



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Photo RVO

Encouraging enterprise

Support for small businesses

In developing countries, the Netherlands supports local startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that want to grow. We also help Dutch companies to do business internationally, boosting local economies and sustainable trade with their innovative solutions.

It is not easy for companies in developing countries to sell their products on foreign markets. Competition is fierce. Small businesses have difficulty finding customers in other countries. They are disproportionately impacted by tariffs. Customers also have stringent demands in terms of quality and sustainability.

Thanks to Dutch efforts, 24,000 SMEs in developing countries obtained credit in 2014. A further 122,000 customers were able to open a bank account and 460,000 people were able to take out insurance for the first time in their lives.

Sustainable enterprise

Corporate social responsibility is the norm, both in the Netherlands and in international business. Responsible business practice means everyone wins: partners in the South, consumers and companies themselves. Companies that operate on the basis of corporate social responsibility can guarantee that the products they sell have been produced in a fair and environmentally friendly way. And they are receptive to the wishes of their customers, who are often quite critical.

International business

A lot of Dutch companies are active internationally. They include major companies like Philips, Unilever and Heineken, and also numerous smaller companies. Yet only a small proportion of Dutch businesses trade with or invest in low- and middle-income countries, even though their expertise would help these countries enormously in tackling the challenges they face.

Developing countries are increasingly seeking economic collaboration with Dutch companies. More and more companies are responding, and launching international operations. The strength of Dutch companies lies in their high-quality products and services, and their focus on sustainability. Dutch companies also tend to be innovative. The challenge is to deliver the same level of quality and innovation in developing countries. The Netherlands' good reputation, derived in part from its long track record in development cooperation, helps in this respect. Opportunities exist for Dutch industry to become more internationally active.

We help Dutch companies engage in international enterprise and devise innovative solutions to boost local economies and sustainable trade. And we encourage and support public-private partnerships between companies, civil society organisations and public authorities to create jobs and stimulate enterprise.

Investing in women

The Dutch programme focuses a lot of attention on young entrepreneurs and businesswomen, as well as businesses in fragile states. There is growing international awareness that, in order for inclusive growth and development to progress, women must have equal economic opportunities. Investing in women makes economic sense. Women's economic independence is also an important aspect of Dutch policy on women's rights and gender equality.

Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO.nl)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Affairs collaborate closely in promoting enterprise. RVO.nl is the port of call for all Dutch companies interested or already involved in international business. In 2014, RVO.nl supported 460 Dutch companies in devising and implementing innovative investment plans in developing countries. Companies themselves invested €135 million in these plans. Over 600 companies asked for advice on potential opportunities for trade and investment in one of the Netherlands' 15 partner countries.

After transfer of knowledge by the CBI, exporters in developing countries increased the value of their exports to the European Union/EFTA by an average of € 50,000 and to the rest of the world by € 208,000.

(based on data from 313 companies)

Dutch Good Growth Fund

The [DGGF](#) plays a key role in supporting trade and investment by SMEs in developing countries, and by Dutch companies wanting to invest there. The fund promotes economic activity and creates opportunities that allow everyone to participate fully in the economy and in society. There are three parts to the DGGF: credit for Dutch SMEs wanting to invest in selected countries, export credit insurance for Dutch SMEs, and an investment fund for SMEs in developing countries. The DGGF is a revolving fund. The money it lends is paid back and then loaned out again. Every loan proposal must be relevant to development.

'During my travels I regularly meet entrepreneurs with promising projects that they are unable to finance through regular lenders. The DGGF can provide a solution for them.'

(Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation)

INSTITUTIONS AND ACTORS

Economic institutions and actors supported by The Netherlands (2014)



DRIVE

Good infrastructure is vital for the functioning of an economy. It is difficult for manufacturers to produce without a reliable electricity supply. Poor infrastructure makes it difficult or impossible for people to trade their products on local or even international markets, or to commute to work. This slows economic growth. Often, countries do not have sufficient financial resources to build the required infrastructure. The least developed countries also lack the capacity and resources to develop projects. The [DRIVE](#) programme was established to bridge this funding gap. The programme enables companies to include a more attractive and efficient financing plan when tendering for infrastructure projects in developing countries.

Facility for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Food Security (FDOV)

[FDOV](#) encourages public-private partnerships in the fields of food security and private sector development in developing countries. To qualify for support, projects must be aimed at making markets more efficient and production chains more sustainable. They must also have demonstrable positive effects for low-income groups and women. Women entrepreneurs will be given priority.

Thanks to the programmes for private sector development and food security, in 2014 150,000 jobs were created in the formal sector. An estimated 30 to 45% of these positions were filled by women.

For more information on Dutch efforts to achieve sustainable, inclusive economic growth, contact: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sustainable Economic Development Department
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