

EVALUATION REPORT

External Evaluation of the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP II) and Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE II)

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

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Content

List of Tables and Figures	II
List of Abbreviations	III
1. Executive Summary	IV
2. Introduction	1
2.1 Evaluation subject	1
2.2 Objectives of the evaluation.....	3
3. Data basis and methodological limitations of the evaluation	3
3.1 Empirical data base	4
3.2 Methodological limitations of the evaluation	5
4. Results for NICHE	6
4.1 Relevance	6
4.2 Efficiency	12
4.3 Effectiveness and Impact.....	26
4.4 Sustainability	40
5. Results for NFP.....	48
5.1 Relevance	48
5.2 Efficiency	53
5.3 Effectiveness and Impact.....	62
6. Overall conclusions and recommendations.....	72
6.1 Conclusions and recommendations regarding NICHE	72
6.2 Conclusions and recommendations regarding NFP.....	76
7. Annex.....	82
7.1 Data collection instruments	82
7.2 Terms of Reference	82
7.3 Technical Proposal.....	82
7.4 Inception report.....	82
7.5 Description of the management system for NICHE II	82
7.6 Description of the new rules and regulation introduced under NFP II to improve the efficiency of programme implementation	86
7.7 Additional figures and tables.....	88
7.8 Field schedules	93
7.9 List of interviewees (in alphabetical order).....	99
7.10 List of consulted documents	104

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Total number of interviewed persons by stakeholder group and country	4
Table 2: Net return rates of surveys	5
Table 3: Overview of the share of the programme management costs in relation to the budget committed for projects, in €	20
Table 4: Overview of the total bids won or lost per type of organisation for the period 2012-2015 .	22
Table 5: Overview of the total grant budget and total budget spent for the projects visited, in €	23
Table 6: Number of projects visited that suffered from delays or quality in implementation [...]	24
Table 7: Overview of the % of time input of Dutch/European expertise to the total budget granted and the share of project management	24
Table 8: Overview of the share of the programme management costs in relation to the budget committed for scholarships	57
Table 9: Overview of the total programme budget committed for the different NFP modalities in the period 2012 to 2015, in €.....	58
Table 10: Overview of the total number of scholarships granted per year and per modality	58
Table 11: Overview of the budget norms per scholarship modality for the period 2012-2015, in €....	59
Table 12: Overview of the share of scholarships on the total scholarships granted per modality/per year situated in food security sector	59
Table 13: Number of fellowships per type of employer, for scholarships granted in 2013	60
Table 14: Overview of composition of the response group for the four countries visited	63
Table 15: Number of training awards by year and modality.....	63
Table 16: Completion rates for master and short courses organised in the period 2012-2015	64
Table 17: NICHE cost components at programme management level per year, in €	90
Table 18: Overview of the total grant awarded per country in the period 2012-2015, in €.....	91
Table 19: Overview of the project budget granted per type of contracted provider and type of organisations member of a consortium in the period 2012-2015, in €.....	91
Table 20: Overview of the project budget granted per sector in the period 2012-2015, in €.....	91
Table 21: Overview of the project budget granted per type of contracted institution in the period 2012-2015, in €.....	92
Table 22: Grants by type of requesting organisation.....	92
Table 23: Overview of the total grant budget and total budget spent per cost component for 195 projects that were managed in the period 2012-2015, in €.....	92
Table 24: Overview of budget spent on the management of NFP at programme level per year, in €.	93
Figure 1: Challenges as identified by Dutch Service providers	18
Figure 2: Challenges as identified by southern partners	18
Figure 3: Assessment of the role of southern partners by DSP	19
Figure 4: Perceived benefits for requesting organisations by requesting organisations.....	29
Figure 5: Assessment of the role of the embassies by Dutch Service providers	38
Figure 6: Assessment of personal changes due to participation in NFP course	50
Figure 7: Share of NFP alumni and current students working in main thematic areas of Dutch DC....	52
Figure 8: Rating of personal benefits from participating in NFP training.....	65
Figure 9: Proportions of employees who are still working with NFP nominating organisations	66
Figure 10: Assessment of project management by Dutch service providers	88
Figure 11: Assessment of the role of EP-Nuffic by DSP	89
Figure 12: Assessment of the role of EP-Nuffic by southern partners.....	89
Figure 13: Assessment of ability to ensure sustainability of project results	89
Figure 14: Assessment of ability to ensure sustainability by DSPs.....	90
Figure 15: Challenging aspects for NFP fellows.....	90

List of Abbreviations

ABC approach	Apprentissage basée sur les Compétences
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Nations
CAMES	Conseil africain et malgache pour l'enseignement supérieur
CBL	Competency Based Learning
DSO	Department of Social Development
DSP	Dutch service providing (educational) institution
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
EP-Nuffic	Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education
FGD(s)	Focus Group Discussion(s)
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LMD	Licence, Master, Doctorate
MASP	Multi-Annual Strategic Plan
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
NAA	National Alumni Association
NESO	Netherlands Education Support Office
NFP	Netherlands Fellowship Programmes
NICHE	Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education
NPT	Netherlands Programme for the Institutional Strengthening of Post-Secondary Education and Training Capacity
OECD/DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REESAO	Réseau pour l'Excellence d'Enseignement Supérieure en Afrique de l'Ouest
RO	Requesting Organisation
RVO	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1. Executive Summary

The report at hand deals with the main findings from the external evaluation of the Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE II) and the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP II), implemented by the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education, EP-Nuffic. CEval GmbH and ACE Europe conducted the evaluation on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA) between September and December 2016, including field missions to four implementing countries: Benin, Indonesia, Mozambique and Nigeria.

Main findings for NICHE II

The evaluation showed that NICHE projects are **relevant** for requesting organisations particularly to build up capacities and establish networks, provided the measures are sufficiently adapted to their needs. If sufficient leverage effects are achieved, NICHE projects further can have an impact on system level, e.g. in terms of changing curricula or regulatory frameworks. Thereby, long-term partnerships benefit the establishment of trustful relationships with requesting organisations, mediating tacit knowledge, involving higher-level decision makers and eventually sustainable impacts.

NICHE projects are widely aligned with the thematic priorities of the Dutch development cooperation. However, due to the chronological offset between the project cycles and the MASPs, in some countries alignment cannot always be fully achieved.

For Dutch educational institutions NICHE is relevant as it features great potential for gaining international experience and reputation, establishing and consolidating international networks, providing learning opportunities in the international field and finally for generating revenues and expanding their service portfolio.

EP-Nuffic has taken several measures to increase the **efficiency** of the programme's management. NICHE II requires less staff and resources than NICHE I, features a more standardized, simplified and automated programme management, and increased transparency. However, efficiency gains were yet partly "neutralised" due to additional requests from the MFA and the fact that the programme has become very popular among a large group of service providers, which put an enormous pressure on the staff's workload. Currently management costs represent less than 10 % of the total programme budget. A team of 16 staff members manages more than 200 projects, relating to 18 Netherlands embassies, more than 200 Dutch service providers, and responding to more than 3000 requests p.a. from organisations interested in participating in the programme. Provided no substantial changes in the programme's management, it is likely that efficiency gains will pay off during the last two years of NICHE II and might be valorised in the future phase of the programme.

The introduction of a holistic capacity development approach and a results-based management improved the quality of the design and management of NICHE II projects. The introduction of a results-based management, the increased flexibility in planning and reporting, the introduction of the principle of "active mandatory obligation" and transfer of responsibilities towards the implementing partners, is appreciated by most Dutch service providers. Yet, challenges remain in responding effectively to capacity needs of requesting organisations and in reporting progress against output and outcome (instead of activities).

According to the recommendation from the Ramboll evaluation (2012), EP-Nuffic's role was limited to programme monitoring. However, Dutch service providers and the southern partners still expect EP-Nuffic to be more active in mediating between the parties.

Up to date 98 % of the total programme budget is committed according to plan, with 40 % of the budget granted to projects in the food security sector (including private sector development). Still 5 % of the NICHE II programme is invested in the education sector. While projects in collaboration with ministries, national agencies or academic institutions situated in the four priority sectors of the Dutch development cooperation might include elements of private sector development and/or TVET, these are not traceable in the overall programme budget documents.

All projects face challenges implementing the measures in the given timeframe. In reality projects last six years instead of four. Consequently, the NICHE programme budget shows currently an under-spending of 38 %. Main factors that contribute to delays include weak adaptation of project measures to the needs and capacity of the requesting organisation, availability problems at the side of the service providers, the lack of sufficient financial resources and staff time made available by the requesting organisations. Thus more than 30 % of the time for Dutch and European expertise is spent on project management. Further, projects implemented in fragile states show considerable delays and sometimes have not even started yet.

Most visited projects achieved the planned outputs, even though mostly after the end of their implementation. Projects were especially **effective** in producing outputs with regard to staff training, curricula development and investments, and thereby in contributing to the development of human resources and teaching skills, and improving the infrastructure and equipment of the requesting organisations. In contrast challenges were faced in terms of lacking trained staff to use and maintain new equipment, identifying qualified candidates for receiving academic training abroad and long-lasting accreditation phases for new curricula.

Over time, gender has evolved to an important pillar in NICHE programmes. All projects undertook considerable sensitisation efforts and report on them accordingly. Still identification with the concept and institutionalisation is often low.

Except a few educational projects, all visited projects were found to correspond to the thematic priority areas. Both, NICHE I as well as NICHE II projects contribute to increasing the requesting organisations' capacities in these areas. While educational projects only make up a small fraction in NICHE II, nevertheless, they are important to assure quality and alignment within the sector or the larger institution (e.g. main universities). Through introducing new good-quality degree programmes in fields where shortages exist, the revision and updating of existing curricula, NICHE I contributes to the development of a well-trained workforce in the targeted sectors. This is also supported by the strengthened focus on TVET, which addresses skills gaps in specific sectors. Apparently, NICHE I and NICHE II projects are also able to have positive labour market effects.

While academic **sustainability** (e.g. further use of revised curricula and introduced innovations), at least for the visited projects, is mostly ensured, institutional sustainability (e.g. human resource development strategies, networking) and financial sustainability, in terms of the ability of the receiving organisations to generate funds after project ends, are considerably weaker. Finally, technical sustainability, i.e. the sustainable use and maintenance of provided equipment and infrastructure, again varies as it depends on the financial sustainability of the receiving organisation.

While strategic policies and plans are regularly formulated, challenges remain in ensuring their implementation after the project ends. In particular, it proved to be difficult to commit staff to changes that are not directly related to their usual teaching and research duties without financial compensation and/or reorganisation of duties within the institutions. Also sustainability of multidisciplinary

collaboration within universities and of newly created entities appeared to be rather weak and difficult to ensure within the projects' timeframe.

According to these findings, the evaluation came to the following overarching conclusions and recommendations for the further development of the NICHE programme (see Chapter 6.1 for further details):

- ✓ **NICHE is a relevant programme but faces challenges in balancing between the objectives to strengthen post-secondary education on the one hand and in contributing to the sector development in the four priority sectors on the other hand.**

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to organise two specific financing modalities to address these different objectives. One could consider to launch a call for proposals for organisational and institutional strengthening of educational institutes and to create another modality to enable the programme to react in a more flexible way to specific capacity needs or opportunities that emerge.
 - Regarding the support to organisational and institutional strengthening of educational institutes it can be taken into consideration to not limit these calls for proposals linked to the priority sectors of the bilateral cooperation.
 - The other financing modality should be more aligned to the bilateral programmes that are coordinated at central or decentral level. To that end participation of EP-Nuffic in sector platform or groups is needed to identify opportunities for cooperation. Experiences with institutions benefitting from this modality could be an entrance to a more longer-term capacity trajectory, which can be financed consequently through the first financing modality.
 - Also support to the educational sector at large is needed. This requires more pro-active alignment and harmonization with other donors.
- ✓ **The tender procedures are properly managed, transparent and contribute to competition but need to be revised to enhance effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the projects.**

Recommendation:

- A combination of a tender procedure as is currently organised and an open call system, enabling Dutch service providers and requesting organisations to jointly present a proposal, is recommended. The current experiences with the NFP TMT modality can be taken as an example.
- ✓ **Capacity development processes are non-linear and long-term trajectories require appropriate strategies.**

Recommendations:

- To effectively obtain sustainable changes, aiming also at organisational and institutional change, projects are needed that last longer than four years. Two cycles of five years seem more appropriate as is currently being applied in the Belgian international university cooperation.
- If needed, also shorter-term projects can be financed but the objectives of the capacity development support need to be more modest.

- More trainings should be provided for staff of Dutch service providers to fully understand the challenges related to supporting capacity development processes and to strengthen competencies in supporting capacity development trajectories. Tools like the 5C-model are just instruments to support capacity development trajectories. A proper vision and strategy on capacity development support is a prerequisite before starting to apply specific tools, such as 5C-model.
- ✓ **EP-Nuffic is capable to conduct proper programme management but there are several challenges at project management level.**

Recommendations:

- In order to maintain the efficiency gains it is recommended to maintain as much as possible the existing management system in the next phase.
- The changed division of roles and responsibilities needs to be made clear again to all parties involved.
- A more pro-active role can be taken up by EP-Nuffic in monitoring NICHE at programme level, for example in linking requesting organisations to other initiatives at regional or international level that can be relevant for the project.
- Trainings need to be provided to inform again the Dutch service providers on the principle of result based management and to look jointly for solutions how to improve the critical dialogue between the Dutch service provider and the requesting organisation to discuss progress towards output and outcome.
- Within the framework of capacity development should be considered if financial responsibility can be transferred more adequately to the requesting organisations. It is recommended to effectively share the financial responsibility between the Dutch service providers and the requesting organisations.

Main findings for NFP II

NFP is highly relevant for its participants and employing organisations. Thereby its **relevance** does not only derive from its potential to improve the technical knowledge of its participants but also from the fact that with it soft-skills, improved working attitude and intercultural experience can be mediated. While on the individual level particularly short and refresher courses appear to be great opportunities for career advancement, on organisational level TMTs are regarded as most beneficial for strengthening capacities.

Dutch educational institutions, RVO, the embassies and apparently also private sector actors, consider NFP as a valuable instrument for political diplomacy and preparing future economic collaboration, particularly for establishing personal relations with strategically important counterparts. Most respondents regard it more important to keep NFP flexible, i.e. the adaptability of the courses to specific partner needs and different country framework conditions, than aligning it with the thematic priorities of the Dutch Development Cooperation strategy. With regard to the thematic priorities, 'food security' and 'water (management)' appear to be more important working areas than 'sexual and reproductive health and rights' and 'rule of law'. However, demand may be also in other areas like health in general, local governance or civil society support.

EP-Nuffic manages the programme budget efficiently and spends it according to plan. Moreover, EP-Nuffic undertook several measures such as the digitalisation and automatising of the application and selection process, the restructuring of reporting formats, the use of lump sums etc. In combination with another division of roles and responsibilities these measures have resulted in **efficiency** gains that started to become visible recently. However, due to the overall programme budget cut compared to the previous phase, the share of the programme management costs to the overall programme budget remained the same.

The new way of working and the new role division between EP-Nuffic, the Dutch educational institutes and the Netherlands embassy are appropriate and also contributed to efficiency gains due to the more targeted approach and decrease in applications that need to be assessed. The new procedures work well and contribute to a transparent and fair competition, under the condition that all stakeholders fulfil their designated tasks appropriately. Yet, the high competition of applications and the limited level of strategic selection of nominated candidates, remains a bottleneck for both, the educational institutes and the Netherlands embassies.

Although the selection of the scholarships largely depends on their alignment with the Dutch thematic priorities, the Netherlands embassies cannot make much strategic use of these scholarships as their selection depends on a computer algorithm and the embassies are not well informed about the final selection and study career path of the selected candidates. Moreover, scholarships situated in other than the four priority fields could also contribute to development in these fields but have less chance to be selected.

The number of TMT, PhD and RC fellowships organised in some countries is very low. For the TMT it can be questioned why this modality should be offered to 51 countries instead of being strategically used in smaller number of countries, for example to complement the NICHE projects. As the number of PhD fellowships is very low, the question is how strategic use can be made of this modality, in particular when not employed by an educational institute.

The changed roles of EP-Nuffic and efficiency measures also caused EP-Nuffic to lose direct contact with the NFP participant, which complicated its tasks to run an alumni programme, use the network of alumni for promotional purposes and support the role of NFP alumni in economic diplomacy. EP-Nuffic is not visible anymore for the NFP participant.

While the programme budget decreased, the average costs for master students increased, resulting in a lower number of master scholarships. Experiments with co-financing are still young but show possibilities. The pilot demonstrated that in a third of the cases the students contributed themselves, and in more than the half the educational institutes did. However, the current dominant contribution of the educational institutes are at risk as it depends on the funding of the educational institutions by Dutch Ministry of Education and their access to other donors or scholarship programmes. There is also potential for co-financing short and refresher courses. It, however, must be recognized that experimenting with co-funding modalities requires more time for EP-Nuffic staff as procedures deviate from the regular processes.

The **impacts** of the NFP are mainly situated at individual level, less at organisational level and even less at country level. Effects at individual level were experienced in terms of applicable and transferable skills and knowledge and also improved self-confidence. The contribution of the programme to better performing organisations, however, depends not only on the performance of the individual alumni but also on the organisational framework conditions that might facilitate or hamper knowledge transfer and application.

Effectiveness at organisational level can improve when several staff members of an organisation participate in the same or similar courses. The refresher courses only respond to this in a limited manner. The same applies for the other in-country trainings, namely the TMT of which only a few are granted per year and country.

The former NFP evaluation suggested three possible scenarios for the next phase of the programme. The MFA clearly opted for the first scenario, formulating programme objectives that aimed at sector development, improvement of bilateral relations and economic diplomacy. The alignment of NFP with the current four policy priorities is a clear example of this policy choice. However, other consequences of the selected scenario as described in the evaluation report 2012 were not given follow-up, like the need for more targeted and strategic selection of scholarships and the need to focus less on organisational development but more on institutional capacity development. However, the chosen scenario was not well developed or implemented. By consequence, clear indications of contribution to sector or system development are absent. The NFP does not apply a sector or system oriented approach as it is based on individual applicants, and opportunities to steer the programme in a more strategic manner – from country perspective – are limited. The embassies have only limited influence on the selection of individual applicants. Moreover, there is limited alignment between the NFP priority fields and the priority interventions in the countries visited. The TMT offer the most options for alignment and strategic coherence (and influence from the Netherlands embassy), though only very few get eventually awarded. The NFP tries to compromise between objectives related to individual development and sector development. It balances between central and decentral management. Both sides of the equation are difficult to combine.

So far the NFP has little contributed to economic diplomacy or private sector development. Other capacity development facilities, supported by the MFA or by RVO, are in place to strengthen private sector development and promote trade and development. Not much use is made of the NFP or the NFP alumni. NFP students are also not linked with the business community during and at the end of their stay in the Netherlands.

While the alumni networks varied in strengths, NFP alumni members expressed strong interests and enthusiasm to the idea of a Holland alumni network. However, most alumni interviewed are already active in thematic knowledge networks, created in the margin of a specific NFP course or linked to the educational institute in the Netherlands. These thematic networks seem to be operational and beneficial in knowledge sharing, peer support and joint proposal writing. The added value of the national alumni associations was not evidenced and the strategy to support these NAA is rather “old fashion”. The Holland alumni network creates above all – sometimes unrealistic - expectations among NFP alumni to increase their access to opportunities for employment, grants and consultancies offered by the Dutch government agencies and Dutch private companies in the recipient countries.

According to these findings, the evaluation came to the following overarching conclusions and recommendations for the further development of the NFP (see Chapter 6.2 for further details):

- ✓ **The NFP is a relevant and effective programme at individual level and the level of employing organisations. Transfer of knowledge and skills to the organisational level can be further supported.**

Recommendations:

- If the NFP formulates objectives at individual level and organisational level, it is recommended to pay more attention to the conditions that facilitate or hamper knowledge transfer. An employer statement is not sufficient to guarantee this knowledge transfer. For example, it would be relevant for educational institutes in the Netherlands to include a module on change management topics.
 - The policy decision to also include objectives at organisational level excludes the group of independent workers and free-lancers. These groups, however, can also play an important role at country level with regard to sector development, like for example good qualified journalists or entrepreneurs. Inclusion of these target groups in NFP should be taken into consideration.
 - Currently the development of action plans at organisational level is already included in the short courses and refresher courses. More attention should be given to the monitoring of the implementation of these action plans.
 - The modality of a long-term trajectory of several short courses (in the Netherlands or in-country training) with staff from the same organisation could be considered again.
- ✓ **Contribution to support sector development at country level takes place but is not strategically managed.**

Recommendations:

- Clear policy decisions need to be taken regarding the objectives of the NFP and its demand driven character. On the one hand there are several arguments to defend the demand driven approach of the programme, contributing to individual and organisational capacity development in a variety of sectors. On the other hand, there is a manifest request from different stakeholders within the ministry to make more strategic use of the NFP, to respond to specific capacity gaps that emerge from the programmes they are managing. It should be taken into consideration to develop two different modalities: an open system of calls for proposals without much limitation in sectors and a closed call for proposals that can be used by the actors involved in the Dutch bilateral development cooperation programmes.
- When making more strategic use of the NFP, it should be taken into consideration to link master and PhD students more to the Dutch development cooperation. Master students could do internships or conduct research in organisations that are involved in or of relevance for the Dutch bilateral cooperation programmes. Master and PhD students should be more informed on the Dutch bilateral cooperation programme, already when they are staying in the Netherlands. This requires a more active involvement of the MFA and the Dutch service providers and should not depend on alumni activities organised by EP-Nuffic.

- ✓ **The alumni and their networks have potential in contributing to sector development and economic diplomacy but the current alumni programme requires revision.**

Recommendations:

- The objective of the Holland alumni network needs to be further clarified and appropriate strategies need to be developed. For networking, knowledge sharing and linking up with NFP alumni no Holland alumni network is needed. If the decision is taken to establish national alumni associations, more hands-on support in strengthening these associations is required. This capacity is currently not available at the Netherlands embassies and difficult to offer at distance by EP-Nuffic.
 - More alignment should be looked for between the various programmes fostering private sector development in partner countries and the NFP. In order to make effective use of the NFP a specific budget should be made available for scholarships awarding candidates identified in these private sector development programmes.
 - The budget for direct funding of small development projects, managed by the Netherlands embassies, could be used in a more strategic manner to support projects formulated by NFP alumni. It will provide an extra incentive for the alumni to become part of the national alumni association (if any) or Holland alumni network and maintain relationships with the Netherlands embassy; and it offers opportunities for knowledge exchange among alumni.
- ✓ **EP-Nuffic is able to conduct appropriate and efficient programme management and the new role division between all stakeholders is adequate. The use of the budget (and as such the distribution of the different NFP modalities) will depend on the policy choices taken for the next phase of the programme.**

Recommendations:

- The efficiency measures taken should be respected and the way the application and selection process is organised and automatized should be maintained as much as possible.
- The division of the budget and fellowships over the educational institutions and countries depends on the policy choices. Currently NFP is mostly demand driven. A policy choice in favour of a stronger and more strategic role of NFP in contributing to sector development in the priority fields of the Dutch development cooperation will require the establishment of country budgets for NFP.
- The policy choice could be made to use the limited budget for PhD in a more targeted manner, identifying strategic universities and research centres having potential to contribute to the objectives of the bilateral cooperation that could benefit from enhanced research capacities.
- The creation of an urgent response fund, with flexible rules and regulations, is recommended, as it would allow EP-Nuffic to react to specific demands.
- As master scholarships represent the biggest share of the total NFP budget it is recommended to further experiment with co-financing modalities for the master courses, as this enables increasing the number scholarships.

2. Introduction

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA) has mandated the CEval GmbH and ACE Europe to conduct an external evaluation of two programmes, implemented under the aegis of its Department of Social Development (DSO): the Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE) and the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP). Both programmes are managed by the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic, since 2015 EP-Nuffic). The evaluation was implemented by a six-headed expert team¹ between September and December 2016, with field missions to four implementing countries: Benin, Indonesia, Mozambique and Nigeria.

This report contains the main evaluation results, which are based on empirical data from interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and workshops on site and in the Netherlands, online surveys with involved stakeholder groups as well as documentary data on project and programme level, and further background information. Before the results for NICHE (Chapter 4) and NFP (Chapter 5) are discussed, the evaluation subject is briefly outlined (Section 2.1), followed by a summary of the evaluation objectives (Section 2.2). Furthermore, the data basis and the methodological limits of the evaluation are described (Chapter 3). The structure of the results presentation follows the guiding questions as outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) that are clustered mostly according to the OECD/DAC criteria relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, whereby in this report the budget analysis is included in the respective efficiency sections while the lessons learnt are summarized in a separate chapter on the overarching conclusions and recommendations for further programme development (Chapter 6).

2.1 Evaluation subject

Since 1970 the Dutch government supports programmes for capacity building. The Netherlands' engagement in international education cooperation has changed over the past decades in regard to its focal points, targets and implementation processes. Subject of this evaluation are the NPT/NICHE programmes and the NFP, starting from the policy period in 2002 (three phases: 2002-2009; 2009-2013; 2013-2017). These programmes are managed by the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic, since 2015 EP-Nuffic).

- ✓ *NPT and NICHE*: The Netherlands Programme for Institutional Strengthening of Post-Secondary Education and Training capacity (NPT) started in 2002, replaced by the Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE I) in 2009. The overall aim of NFP and NICHE was and still is to help reduce quantitative and qualitative shortage of trained professional staff in developing countries and to build sustainable capacity within the poverty reduction framework. *The specific aim of NPT* was to sustainably strengthen post-secondary education and training capacity in developing countries, so as to give them a better chance of generating their own training institutes and manpower in the longer term. *For NICHE the specific aim* is to improve the quality, relevance and gender sensitiveness of post-secondary education in NICHE countries. NICHE focuses more on labour market orientation, gender, policy alignment, continuous learning as well as on technical and vocational training. The implementation of NICHE II started in July 2013 and is a continuation of NICHE I, with some adjustments (alignment to the four policy priorities of the Dutch development cooperation and its cross cutting themes such as gener, cli-

¹ Cf. section 3.2 in technical proposal in annex 7.3.

mate and private sector development, strategy development regarding capacity development support).

- ✓ *The Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP) aims to help alleviate quantitative and qualitative shortages of skilled manpower at mid-career level in developing countries. The old NFP (2002-2009) consisted of an academic programme for postgraduate courses (masters and PhD), a programme for diploma courses (short courses), refresher courses and tailor-made group training courses. An experiment was piloted regarding the implementation of multi-year agreements benefiting national organisations that could nominate members of their staff for a NFP sponsored courses during a certain period (piloted in 8 countries). These modalities were maintained in the NFP I with exception of the tailor made training and the multi-year agreements. Because their aim was more strongly linked to capacity building of organisations, it was decided to integrate these possibilities in the NICHE programme.*
- ✓ As for NICHE II also for NFP II the main difference with the former period lies in the additional focus on economic diplomacy and the fact that the programme needed to align with the four priority themes of the development cooperation strategy of the ministry of foreign affairs (water, sexual reproductive health and rights, security and rule of law and food security and the cross-cutting themes gender, climate and private sector development). The popular modality of the tailor made training was moved back to the NFP II programme (the multi-year agreements have not been maintained). In the NFP II programme more emphasis is given to alumni. It is expected they should form an integrated part of the contacts of the Netherlands embassies. Dutch alumni can play a valuable role in connecting local needs with Dutch interest. EP-Nuffic is working on a nation-wide alumni network (Holland Alumni Network), which can become a key instrument in connecting aid and trade abroad. The alumni programme also entails the strengthening of national alumni associations in southern countries.

The last external evaluation of the programmes for higher education and capacity building was held in 2012, focusing on evaluating NPT and NICHE I. Six areas of recommendations were formulated: (1) to maintain the labour market focus and sector wide approach; (2) to adopt a holistic approach towards capacity development (reference was made to the use of the 5C model developed by Morgan and Baser (ECDPM, 2008)), (3) to clarify roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders, (4) to introduce proactive measures to enhance the participation of the Dutch organisations, (5) to introduce a results based management instrument aimed at fostering mutual learning among the relevant programme stakeholders, (6) to place an emphasis on generating tangible synergies between the funded projects, the Dutch development programmes and programmes of other bi- and multilateral donors to strengthen the impact on sector level. This evaluation will assess to what extent these recommendations have been implemented and have had a positive influence on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the NPT and NICHE programme.

The last external evaluation for NFP was conducted by Ecorys in 2012 and covered the period 2002-2010. The evaluation pointed out at the need for clear policy choices in relation to (1) the main objectives of the programme, (2) the number of countries, (3) types and location of the courses and (4) the management and cost reduction. The evaluation had identified three policy scenario's for NFP: (1) the continuation of the programme with an emphasis on improvement of bilateral relations and internationalization of Dutch higher education; (2) the continuation of the programme with a clearer emphasis on capacity building (focus more on the contribution of NFP to organisational capacity development in the framework of the development cooperation programmes) and (3) the phasing out

of the programme (and its integration in other capacity building programmes). The evaluation will assess what policy choices have been taken and to what extent these have contributed to the level of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the NFP phase II.

2.2 Objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation has a summative (accountability objective) and formative (forward looking) character. The evaluation is expected to generate information that will be useful to all NICHE II and NFP II stakeholders and organisations involved in similar programmes. It will be used in discussions on the next phase, after the current contract in 2017 expires.

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to:

1. account for Netherlands funding and other inputs provided for the NICHE II and NFP II programmes in the period 2012-2015;
2. assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the NICHE II and NFP II programmes and the extent to which they have been able to realize their respective aims;
3. assess the sustainability and impact of a sample of projects that were implemented in the NPT and NICHE I programmes (2002 – 2011);
4. assess the follow-up that has been given to the findings and recommendations of the NPT/NICHE and NFP evaluations of 2012;
5. assess the impact of the 2012 policy changes on (i) the development and implementation of the NICHE II and NFP II programmes and their results, (ii) their alignment with the MASPs of the embassies and their contribution to the spearheads of Dutch development cooperation and foreign trade; (iii) the management and administration of these programmes and the division of responsibilities in the respective programme stages (identification, project articulation, selection, implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation) between the ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies, recipient institutions, implementing organisations, and EP-Nuffic;
6. and gain lessons for future policy development and implementation.

3. Data basis and methodological limitations of the evaluation

As described in the inception report, due to its design and scope, the evaluation cannot be considered as an 'impact evaluation', in terms of providing a clear impact attribution based on counterfactual evidence. Instead it had to pursue a perceptive approach including participatory data collection instruments like outcome harvesting or timeline exercises (cf. section 3.2 of the Inception Report), substantiated with qualitative and quantitative data from all relevant stakeholders that allow for a well-founded assessment of the programmes contributions to the observable changes at individual beneficiary, organisational and policy-field level in the partner countries. By combining different data collection methods and data sources (i.e. method and data triangulation), its results transcend merely anecdotal evidence as this approach allows for cross-validating individual statements and assessments from different perspectives and thus drawing plausible conclusions about the programmes' relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact, and sustainability. By including surveys with service providing educational institutions, local partner organisations and current programme participants the evaluation results are further put on a broad database.

The method mix and broad database provides for a high level of contextual representativeness and internal validity in terms of the robustness of the results relating to those stakeholders that were consulted during the data collection.

3.1 Empirical data base

In particular, the results presented in this report are based on empirical data collected in the Netherlands and during four field visits to Benin, Indonesia, Mozambique and Nigeria. Thereby, the data collection was implemented by means of the following instruments:

- ✓ **Individual interviews** with staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Economic affairs, the Dutch Enterprise Agency (RVO), EP-Nuffic programme administrators, service providing Dutch education institutes and representatives of the Dutch embassies in the visited countries;
- ✓ **group interviews** and **focus group discussions** (FGDs) with current NFP participants and alumni, employers of NFP alumni, and current and former NPT/NICHE requesting organisations;
- ✓ and **semi-standardized surveys** with Dutch education institutes/service providers (DSPs) that support NICHE requesting organisations and current NFP students.

As the following table shows, in total 475 persons were interviewed either individually or by means of FGDs:

Table 1: Total number of interviewed persons by stakeholder group and country

	Netherlands	Benin	Indonesia	Mozambique	Nigeria	Total
EP-Nuffic	20					20
Dutch NFP DSPs	9					9
Dutch NICHE DSPs	24			n.a.		24
Ministry representatives	12					12
RVO	7					7
Embassy representatives		9	1(4 ²)	7	1	22
NPT/NICHE partners (receiving organisations)		76	77	26	n.a.	179
NFP students/alumni (interviews and FGDs) ³	n.a.	19	34	16	86	155
Partner ministry staff and other stakeholders		15	2	3	n.a.	20
TMT alumni/receiving organisations		8	7	2	10	27
Total	72	127	125	54	97	475

With this number of interviews, it was, at least to the knowledge of the evaluation team, possible to include most key stakeholders at EP-Nuffic and the MFA, as well as a good share of involved RVO staff in the data collection. Due to time and budget constraints only a small fraction of Dutch educational institutions that provide their services to the NICHE and NFP (in the following called ‘DSPs’) could be interviewed and the evaluation design only foresaw on-site data collections in four countries. Additionally, full population surveys with these service providing institutions as well as with NICHE receiving partner organisations and current NFP fellows were conducted.

