Ghana. It should be noted that (1) part of the Partos-members are not project funding organisations; and (2) at least two member organisations (i.e., Wilde Ganzen and Aqua for All) are active in both countries but essentially only fund projects of other Dutch organisations (in particular PIs). Table 6 provides a brief (and non-exhaustive) overview of Dutch NGOs active in Malawi and/or Ghana.

Table 6 Dutch NGOs: activities in Ghana and/or Malawi (an impression)

Dutch NGO	Ghana	Malawi
Hivos	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research ▪ Training ▪ Children’s and human rights ▪ Advocacy ▪ Civil society building
Cordaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HIV/Aids ▪ Access to markets ▪ Peace & conflict ▪ Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emergency aid ▪ HIV/Aids ▪ Access to markets ▪ Health
Oxfam Novib	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Basic education ▪ ICT ▪ Advocacy ▪ Health ▪ Trade ▪ Societal & political participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health ▪ Education ▪ Societal & political participation
Icco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic development ▪ Access to basic services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to basic services
Plan Nederland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health ▪ Education ▪ Micro credit ▪ Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health ▪ HIV/Aids ▪ Education ▪ Agriculture

VSO Nederland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children's rights ▪ bestaanszekerheid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children's rights ▪ Health ▪ HIV/Aids ▪ Capacity building
Heifer Nederland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agriculture and livestock ▪ Beekeeping 	-
Simavi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health ▪ Drinking water & sanitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drinking water & sanitation
Save the Children Nederland	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health ▪ Education ▪ HIV/Aids
Stop Aids now	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HIV/Aids
Melania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Livestock 	-
KNCV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health 	-
Tuberculosefondsen	-	-
Edukans	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education
ISCOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agriculture 	-

Source: websites of the Dutch NGOs

Another way of showing the thematic foci of those organisations receiving funding under the MFS 2007-2010 is by looking at their proposals as put forward to the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation. Data from this MFS exercise shows that of the 58 Dutch NGOs only nine are active in Malawi against 19 in Ghana.

Table 7 Thematic focus of MFS organisations in Ghana and Malawi (2007-2010) – in number of NGOs active in a particular theme

Thematic focus	Ghana	Malawi
Sustainable economic development	10	7
HIV/Aids and reproductive health	5	3
Socio-cultural development	4	3
Political development	2	2
Peace & security	-	2
Environment & water	6	2
Gender equality	2	-
Access to basic services	5	1
Total no. of MFS organisations active in the country	19	9

Source: Data provided by Ministry of Foreign Affairs

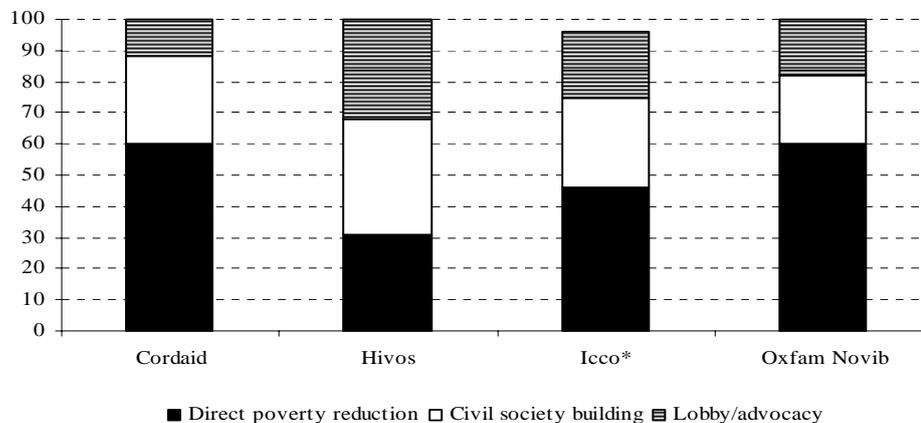
Note: MFS-organisations may have more than one thematic focus.

It is interesting to note that several of these Dutch NGOs support projects that many would feel are the principle type of activities supported by PIs. Over 2006, Plan Nederland constructed ten kindergartens and 500 latrines in Malawi but also trained 170 people in taking care of Aids-orphan. Activities in Ghana included the provision of micro credits to women and training of 360 school teachers in 'modern, child friendly teaching methods'. Stop Aids Now, among other things, supports the Catholic Church in Malawi in the provision of medicines, HIV-tests and blankets as part of its homecare programme for Aids-orphan. Heifer Nederland trains farmers in taking care of milk animals, facilitates the construction of cow sheds and distributes milk animals to the farmers. Simavi in turn supports the construction of hand pumps and latrines in Malawi and Ghana and training of local people as health workers, whereas Save the Children Nederland builds schools, toilets and teachers quarters, provides schools with furniture, pencils, notebooks and trains teachers.

As we will see below, many of these types of activities belong to the core of PI-supported interventions. Based on this, the idea of PIs filling the gap of direct poverty reduction activities left by the traditional development organisations seems a bit premature. Many of the

types of activities essentially seem to have a lot in common. Perhaps an exception then has to be made for the old MFOs. Hivos, for instance, is hardly (if at all) involved in such more concrete brick-and-mortar type of activities as building schools, latrines, water pumps, etc. Instead, the organisation focuses on strengthening of civil society (through training and exchange) and lobby/advocacy. Departing from the three intervention strategies generally distinguished in the Netherlands it is thus no surprise that Hivos states to be spending the larger part of its funds to civil society building (37%) followed by lobby/advocacy (32%) with direct poverty reduction (31%) coming third. Table 8 shows that this is substantially different for the other three former MFOs. Although it should be kept in mind that the three intervention strategies are not always that clear (nor mutually exclusive) and do not say anything about the exact type of interventions supported, the fact that direct poverty reduction activities form the core of the programme of these major Dutch donor NGOs further discredits the idea of PIs filling the gap in direct poverty reduction left by the traditional NGOs.

Table 8 Division of funds over intervention strategies (in % total expenditure 2005)



Source: annual reports

* Figures for 2006. The remaining 3% are categorised as 'other'

Note: It is interesting to note that in the annual reports meant for the general public a word like civil society building (in Dutch: *maatschappijopbouw*) is often not used at all.

Dutch Private Initiatives (in Malawi and Ghana)

If the aid from bilateral and multilateral donors to Malawi and Ghana is relatively unknown and civilateral aid is a shade murkier, than the assistance provided by (presumably) hundreds or even thousands of small private initiatives from all over the world is extremely obscure. There is not even a beginning of trying to grasp the number of PIs (in all its different forms – see above) active in the world, let alone the magnitude of their assistance to any specific country or to a specific sector in that country. In the Netherlands alone, the number of PIs active in the field of international cooperation are estimated anywhere between 6,000 and 15,000. Many of these will be extremely small and can probably only be found when knocking on every door in the Netherlands.

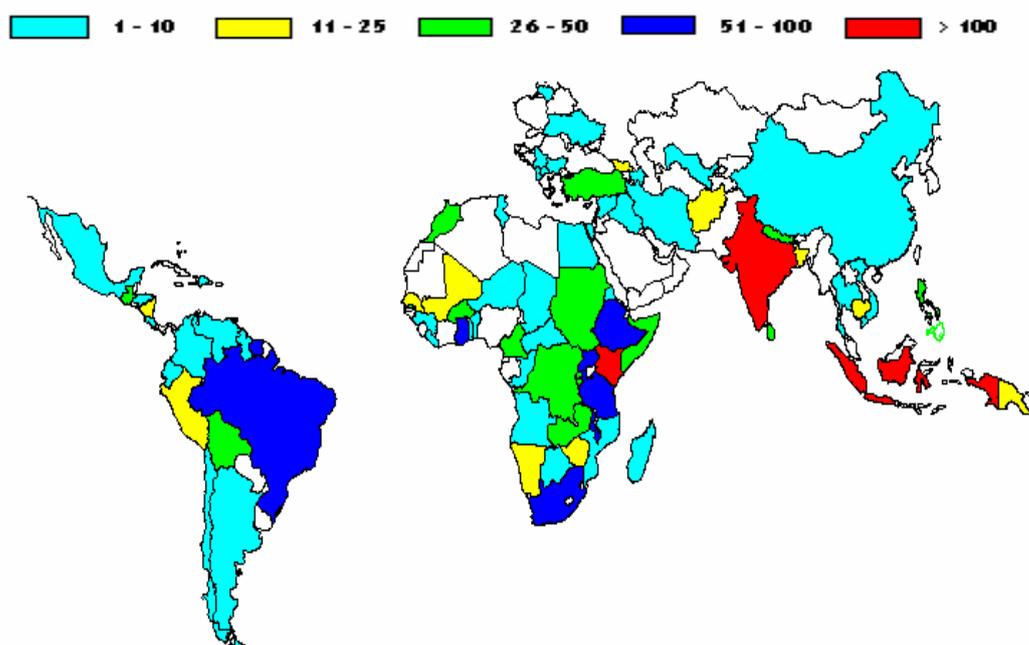
It only goes to show that research into PIs is still limited meaning in practice that our knowledge about not only the origin but also some other characteristics of this 'fourth channel' is still relatively imperfect. The research by CIDIN (Brok & Bouzoubaa 2005) was probably the first PI-related research of its kind in the Netherlands. The study, concentrating on providing a first insight in private initiatives, showed for instance that many PIs started in the last 10 years. More than 56% of the PIs in their research were set up after 1995.⁴² For Flanders, Develtere & Stessen (2006: 4) come to approximately the same conclusion with

over '50% of the initiatives [...] founded in the last 8 years'. Both studies thus conclude that particularly since the [end of the] 1990s there has been an 'exponential growth of these new initiatives'. It should be stressed here (again) that PIs are not new to the development arena in the Netherlands. On the contrary, there have always been PIs – what is important here is that their number is increasing, that the reasons for citizens to become active in the field have probably changed and that there is now major attention to these PIs if only because they are, among other things, regarded as an expression of distrust in traditional channels for development cooperation.

Also in other fields, the Dutch and Belgian (i.e., Flanders) studies come to similar findings. In effect, Brok & Bouzoubaa (2005) show that the majority (more than 90%) of PIs are run by volunteers, that more than 50% of these volunteers are older than 50 years, that many PIs (63%) have no religious background, that the larger part of their funding comes from individual gifts and donations, that 80% has an annual budget of less than €100,000, that education, health, gender and water supply are the most important 'themes' and that the PIs are active in a large number of countries. The latter does not mean that there are no 'concentration countries'. On the contrary: departing from the notion that the majority of PIs works in only one country, the CIDIN study showed 13% of the PIs to be working in India, nearly 11% in Kenya, and more than 7% in Ghana or Tanzania.⁴³

At the same time, there are also other sources to be tapped to find data on PIs. Probably the most accessible of these is the database of Linkis. The website of this service organisation for PIs seeking financial support started in June 2004 and serves as the 'central gateway for information and funding of small-scale development projects' (Linkis 2005: 4). Besides, Linkis also collects data on the projects sanctioned by the front-offices. The annual reports of Linkis (2005 and 2006) show that over the three year period 2004-2006 the Linkis-organisations (excluding the NCDO)⁴⁴ received a total of 6,669 applications of which 2,536 (38.4%) were sanctioned. Cordaid received by far the largest part of the applications (40%) and approved also the largest part (51%). The smallest is Plan Nederland. Overall, the figures suggest that PIs have the least chance of being approved with Hivos (over 2004-2006, Hivos approved 21.9% of the applications) and the biggest chance with Cordaid (48.4%).