As Table 2 shows, during these four surveys a total of 918 questionnaires with sufficient data quality could be gathered (n_{corr}). Based on the respective total number of valid email addresses (N_{corr}), the according net return rates lie between 24.1% for the NICHE partner survey and 67.4% for the NFP student survey. While the return rates of the student and NICHE DSP survey is acceptable, consider-

² In Indonesia also 4 staff members of the Netherlands Education Support Office (NESO) were interviewed.

³ Further to the FGDs, NFP students, who were not able to attend, were sent a short questionnaire by email with six qualitative questions that reflected the guiding questions of the discussions (cf. annex 7.1.4). The numbers in brackets represent the number of filled out questionnaires.

ing the short timeframe of three weeks to fill out the questionnaire, the feedback from the NICHE partners and NFP DSPs and particularly the NICHE partners (receiving organisations) is somewhat less satisfactory. With regard to the latter it appeared to be difficult to motivate this stakeholder group to participate in the survey as despite a support letter from EP-Nuffic and an extension of the survey period to almost five weeks with two recalls, it was not possible to increase the return rate any further.

Table 2: Net return rates of surveys⁴

	N	N _{corr}	n	n _{corr}	Net return rate
NICHE DSP survey	190	190	79	73	38.4%
NICHE partner survey	455	432	111	104	24.1%
NFP DSP survey	562	168 ⁵	67	53	31.6%
NFP student survey	1.105	1.021	700	688	67.4%
Total/average	2.312	2.186	957	918	42.0%

3.2 Methodological limitations of the evaluation

As mentioned above, due to its method mix and large empirical database, the evaluation results can be considered as highly valid for the consulted stakeholders and visited countries. Nevertheless, since during the design and implementation of the evaluation the team had to face a number of time and budget constraints, the evaluation also features some methodological limitations. In particular the evaluation team would like the reader to take the following caveats into account when assessing and interpreting the evaluation results:

- ✓ As mentioned, an impact *attribution*, as it would be possible if an experimental or quasi-experimental design with a difference-in-difference measurement (i.e. comparison of differences in impact indicators for a treatment and a comparison group) would have been implemented, is not possible. Instead, conclusions about outcomes and impacts are based on empirically substantiated assumptions about the *contribution* of the programmes to its objectives. Thereby, the empirical databasis comprises the results from the interviews, FGDs and online surveys in which the respondents were asked (amongst others) about the perceived changes or improvements due to their participation in the NICHE projects, respectively NFP. Accordingly, the evaluation can be considered to have followed an ex-post facto design (i.e. single data collection after intervention) with retrospective questions.
- ✓ Since the evaluation is based on solely four intentionally (i.e. based on cost-effectiveness and convenience considerations) selected case study countries, the external validity of its results cannot be postulated. The external validity is further compromised, as even within these countries only a selection of NICHE requesting organisations and NFP beneficiaries could be interviewed, which were also not selected at random but based on considerations about their availability and reachability within the given timeframe. This means that strictly speaking the results presented in this report are only valid for those stakeholders visited in four case countries. However, the confirmative survey results and other stakeholders' assessments (e.g. em-

⁴ With: N = number of provided email addresses, N_{corr} = number of valid and reachable email addresses, n = number of received questionnaires and n_{corr} = number of questionnaires with sufficient data quality.

⁵ In the NFP DSP survey the factual number of respondents was much lower than the number of provided email addresses as, in contrast to the NICHE databases, the NFP database contained several contact persons for one and the same institution. Thus the evaluation team calculated the net return rate on the number of different institutions that replied (168), not the number of valid email addresses (562).

- bassies, DSPs) indicate that at least within the countries the results appear to be highly valid also for other projects and beneficiaries.
- ✓ Although the online surveys were designed as full-population surveys, their results may be compromised by self-selection bias, as it was voluntary for the respondents to participate. While it may be speculated how this self-selection biased the survey results, inferential statistical analyses (e.g. assessment if differences between countries are significant or not) are not permissible and – accordingly – were not undertaken.
 - ✓ With regard to the assessment of the impact of NPT projects, it has to be added that thorough information on these was only available for Benin. In Indonesia no NPT institutions could be visited and in Mozambique only very general information was collected, since the project staff mostly had changed and accordingly the interviewed persons did not have much knowledge about the NPT projects. Thus, the assessments in Section 4.3.2 are mainly based on NICHE I and NICHE II projects.
 - ✓ The assessment of the sustainability of NICHE also faces some limitations: From the visited 24 projects, only five were completed (one in Indonesia and four in Mozambique). This means there is too little information to assess how the receiving partner organisations in general are actually continuing the services after the project ends (e.g. ensuring finances, number of staff and quality of staff). Furthermore, it was not possible to retrieve reliable information about the actual financial commitments that the receiving partner organisations have planned to allocate to newly created initiatives or structures. This information is not documented by the receiving organisations in the reports, is not known by the DSPs and was also not shared with the evaluation team during the missions. This means that it is not possible to provide reliable information about the extent to which the receiving organisations have adequate financial resources to continue financing the initiated changes.

4. Results for NICHE

As outlined in the introduction, the following two chapters deal with the main evaluation results. Starting with NICHE, the results are structured according to the specific evaluation questions, which are clustered into the overarching analysis dimensions relevance (section 3.1), efficiency (section 3.2), effectiveness and impact (section 3.3) and sustainability (section 3.4).

4.1 Relevance

The rationale of the NICHE II programme is based on the overarching Dutch development cooperation policy aiming at the promotion of “sustainable economic growth in developing countries” by working “towards global stability and security and to foster human rights.”⁶ Thereby, the Dutch development cooperation measures focus on four main fields of action: security and the rule of law, water management, food security, sexual and reproductive health and rights. In these four fields particularly equality for women, environment and climate are considered as important crosscutting issues.

Among others, the provision of good quality post-secondary education is perceived as one essential means to alleviate the deficits in the four thematic fields. Accordingly, with particular focus on these fields NICHE II aims “to improve the quality, relevance and gender sensitiveness of post-secondary

⁶ Cf. <https://www.government.nl/topics/development-cooperation/contents/the-development-policy-of-the-netherlands>

education in NICHE countries.”⁷ It is implemented “in 22 bilateral partner countries in support of bilateral sectors and cross-sectoral themes, or of the post-secondary education sector in general.”⁸ (ibid.) On country level NICHE aims at improving the “quality and relevance of post-secondary education including vocational training [...] with regard to i) policy development and implementation, ii) organisational performance iii) education and training quality.” (ibid.) The capacities of educational institutions and education sector institutions are strengthened in order to enable them to provide beneficial systemic (regulatory, institutional etc.) framework conditions for post-secondary education and training provision. Furthermore, post-secondary education and training institutes are supported “to deliver quality, gender sensitive, education and training, or to do relevant research” (ibid.). The education and training services provided by the supported institutions should respond to the labour market demands and furthermore contribute to decreasing gender disparities in the respective partner countries by addressing the different needs of women and men.

4.1.1 *Validity and adaptation of NICHE II rationale and objectives*

According to the current state of educational research in the field of development cooperation (cf. amongst others: ADB 2013; ETF 2011; UNEVOC 2006, 2005; Stockmann et al. 2000), high quality post-secondary education is regarded as one of the key prerequisites for sustainable development and economic growth. By providing an adequately qualified workforce to the private and public sector post-secondary education contributes to facilitating value creation, improving welfare and living conditions. So while the validity of the main rationale of NICHE, to contribute to a functioning post-secondary education system may not be doubted, the question is rather if the approach pursued by EP-Nuffic, to provide institutional capacity support to sectorial organisations and institutions the way it is currently done, is an adequate means to effectively achieve this objective. In order to provide an answer to this question the relevance of the NICHE programme approach needs to be assessed, based on:

- ✓ *the relevance of the project outputs and outcomes for the NICHE requesting organisations:* in terms of its relevance for the improvement of their technical, human, financial (etc.) capacities,
- ✓ *the institutional relevance of the project outcomes beyond the borders of the supported organisation:* in terms of its relevance for the capacities, reputation, significance (etc.) of the institutions where the requesting organisations are located,
- ✓ *the systemic relevance of the project outcomes and impacts for the quality of post-secondary education in the partner country:* in terms of its relevance for the further development of the education systems in which the requesting organisations provide their services,
- ✓ and finally *the systemic relevance of the project impacts for the partner countries:* in terms of its strategic relevance for the political, economic (etc.) framework conditions in the partner countries, in particular with regard to the four thematic fields of the Dutch development policy cooperation.

Concerning the relevance of the outputs and outcomes for the requesting organisations the findings from the interviews during the field missions and the NICHE partner survey indicate that the projects

⁷ Cf. EP-Nuffic/C&B – NICHE programme: objectives, outcomes, performance indicators – Final Version, EP-Nuffic 2012:1

⁸ It has to be added that the number reflects ongoing and completed NICHE projects in 2015 (cf. <https://www.epnuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/annual-report-2015-nfp-and-niche-programme.pdf>, p. 25f). Currently NICHE II is implemented in 16 countries.

generally cover partner's capacity demands with regard to the provision of improved training and education services. All partners agree that the implemented measures focus adequately on the demands of their respective organisations, e.g. concerning research, teaching and management capacities, professional and technical know-how, and infrastructure. It was also reported that the NICHE projects are strategically relevant, i.e. with regard to improving the partner's reputation and network connections beyond its institutional (i.e. department, faculty, university) borders. In that regard, despite shifting political agendas, the strategic interests of partner organisations do not appear to have changed on the whole, leaving the basic assumptions of the programme still valid on the organisational and institutional level. While repeatedly regulatory constraints (e.g. regarding the accreditation of curricula) were described as hampering diffusion effects, it appeared that in most cases they could be overcome with interventions on management level (see also Section 4.3 for further details).

It has, however, also to be stated that not all NICHE projects were requested by the partners the way they were implemented. In several cases it was reported that it was perceived as 'donor driven', based on the design and experiences from former projects. While this does not necessarily impair the relevance of the projects for the partners on the whole, it indicates that probably too much weight is put on replicating successful approaches instead of on adapting project designs to the individual needs of partner organisations. This assumption is supported by the finding from the partner survey, in which almost half of them (41 out of 85, i.e. 48 %) rated the communication of their needs to the Dutch supporting organisation as rather challenging⁹; 10 (i.e. 12 %) even rated it as "very challenging". While it surely leaves room for discussion to which extent the assessments are rooted in unrealistic goals or perceptions of the own organisational capacities, the finding at least indicates that the adaptation of support measures to partner needs do not only require extensive capacity analyses beforehand, but also establishing an adequate communication structure right from the start to assure a common understanding about the project objectives throughout its implementation.

Another finding suggests that projects building on existing organisational structures (e.g. with regard to staffing level, training schemes, equipment) are more successful than those pursuing the establishment of new structures or units. While due to the non-random selection of the projects in this evaluation the external validity of this assumption can be questioned, the finding remains valid for those visited. Albeit, it has also to be considered that due to its orientation at the thematic priorities of the Dutch development cooperation, particularly in the field of security and rule of law, its projects are also implemented in fragile contexts, where such structures are inexistent.

With regard to the relevance of the project outcomes and impacts on system level, the project descriptions as well as the interview and survey results suggest that most requesting organisations provide very specific training and consulting services, which makes them unique in their working field, institution and often also in their country or even region. As NICHE aims at the further development (e.g. curricula, education standards) of such mostly very specialised organisations, its projects can be considered as relevant in their respective fields.

However, in order to become systemically relevant a project requires to have substantial leverage effects on the political and/or regulatory level. While anecdotal references from interviews suggest that some projects managed to create such leverages (e.g. through changing legislation, nation-wide

⁹ Indicated with a value greater than 3, based on a six-step scale from 1 = „not challenging at all“ to 6 = „very challenging“. See also Figure 2 on page 18.

accreditation of curricula), the evaluation design did not allow for a systematic assessment of according policy-level effects (see also Section 4.3.2).

Lacking system-relevant leverage effects, however, does not mean that NICHE projects might not still be relevant for other Dutch bilateral aid projects or economic collaboration as such. According to ministry, embassy and EP-Nuffic representatives, with NICHE II the alignment of the programme with the four thematic themes and cross-cutting issues of the Dutch development cooperation improved noticeably. It was highlighted that this development would contribute to the coherence of Dutch development programmes at large, which again would benefit the perception of the Dutch DC among donors in general.

A few (3) interviewees somehow question the potential benefit of NICHE for the Dutch economy, in terms of improving business opportunities for Dutch enterprises – as it is intended with the recently introduced project approach called ‘Innocap’. In particular, doubts are raised about the relevance of collaborating with educational organisations in least developed countries. According to their perception, economic potentials could only be exploited efficiently if NICHE partners would be selected more strategically, i.e. based on an assessment of their capability to act as business partners for Dutch enterprises in the future and not only on the matching of their request with the Dutch DC priority areas.

4.1.2 Relevance of long-term collaboration

The learning outcomes from NPT and NICHE I projects suggest that institutional capacity building takes considerable time and repeated efforts to address the capacity gaps of partner organisations, particularly if no sustainable capacity development strategies within the institution are in place. During the field missions, numerous examples could be identified, which indicate that collaborations improved over the years. Particularly strengthening strategic capacities, in terms of enabling partners to develop follow-up activities, establishing a technical, financial and organisational structure for further self-sustainable development or exerting influence on the institutional framework conditions requires enduring engagements, exceeding the usual project durations (see Section 4.3). Thereby, it is not so much the provision of actual professional support that made the difference but rather the mediation of tacit knowledge (i.e. communication and soft-skills, knowledge about structures and procedures etc.) through the continuous collaboration with the service providing institutions. It is this tacit knowledge that can trigger the change of mind-sets and thus lead to sustainable change/impacts at the supported institutions and beyond.

4.1.3 Influence of changing Dutch development policy on the relevance of NICHE

The findings from the interviewees with ministry, embassy and RVO representatives indicate that from their perspective the relevance of NICHE projects for Dutch development collaboration varies from country to country, based on the alignment of the projects with other bilateral programmes going on there. Thereby, reference is made more to the actual (political, economic etc.) conditions in the respective country than to the spearheads of the Dutch development cooperation. In contrast to bilateral aid programmes, NICHE is perceived as a ‘stand alone’ kind of instrument that extends the Dutch support portfolio in a country. While this portfolio is based on the country MASPs, NICHE, while also aligned with these MASPs once they are issued, apparently rather follows the demands of requesting institutions as suggested by the embassy. Although in theory this approach should be fully in line with the respective MASP, in practice it is not. This lies also in the fact that NICHE project cycles are not chronologically synchronized with the MASPs so that projects are still running when a

new one comes out. The question is accordingly, if NICHE should stay more independent and demand driven, or whether it should be stronger aligned with the priority themes of the Dutch development cooperation, as it is the tendency with NICHE II.

On the one hand, the way NICHE is currently implemented provides most flexibility in terms of adapting the support to partner needs. According to EP-Nuffic and the embassies, the tender process also ensures the quality of the projects and provides them the freedom to put emphasis on areas and topics that promise best outcomes in terms of institutional capacity development, leverage effects and sectorial development. On the other hand this selection strategy undermines to a certain extent the coherence of Dutch bilateral aid, as other actors are not involved in project selection or scoping. However, changing this approach in the way that projects are selected solely on the basis of their contribution to other bilateral aid programmes would reduce the flexibility of NICHE, downgrade the roles of EP-Nuffic and the embassies, and reduce the projects to modules for providing human capacities to other aid programmes.

For RVO in particular, NICHE projects have the potential to contribute to private sector development by complementing its PSD programmes in terms of providing capacity development support to the partner organisations. While EP-Nuffic and RVO intensified their strategical collaboration in the last two years¹⁰, on the operative level project staff collaborates on a case-to-case basis already for a longer time (e.g. joint participation at events, incoming missions), as for instance in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Tanzania or Vietnam. Thereby, Dutch educational institutions, which act as implementers for both RVO and EP-Nuffic, and the embassies play a crucial role as an interface for alignment. Nevertheless, according to two interviewees there is still some room for improvement in order to exploit potential synergies more efficiently. In particular it was stated that more information should be exchanged about current projects in a country/sector or potential partners and their performance.

While the MFA calls for a strong alignment of NICHE with the Dutch DC spearheads, others, particularly the DSPs, RVO and in parts also the embassies, regard such a focus as too narrow as it would limit the potential of NICHE as a comprehensive means for demand based capacity development for PSD and eventually the benefit of Dutch enterprises. Opening the focus in order to achieve synergies, however, would require (probably even more) comprehensive and speedy communication not only between EP-Nuffic and RVO but also with further actors, which are active in PSD.

As will be further elaborated in Section 4.3, with regard to the relevance of NICHE for the labour markets in the partner countries, the findings from the partner visits during the field missions draw a quite heterogeneous picture. While on the one hand a number of interviewees highlight that e.g. through training-of-trainers, revising curricula or improving institutional infrastructures, therefore required leverage effects can be achieved. On the other hand, others raise their concerns about the limited institutional scope of many projects and the often constraining regulatory frameworks they are embedded in, which impede such leverage effects.

4.1.4 Relevance of 5C-approach

Most NICHE requesting organisations and also many Dutch education institutions perceive the 5C-approach rather as an academic exercise than a practically usable tool for capacity analysis. This find-

¹⁰ In order to formalise the collaboration and exchange of information on strategic level, in summer 2016 and MoU between EP-Nuffic and RVO was signed.

ing is also supported by the result from the NICHE partner online survey showing that among ten aspects the added value of the model is considered as least satisfactory.¹¹ While it is in principle appreciated as a theoretically substantiated tool for capacity analysis and used by a few more experienced partners, in general its application is regarded as too laborious and its results being often just trivial. It was also mentioned that the adequate application of the tool would have required considerably more time than was available during the project inception phase. Moreover, some institutions report preferring other more common tools, such as SWOT or potential analyses, which allegedly yield comparable results with less effort. It is interesting to note, that despite the considerable efforts taken by EP-Nuffic to introduce the approach, still a number of Dutch institutions recommend that technical terms and practical guidelines how to assess the organisational capacities should be revised and explained in even more detail.

4.1.5 *Added value of Joint Initiatives*

The modality of “joint initiatives” aims to further strengthen higher education and TVET capacity in NICHE countries, by creating opportunities to strengthen the cooperative relationship previously built up in NICHE.¹² It allows former requesting organisations “to enter in a long-term cooperation around primary processes” (ibid.) meaning that the focus of the cooperation shifts from capacity building to a more autonomous and equitable partnership. Joint initiatives can be based on joint study programmes, research or developing and implementing commercial options for former project results. Unfortunately, since the approach is rather new, during the evaluation no factual evidence could be collected from on-going joint initiatives that would allow the factual assessment of its relevance. The only information available is based on interviews with a few Dutch education institutes, which expect it to be an adequate modality for long-term collaborations and thus relevant to their engagement within NICHE. However, it remains to be seen if the partners are prepared and capable to continue a formerly clearly hierarchically organized partnership on a more equitable basis. It seems somehow foreseeable that the distribution of resources and responsibilities may pose challenges to such initiatives. It will be the task of future evaluations to shed more light on these issues and to provide according recommendations for facilitating institutional settings.

4.1.6 *Relevance of NICHE for Dutch service providers*

For most Dutch educational institutions that provide support in NICHE projects the motivation for their engagement is to gain international experience and reputation. A few (2) interviewees also ascribe NICHE a strategic relevance for establishing and consolidating international network relations, which can be used for other (promotional) purposes, and legitimating the existence of their foreign offices. Academic institutions particularly perceive NICHE as an innovative approach for international collaboration between universities, research organisations and governmental institutions. They also see the projects as learning opportunities for their own research on education and international collaboration. A few interviewees even allude to positive side effects of NICHE projects for capacitating own staff in intercultural communication.

Dutch educational institutions also highlight the experiences made during the projects as valuable for their own institutional development. Furthermore, although only mentioned sporadically, the fact that NICHE projects are fully financed may be another important factor for their engagement. Even-

¹¹ With an arithmetic mean of 4.9 on a six-step scale from 1 = „absolutely unsatisfactory“ to 6 = „absolutely satisfactory“. n = 50. See also Figure 12 on page 89.

¹² Cf. Format Joint Initiative Proposal, EP-Nuffic 2015

tually, besides the generation of revenues, the establishment of international contacts and the expansion of service portfolios were named as relevant aspects for the public image of private sector service providers.

Conclusions on the relevance of NICHE

NICHE features high relevance on organisational and institutional level, and, depending on the achievement of leverage effects, considerable potential on system level. Shortcomings could be identified to some extent regarding the adaptation of the capacity building measures to the needs of the partner organisations.

Long-term approaches are still relevant as they are of particular benefit for establishing trustful relationships with requesting organisations, mediating tacit knowledge, involving higher-level decision makers and eventually creating impacts on institutional and systemic level.

NICHE projects are driven by the demands of the requesting organisations, albeit in some instances partners would appreciate even more adapted measures. The projects are also widely aligned with the thematic priorities of the Dutch development cooperation. However, due to the chronological offset between the project cycles and the MASPs, in some countries alignment cannot always be fully achieved.

Many partners and also DSPs regard the 5C-approach more as an academic exercise than a practical tool. Its application appears to require considerable resources and guidance, and thus overburdens some requesting organisations.

For Dutch institutions NICHE is relevant as it features great potential to gain international experience and reputation. Furthermore, it helps them establishing and consolidating international networks and provides learning opportunities in the international field. At the same time, NICHE constitutes a possibility for generating revenues and expanding the service portfolio of public and private educational institutions.

4.2 Efficiency

At the start of NICHE II several measures were taken to improve efficiency of the programme, in particular with regard to the management of the programme. These were the results of internal reflections and discussions between EP-Nuffic and the Dutch service providers, a client satisfaction survey that was done by EP-Nuffic in 2012 and the recommendations from the evaluation of NPT and NICHE conducted by Ramboll in 2012. The fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs imposed a saving of 30 % of the management costs accelerated the process and obliged EP-Nuffic to reorganise and automate several management processes. In this chapter an assessment is done of the extent to which the NICHE II programme is efficiently implemented, managed and administrated.

The chapter starts with the presentation of the changed rules and regulations introduced under NICHE II and the assessment of the extent to which these have improved the efficiency of programme implementation, management and administration (Section 4.2.1). In the second part the assessment of the level of efficiency by Dutch service providing institutions and requesting organisations is presented (Section 4.2.2), followed by an analysis of the NICHE programme funds, analysing the financial contribution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the utilization of the NICHE II budget in the period 2012-2015 and the experiments with co-financing (Section 4.2.3). The third part highlights the analysis of efficiency at project level for the projects visited and presents a qualitative analysis of

the balance between input and outputs realised (Section 4.2.4). The chapter concludes with an overall assessment of the level of efficiency of the NICHE II programme.

4.2.1 Description and analysis of the changed rules and regulations introduced under NICHE II and their effect on efficiency

Processes and phases for programme management have been further standardized and adapted for NICHE II to obtain efficiency gains. A detailed description of these phases and processes, and the changes that have taken place in regulations and procedures is added in the Annex 7.5. Adaptations concern the improvement of the management information system, measures taken to save staff time and resources and measures taken to enhance quality of programme management.

Improvement of the management information system

A specific software tool called WIRE was developed in 2014 to automatize project management at the level of EP-Nuffic. For all the phases of the NICHE programme and project management standardized formats were developed and put on the server. More appropriate databases were developed to collect data on project level and avoid mistakes in data input and analysis. The system also obliges all programme officers to respect the sequence of the different phases and to provide complete data for one phase before moving to the next phase. Reports received from partners can easily be uploaded in the system. Further, several documents can be automatically generated from the system, such as the communication letters regarding the tender results, the grant award letter, approval letters for budgets, etc. These measures contributed to more accurate information management and gain of time for programme and financial officers, as confirmed by the programme officers interviewed.

Planning and reporting has been simplified in order to decrease the administrative burden for both EP-Nuffic officers and requesting organisations. In order to avoid duplication of information to be delivered, the format of the annual reports was adapted. Further, result based management was introduced. EP-Nuffic obliged the service providers to not formulate more than 12 outputs in the project proposal and to deliver only information on output and outcome level in the annual reports. No detailed description of activities implemented is required anymore. Planning for the next year has been included in the annual report. Reports can be sent digitally (except the audit reports which need to be in hard copy) and uploaded in the WIRE system, whereas under NPT and NICHE I still hard copies needed to be provided. These measures are supposed to contribute to efficiency gains both for EP-Nuffic and the service providers. The service providers interviewed confirmed that there are improvements in the reporting formats but that not all problems regarding duplication of information have been solved. From the field visits it becomes clear that the service providers and the requesting partners face challenges in providing information on output and outcome level. For (all) the projects visited (one exception in Indonesia), the performance excel-files that need to be added to the annual report, were incomplete or lacking, which complicates the monitoring task of EP-Nuffic. Moreover, as evidenced by the projects visits, implementing partners do not manage to estimate progress towards outcome effectively based on the information provided in these performance excel-files and on the indicators of the logframe.

Measures taken to save staff time and resources

Several recommendations of the Ramboll evaluation have been implemented that also had a positive result on the efficiency of programme management. Important efficiency gains, in terms of saving staff time and resources, can be identified in the phases of demand identification and articulation, and the implementation phase.

The phase of demand identification has been cancelled. More alignment was looked for with the Dutch bilateral cooperation programmes, as suggested by Ramboll. In NICHE II the MASP of the Netherlands embassy has become the reference document to identify and select requesting organisations that could be eligible for NICHE II projects. There are efficiency gains because EP-Nuffic has no longer to invest staff time and resources in executing fact finding missions, developing programme outlines and sector plans. Requesting organisations are identified in close collaboration with the Netherlands embassy, which is done during the annual monitoring missions of EP-Nuffic staff.

There are however several challenges in the collaboration with the Netherlands embassies. The development of the NICHE country programme and of the separate projects depends a lot on the quality of these MASP and the quality of the elaboration process of these MASP (e.g. delays, changes brought to the MASP after the NICHE tender procedure has been started). This has consequences for the relevance of the projects but also for the staff time, demanding EP-Nuffic staff to adapt country programmes, project proposals and the timing of the tender procedures. Furthermore, the communication with the Netherlands embassy takes more staff time when the process is not going smoothly (example given for the Ethiopia programme).

EP-Nuffic has become less actively involved in the implementation phase, as suggested by the 2012 Ramboll evaluation. Its role is limited to monitoring the progress of the programme. This is done through the assessment of the annual reports and the annual monitoring visits conducted per country. EP-Nuffic also conducts monitoring through regular telephone conversations, e-mails and through the organisation of meetings with Dutch service providers per country to discuss country dynamics and possible alignment between country projects. EP-Nuffic has become less actively involved in the monitoring of specific projects, a role that is assigned to the service providers, which have received more responsibility and autonomy in project management. To that end several regulations for project monitoring have been adapted that also have a positive influence on lowering the administrative burden, in particular at the level of EP-Nuffic:

- (1) The principle of “active mandatory obligation” was introduced: partners only have to inform EP-Nuffic when there are indications that outputs will not be realised, when they are not able to adhere to the grant obligations or when less than 75 % of the annual budget will be used. EP-Nuffic only intervenes actively in case of problems.
- (2) Partners do not have to formulate a request for change in activity implementation anymore and ask for approval, as long as these changes will still contribute to the envisaged outputs and outcomes (result based management).
- (3) The country visits of the financial controllers have been cancelled. They only visit requesting organisations experiencing problems with financial management.
- (4) The project inception phase as such has been cancelled in phase II of NICHE, based upon the critique from the service providers that this phase was almost a repetition of the development phase of the proposal. The inception phase is replaced by the request from EP-Nuffic to develop a report zero. This is seen as a tool for the partners, the service provider and the requesting organisation, to agree on the final strategy for the project, to discuss the logical framework, to finalise a plan of action, to conduct a training needs assessment, discuss the 5C assessment exercise, etc. The report zero can be seen as a “light version” of the inception report. Different from the inception report, no approval of this report zero is needed from EP-Nuffic. EP-Nuffic does not assess these reports and requesting organisations can immediately start project implementation.

- (5) The reporting cycle is not based on the calendar year anymore. A first report is expected after 16 months of implementation, starting from the starting date of the project. This implies that fewer reports need to be assessed by EP-Nuffic staff.

Furthermore, several changes have been introduced related to the financial management of NICHE II projects. Some examples include: (1) Advanced payments (max. 80 % of the total project budget) are now regulated by the grant award and do not depend anymore on the project expenses. This decision was taken because EP-Nuffic had to manage several requests for intermediary payments under NICHE I (because of liquidity challenges). (2) Contingencies can be used along an agreement between the service provider and the requesting organisation and do not need to be approved by EP-Nuffic anymore. (3) A lump sum for project management costs is foreseen for the requesting organisation (with a maximum of 6 % of the total budget), but not for the service provider. This lump sum can be used in a flexible manner and does not need to be accounted for. All rules and regulations are described in the NICHE Handbook. The grant letter explicitly refers to this handbook.

These changes were needed to compensate for the cuts in the programme management budget and to organise the management work in a more efficient manner. Interviewees at EP-Nuffic confirm the efficiency gains but also highlighted that additional tasks or requests from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have somehow neutralised these efficiency gains. Some examples:

- (1) Each project is supposed to be implemented within the given timeframe. The projects last up to four years. A budget neutral extension can be requested. Almost all projects that had started under NICHE I have demanded such a budget neutral extension and in reality last 5 to 6 years. Consequently, in the period 2012-2015 EP-Nuffic was managing projects developed and implemented under two different regimes. This complicated the management tasks for EP-Nuffic staff.
- (2) Since NICHE II the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded EP-Nuffic to experiment with greater customisation and simpler processes to enhance mutual learning and creativity. To that end, the INNOCAP project was launched in mid-2015 for a period of two years. Pilots just have started so it is too early to already draw lessons learned. To manage these projects, flexibility in articulation, application and selection processes was introduced and customised to each particular case. Evidently, every deviation from regular and standardized procedures demanded extra time and human resources needed for the management of these processes.
- (3) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also demanded data at outcome and impact level. EP-Nuffic had already taken a step towards result-based management. EP-Nuffic was also requested to develop general result chains for each of the priority themes of the Dutch development cooperation, including impact indicators, and to deliver data to that end. This process demanded additional staff time of EP-Nuffic staff for developing these result chains, collecting data and reporting on these indicators.

Apart from efficiency gains in programme management, the efficiency measures and obligation to cut in the management expenses have also had negative effects. According to some interviewees, EP-Nuffic is discouraged to take initiatives that deviate from the regular procedures when it is not requested by the MFA. And (maybe implicitly) preference is given to bigger projects as smaller projects lead to a lower cost-efficiency ratio (which also can explain why educational institutes prefer to leave project management up to consultancy companies).

Measures taken to improve quality of programme management

Some phases and processes have been adapted in order to improve the quality of programme and project management.

In the demand articulation phase more emphasis is put on the organisational capacity assessment. Since phase II of NICHE the organisational capacity assessment needs to be complemented with a capacity self-assessment based on the 5C-model. EP-Nuffic supports the requesting organisation to carry out this self-assessment and to develop the organisational profile, which is part of the project outline. This tool was introduced to better support the reflection and planning regarding organisational capacity development from a holistic perspective on capacity development, as was recommended by the 2012 Ramboll evaluation. This assessment is supposed to be repeated in the mid-term and at the end of each NICHE II project. EP-Nuffic purposefully has invested more staff time to guide this process. It is assumed that a good quality organisational capacity assessment will contribute to better project proposals and more relevant and effective intervention strategies.

According to the EP-Nuffic staff, this measure has contributed to better organisational capacity assessments but at the same time required more staff time investment (no efficiency gain here regarding use of resources). Moreover, the field visits and the results of the surveys indicate that the introduction of the 5C-model did not contribute to projects that respond better to the capacity needs of the requesting organisations (see further in this Section and in Section 4.3).

For NICHE II the project outline is simplified and requesting organisations are only asked to describe the expected outcomes of the project, which gives service providers more flexibility in designing the strategy of the project and identifying the expected output. This was a response to the critique of the Dutch service providers that project outlines were often too ambitious and left less room for own suggestions and creative proposals. In phase II the service providers received more responsibility to develop realistic outputs themselves and to assess beforehand the expected contribution of the outputs toward the formulated outcomes. The projects visited for NICHE II clearly demonstrate a better project design mainly at strategic level through the identification of output and outcome (not always for at the level of indicators), with a lower number of output compared to the NICHE I projects. Projects however, remain rather ambitious.

Different from phase I the assessment of the technical and financial proposals is disconnected. The members of the Tender Evaluation Committee (TEC)¹³ only receive the technical proposal and have no access to the financial proposal. This measure was taken to avoid TEC members to be influenced by the financial proposal while assessing the technical quality. The financial proposal is not assessed as such (apart from the eligibility check done by the financial controllers before the TEC commission starts its work). After the technical assessment, the total technical score is just divided by the project budget. The bidder with the lowest budget/score wins. This measure contributed to enhanced transparency and enabled a balanced and fairer assessment of cost-quality. This is evidenced by the fact that the amount of complaints has decreased.

4.2.2 Assessment of the level of efficiency by Dutch service providers and requesting organisations

This assessment is based on the results of the surveys to the Dutch service providers and the partners in the South (see figures in Annex 7.7.1), the interviews with the Dutch service providers and their partners of the projects visited and the focus group discussion with seven member of the PIE

¹³ The TEC commission is composed by an EP-Nuffic staff member (secretary), the requesting partner and one specialist with expertise related to the project's subject area (chair of the committee).

group in the Netherlands. Service providers implementing NICHE I projects were offered the opportunity to migrate towards the regulations and procedures as developed under NICHE II. The majority of the service providers did so as NICHE II introduced more flexibility and decreased administrative burden. An assessment was done of the project management, the management of the implementation process and of the role of the partners involved (Dutch service provider, southern partner and EP-Nuffic).

Project management and implementation

Overall the picture is positive among Dutch service providers and their partners in the South. The service providers and the requesting organisations are satisfied with their involvement and contribution to the project design and roles assigned to them regarding project management. Both partners are satisfied with the resources made available and the administrative efforts required for project management. Dutch service providers are satisfied with the effort required to tender. The Dutch service providers also appreciate the timely disbursement of the project budgets by EP-Nuffic, the amount of the grant and the adequacy of the project budget lines. These results were confirmed in the interviews and focus group discussion.

The most important challenge in project management and implementation as experienced by both the Dutch service providers and the requesting organisations is the **implementation of the project in the given timeframe**. This can be linked to other challenges assessed in the survey, such as the socio-economic conditions and the difficulties in adapting the projects to the regulatory framework in the partner countries. From the field visits it is also learned that delays in implementation were also due to lack of good leadership, lack of ownership and lack of appropriate project management at the requesting organisation but also related to problems with availability of technical expertise at the level of the service providers and the time required for discussing adaptation of implementation strategies (see further under analysis of efficiency at project level).

Another important challenge according to the Dutch service providers is the **financial management** of the project. Interviewees at EP-Nuffic confirmed that several service providers did not fully understand yet the changed rules and regulations for financial management and reporting. More flexibility in financial management was provided since NICHE II but several service providers seem to struggle with this flexibility. The Dutch service providers are also critical on the share of the project budget dedicated to project management. Interviewees confirmed that the projects often require much more time investment in management than initially estimated, for example in cases where the project was not properly managed by the counterpart in the South.

Although the service providers and the requesting organisations are satisfied with their involvement in the project design, it still is a challenge to adapt the project to the needs and capacities and to the rules and regulations of the requesting organisations. As described in the above, the use of the 5C-model seems not to have been helpful to that end. The added value of the 5C-model, introduced by EP-Nuffic as a tool for capacity assessments is critically assessed by the Dutch service providers, but better appreciated in the South. Further the communication on capacity needs with the Dutch service provider is assessed as challenging, which can also be linked to the general difficulties in communication between the Dutch service provider and the requesting organisations. This was evidenced through the visits to the projects (problems in 12 of the 24 projects visited).

Figure 1: Challenges as identified by Dutch Service providers¹⁴

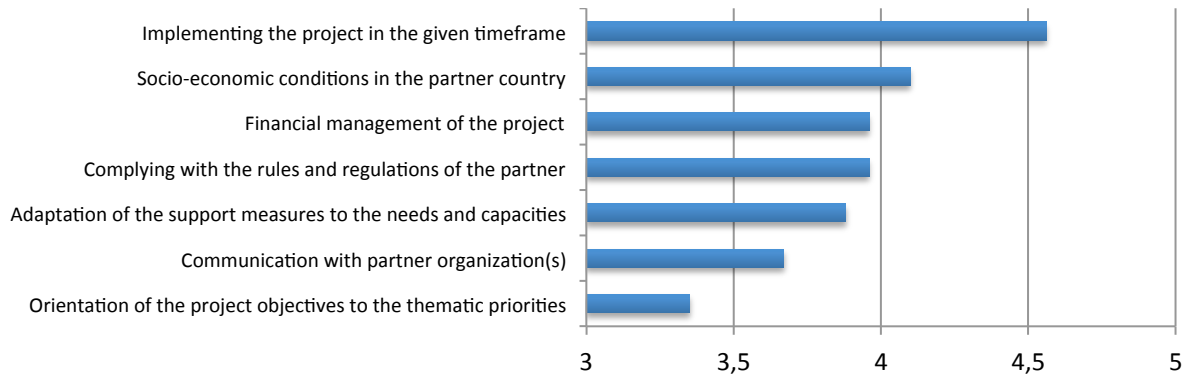


Figure 2: Challenges as identified by southern partners¹⁵



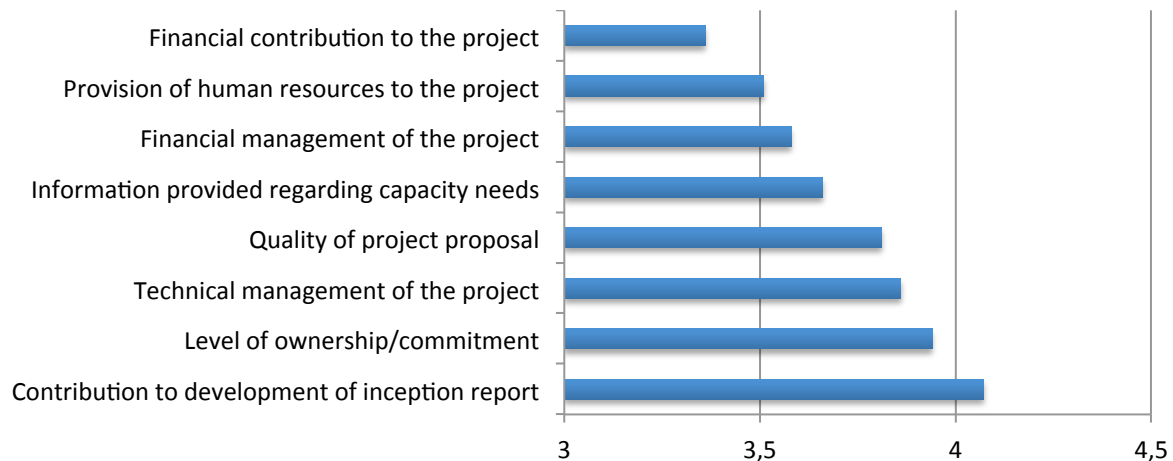
Roles of partners

The role division between EP-Nuffic, the Netherlands embassy, the Dutch service provider and the requesting organisation is also positively assessed. The role of southern partners in project design and implementation is more critically (but still positive) assessed by the Dutch service providers (see Figure 3) whereas the southern partners are overall positive on the role performed by their Dutch counterparts. From the field visits and interviews it is learnt that the roles are not always taken up in a satisfactory manner, both by the Dutch service provider and the requesting organisations. The Dutch service providers interviewed are more critical (but still positive) on the limited financial contribution of the requesting partner to the project, the insufficient provision of human resources to the project, the weak technical and/or financial management of the projects. In the projects visited these factors also contributed to delays in project implementation (see further in Section 4.3).

¹⁴ Source: NICHE DSP survey, based on a six-step scale from 1 = “not challenging at all” to 6 = “very challenging”, scale adapted to highlight differences.

¹⁵ Source: NICHE partner survey, n = 104, based on a six-step scale from 1 = “not challenging at all” to 6 = “very challenging”, scale adapted to highlight differences.

Figure 3: Assessment of the role of southern partners by DSP¹⁶



From the field visits it is learned that some requesting organisations were critical on the technical and financial management capacity of the Dutch service provider mainly related to misunderstandings and miscommunication on the project intervention logic and the expected results. Besides, comments were made regarding the insufficient availability of technical expertise provided by the service providers, contributing to delay in implementation and the lack of attention to cultural differences.

The support provided by EP-Nuffic is overall assessed as satisfactory by Dutch service providers and requesting organisations (see figures in annex). A more critical assessment is given by the Dutch service providers on the adequacy of financial reporting formats, EP-Nuffic’s quality of project monitoring and its role in supporting the communication or mediation with the requesting organisation. These factors are the results of changes introduced in programme management under NICHE II, which seem not yet to be understood well by all service providers. Several interviewees clarified that they would like to see a more active role of EP-Nuffic in conflict mediation but also in the monitoring of the project (providing feedback on content rather than on procedures, taking up a brokering role in linking requesting organisations to other interesting initiatives and actors at regional or international level, etc.). This however, requires more resources for programme management.

The assessment of the tender proposals, the organisation of the tender procedure and transparency of the selection process as organised by EP-Nuffic are positively assessed by the Dutch service providers and the requesting organisations. However, the tender procedure itself is questioned by almost all Dutch service providers interviewed and in the focus group. Interviewees argued that the tender procedure demands a lot of time (this is however not confirmed by the survey among the Dutch service providers that assessed the effort required for the tender as satisfactory) and does not guarantee better quality of projects (evidenced by the challenges in adapting projects to the capacity needs of the requesting organisations). The latter could be contested as during the inception phase time can be taken to fine-tune the tender proposal to the needs and expectations of the requesting partner. Such a process takes time. From the field visits it can be learned that in almost all projects much time needs to be taken to adjust the project proposals. In some cases the initial project outline was of bad quality, in other cases the project proposals that won the tender did not fully respond to the expectations of the requesting organisations. For example, in one case in Indonesia the discus-

¹⁶ Source: NICHE DSP Survey, n = 72, based on a six-step scale from 1 = “not challenging at all” to 6 = “very challenging”, scale adapted to highlight differences.

sions on the project eventually resulted in the development of new strategies. In two cases in Benin the negotiations on the approach and the adaptations of the logical framework took a long time, caused a lot of misunderstandings and confusing among the partners and were still not fully finalised at the time of the evaluation field mission (when projects entered their second or even third year). Another argument questioning the tender procedure refers to the importance of establishing good partner relationships for swift project implementation. According to the interviewees, the tender procedure does not guarantee a good relationship with the requesting partner. Many interviewees advocate for a system of open calls or a combination of closed and open calls as is being applied for the tailor made training (see also Section 5.2 on NFP).

4.2.3 Description and analysis of the NICHE II programme funds

In the period 2012-2015 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has spent 11.860.371 EUR for programme management and more than 129 million EUR at project level (see Table 17 in Annex 7.7.2). The main costs components at programme level remain similar compared to the previous period (NICHE I) and relate to project monitoring (5.209.170 EUR) and identification, articulation and assessment (3.046.815 EUR). In phase II of the programme, costs for monitoring are higher compared to the cost for identification, articulation and assessment, which gives evidence for the efficiency gains compared to phase I (among others through the cancellation of the identification missions). The year 2013 can be seen as a transition year, which is evidenced by the lower budget for identification, articulation and assessment and a higher budget for regulation and communication. The budget spent on project monitoring increases over the years. Although there was a cost saving also for monitoring, costs for monitoring increased because the number of projects to be monitored increased (including the extensions of NICHE I projects).

The budget for programme monitoring and evaluation in 2012 is lower compared to the other years as there also existed a separate budget post for management that covered the management costs of monitoring and evaluation (which has disappeared since 2013). EP-Nuffic also mentioned that because the external evaluation conducted by Ramboll was organised in 2012 the internal evaluation activities were put on hold and transferred to 2013.

The efficiency gains are not reflected in a lower share of programme management costs compared to the total budget committed for NICHE projects, which indicates that there was a linear budget cut on the overall programme budget, as shown in Table 3. Table 17 in the Annex shows that in 2013, the transition year from NICHE I to NICHE II, was still expensive from the point of view of the administrative share. A lower share of 6,4 % of the management costs to the total project budget can be noted in 2015, which might indicate that efficiency gains are starting to pay off. A conclusion can only be taken at the end of the programme period.

Table 3: Overview of the share of the programme management costs in relation to the budget committed for projects, in Euro

	Total budget planned for projects	Total management cost EP-Nuffic	Share of management/projects
2012	43.463.861	3.260.406 ¹⁷	7,5%
2013 until June 2013	17.868.426	1.537.325	8,6%
2013 from July 2013	9.018.205	1.435.293	15,9%
2014	29.097.321	2.713.829	9,3%
2015	41.114.523	2.648.933	6,4%
Total	131.562.336	11.595.785	8,8 %

¹⁷ BTW suppletie not included.

In the period 2012-2015 EP-Nuffic was managing 200 projects of which 137 NICHE I projects, 62 NICHE II projects, and the Tanzania Dutch Energy Capacity Building project. 14 projects were ended at the moment of this evaluation in 2016. This means that almost all NICHE I projects were still in implementation phase at the moment of the evaluation.

In the period 2012-2015 a total project budget was awarded of 129.305.709 EUR (see Table 18 in Annex 7.7.2). Compared to the budget planned there is a difference of 2.256.627 EUR (value of one big NICHE project) indicating that almost all project proposals presented a financial proposal that was lower than the budget tendered. With a share of 98 % of the total planned budget effectively awarded, one could state that the total project budget was well managed by EP-Nuffic. The three countries visited in this evaluation can be situated in the top 3 countries with the highest budget received in the period 2012-2015.

The total project budget was divided over 18 countries in the period 2012-2015. The countries visited, Indonesia, Mozambique and Benin take the biggest share of the total budget with respectively 16 %, 14 % and 12 %. Six countries represent each 6 % to 9 % of the total budget (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda). The rest of the countries take a share of 1 % to 5 % of the budget. Among the latter, the fragile states can be situated.

NICHE projects need to be situated along the thematic priority themes of the Dutch development cooperation policy: food security, water, sexual reproductive health and rights and rule of law. According to the contract between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and EP-Nuffic, at least 35 % of the NICHE projects needed to be situated in the sector of food security. By the end of 2015, the food security sector covers 29 % of the project budget granted (see Table 20 in Annex 7.7.2). However, the agreement with the Ministry of Foreign affairs stipulates that food security and private sector development are counted together for the achievement of the 35 %, which shows a share of 40 %. Still some projects are situated in the education sector,¹⁸ which was the dominant sector in the former phases of the programme (32,6 % of budget spent in the education sector in the period between 2008 and 2011, as described in the Ramboll evaluation). In the period 2012-2015 7.770.994 EUR were spent in the education sector, or 5 % of the total budget (included in the category other). The decrease in budget dedicated for private sector development since 2013 can be explained by the fact that since NICHE II private sector development initiatives are usually linked to one of the four priority themes and as such categorized.

With regard to the type of organisation contracted in comparison to the former programme evaluation covering NPT and NICHE I, the trend as described in the evaluation report of Ramboll can be confirmed for NICHE II (see Table 21 in Annex 7.7.2). The Ramboll report refers to a share of 38 % of consultancy companies in NICHE I. This trend has continued and their share even has increased in the period 2012-2015 mounting to 47 % of the total project budget granted to consultancy agencies. The academic institutions have respectively a share of 26 % (universities) and 6 % (universities of applied sciences).

Interviewees at EP-Nuffic and of the Dutch service providers confirmed that universities tend to give consultancy companies the responsibility for project management based on the assumption that consultancy companies are likely to have more appropriate project management capabilities and

¹⁸ Education sector = strengthening educational institutes or the educational system not linked to a particular priority sector of the Dutch development cooperation.

adequate project management structures and procedures in place. This is confirmed by the data in Table 19 in Annex 7.7.2.

From the field visits it is difficult to formulate a conclusion on the difference in quality of project management in cases where a consultancy company took the lead or a university. There are too many variables that have an influence on appropriate and effective project management. Good and back examples could be identified among the two groups of service providers in the projects visited.

Among the requesting organisations 55 % of the grant is benefitting universities (70.997.663 EUR) (see Table 22 in Annex 7.7.2). 15 % (19.212.168 EUR) involves a national agency and 9 % (11.170.551) involves ministries. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded to increasingly include the TVET sector in the NICHE II programme, only 8 % of the budget was granted to support vocational education and training institutes (10.105.100 EUR). However, EP-Nuffic refers to the fact that TVET institutions are often relatively weak organisations and prefer to form a partnership with a Ministry or a university that will be the lead requesting organisation.

Table 22 in the Annex further shows that for the majority of the projects the Dutch service provider takes fully responsibility for the financial management of the project (with 6 % of management costs to be spent by the requesting organisation). Only 17 % of the granted budget is managed in a bipartite modality within which the Dutch service provider and the requesting organisation share the responsibility for the financial management. In the period 2012-2015 none of the requesting organisations was assigned with full responsibility for the financial management.

In the period 2012-2015, 93 tender procedures have been organised of which 10 had to be re-tendered (11 %). Compared to the former phases the number of interested parties to tender has increased from 400 to 3000¹⁹ (most probably because of the several budget cuts in the sector of development cooperation), which requires extra work in responding to all kind of questions (although a lot of information is made available via the EP-Nuffic website). The level of competitiveness is the highest among the international education institutes, research centres and consultancy agencies. Compared to the former phase the participation of business in the tender competition has almost disappeared (with 32 bidders from business sector as described in the Ramboll evaluation).

Table 4: Overview of the total bids won or lost per type of organisation for the period 2012-2015

	Winning bids	Losing bids	Level of competitiveness
Consultancy Agency	40	35	53%
University	24	27	47%
University of applied Science	6	16	27%
International education institute	18	11	62%
Research Centre	4	4	50%
Other	1	3	25%
Non-governmental Organisation	0	2	0%
Business	0	1	0%
Total	93	99	48%

A specific budget of 5.000.025 EUR was made available for INNOCAP projects. In the period June 2015 – November 2015 59% of the budget was granted to 1 joint initiative, 8 proposals responded the call for innovative projects, 1 project implemented by the water consortium in Bangladesh and 5 Tailor Made Training (4 in Ethiopia and 1 in Bangladesh). 200.000 EUR were used for the co-financing pilot under the NFP (see Section 5.2 on NFP).

¹⁹ Based on interviews with EP-Nuffic staff.

4.2.4 Description and analysis of the efficiency at project level

All project budgets are composed along the same budget components as shown in Table 23 in Annex 7.7.2. This table provides an overview of 195 NICHE projects and is based on the information provided on annual expenses. The table demonstrates that there is an underspending of 38 % of the total budget granted. However, one has to take into account that for 12 % of the projects no data are yet available on the total budget spent. A complete picture will be available when all projects will be finalised. The estimation of EP-Nuffic, based on prior experiences, is that most of the budget eventually will be spent. This estimation is confirmed by the interviews with the Dutch service providers and requesting organisations visited.

The table shows that the investment of Dutch and European experts constitutes the highest budget post (35 % of the total budget). Only to a limited extent (9 %) use is made of local or regional expertise. From the interviews and project visits it is learned that there are misunderstandings or lack of transparency between the service providers and the requesting partners on the use of the budget foreseen for contingencies and that there are hesitations to use this budget, though there are clear rules how contingencies can be spent. EP-Nuffic does not demand specific reporting on this budget post (part of the flexibility in financial management).

Project expenses follow the traditional project cycle with low expenditures at the start of the project and high expenditures in the last two years (that often coincides with the budget neutral extension period).²⁰

A similar pattern could be identified among the projects visited in Benin, Mozambique and Indonesia. For the projects visited the share of the budget spent compared to the total budget granted varies between 45 % of the total budget for Indonesia to 71 % for Mozambique. It is normal that the projects will demand a budget neutral extension. This underspending can be explained by the delay in implementation as already highlighted in the section above.

Table 5: Overview of the total grant budget and total budget spent for the projects visited, in Euro²¹

	Total budget granted	Total budget spent	Absorption capacity
Benin (8 projects)	10.071.416	4.921.417	49%
Indonesia (9 projects)	11.640.531	4.437.85022	45%
Mozambique (7 projects)	12.824.215	6.017.36523	71%

Several factors had a negative influence on the efficient implementation of the projects visited and the timely implementation of the projects. The most dominant problems in the projects visited was the lack of sufficient financial resources and staff made available for the project implementation by the requesting organisation. Other factors refer to project design (low quality of the identification and planning process, unrealistic expectations) and the quality of the partnership relation (communication, trust, level of ownership). In a few projects also the Dutch service provider did not always engage sufficient technical expertise in time. The adequacy of the services provided was generally assessed a good by the consultants, just commenting that there is a heavy focus on international missions (as shown in Table 23 in Annex 7.7.2 indicating a share of 35 % of the total budget assigned

²⁰ Source: financial project data at EP-Nuffic.

²¹ Information lacks for two projects in Indonesia (share budget spent/total grant is counted on the total amount of 9.965.693 EUR for 7 projects) and for two projects in Mozambique (share is counted on the total amount of 8.399.215 EUR for 5 projects).

²² Information lacks for two projects, absorption rate is counted on the total amount of 9.965.693 EUR for 7 projects.

²³ Information lacks for two projects, absorption rate is counted on the total amount of 8.399.215 EUR for 5 projects.

to Dutch and European expertise). Only in three of the 24 projects there were comments of the requesting organisation on the quality of services provided such as a heavy focus on international missions (which was difficult to manage by the requesting organisation), expert missions that are perceived as being too short and/or the low technical expertise.

Table 6: Number of projects visited that suffered from delays or quality in implementation due to the factors related to project design, partnership relation, management and/or services provided

	Benin	Indonesia	Mozambique
Project design	4/8	4/9	2/7
Quality of partnership relation	5/8	4/9	2/7
Technical or financial management DSP	3/8	2/9	1/7
Technical or financial management RO	8/8	5/9	5/7
Adequacy of services provided	/	2/9	1/7

The biggest budget post is also in the project visited the time input of Dutch and European expertise. A maximum percentage of the total project budget was set for project management (6 %) and for investments (20 %).²⁴ In Benin, Indonesia and Mozambique two projects visited exceeded the 20 % for investment (respectively 23 % for BEN171, 22 % for BEN196, 23 % for IND223, 22 % for IND198, 25 % for MOZ150 and 26 % for MOZ231). From the interviews with requesting organisations it is learned that the support for investments is very much needed (and entails sometimes new constructions that are creatively described as modifications to the infrastructure). This is more prominent in Benin and Mozambique where all projects visited (except two) made optimal use of the investment budget, whereas in Indonesia 5 out of 9 projects visited the investment remained below the 20 %. The level of country development might explain this country difference.

Another observation is related to the costs spent on project management. Compared to the overall project budget the share spent on project management represents 14 % for the service provider and 7 % the requesting organisation.²⁵ In the project budget, the project management cost at the level of the Dutch service provider is included in the total cost of the Dutch/European time investment. When calculating the share of the cost related to project management of the Dutch service provider to the total cost for time input Dutch/European expertise it appears that the project management costs take a large share of the total costs of the Dutch/European time investment in the projects visited (between 29 % and 47 %) as shown in Table 7. In Benin, for example, this means that almost half of the Dutch/European expertise time is dedicated to project management but also in Indonesia and Mozambique almost 1/3 of the time is dedicated to project management. This shows the complexity of the project management.

Table 7: Overview of the % of time input of Dutch/European expertise to the total budget granted and the share of project management

	Share of total budget granted for time input Dutch and European expertise	Share of project management cost of total budget time input Dutch and European expertise
Benin (8 projects)	29 %	47 %
Indonesia (9 projects)	44 %	31 %
Mozambique (7 projects)	34 %	29 %

²⁴ Investment in new infrastructure is not allowed, renovation of facilities and equipment of facilities are allowed.

²⁵ This can be perceived as reasonable, though one has to take into account that programme management cost at EP-Nuffic and at the Netherlands embassies are not taken into account.

Conclusions on the efficiency of NICHE

It is clear that EP-Nuffic has taken several measures that have contributed to efficiency gains in programme management. The programme is being managed with less staff and less resources. Processes and phases for programme management have been standardized, simplified and automated. This has also contributed to increased transparency and as such a decrease in the number of complaints.

There is not yet a substantial decrease of the share of the programme management budget to the overall programme budget as also the total programme budget decreased. Moreover, time and resources needed to be invested to manage the transition period. The evaluation also noted that efficiency gains were “neutralised” because of the additional tasks or requests from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the implementation of the programme and the fact that the programme has become very popular among a large group of service providers. These factors have put an enormous pressure on the staff’s workload. The management costs represent less than 10 % of the total programme budget (except for 2013) which can be seen as acceptable. A team of 16 staff members is managing a programme with more than 200 projects, relating to 18 Netherlands embassies, more than 200 Dutch service providers, and responding to more than 3000 request for information from organisations having an interest in participating in the programme. Efficiency gains will above all pay off during the last two years of the programme and might be valorised in the future phase of NICHE under condition that no substantial changes will be brought to the programme’s management.

Some measures have been taken to improve the quality of the management NICHE II projects, among others by the introduction of a holistic perspective on capacity development (supported by the 5C-model) and the obligation to apply a result based management approach, obliging the Dutch service providers to formulate maximum 12 outputs and reflect on the contribution of these outputs to the envisaged outcomes. There is a small evolution in the quality of project design, mainly regarding the quality of the logical frameworks developed since NICHE II. But there are still challenges in responding effectively to the capacity needs of the requesting organisations and the communication thereof, and in reporting progress against output and outcome (instead of activities).

For purposes of efficiency the role of EP-Nuffic has been adapted with a less active role in the implementation of the projects, moving from project monitoring to programme monitoring. The evaluators welcome the evolution towards result based management, the increased flexibility in planning and reporting, the introduction of the principle of “active mandatory obligation” and transfer of responsibilities towards the implementing partners, which is also appreciated by the Dutch service providers. The evaluation however shows that several Dutch service providers and their partners in the south are still struggling with this new approach and the gained flexibility.

The support provided by EP-Nuffic is overall assessed as satisfactory. The Dutch service providers only still expect a more active role of EP-Nuffic in mediating the communication between the Dutch service providers and the southern partners. However, the role of Nuffic in project implementation has been limited to purely monitoring the projects, as was recommended in the Ramboll evaluation. New roles and responsibilities of all parties involved have been clearly described in the NICHE Handbook but it takes time until everybody will have fully internalized the changed roles.

EP-Nuffic showed that systems and procedures are in place to manage the programme budget, with 98 % of the total programme budget being committed according to plan. The policy guidelines as agreed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are respected to a large extent. 40 % of the programme budget is granted to projects in the food security sector (including private sector development), which remains the priority sector for NICHE II. Still 5 % of the NICHE II programme is invested in the

education sector. The focus on private sector development and on technical and vocational education and training is not yet very visible in the programme budget granted. However, projects in collaboration with ministries, national agencies or academic institutions situated in the four priority sectors of the Dutch development cooperation might include elements of private sector development and/or TVET. Many NICHE II projects have a component related to private sector development and /or TVET. This is just not traceable in the overall programme budget.

At project implementation level, all projects face challenges in implementing the projects in the given timeframe. In reality projects last six years instead of four. Project spending follows the traditional rhythm of the project cycle with slow disbursement rates at the start, accelerated towards the end of the projects. Consequently, the NICHE programme budget shows currently an underspending of 38 %. Main factors that contribute to these delays relate to the weak adaptation of the project to the needs and capacity of the requesting organisation, availability problems at the side of the service providers, the lack of sufficient financial resources and staff time made available by the requesting organisations, which is often not budgeted nor made transparent and/or the weak management capacity of the requesting organisations. By consequence a high share (more than 30 %) of the time for Dutch and European expertise is spent on project management, which shows the complexity of the management of this kind of projects. This can also be an explanation for the fact that universities prefer to assign project management to the consultancy companies. Further, projects implemented in fragile states show considerable delays and sometimes have not even started yet. The quality of the partnership and the fact that partners knew each other before the start of the project contributed positively to efficient implementation of the project.

Several Dutch service providers that question the tender procedure referred to the above-described factors influencing negatively the level of efficiency. The evaluators recognize the advantages and disadvantages of a tender system but support the opinion of several interviewees that have advocated for a system of open calls or a combination of closed and open calls as is being applied for the tailor made training.

4.3 Effectiveness and Impact

This section covers the effectiveness of NICHE and NPT projects and the impact that can be attributed to NICHE and NPT projects. Effectiveness relates to the extent to which the development intervention's objective was achieved. This is described in the intervention logics of EP-Nuffic as the strengthening of higher education and TVET training capacity in partner countries with respect to the four policy spearheads and the cross cutting topics gender and labour market needs. Impact relates to the longer-term effects of the programme on the labour market in the targeted sectors.²⁶

The section is divided in the subsections effectiveness (Section 4.3.1), impact (Section 4.3.2) and harmonization and alignment (Section 4.3.3), and closes with the overall conclusions.

For analysing effectiveness and impact it is important to consider how they are defined in the documentation and how reporting takes places. For each of the programmes (NPT, NICHE I and NICHE II) Nuffic developed an intervention logic. Over time one clearly sees the more specified formulation by Nuffic and the shift in focus as gender sensitivity and explicit orientation to labour market needs were added in the NICHE I intervention logic and the orientation on the four thematic priorities only in the NICHE II intervention logic. In the NICHE II intervention logic, impact, understood as long-term

²⁶ See the intervention logics for NPT, NICHE I and NICHE II.

benefits, refers to the policy priority outcomes (of the Dutch bilateral policy). It relates to the intended outcomes of the NICHE programme as developed in the NICHE Country Programme (NCP) and to the Embassy's objectives in the MASP. Under NICHE II EP-Nuffic was requested to develop results chains for the four priority sectors with impact indicators to improve reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In each project outline of a NICHE I project developed by the requesting organisation the outcome (specific objectives) as well as the impact (overall objectives) is determined.²⁷ In NICHE II outcomes at policy priority level and outcomes at organisational level have to be determined.

Within the project outlines we find that impact and outcomes are differently interpreted. For example for the NICHE I projects in Mozambique one project refers in the overall objective to the sectoral achievements, one only to achievement of their institution and two describe a mixture of institutional achievements and sectoral achievements. In the NICHE II project outline the differentiation becomes clearer as the impact level is named policy priority outcome. For example in all Indonesian project outlines of NICHE II projects the impact of the projects is stated clearly and is not referring directly to the targeted institution.

4.3.1 Effectiveness of NPT and NICHE interventions

Reporting quality

To assess the output of the projects, information from the field missions as well as project documents were used. However, there was a strong variance in the quality of reporting amongst the different projects visited and this applies especially to the progress reports and achievement annexes. While some institutions exhibited a great diligence in completing the annexes, other progress reports and achievement annexes lacked data or were filled in incomplete. The difference of quality and accuracy in reporting and providing project related data was also confirmed during the interviews with the Dutch service providers. Information from reports of NICHE II is not yet available as most projects that were initiated under NICHE II had not been running for 16 months at the time of the evaluation.

General assessment

All new projects of EP-Nuffic were found to be within the priority areas of the Dutch bilateral policy or the thematic priorities set by the Netherlands embassy. The institutions involved increased their knowledge, research capacities and way of teaching in the thematic priorities, mainly through the update of curricula, the long-term courses abroad including research on a topic connected to the scholar's institution and the staff training by Dutch/external experts.

Further, it can be maintained that all projects were at least partially able to achieve their output. However, opinions often varied between requesting organisations and Dutch service providers whether the output meets the expectations of both partners and on the quality of the achieved outputs. During the field visits in Indonesia, Benin and Mozambique, the partners generally reported positively on the respective projects and this also applies to the annual and final reports. By contrast, many Dutch service providers were able to name strengths and weaknesses of the project providing a more nuanced appreciation than the requesting organisation. While there are many possible reasons for the hesitance to openly talk about problematic issues including culture and/or hierarchies,

²⁷ For NICHE I the requesting organisation also provided the outputs in the project outlines. This is not the case for NICHE II where outputs are provided by the Dutch partner organisation on grounds of the desired outcomes of the requesting organisation.

the evaluators also had the impression that some institutions were also reluctant because they were afraid that addressing problems would have repercussions for their financial funding or possible future partnerships. But different benchmarks can play a role as well in the different assessments of achievement by partners in the South and partners in the Netherlands.

Even though institutions attest EP-Nuffic a high flexibility in the modification of programme components, Dutch service providers were not always convinced and willing to adapt the outputs according to the wishes of the requesting organisation. Further, if partners differ in their understanding of the exact outputs, this can lead to unsatisfactory results for the requesting organisation.

Strengthening of organisational and institutional capacities

The strengthening of the organisational and institution capacity can be achieved by investments in equipment or by the introduction of institutional bodies. From the interviews in the field it became clear that for many institutions, equipment is a crucial part of the NICHE project. Laboratories, libraries, (ICT) equipment and modification of existing equipment are the main investments carried out. As far as it could be proved during field visits investments are in place and functioning. Even though institutions report that they perceive training as more important they emphasize that without the investments in equipment they cannot apply the knowledge the trained staff gained. Still, it is also commented that in the long run a lot of equipment will get damaged or needs to be upgraded. In three cases in Indonesia and in another case in Mozambique, the extent to which the investments in equipment were made accessible to students and staff (in the case of laboratories and libraries) and adequately supervised by staff knowing how to operate the equipment was questionable. Often purchase of equipment is accompanied by high delays as procurement procedures within the organisation or the buying procedures in general are complicated.

Dominant strategies for organisational strengthening are the establishment of committees, councils and structures within the institutions to assure the quality management and networking, which are supposed to have an influence on sustainability. These support systems are an important pillar of holistic capacity building, which received more attention under NICHE II following the recommendations of the 2012 Ramboll evaluation. Networking activities to strengthen organisational entities (such as commissions to support curriculum development) were often part of the project but with mixed success. Some of those activities worked very well and did even over-achieve the set goals. In other projects, Dutch service providers did try to initiate networking with other stakeholders but were not successful as ambitions from the requesting organisation were limited. In a number of projects, especially in the case of Mozambique (3/7) and Benin (4/8), activities to support organisational or institutional development were less likely to succeed if substantial input from the requesting organisations was needed.