Figure 3 Linkis-supported projects: number per country

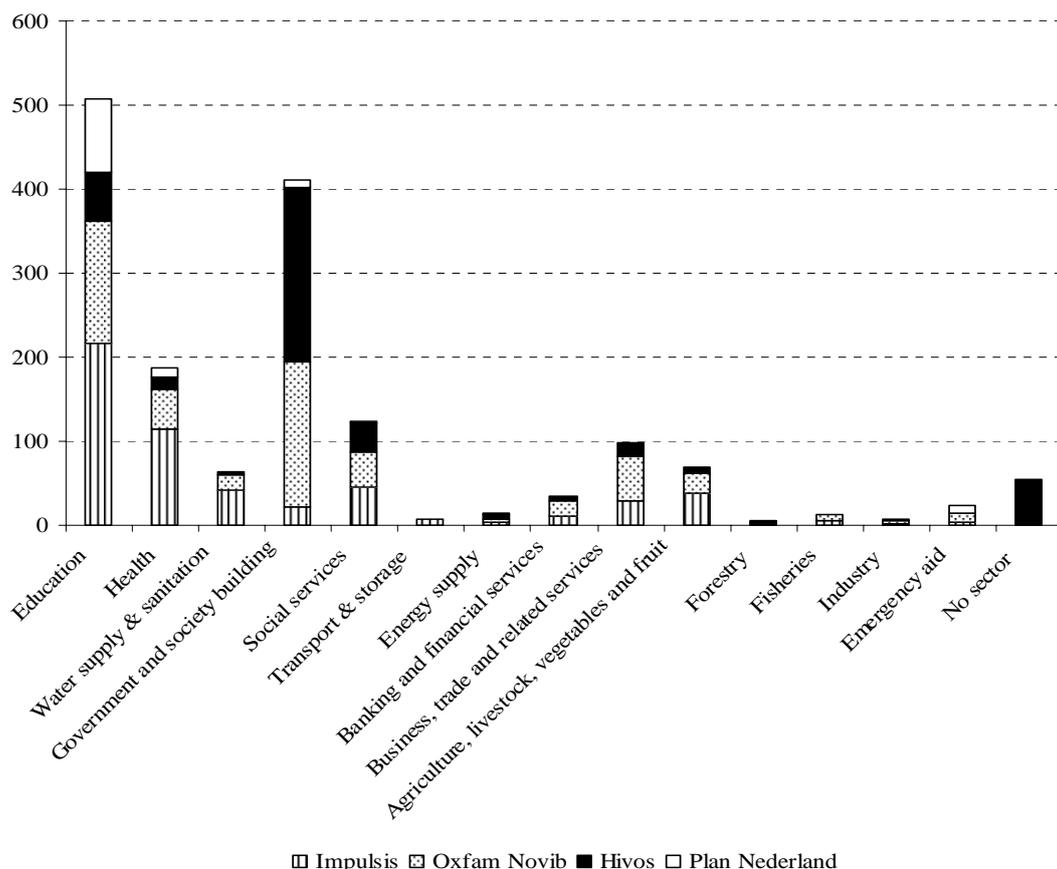


Source: own calculations from Linkis website (www.linkis.nl)

From this database, it is learned that since the start the Linkis-organisations supported 91 projects in Ghana and 71 in Malawi with Wilde Ganzen adding another 40 and 15 respectively over the period 2002-2006. Focussing on the Linkis database, Ghana and Malawi are important recipient countries but not the most important ones. Over the period 2002-2007, Linkis-organisations subsidised a total of 2,054 projects (excluding 969 projects registered as being implemented in the Netherlands). These projects were implemented in 89 different countries all over the world. Naturally, in some of these countries only one project is mentioned. The most important countries (as far as numbers of PI-projects are concerned) are India (210 projects), Kenya (161 projects) and Indonesia (129 projects). Ghana and Malawi come fifth and eighth in the top ten (also see Figure 3).

The Linkis-site also shows a thematic division of the Linkis-supported PI-projects. Keeping in mind that a project can be grouped under different themes, this division confirms the importance of sectors such as health, education and water supply, but adds to these sectors as ‘government and society building’ and ‘social services’. Table 9 provides an overview for the ‘front offices’ of Hivos, Icco, Oxfam Novib and Plan Nederland. Sectoral data for Cordaid- and NCDO-supported PI-projects is not available. Looking at the projects supported in Ghana and Malawi, it can be concluded that these are mainly in the fields of education (37% of the projects in Ghana and 29% in Malawi), health (8% and 41% respectively) and agriculture (29% and 6% respectively).

Table 9 PI-supported projects per sector, 2001-2008



Source: own calculations from www.linkis.nl

Finally, and continuing with the Linkis-supported PI-projects, it is also learned that the total project costs amount to nearly €42.3 million meaning that on average the budget for every project is some €14,000. Data with regard to specific countries is not available. Interestingly, such information can also only rarely be found with the PIs themselves. The private initiatives

are notoriously quiet or perhaps even secretive about their budget, their total income and the exact financial data regarding their specific projects and programmes. For a sector that is often said to be (at least partly) the outcome of dissatisfaction with more traditional organisations, it is strange to note that they themselves are so little open about one of their most important means: their money.

All in all, data on PIs active in Ghana and/or Malawi is either extremely difficult to find or rather sketchy. This holds for the Netherlands and this certainly also holds for the recipient countries. With both Ghana and (certainly) Malawi having troubles in tracking down what bigger development actors (i.e., bilateral, multilateral and civilateral donors) are exactly funding in their countries and how much money is involved, it is self-evident that this is the more difficult for the work of PIs. The fact that of the 13 Malawian PI-partners in this research only four are officially registered is of course not very helpful in this.

In preparation for the field research, a short survey was sent to 242 Dutch PIs. Of these, 169 were supposedly active in Ghana and the remaining 73 in Malawi.⁴⁵ A total of 121 organisations (50%) returned the questionnaire of which 118 can in principle be used for further analysis.⁴⁶ It should be noted that these remaining 118 PIs include some that are connected to private companies, schools and universities, and foundations active in such fields as training for schools. This already shows the diversity within the field of this ‘fourth channel for development cooperation’. At the same time, on the basis of the available data it is not in all cases possible to determine whether the PI is indeed of the type 6 category (i.e., those PIs central in this research). Nevertheless, with including all 118 organisations in this analysis, a first rough picture can be drawn with regard to the sectors, duration, budget, objectives and partnership relations of Dutch PIs working in Ghana and Malawi. A distinction is made here between PIs active in Ghana and/or Malawi. Of the 118 organisations, 75 are active in Ghana, 34 in Malawi and the remaining nine in both countries. As shown below, it is possible that some of these are active in other countries as well.

Table 10 PIs: division by country of operation and international cooperation as central activity

	Development cooperation as central activity		Total
	Yes	No	
Ghana	59	16	75
Malawi	33	1	34
Ghana and Malawi	2	7	9
Total	94	24	118

Source: PI Survey CIDIN 2006-2007

Before describing some of the salient features of these Ghana- and Malawi-PIs, it is important to note that certainly not all organisations indicate that development cooperation is their main task. This then goes back to the distinction between two broad groups of PIs as distinguished by Brok & Bouzoubaa (2005): (1) ‘organisations which do not have development cooperation as key task but which are active in that field’ and (2) ‘organisations with development cooperation as key task and which have been set up specifically to fulfil that task’. The first covers 24 PIs of which 16 are active in Ghana, one in Malawi and seven in both countries, whereas the second category covers a total of 94 PIs (of which 59 are active in Ghana, 33 in Malawi and two in both countries) (also see Table 10).⁴⁷

A first analysis

The background data on the PIs shows them to be relatively young, Dutch staffed, small (in staff and budget), generally active in only one country, with a broad range of funding sources and with a rather down to earth objective. Some 43% (N=116) have been set up in the last six

years (i.e., from 2000 onwards). If the second half of the 1990s is included this percentage climbs to 61%, with Malawi-PIs being generally younger than Ghana-ones. Interestingly, the nine PIs active in both countries are much older with the youngest one being set up in 1996. The same picture emerges when looking at the start of activities in Ghana and/or Malawi: the majority of organisations active only in Malawi (75% / N=33) started their work from 2000 onwards. For Ghana this percentage is 66% (N=74).

With a total of 9,871 people, 114 PIs on average have some 86 people who are actively involved as volunteers in the organisation in the Netherlands. These figures are highly inflated by only a few organisations, however. Three organisations cover already 44% of all involved people. If these are left out, the average number of people per organisations drops to nearly 50. At the same time, nearly 63% of the organisations have 10 or less active people. Most of these ‘active people’ are Dutch natives. Only three organisations (one active in Malawi and two in Ghana) state to only consist of people of immigrant origin, 32 have a mixed active group (i.e., including people of native and non-native origin),⁴⁸ whereas 78 only consist of Dutch natives.

Also with regard to the annual budget for development activities there are a few organisations that clearly deviate. In total the 97 PIs that answered this question have an annual development budget of more than €65 million and an average budget of some €675,000. Only five organisations take up 86% of this total budget. A large majority (77%, N=97) stays well below €100,000 and nearly 20% reaches a maximum development budget of €10,000. Whereas Malawi-organisations are generally smaller than Ghana-PIs, the organisations active in both countries are the biggest in financial terms. Four of them, for instance, have an annual development budget of more than €1.5 million (up to €35 million).

When taking into account the countries in which the PIs are working, it becomes even clearer that there are a few that are not only (relatively) large when looking at the number of active people and their annual development budget. All nine PIs active in Ghana and Malawi are also active in (an)other countr(y)ies and in many cases the number of ‘other countries’ is quite substantial. One works, for instance, in 20 countries spread over three continents, another in 69 countries, while a third ‘in principle’ works in every country where the Roman Catholic Church is active. Of the remaining PIs, 55 are only active in Ghana and 26 only in Malawi. Most of the remaining Ghana- or Malawi-PIs are active in one to three other countries and most of these countries are in Sub-Sahara Africa (although certainly not restricted to that region).