The findings from the field missions and interviews show that these mechanisms are often only established towards the end when projects are almost finished projects. This leaves a short time to introduce and establish the mechanisms – still with support of the Dutch providers. In the survey (see [Figure 4](#)) with the requesting organisations, the respondents assessed *experience in cooperation with foreign partners*, *expertise in its field of work* and *team working capabilities* as main benefits from the project. Furthermore, the ability of requesting organisations needed to develop and sustain these organisational supporting bodies is assessed especially low by the Dutch service providers in the interviews, e.g. network building abilities and organising regular meetings. The survey with the Dutch service providers confirms these results and one can conclude from both surveys the benefit is rather perceived with regard to the outputs that increase the expertise in the field of work.

To sum up, not many results are visible yet regarding organisational development processes and institutional strengthening. This is analogous to one of the major conclusions of the Ramboll evaluation study. The study identified that the focus of the NPT and NICHE I programme was mainly on curricula/course development, investment in infrastructure and training of staff. Many conclusions from this evaluation are still true today. Not much evidence is already available on the added value of applying a more holistic perspective on capacity development as is being applied under NICHE II. One has to acknowledge that projects under NICHE II just have started, and have not yet produced substantial results.

Figure 4: Perceived benefits for requesting organisations by requesting organisations²⁸



In NICHE II projects, more efforts are being undertaken to increase the organisational and institutional capacities than in NICHE I projects but these interventions are the most challenging and have only shown some successes. The lack of ownership of these interventions has been found to be one main problem, especially in projects in Mozambique.

Development and implementation of curricula

The experiences from the field show that developing new curricula and revising existing curricula is mostly accomplished by the end of the project. From the sample: 19/24 projects have focussed on the development of new curricula (5/8 in Benin, 9/9 in Indonesia²⁹ and 5/7 in Mozambique). In Benin, 3/5 of the projects have only recently started with the curriculum, but none of the respondent DSP's doubt that all curricula will be validated, as this is part of the core business of the receiving organisations. There is a lot of variety in the way curricula are developed in Indonesia: quite a few institutions have had lengthy discussions with different stakeholders from the public and private sector while some others organise more closed workshops. When institutions establish new Master or Bachelor courses, accreditation is an important step for quality assurance and meeting the regulations and criteria within a country. But accreditation of the curricula often takes longer than expected and is very bureaucratic; only in three projects visited accreditation of new curricula was already complet-

²⁸ Source: NICHE partner survey, n = 80, based on a six-step scale from 1 = "absolutely unsatisfactory" to 6 = "absolutely satisfactory"; scale adapted to highlight differences.

²⁹ These would also include the development of new training programmes and E-learning courses for non-universities.

ed. To date, new/adapted curricula have been validated and or accredited for 10 projects (2 in Benin, 4 in Indonesia with 2 additional ready for accreditation³⁰ and 2 in Mozambique). The development or revision and implementation of (short) courses or modules are relatively successful as well. Only if several courses are newly developed at once (for instance within a newly formed institution/school) the capacity of the institutions can be too weak. E.g. the staff available might be limited to organize and conduct many high quality courses at once according to the feedback from some Dutch service providers.

Capacity development of staff

Staff training is one main pillar of the NICHE projects. In-house training, short courses or long term studies in the Netherlands or other international destinations are part of the programme. All of the projects had a component of staff training. Not all institutions managed to find enough persons willing or capable to take part in the long term training according to the planning, especially with regard to planned Master and PhD courses at Dutch universities, mostly because of the low level of academic qualification and language barriers. In all projects visited in Mozambique and Indonesia, the required level of English was a challenge, especially with regard to passing the English proficiency test and to be able to follow the course contents and obtain sufficient results. Another challenge was that leaving the country for a longer time is especially difficult for participants that have family, which are not supported financially when accompanying the participant. In one case where instead regional, less distant alternatives had been selected the quality of the courses was not to the satisfaction of the students.

Scholarship recipients as well as employers interviewed were very positive about the in-house trainings and trainings abroad. Institutions and staff explained that the staff training enhanced their teaching especially through improved knowledge of the discipline taught and/or of teaching methods. Many staff members and their employers also mention the maturing and increase in self-confidence especially from long-term courses abroad.

With respect to the workshops conducted by the Dutch service providers, the Dutch service providers interviewed mentioned a lack of using the gained knowledge in the institution after the Dutch expert has left as follow-up activities were not planned very well.

All institutions have to set incentives to retain the newly qualified staff in the institution. If salaries of the institution are not competitive, they try to give other incentives like promotion. Still, institutions experience that trained staff is occasionally leaving the organisation but it is not described as a major problem. Exact data on this are not available.

Development of research capacity

Several projects in Indonesia and Mozambique also improved the research capacity in the field of the priority area, but this was less obvious in Benin. In this country there is a lesser focus on research in NICHE II projects in comparison to NPT projects. In Mozambique, research is seen as important by several interviewees but only few projects have a strong focus on research. Results in this area for example in the form of published articles in journals are very low. In the achievement annexes almost no research activities were reported from Mozambique. While strengthening research capacities was not in the spotlight of NICHE II projects in Indonesia, most NICHE II projects with Indonesian

³⁰ In Indonesia, government has decided that curricula can be changed only once every 5 years.

universities still included research activities (e.g. guidance on publishing, co-publishing, financing research stays, hosting of a research forum).

From interviews with requesting organisations of NICHE I and NICHE II projects, it was learned that enhanced research capacities – especially publication in (international) journals, is important for accreditation.

Gender effects

With the transition from NPT to NICHE I a new emphasis was put on gender. Improving the gender sensitiveness of post-secondary education in NICHE countries became part of the overall NICHE I programme objective with the specific objectives of decreasing gender discrepancies, engendering NICHE country programmes and addressing the gender dimensions of capacity building becoming specific programme objectives (NICHE programme logframe).

Despite the frequent criticism from various respondents regarding the implementation of gender strategies under NICHE, reporting on gender outcomes was positive for the majority of projects visited. There was an increased focus on awarding Master and PhD scholarships to female staff members, and to increasingly focus on recruiting female employees and students. Several institutions describe how they increased the female share in staff or students' numbers. The same holds true for staff training where women are often favoured in order to achieve the goal of higher female participation. Even though in the end a participation rate of 50 % is in many contexts not reached, the focus on gender leads to a higher attention to address women.

Many institutions also developed a gender policy (or are in the process of developing it) and assigned a person to that topic. In Indonesia the share of women in several institutions is already high, which complicated the understanding of the institutions of the need to develop a gender strategy. Nevertheless, in Indonesia, as in the other two countries, only few women were found in higher positions. Gender strategies were often only elaborated and face challenges regarding their implementation. E.g. no appropriate measures were taken in the projects visited to enable the combination of career development and family care and to find solutions for the bottlenecks that hamper women acquiring more important management positions (also tackling socio-economic and cultural norms). Regarding the institutionalisation of gender within the requesting organisations, the results were mixed and it remains questionable as to what extent developed strategies will be implemented. Many receiving institutions perceived the gender issue as being imposed by EP-Nuffic (as it took an important place in criteria to assess proposals and is central in the monitoring of outputs) or as an item to be ticked on a checklist. Nevertheless, a number of institutions reported that the gender activities did lead them towards increasing their gender awareness and to shift their focus towards the promotion of women in the institutional context. The lack of appreciation for the gender component also explains the lack of ownership on gender in most visited projects.

Attributable vocational education system improvements

Under NICHE more attention was given to technical and vocational training (TVET). Several Dutch service providers but also several officers of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs interviewed confirmed the relevancy of this policy direction as there is a great need of technical skilled people. The strengthening of TVET institutes still remains limited, especially in Benin and Indonesia, where only 3 % and 2 % of the total grant amount from 2010-2015 were dedicated to TVET projects. The partner portfolio of Benin does not include TVET institutions, only limited support was given to a post-secondary technical institute. Neither are TVET institutions supported directly in Indonesia either. An

exception were vocational training is strengthened in the food security sector is via the support of a vocational university that strengthens vocational training institutes in the field of food processing across the country. A more prominent approach is visible in the partner portfolio (19 % of total grant amount) of Mozambique where an educational expert was attached to the embassy for several years. Over the years, NICHE has been used to strengthen the educational system with a particular focus on creating and strengthening a system of polytechnic institutes all over the country. This – long term – support has been successful taking into account that the institutes are developing fast and are gaining reputation.

Further (unintended) outcomes

Few unintended outcomes were mentioned by requesting organisations or Dutch service providers. In a positive light, a limited number of projects showed some overachievement of their goals. Some universities mention that they aspire to support other universities to develop similar programmes and Dutch Service providers mentioned that good collaborations under a NICHE project can be the basis for prolonged collaboration (see also the chapter on sustainability).

Side effects for Dutch implementing institutions

During the interviews with representatives from the (Dutch) implementing partners, several effects were mentioned that the Dutch institutions benefitted from beyond the mere financial compensation for their services.

Most of the university partners agreed that their engagement in international projects contributed to the internationalization of their institutions. Through the NICHE projects, they were able to get access to new opportunities for collaboration and it helped them to further develop their expertise and to be able to engage in applied research in the South. Some NICHE projects also hold the possibility to meet future business partners. Against this background, some partners also mentioned that due to time and resource constraints, they were not able to maximize the learning and research opportunities with the partnering organisation.

With regard to financial compensation, the opinions were mixed. Some of the commercially active institutions reported significant revenue through NICHE while some respondents also stated their disappointment of the financial compensation for their services or underlined the fact that management of the project took much more effort than anticipated. One Dutch service provider had an explicit interest in receiving PhD students from the requesting organisation but was not satisfied with the quality of the students.

In one incidence, when interviewing an implementing partner from the South, the department described a huge benefit for their own research. Cooperating with government training centres helped them to become much more aware of the realities on the ground and thus they were able to align their research focus on more practical and relevant issues.

Influencing factors on achievement of effectiveness

Several factors have been found during the field visits and the interviews in the Netherlands to be important for effectiveness of the projects. One main factor that constrains the achievement of outputs is the **project management capability** of the requesting organisations. As mentioned above, in 1/3 of the cases, coordinators did not have any experience in project management or capabilities of the institution in project management were very low.

Another problem that negatively influenced the coordination of activities within the project is the **availability of staff**. In many cases, staff in the requesting organisation faced heavy work overload, especially in the cases of Mozambique (4/7), Benin (5/8) and Indonesia (7/9). Due to low salaries, staff members assume several commitments to upgrade their income. The required time investment and availability of staff for project implementation is not well described in the projects.

In NICHE II time allocation of staff has to be determined in the report zero, but the accurateness of completion and realistic planning can be doubted as requesting organisations have difficulties of exactly determining the workload from other obligations in the future.

The above described problem was highlighted by several Dutch service providers interviewed as expressed by the following two statements: *“Sometimes they [staff of the requesting organisation] put in so much time and energy and I feel ashamed that they don’t get compensation, especially since the salaries are very low, so I think Nuffic should do something about that. It would be good if we could compensate them at least for a couple of extra hours.”* And: *“In Indonesia staff in all institutions receives really low salaries; they need to take on more responsibilities if they want to earn more. But [the] 6% for project coordination (...) is not enough to cater for the extra time of involved staffs. Nuffic (...) argue[s] that the partners signed the contract and know about this beforehand. But in the end the staff faces the decision to either work for us or do extra paid work, such as paid consultancies and it’s understandable that they need paid extra work because they have families.(...) There’s an imbalance of Dutch staff getting paid versus Indonesian staff not getting paid. But again, Nuffic’s position is also understandable because they argue that partners already receive the grant and they cannot pay them additionally to receive the grant. What Nuffic could do: Before giving the grant to the institution, they should make sure that funds are available to pay their own staffs.”*

Furthermore, it was reported that within projects of other donors, remunerating the involved staff was common, which makes it difficult to convince staff to work within the NICHE project instead. Problems of limited staff capacities are also aggravated when some staff members are going abroad for Master or PhD courses. The 6 % made available for project management can be flexible used. It can, for example, also be used for other activities than strict project management (e.g. compensation of staff involved in project activities). It was a purposeful decision of EP-Nuffic to finance staff salaries only in this limited boundary with the goal to achieve higher levels of ownership and sustainability. However, the required own contribution is usually not made transparent or monitored.

A **regional or local partner** was described as convenient for the Dutch service providers in “monitoring” the process and stepping in when necessary. One Dutch service provider of a Mozambican project, who was active in two countries, explained how helpful he perceived a national or regional implementing partner who was able to cooperate much closer with the requesting organisation and who would inform the lead partner on on-going activities as the Dutch service provider cannot travel regularly to the partner country. A similar example was also described for Benin.

A **high motivation** of both partners and a **good relationship** between the two partners is another crucial aspect for the achievement of outputs. In 1/3 of the projects some staff members were not fully convinced of the project, its approach or of certain contents. This led to a low motivation of the requesting organisation and problems within the communication of the partners, which is further constraining the project. Output contributes to outcome when motivated persons in the institutions receive the possibilities to integrate project outputs in the system of their institution. This also depends on the level of ownership and interest of the institutions. If this is low, capacity building will remain limited to having up-to-date curricula, new equipment and better trained staff.

This is directly connected to the **ownership** that is needed to motivate staff. In Benin and Indonesia interviewees addressed the involvement of the Netherlands embassy in developing collaborations and/or project interventions. At times these interventions were perceived as “imposed” by the Netherlands embassy (in perspective of the alignment with their own programmes). This resulted in weaker ownership for (part) of the projects. One interviewee describes the role of the embassy in Indonesia as follows: “Embassies should set policy priorities but not be too prescriptive and invite project ideas. What happened in Indonesia is that the embassy together with EP-Nuffic made a choice of institutions they wanted to support [...]. They were approaching the institutions saying ‘we can support you with a project, so what do you need, what do you want?’ From thereof it became a bit problematic, we as institutions would prefer a bit more of an open call. It’s always risky when the embassy suggests partners, why would one exclude good universities beforehand?” If an organisation and its staff cannot be convinced of the benefits of the project the ownership will be very low.

The success on achieving outcomes also depends on the **starting point of the institution**. If institutions had already been involved in NPT projects and acquired a higher initial capacity, success of the programmes appeared to be more likely. In Indonesia for example the initial capacity in comparison with the projects visited in Mozambique show a much higher understanding of capacity building and the involvement needed from the institutions. In Benin, NPT contributed a lot to the academic capacity of the institutions at the level of faculties involved, mainly the capacity to deliver on tasks. This is not contradicting the finding from the Ramboll study that countries with a higher starting capacity show less change (or additional capacity) as a result from the project. The change potential of institutions with low levels of capacity is higher (which is common to be found in development processes in general), but from the field studies one can also infer that the chance of achieving part of the outputs/outcomes not at all is higher.

The Ramboll study mainly refers to the fact that the change potential of institutions with lower capacity level is higher and progress in capacity development can be easier observed as compared to organisations with a certain level of capacity. It does not say much on the level of achievement of the planned outputs and outcomes. From the field studies in this evaluation it can be concluded that more output and outcome were obtained among those institutions that had acquired already a certain level of organisational and institutional development.

4.3.2 Impact of NPT and NICHE interventions

This section presents an analysis on the impact of the NICHE interventions based on the projects visited. As discussed above, not many NPT projects could be visited, therefore, the focus is on NICHE I interventions. Since only two NICHE I projects had been completed, the results of this analysis are of a preliminary and indicative nature.

Labour market orientation and employability of trained workforce

NPT and NICHE I programmes aim at achieving a positive impact on the labour market by relating training and education to the needs of the sectorial labour markets and as such increase the availability of qualified human resources (NPT and NICHE I programme logframe). In all three countries, it can be concluded that NICHE interventions contributed to improving post-secondary education and have the potential to increase/will increase the availability of skilled manpower of the specific sectors targeted by the Dutch policy priorities with mixed outcomes however of the individual pro-

jects.³¹ This was also the case for the few faculties that were involved in NPT projects in Benin. In 2/3 faculties that were involved in the timeline exercises a considerable raise in number of students could be noticed. A number of NPT projects in one of the universities in Benin and in Mozambique have created a basis for nationwide change with the creation of a nationally recognised water institute in Benin and an Institute for quality of education in the Ministry of Education in Mozambique. Survey results reveal that in general, local partners as well as Dutch service providers see a positive benefit of the projects to satisfy the human resource needs in their respective sector. Thereby the requesting organisations assess this capacity slightly more positively (4,72, n = 78)³² than the Dutch service providers (4,44, n = 68).³³

Most projects visited during the field missions demonstrated clear efforts to align with the national labour markets. This was most commonly done through needs assessments, labour market diagnostics and collecting input from the private and public sector for revision or development of curricula or trainings. Other activities undertaken were business incubators set up in a variety of projects with the aim to increase the entrepreneurial skills of students, institutional support to help students/graduates to connect to the private sector through internship programmes or volunteer programmes. There was a variance of how far these efforts had been institutionalized within the different programmes. While some programmes demonstrated a clear commitment to maintain established connection with labour market representatives on various levels, a number of projects (more in Mozambique than in Benin and in Indonesia) lacked a strategic vision to effectively anchor such activities in their respective programmes and to sustain the efforts generated under NICHE.

Of the NICHE I projects visited within which (new) curriculums, trainings, or study programmes were developed or revised only two projects had any graduates so far. Most programmes were still in the development phase or had recently started to accept incoming students. Of the two institutions that had released their first cohorts of graduates – a marine transportation study programme in Indonesia and an agricultural business incubator in Mozambique, the former one had already undertaken a tracer study and the latter had set up an Alumni Association. The tracer study of 134 graduates in Indonesia revealed that most of the students pursue a career in the fields of shipping, port, research, and logistics. The study also revealed a very high satisfaction of employers with their students which is also confirmed by two independent interviews with employers from the public sector. Furthermore, interviews conducted in Indonesia point to a high demand for alumni of the visited education and training institutes which is also supported by the tendency that the private sector and some government authorities were very interested to be involved in programme design, research activities and internship programmes. For Benin overall conclusions cannot be drawn from the field mission as no tracer studies have been conducted and there were not yet any graduates from newly developed curricula available. From the interviews it was learned that the government is recruiting much less than in the past and that private sector is still weakly developed, which means that demand for labour is limited. A particular challenge is the change in employees' profiles required at municipal level, e.g. municipalities have received specific responsibilities for water management and for supporting

³¹ Nevertheless, the exact influence of NPT/NICHE projects on this issue is not measurable. Reliable data on indicators such as employability does not exist and even if it did, it would be challenging to make generalized conclusions about the contribution of NICHE to (improved) changes in the labour market (taking into account an environment where several donors are present and where other influencing factors positively or negatively affect the situation). Furthermore, as described above, most visited projects have not yet produced any graduates.

³² Mean value, based on a six-step scale from 1 = „did not benefit at all“ to 6 = „benefitted substantially“.

³³ However, compared with a list of other benefits that may arise out of the projects, Dutch service provider rank this item higher than the requesting organisations (see annex).

the development of the agriculture sector under the decentralization framework. More technical skilled people are needed but the need for these new profiles is not yet broadly understood or shared, neither by the government nor the universities.

Though some requesting institutes declared their intention to do tracer studies of their alumni and even included this as an indicator in their logframe, there is currently a lack of monitoring on the destination of graduates from NICHE supported study and training programmes and the capacity of many requesting institutions to monitor this is questionable. Generally, it can be stated that most programmes increased/have the potential to increase the employability of graduates through a better alignment with the skills and knowledge needed by the industry or a better reputation of the faculty/department following the NICHE intervention. This is also supported by changes in way of teaching that have been introduced both in Benin and in Indonesia (e.g. through the introduction of problem-based learning, see Section 4.4).

In several projects interventions also aim at strengthening capacities of the requesting institutes to conduct labour market analyses that can be used as a source of information for further curriculum development. This endeavour remains weakly developed. In Benin for example, rather superficial labour market studies were done. External actors were also invited to participate in academic workshops to give input in the revised curricula, but a comprehensive market analysis and in-depth discussions were not taking place yet. By contrast, in Indonesia, labour market assessments and the integration of external stakeholders in curriculum development were much further developed.

Influencing factors on indications of impact

One important factor for impact on the development within a sector is the **quality and quantity** of graduates, prospective or number of projects that will contribute to the respective sector. As the human resource needs vary with the size and the level of development of a country, making sustainable impact and creating leverage effects is more difficult in a populous country like Indonesia than in Mozambique or Benin.

Another factor for impact is the **relevance of the contents** of the project for the country and a positive endorsement of government. In Indonesia for example, several projects, especially in the food, water and maritime sector correspond to related government policies. E.g. in one instance, a policy for improving maritime infrastructure requested a NICHE partner university to assist in addressing several aspects of the implementation of the policy including human resource provision. For this reason, a programme in the maritime sector was established on behalf of the Ministry of Transport whereby NICHE supports the capacity development of the department to deliver relevant education and research. The same case was in Benin with the creation of a national water institute, which was connected to a Dutch bilateral programme with the government of Benin; unfortunately this did not work out because of a fraud issue at the level of government after which the project was suspended. A new bilateral programme will take of soon though.

A **systemic approach** where different actors of the private and public sector are integrated in the implementation or even in the planning of the project creates opportunities for impact as well. Selective evidence has been found in a limited number of visited projects within the three countries (mostly in Indonesia), where industry representatives were invited to participate in programme and curriculum development, the creation of multistakeholder platforms or collaboration with the private sector for internships and guest lectures (Dutch enterprises were not actively involved in the projects).

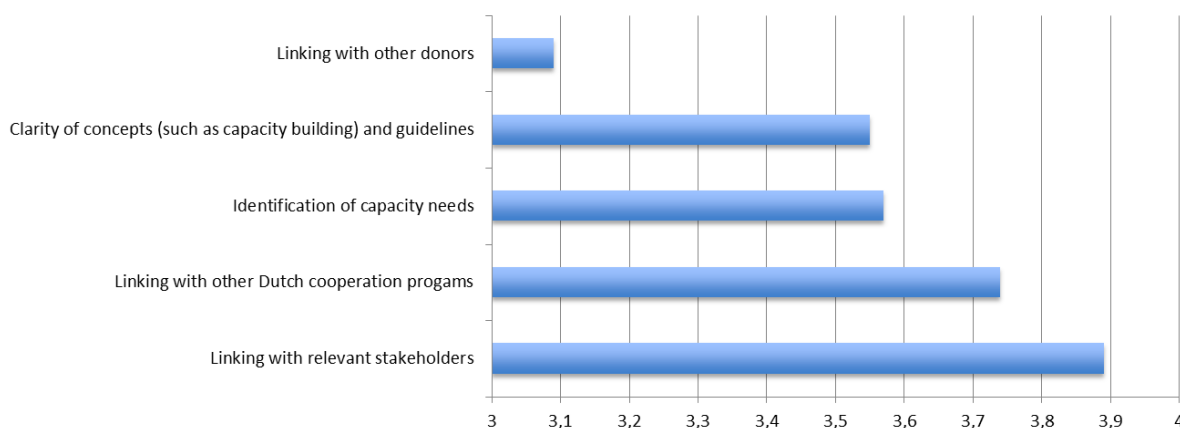
Another factor for impact is the choice for a **strategic institution**, which can contribute to disseminating knowledge within a sector. This is for example the case of government organisations (such as training institutes under the respective ministries or governmental bodies like accreditation councils), which set structures, impact decision-making processes or conduct training countrywide. However, many projects that were in cooperation with educational centres and training academies of the ministries or public authorities in the countries visited, suffered from lack of financing, low infrastructure and long bureaucratic and hierarchical chains making project adaptations and changes very difficult. This is especially true for Indonesia, where the two visited projects, were amongst the least successful. In Mozambique the visited projects draw a mixed picture; definitely difficulties have been present in the implementation of the projects and the cooperation in general but institutions could improve their capacity significantly in the end making projects a success, even though targets of the projects might not have been achieved completely. One example from Mozambique dates already back to NPT projects on educational policy development and quality assurance resulting in the formation of the accreditation council which is seen as a success in itself.

4.3.3 *Harmonization and Alignment*

With the introduction of NICHE II, better alignment with national policies and more cooperation with other donors have been introduced as additional policy principle and specific programme objective. To this end, the EKN is to introduce, represent and report on the programme to the national authorities and other stakeholders in the country. Under NICHE I, EP-Nuffic was to directly inform the national governments about the programme, while under NICHE II, the MASPs serve as the guiding principle in developing the country programmes and the embassy informs the national government about NICHE (Annual Report 2013).

With regard to donor harmonization, efforts to align NICHE I projects with other donors and Dutch development programmes has improved significantly compared to NPT. Embassies and requesting organisations report that there is a stronger coordination with other donors under NICHE than under NPT as reflected in the interviews conducted at the EKN in the countries visited. This finding is confirmed by findings from the Ramboll study in 2012. Although for Benin the improvement was generally related to better consultation and information exchange and less to strategic coordination. Embassies confirm that they communicate programme developments in the relevant donor forums and seek for allies to further align their programmes with those of other donors on a strategic level, but not always in a very systematic way. One example was given by the EKN in Benin's involvement in the health sector or in Indonesia where meetings with other EU countries involved in Higher Education take place. There are also undertakings to extend the collaboration with other ASEAN countries. While these examples point to a positive role of the embassies to strive for alignment, the results from the Dutch service provider survey point to a very low assessment of the embassy's effort to link up with other donors indicating that still more can be done to achieve the objective. By contrast, service providers viewed the efforts of the embassy to link with other relevant stakeholders and Dutch cooperation programmes much higher.

Figure 5: Assessment of the role of the embassies by Dutch Service providers³⁴



What emerged as an issue in Indonesia was the limited geographical coverage of the NICHE projects with its strong focus on Java, Indonesia’s most developed and populous island. In fact, all projects that are currently being implemented or were recently completed are based in Java (unlike the NPT projects which were more geographically dispersed). Limiting the cooperation to institutions that are close to the capital and the institutions of centralized power runs the risk of increasing tendencies of centralization and thereby working against Indonesia’s efforts of decentralization and the current government’s commitment to strengthen rural development and ensuring equitable economic growth. As the MASP for Indonesia 2014-2017 (p. 5) points out, the uneven distribution of growth presents one of the main obstacles to accelerated and equal economic growth. While the MASP clearly states that the majority of Dutch activities in the Indonesian water sector will be based on private sector (private – private) projects, focused on urban areas and densely populated rural areas in particular on Java and Bali, this does not hold true for the other ODA priority sectors. This observation does not hold true for Benin and Mozambique. NICHE projects in Benin are geographically dispersed and also in Mozambique efforts have been undertaken over the past years. This is especially exemplified in two NICHE II projects within a consortium of Mozambican educational institutions which cover the whole country or regions distant from the capital.

Generally, the support provided by the embassy was assessed positively with some limitations for the embassy in Benin, where some DSP’s would have preferred more active involvement from the embassy in thinking through alignment and sustainability of projects.

With regard to the projects visited, information on other donor activities was rather scarce. Many visited projects reported not having any other donor directly involved in their organisational entity while some accounts of the requesting organisations on further donor involvement remained very vague, making it difficult to assess whether there were significant overlaps with other projects. One project, were this was the case, was mentioned by an external consultant in Indonesia where NICHE was funding an academy that was already strongly supported by Australian Donors, but this project was not visited by the evaluators. In Mozambique in several occasions other donors had similar projects or complemented the project and coordination was necessary to avoid overlaps. Partners are requested to report on donor coordination in their annual reports, however, reporting on this is often very limited with no further indications of concrete actions/activities undertaken to guarantee harmonization and linkages with other stakeholders.

³⁴ Source: NICHE DSP survey, n = 79, based on a six-step scale from 1 = “absolutely unsatisfactory” to 6 = “absolutely satisfactory”, scale adapted to highlight differences.

The coordination between different NICHE projects especially if they take place in the same educational institutions, demonstrates mixed results. Whereas some degree of coordination in Mozambique was guaranteed through the fact that one project director was responsible for all NICHE projects in one institution; this was not the case in Indonesia where little evidence for cooperation was found amongst projects which were either based at the same universities (e.g. ITS in Surabaya or ITB in Bandung) or projects within the same sectors. In Benin, upon initiative of one of the Dutch service providers supporting a university that was implementing several NICHE projects at the same time (in different faculties), it was achieved that funds from four different NICHE projects were pooled to develop and implement jointly a gender strategy (as it appeared that all projects had a gender component). This, however, was not strategically steered and mainly happened accidentally. Also in this university there was a lack of donor coordination. The Dutch service provider, for example, highlighted that they received little to no information on cooperation from the staff and departments involved in NICHE projects.

Representatives of Dutch service providers also saw a potential benefit of knowledge and experience exchange between the project managers in the requesting countries, however, this did hardly take place.

Overall conclusions regarding the effectiveness and impact of NICHE

In general the projects visited were relatively successful in achieving the planned outputs, even though only a small minority of the visited projects were able to achieve all of them by the end of the project phase (NICHE I). Reflecting the main interests of the requesting organisations, the projects were especially successful in producing outputs in regard to staff training, curricula development, and investments. Thereby, the projects successfully contributed to the development of human resources and teaching skills, and improving the infrastructure and equipment of the requesting organisations. At the same time, in most cases, project implementation was impaired by a lack of available human resources, lack of trained staff to maintain and use newly purchased items, identifying qualified staff for receiving academic training abroad, or long-lasting accreditation phases for new curricula.

Organisational development issues are still somewhat neglected and receive too little attention especially from the requesting organisations. Even though EP-Nuffic is undertaking endeavours to steadily improve project effectiveness as exemplified by the integration of the 5C-model, more is needed to realise capacity development of institutions.

The greatest challenges to increase the effectiveness of the projects are availability, qualification and motivation of staff at the requesting organisation. Under NICHE II, more efforts are undertaken to estimate time allocation for staff of the requesting organisations but this has not resulted in thorough awareness creation amongst involved staff in the requesting organisations. The demand-drivenness which leads to high ownership from the side of the institutions can be questioned if the embassy and EP-Nuffic play a central role in selecting the institutions to submit a project.

At the outcome level, the effectiveness of the NICHE I projects is assessed mainly positive and endeavours are undertaken to align the projects with the policy priority sectors though reporting on thematic priorities was low. The qualification of (junior) staff within the requesting organisations, the improvement of teaching and research skills of lecturers and trainers, and the support of the organisations with much needed equipment and infrastructure contributed to increase the capacity of the targeted institutions to contribute to the thematic policy priorities. Especially in institutions that had

NPT projects before or that were based on an NPT project the evolvement of these effects was clearly visible.

However, to intertwine the short-term achievements with organisational capacity in order to enable requesting organisations to initiate change processes on their own, to keep newly acquired knowledge and curricula up-to-date and to maintain funded infrastructure is the most difficult task which could only be achieved with very mixed results and was often particularly negatively assessed by the Dutch service providers.

Over time, gender has evolved to an important pillar in NICHE programmes. Sensitisation for gender is definitely working as high reporting standards exist on this issue and all projects can describe their efforts undertaken in this regard. Still identification with the concept and institutionalisation is often low and new strategies are necessary to tackle this problem.

All visited projects were found to correspond to the thematic priority areas (except some purely educational projects) and NICHE I as well as NICHE II projects are contributing to increase the capacity in the thematic priorities of requesting organisations in the partner countries. The educational sector only makes up a small fraction of the programme under NICHE II, however, projects in the educational sector are important to assure quality and alignment within the sector or one larger institution (e.g. main universities). This is important for the capacity of the educational sector in general. For NICHE I projects it could be detected that through the conceptualization of new good-quality degree programmes that target fields of expertise where shortages exist, or the revision and updating of existing curricula, NICHE I contributes to the development of a well-trained workforce in the targeted sectors. This is also supported by the strengthened focus on TVET, which exhibited a great potential of addressing skills gaps of a specific sector. Thus, NICHE I and NICHE II projects were found to be able to have a positive impact on the labour market in the Dutch policy priority areas and therefore contribute to the realization of the goals of the Dutch Development policy. Attention to donor harmonization has continuously improved with each new phase of the programme (NPT to NICHE II) but few specific examples and results could be identified by the interviewed embassy representatives.

4.4 Sustainability

To analyse sustainability, the evaluation looked at two aspects: what remained of former NPT projects (Section 4.4.1) and what are indications for sustainability for current projects (NICHE I and NICHE II; Section 4.4.2).

The findings are based on the data gathered during the field mission to the three countries (interviews, focus group discussions and site visits), desk-study (documents related to individual projects), interviews with the DSP coordinators of the respective projects and results of the surveys for DSP and receiving organisations.

4.4.1 Sustainability of NPT Projects

In the three countries visited, there were in total 34 NPT projects executed in selected NICHE sectors (14 in Benin, 13 in Indonesia and 7 in Mozambique). The evaluation team planned to organise timeline exercises during the field missions with a number of faculties that benefited from the NPT projects to assess impact and sustainability.

The consultant cannot formulate firm and general findings related to the sustainability of NPT projects over the three countries. Only for Benin, it was possible to organise the timeline exercise with three faculties in the two universities visited (2 at UAC and 1 at Parakou) having benefited from vari-

ous NPT projects. None of the respondents in Mozambique was able to give detailed information on the NPT projects; they were new in their position and did not have experience with NPT.³⁵ In the sample of universities/faculties to visit in Indonesia for NICHE there were no faculties having experienced NPT projects so there was little point in having the timeline sessions.³⁶ In Indonesia, faculties involved in NPT projects were not part of the sample selection.³⁷

For Benin, it is clear that results from NPT projects have had impact on directly involved faculties and more in particular on the capacity of individual academic staff for research and teaching (academic sustainability) and technical sustainability (lab equipment for research and teaching still in use) is ensured. The most important factor that played a role was the fact that NPT arrived at a time when Higher Education in Benin started with the introduction of a new system in 2006 of LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) and the ABC approach (Apprentissage basée sur les Compétences).³⁸ Another change was the introduction of CAMES (Conseil africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur) in the country, which defines the career path of academic staff from assistant to professor and introduced a more transparent scheme with norms and procedures. NPT assisted mainly technical faculties to prepare themselves for the new system. Thus, the change was not induced by NPT but NPT aligned with the new requirements and supported transition. Through training and research activities, NPT also ensured that academic staff could rise up in the CAMES hierarchy, for e.g. in one faculty, 6 out of 12 teachers were able to get higher in the CAMES hierarchy which strengthened the faculties (adequacy of available staff). Staff that experienced NPT projects is still around in the faculties visited in Benin and is partly playing a role in the execution of the current NICHE projects.

In Mozambique, evidence from the field and from the two institutions that were part of the evaluation sample suggests that NPT projects realised a firm basis (organisational and institutional) for further development, which was supported by new NICHE projects. One NPT project led to the creation within the Ministry of Education of an institution that is putting in place a quality and accreditation council in Mozambique through a NICHE I and an INNOCAP project. In the second visited institution, respondents confirmed that without the NPT project the institute would not have its role today and they see the follow-up NICHE projects as opportunity to further improve the capacity and increase the reputation of the institute.

4.4.2 Sustainability of NICHE projects

This section is based on the field missions and visits to 24 projects in 3 countries (including desk-study and additional interviews with DSP's). The majority of the projects or 20/24 (8/8 in Benin, 5/7 in Mozambique, 7/9 in Indonesia) are projects with educational institutes as receiving organisations, which allow to formulate general findings. The findings from the field missions have been compared with results from the DSP and partner survey.

³⁵ From the documentation on former projects (e.g. in the outlines of the new projects), nothing substantial could be concluded on the sustainability of the former projects.

³⁶ One of the visited universities, ITB Bandung had an NPT project that was related to a Faculty of Mathematics, the NICHE project visited on Coastal Zone Management was executed in another Faculty.

³⁷ One of the visited Faculties in Indonesia made reference to the Water Resources and Irrigation Management, Capacity Building Network Project (CKNET), a network that was established through an NPT project implemented at inter-university level (including 4 universities). Clearly, this network extended its membership and is still functional and providing services which demonstrates the sustainability of the results of this particular project.

³⁸ This was decided upon by different African Countries that are members of the REESAO (Réseau pour l'Excellence d'Enseignement Supérieure en Afrique de l'Ouest).

Findings related to sustainability have been summarised under the following headings: academic sustainability, institutional sustainability, technical sustainability and financial sustainability. Some of these findings, for example with regard to financial sustainability are tentative given the limitations of the evaluation. As most of the projects are still ongoing, the consultant is primarily assessing *indications* for sustainability.

Academic sustainability

Several projects have focussed on the improvement and/or adaptation or development of (new) curricula. The results have been described in Section 4.3.

In the three countries, a mechanism and procedure for regular update of these curricula is in place, however less developed in Mozambique. In Benin, there was evidence of the functioning of this mechanisms for all the faculties visited. The mechanisms were often introduced by NPT projects. The mechanism to ensure an update (involving external actors) is still rather academic (style of a workshop where content is presented to stakeholders from outside the university, see also Section 4.3). Generally, in Indonesia revision mechanisms are in place (however not introduced by NICHE). There is a government policy that defines that full study programmes can only be revised (and accredited) once every five years.

The DSP survey and the receiving organisation survey results confirm this finding; both DSP's and receiving organisations are optimistic about this; receiving organisations estimate their capacity to update curricula relatively higher than DSPs (5,12/6 against 4,37).

Trainings for teaching staff in projects that focused on quality or introduction of a new pedagogy have contributed to a great sense of self-consciousness about the role as a teacher/lecturer and sometimes pride with academic staff involved. This positive feeling will partly ensure that at least in their courses they will try their utmost best to apply those new ways of teaching which do not require any financial investment. This was very much the case in Benin with all the projects concerned, but could also be noticed in the projects in Mozambique and Indonesia.

This academic sustainability, which is rather promising, is influenced by several factors:

- ✓ Context of innovation in education in Benin and in Indonesia. The evaluation team did not find evidence of a similar context of innovation in education in Mozambique. In Benin, there was a clear ambition at the level of the two universities visited to practice the norms adopted by the REESAO and the ABC approach. This created a revolution in the way of teaching. A number of (technical) faculties were already introduced to this change through NPT projects but there was not yet a university wide approach, which now (under NICHE projects) is more the case. In Indonesia, several projects had a (variable) focus on problem-based learning, and referred to this when describing (planned) changes in their curriculum or in their way of teaching.³⁹ This contributed to the context of innovation.
- ✓ Staff turnover for academic staff was not particularly mentioned in the majority of the projects (neither in the documents nor during the field missions or the interviews) as a challenge or a problem which means that newly acquired skills, competences and knowledge remain in the in-

³⁹ An ADB/OECD paper from 2015 stressed the importance to improve quality of instruction in schools in general throughout Indonesia and to focus on specific competences (next to cognitive skills) particularly those of critical thinking and problem solving, and the development of student character and behavior.
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/156821/education-indonesia-rising-challenge.pdf>

stitutions. Staff turnover was a big challenge in the *government* institutions in Indonesia (2 projects).⁴⁰ The receiving organisations in general confirm in the survey that adequate academic staff to implement changes is ensured (4,9/6 in the survey), the DSP respondents are less convinced about this (3,96).

- ✓ Experience with NPT projects that prepared the ground for changes in teaching (mostly visible in Benin).
- ✓ Investing in joint research (example of one project in Indonesia) can support sustainability of investment in research.
- ✓ The possibility to experience quick and small successes: changes in teaching method were immediately noticed by students and teachers received positive feedback. This was clearly the case in Benin. This strengthened the motivation of teachers to further invest in new ways of teaching thus contributing to sustainability.

Institutional sustainability

To assess institutional sustainability, the evaluation team has considered the formulation of strategic plans and policies involving leadership and will highlight the sustainability of multi-disciplinary work within universities and the sustainability of new entities created.

Strategic plans and policies were formulated in the majority of the projects through participatory processes. These processes involved middle and higher management although committing these people throughout the process often appeared quite challenging in all three countries. This involvement was confirmed by the results of the surveys: DSP and receiving organisations estimate that middle and higher management is sufficiently involved in the projects (score of 4,41/6 for DSP and 4,86/6 for receiving organisations). In Benin, many of these plans are in the process of being adopted at faculty level and sometimes even at rectorate level. This is also the case for gender policy plans, more in particular in Benin, but less in Mozambique and Indonesia (mixed experiences).

The institutionalisation of a commitment to change/improvement should not be underestimated and offers a firm basis for future steps.⁴¹ The DSP's and receiving organisations that replied to the surveys also consider this to be an indicator for sustainability: they state that changes are institutionalised into strategic plans and/or business plans (scores of 4/6 and 4,69/6). Challenges remain however to ensure actual implementation of these policies after the project ends, even when procedures have been developed, responsibilities allocated, structures for implementation defined. The new policies are often only formalised towards the end of the project and little time remains to actually implement and take over full responsibility by the receiving organisation. For intended changes that are not directly related to the 'normal' teaching or research duties⁴² (for e.g. follow-up on quality, gender mainstreaming, support to students, etc.) it is hard to commit staff if there is no financial compensation or no reorganisation of duties. This was already clear during the execution of the projects, so the situation post-project will probably not be better. Finally, the expectation (which was implicit in many projects) that a smaller number of trained staff would transfer knowledge and competences and would introduce a 'change agenda' or concrete steps for change within their unit was in the ma-

⁴⁰ This might be very dependent upon the context of the country. For eg. The evaluation of NPT and NICHE in Ethiopia refers to persistent staff turnover as a problem for academic sustainability. Krämer, M. (2016) *External evaluation of the NPT, NICHE I and NICHE II programmes in Ethiopia (2003 - 2015). Final evaluation report*, 20.

⁴¹ A comparable positive picture was recorded in the evaluation about Ethiopia, Krämer, *op.cit.* page 21.

⁴² Already, the introduction of new pedagogical approaches (LMD system in Benin, Problem based learning in Benin and in Indonesia) is putting a lot of pressure on teachers and the means to fully comply with the requirements are not available.

majority of the cases not affirmed. For instance one project in Indonesia where the introduction of a new pedagogy would require a role for academic staff as tutors: available staff stated that they could not do this because it was not part of their duties and that money was not available to hire tutors to do the job instead. For e.g. in one project in Benin, teachers were trained in how to develop entrepreneurial spirit but they did not feel like taking up a role in supporting students in the business incubator.

While receiving organisations state that they have sufficient financial resources to cover staff costs to implement change processes – at least this was not as much considered as a challenge by those which replied to the survey (4,13/6, see further in Figure 1 and Figure 2 in Section 4.2.2) –, DSPs are more critical (score of 3,8/6, with a high variation in the answers).

7/8 projects in Benin are trying to make entities *within* universities work together; these projects stimulated multi-disciplinary collaboration and sometimes envisage a university broad approach. This was not so much the case with projects in Indonesia and far less in Mozambique. In Benin, there was already some experience with collaboration through NPT projects (which laid a basis, more in particular at UAC) but some of the NICHE projects went further, for e.g. in joint curriculum development. This type of multidisciplinary collaboration proved to be quite difficult in all projects and the sustainability of it is questionable; leaders of the faculties do not yet sufficiently experience added value of a multidisciplinary approach, which jeopardises institutional sustainability.

A specific point of attention is the creation of new structures within educational institutions and their functioning. 10/24 projects in the three countries are contributing to the creation of new entities (for example, a new institute, a business incubator, a micro-credit institution, a national structure for quality): 5 in Benin, 2 in Indonesia and 3 in Mozambique. Projects have been concerned with putting in place procedures, policy documents and training people to ensure the functioning of the new entities. These entities are generally still weak and have not yet demonstrated their effectiveness. Their positioning within the receiving organisation (and vis-à-vis other entities), is often not yet fully clear and the actual work or actual provision of new services has only started in a few projects, one in Benin and one in Mozambique (with very low level of activity). To be sustainable, new institutions obviously need a longer time than the project period. The receiving organisations are now managing with the staff they have. However, without an external programme or government funding, it is not possible for them to increase staff to fill all the needed positions and to keep the new entity up and running. One project in Benin might provide an alternative: the receiving organisation with the DSP decided to create a new structure, but only as a less formal and multidisciplinary network structure which could have more chance of being sustainable as it does not require investment.⁴³

Factors that influence on institutional sustainability are the following:

- ✓ Government policies. The Existence of clear government frameworks for supporting higher education can contribute to institutional and organisational sustainability. In Benin a decree for Higher Education⁴⁴ stipulates that Universities need to establish a unit for quality, called CUAQ (which is being supported by two projects in Benin), the decree also wants to promote the link between research and government policies. In Indonesia, government stimulates universities to

⁴³ This network is still much dependent upon very motivated individual academic staff with their faculties not yet being very much engaged (because they see too little direct interest for them), so it remains to be seen whether this option has more chances of being sustainable.

⁴⁴ Cf. Decret sur les attributions, organisation et fonctionnement du Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la recherche scientifique. (July 2016)

develop 'centres of excellence'. These government policies create a framework in which universities can develop. However, for e.g. in Benin, the capacity of government to actually support academic development and use research input is rather limited. Further, government decision on the organisation of higher education sometimes affect the capacity of the institutions and influence on project execution (for e.g. in Benin, the University of Parakou is currently in a process where it has to take back a number of institutions that were previously detached from their university which heavily affects several faculties, same situation in Indonesia with one institution and a discussion on resettlement). This negatively affects sustainability of the changes and new entities created.

- ✓ Support by higher management and rectorate is very important; more in particular the way leadership is facilitating and managing a change process is quite crucial. This goes beyond project management (participation in meetings, putting a signature on project documents and ensuring that planned activities are executed). A more pro-active leadership engagement facilitating organisational change beyond project implementation was not very much present in the projects visited with some exceptions (2 projects in Benin and 2 in Indonesia). From the timeline exercise in Benin and interviews with DSPs, it appeared that politics cannot be excluded from the change processes: elections of higher management (rectorate and vice-rectorate) created a dynamic that in some cases influenced negatively on sustainability of decisions regarding projects.
- ✓ Difficulty of internal organisation of educational institute: the consultant found that developing, managing and supporting a change agenda that is not necessarily related to the teaching or the research duties of the individual staff, is challenging. It requires a different kind of organisation within the educational institutes alongside with their orientation towards research and education.
- ✓ Experiencing small concrete successes that demonstrate added value are very important. For e.g. in Benin one project introduced a new way of working on managing external relations: from the training and the revision of dormant relations, one faculty involved in the project was able to redynamise the relations and to access external funding for research.
- ✓ Especially when it comes to ensure implementation of tasks besides research and teaching and to ensure functioning of new entities, having adequate financial resources to provide competitive salaries⁴⁵ according to responsibilities and task descriptions is a challenge. This is also highlighted in the surveys. Both DSPs and receiving organisations score this aspect the lowest in the list of the various prerequisites for sustainability that need to be ensured (3,76/6 for the receiving organisations and 3,34/6 score given by the DSP, both with high variation in the answers; see Figure 13 and Figure 14 in Annex 7.7.1).
- ✓ From the timeline exercise in Benin it appeared that NPT contributed only to a lesser extent to organisational development: manuals and documents, such as 'manual de procedures' were developed but focus was much more on research and not the functioning of the Faculty. This explains partly why institutional sustainability is an issue.

Technical sustainability

From the field mission, the documents and the interviews with DSP's, the evaluation team did not receive strong indications about challenges for technical sustainability including budgets allocated to maintenance of equipment and infrastructure. Neither did the evaluation team receive indications

⁴⁵ Salaries in Benin for professors are already quite high (related to their position in the CAMES hierarchy) but this is a salary for education and research.

that technical solutions or equipment could not be used by the receiving organisations. There is only one project (in Indonesia) where ‘technical ICT solutions’ (related to blended learning) were difficult to grasp and apply for the receiving organisation.

For Benin, based on visits to NTP labs that are still maintained and in use, the consultant would tentatively conclude that overall investments in pedagogical and research labs under the NICHE projects (in the same universities) will be sustained as much as possible because they are directly contributing to teaching and research. The maintenance is partly ensured through new research projects. The sustainability for infrastructure and office equipment is less clear in Benin. For some projects in Indonesia (but to a lesser extent) and Mozambique it is clear that receiving organisations might have the intention to maintain but are facing difficulties to ensure this, because of financial constraints. The results of the survey also indicate that receiving organisations are facing challenges to ensure the budget to maintain equipment and infrastructure: receiving organisations gave a score of 4/6 but DSP scored it lower at 3,76/6 (with a high variation in answers). This indicates that the situation in Benin might be very particular.⁴⁶

Financial sustainability

As stated in the above, the analysis of the projects in the sample does not provide specific and detailed findings related to financial sustainability. What became clear from the field missions is that the majority of the receiving organisations that are coming to the end of their project indicated that they need a follow-up project to start implementing what they prepared in the current project.

That the educational institutes in general are facing important challenges related to financial sustainability is clear from the surveys. When looking at the results of the survey, the three most critical challenges for sustainability are related to having available sufficient financial resources. Most critical challenges for sustainability for receiving organisations, according to their own assessment and the assessment of the DSP in the survey are the following (in order of importance): being able to provide competitive salaries according to responsibilities and task descriptions, budget to maintain technical equipment and budget to cover staff costs to implement and maintain change process. The first and the latter are also closely connected to institutional sustainability.

Continuation of partner relations

Apart from some exceptions, most DSP and receiving organisations involved in the sample of projects visited would welcome further collaboration, provided that funds are available. Only for two receiving organisations in Benin, one in Indonesia and one in Mozambique, the consultant found that partners of the consortium have taken a decision to continue relations and to collaborate again (although nothing yet has been planned for in concreto in Benin and in Indonesia. In Mozambique a INNOCAP project was conducted with the same partners.

From interviews with DSP’s connected to the projects visited, the consultant can conclude that most of the DSP’s that were positive about the collaboration would continue collaboration if there is funding. Almost all receiving organisations that replied to the survey intend to further collaborate. The open answers in the survey (almost all respondents gave further information) reveal a lot of argumentation about the ‘why’ and in half of the cases the ‘what’ of further collaboration. The ‘what’ is most often related to build further on the current project with only five respondents being very explicit on the content of future projects. The reasons to continue are mainly the following (in order of

⁴⁶ However, the same is true for projects in Ethiopia, Krämer, *op.cit.*, 20.

what was mentioned the most): because the work is not finished, because some aspects received too little attention in the current project, because of good relations, to sustain project results, because this fits with the approach of internationalisation and because the receiving organisation feels they can do better now.

Institutional sustainability, combined with financial sustainability is definitely the most challenging aspect of the NICHE projects. The Ramboll evaluation suggested in the chapter on sustainability to pay more attention to involving leadership, training of trainers and the formulation phase of the project in order to strengthen sustainability. EP-Nuffic has been attentive to those suggestions and invited receiving organisations to think through sustainability (see also reporting formats) and to use the 5C-model (in Niche II) to ensure a good analysis of the capacity of the organisation in the beginning of the project.

The evaluation found that the formulation stage is still a very difficult stage in many of the projects. To come to an agreement of what is really needed takes time and is sometimes not very effectively resolved. The application of the 5C-model did not go very well and was as such not helpful in the process to reflect upon institutional aspects and sustainability. The main constraints mentioned in relation to the application of the 5C-model were: having not enough budget and time to execute the analysis, having a weak understanding of this new model/tool both at the side of the DSP and the receiving organisation even though it was introduced in the beginning by EP-Nuffic.

The evaluation team witnessed that in most projects higher management was involved (commitment by signature, being invited into workshops etc.) and that attention was paid to training of academic staff to prepare them for a role in the transfer of knowledge and skills to their colleagues (ToT). A lot of attention was also paid to the formulation of policies and procedures and engaging academic staff to elaborate themselves the content of those documents. However, the assumption that ToT will ensure that institutions implement the trainings or invest themselves in ToT schemes was in general not validated by the evaluation team.⁴⁷ A big stumble block was actually committing people to tasks related to management of change processes and committing people to take over the changes initiated. This is related to the weak capacity to (re-)organise task division within the university taking into account the available staff, the available financial resources of the university and the political dynamics within educational institutes.

NICHE quite rightly stimulated receiving organisations to be much more outward looking and to build relations with external actors to create a stronger link between the academic world and society. The evaluation team could notice this in the project in Benin and in Indonesia (but not in Mozambique). This 'outward looking' is not only helpful to ensure better adequacy of curricula with the needs of the labour market, but it can also contribute to sustainability, institutional and financial sustainability: a multi-stakeholder approach can lead to a better division of efforts and strong relations can lead to having more access to external funding. Efforts to be more outward looking were visible in all the projects visited in Benin⁴⁸ and in Indonesia (except for the 2 projects involving government institutions) and were sometimes at the centre of the project (example of one project in Benin involving two universities). In most cases new partnerships are being explored by the receiving organisations although not yet always very systematic or formal. In some cases this orientation to the outside has

⁴⁷ The evaluation of NICHE projects in Ethiopia suggests that the ToT approach was more of a success in this country. It might be interesting to look into the factors of success of this case. (Krämer, *Op.cit.*, 21).

⁴⁸ This was also strongly confirmed by the timeline exercises on capacity during the field mission in Benin.

resulted in the creation of platforms trying to organise all stakeholders to exchange information and to contribute to new knowledge and experiences. This was the case in 3/8 projects in Benin and in 3/9 projects in Indonesia. Only a few of these platforms are already fully functional. With regard to the multi-stakeholder approach in general: although the consultant finds that this is a very interesting and relevant option, to be effective and sustainable, developing multi-stakeholder approaches requires competencies for multi-stakeholder management and sensitisation of stakeholders involved. Clearly, in Benin, these competencies are not readily available with staff of receiving organisations and there is resistance from the stakeholders to become involved in multi-stakeholder projects if the time investment is not financially compensated. The examples in Indonesia on the contrary perform much better in this respect: there are functional platforms (financed by membership fees). The difference might be explained by the difference in level of development between the two countries.

Conclusions regarding the sustainability of NICHE

For the sample of projects visited, academic sustainability is most often ensured. Institutional sustainability and financial sustainability are much weaker. Technical sustainability is to be found somewhere in the middle, with sustainability for equipment related to research being mostly ensured but still challenging, because of financial constraints.

Strategic policies and plans have been formulated involving also middle and higher management and strengthen institutional sustainability. Challenges remain however to ensure actual implementation of these policies after the project ends. In particular, for intended changes that are not directly related to the 'normal' teaching and research duties, it will be very hard to commit available staff if there is no financial compensation and/or no reorganisation of duties within the institutions. The evaluation team also finds that the institutional sustainability of the multidisciplinary collaboration within the universities (which was important in Benin) and the financial and institutional sustainability of newly created entities is rather weak and is difficult to ensure within the timeframe of a 4 year project.

Changes in NICHE have partly contributed to more sustainability, more in particular the attention for the involvement of leadership and the attention for strengthening the outward looking of the institutions and the management of multi-stakeholder partnerships (more in particular in Benin and in Indonesia). There are however two critical issues connected to this: (i) leadership is essential, but can be understood in different ways. Leadership in organisational and institutional capacity building processes is different than leadership needed for project management and requires another set of competences. The real issue may not be the position of a person but how to ensure a leadership at different levels in the institution. The question is then to what extent this can be influenced by projects and relations with DSPs. (ii) More attention for multi-stakeholder approaches requires also attention for the development of specific competences for multi-stakeholder management, this might have received too little attention in the projects (more in particular in Benin).

5. Results for NFP

5.1 Relevance

The NFP offers fellowships to professionals from selected developing countries, so-called 'NFP countries', which are classified in two categories with different priorities. The overall objective of the pro-

gramme is “to help alleviate qualitative and quantitative shortages of skilled staff at a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organisations”⁴⁹ and thus to improve their human capacities. Therefore it supplements salaries of fellowship holders during their study period with an allowance for covering living costs, tuition fees, visas, travel, insurance and thesis research. Eligible are employees of education and research institutes, ministries, NGOs and SMEs, whereby the candidates have to be nominated by their employer, which also has to prove that there is “a clear need for training within the context of the organisation.”⁵⁰

The NFP features three key training modalities for individuals: Short courses, Master’s degree programmes and PhD studies with a duration of up to 48 months. The trainings are directed not only towards the acquisition of technical expertise and skills, but also aim at the mediation of knowledge about relevant global developments and building international networks.

Dutch higher education institutions publish their course offerings on an online platform that contains information about the respective course contents, duration and qualification requirements. Since 2014 applications have to be sent directly to the Dutch hosting institution. Based on the fellow’s qualification, residence and the eligibility, capacity needs and working fields of its employing organisation, the institution nominates a candidate and recommends it to the embassy in the country of origin. The embassy assesses the application again under consideration of the development goals in the respective country as outlined in the MASP. Finally, EP-Nuffic selects the nominees for the fellowship on the basis of the embassies’ recommendations. Thereby, particular priority is given to fellowships in the fields of food security and private sector development (min. 35 %), in Sub Saharan countries (min. 50 %) and to female applicants (min. 50 %).

Furthermore, organisations can apply for tailor-made trainings (TMTs), which aim at improving “the overall functioning of an organisation by training a selected group of staff”⁵¹. In contrast to the above-mentioned modalities, TMTs are designed as group trainings of a single organisation that can apply twice a year in an open call for proposals. Thereby the same organisational selection criteria apply as for the other three modalities. While short, master and PhD courses can take place in both, the Netherlands or in the partner country, TMTs are usually provided on site at the applying organisation.

Finally, the NFP offers funds for alumni activities, including refresher courses as well as start-up grants and financial contributions for alumni associations.

Under the heading of relevance this chapter discusses the validity of the rationale and objective of NFP II (Section 5.1.1), the relevance of its current training modalities (Section 5.1.2), its relevance for Dutch organisations (Section 5.1.3), the influence of changing Dutch development policy on the programme (Section 5.1.4), and the programme’s relevance for the spearheads of Dutch bilateral aid (Section 5.1.5). Finally, the section closes with overall conclusions on these issues.

5.1.1 *Validity of NFP II rationale and objectives*

The findings from the focus group discussions, the current NFP student survey and the secondary analysis of the NFP tracer study from 2015, draw a quite distinct picture about the relevance of the NFP for satisfying local development needs and closing capacity gaps. They further give account

⁴⁹ Cf. NFP information brochure, EP-Nuffic 2014

⁵⁰ Cf. <https://www.studyinholland.nl/scholarships/highlighted-scholarships/netherlands-fellowship-programmes>

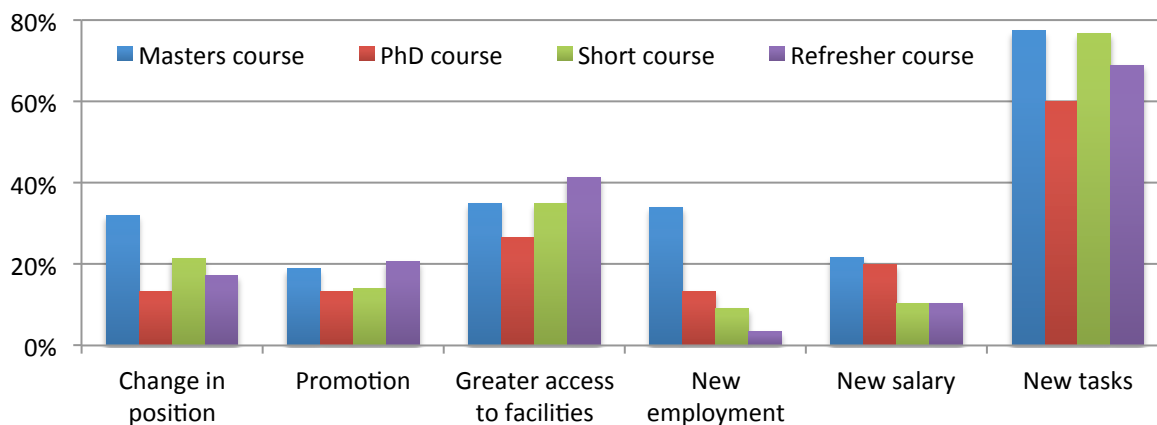
⁵¹ Cf. <https://www.epnuffic.nl/en/capacity-building/nfp-tmt-tailor-made-training-programme/nfp-tmt-tailor-made-training-programme>

about its alignment with the bilateral thematic priorities. According to the empirical data from the FGDs and participant survey, NFP is regarded as a highly relevant opportunity for both the personal professional development of the participants as well as the improvement of organisational capacities of the employing organisations. Thereby, in particular the quality of the training content, its didactical mediation, cultural adequacy, conformity with the knowledge needs and its practical applicability are mentioned as most beneficial aspects that contribute to the relevance of the programme at individual level. Furthermore, the acquisition of soft-skills and intercultural experience as well as the establishment of professional networks are regarded as beneficial for the participants' professional development. As will be further outlined in the effectiveness and impact section (4.3), the relevance for the professional development of NFP fellows is further supported by its direct link to promotion opportunities within the employing organisation and further occupational options that arise particularly after the participation in masters and PhD courses.

5.1.2 Relevance of NFP II training modalities

The findings are even more evident as they appear to count for all training modalities in equal measure. Particularly interesting in this regard is that even short and refresher courses were also regularly named as great opportunities for career advancement, which might not be expected in the first place. However, the results of the 2015 tracer study also support this finding. As Figure 6 shows, short and refresher courses were rated at least equally relevant for promotions at the job, greater access to facilities or being assigned to new tasks. In contrast new employment and salary appears to be more likely after the participation at a masters or PhD-course.

Figure 6: Assessment of personal changes due to participation in NFP course⁵²



On the organisational level the interviewed employers confirm that the acquisition of knowledge was also very relevant for their organisations. While this was not confirmed in all cases from the side of the trainees, it is in this regard interesting to note, that besides the technical innovations, often their improved working attitude (e.g. in terms of commitment, reliability etc.) was mentioned as being particularly relevant for working practice and culture of the sending organisation. It also appears that TMTs are even more relevant on organisational than on individual level. In the interviews, organisations that were granted a TMT reported that the providers were generally very well capable to adapt the trainings to their very specific needs.

⁵² Source: NFP student survey, n = 688

However, on the organisational level one downside particularly of the masters and PhD-course modality appears to be that some fellows use their gained knowledge to get a better (paid) job. Although there is an obligation for the NFP alumni to stay for a certain time at the sending organisation, still a few appear to manage to leave. While this may not affect the intended effect of knowledge transfer in general, as the alumni continue to use their acquired expertise elsewhere, it of course impairs the attractiveness of the fellowship for the sending organisations.

On country level the NFP is regarded by the embassies as a handy tool to work with strategically important counterparts. Thereby its alignment with the thematic priorities appears not to be as important as its flexibility with regard the specific needs of important governmental or private sector partners. Its biggest potential is seen as a preparatory instrument for establishing sustainable relationships for further collaboration by building up personal relations with key actors, particularly when fellows are sent to the Netherlands. Again it is not (only) the acquired technical knowledge but primarily the attitude towards their work – and of course the Dutch partners – that appears to have a great effect and make it a relevant instrument for political diplomacy. Regarding its potential as an entry point for further collaboration it has to be noted, that it was not known to all respondents, that also local employees of Dutch enterprises operating in the partner countries can apply, provided that the enterprise has no own human resource development strategy.

Regarding its relevance for reducing manpower shortages on a large scale, it has, however, to be stated that, despite the considerable total amount of NFP alumni and their professional success, in the individual countries their number is still far too small to have measurable large-scale impacts. So it is more the fact ‘who’ is trained than ‘how many’ are, that counts. One aspect that was raised particularly in Indonesia was that the fellowships were mostly limited to participants from regions in Java where most of its economic development takes place. While such a regional focus on high-potential areas may benefit the efficiency of the programme, it impedes necessary diffusion effects required for system relevant impacts.

5.1.3 Relevance of NFP II for Dutch organisations

Going by the results from the workshop with selected Dutch educational institutions, NFP is regarded as an excellent opportunity for expanding networks and gaining profile, particularly for those institutions with an international focus – just as NICHE.

The high interest of Dutch education institutions in the NFP is also reflected in the large amount of training courses published on the ‘studyfinder’-website⁵³, that currently contains about 700 offers, mainly for masters and short courses. The fact that the number of participating institutions and course offers has constantly increased since the introduction of NFP, eventually points in the same direction.

5.1.4 Influence of changing Dutch development policy on NFP II

In comparison to NFP I, NFP II is perceived as more strict in terms of the selection of courses, which need to be aligned with the priority themes of the Dutch bilateral aid. While in general all stakeholders agree that it makes sense to focus on these themes, some consider it necessary to be more flexible in order to be able adapting the support to the different framework conditions in the partner countries. For instance in Indonesia it was stated that a broader focus on health, not only limited to sexual and reproductive health, would be helpful, considering the condition of the public health sec-

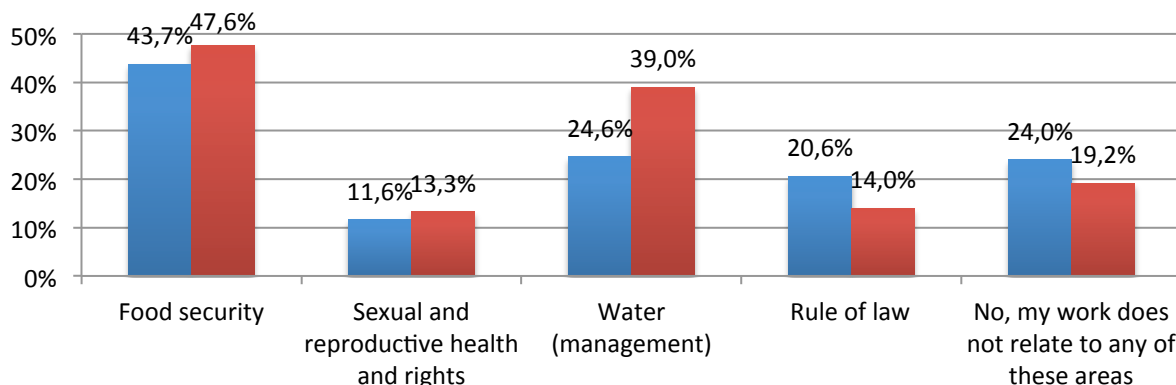
⁵³ Cf. <https://www.studyfinder.nl>

tor and the substantial shortage of qualified medical staff in the country. Another example is Benin, for which decentralisation, local governance or civil society support are also highly relevant areas in which support is needed – and in which Dutch education providers are well experienced.