Table 11 Funding sources of PIs – a wide diversity

	Absolute	In % total
Only other sources	10	8.5%
Only general public	3	2.5%
General public + Linkis organisations	6	5.1%
General public + private companies	4	3.4%
General public + other sources	7	5.9%
General public + Linkis organisations + private companies	14	11.9%
General public + private companies + other sources	16	13.6%
General public + Linkis organisations + other sources	16	28.8%
Linkis + private companies	2	1.7%
Linkis + other sources	3	2.5%
Linkis organisations + private companies + other sources	2	1.7%
Private companies + other sources	1	.8%
All sources	34	13.6%
Total	118	100.0%

Source: PI Survey CIDIN 2006-2007

Whereas the majority of PIs can thus be characterised as low budget single-country organisations with less than two hands full of active volunteers, the number of funding sources is entirely different. In distinguishing between four types of funding (i.e., fundraising activities among the general public, contributions from Linkis-organisations, contributions from private companies and other sources), the survey shows 34 PIs (29%, N=118) to tap into all four sources. Only a few PIs have only one source of funding. In three cases this concerns only contributions from the general public, while ten PIs only get their funding from 'other sources'. Such other sources may be quite diverse and include churches, schools, hospitals, Rotary clubs and the educational budget (in the case of a school) but also (semi) government departments and institutions such as the EVD and local and provincial councils. Linkis-organisations (and such institutional PI back donors as Wilde Ganzen) are also mentioned by many PIs but always in combination with other sources (which is, considering the demand of an 'own contribution' of the PI by these back donors, logical) (also see Table 11).

Not surprisingly, the objective of the work of PIs is described in entirely different ways. That makes an overall analysis nearly impossible. In general, the objective(s) of PIs are either rather narrowly or (very) broadly defined. In effect, many organisations essentially refer to what they are funding. So, the objective then, for instance, is to 'financially support two teacher's colleges in Ghana', to 'improve the infrastructure' in one particular location, to 'build a school' or to support a specific hospital. Often, such 'objectives' then include issues reflecting the work in the Netherlands itself (e.g., contributing to public support and awareness building or plainly to raising funds). On the other broader side, PIs are striving to empower women, to provide 'sustainable improvement in the living conditions in Northern Ghana', to contribute 'to poverty reduction and sustainable development' or simply mention that they see the MDGs as point of departure. In this latter group, essentially all concepts used by traditional development organisations are reviewed: poverty reduction, sustainable development, empowerment, basic needs, self realisation, capacity building, etc.⁴⁹

Working in Ghana and/or Malawi

Education and health are by far the most important sectors in which private initiatives are active in both Ghana and Malawi. In Ghana, water supply and economic development are also important, as are children & orphans in Malawi. Activities in the field of governance are only for a few organisations of interest. Other sectors mentioned by only few (or: only one) PI(s) are in fields as environment and tourism. Some four PIs explicitly mention that they are active in micro credit (also see Table 12). Only three PIs are only active in these 'other sectors' (i.e., construction of houses, food supply and guidance of students).

Table 12 Sectoral focus of PIs – Ghana and Malawi (in percentages)

Sector	Ghana	Malawi	Average
Health	52.4%	62.8%	55.9%
Education	79.8%	74.4%	77.9%
Water supply	42.9%	27.9%	37.8%
Economic development	42.9%	32.6%	39.4%
Agriculture	32.1%	32.6%	32.3%
Children & orphans	23.8%	34.9%	27.5%
Governance	8.3%	4.7%	7.1%
Other sector(s)	29.8%	27.9%	29.1%
Total (abs.)	84	43	127

Source: PI Survey CIDIN 2006-2007

Sectoral concentration is, perhaps contrary to general beliefs, not an overall feature of PIs. In both Ghana and Malawi around 21% of the PIs work only in one sector with another 25% and 23% respectively working in two sectors. Even if a maximum of three different sectors per PI

is taken as an indication for a specific concentration, then still 42% of the Ghana-PIs and 33% of the Malawi-PIs fall outside that category. It thus seems more accurate to conclude that many PIs are rather broad organisations working in several sectors at the same time.

In Dutch civilateral development cooperation the standard is that the Northern NGO is not directly involved in implementation. Instead implementation is in the hands of a local organisation (generally referred to as 'partner'). For most of the PIs this is also the case. In Ghana, nearly 55% of the PIs indicate that implementation is in the hands of the local partner, whereas this percentage is 40.5% in Malawi. These figures already indicate that in many cases the PI itself has a role to play in the implementation of activities (apart from the financial contribution and what some call knowledge transfer).

Contrary to the 'normal' Dutch way of working, there are also some PIs (3.6% in Ghana and 7.1% in Malawi) stating that implementation is in their own hands. Most likely, this does not necessarily mean that there is no local partner or local individuals involved. In all other cases, implementation is arranged in a different way. Generally, this then refers to a mutual responsibility in implementation. Only in a few cases reference is made to implementation by another (international) organisation (e.g., Oikonomos).

Table 13 Types of support – Ghana (N=80) and Malawi (N=40)

	Ghana		Malawi	
	One partner		More partners	
One-time support	20	7	13	4
Structural support	41	22	27	14

Source: PI Survey CIDIN 2006-2007

The majority of PIs has one specific way of working meaning that they either fund one-time interventions or provide more structural support. The same holds for the question whether they support only one organisation or whether they support several organisations.⁵⁰ Some, however, mix these types of support (e.g., they provide one-time support to one organisation and more structural support to another). Table 13 (providing an overview of these four types of support) shows that more structural support is more common in both countries and that there is hardly any difference with those having one partners and those having multiple partners.

3. PIs in Ghana and Malawi - main findings from the field

Many will undoubtedly question the sincerity of a former president under whose government the development budget of the United States reached a all-time low when writing a book carrying the title 'Giving – how each of us can change the world' (Clinton 2007). Still, his remark that 'almost everyone – regardless of income, available time, age, and skills – can do something useful for others and, in the process, strengthen the fabric of our shared humanity' (*ibid*: x) is of interest. Not only because many PIs are obviously out to 'do something useful for others', but also because he introduces an important element which in a more general study of the work of PIs could easily be overlooked. If we translate 'strengthening the fabric of our shared humanity' as meaning that PIs are a way of showing that one cares about others, than relating to that other is already an important achievement (as it could lead to mutual understanding and interaction between people that are normally, and despite globalisation, worlds apart and only little aware of each other's life).

Looking at the work of PIs from that side would almost automatically lead to unconditionally embracing any type of activity in which a bridge is build between people across the world. Building such a bridge is then inherently good. Added to this is the idea that PIs focus their interventions mainly to those service delivery areas (e.g., in the field of health and education) which the government, market and/or traditional donors do not cover. There will be few people in the world that will object to school children having a roof over their head, to farmers having access to fertilisers and seeds and to health centres having medicines in stock with which they can treat their patients. If that is true then why bother looking into the work of these Private Initiatives at all? Is it not just enough to know that these PIs are sincerely concerned with people on the other side of the world, that they are active in such areas that no well-thinking human being can object to, that these PIs are run by hardworking and ambitious people who obviously are willing to invest a large part of their time and energy in assisting strangers, that they are overall successful in tapping into the chari-market and that this already shows the trust they receive from the general public, and that they obviously do what they promise and have the pictures and stories ready to show it to the world?

These questions are closely linked to the discussion raised in the first chapter of this report whether the main objective of PIs is indeed poverty reduction and whether 'contributing to development processes' is their main starting point. It might well be that many PIs simply want to express their desire to assist a specific group of people in their daily struggle out of the goodness of their heart, because it gives them a good feeling and/or to ease their own consciousness. It would probably explain several of the findings discussed below. As Develtere & Stessens (2007) conclude in their 'fourth pillar'-study: 'some common characteristics distinguish the fourth pillar initiatives from the traditional actors in development co-operation. The majority of the new actors do not have development co-operation as their prime raison for existence. Globalisation is the main catalyst for these initiatives as much as the North-South divide was (and to a large extent still is) the vector for the other pillars. This also means that they have another frame of reference, other values and norms, use another language and apply other methods of co-operation'. This would make 'judging' PIs based on the basis of elements derived from that same traditional sector a strange undertaking.

This study acknowledges that PIs may have entirely different perspectives than other channels of development cooperation and that part of them may even be triggered more by the felt need to do something than by the question what that 'something' means. Nevertheless, it still departs from the idea that PIs are development organisations in the first place. The above questions are thus answered with a clear No meaning that it is acceptable to use these basic elements in assessing the work of PIs. Point of departure for this study thus forms the idea that PIs, and certainly those being subsidised by traditional development organisations, are

Table 14 Background information on selected PIs and their partners

Ghana

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Founding year	1975	2003	1998	1990	2002	2002	2002	2003	1984	1993	1982	2003	1996	2004	1996
Start in Ghana	1975	2003	2001	1992	2002	2002	1999	2003	1984	1993	1982	2003	2000	2005	1996
No. of active staff/volunteers	8	30	n.a.	25	5	3	1	10	8	4	5	4	20	21	4
Active in other countries													X		
Annual budget (in €)	45.000	50.000	5.000	250.000	150.000	20.000	25.000	27.500	20.000	10.000	50.000	20.000	10.000	n.a.	50.000
Contribution from citizens	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Contribution from 'Linkis'	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X
Contribution from companies	X	X		X		X	X		X			X	X	X	X
Contribution from other sources	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Active in health	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X		X
Active in education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Active in water & sanitation	X	X		X	X		X	X			X		X	X	X
Active in economic activities	X	X	X	X				X						X	X
Active in agriculture	X	X		X				X		X	X		X		X
Active in orphan care				X				X						X	
Active in governance				X	X					X				X	
Active in other sectors		X	X	X					X			X		X	
Local implementation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			
Own implementation															
Implementation different								X					X	X	X
One-time projects with one partner					X				X		?				
One-time projects with more partners				X						X	?				
Structural support to one partner		X	X			X	X				?	X		X	
Structural support to more partners	X			X				X	X		?	X	X		X
Partner = Mirror organisation		X	X	X		X		X						X	
Partner = Individuals									X	X	X	X	X		X
Partner = Local organisation	X			X			X	X			X				
Partner = Community		X			X		X								
No. of partners	2	1	1	6	1	1									

Types of activities undertaken (a.o.):															
Construction (schools, water, etc.)	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X		X	X	X
Provision of materials	X	X		X		X		X	X	X		X		X	X
Micro credit	X		X					X	X					X	
Animal revolving fund									X						
Training (e.g., income-generation)	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	X		
Narrative reports on website								X							
Financial reports on website								X							

Malawi

	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Founding year	2005	2006	2000	1988	1999	2006	1989	2002	2003	1997	2003	1984	2001
Start in Malawi	2005	2005	2000	1988	2000	1997	1989	2002	2003	2000	2003	1986	2000
No. of active staff/volunteers	9	10	7	12	5	11	100	3	5	20	5	4	6
Active in other countries										X			
Annual budget (in €)	20.000	20.000	50.000	65.000	6.000	30.000	400.000	7.500	10.000	100.000	40.000	10.000	80.000
Contribution from citizens	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Contribution from 'Linkis'	X	X	X	X		X	X			X		X	
Contribution from companies		X			X	X	X		X	X	X		
Contribution from other sources	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X			
Active in health		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Active in education	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Active in water & sanitation				X	X		X			X			X
Active in economic activities	X					X	X						X
Active in agriculture			X	X		X	X			X	X		X
Active in orphan care		X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X
Active in governance				X									
Active in other sectors	X				X	X						X	
Local implementation			X	X	X			X			X	X	X
Own implementation							X						
Implementation different	X	X				X			X	X			
One-time projects with one partner						?			X				
One-time projects with more partners						?							
Structural support to one partner		X	X		X	?	X	X			X		X
Structural support to more partners	X			X						X		X	
Partner = Mirror organisation	X						X			X			X
Partner = Individuals			X			X				X			
Partner = Local organisation		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	
Partner = Community													
No. of partners	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Types of activities undertaken (a.o.):													
Construction (schools, water, etc.)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provision of materials	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

Micro credit										
Animal revolving fund			X		X					
Training (e.g., income-generation)	X	X		X		X		X		X
Narrative reports on website	X*		X*		X			X	X	
Financial reports on website	X*		X*					X	X	

* = reports can be ordered.

part of the development cooperation sector and can thus also be judged using yard stick derived from that same sector. Besides, this study also departs from the thought that every organisation being actively involved in contributing to a better world (notwithstanding that the 'world' of PIs is often restricted to a relatively small group of individuals) is accountable for its activities. One of the few available 'measures' with which to judge these activities and provide a framework for accountability then simply derives from the traditional sector. That is not to say that such 'measures' should simultaneously be regarded as the standard and that any deviation from that standard is a disqualification. But many of these measures have proven themselves over decades of international cooperation and belong, to the best of our present knowledge, to the list of 'best practices'.

Activities

It is often thought that PIs are not only mainly active in the fields of education and health but also that the type of activities supported are of what could be called a 'brick-and-mortar' nature. In other words: they concern construction activities and the provision of materials (ranging from fertilisers to footballs and from medicines to ambulance including payment of insurances). Essentially all PIs are involved in these types of activities and within that they do not restrict themselves to one specific sector. The numbers of sectors PIs are active in shows that concentration is not one of their major characteristics. On the contrary, the sectoral division shows PIs to be rather heterogeneous organisations. Of the 28 PIs in the study only three claim to be active in only one sector. All others are active in at least two sectors but going up to even five different sectors. Besides health (75%, N = 28) and education (86%), many PIs are (also) active in such areas as water & sanitation (54%), agriculture (54%), economic activities (39%) and with orphans (39%).⁵¹ Just a handful states to be active in the field of governance although it remains unclear what is exactly meant by this.

Again, in the two main sectors attention is mainly paid to hardware. Of the 15 Ghana-PIs some ten are involved in either construction or renovation of schools while most also provide schooling materials (and many in the past provided school fees). One of these organisations, which might be characterised as a kind of 'gypsy-PI' (because it has no specific area in which it is active but moves from one project to another and from one area to another), over the years has assisted a few schools in renovation. These are not only one-time aid interventions but there is also no attention to maintenance. So, when one of the roofs funded by this particular PI blows off (as recently happened), the school essentially is back to square one.

In most cases, school construction and –renovation is done for so-called government schools. Occasionally, however, a PI decides to construct a new school that is meant to become a private school but then one without any school fees being asked. In that way, it was felt that all children (including the poorest) could join. Although the school was still under construction during the field study, the question should be asked who will then finance the running of the school. It does not look like the PI or its (mirror) partner really thought about such an obvious issue. In other cases, schools are constructed as part of a centre catering specifically for orphans like was the case with three of the Malawi-PIs.

In health, activities range from the provision of medicines to training, while one PI provides specific support to a hospital in trying to curb financial losses due to, for instance, theft. Another PI in Ghana provides financial and material assistance in setting up a diagnostic centre, while a third provided support to the renovation of the operation theatre of a hospital. In Malawi, a few PIs have strong links to some rural health centres providing them with materials such as medicines, blankets, tyres for the ambulance, etc. Construction activities in the field of water & sanitation are very clearly seen with a PI working in one village in Ghana. Over the years, the organisation managed to construct two rainwater harvesting tanks,

one borehole plus water pump, and two toilet blocks. All these structures are used although the number of people claimed by the PI seems to be an exaggeration.

All in all, there is little doubt that these brick-and-mortar activities are beneficial to those people able to use (or receive) them. The question remains who can use them (also see under target group) and for how long they provide a solution. In many cases, the provision of these materials could most likely be repeated after some time for the simple reason that the organisations (schools and health centres) are fundamentally under funded. The 258 health centres in Malawi falling under the Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM), for instance, for the largest part have to cater for themselves. Although salaries are paid for by the government, materials and maintenance mainly have to be paid for from user fees collected. At the same time, many health centres are said to provide essential services free of costs to the poor and/or to have a large stack of unpaid bills. One of the few remaining sources of income are then outside donors including PIs.

The same essentially holds for primary schools in Ghana which after the abolishment of school fees saw the number of pupils increasing while the funds available for materials, construction and maintenance remained the same or even decreased. The Parents-Teachers Association are then a possible solution during times of calamities and in many cases these PTAs play an important role in providing labour. Providing funding by the parents is, however, an entirely different issue. Several head masters explained this by stating that parents nowadays are less willing to contribute to improving the school or purchasing required teaching materials because they have been told by the government that primary education is now free of charges. Also here, one of the few remaining options then is outside assistance. And, as mentioned, PIs do react to that call for outside assistance. But again: as there is no change in the financial structure as such leading to a situation in which the PIs are almost condemned to continue their support. It leads to an idea of structural emergency aid needed because nothing fundamentally changes.

At the same, the idea that PIs are only active in such kind of brick-and-mortar activities is not correct. Although most do start with these activities, and most also continue with them, there are many that move into more complex programmes. These more complex activities then include, for instance, micro credit, group formation, extension services and/or animal revolving schemes. Generally, these are activities which require a much stronger local organisation, a clearer selection of target groups and a more strict planning. As these issues are discussed below under different headings it suffices to say that there are many examples where question marks can be placed whether the PI and its partner are sufficiently equipped to implement such more complex activities.

For now, it sounds logical that PIs move from rather straightforward activities in the field of brick-and-mortar to more complex activities. Interestingly, there are of course organisations that do not start off with less complicated activities. More important, however, is that the speed with which more complex activities are taken up is sometimes overwhelming. If funds are available, such activities might almost start overnight without a proper planning and analysis made beforehand. Generally, these changes are dependent on contacts and requests from the partner(s) but occasionally emerge from a growing insight of the PI itself. One of the PIs working in Ghana, for instance, felt that its involvement in education was insufficient to reach its goal of making people independent. Although the school construction activities were felt to be needed, the PI doubted whether 'any real change' would come out of these type of projects. The decision to start a project in agriculture (aimed at increasing the income of farmers) was a direct result of this assessment.

It is often said that development cooperation is not as effective as it could be because of the speed with which results are sought, the need to show that the organisation is doing a good job and is thus worth to be supported. Whereas often this is thought to apply to bilateral and

multilateral agencies, it could as well apply to the PIs. There is a strong tendency to work fast and to show results fast as they are required for further funding. It means that there often is a lack of proper planning. Although undoubtedly not seen as such by the concerned PI, its activities in a village in Ghana would fall under this category. Over the years, this PI has managed to construct a lot of programmes in 'its' village. At the same, with practically all of its activities concentrated in one corner of the extended village the chance that all people will benefit (which is the objective of the PI) seems unlikely to be reached. Besides, some of these programmes seem to be the outcome of funds becoming available instead of a deliberate policy and planning. The consequence is that at present a multipurpose community centre is being constructed which should, among other things, house a computer class for people from the village. The fact that there is no electricity in the village naturally poses a major problem. Perhaps even more important is that this community centre is actually the idea of a group of Dutch youngsters. Although this does not mean that the people in the village do not appreciate the construction, they were not involved in its planning. The same holds for many of the gymnastic equipment and old computers still waiting to be installed in the school. Obviously, with no electricity there is little use for the computers while the gymnastic equipment is still not being used due to communication problems with the community school.

The fact that projects sometimes are dropped into a community is also clear from another PI active in Ghana. As two American students offered assistance in training people in soap making, the organisation decided to accept the offer. Although some kind of research was done to establish whether there would be a market for locally produced soap, the training started without having the financial means to further assist people in taking up soap making after the training. Even now, some years after the training, there are still no funds available and no other conclusion is possible than that the training has largely been a waste of time and money. Promising too much on limited resources is a dangerous strategy and could easily backfire as the target group could regard the PI and its partner simply as just another organisation not delivering.

Finally, it is often thought that PIs are an addition to development cooperation because of their innovative nature. As far as the types of activities are concerned, such innovation is largely lacking, however. In most cases, the activities undertaken are rather similar and not necessarily different from those of other actors in the field of development. This naturally holds for construction activities (there are simply only so many ways of building a school) but also for most other activities such as micro credit, animal revolving schemes, school feeding programmes, training for income generation, etc. Perhaps exceptions should be made for a few PIs like the one setting up a library and computer class while trying to link up with schools in the area.

Partnership

Within Dutch development cooperation, it is most common for a Northern donor not to be directly involved in implementation. Most of the traditional donor agencies thus act as provider of funds in the first place but are also involved in discussions about the planning and strategy of its Southern partner. Occasionally, both are involved in specific activities which then often move beyond direct implementation of activities aimed at the target group (e.g., in the field of lobby or campaigns). All these potential relationships fall under what is generally regarded as partnership – a relationship guided by trust but with a clear mutually agreed division of tasks. Naturally, the term partnership often leads to discussions if only because of the inherent power imbalance in which one of the partners has the funds the other needs.

The PIs in this study generally fall within this tradition. A large majority (65%, N = 28) states that implementation is entirely in the hands of a local partner, whereas only one PI regards itself as the implementing agency. The remaining PIs have different ways mainly referring to

mutual implementation. The reality is, however, somewhat different and shows that with PIs the term 'partner' should be viewed in a broader manner. Whereas traditional development organisations generally work with existing local partner organisations emerging from the local civil society, PIs obviously have a much broader perspective.

In Ghana, there are only three PIs which (also) work with and through already existing local organisations, although with at least one of these cases the assistance of the PI was instrumental in starting the local organisation in the first place. Already more common are 'partners' which have been established by the PI itself (so-called 'mirror organisations'). In some cases these mirror organisation only consist of one or two individuals which then form the board and implementers at the same time (effectively meaning that they control themselves). In another case, the mirror organisation officially has a control function but implementation is supposed to be in the hands of the people in the village itself.

Seven of the 15 PIs in Ghana do not have an organisation as partner but work with and through individuals. In one case this was the specific objective as the organisation aims at supporting enterprising individuals which can make a difference in poverty. Another even followed an individual to several villages where he was positioned as priest, while at the same time supporting an individual who used to work for a local NGO but in the meantime has set up his own organisation. Interestingly, the PI only has contacts with that specific individual and essentially has no idea about who else is involved in the new organisation. Finally, two PIs (also) work with entire communities meaning that in essence that community forms the partner (although in practice of course a specific group within that community). In one of these cases such a group was indeed formed for guiding the implementation but the PI hardly had direct interaction with this group. Instead a Dutch missionary (director of a Ghanaian NGO) formed the actual counterpart and the liaison between the PI and the community group.