5.1.5 Relevance of NFP II for the spearheads of Dutch bilateral aid

One indication reflecting the relevance of the NFP II for the bilateral thematic priorities of the Netherlands may be provided by the extent to which the participants of the programme are working in these areas. In this regard the survey with current NFP participants as well as the alumni tracer study from 2015 show that about less than a fourth (2015), respectively a fifth (2016) considers his or her working area not being related to one of the areas, while the rest states to be associated with one or more of it (see Figure 7). While it is up to the MFA to decide if this ratio is to be assessed as satisfactory or not, it also indicates that apparently ‘food security’ and ‘water (management)’ play a considerably more – and increasingly – important role than ‘sexual and reproductive health and rights’ or ‘rule of law’. Among those roughly 19 percent of the current NFP fellows, who indicated that their work is not linked to the priority areas, the majority works in the health (other than sexual and reproductive health), education and environmental sector. Thereby, it has to be added that with more than a third, at least twice as much PhD-students (35,0 %, n = 100) belong to this group than students of master (17,3 %, n = 444) or short-courses (13,7 %, n = 131). According to this observation, it appears that the latter course types are more suitable to be aligned with the Dutch DC policy spearheads than PhD-courses.

Figure 7: Share of NFP alumni and current students working in main thematic areas of Dutch development aid⁵⁴



The figure suggests further that currently participants who are working in the water sector are considerably more represented in NFP courses than they were before (39,8 % vs. 24,6 %), indicating a rising relevance of this sector. Although at this stage it cannot be decided if this finding can be considered as a trend or just as a statistical artefact, it is recommended to monitor the numbers for gaining information about the development of the participants’ backgrounds, which again can be used for the further adaptation of the programme.

Conclusions on the relevance of NFP

NFP is highly relevant for its participants and employing organisations. Thereby its relevance does not only derive from its potential to improve the technical knowledge of its participants but also from the fact that with it soft-skills, improved working attitude and intercultural experience can be mediated.

⁵⁴ Sources: Tracer study 2015 (n = 811; blue columns) & NFP student survey (n = 677, red columns).

While on the individual level particularly short and refresher courses appear to be great opportunities for career advancement, on organisational level TMTs are regarded as most beneficial for strengthening capacities.

Dutch educational institutions, RVO, the embassies and apparently also private sector actors, consider NFP as a valuable instrument for political diplomacy and preparing future economic collaboration, particularly for establishing personal relations with strategically important counterparts.

Most respondents regard it more important to keep NFP flexible, i.e. the adaptability of the courses to specific partner needs and different country framework conditions, than aligning it with the thematic priorities of the Dutch DC.

With regard to the spearheads of the Dutch DC, 'food security' and 'water (management)' appear to be more important working areas than 'sexual and reproductive health and rights' and 'rule of law'. However, demand may be also in other areas like health in general, local governance or civil society support.

5.2 Efficiency

The obligation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to save up to 30 % of the management costs also included the NFP. Several measures have been taken to decrease time investment of EP-Nuffic staff in the management of the programme. In this chapter an assessment is done of the extent the NFP II programme if efficiently implemented, managed and administrated.

The chapter starts with the presentation of the changed rules and regulations introduced for NFP II and the assessment of the extent these measures have improved efficiency of programme implementation, management and administration (Section 5.2.1). In the second part presents the assessment of the efficiency by the different stakeholders involved (Section 5.2.2). In the third part an analysis is presented of the NFP funds, analysing the financial contribution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the utilization of the NFP II budget in the period 2012-2015 and the effect of the co-funding arrangements on programme efficiency (Section 5.2.3). The chapter ends with a concluding assessment of the level of efficiency of NFP II.

5.2.1 *Description and analysis of the new rules and regulation introduced under NFP II and their effect on efficiency*

At the start of NFP II, EP-Nuffic has started to systematize and automate all steps of the NFP application process. EP-Nuffic moved from the SOL software to ATLAS (to manage PhD, Ma, SC) and is working to develop DELTA (software that will built further on SOL and also include TMT and RC). An overview of the most important changes taken in relation to the different phases in the management process of NFP is added in annex. Some processes also have been adapted, not only to save staff time but also with the perspective to improve the relationship between the input and output. To that end also the role division between EP-Nuffic, the Netherlands embassy and the educational institutes has changed.

Systematization of the application process of the individual courses (PhD, Master, Short Courses)

All phases in the application process have become digitalized and systematized, supported by the ATLAS software: (1) an overview of all possible courses is listed on studyfinder.nl and educational institutes just can tick the courses they will provide for the coming call. This needed to be done manually by the EP-Nuffic officers in the previous phases. (2) The candidate registration form is available

at the EP-Nuffic website and applicants can easily upload their completed registration form. Only completed registration forms are accepted by the system. No incomplete applications exist anymore that required follow-up by EP-Nuffic or the Netherlands embassy. (3) The nomination of the applicants, the assessment of the nominated application and the selection are also digitalized, which enables close monitoring by EP-Nuffic throughout the entire process and saves time as nothing has to be done manually any-more. (4) Lastly, several documents can be automatically generated from the system, such as the letters to the non-selected applicants, the grant letters to the students and the educational institutes.

Adaptation in role division between EP-Nuffic, the educational institutes and the Netherlands embassy regarding the individual courses (PhD, Master, Short Courses)

EP-Nuffic was assigned mainly with a monitoring role and controls whether all actors are completing their tasks appropriately. This includes the monitoring of the number and content of courses offered, the monitoring of the assessments done by the Netherlands embassies and the management of the budget distribution over priority themes, gender, countries and educational institutes (including planning and final distribution). EP-Nuffic provides guidance towards the educational institutes and the Netherlands embassies to support them in implementing their roles appropriately. This is done through regular contacts with the educational institutes, the organisation of information sessions and by making manuals and guidelines for NFP management available through the EP-Nuffic website. EP-Nuffic also organises meetings with the Dutch educational institutes to discuss and reflect on the management of the programme (klankbordgroepen).

EP-Nuffic has become less involved directly with the possible candidates and granted applicants. In NFP II, upon request of the educational institutes, these have received more responsibility in promoting and identifying possible candidates. Contrary to the previous phase, the application is not open for every-one. Candidates can only apply for a scholarship through the educational institutions. Only students that receive a specific URL link from the educational institution can access the candidate registration form. As a consequence the number of applications has decreased and according to some educational institutes interviewed this approach also is helpful in targeting good candidates. The nomination process has become less demanding for the educational institutes (fewer applications and EP-Nuffic has no task any-more in collecting the applications and checking them whether these are complete).

The educational institutes have the task to assess the application and nominate possible candidates. The assessment of the nominated candidates is assigned to the Netherlands embassies who assess the applications based on their multi-annual strategic plans. The embassies only have to assess the list of nominated candidates, whereas in previous phases all candidates were assessed by the educational institute and the Netherlands embassy.

Adaptations regarding the application and management process of the Tailor Made Training and Refresher Courses

Tailor Made Training - A new approach for the TMT was developed for NFP II in order to contribute to efficiency gains and to organise a more targeted and relevant approach. This include following main adaptations: (1) less deadlines; (2) a bigger role for the Dutch embassy, with the embassy becoming more involved in the promotion, information dissemination and assessment of the TMT proposals; (3) changes in application procedure, with the introduction of an open or closed application

system;⁵⁵ (4) changes in the tender procedure, namely Dutch service providers can apply for a TMT grant via a joint proposal or via a tender procedure;⁵⁶ and (5) bigger budget per TMT (according to EP-Nuffic staff from 50.000 EUR under NFP I to 75.000 EUR for NFP II). The application and selection process also has been digitalized and programme documents and reporting formats were simplified. EP-Nuffic also prepared instructions for the embassies, including suggested pages for the embassy websites.

The new application process contributed to a more strategic use of the TMT modality in supporting the bilateral policies of the Netherlands embassies. More flexibility has been brought in the programme for both the Netherlands embassies and the Dutch service providers. The Netherlands embassy could use the programme in a strategic manner by targeting specific organisations that are of interest for the bilateral cooperation programmes (but this is not an obligation). Dutch service providers that had already a good partnership with an organisation in the South could develop a joint TMT proposal and did not have to tender any-more. This flexibility was positively assessed by the people interviewed.

The Netherlands embassies have received a bigger role in the promotion, development and assessment of the TMT. According to EP-Nuffic staff some embassies make more use of this modality compared to others. Some embassies effectively invested quite some time in the accompaniment of the requesting organisation for the development of the TMT proposals and in the assessment of the TMT proposals. The role of EP-Nuffic has become limited to providing support to the Netherlands embassies and to managing the final selection of all TMT proposals. This final selection is done by an algorithm (compared to the individual courses), taking into account the different criteria as set by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the available budget. EP-Nuffic is responsible for organising the tender procedure for those TMT applicants that opted for a tender procedure. EP-Nuffic has no role anymore in supporting organisation through the application process, which contributed to efficiency gains but which was also regretted by EP-Nuffic as in some countries the quality of the TMT proposals could have been increased if specific support would have been provided.

Refresher Courses – No specific changes have been brought to the application and selection process of the refresher courses. EP-Nuffic still organised the call for proposals and assessed the proposals. Also the management of the refresher courses is automatized and digitalised. Under NFP II, the refresher courses are increasingly seen as a tool to contribute to the strengthening of national alumni associations as these are also motivated to organise refresher courses. The Netherlands embassies are still not involved in the organisation or assessment of refresher courses and are only aware of the organisation of a refresher course in their country when informed by the Dutch educational institute.

5.2.2 Assessment of efficiency of the programme by educational institutes, NFP students and alumni and EP-Nuffic staff

This assessment is based on the results of the surveys to the educational institutes and the current NFP students in the Netherlands, the interviews with NFP alumni and the Netherlands embassies in the four countries visited and the focus group discussion with nine members of the PIE group in the

⁵⁵ In an open call the embassy can choose to accept applications and proposals from all interested organisations; in a closed call it is the embassy that identifies and invites organisations to submit applications or proposals.

⁵⁶ An organisation in one of the NFP countries can directly approach a Dutch training provider. The two organisations can then formulate a training proposal together or an organisation in an NFP country can submit an application and any Dutch provider can put in an offer based on a tender procedure. Tenders are published on the EP-Nuffic website.

Netherlands. An assessment was asked of the new rules and regulations, the administration and management of the programme and the roles performed by the different stakeholders involved.

The administration and management of NFP, the information shared by EP-Nuffic and its communication and level of commitment are positively assessed by the Dutch service providers. They are the most satisfied with the timely disbursement of the awarded grants. Also the amount of the award is positively assessed, though a number of institutions assess the amount as not satisfactory, although the grant has increased compared to the former period. A reality of co-financing still exists, as was the case under phase I. The adequacy of the nomination contingent for the institution is assessed as satisfactory, but not for all institutions.

The new application system ATLAS seems not to yield many problems and is positively assessed. Less satisfactory but still positive are the Dutch educational institutes with the role division between the embassy, EP-Nuffic and themselves. The new role distribution with a bigger role for Dutch educational institutes and a smaller role for the embassies in the assessment and selection procedure is positively appreciated by both parties. However, the Dutch educational institutes are critical on the level of commitment of the embassies and their assessment of the nominated candidates. This is confirmed by EP-Nuffic staff that notices a varying level of commitment and capacity between the different embassies. An example was given of the embassy of Indonesia who gave high scores to all nominated candidates in order to obtain a bigger share of the final selected candidates. The educational institutes participating in the focus group reported several incidences of delay in assessment done by the embassies that has led to the rejection of highly qualified candidates in some countries.

EP-Nuffic admits that there are efficiency gains in the application and selection process as their role has diminished and because of the digitalization of the whole process, but at the same time EP-Nuffic has lost the direct contact with the NFP students and alumni. This complicates their other tasks, for example in making the NFP more visible. Students and alumni feel more connected to their hosting educational institute and less to EP-Nuffic or the NFP as such.

The least satisfactory are the Dutch service providers on their level of involvement in the selection process and the transparency of the selection process, which is understandable as the final selection is done by a computer programme. This selection may respond to the obligations at programme level regarding distribution over gender, countries and sectors but does not automatically result in the same balances at institutional or training programme level. In the focus group discussion, examples were provided of gender imbalances at institutional level and of classrooms where 75 % of the NFP students were only coming from one country. Several interviewees refer to the system as a lottery. Moreover, more feedback is requested by the educational institutes to inform the non-selected candidates on the reasons for non-selection.

The efficiency gains are only becoming visible from 2015 onwards as much effort, time and energy was spent in developing the new rules and regulations, developing the ATLAS software and the transition from Sol to ATLAS. Moreover, despite the budget cuts for programme management, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded additional tasks from EP-Nuffic such as creating more visibility for the NFP, introduce more flexibility, pilot with co-financing modalities and look for more linkages with the business community in the Netherlands. EP-Nuffic was asked to respond in a more flexible way to certain situations, such as the Ebola crisis or the Boko Haram survivors. However, every modality that deviates from the regular procedures demands additional management time.

Efficiency of PhD scholarships is questioned by EP-Nuffic staff and some resource persons interviewed, in particular when the PhD researcher is not embedded in an academic institute.

Current NFP students are all satisfied with the organisation of the scholarship. This is confirmed by the NFP alumni interviewed during the field visits. Respondents are very satisfied with the information about the programme and the rules and regulations. They consider the selection process as transparent and have appreciated the pre-departure meetings at the Netherlands embassies. The main comments were related to logistics. Difficulties with travel permissions (visa) were reported among the challenges faced by candidates (six testimonies). In Nigeria for example, the requirement travel to Ghana for visa application, or through other Schengen country embassies in Nigeria triggered a mixture of reactions as it sometimes led to attendance failures. According to the focus group with Dutch educational institutes, the estimated 5 % post selection attendance failure is normal and it is in most cases resulting from issues with the candidates. Another comment is the tool that is used to test the English proficiency, which is not considered as being appropriate.

5.2.3 Description and analysis of the budget

In the period 2012-2015 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has spent 9.731.380 EUR for programme management and 35 million EUR for scholarships/year (since NFP II).⁵⁷ The total programme management budget only started to decrease in 2015, which reflects that time was needed to take benefit of the efficiency gains that might result from the new way of working and the automated process. Moreover, EP-Nuffic still was managing scholarships that had started in the former phase of the programme.

Programme management costs⁵⁸

The largest budget post is related to the selection processes and awarding the grant, which is the core task for EP-Nuffic in managing the scholarship programme. Staff constituted respectively 85 % (2012), 91 % (2013), 79 % (2014) and 88 % (2015) of the total programme management budget. Under NFP II a specific budget was made available to develop an alumni programme that effectively took off in 2014 (only a small budget was spent in 2013).

EP-Nuffic was able to spend the programme management budget as planned with an overspending in 2012 and 2014 with respectively 7 % and 2 % and an underspending in 2013 and 2015 with respectively 16 % and 2 %.⁵⁹

The share of management costs to the overall programme budget has always been around 6 % with 2014 being the exception with 9 %, which indicates that there was a linear budget cut on the overall programme budget, as shown in Table 8. The higher share of project management in 2014 coincides with the introduction of the new ATLAS software.

Table 8: Overview of the share of the programme management costs in relation to the budget committed for scholarships

	Total budget committed for scholarships	Total management cost EP-Nuffic	Share of management/ scholarships
2012	41.628.265	2.292.204	6%
2013	37.781.666	2.332.018	6%
2014	33.807.993	3.123.678	9%
2015	34.857.017	1.983.480	6%
Total	148.074.944	9.730.380	7%

⁵⁷ All financial data presented are based on the data provided by EP-Nuffic.

⁵⁸ For details see Table 24 in Annex 7.7.2.

⁵⁹ Based on data provided by EP-Nuffic

Use of the programme budget

The largest budget is spent on the master students with a share of 47 % of the total budget in 2014 and 47 % in 2015. A limited budget was made available for TMT (projects between 25.000 and 200.000 EUR). The total budget for TMT needed to be divided among 58 countries, with a maximum of four TMT per country (with a few exceptions with more than 4 TMT/year). Only in 15 countries three or four TMT had been selected.⁶⁰

EP-Nuffic is able to commit the entire available budget with an absorption capacity of almost 100 %, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Overview of the total programme budget committed for the different NFP modalities in the period 2012 to 2015, in euro

	2012 (NFP I)	2013	2014	2015	Total
Master courses	23.413.506	19.829.801	15.983.906	15.485.966	74.713.179
Short courses	6.159.125	8.948.750	8.231.440	8.645.443	31.984.758
PhD-courses	5.049.880	1.353.490	2.783.000	3.045.152	12.231.522
Refresher courses	1.725.000	1.483.686	1.505.950	1.500.000	6.214.636
Alumni activities	-	-	200.129	197.198	397.327
TMTs	5.280.754	6.165.939	5.103.569	5.983.260	22.533.522
Total	41.628.265	37.781.666	33 807 994	34 857 019	148.074.944
% of planned budget	108%	86%	97%	99%	97%

63 countries are participating in the NFP. The top 10 are countries that receive every year scholarships above the total amount of one million Euro for different scholarship modalities: Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe. In the other countries the amount of scholarship is less significant.

Following table provides an overview of the total number of scholarships granted per modality, which shows the popularity of short courses. There is a decrease of the number of master scholarships being granted because of the decrease of the available budget but also because of the increased budget per scholarship (which is higher compared to the first phase of NFP due to the norms set per grant and the payment of almost the complete tuition fee). The fluctuation of the PhD scholarships depends largely on the varying quality of the PhD applications.

Table 10: Overview of the total number of scholarships granted per year and per modality

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Master courses	673	613	439	423
Short courses	1.533	1.329	641	1.126
PhD-courses	60	16	36	36
Refresher courses	23	18	0	20
TMTs	60	93	68	85

When comparing Table 10 and Table 11, there is a discrepancy between the budget committed and the number of courses granted in the year 2014. This was caused by the introduction of the new way of working in ATLAS, the different deadlines in a year and the discrepancies between financial reporting for a specific deadline and the narrative/technical reporting on that deadline.

⁶⁰ Afghanistan (7 TMT in 2012), Bhutan (5), Burma/Myanmar, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kosovo, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Tanzania, Uganda

Educational institutes receive a lump sum per student as shown in Table 11. These are set per year and dependent on inflation and negotiations with the educational institutes. The educational institute do not have to account for actual expenses (as was used in phase I). They can manage the grant in a flexible way, only taking into account some maximum amounts that can be spent on living fees, housing and flight tickets. An exception was made for the tuition fees. As these have increased a lot, EP-Nuffic agreed to pay the actual tuition fee minus 5 %. There have been discussions between EP-Nuffic and the educational institutes about these norms. For example, a flat rate for housing is perceived as unfair as some cities are more expensive compared to others. However, the choice for working with lump sums is an efficiency gain for both EP-Nuffic and the educational institutes in terms of managing and reporting and enables flexible use of the budget.

Table 11: Overview of the budget norms per scholarship modality for the period 2012-2015, in Euro

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Master courses	34.793	32.349	36.327	36.525
Short courses	7.171	6.733	7.605	7.552
PhD-courses	84.165	84.593	77.306	84.168

According to the survey results, the financial management and adequacy of the administrative efforts for NFP management are positively assessed by the Dutch educational institutes. Current students surveyed indicated that getting along with the financial support was rather challenging, although they still receive their salary at home (see Figure 15 in Annex 7.7.1). The Dutch service providers assessed the amount of the grant with a score of 3,8 (on a scale of 6 with 6 being fully satisfactory), which indicates a rather moderate level of satisfaction. Moreover, the comparatively high standard deviation of 1,57 indicates that for a number of institutions the grant does not even cover all costs incurred (resulting in a practice of co-financing).

Since NFP II at least 35 % of the scholarships needed to be situated in the food security sector. The programme needed a transition period to achieve this target in 2014 and 2015, as shown in Table 12. The priority for certain sectors was not perceived as limiting according to the educational institutes participating in the focus group, though some resource people interviewed highlighted that other sectors, and in particularly social sciences are excluded from the NFP, thematic domains that also can be of relevance for supporting sector development in the four policy domains. From the interviews with embassies, some Dutch service providers and people involved in TMT it can be learned that the sector of food security is very broad and that applicants (in particular TMT and SC) know how to formulate the title and description of the course to make it fit within the food security sector.

Table 12: Overview of the share of scholarships on the total scholarships granted per modality/per year situated in food security sector

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Master courses	18 %	28 %	36 %	37,5 %
Short courses	51 %	22 %	25 %	49 %
PhD-courses	15 %	50 %	42 %	40,5 %
Refresher courses	n.a.	n.a.	0 %	35 %
TMTs	17 %	14 %	40 %	41,2 %

In 2013, the majority of the NFP fellowships are awarded to people employed by government or semi-government institutions, followed by staff working for educational institutes. The numbers for 2012 showed a similar pattern (no data for 2014 and 2015).

Table 13: Number of fellowships per type of employer, for scholarships granted in 2013

2013	Master course	Short course	PhD-course
Government	285	563	2
Education institute	107	311	10
NGO	91	292	2
Small business	48	43	0
Research centre	20	48	1
Large business	8	8	0
Other	54	64	1
Total	613	1.329	16

The data in the EP-Nuffic annual reports show that the obliged percentage of division over gender and country categories is respected.

Budget dedicated for alumni activities

A very small budget (less than 1 %) is made available for the alumni activities. The largest part of the budget for alumni is spent in the Netherlands on (1) thematic alumni events, (2) NL4Talents/NFP/MSP alumni events and (3) the Holland alumni programme. A smaller budget is also foreseen to support national alumni associations in setting-up the association and for co-financing alumni activities of these national alumni association. In 2015 EP-Nuffic started the Holland Ambassador Programme.⁶¹ Other budget components relate to company visits in the Netherlands, and the development of promotion materials.

In the period 2012-2015, five national alumni associations⁶² have received a start-up subsidy. Only three national alumni associations have received co-financing for their activities, of which two alumni activities in the Philippines (one being a regional event with participation of 5 countries), two in Colombia (one being a regional event with participation of 12 countries) and one in Ghana. Company visits have only started to take place in 2016, according to the overview received from EP-Nuffic.

Experiences with co-financing

During NFP II, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked EP-Nuffic to develop some experiments with co-financing (as was suggested in the 2012 NFP evaluation). Co-financing was piloted in the TMT and master courses. In 2015 EP-Nuffic started a pilot with co-financing in the TMT modality, requesting a minimum of 20 % co-financing. According to the interviews with EP-Nuffic it appeared that in several cases the educational institutes had provided this co-financing from their own budget what might cause a conflict with the Dutch Ministry of Education (delivering evidence that an educational institute can save from their core-funding). In the second call in 2016, it was obliged to include minimum 2 % of the co-financing from another donor.

The largest budget from the NFP is given to the master scholarships. A first pilot with co-financing was launched in the margin of the first call of 2016 (1 million EUR was made available, financed with the budget made available for the specific master call (80 %) and 20 % from the INNOCAP budget). The educational institutes that showed interest to participate in the pilot (#14) could select 2 candidates from their top 10 nominated but not selected candidates for the first call of 2016 to be eligible

⁶¹ Through this programme NFP alumni in NFP countries are identified as ambassador for the Holland alumni network with the tasks to promote the NFP in general and the Holland alumni network in particular.

⁶² Zimbabwe, Palestinian Territories, Nepal, Costa Rica and Georgia

for a co-financed scholarship. 12 of the 14 participating educational institutes nominated in total 23 candidates for a co-financed scholarship.

The pilot showed that a variety of co-financing modalities are possible but also highlighted that in 56% of the cases it was the Dutch educational institute that had contributed. A variety of actors have contributed to the scholarship, like the fellowship holder itself, the educational institute, the employer, a Dutch sponsor or another scholarship programme. In 21 % of the cases the co-financing consisted in a combination of the contribution of the Dutch educational institute and others.

The pilot demonstrates that co-financing is possible and enables awarding twice as much as scholarships for the same budget, but also questions the fact that in more than half of the cases the co-financing was paid by the Dutch educational institute. The educational institutes also highlighted (internal evaluation reports and the focus group discussion) that candidates with interest in (and opportunities for) a co-financing scholarship could not be selected, as they had not been nominated among the top 10 of the candidates that could be eligible for the co-financing pilot or because of the short timeframe it had not been possible to find other resources for funding like e.g. crowdfunding..

From the interviews with NFP alumni and employers visited it was learned that there is an interest among NFP alumni in co-financing, in particularly for participation in short courses and refresher courses, but that the interest (and possibility) of employers in co-financing was very low to non-existent.

Conclusion on the efficiency of NFP

EP-Nuffic realises adequate and efficient management of the programme budget and has implemented appropriate management systems in order to be able to spend the budget as planned. Moreover, several measures taken by EP-Nuffic such as the digitalization and automating of the application and selection process, the restructuring of reporting formats, the use of lump sums, in combination with another division of roles and responsibilities have resulted in efficiency gains that have started to become visible recently. As huge investments have been done to achieve this efficiency level, it would be an efficiency loss if the whole system would needed to be changed again in a next phase. Because of the overall programme budget cut compared to the previous phase, the share of the programme management costs to the overall programme budget has remained the same.

The new way of working and the new role division between EP-Nuffic, the Dutch educational institutes and the Netherlands embassy are appropriate, with a more prominent role for the educational institutes, and also have contributed to efficiency gains for all stakeholders involved due to the more targeted approach and decrease in applications that need to be assessed. The new procedures work well and contribute to a transparent and fair competition, under the condition that all stakeholders fulfil their designated tasks appropriately.

The remaining bottleneck is linked to the high competition of applications (all modalities) and the limited level of strategic selection of nominated candidates, both for the educational institutes and the Netherlands embassies. The biggest budget is spent on master students, though the number of students is spread over 51 countries. The number of PhD scholarship is rather low. Although the selection of the scholarships largely depend on their alignment with the Dutch development priorities, no strategic use can be made of these scholarships by the Netherlands embassy as the selection depends on a computer algorithm and the embassies are not well informed of the final selection and study career path of the selected candidates. Moreover, scholarships situated in other sectors than the four priority sectors could also contribute meaningfully to development in the priority sectors but

have less chance to be selected. According to the evaluators there is a need to clearly choose between two systems: (1) an open and fair competition, based on selection criteria related to the quality of the application and the motivation of the applicant but without limitations regarding sector and even without demanding an employers' statement as this excludes freelancers and independent workers (demand driven approach) and (2) a more targeted and strategic competition whereby the NFP is explicitly used to contribute to the development in the four priority sectors and selection is based on the quality of the proposal, the motivation of the applicant and its contribution to sector development in the four priority sectors (donor driven).

The number of TMT, PhD and RC organised in specific countries is very low (and competition is high). For the TMT it can be questioned why this modality should be offered to 51 countries instead of being strategically used in a limited number of countries, for example as a complement of the NICHE programme (making available access to smaller projects, under a more flexible regulation). The number of PhD is very low. The question how to make strategic use of PhD is a valid question, in particular when not employed by an educational institute.

The changed roles of EP-Nuffic and the efficiency measures also had as consequence that EP-Nuffic has lost direct contact with the NFP alumni, which complicated the task of EP-Nuffic to run an alumni programme, use the network of alumni for promotional purposes and/or support the role of NFP alumni in economic diplomacy. EP-Nuffic is not visible anymore for the NFP alumni.

The programme budget has decreased and at the same time the cost for master students has increased, resulting in a lower number of master scholarships. Experiments with co-financing are still young but show possibilities. Moreover, a practice of co-financing already existed at several educational institutes that compensated the budget received per student with own resources when needed. The pilot demonstrated that in 1/3 of the cases the students themselves contributed but in more than 50 % the educational institutes. More experiments are needed to differentiate in co-financing. The current dominant contribution of the educational institutes can be at risk as it is dependent on the funding of the educational institutions by Dutch Ministry of Education and their access to other donors or scholarship programmes. There is also potential for co-financing for shorter courses such as the short courses or the refresher courses. It must be recognized that experimenting with co-funding modalities requires more time investment for EP-Nuffic staff as procedures deviate from the regular processes.

5.3 Effectiveness and Impact

This chapter covers the assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the NFP II programme. It addresses the level of output, outcome and impact of the NFP and the factors that had an influence on the level of achievement. No specific output, outcome and impact have been formulated for the NFP. But the ToC indicates that the NFP is supposed to contribute to more qualified human capital, better performing organisations, active alumni networks and to NFP alumni promoting the interest of the Netherlands. In the long term these changes are supposed to contribute to objectives as set in the bilateral programmes as implemented or coordinated by the Netherlands embassies and to economic diplomacy.⁶³

In this chapter first a brief description is presented of the number of scholarships and the training completion rates. The following sections analyse respectively the results at individual level (Section

⁶³ EP-Nuffic Theory of Change NFP II

5.3.1), the results at organisational level (Section 5.3.2) and the results at country level (Section 5.3.3). A separate section is dedicated to the analysis of the alumni programme (Section 5.3.4). The chapter closes with overall conclusions on the effectiveness of the NFP.

The following analysis is based on the data collected from alumni who were physically visited at their workplaces during the fieldwork in the four countries. NFP II alumni in the four countries visited who could not be reached physically were requested to fill-in a short digital questionnaire. The results of the interviews and online questionnaires are combined. Responses from the focus groups organized in each of the four countries are treated collectively rather than individually. Table 14 summarises the number of alumni respondents in each of the four countries, organized according the modes of response. The table includes also the alumni’s employers who were contacted during the fieldwork, and the number of respondents of the NFP tracer study of 2015 drawn from the four evaluation countries.

Table 14: Overview of composition of the response group for the four countries visited

	Benin	Indonesia	Mozambique	Nigeria	Total
Alumni (Online Questionnaire and Interview)	20	23	10	75	128
Alumni (focus group participants)	18	10	4	22	54
Employers	2	1	1	6	10
Alumni 2015 Tracer study	30	238	28	516	812

Two NFP related online surveys were conducted as part of this evaluation; a student survey which reached out to 700 out of 1.105 approached individual trainees who were attending their NFP training at the time of the evaluation, and a survey among representatives of the DSP (n = 168 with a response rate of 31,6 %). Additionally, the colleagues of NFP alumni, representatives of the EKN and partner organisations and leaders of the national alumni associations (NAA) in each of the four countries (who are also NFP alumni) have also informed this analysis.

5.3.1 *Setting the scene – number of scholarships granted and completion rate*

As described in the introduction chapter of this report the NFP offers different scholarship modalities: individual courses such as the PhD, master and short courses and group training such as the tailor made training and refresher courses.

Table 15 summarizes the distribution of NFP II scholarships granted between 2012 and 2015 per modalities.

Table 15: Number of training awards by year and modality (Source: EP-NUFFIC annual reports)

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Ma	673	613	439	423
SC	1.533	1.329	641	1.126
PhD	60	16	36	36
RC	23	18	0	20
TMT	60	93	68	85

EP-Nuffic provided the data on completion for the master and short courses modalities between 2012 and 2015.

Table 16: Completion rates for master and short courses organised in the period 2012-2015 (Source: mail EP-Nuffic)⁶⁴

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Master	68	87	n.a.	n.a.
Short Courses	89	82	73	96

The data show a lowest score of 68,5 % for the 673 master students in 2012. The highest completion rate (96,2 %) was attained for the short course modality in 2015. These official records are also confirmed by the alumni interviewed that explained that the completion rate is especially lower on PhD and Masters training modalities compared to short courses. Four anecdotal stories of delayed completion or dropouts were reported during the field visits at PhD (#1) and masters (#3) for various reasons. The main reasons included a case of medical conditions, difficulties with adaptation to the learning system and trainee’s conflicting commitments (enrolment in the pilgrimage). The perception on completion rate was also asked in the survey towards the educational institutes who appear to have a more positive idea of the completion rates, ranging between 85 % and 93 % and showing no significant variations between modalities.

The completion rate figures also include the number of students that eventually do not start at all. According to the focus group with DSP representatives, the estimated 5% post selection attendance failure is normal and it is in most cases resulting from issues with the candidates.

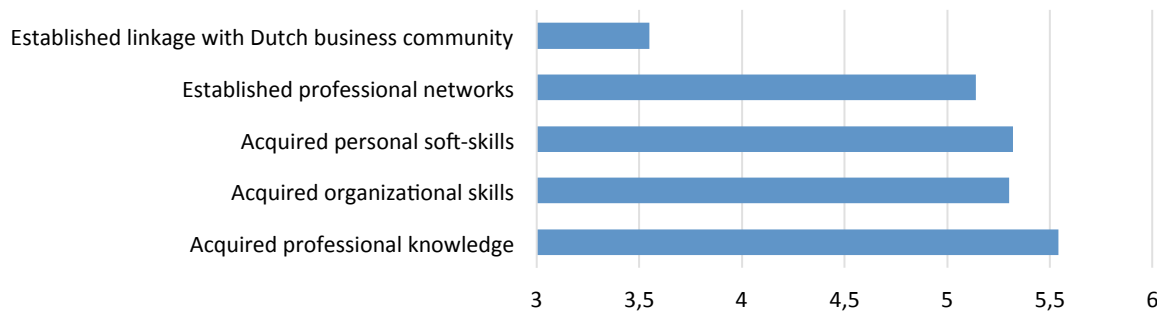
Respondent alumni provided additional information on factors that had a positive influence on the completion of the NFP training such as, the fair and systematic selection process, which ensured that they were qualified; the high quality of the NFP training administration and delivery. The appreciation and satisfaction of the quality of the NFP trainings was reported by alumni during the focus groups and individual interviews. These findings are also validated by the 811 responses of the 2015 tracer study coming from the four countries visited, who indicated that their expectations from the NFP training were met at 99,8 %.