In Malawi, many of the different partner-styles discussed above can also be found. Mirror organisations are quite common with a notable difference: many of these have been set up and are run by expatriates. Of the 13 PI-partners in Malawi visited for this study six are effectively run by Dutch. Interestingly, four of these are the only PI-partners in this study officially registered with the Malawian government. The partner of another PI is a church which also runs a development programme although during frequent visits, the PI itself is also involved in implementation. Interestingly, this church seems to be the only exception to the rule that among the PI-partners in Malawi are either set up by Dutch and/or are the direct result of the intervention of the PI.

Several of the PIs (particularly those active in Ghana) further complicate this picture by having different types of partners. So, one PI has effectively adopted a village and works closely together with the chief and his staff but is also involved with a hospital where the administrator effectively forms the partner. Another PI works together with a local organisation but also implements its own programme in a nearby village, while a third actually moves from one project to another and from one individual to another.

This plethora of partners is interesting because it clearly deviates from what is regarded as 'normal' within Dutch development cooperation. One of the presumed advantages of such different partner-styles is that there is a much closer interaction between the PI and the partner. Most of the PIs are very satisfied with their communication with their partners although naturally some problems are experienced (see below). For a large part this seems to be due to very close friendship or family bonds. In several cases, the PI in the Netherlands and the local partner are run by members of the same family. This holds not only for PIs run by Ghanaians in the Netherlands but also for PIs run by native Dutch. The latter is more common in Malawi although can also be found in Ghana. More direct relationships, often of a friendship nature, are particularly common with (but not restricted to) those PIs essentially working through individuals.

At the same time, none of these different partner-styles are without problems. Establishing their own local organisations instead of choosing to work with already existing ones generally contributes to a further diversification of the local development arena. Although this is not necessarily bad, the question can and should be asked why PIs decide not to link up with existing organisations in the civil society but feel it is necessary to add a new player. Naturally, it is possible that there are insufficient numbers of local organisations of sufficient quality with which to link up. However, the impression is that this is not the major reason if only because most PIs do not seem to have a clear view or understanding of the civil society in which they participate (also see under 'cooperation' below). For many PIs the relationship seems to be more the outcome of chance than of a deliberate policy. During visits, the founders of the Dutch PIs meet specific people which they trust and with which they decide to start working. In other cases, expatriates decide to become active and set up their own organisation with financial backing from the Netherlands. Perhaps the reason is also more instrumental: setting up their own mirror organisation strengthens the possibility of 'planting their own flag'.

At a more general level, the reliance on individuals (even within an official local organisation) can become problematic in the long run. Contacts are mainly with these individuals and not with others within the organisation as seen with the Ghana-PI mentioned above which even had no idea about its official partner organisation itself. The two PIs supporting the same Dutch run programme in Malawi only have contacts with the Dutch director. The Dutch director of the only PI that clearly states that it is an implementing organisation itself is also the only contact person for the Dutch PI. The same holds for a PI working in Ghana. Although the local mirror organisation, besides implementing its own programme, also works with a local NGO, the contact between the Netherlands and Ghana are essentially with the director of the mirror organisation. There seems to be a clear reason for this: high trust in their direct contact persons.

Major problems within the partnership are often related to reporting (also see below under monitoring and evaluation). Another more important problem runs a bit deeper and relates to what could be called 'cultural differences' with PIs stating that their partners often do not understand the need for, for instance, frequent and timely reporting. In some cases these differences are expressed in rather paternalistic terms. One PI simply states that 'we really have to learn them [i.e., the partner] everything'. It points at a low feeling about local capacity and occasionally even distrust in individual and organisational capacity. A PI working in Malawi already from the start depends on Dutch leadership essentially because the Malawian attitude is not felt to be conducive to the requirements of running the programme. Another PI claims to check every drawer when visiting a specific project in order to see whether the materials sponsored are indeed being used.

This distrust is balanced with many PIs showing high trust in their (individual) counterparts and their capacities. Certainly not in all cases this trust is deserved. The organisation in Ghana setting up a private school and being told by its partner that the government will take care of the salaries of the teachers is simple lied to. Besides, whereas trust in general can be regarded as the basis for any cooperation, individual relationships can create problems in the longer run. One of the Dutch PIs, for instance, recently lost its founder meaning that the relationship with its partner became more troublesome and substantially less frequent. In other cases, it can be doubted whether much (if any) attention is paid to strengthening of the local organisation. Local capacity building is not high on the agenda of PIs whereas generally it is regarded as an important element not only in securing effectiveness but also in facilitating a strong civil society (which then in turn is regarded as instrumental in the development process).

The problems with trusting in and on individuals are sometimes quite clear in that they can compromise the implementation of the programme and/or its sustainability. Particularly those PIs that start off not so much with a personal relationship (because effectively all of them do) but that start with providing funds to specific individuals and later include a larger target group may fall into this trap or become susceptible to individuals boycotting or disrupting further procedures. This was, for instance, the case with one of the projects in Malawi which started off with supporting one woman and her extended family and later moved to supporting a few communities. One of the members of the original extended family still feels that he has not profited enough from the project and has become a disruptive force for the implementation of the programme in one of the communities. In Ghana, a PI adopting the name of one particular family discovered that it is far from easy to convince that family that the programme is not meant only for themselves but for the entire community. After five years, the local organisation that has been involved in the programme and consisting of several members of the concerned family feel that it is time that they themselves benefit more. In effect, they disrupt further developments and the establishment of a local organisation that can and will sustain the programme. There is thus a large potential problem with not only trusting but also building upon individuals.

Another PI working in Malawi which deliberately worked only with individuals for the many construction activities undertaken discovered that this can cause many problems. One of the head masters, for instance, was discharged for sexually abusing students and another head master used the funds provided for maintenance of the school for his own benefit. In this regard, it seems a wise decision to switch to an institutional partner for its recently started animal revolving scheme. Not only because this partner is generally regarded as efficient and trustworthy, but also because it provides an opportunity to use the experience of the partner in earlier animal schemes. Reportedly, it took some time for the PI to set aside its focus on individuals and accept a cooperation with its new (institutional) partner.

Partnership also concerns the local population and not only the partner. Practically all PIs emphasise that the target group will have to contribute their share and in most cases this also seems to be the case. They contribute labour although that is often already custom. In some cases they are also requested to contribute financially but this turns out to be a problem. The involvement of the target group is mainly in two ways: on the one hand the request is said to come from the target group. This can in many cases be doubted if only because of often infrequent interactions between the contact person and the target group. One of the organisations working in Ghana set up a rather elaborate system of working groups in the village with the intention that these groups bring forward proposals to be funded by the PI. In reality, only a few of these groups seem to be active at all and most of the concrete activities brought forward for proposal actually derive from one of the board members who does not live in the village itself but is a well-known and well-connected person. The main problem here seems to be the fact that there is actually no local organisation that tries to combine the people in the village to ensure their involvement. Besides, whereas the village is wide-spread and consists of separate hamlets, many of the activities of the PI are concentrated in one specific area of the village making it extremely difficult to reach an eligible involvement of the entire village. The frequent visits by Dutch students seem to be an incentive for the local people to become more active but this seems to fade away as soon as the students leave.

The lack of an organisation active in the village itself and capable of strengthening a group feeling and a process of organisation in the village through which ownership can be created is perhaps one of the major problems. Another Ghana PI clearly found out that if you leave it all to the people themselves without any organisation present it becomes extremely difficult to create that ownership. At the same time, they also discovered that the idea of depending on an outsider (in this case a Dutch volunteer) to take up that organisational strengthening does not work if only because of language problems. Besides, there were little incentives for people to take the volunteer seriously. Only a group of youngsters provided with animals for income

generating activities were somewhat more active because they felt something was to be won here.

Many PIs make use of expatriate volunteers. The number of organisations offering a post in a Third World country to (mostly young) volunteers seems to have expanded in the last few years. Considering the wish to expand one's horizon these obviously fill a gap in the market. In some cases, PIs themselves have close relationships with such volunteer-sending organisations, whereas others have set up their own. Without disputing that volunteer work can contribute to a personal development and might form an important element in the work of the PI, a few questions should be asked. In some cases, the PI uses the volunteer to essentially run a part of their programme. This was, for instance, the case with a PI active in central Ghana where one of the Dutch volunteers was co-responsible for the micro credit programme. However, the concerned volunteer was hardly trained in micro credits and did not really had an idea about what was expected of him. Another question that should be asked concerning the use of volunteers is whether they essentially replace local people. The short answer to this probably is yes. But then: volunteers cost less money (and occasionally even bring in money) and they are thus no financial burden for an organisation that is likely to feel that the 'rake off' should be kept as low as possible anyway. Hiring in local people on the other hand cost money.

This points at one of the issues which seems to impact on the relationship between the PI and its partner as well as on capacity development of the local partner: the emphasis on voluntarism. Several PIs (and their partners) doubt the possibility of raising sufficient funds for more complex interventions. Partly this is because they realise that such interventions might be more difficult to grasp for their constituency but also because it creates problems with regard to the so often discussed 'rake-off'. More complex interventions demand more staff to implement and perhaps even more paid staff. Particularly the latter is seen as a problem by some PIs which feel that since they are volunteers, the southern people involved should be volunteers as well. For one PI active in Ghana the discussion about paid staff was part of a process in which the concerned PI and its partner 'drifted apart'. Again, for other PI this is not an issue. In 2006 one PI, for instance, decided to take on one paid staff member simply because the project became too big to handle (particularly out of the Netherlands). Others have had paid staff in the southern country already for years. Interestingly, this mainly seems to hold for PIs active in Malawi (also see below under Target Group).

Finally, and in contrast to what some websites promise, it should be noted that PIs are certainly not always the only donors of a partner. Moreover, they are certainly not always the most important donor (neither in financial nor in other terms). This particularly holds for those PIs that institutions such as hospitals or organisations that were already active before the PI showed up. In other words: it mainly holds for those partner organisations and those development activities that have not been set up because the PI provided funds. Not being the only (or most important) donor probably means that it will be more difficult to show what exactly the contribution of the PI is to the local development process (but see below under 'accountability, monitoring and evaluation'). Besides, it shows that some PIs are essentially acting in the same manner as more traditional NGOs. A Ghanaian NGO active in the field of street children, for instance, had some 14 donors for a single activity. With traditional development organisations from Germany and the Netherlands, the PI was 'in good company'. Sharing a partner with (an)other donor(s) is not always regarded as positive by the PI. The private initiative from the above example, for example, pressed its partner to more prominently display the PI as one of the main donors. According to the partner, this pressure was given in by the fact that the PI uses its involvement in that specific project as an important means in fund raising in the Netherlands and feared that being put down as one of many donors would jeopardise its fund raising activities.

Target group

Certainly not in all cases, it is clear who belongs to the target group of a PI. Children and young people are often mentioned but with a few PIs essentially the whole population is regarded as (potential) target group. In many cases the beneficiaries are all people in a village. Not only because the PI and its partner is working only in the one village but also because 'everyone is poor anyway so why bother with selecting'. In others, it are those that send their children to the school that is supported or those that are actively seeking assistance. In these latter cases, it can be doubted whether the target group consists of the poorest. The set-up of a library and computer programme, although rather innovative, most likely leads to the poorest not being reached for the simple reason that they can ill-afford the fees being demanded. The same holds for micro credit programmes where the selection of beneficiaries is based on an ad random selection of women who are economically active and answered the question whether they would be interested in a loan with yes.

Targeting is not a strong point with most of the PIs. Self-selection is an important way in which they work. Other simply target a whole village or community and not specific groups within that community. In some cases, PIs deviate from this general picture. That was, for instance, the case with school fees in Ghana (but school fees have been abandoned recently leading to substantially more children going to school but without the required improvements in housing, staff and materials leading to an even greater stress on the quality of schooling) and that is still the case with many of the programmes, particularly in Malawi, aimed at aid orphans. But even with these, the selection is largely left to the local community and community leaders. While this is positive on the one hand because no parallel structure is imposed, there is no guarantee that this also means that the poorest will benefit. As such, the PIs seem to experience the same difficulties in reaching those poorest as the traditional organisations do. The major difference perhaps is that many of the PIs not even try if only because they feel that everybody is poor so there is no need to target specific groups.

The lack of a clear selection policy is often carried further in insufficient attention to organising the target group. That this can lead to major problems is clear in several of the programmes in this study. The partner of one PI working in the south of Malawi has managed to construct tens of so-called water kiosks (standposts on the main waterline with 4-5 taps) in her working area. The partner is the formal owner of the kiosks with the right to raise water charges and the obligation to pay the water bills of the Water Board and to maintain the kiosks. Maintenance in turn is in the hands of a local staff of more than 60 people (mainly women) who are employed by the partner and paid for by the profit the partner makes from selling water to the local population. As such, the partner effectively becomes some kind of private company. The main problem is then that the local population also regards the partner as a private company and does not feel any responsibility to support the partner in its drive to construct a health centre in the area. As the staff members of the partner acknowledged they have not been effective in creating a sense of ownership for the organisation and its programme in the area.

The latter also holds for a PI that has worked in Ghana for a period of five years and in January 2007 handed over its programme to the local community with the idea that the community itself would now be responsible for maintenance and (possibly) expansion of the activities. Unfortunately, it remained quite unclear who exactly took over. Although the PI managed to construct over the 5-year period a large number of facilities which are potentially beneficial to the local schooling system, no attention was paid to setting up and strengthening a local group which was able to carry on the work after the PI withdrew. The situation was, however, in reality even more problematic. The group of people that (partly) assisted in implementing the programme during these five years has effectively broken down due to personal disputes leading to a situation where the community as such does no longer seem to feel responsible for the programme at all.

The lack of attention to organisation of target groups already points out that with many of the PIs the target group as such is not involved in shaping and planning the different interventions. The PIs are also not secretive about this; their reliance is on the local organisation or individual with whom they work. They feel that these organisations/individuals are the spokespersons of the target group and as such they have sufficient backing of that same group. Besides, some partners simply feel that organisation of the target group is not only unnecessary but also impossible. As one of the Ghanaian partners simply stated: 'group formation in Ghana simply doesn't work'. An example only 40 kilometres to the north clearly contradicts this opinion. Here a local NGOs and partner of a Dutch PI is already for years working in the field of ecological agriculture. In their work they depart from farmers forming groups voluntarily. They then discuss the major problems with these groups, train them and support them with very limited inputs but with a lot of attention for group strengthening and mutual learning and support. Only years within the programme and with those groups they were working satisfactorily, the NGO started providing micro credits. In the provision of these micro credits, the groups themselves perform a major role.

Not surprisingly, the latter organisation has qualified staff to implement the programme and a clear strategy. These two important preconditions seem to be missing with many partners. Instead they depend on good-willing volunteers who may be experts in specific fields but are not necessarily experts in strengthening development processes. Moreover, in many cases the lack of permanent staff dealing with the target group is a major headache. Particularly when trying to set up a more local-driven and –managed development process, frequent interaction between the target group and the facilitating organisation is required. With some organisation, the lack of direct supervision and assistance leads to a wait and see attitude with the local population. This certainly holds for those organisations that set out quite ambitious programmes for income generation, start training of people but then are not able to continue because of lack of funds.

For many partners a more frequent and direct supervision is impossible as they consist of volunteers who are in no position to invest the time and energy required for such a process. Some of these organisations eventually realise that if they really want to facilitate and strengthen local ownership there is a need for more interaction and this in turn means that there is a need to hire in people who are able to do the job. That was, for instance, the conclusion of one organisation working in the north of Ghana when it realised the need for a local supervisor for its micro credit programme who would be able to spend more time in facilitating and supporting the target group. The same holds for a PI working in Malawi. Realising that the programme became a bit too big to be left to a few volunteers the organisation employed a coordinator for the programme. Others try to 'fill the gap' by using young volunteers from the Netherlands not only in, for instance, the construction of schools but also as temporary assistants in managing such sensitive programmes as micro credits.

The above perhaps creates the impression that most PI-partners are run by volunteers only. This impression is not correct. Many of the partners of PIs in this study have staff members on the wage sheet although often these salaries are not paid for by the PI but come from (for instance) the government as the partner is employed in a hospital or school. Still, some seven PIs also directly employ people from the funds they raise in the Netherlands. This includes two staff members in a small mirror-organisation working in Malawi, the salaries of several staff members in a much bigger organisation in Ghana, the salary of the Dutch coordinator of the mirror organisation in Ghana, etc.

In some cases, partners clearly express their dissatisfaction with the emphasis on voluntarism by the PI and occasionally this can lead to major frictions. It should be noted that not paying salaries can eventually lead to less interest from the local staff members. That was, for instance, the case with one of the partners in Ghana where the people involved felt that after

so many years they were entitled to being paid for their work. Others simply regard salaries as an integral part of the programme. Most likely, the emphasis on voluntarism with PIs emerges partly from the idea of keeping down overhead costs and thus securing that 'every Euro is used for the programme' and benefits the target group.

Cooperation

Due to the lack of documents, it is not only extremely difficult to analyse to what extent PIs make a proper analysis of the local situation and particularly the local power relations but also whether they have contacts with other organisations in their line of work. The impression from the field study is that PIs often work in splendid isolation as they are hardly aware of who else is working in their field or even area and only few of these other actors seem to be aware of the PI and its work. Occasionally this even holds for the same village where one of the PI-supported partners essentially has competition from another local organisation but seemed to be unaware of this. Perhaps this is partly due to the fact that PIs often do not work together with already existing organisations which may have their own network but start their own organisation. Even organisations supporting the same partner are not necessarily working together and are knowledgeable about what the other is exactly doing and funding.

Naturally, this is not always the case. The Dutch director of one of the PI-partners in Malawi has frequent contacts with other organisations as well as with government departments and has even been part of a selected group of experts drafting a policy on aids-orphans. Another PI working in Ghana deliberately sought contact with not only bilateral and multilateral donor agencies but also with government departments. The latter was felt necessary because the aim of the organisation (i.e., providing and improving skills such as reading and computer knowledge) automatically connects it to the schools these children go to. In this case, it is quite unfortunate that the concerned government department is either unable or unwilling to really connect with the programme. Another PI active in Malawi closely linked up with the forest department, whereas in several cases one could say that formally the PIs and their partners connect to the local government structure. However, in both Ghana and Malawi it is almost impossible not to connect to the local chiefs as without their consent it is nearly impossible to work in their area.

The latter does, however, not mean that this relationship is extended fully or that it even goes beyond receiving a formal blessing to work in the area. Other partners clearly choose for an isolated position such as one of the orphanages in Malawi. Although there are formal relationships with government departments, the organisation essentially provides a closed off environment for 'its' orphans with little if any contacts between the children and the outside world and with no outreach programme. Another organisation working with orphans in the north of Malawi, on the contrary, links up closely with the surrounding villages. It not only has an outreach programme in which guardians of orphans are supported but managed to provide drinking water to tens of villages surrounding its compound.

It goes without saying that the local context is extremely important for development work. The same holds for cooperating with others. Also from a broader development perspective, an isolated position is thus not advisable. The Paris Declaration showed coordination and harmonisation of donors (at policy level and implementation level) to be regarded as extremely important, while NGOs in the Netherlands have been judged by the Ministry for their interaction with other actors. The general idea here is that 'one plus one can indeed be three'. Naturally, any process of more frequent interaction, exchange, coordination and (eventually) fine tuning starts with information. Also with the traditional organisations the provision of information already presents major problems but with PIs it seems to hardly exist. This then not only refers to the lack of in-depth information to their own back-donors

(see below) but also to other actors in the development – not in the last place (local) governments.

Overall, governments seem to be hardly aware (let alone knowledgeable) about the number of PIs active in their country, the funds they bring in, the sectors they are working in and the type of activities in which they are active. The same holds for multilateral, bilateral and civilateral donors. Apart from the question whether all these development actors are indeed interested in what PIs support; it goes without saying that ‘not knowing’ kills any (potential) possibility of reaching a combined added value in its infancy. Officially this means that in policy preparation, in the selection of target communities for specific interventions and in taking into account what is already being done, all development actors (including the PIs themselves) have to work with far insufficient data.

Accountability, monitoring and evaluation

As discussed earlier, it is often said that PIs partly emerge because of dissatisfaction with the work of traditional (civilateral and bilateral) development organisations. One of the issues often raised then is that these organisations are not able to sufficiently show what the meaning or impact of their work is. To put it bluntly: they are criticised for not showing what one Euro in aid really delivers leading to what has been called above the legitimacy crisis of development aid.

Following such criticism, it is to be expected that PIs are much better at showing what they do and what they contribute. The first they certainly do, the second is substantially less clear. The main means of communication with their own constituency in the Netherlands is either the website or newsletters. Narrative reports are seldom and financial reports even less frequently found on the websites. Of the 21 organisations with a website only four provide narrative reports. Three of them also include a financial report, while with two other organisations the annual reports can be ordered. Particularly also with regard to their financial dealings, private initiatives seem to be notoriously quiet or perhaps even secretive. For organisations depending for a large part on trust with the general public these are surprisingly low numbers. What many of the websites do provide are short descriptions of ongoing or finished projects and many photos.

Electronic or hardcopy newsletters then seem to be used as a kind of alternative source of information for the back donors of the PIs. Most of them keep their supporters updated by regular newsletters. However, these newsletters mainly consist of personal stories about travels to the projects and of individual success stories. Only rarely an analysis is added of major problems experienced and the way the PI and/or its partner has tried to overcome these (but then this also holds for the annual reports mentioned above which are mainly of a descriptive nature and are restricted to showing the different activities undertaken). Perhaps even more important, the newsletters do seldom if ever provide an insight in the financial means available, a clear justification of the decisions taken or an analysis of the meaning of the work done for the target group. These reports and newsletters are thus unlikely to be critical in the sense that they show what goes wrong. Perhaps such a focus on success is giving in by the idea that analysing failures and problems is a way of washing one’s dirty linen in public and as such not done likely for fear of losing support. Whether this is indeed a correct reasoning or whether not showing more negative developments (and the way the organisation is dealing with them) is actually the way to indeed loose that support remains to be seen.