5.3.2 Description and analysis of the results at individual level

The effect of the NFP training on individuals is achieved through improvement of professional knowledge and skills. The sets of skills reported by individual alumni interviewed are grouped into intellectual skills in the forms of research skills, technical skills, enhanced knowledge and analytical skills. Also alumni reported to have acquired non-intellectual skills including: inter personal skills, enhanced self-confidence and higher recognition/reputation. The improvement in skills is also linked with enhanced individual work performance, and it contributes to the influence of alumni on policies and practices at organisational and community levels (see further). The appreciation of skills acquisition is also confirmed by the surveyed students as indicated on Figure 8.

⁶⁴ Data for master courses in 2014 and 2015 are not yet available as not all courses have ended yet.

Figure 8: Rating of personal benefits from participating in NFP training⁶⁵



From the interviews conducted during the field visits and also described in the NFP country evaluations of Kenya and Tanzania (ACE Europe, 2016)⁶⁶, the skills gained by alumni enabled them also to empower their communities through outreach activities they carried outside their employer organisations. Ample examples were given of the way the acquired knowledge and skills were applied on families, neighbourhood communities, religious congregations and professional association in which the alumni belongs. The effects on religious groups were especially reported by alumni in the three African countries (Benin, Mozambique and Nigeria), while for the Indonesian alumni this was more directed towards friends.

By acquiring the training credentials and through the demonstrated improvements in performance, interviewed alumni (#25/128) were able to experience job mobility of variable forms, and levels. The patterns of job mobility, either through promotions or transfer into different units/departments, are not only associated with completion of Masters (#10 alumni interviewed) and PhD (#4) training but also through short courses (#9) and refresher courses (#2). Besides the intra-organisational promotions, the acquisition of a higher position in other organisations (#2), the establishment of NGOs (#2), consulting firms (#3) or a commercial company (#1) were also reported by respondent alumni. The focus groups in the four countries further confirmed the data in the 2015 tracer study in associating the mobility tendencies with increased individual income.

The attendance of NFP training is also associated with improvements in social and professional networking opportunities for individual alumni (19/128). The feeling of being connected to the world was reported by respondents who enjoyed new linkages with universities in the Netherlands, and classmates from many parts of the world. The alumni’s internationalization has reportedly upgraded the self-benchmarking and it also improved the alumni’s capacity to apply for international grants and consultancies. The attendance of short courses and refresher courses is also regarded as a trigger for masters and PhD applications in the Netherlands.

The NFP training courses have empowered the alumni and enabled them to influence policies and practices at home. 7 out of 10 Interviewed employers and colleagues in the four countries visited were highly satisfied with performances of their staff who attended NFP training. Universities recognized the NFP alumni as reliable partners in teaching and doing research. Based on the inspirations from the NFP alumni, colleagues and superiors were motivated to apply or nominate other employees at their organisations for the various programmes offered under NFP.

⁶⁵ Source: NFP student survey, n = 688, based on a six-step scale from 1 = “not beneficial at all” to 6 = “highly beneficial”, scale adapted to highlight differences.

⁶⁶ Phlix, G. (2016) Evaluation NFP phase II – country studies in Kenya and Tanzania.

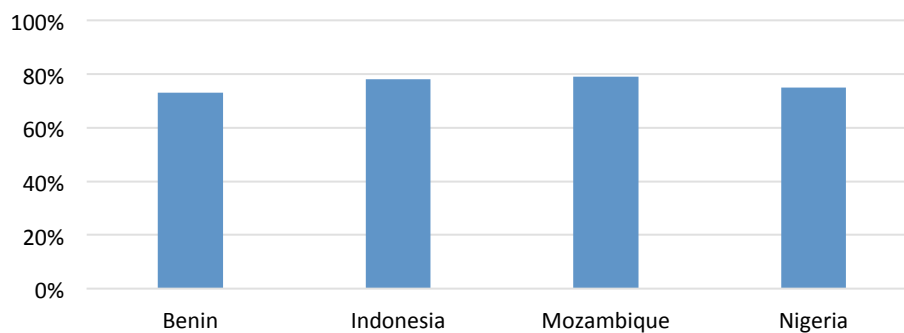
5.3.3 Description and analysis of the results at organisational level

Employee retention

On average 76 % of the 2015 tracer study respondents in the four countries remained with their NFP nominating organisations. The retention rates peaked among the government employees at 90%, while lowest rate were experiences with the international organisations 14%, followed by the private sector 47 %. From the 128 alumni interviewed only 9 indicated that they had left the organisation that had nominated them for the NFP training and this for several reasons. They have joined other organisations or formed their own establishments.

Although the 2015 tracer study results suggest an insignificant variation in mobility rates across the four countries (Figure 9),⁶⁷ during the discussions in Mozambique this issue was presented as barrier to employers’ support and nomination of NFP candidates. The weak support to employees’ attendance of NFP was influenced by the fear of staying abroad which was speculated to be on the rise in recent years following the economic downturn in the country. In Indonesia the job changing patterns were more experienced among NGO employees than on the other sectors.

Figure 9: Proportions of employees who are still working with NFP nominating organisations⁶⁸



Knowledge transfer

All but 12 individual alumni interviewed acknowledged to have transferred the knowledge they gained from NFP training at moderate or strong pace. Those who work at universities and other training institutions (18 alumni) could easily use their professional training role to convey their knowledge to students. Also upon return from NFP training alumni organize training/presentation sessions at their organisations to share the key lesson learned from the training (#43), and others reported that they shared the course materials (#7). Another popular approach to knowledge sharing is through informal interactions between alumni and their colleagues at the workplaces, this was mentioned by 31 alumni interviewed.

Data from the 2015 tracer study confirmed a high tendency of knowledge transfer (70 % and above), with minor variations between countries and training modalities. Interviews and focus groups during fieldwork on the other hand revealed some variations between individual alumni, organisations and countries. For example in Nigeria 27 out of 97 respondent alumni were obliged to organize a training sessions or presentations upon their training completion. These trainings or presentations are seen in

⁶⁷ The 2015 tracer study data shows that the longer ago the respondents had finalised the NFP courses, the lower was the retention rate. However, the retention rate remains high as shown in the figure. More detailed figures are available in the 2015 tracer study.

⁶⁸ Source: NFP tracer study 2015, n = 811.

Nigeria serves as a platform to exchange learning experiences and challenging the existing habits, practices and policies at the workplaces. In Mozambique the lack of trust and weak support by employers during the nomination process is also claimed to be extended into weakening the support towards transfer and application of the gained by some returning alumni.

Knowledge application

All but eight of the 128 alumni interviewed confirmed the application of acquired knowledge and skills at work. This contributed to improved performance of the employing organisation (see further). The 2015 tracer study results presented variation in knowledge applications between countries; Benin (90 %), Indonesia (64 %), Mozambique (61 %) and Nigeria (85 %). In terms of training modalities the highest rate of knowledge application was observed with Masters (81 %) and PhD, while the SC and RC (71 %) recorded the lowest rates.

The reported cases of failure to apply the acquired knowledge are related to both employer and alumni side factors. Reasons such as lack of relevance for the acquired knowledge at the employer organisation and the employer organisations lacked resources or motivation to invest in the application of new competencies were mentioned. Moreover, some alumni could not apply the knowledge because they immediately continued with further studies, or felt that the organisational delays in promotion after training hindered their potential to apply the knowledge.

Effect on organisational changes

Respondents reported to have influenced organisational changes in various ways including but not limited to; the decision to purchase and apply new software and equipment, acquisition of new working tools and methodologies like stakeholder analysis, power mapping, value chain analysis, problem analysis, result based management, use of log-frame and also the new ways of writing proposals. Moreover, the alumni reported to have influenced the introduction of the new technical approaches to their organisations and new ways of working.

The nature of master and PhD courses entails that effects of these trainings also are more visible in the long term, as alumni with master and PhD grades can more easily obtain strategic positions in the organisation over time, having more influence on policy making (internal and external), as confirmed by the 2015 tracer study and anecdotal information from the field visits. PhD students also have a direct return on the organisation when their research projects are designed to fit with the organisational interests, and fieldwork conducted at home countries.

In the field visits (and confirmed in the NFP country studies in Kenya and Tanzania) it was noticed that organisations with critical mass of alumni had gained more benefits. This is drawn from the confidence, trust and complementation among alumni who formed a community at the organisation level. Some individual alumni were also found to have greater influence in the long run, as they climbed into the managerial positions. The level of influence reported by alumni at Masters and PhD levels are deemed stronger than for the SC and RC alumni, for example the creation of new department or shifting the entire organisation's service framework.

By design the TMT modality is expected to yield stronger organisational effects. This was realized in 9 out of 10 researched TMT in the four countries. Only one TMT in Indonesia is assessed with lower organisational impact in juxtaposition with the reported individual skills gains. For other TMT the contribution to organisational changes are exemplified by the development of new curricula/training modules at the requesting organisations and the development of new or improved products, methods and services. Improvement in the level of tolerance towards people of other faith groups was

mentioned in one TMT (Nigeria) and changed attitude and convictions on sexual behaviour and violence against children and women was mentioned in Benin.

5.3.4 *Description and analysis of the results at country level*

The NFP's intervention logic illustrates the transfer of benefits from individual alumni, to their employing organisations, and broadly to the sectors at large. The theory of change is based on the assumption that more qualified human capital and better performing organisations contribute to promoting inclusive growth and will have a positive impact on the economy and society. This is confirmed in the results described in the above. The engagement of alumni in outreach activities for example on their religious communities, residential neighbourhood and home villages has spread benefits of NFP beyond individuals and organisational circles. This is achieved through voluntary community interventions, training services outside the workplaces and influence on behaviour change in the society. Moreover, respondent alumni in the four countries claimed their contributions to sector development through their leadership roles and influence of standards and policies in the professional bodies and networks. It is also important to acknowledge the 2015 tracer study findings, which shows that except for Benin (80 %), at least 90 % of the alumni returned home in the three other countries.

However, contribution of NFP to the outcomes set for the priority sectors of the Dutch development cooperation (including gender equality and private sector development) is more difficult to assess. The overall impact of NFP's theory of change is challenged by the observed divergences in number of awards between countries, questioning what the contribution will be of a small number of scholarships to the intended objectives of the bilateral programmes at country level. Between 2012 and 2015 for example the top ten (10/51) beneficiary countries accumulated over 60 % of all the NFP scholarship awards, leaving the bottom 10 countries absorbing only 4 %. Moreover several interviewees within embassies and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented that they can't make strategic use of the NFP because due to the current selection process installed by EP-Nuffic (1) they have little influence on the type and number of scholarships that are granted and (2) they have difficult access to data of NFP alumni in order to trace and engage NFP alumni for bilateral programmes.

The scholarship distribution patterns have also triggered the debate on reinstalling the country budgets among the Dutch educational institutes, as they also observed some imbalances in their classroom's internationalization (e.g. some classrooms having students coming from one country, see also under efficiency). Barriers to equal opportunity within host countries are likely to affect the spread of impacts. During the focus groups in Indonesia it was pointed out that NFP scholarship tend to concentrate in the commercially active area of Java, ignoring the rural parts of the country (promotion focusing on these areas, role of peer to peer promotion, and alike). In Mozambique some rural based candidates are confronted by the need to undertake the English proficiency test as far as South Africa.

Both the 2015 tracer study and the student survey conducted during this evaluation show that only 9% of respondents were working in the private sector. Employees of large private companies are structurally excluded from the NFP awards, and at the same time the eligible firms are too small to afford the absence of their employees especially for the long-term training. Alumni and EKN officials in Indonesia and Nigeria noted a growing interest on NFP among candidates from the private sector, and higher potential for partial financing, but these candidates fail to compete under the current setup. While some of the NFP alumni in the public sector contribute to the enabling environment for private sector development, the limited involvement of small and medium enterprises (SME) has

limited the contribution of the scholarships to private sector capacity building in the south. Limited involvement of the private sector also hampered the foreseen potential for co-financing by the firms in the south, including the Dutch companies. Good practices regarding co-financed scholarships supported by the private sector were found at the British Council. In Tanzania, the British Council collaborated with British Gas Tanzania (of the Shell group) that financed ten scholarship in Great Britain and eight national scholarships per year to build national oil and gas engineering capacity. The British Council was assigned with the management of these scholarships.

The Netherlands embassies in the four countries offer varying levels of priority to the NFP, which is also reflected in the varying levels of human resources dedicated to the programme. It is worth noting that the embassies in all four countries visited acknowledge the important role of the NFP as a tool for justifying their position as a mission of the Kingdom of The Netherlands in the host economies (in particular when the direct development cooperation programmes had been phased out). However, with the exception of a few isolated cases, there are limited evidences on a strategic linkage between the NFP and bilateral programmes which exists in Benin, Indonesia and Mozambique. Moreover, for private sector development the embassies do not see much opportunities for NFP as they can already rely on other instruments such as those managed by RVO and PUM. In Nigeria for example the NFP is attached to the embassy in Abuja and is as such disconnected with the trade office based in office of the embassy in Lagos.

The NFP intends to contribute to the strengthening of private sector development and economic diplomacy, involving also Dutch companies working abroad. Several interviewees however refer to the missed opportunity of linking NFP students with the Dutch business community and Ministry of Foreign Affairs during and/or at the end of their stay in the Netherlands, for example through study visits but also through offering short or longer term internships in the Netherlands or in the South. Alumni, however, are also compelled to return to their home institutions immediately upon their training completion.

Alumni association

Out of 128 alumni interviewed, 35 indicated to be engaged in alumni activities whether through EKN, the national alumni association or the official institutional alumni networks in their countries. 40 respondents indicated that they were not aware of the alumni activities but showed interests, while 37 were not involved in alumni activities for several other reasons (16 alumni were not involved in alumni activities and did not give a reason). Some of the reasons for non-engagements in alumni activities include being in remote areas, conflicting schedules at work and their absence in the home countries. The 2015 tracer study showed a different picture with 40 % of respondents indicating to be members of the NAA in their countries, while 40 % were not and the remaining 20 % reported the lack of NAA in their countries. The interest of NFP trainees in alumni activities is even higher, recorded at 89 %.

In three of the four countries visited the NAA are still weak and at emerging phase. The NAA in Mozambique was formed in 2015, Benin is in a process of creating the NAA, in Nigeria it is yet to be officiated while the Indonesian association exists since 1986. In all the four countries the alumni networks which are linked with the Dutch institutions were also active, with variable levels of strengths. For countries like Nigeria where the NAA is very young, leaders of the institutional networks felt some threats from the NAA concept. Generally, the idea of having NAA is partly supported by stakeholders, but also challenged as an old school, bureaucratic and costly approach. For example, the NAA secretariat is seen as redundant if the EKN could access the alumni database and fulfil their

roles of engaging the alumni through regular events, competitive mini grants or linking the alumni with the Dutch business communities. On the other hand Dutch service providers with weaker alumni programmes are more supportive of NAA than those, which have strongly invested in the institutional alumni networks.

The successful coordination of the NAA activities is highly dependent on voluntary services and dedication of the leaders who are also tied to their jobs. Besides the coordination time, financial resources are also important. In Mozambique for example, the annual fees was debated during the focus groups. Similarly, for the Beninese NAA to implement the current plan of setting up an office and hire permanent secretariat staff, a stronger financing model is needed beyond expectations on seed grants from EP-Nuffic/EKN. Alumni in Mozambique expressed strong confidence with EKN as a better positioned entity to coordinate the NAA. However, the EKN are currently constrained with capacity to coordinate the interactions between alumni and Dutch business community. Embassies are also constrained with access to the up-to-date alumni database. EP-Nuffic reported the individual privacy policy as barrier, but also foresee a solution in the future following the creation of Holland Alumni Network.

Coordinators of the NAA in the four countries visited are aware that the EKN and EP-Nuffic may provide them with financial support through seed grants and co-financing for events. The Indonesia association for example organized and hosted a regional alumni conference in 2015 with support from EP-Nuffic. All embassies organize the pre-departure events for the outgoing trainees each year. Similarly, in Nigeria the EKN organizes events and invites the alumni across the country, but the attendance is still limited given the limited database of alumni that the embassy possesses. There are broader but often rather unrealistic expectations from the NAA besides the sustained linkage with the Netherlands. These include opportunities for employment, grants and consultancies offered by the Dutch government agencies and Dutch private companies in the recipient countries.

Conclusions for the effectiveness and impact of NFP

The conclusions of the former NFP evaluation (2012) are confirmed in this evaluation. The NFP related impacts are dominantly situated at individual level, less at organisational level and even less at country level. The effect at individual level was experienced in terms of applicable and transferrable skills and knowledge and also improved self-confidence. The level of application and transfer of knowledge by individual alumni was also evidenced although in some cases this was prevented by both individual and organisational factors. The effect of NFP at alumni's employer organisations was observed and it was affected by alumni's capacity and efforts, as well as the favourable conditions for knowledge transfer and application at the workplaces.

The effects at individual level are clear. Contribution of the programme to better performing organisations depends – at the short-term – on the performance of the individual alumni and the organisational characteristics that facilitate or hamper knowledge transfer and application. On the long term organisational effects could be the result of NFP alumni obtaining more strategic or leadership positions. The NFP has no direct influence on these conditions but could take some measures to increase the probability of contributing to better performing organisation, like for example: (1) It would be relevant for educational institutes in the Netherlands to include a module on change management topics (how to cope with resistance in the organisation, how to start and influence changes from a non-leadership position). (2) The monitoring of the effect at organisational level should be an obligation in short courses and refresher courses (included in an obligated action plan that is already drafted during these courses).

Effectiveness at organisational level can improve when several staff members of an organisation participate in the same or similar courses. The refresher courses only respond to this in a limited manner (short duration, limited number of staff). The same applies for the other in-country trainings, namely the TMT of which only a few are granted per year/country. The modality of a long-term trajectory of several short courses (or in-country training) with alumni from the same organisation could be considered again (and draw lessons from past experiences with such modalities).

The former NFP evaluation suggested three possible scenarios for the next phase of the programme (see introduction). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly opted for the first scenario, formulating programme objectives that aimed at sector development, improvement of bilateral relations and economic diplomacy. The alignment of NFP with the current four policy priorities is a clear example of this policy choice. However, other consequences of the selected scenario as described in the evaluation report 2012 were not given follow-up, like the need for more targeted and strategic selection of scholarships and the need to focus less on organisational development but more on institutional capacity development. This evaluation shows that the chosen scenario was not well developed or implemented. By consequence, clear indications of contribution to sector or system development are absent. The NFP does not apply a sector or system oriented approach as it is based on individual applicants, and opportunities to steer the programme in a more strategic manner – from country perspective - are limited. The embassies have only limited influence on the selection of individual applicants. Moreover, there is limited alignment between the NFP priority sectors and the priority interventions in the countries visited. The TMT offer the most options for alignment and strategic coherence (and influence from the Netherlands embassy), though only very few get eventually awarded. The NFP tries to compromise between objectives related to individual development and sector development. It balances between central and decentral management. Both sides of the equation are difficult to combine.

So far the NFP has little contributed to economic diplomacy or private sector development. Other capacity development facilities, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or by RVO (Netherlands Enterprise Agency), are in place to strengthen private sector development and promote trade and development. Not much use is made of the NFP or the NFP alumni in these programmes. NFP students are also not linked with the business community during and at the end of their stay in the Netherlands.

While the alumni networks varied in strengths, NFP alumni members expressed strong interests and enthusiasm to the idea of a Holland alumni network. However, most alumni interviewed are already active in thematic knowledge networks, created in the margin of a specific NFP course or linked to the educational institute in the Netherlands. These thematic networks seem to be operational and beneficial in knowledge sharing, peer support and joint proposal writing. The added value of the national alumni associations was not evidenced and the strategy to support these NAA is rather “old fashion” according to the evaluators (in time of social media). The Holland alumni network creates above all – sometimes unrealistic - expectations among NFP alumni to increase their access to opportunities for employment, grants and consultancies offered by the Dutch government agencies and Dutch private companies in the recipient countries.

6. Overall conclusions and recommendations

In the following two sections the conclusions and recommendations deriving from the results as described in the previous chapters on NICHE and NFP are compiled:

6.1 Conclusions and recommendations regarding NICHE

(1) NICHE is a relevant programme but faces challenges in balancing between the objectives to strengthen post-secondary education on the one hand and in contributing to the sector development in the four priority sectors on the other hand.

NICHE aims at improving the quality, relevance and gender sensitiveness of post-secondary education in support of the bilateral priority sectors in the 22 partner countries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Successful projects have mainly contributed to the development in the bilateral priority sectors through the training of a skilled workforce and the delivery of relevant scientific research. The uptake of these results depends on a variety of factors such as the responsiveness of the government and/or other actors involved in the bilateral programmes and sector development, the quality of sector analyses, the level of involvement of the Netherlands embassy in the follow-up of the NICHE projects, the quality of the bilateral programmes, etc. A good identification of strategically positioned institutions with leverage is important.

An alignment with the MASP has not always been guaranteed in the NICHE programme, for a variety of reasons, among them also the chronological offset between the project cycles of NICHE and the development of the MASPs. Alignment with bilateral cooperation programmes coordinated at central level almost has not taken place. During NICHE II EP-Nuffic was asked to do develop rules and procedures in order to be able to respond in a more flexible way to needs and requests for capacity development at short term that could be relevant for specific Dutch bilateral interventions or projects. These projects only have recently started but some of them appear to be promising and were very much welcomed by the stakeholders involved.

The focus of NICHE on the limitation to the four priority sectors has resulted in a decrease of support provided to the education sector. Less support is given to strengthening education sector institutions such as accreditation mechanisms, quality control mechanisms, and alike. However, the presence of an appropriate regulatory framework for the educational institutes contributes to the level of effectiveness of the NICHE projects. More so for the TVET sector. NICHE II projects have increasingly included TVET institutions but have rarely addressed the policy and regulatory framework for TVET, which is even more complicated because of the involvement of a variety of ministries responsible for the organisation of TVET. As the Dutch bilateral cooperation has withdrawn from the education sector, much more alignment had to be looked for with other donors supporting the TVET sector and the education sector at large. Alignment or harmonization with other donors has almost not taken place.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Two strategic policy choices are influencing the NICHE II programme. On the one hand the programme aims at strengthening post-secondary education, which requires long-term trajectories. On the other hand, NICHE II is also seen as an instrument to address capacity gaps in a certain sector at short term. It is recommended to organise two specific financing modalities to address these different objectives. One could consider to launch a call for proposals for organisational and institutional strengthening of educational institutes and to create another modali-

ty to enable the programme to react in a more flexible way to specific capacity needs or opportunities that emerge. A system like is currently be used for TMT could be considered. Also the experiences with the INNOCAP projects need to be further examined and lessons learned can be used to further modify this more flexible financing modality. This second modality could also be more relevant for projects to be implemented in fragile states as these are situated in a rapidly changing context.

- ✓ Regarding the support to organisational and institutional strengthening of educational institutes it can be taken into consideration to not limit these calls for proposals linked to the priority sectors of the bilateral cooperation. Enhanced capacity of other sectors can also be beneficial for the priority sectors as development is multi-sectoral. Furthermore, currently Dutch educational institutes – operating in other sectors than the four priority sectors – are excluded from the NICHE programme though they also have an interest in using the NICHE programme to support the further internationalisation of their own institutes.
- ✓ The other financing modality should be more aligned to the bilateral programmes that are coordinated at central or decentral level. To that end participation of EP-Nuffic in sector platform or groups is needed to identify opportunities for cooperation. Experiences with institutions benefitting from this modality could be an entrance to a more longer term capacity trajectory, which can be financed consequently through the first financing modality.
- ✓ As described in the above, support to the educational sector is also needed. This requires more pro-active alignment and harmonization with other donors.

(2) The tender procedures are properly managed, transparent and contribute to competition but need to be revised to enhance effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the projects.

The tender procedure as it is currently organised, with a project proposal from a requesting organisation that is tendered, was assessed as one of the factors having a negative influence on the effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the NICHE projects. Many difficulties were mentioned regarding communication between partners, problems in the partnership relation, projects that eventually were not sufficiently responding to the capacity needs of the requesting organisations, different opinions on the strategies and activities to be implemented, and alike. It is clear that the current tender procedure does not enable automatically a good match between the requesting partner and the service provider. It is also not the appropriate procedure to award partners that want to become engaged in a long-standing partnership relation that can provide more guarantee for enhanced ownership and better adaptation of the intervention to the demands and capacity needs of the requesting organisation.

On the other hand, the tender procedure organised competition, opened the market and obliged Dutch service providers to develop qualitative project proposals. However, the quality of the project proposal of the Dutch service provider alone did not guarantee a good project. This was above all dependent on the quality of the partner relationship that could be established.

Recommendation:

- ✓ A combination of a tender procedure as is currently organised and an open call system, enabling Dutch service providers and requesting organisations to jointly present a proposal, is recommended. The current experiences with the NFP TMT modality can be taken as an example.

(3) Capacity development processes are non-linear and long-term trajectories require appropriate strategies.

The evaluation shows that most results were obtained regarding the development of curricula, improving research capacities, providing equipment, up-to-date infrastructures, the provision of state of the art knowledge, improved teaching and research capacities. The level of sustainability is dependent on the level of institutional embedment of these changes. In order to strengthen this institutional embedment NICHE II adopted a holistic perspective on capacity development and provided support for change processes at management, organisational and institutional level. Top and middle management were supposed to be more actively involved in project design and implementation.

The results of organisational and institutional development support are rather limited. Measures were taken to improve the organisational structures and management systems and/or to enhance networking with external stakeholders. Often the developed policies, strategies and/or products were not fully implemented (or not at all). It was insufficiently taken into account that the envisaged results required changes in responsibilities, additional tasks and duties without proper financial compensation. Given that capacity is a highly relational concept, a sub-theme is that power matters. In many cases insufficient attention was paid for the types of power that are in play, where they are located and how they are applied.

Middle and higher management were usually involved in the projects but this did not guarantee ownership, effectiveness and sustainability. Leadership in organisational and institutional capacity building processes is different than leadership needed for project management and requires another set of competences. The real issue may not be the position of a person but how to ensure a leadership at different levels in the institution. Insufficient attention was paid to identifying change agents within the institutions and/or to identify people that could manage the change processes.

This is also evidenced by the gender interventions. Quick wins were achieved in obtaining more female students in training but not much difference has been achieved in engendering top management. A typical donor driven approach was applied with an emphasis on developing a gender policy, which was often not fully implemented. No appropriate mainstreaming strategies were developed and often there was no ownership for this kind of change processes at the side of the requesting organisation (and as such no leadership to steer these processes).

The choice for a holistic approach to capacity development is relevant taking into account the complexity and multi-facet dimensions of capacity development and the need to enhance sustainability of the NICHE projects, as was recommended in the 2012 Ramboll evaluation. However, no appropriate strategies were developed and it can be questioned whether there was sufficient competence available at the level of the Dutch service providers to facilitate this kind of change processes. Supporting capacity development processes requires good knowledge of such change processes, specific facilitation skills, and an appropriate capacity development plan, shared and owned by all stakeholders. The 5C-model was used as a tool for capacity assessment. The tool appeared to be complex and difficult in use. Capacity assessments however are just one - but important- element of capacity development trajectories. There was a general lack of a sound vision on how capacity takes place and how it can be supported among both the Dutch service provider and the requesting organisations. Dutch service providers are strong in their technical field of expertise but not always strong in supporting capacity development processes.

Lastly, capacity development processes require more than four years. This was evidenced by the fact that almost all projects required an additional one to two years (budget neutral extension). Further-

more, it can be questioned whether organisational and institutional change processes can be organised in a partnership where often the partners did not know each other or where there was a lack of mutual trust.

Recommendations:

- ✓ To effectively obtain sustainable changes, aiming also at organisational and institutional change, projects are needed that last longer than four years. Two cycles of five years seem more appropriate as is currently being applied in the Belgian international university cooperation.
- ✓ If needed, also shorter term projects can be financed but the objectives of the capacity development support need to be more modest.
- ✓ More trainings need to be provided for staff of Dutch service providers to fully understand the challenges related to supporting capacity development processes and to strengthen competencies in supporting capacity development trajectories. Tools like the 5C-model are just instruments to support capacity development trajectories. A proper vision and strategy on capacity development support is a prerequisite before starting to apply specific tools, such as 5C-model.

(4) EP-Nuffic is capable to conduct proper programme management but there are several challenges at project management level.

EP-Nuffic has installed a proper and efficient management system and the evolution towards focusing on programme monitoring and less on project monitoring seems appropriate and contributed to efficiency gains. The principles behind project management such as result based management, trust based relationships, etc. should be respected and maintained in the next phase.

There are however several challenges at project management level. Requesting organisations were not always able to provide staff for qualitative project management. Several Dutch service providers complained about the weak management capacity at the requesting organisations, which can be explained by the lack of sufficient ownership, lack of adequate leadership and/or competencies in project management, lack of time, etc. These elements jeopardized efficient implementation of the projects and demanded a bigger time and resources investment from the Dutch service providers. The quality of reporting and the monitoring of progress of output, and its contribution to outcome, was generally weak. The indicators in the logframe are not helpful in stimulating a critical reflection on progress towards the outcome envisaged.

Regarding the management capacity of the Dutch service providers it is difficult to formulate a conclusion on the difference in quality of project management in cases where a consultancy company took the lead or a university. There are too many variables that have an influence on appropriate and effective project management. Good and bad examples could be identified among the two groups of service providers in the projects visited.

Recommendations:

- ✓ In order to maintain the efficiency gains it is recommended to maintain as much as possible the existing management system in the next phase.
- ✓ The changed division of roles and responsibilities needs to be made clear again to all parties involved.

- ✓ A more pro-active role can be taken up by EP-Nuffic in monitoring the programme at programme level, for example in linking requesting organisations to other initiatives at regional or international level that can be relevant for the project.
- ✓ Trainings need to be provided to inform again the Dutch service providers on the principle of result based management and to look jointly for solutions how to improve the critical dialogue between the Dutch service provider and the requesting organisations to discuss progress towards output and outcome.
- ✓ Within the framework of capacity development it needs to be considered to examine how financial responsibility can be (partially) transferred to the requesting organisations, which need to be different from the current arrangement with assigning 6 % of the project management to the requesting organisations. The current arrangements hamper this transfer or sharing of financial responsibility as the Dutch service providers have the full (juridical) responsibility for the financial management. Evidently they are hesitant in transferring part of the financial management to the requesting organisations. It is recommended to study how financial responsibility could be effectively shared between the Dutch service providers and the requesting organisations. This is based on the assumption that in such as situation the requesting organisation will gain decision power regarding the activities to be implemented and will become more the owner of its own development process.

6.2 Conclusions and recommendations regarding NFP

(1) The NFP is a relevant and effective programme at individual level and the level of employing organisations. Transfer of knowledge and skills to the organisational level can be further supported.

The conclusions of the former NFP evaluation (2012) are confirmed in this evaluation. The NFP is highly relevant for the individual alumni as it responds to a specific personal need or interest (more career oriented for master and PhD, more operational oriented for SC and RC). The NFP contributed to improved individual performance. NFP alumni acquired new knowledge and skills and were mostly able to apply these in practice, which resulted in improved performance at individual level and – to a certain extent- also contributed to improved services and strategies of their employing organisations.

Contribution of the programme to better performing organisations depends – at the short term - on the performance of the individual alumni and the organisational characteristics that facilitate or hamper knowledge transfer and application. On the long term organisational effects could be the result of NFP alumni obtaining more strategic or leadership positions. The NFP has no direct influence on the pre-conditions that create the opportunities for knowledge transfer within the employing organisation.

There were indications that NFP could be leverage for better performing organisations in cases where several staff members of an organisation had participated in the NFP. This is currently not strategically managed by the NFP and depends on the individual initiatives, peer-to-peer promotion and interest in NFP of the leadership at the employing organisations. The refresher courses only contribute to group training to a limited manner (short duration, limited number of staff). The same applies for the other in-country trainings, namely the TMT of which only a few are granted per year/country.

Recommendations:

- ✓ If the NFP formulates objectives at individual level (more qualified human capital) but also at organisational level (better performing organisations) it is recommended to pay more attention to the conditions that facilitate or hamper knowledge transfer. An employer statement is not sufficient to guarantee this knowledge transfer. For example, it would be relevant for educational institutes in the Netherlands to include a module on change management topics (how to cope with resistance in the organisation, how to start and influence changes from a non-leadership position).
- ✓ The policy decision to also include objectives at organisational level excludes the group of independent workers and free-lancers. These groups however can also play an important role at country level with regard to sector development, like for example good qualified journalists or entrepreneurs. Inclusion of these target groups in NFP could be taken into consideration.
- ✓ Currently the development of action plans at organisational level is already included in the short courses and refresher courses. More attention should be given to the monitoring of the implementation of these action plans (e.g. being part of the contract with the Dutch service provider)
- ✓ The modality of a long-term trajectory of several short courses (in the Netherlands or in-country training) with staff from the same organisation could be considered again (and draw lessons from past experiences with such modalities).