It is interesting to note, for instance, that a PI which recently terminated its intervention in Ghana simply states that over a period of five years ‘a complete package of services’ has been established and that these services take care of ‘good education for all children’ in the village.

Obviously this is felt to be sufficient for all back donors who over the years donated a total of Euro 110.000 to the project. In this particular case, the PI is indeed correct about the 'package of services' (e.g., school building, kitchen for kindergarten, teacher's houses) provided but whether this indeed has led to 'good education' let alone 'for all children' is a completely other question. In no way, the PI backs up such a claim. This raises the more general question why PIs obviously 'get away' with what looks like a lot less of accountability than the traditional organisations.

Naturally, there are exceptions here as well. So we learn from one of the newsletters of a Ghanaian PI that a grinding mill provided to a group of women caused severe problems. Women in the group felt that, since it was their mill, they could use it for free leading to a situation where there were no funds available for fuel and maintenance. Although not mentioned as such, it shows the failure in group formation activities and with the decision of the PI to keep the mill as its own property and essentially lend it to the women. Of course: this is a solution but it remains questionable whether it is the best one.

Most of times there are newsletters and short descriptions of projects (sometimes also already finished projects). The newsletters often provide personal stories about travels to the projects or a bit more background information. But also here, accountability in the way of providing clear data on objectives, financial means and (certainly) the outcome (let alone impact) of the projects is lacking. Several PIs seem to feel that pictures are the best way of showing what is being done. Some PIs indicate on their website that the annual report can be ordered. Even in those rare cases that the PI provides easy accessible progress reports or annual reports, these are most of times of a rather descriptive nature explaining what is being done (i.e., an activity report) but not what is being reached.

At the same time it should be acknowledged most PIs in this research would find it almost impossible to answer questions about their effectiveness (let alone their impact) themselves. For one because many are relatively young and determining the impact of their work is alone for that reason extremely difficult if not impossible. Secondly, as some of the PIs acknowledged, they not always have a clear idea how to measure the effectiveness of their work while, thirdly, they experience major reporting bottlenecks. The fact that evaluating their work is extremely rare should thus not come as a surprise. Such studies can be extremely helpful shows one PI active in Malawi. The study (carried out by one of the founders of the PI in cooperation with local staff) has assisted the organisation in adapting their programme. The organisation now, for instance, learned that 'the aims of the [project] are not in line with the priorities of the farmers' and showed as well the need to 'appoint a project supervisor'.

PIs describe their own effectiveness often in terms of managing to build a school or deliver specific materials. Only rarely, effectiveness was described in terms of what the project means for the target group. It shows a strong focus with concrete activities already reflected in the objectives (see above). This could even create the impression that PIs do not seem to be interested in what the activities supported actually mean for their target group.

Perhaps even more important (for learning as well as accountability reasons) than mid-term and end evaluations is a monitoring system that structurally keeps track of what is happening and whether any changes in the programme are required. Seldom there seem to be structured monitoring systems in place. At the same time, projects are often visited, problems are obviously discussed between the partners and many phone calls and emails move back and forth to keep track of what is going on. In some cases, these contacts are weekly. Only in a few cases, contacts are very irregular. Visits to the projects are also frequent – with a substantial number of PIs someone from the organisation visits the partner(s) at least once per year and often twice or even thrice. Although, often due to technical (e.g., no electricity) or funding limitations (phone calls are extremely expensive), these interactions are sometimes less frequent than one would like them to be. , the idea of (independent) evaluations of

projects is an exception rather than the rule. Only few of the PIs studied here have ever carried out an evaluation of their project(s).

Finally, two remarks should be made. First, it should be stressed that several of the PIs emphasised that their work is 'evaluated' by their founders (e.g., Linkis-organisations). In most cases this then seems to refer to the evaluation reports that the PI has to submit. It remains unclear what is exactly asked of the PIs in these 'evaluation reports'. The relationship between the PI and its institutional back donor(s) was not part of this study. More importantly, the reports sent by the PI are not easily accessible and can not be found on any of the websites. Secondly, the above remarks about monitoring, evaluation and accountability should not be read as a call for burdening the (relatively) small PIs with a system equal to that demanded of the traditional organisations. There are, however, accountability as well as learning reasons also for PIs to pay substantially more attention to keeping track of what is happening in their programmes in a more structured manner and to periodically evaluate their programmes and use the findings for improving their future work. Naturally, this will require investments as well: in financial terms and in terms of mindsets (with the PIs themselves and most likely with their supporters).

Sustainability

Most PIs are convinced that 'their' projects will disappear as the proverbial snow for the sun when they cease funding. Their partners seem to be in agreement here. A discussion in one of the villages clearly revealed the fear for losing their 'saviour' as they called the founder of the PI. Although the situation most likely is very different for those partners which have more donors (and certainly those for which the PI is not the most important one), generally PIs answer the question about sustainability negatively. In some cases, they are convinced that the activities will continue but then mostly at a much lower level. This rather gloomy picture of the future and of the need for continuation of outside funding is at the same time not high on the agenda of every organisation.

Still, many PIs are actively seeking diversification of funding for their programme or partner by looking out for other donors. The Ghana-PI which recently terminated its assistance and handed over the programme to the local community (see above) has kept some funds in reserve in order to assist in what could probably be called a kind of re-start. Everything points out that such funds will be required as the community has not yet managed to raise any funds locally to either continue the programme or even to maintain what has already been established. Considering the fact that there is no specific group within that village feeling responsible and the older group is breaking up due to in fights, it is perhaps not that strange that few people are willing to invest in the programme. Occasionally, partners seek assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors and some have managed to tap into these funds.

More important perhaps in trying to secure a continuation of the programme (and/or the organisation) is setting up income generating programmes. Many studies have shown that such income generating activities are extremely difficult also because they demand different skills and capacities of the concerned organisations. Still, there are a few success stories like the one PI that supported the expansion of the mortuary in a hospital in Ghana. According to the present hospital administrator, this expansion has been instrumental in solving an important part of the financial problems of the hospital and may even have prevented closure. Also a Malawian organisation, supported by two PIs in the study, seems to be rather successful in this regard. Apart from the fact that there are several other foreign donors, the Dutch director has set out to make her centre self-sufficient. Animal husbandry (pigs, cows and chicken) is an important element in this strive towards self-sufficiency and the organisation obviously is well-equipped and well-funded to make this potentially beneficial.

In other cases, success is not (yet) reached. Trying to secure an income for its local partner by funding a piece of land, seeds and fertilisers, as one PI did in Malawi, three years later has not lead to any substantial income. Not only because the means available are insufficient to prepare the entire plot but also (and perhaps mainly) because the local organisation has no experience in farming. It will be clear that this problem is not solved by hiring in a local farm supervisor belonging to the right church but with no experience in farming. Also the plans of another Malawi-PI for constructing a school garden in order to train students but also to raise some additional money for the school did not work out. The garden is littered with stones and the little production coming off it is principally used in the kitchen of some of the teachers. With other organisations ideas about financial sustainability are still in the early stages as with the Ghana PI wanting to use their computers as an internet café.

In this regard, the activity supported by one of the PIs in Malawi is interesting. In order to secure their school feeding programme in future, the organisation together with the head master embarked on a scheme for creating additional income for the school by chicken rearing and a school garden. Although the programme yet has to really get off the ground, it could create a possibility for some local income generation

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Notes

¹ Unfortunately, the author has not managed to fully work out all the individual reports prior to preparing this overall report. The findings from these have, however, been included here.

² With regard to the knowledge of citizens on development issues (regarded as an important part, or even prerequisite, of public support) the old saying that 'public support is a mile wide but an inch deep' still seems to be true. Dutch studies consistently show that knowledge about developing countries, development processes and development cooperation is erratic at best. A recent study showed this to be true also for Dutch politicians (Hemmer & Oosten 2006)

³ Also see Develtere (2003) for a discussion on the different elements or dimensions that can be distinguished within the general term 'public support'.

⁴ And, just in case citizens do not know which organisation to support, there is even the possibility to do the 'Good Goal Test' in order to determine which good goal first best to you.

⁵ Interestingly, this meant that in 2003 'international aid' moved from the third most important aim within the 'philanthropist sector' to the sixth. A recent study by Motivaction (2007) showed that 44% of the Dutch citizens in 2006 donated money to 'organisations or actions for developing countries'. These 9% equal €483 million adding nearly 0.1% to the 0.8% of GNP that the Dutch government sets aside for international cooperation.

⁶ One could also say that the socialisation of international cooperation fits neatly in the five I's the Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP 2004) sees as long term societal processes in the Netherlands: individualisation, informatisation, internationalisation, informalisation and intensification (see: Van der Velden (2007).

⁷ There are more PI-funding agencies in the Netherlands. Aqua for All, for instance, provides funding and expertise in the field of drinking water and sanitation projects for, among others, PIs. Probably the best known funding agency for PIs is Wilde Ganzen (Wild Gees) which in 2007 celebrated its 50th anniversary. The organisation 'supports fund-raising campaigns in the Netherlands to facilitate concrete, small-scale projects' most of which are in developing countries. In 2006, the organisation subsidised some 453 projects for a total amount of nearly Euro 15 million (Wilde Ganzen 2007 = Jaarverslag). Wilde Ganzen receives part of its funding indirectly from the Dutch government (e.g., through NCDO and Icco).

⁸ As the Barometer public support surveys in 2006 and 2007 used a different methodology compared to earlier public support surveys, the NCDO decided to conduct a simultaneous research in 2006 using the 'old' methodology. This study (known as the control group study) showed the Dutch public to have trust first of all in 'a person or small foundation [*Stichting*] in the direct surrounding' followed by 'professional development organisations'. The Dutch government is considered by only 9% of this control group as the best channel.

⁹ In a recent article in *Internationale Samenwerking* (July 2007: 24), Junte suggests that the large number of private development projects in Ghana is the outcome of guilt felt because of the slave trade ('no easier way to ease your conscience than by pulling your purse'). Perhaps this is also a reason but certainly not one that can vouch for the large number of PIs active in countries such as India.

¹⁰ This aid chain refers to 'the series of organizations and actors involved in the process of moving funds from their initial institutional source to be spent on behalf of the targeted beneficiaries in the recipient area, and the associated processes of accounting to donors for the use of these funds' (Wallace et.al. 2006: 12). As such, this aid chain 'follows the money' and seems rather straightforward consisting as it does of specific organisations and actors linked to each other in terms of funding and reporting.

¹¹ Following Van der Velden (2007: 5), this 'socialisation of development cooperation' is here understood as the 'process of broadening and deepening the active involvement of people and groups in development issues'.

¹² It should be acknowledged that these new actors in many cases are not that new at all. The fact that citizens start fundraising, adopt projects and programmes in developing countries and/or start their own projects is essentially of all times. Besides, what are here termed 'traditional development organisations' started off as private initiatives as well. They are still termed 'new actors' here because there is a marked growth of these PIs, they are increasingly considered as part of international cooperation and as such also have become a part of the aid discussion.

¹³ The exact number of PIs in the Netherlands is not known but estimates suggest that there are between 6,000 and 8,000 (Brok & Bouzoubaa 2005) and between 10,000 and 15,000 (Van Voorst 2005).

¹⁴ Remittances could be regarded as a possible seventh type of PIs. In 2005, Van Voorst (p. 9-10) distinguished between four types of initiatives: (1) fund raising initiatives for a specific objective; (2)

volunteer work with Southern organisations; (3) direct support to specific projects in the South with assistance of friends and acquaintances; and (4) anti globalists.

¹⁵ The term anti-globalist is in most cases incorrect as most people and organisations within this diverse group is not fighting globalisation as such but the way in which international organisations and the Western world more in general acts in the globalisation process.

¹⁶ The table clearly shows that our knowledge about these foundations is still meagre. This particularly holds for the financial endowment (i.e., a transfer of money or property donated to an institution, with the stipulation that it be invested, and the principal remain intact) and the annually available budget.

¹⁷ Naturally, there are many more ways in which citizens can express their involvement with development issues. Think, for instance, about individual donations to a specific development organisation, buying fair-trade products and 'giving with profit' (e.g., participating in lotteries). Here, these types of activities, which can be seen as an expression of public support, are considered as more passive forms and are thus not included under Private Initiatives. Also see Valk & Schulpen (2007) who showed that many citizens do not regard 'giving money' as an 'action'. Naturally, they do provide part of the funds which enables these PIs to do their work in the first place.

¹⁸ Also see a white paper of her political party CDA (Christian Democrats) (CDA 2005: 23) which states that PIs 'are a new channel for establishing a direct commitment between citizens in the Netherlands and in developing countries'.

¹⁹ In a white paper 'A good development' for the PvdA (Labour Party), the commission-Koenders (PvdA 2005: 15) stated that PIs 'are crucial for public support [for development cooperation] in Dutch society'.

²⁰ As Termeer notes: 'connecting to this growing group of "do-it-yourself" is indispensable. The sector can not allow itself to ignore this group of people which are enthusiastically and often successfully active in development aid'. The consequence also seems to be that criticising PIs openly becomes almost impossible for traditional aid agencies (Koch 2007).

²¹ Interestingly, neither those that feel that PIs are an important addition to international cooperation nor those that feel that they are some kind of 'development menace' have much to base their assessment on. Some (e.g., Koch 2007) acknowledge that research into this type of aid has hardly come of the ground yet. PIs themselves may have substantial knowledge about their contribution to development but, if existing, such information is hardly common knowledge. Only recently, a few studies have been issued by Linkis organisations into the effectiveness of PIs. Although these studies have not yet been completed or have not yet been made public, the first rumours have it that they are critical. No independent studies outside of the development establishment have been undertaken so far.

²² The idea of assisting PIs not only with funding but also with advice (as essentially all Linkis-organisations are doing) already points out that there is at least doubt about the effectiveness of these small projects and activities. The fact that PIs seem to welcome such advice would then indicate that they do realise that they are in need of it.

²³ Also see Bieckmann (2007: 131-134) who feels that PIs lack 'political depth' thereby referring to 'societal processes in a broader, international context' which he regards as most important in the fight against poverty.

²⁴ See, for instance, Paardekooper (Vice Versa – Ontwikkelingsorganisaties moeten grote publiek serieus nemen) who states that aid organisations 'have become more professional [over the last decennia] not only with regard to their set up but also in the implementation of projects. The emphasis has shifted towards structural changes and no longer is focussed on direct aid to the poor – most development organisations are active in capacity building and lobby'. This also means that it increasingly becomes 'difficult to explain to the general public what the development sector is doing'. She adds that these traditional NGOs also moved closer to the government because of subsidy reasons at the same time moving further away from their constituency.

²⁵ Koch (2007) quotes some 'professionals' who state that 'these small aid clubs now do what we did thirty years ago'.

²⁶ Reference is then often made to issues considered much more important for overall development (e.g., breaking down trade barriers, fighting against corruption and for good governance and strengthening entrepreneurship).

²⁷ It are exactly those changes which have meant a move away by the traditional aid agencies from direct poverty reduction activities or service provision and lead to a growing distance between these agencies and the general public and an increased call for showing results.

²⁸ For a critique on some of the central elements of the new aid paradigm see Bernard 2007 and Molenaers & Renard 2007.

²⁹ The government felt a new plan was called for as the previous PRSP ‘was scrapped off for lacking a business plan that recognises the private sector as the engine of economic growth’ (The Nation, 26-7-2007).

³⁰ Not surprisingly, there is a direct link between the priority areas of the MGDS and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in the ‘areas of health, education, gender, environment and governance’. More in general, it is even said that the ‘MGDS has attempted to translate the MDGs for Malawi in a localized context’ and that ‘all MDGs are therefore addressed in the strategy’.

³¹ That goal may even be further away than perhaps anticipated in the PRSP. Not surprisingly, and consistent with the overall call for an increase in aid in light of the MDGs, donors are called upon to provide considerable more (and particularly: more reliable) aid. In line with this, the IMF in its review of the PRGF (Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility) recently stated that ‘Malawi would need a large increase in external private capital and aid flows to finance its development goals’ (IMF 2007: 4). Particularly also the call for an increase in external private capital (e.g., FDI) is warranted considering the fact that in 2005 net ODA stood at US\$ 575 million, while FDI were as low as US\$ 3 million (and remittances only added a meagre US\$ 1 million) (all in current prices) (source: Malawi Date Profile at <http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile.asp?PTYPE=CP&CCODE=MWI> - retrieved 22 June 2007).

³² The large influx of donor money is, for instance, held responsible for the ‘double-digit inflation’ and for creating ‘monetary shocks and quasi-fiscal deficits of a magnitude overwhelming the Government’s capacity for macroeconomic management’.

³³ The PRSP adds that ‘current arrangements for the coordination of donor aid with national policies and priorities falls short of requirements. No comprehensive list of donor funding exists. In some cases donors negotiate funding direct with MDA. In this case funding may not appear in the annual budget. In other cases donors deal direct with contractors’ (GoG 2002: 134). These type observations are also made in the 2006 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration (OECD 2007) which shows that in both Malawi and Ghana certain steps have been taken in the field of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability (i.e., the central elements of the Paris Declaration) but that there is still a lot that needs further improvement.

³⁴ Total capital flows consist of ODA, OOF (Other Official Flows) and Private Flows (e.g., FDI).

³⁵ It should be kept in mind that changes in donor funding over the years may not reflect changes in the context analysis made but are more a reflection of changing donor policies due to internal reasons. In the case of Malawi, changes may also be due to famines which frequently haunt the country.

³⁶ Considering the fact that the PRSP process originates from the multilateral corner the fact that aid-levels were at a low in 2002-2004 should be regarded as at least strange.

³⁷ In 2005, ODA per capita for Ghana stood at US\$ 50.65, whereas every Malawian ‘received’ US\$ 44.66.

³⁸ These six DAC donors are the only which have provided more than the average DAC ODA to Malawi over the 1990-2005 period of US\$205.8 million. All other DAC donors remained (well) below that average ODA figure. Note that Malawi is not a partner country for Dutch aid anymore. In 1999, the Netherlands decided to phase out of Malawi (a process that should be completed in 2007). The latter does not mean that no Dutch bilateral aid at all reaches the country. The Netherlands has signed a so-called ‘silent partnership’ with the United Kingdom for support in the field of education and provides emergency aid through the United Nations system (see <http://www.minbuza.nl/binaries/pdf/reizen-en-landen/betrekkingen-met-nederland/Malawi.pdf>).

³⁹ Ghana is a partner country for Dutch bilateral development cooperation. A large part of Dutch aid is provided in the form of budget support and is meant for implementing the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) in the fields of health, education (e.g., school feeding) and environment. Besides, the Netherlands is also actively involved in private sector development, good governance, public sector reform and migration (see: <http://www.minbuza.nl/binaries/pdf/reizen-en-landen/betrekkingen-met-nederland/ghana.pdf>).

⁴⁰ Point of departure here thus is that, for instance, bilateral ODA, as reported to the DAC, does not cover the assistance to Malawi through NGOs even though these NGOs (e.g., in the Netherlands for instance Oxfam Novib, ICCO and Hivos) receive substantial contributions from the government.

⁴¹ This data was collected as part of an evaluation of the first two rounds of the TMF (Thematic Co-financing Programme) in 2005. For a full report on this evaluation see CIDIN 2006 and

⁴² Also see De Hart 2005: 28) who states that particularly organisations active in such ‘fields as nature and environment, abortion or euthanasia, *international aid* and health have grown substantially’ (emphasis added).

⁴³ Linkis (www.linkis.nl) shows that 58% of all projects supported by Linkis-organisations over the period 2001-2008 (also seen Note 17) are concentrated in 20 countries of which India (7.7%), Kenya (6%), Indonesia (5.3%), Surinam (4.3%), and Ethiopia and South Africa (3.6% each) are the most important. For comparison sake: the study of Develtere & Stessens (2005: 33) showed 20% of the 'fourth pillar initiatives' to be working in the Democratic Republic of Congo, whereas 11.5% works in India, 8.5% in Rwanda, 7.7% in Senegal and 6.2% in Rumania.

⁴⁴ The NCDO is excluded in this overview for the simple reason that data for the years 2005 and 2006 for this organisation is not included in the annual reports of Linkis.

⁴⁵ Several sources were used for collecting these PIs. Principally this concerned internet search (e.g., through the Ghana Platform, Linkis overviews) but names and addresses were also provided by NCDO and Impulsis. There is as yet no overall overview of PIs active in the two countries. It is presumed that there are (many) more so-called Ghana- or Malawi-PIs than have been contacted for this study. The latter also means that it is extremely difficult – if not impossible – to determine whether the group contacted and certainly the group that reacted forms a representative selection. The data presented here have to be interpreted in light of this limitation.

⁴⁶ Three organizations have not been included in this analysis because they were either no longer active in Ghana and/or Malawi, do no longer exist as an organisation (although their activities are presumably still continuing) or it was unclear in which of the two countries the organisation was active. The latter PI also answered only a small part of the questions in the survey.

⁴⁷ Statistical analysis of such small 'groups' of two, seven or even one PI is impossible. The difference between these two broad categories of PIs is thus not used for statistical analysis but only to highlight some obvious differences.

⁴⁸ Apart from 22 PIs stating that (part of their) active people originally comes from either Ghana or Malawi, people of immigrant origin are from all over the world. There is no specific 'country of origin' that really sticks out.

⁴⁹ This also shows that part of the PIs have internalised the discourse of traditional development cooperation. Whether or not that also means they should be considered as comparable development organisations remains to be seen.

⁵⁰ In both cases the term 'organisations' may (also) refer to the PI itself as some of them are actively involved in implementation.

⁵¹ There are few differences between Ghana and Malawi, although orphans are more important in Malawi and water & sanitation is more important in Ghana.