(2) Contribution to support sector development at country level takes place but is not strategically managed.

The NFP is assumed to contribute to sector development in the four priority themes of the Dutch development cooperation. Applicants situated in these priority sectors get preference in the final selection. However, the NFP does not apply a sector-oriented approach as it is based on individual applications, and opportunities to manage the programme in a more strategic manner – from country perspective - are limited. The embassies have only limited influence on the selection of individual applicants (as this is done by a computer programme and competition is high). Other departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could use the NFP to respond to capacity gaps encountered in the bilateral development programmes they are managing. Currently contribution to sector development is materialised through the availability of qualified human capital and the level of their performance, and – in the long term – by having NFP alumni at strategic positions at ministry level or top management level in important sector institutions. But this is not strategically managed (e.g. through a strategic selection of possible candidates). It must be noted that a more strategic use of the NFP can be contradictory to the demand driven character of the programme.

Moreover, preference is given to applications situated within the four priority sectors but the majority of the NFP countries are no partner country for the direct bilateral cooperation programmes and have often other priorities.

The TMT offer the best option for alignment and strategic coherence with the bilateral cooperation (and influence from the Netherlands embassy), though only very few get eventually awarded.

The NFP is also very relevant for the Dutch service providers in perspective of the internationalisation of their courses. Institutions offering courses in other sectors receive only a very few NFP students.

This can be questioned as expertise built up in a certain sector can contribute to the development of another sector (e.g. social sciences and food security).

Recommendations:

- ✓ Clear policy decisions need to be taken regarding the objectives of the NFP and the demand driven character. On the one hand there are several arguments to defend the demand driven character of the programme, contributing to individual (and organisational) capacity development in a variety of sectors. On the other hand, there is a manifest request from different stakeholders within the ministry to make more strategically use of the NFP, to respond to specific capacity gaps that emerge from the programmes they are managing. It can be taken into consideration to develop two different modalities: an open system of calls for proposals without much limitation in sectors and a closed call for proposals that can be used by the actors involved in the Dutch bilateral development cooperation programmes.
- ✓ When making more strategic use of the NFP, it can be taken into consideration to link master and PhD students more to the Dutch development cooperation. Master students could do internships (or conduct research) in organisations that are involved in or of relevance for the Dutch bilateral cooperation programmes (at central and decentral level). Master and PhD students should be more informed on the Dutch bilateral cooperation programme, already when they are staying in the Netherlands. This requires a more active involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch service providers and should not depend on alumni activities organised by EP-Nuffic.

(3) The alumni and their networks have potential in contributing to sector development and economic diplomacy but the current alumni programme requires revision.

The alumni programme, which received specific attention and funding during NFP II, has delivered mixed results. The programme has contributed to sharing of experiences, knowledge and networking among NFP students and alumni in the Netherlands and some southern regions (though limited). These interventions are complementary to the alumni activities organised by the respective educational institutes and or very relevant for those institutions that invest little or not in alumni activities themselves.

Other impacts are more difficult to identify. The planned support for the set-up of national alumni associations and/or for their activities remained very limited. National alumni associations varied in strengths but were perceived rather weak in the countries visited. Most alumni interviewed are already active in thematic knowledge networks, created in the margin of a specific NFP course and are linked to the educational institute in the Netherlands. These thematic networks seem to be operational and beneficial in knowledge sharing, peer support and joint proposal writing. The added value of the national alumni associations was not evidenced and the strategy to support these NAA is rather “old fashion” (establishment of a formal organisation with a secretariat, internal rules and regulations, maybe a physical address, etc.) according to the evaluators (in time of social media).

The creation of the Holland Alumni Network gained strong interests and enthusiasm among the alumni interviewed but also created – sometimes unrealistic - expectations among NFP alumni, e.g. to use the national alumni association or the Holland Alumni Network to increase their access to opportunities for employment, grants and consultancies offered by the Dutch government agencies

and Dutch private companies in their home countries. The objectives and roles of the national alumni associations were not made sufficiently clear by the EP-Nuffic alumni programme.

NFP alumni were not strategically managed for economic diplomacy. The Netherlands embassies rely on their own networks and complaint that tracing NFP alumni was difficult. Netherlands embassies have started to organise specific network events to link NFP alumni to private sector actors. However, the embassies are confronted with the weaknesses of the alumni associations, which implies that organisation of these events largely depends on the Netherlands embassy.

So far the NFP has little contributed to economic diplomacy or private sector development. Other capacity development facilities, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or by RVO (Netherlands Enterprise Agency), are in place to strengthen private sector development and promote trade and development. Not much use is made of the NFP or the NFP alumni in these programmes. NFP students are almost not linked with the business community during and at the end of their stay in the Netherlands.

Recommendations:

- ✓ The objective of the Holland alumni network needs to be further clarified and appropriate strategies need to be developed. For networking, knowledge sharing and linking up with NFP alumni no Holland alumni network is needed, just an up-to-date and accessible alumni database (besides the networking via social media that is already taking place). If the policy decision is taken to establish national alumni associations, more hands-on support in strengthening these associations is required. This capacity is currently not available at the Netherlands embassies and difficult to offer at distance by EP-Nuffic.
- ✓ More alignment can be looked for between the various programmes fostering private sector development in developing countries and the NFP (see also recommendation 1). In order to make effective use of the NFP a specific budget should be made available for scholarships awarding candidates identified in these private sector development programmes.
- ✓ The budget for direct funding of small development projects, managed by the Netherlands embassies, could be used in a more strategic manner to support projects formulated by NFP alumni. It will provide an extra incentive for the alumni to become part of the national alumni association (if any) or Holland alumni network and maintain relationships with the Netherlands embassy; and it offers opportunities for knowledge exchange among alumni (sharing results and learning that took place in these projects).

(4) EP-Nuffic is able to conduct appropriate and efficient programme management and the new role division between all stakeholders is adequate. The use of the budget (and as such the distribution of the different NFP modalities) will depend on the policy choices taken for the next phase of the programme.

EP-Nuffic realises adequate and efficient management of the programme. As huge investments have been done to achieve this efficiency level, it would be an efficiency loss if the whole management system would need to be changed again in a next phase. The adapted role division between EP-Nuffic, the educational institutes and the Netherlands embassies was appropriate and contributed to more efficient application and selection processes.

The role of the Netherlands embassies is limited to the assessment of the nominated candidates (Master, PhD, short Courses) but not all embassies apply the assessment rules in an appropriate

manner, mainly to exert some influence on the final selection (through the assessment scores provided) in order to obtain a bigger contingent of NFP students for the host country of the Netherlands embassy.

The division of the available budget over the different educational institutes and countries depends on the computer algorithm (based on the quality of the applications) but is properly monitored by EP-Nuffic and hardly contested by the educational institutes. The division of the budget over the countries is also monitored but not strategically managed. This has been an explicit policy choice.

The fact that educational institutes received a bigger role and responsibility in inviting possible candidates and nominating them before the assessment phase created the opportunities for the educational institutions for a more purposeful selection of candidates at the start of the procedures. This does not put the demand driven character at risk and gives more control at the educational institutes over the selection of possible students.

The programme budget has decreased under NFP II and at the same time the cost for master students has increased, resulting in a lower number of master scholarships as compared to the previous phases. Experiments with co-financing are still young but show possibilities.

Efficiency gains for programme management are challenged by additional questions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. EP-Nuffic was asked to experiment with co-financing modalities or to respond in a flexible manner to urgent requests from the Ministry to deliver specific scholarships for specific cases. It must be noted that every deviation from regular procedures demands extra time and staff investment. This has not been acknowledged sufficiently by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Recommendations:

- ✓ The efficiency measures taken should be respected and the way the application and selection process is organised and automatized should be maintained as much as possible.
- ✓ The division of the budget (and fellowships) over the educational institutions and countries depends on the policy choices. Currently the NFP is a very much demand driven and open system, in which the quality of the applications (however, in combination with its relevancy for the four priority sectors) is the most important selection factor. A policy choice in favour of a stronger and more strategic role of NFP in contributing to sector development in the priority fields of the Dutch development cooperation (see conclusion and recommendations in point 1) will require the establishment of country budgets for NFP.
- ✓ The number of TMT, PhD and RC organised in specific countries is very low (and competition is high). For the TMT it can be questioned why this modality should be offered to 51 countries instead of being strategically used in a limited number of countries, for example as a complement of the NICHE programme (making available access to smaller projects, under a more flexible regulation). The number of PhD fellowships is very low. The policy choice could be made to use the limited budget for the PhD modality in a more targeted manner, identifying strategic universities and research centres having potential to contribute to the objectives of the bilateral cooperation that could benefit from enhanced research capacities.
- ✓ The creation of an urgent response fund, with its own (more flexible) rules and regulations, will enable EP-Nuffic to act in a flexible way to specific demands without investing each time in tailor made approaches for the management of these requests.
- ✓ As master scholarships represent the biggest share of the total NFP budget it is relevant to further experiment with co-financing modalities for the master courses as this enables twice as much scholarships for the available budget. It is recommended to experiment with co-

financing modalities also for the short courses and in particular for the refresher courses as there exists an interest and most probably the share of fellowship holders and/or employers contributing will be much higher compared to the master programme.

7. Annex

7.1 Data collection instruments

→ For analysis grid and all interview and group discussion guidelines, see section 4.4 (annex) of the Inception Report.

7.1.1 Questionnaire for NICHE service providing institutions

→ See separate document “NICHE DSP questionnaire.pdf”.

7.1.2 Questionnaire for NICHE requesting organisations

→ See separate document “NICHE partner questionnaire.pdf”.

7.1.3 Questionnaire for NFP service providing institutions

→ See separate document “NFP DSP questionnaire.pdf”.

7.1.4 Questionnaire for current NFP participants

→ See separate document “NFP student questionnaire.pdf”.

7.2 Terms of Reference

→ See separate document “ToR external evaluation NPT NICHE 2016 definitief.docx”.

7.3 Technical Proposal

→ See separate document “CEval ACE Technical Proposal NPT NICHE evaluation.pdf”.

7.4 Inception report

→ See separate document “161020 Rev Inception Report NFP NICHE.docx”.

7.5 Description of the management system for NICHE II

Demand identification

The demand identification phase has been cancelled. EP-Nuffic does not invest anymore in fact-finding missions and no programme outline and sector plans are to be developed anymore. Point of departure of the NICHE programme is the Multi Annual Sector Plan (MASP) of the Netherlands embassy. The MASP is guiding in developing NICHE country programmes. New partners are identified in close collaboration with the Netherlands embassy.

Demand articulation

The demand articulation phase is composed by five processes: Information packages for the requesting organisations, project outline, capacity self assessment, training in financial administration and quality assessment of the project outlines.

Information packages for the requesting partners: Following a recommendation of the 2012 Ramboll evaluation, the invitation letter to participate in the NICHE programme is sent to the highest management level, refers to the NICHE handbook and requests to commit itself to the objectives and policy principles of the NICHE programme. The NICHE handbook includes a description of the pro-

gramme and various examples and models to assist the requesting organisations drafting their projects outline.

Project outline: The requesting organisation drafts a project outline in which they describe their demand and outline the NICHE project. No budget is foreseen anymore for consultants assisting the requesting organisation in developing its project. Support is provided through project writing workshops that are organised by EP-Nuffic. For NICHE II the project outline is simplified and requesting organisations are only asked to describe the expected outcome of the project, which gives service providers more flexibility in designing the strategy of the project. This was a response to the critique of the Dutch service providers that project outlines were often too ambitious. In phase II the service providers receive more responsibility to develop realistic outputs and to assess beforehand the expected contribution of the outputs toward the formulated outcomes. Moreover, EP-Nuffic obliged to not formulate more than 12 outputs, to enable better monitoring of the projects.

Capacity self-assessment: Part of the project outline is a checklist for an organisational capacity assessment (COCA). The requesting organisations need to provide information about their staff, their financial resources, their management structure and their organisational weaknesses and strengths. They can also indicate if they want to take over the financial responsibility for the project. In the occasion a requesting organisation wants to take over financial responsibility, EP-Nuffic contracts a local consultant of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to assess the financial situation and stability of the requesting organisation. Since phase II of NICHE the organisational profile is complemented with a capacity self-assessment based on the 5C-model. EP-Nuffic has developed specific indicators for each of the five core capabilities. During the project writing workshop this 5C assessment tool is explained to the partners by the project manager of EP-Nuffic. EP-Nuffic provides guidance (at distance) throughout this self-assessment process and the development of the organisational profile, which is part of the project outline. The objective is to repeat this assessment in the middle and at the end of the project.

Training in financial management: If the requesting organisation wants to take over financial responsibility for a NICHE project, but lacks the necessary capacity, they can be trained by the local office of PwC, which is paid by EP-Nuffic.

Quality assessment of the project outlines: EP-Nuffic assesses the technical quality of the project outlines. EP-Nuffic gives feedback to the requesting organisation to improve the project outline. EP-Nuffic staff spend a lot of time on these assessments and the communication thereof with the requesting partners. EP-Nuffic is responsible for the quality of the tender process that depend to a large extent on the quality of the project outlines.

Tender procedure

The tender procedure can be divided into three processes: publication of the tender, assessment of the proposals and award of the grant.

Publication of the tender: EP-Nuffic publishes the call for proposals on their website and email alerts are sent out all over the world. The tender procedure is a public procedure, restricted to organisations or (international) consortia led by an organisation based in the Netherlands. The tender document can be downloaded from the EP-Nuffic website.

Assessment of the proposals: The submitted proposals are evaluated by the Tender Evaluation Committee⁶⁹ (TEC) through a system of points awarded for each of the following criteria: quality of the proposed project, technical quality of the project proposal, quality of the team members. The minimum score that is required for each criterion is set beforehand. Project proposals need to have a minimum score for each of the three criteria. Different from phase I the assessment of the technical and financial proposals are disconnected. The members of the TEC only receive the technical proposal and have no access to the financial proposal. This measure was taken to avoid TEC members to be influenced by the financial proposal while assessing the technical quality. The financial proposal is not assessed as such (apart from the eligibility check done by the financial controllers before the TEC commission starts its work). After the technical assessment, the total technical score is just divided by the project budget. The bidder with the lowest budget/score wins. This measure contributed to enhanced transparency and enabled a balanced and fairer assessment of cost-quality. This is evidenced by the fact that the amount of complaints has decreased.

Even if there is only one proposal submitted it will still be assessed against the criteria by the TEC. If the proposal does not qualify the tender will be cancelled. If the requesting organisation refuses to accept as a partner the Dutch provider who won the tender, the tender will be cancelled. In these cases, and in the occasion there were no proposals, the tender will be re-launched. This is most often the case for tenders related to French speaking countries or fragile states.

Award of the grant: after the winning proposal has been selected, EP-Nuffic drafts the project grant award letter. This has been automated since NICHE II. The software (WIRE) produces automatically the grant letters and non-selection letters. For NICHE II it is obliged to sign a memorandum of understanding between both partners.

Project implementation phase

Inception period: the inception phase as such has been cancelled in phase II of NICHE, based upon the critique from the service providers that this was almost a repetition of the preparation of the proposal. However, requesting organisations are still requested to develop a report zero (instead of an inception report). Implementing partners can use such a report to agree on the final strategy for the project, to discuss the logical framework, to finalise a plan of action, to conduct a training needs assessment, discuss the 5C assessment exercise, etc. This report zero is sent to EP-Nuffic but partners do not wait for approval of EP-Nuffic and immediately start implementing.

Project implementation: the responsibility for implementing the project lies with the service provider and the requesting organisation. Each project is supposed to be implemented within the given timeframe. The projects last up to four years. A budget neutral extension can be requested. Report zero is expected nine months after the project has started. The first progress report is expected after 16 months, starting from the starting date of the project. The reporting cycle is not anymore based on the calendar year. A planning for the next year is only necessary when changes from the original plan occur.

Monitoring and evaluation: EP-Nuffic is assigned with the responsibility to monitor the projects. Monitoring is done through the assessment of the annual project reports and monitoring visits. The project monitoring evolved from activity based monitoring (as applied under NPT and NICHE I) to

⁶⁹ The TEC commission is composed by a EP-Nuffic staff member (secretary), the requesting partner and one specialist with expertise related to the project's subject area (chair of the committee).

result based monitoring (NICHE II). An assessment of the project progress is based upon the indicators at output and outcome level, which the partners have formulated themselves and that are integral part of the logical framework of the project. Annual reports have to report on progress towards achieving outputs and outcomes and not on activities implemented. The partners do not need to inform EP-Nuffic on changes to planning or choice of activities, as long as the changes contribute to the desired outcome. Partners do not have to formulate a request for change anymore and ask for approval. An “active mandatory obligation” (actieve meldingsplicht) has been installed: partners only have to inform EP-Nuffic when there are indications that outputs will not be realised, when they can’t respect the grant obligations or when less than 75 % of the annual budget will be used. Reports can be sent digitally (except the audit report which need to be in hard copy) whereas under NPT and NICHE I still hard copies needed to be provided.

EP-Nuffic project officers conduct on average one monitoring mission annually/country to visit the projects. A mission lasts between one and a half and three weeks. During these missions EP-Nuffic also has a meeting with the Netherlands embassy to discuss progress of the NICHE projects and its contribution to the MASP. The country visits of the financial controllers have been cancelled. They only visit requesting organisations experiencing problems with the financial management. Complementary EP-Nuffic conducts monitoring through regular telephone conversations, e-mails and through the organisation of meetings with Dutch service providers per country to discuss country dynamics and possible alignment between country projects.

Regarding evaluations within the NICHE II programme, EP-Nuffic can conduct up to five independent evaluations per year (ca. 7 % of all projects). This means that EP-Nuffic is able to evaluate ca. 25 % of all financed projects within the four year cycle. Requesting organisations themselves can also evaluate the project if they have planned for it in their activities (a planned evaluation contributes to a higher score is the assessment of the technical quality of the project proposal). EP-Nuffic reports back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in annual reports which also include the financial statement.

Financial management: There is a yearly provisional approval of expenditures, based on the annual reports. The grant recipient (usually the Dutch service provider) is given a set of rules and fixed fees for drawing up budgets. A prescribed format for the NICHE budget is made available. The grant recipient is responsible for keeping careful records of projects’ expenditures and for monitoring the budget. Guidelines for this are included in the financial rules that accompany the award of the grant.

A lot of changes have been done related to the financial management of NICHE II projects. Some examples: (1) advanced payments (max. 80 % of the total project budget) are now regulated by the grant award and not depending anymore on the project expenses. This decision was taken because EP-Nuffic had to manage several requests for intermediary payments under NICHE I (because of liquidity challenges). (2) Contingencies can be used along an agreement between both parties and do not need to be approved anymore by EP-Nuffic. (3) A lump sum for project management costs is foreseen for the requesting organisation (6 %) but not for the service provider. This lump sum can be used in a flexible manner and does not need to be accounted for. All rules and regulations are described in the NICHE Handbook. The projects need to be carried out in compliance with the NICHE Handbook. The grant letter explicitly refers to this handbook.

The organisations make sure that the expenditures are audited by independent, external auditors. The requirements for selecting an auditor have been made similar for the service provider and the requesting partner since NICHE II. The auditor must be a member of the International Federation of Accountants. If not, explicit approval from EP-Nuffic is needed.

7.6 Description of the new rules and regulation introduced under NFP II to improve the efficiency of programme implementation

The obligation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to save up to 30 % of the management costs also included the NFP. Several measures have been taken to decrease time investment of EP-Nuffic staff in the management of the programme. Part of these measures included systematizing and automating all steps of the NFP application process. In phase II of NFP EP-Nuffic moved from the SOL software to ATLAS (to manage PhD, Ma, SC) and will gradually move to DELTA (to also include TMT and RC). Following an overview is given of the most important changes taken in relation to the different phases in the management process of NFP, in particular for the individual courses (PhD, master and short courses).

Preparation of the course offer

A study programme is listed on studyfinder.nl. An overview of all possible courses is presented. The educational institutes only have to tick the course(s) they will provide for the coming call. This needed to be done manually by the EP-Nuffic officers in the previous phases. EP-Nuffic controls whether all educational institutes have indicated the courses they will provide for the next call.

Application for a scholarship

A candidate registration form is available at the website. Contrary to the previous phase, the application is not open for every-one. Candidates can only apply for a scholarship through the educational institutions. Only students that receive a specific URL link from the educational institution can access the candidate registration form. The candidate registration form requests basic information and includes three open questions to enable the applicant to elaborate on its motivation for participation in NFP. Applicants can upload the registration form in ATLAS. The system also demands to upload a copy of the passport and employer statement. Only completed registrations are accepted by the system. No incomplete applications are existing anymore that required follow-up by EP-Nuffic or the Netherlands embassy. Each educational institute manages its applications.

Nomination of candidates

The educational institutes assess the application based on a scoring system and make a selection out of all applications. The selected candidates are nominated for a scholarship. Each educational institute can nominate a maximum of applications, based on their past track record. EP-Nuffic monitors whether the educational institutes have nominated their candidates and calculates the budget distribution and the number of possible nominations.

Assessment of applications

The list of nominated candidates is sent to the Netherlands embassies who assess the applications based on their multi-annual strategic plans. The embassies only have to assess the list of nominated candidates, whereas in previous phases all candidates were assessed by the educational institute and the Netherlands embassy. The embassy conducts an eligibility check followed by an assessment based on 9 questions related to relevance, sustainability, etc. In total 51 points are to be given. No ranking of the candidates is required anymore as was done in the previous phase. This was cancelled because candidates could not compete with candidates from other countries at equal base. The current system should allow for more fair competition between candidates, under condition that the Netherlands embassies carry out their tasks properly. Scores are put into the ATLAS system. EP-Nuffic

monitors the quality of assessments and provide support to the different stakeholders involved in the assessment.

Selection and granting the award

EP-Nuffic makes the final selection based on the criteria of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in combination with the assessment of the embassies. 50 % of the scholarships need to be granted to female students, 35 % need to be situated in the sector of food security and 67 % of the scholarships need to be directed to category 1 countries. An algorithm is developed to make this selection, based on these criteria. The final selection is controlled by EP-Nuffic in order to check the distribution of the scholarships over countries, educational institutes, absorption of the budget, etc. and when needed corrective measures can be taken. EP-Nuffic awards the grant to the institutions that inform the candidates that have been selected. The whole selection process takes 16 weeks.

Programme implementation

The educational institutes are responsible for the management of the grant. They report to EP-Nuffic: for short courses one report is sent at the end of the course; for the master and PhD scholarships the educational institutes send annually reports and one final report when the last master or PhD student has finalised the course. Formats of these reports are available in ATLAS. EP-Nuffic provides support to the educational institutes for drafting annual reports, when needed. EP-Nuffic also organises meetings with the Dutch educational institutes to discuss and reflect on the management of the programme (klankbordgroepen).

Tailor Made Training (TMT)

The changes in the TMT programme, as compared to phase I are based on the following principles:

- ✓ A targeted approach with a stronger focus of achieving the NFP targets
- ✓ An approach that can be strategically applied by the embassies and support the bilateral policies of embassies in the NFP countries
- ✓ A more optimal balance between demand and the likelihood of obtaining a grant

Since NFP II, Dutch service providers can apply for a TMT grant via a joint proposal or a tender procedure.⁷⁰ The preparation and selection process of the TMT consists of eight steps: (0) a preparation step, (1) the application step, (2) eligibility check and ranking of the proposals, (3) pre-selection, (4) final selection, (5) publishing call for tender/grant award, (6) selection of provider, (7) awarding grant.

The Netherlands embassies play an important role in the assessment of the TMT. Since phase II, the embassy can determine whether to choose for an open or closed application system.⁷¹ The embassy publishes the TMT information on its website with a link to the EP-Nuffic website where all relevant documents can be obtained. The embassy checks the eligibility of the applications and decides to what extent the embassy would like to support the training, in view of the development priorities of the embassy. Embassies make a ranking of the top five applications submitted to them.

⁷⁰ An organisation in one of the NFP countries can directly approach a Dutch training provider. The two organisations can then formulate a training proposal together. An organisation in an NFP country can submit an application and any Dutch provider can put in an offer based on a tender procedure. Tenders are published on the EP-Nuffic website.

⁷¹ In an open call the embassy can choose to accept applications and proposals from all interested organisations; in a closed call it is the embassy who identifies and invites organisations to submit applications or proposals.

EP-Nuffic makes an overview of the proposals, ranking applications and proposals on the embassies' support and ranking, and according to the NFP priorities (Sub-Sahara Africa, food security, country category). Following, a final selection is made out of the pre-selected applications and proposals until the budget ceiling is reached. A tender is published for selected applications and a grant is awarded to the providers of the selected joint proposals. In case of a tender procedure, EP-Nuffic, in collaboration with the requesting organisations, will assess the eligible bids and select the winner.

Once a grant is awarded to a training provider, that provider is directly responsible for the preparation and management of the tailor-made training course. A TMT last between one to nine months. Within two months after the training has finished training providers need to submit a report and a separate list of participants.

Apart from the streamlined application and selection procedure, it was necessary to revise and simplify all documents used for the programme. EP-Nuffic also prepared instructions for the embassies, including suggested pages for the embassy websites. The application and selection process also has been digitalized.

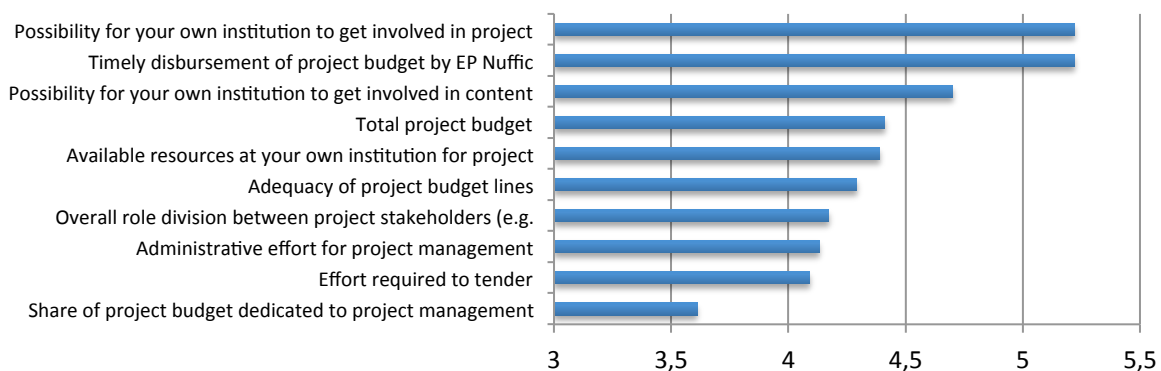
Refresher Courses

A specific call for proposals is launched for refresher courses, through the website of EP-Nuffic. Dutch educational institutes and requesting organisations in the south can present their course proposals. These proposals are assessed by EP-Nuffic, first on eligibility, followed by the quality assessment. The proposals with the highest score receive the grant until the budget ceiling is reached. Also the management of the refresher courses is automatized and digitalised.

7.7 Additional figures and tables

7.7.1 Figures

Figure 10: Assessment of project management by Dutch service providers⁷²



⁷² Source: NICHE DSP survey, n = 73, based on a six-step scale in which “1” represents “absolutely unsatisfactory” and “6” represents “absolutely satisfactory”, scale adapted to highlight differences.

Figure 11: Assessment of the role of EP-Nuffic by DSP

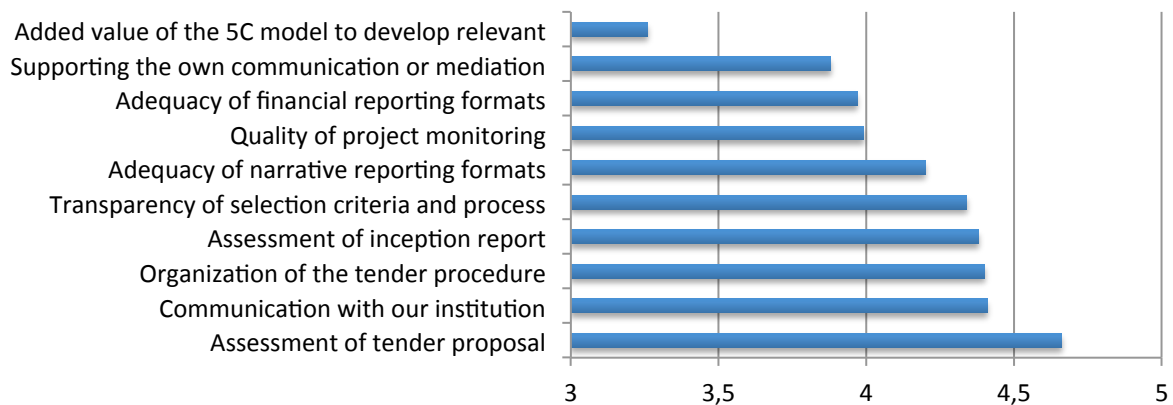


Figure 12: Assessment of the role of EP-Nuffic by southern partners

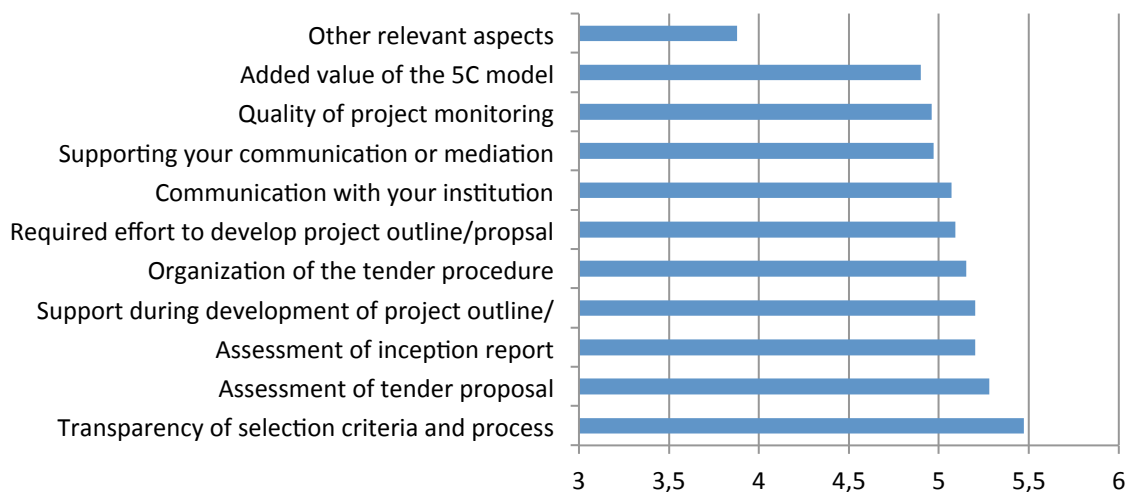


Figure 13: Assessment of ability to ensure sustainability of project results

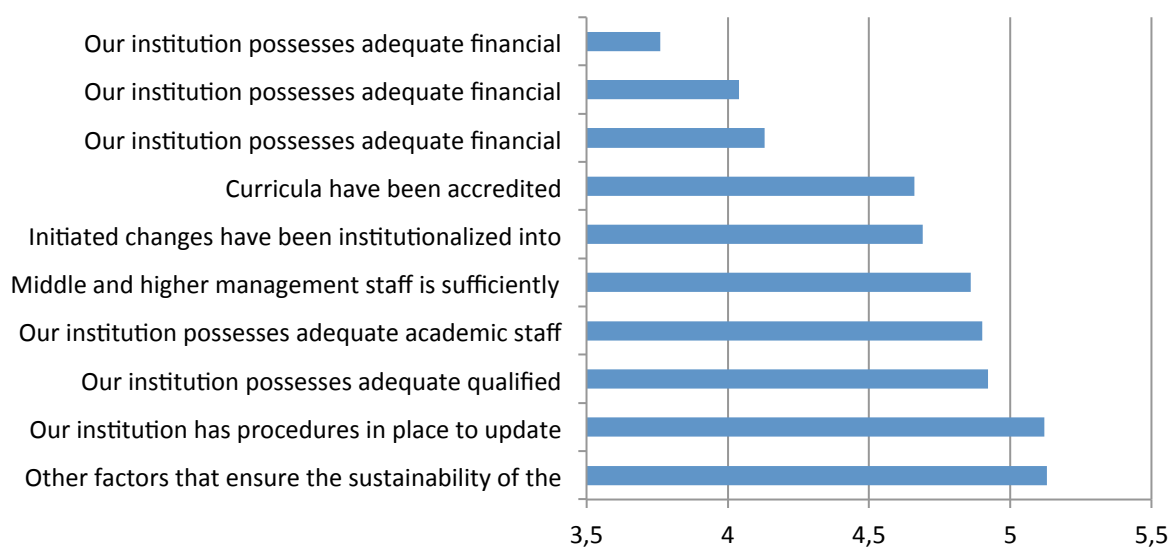


Figure 14: Assessment of ability to ensure sustainability by DSPs

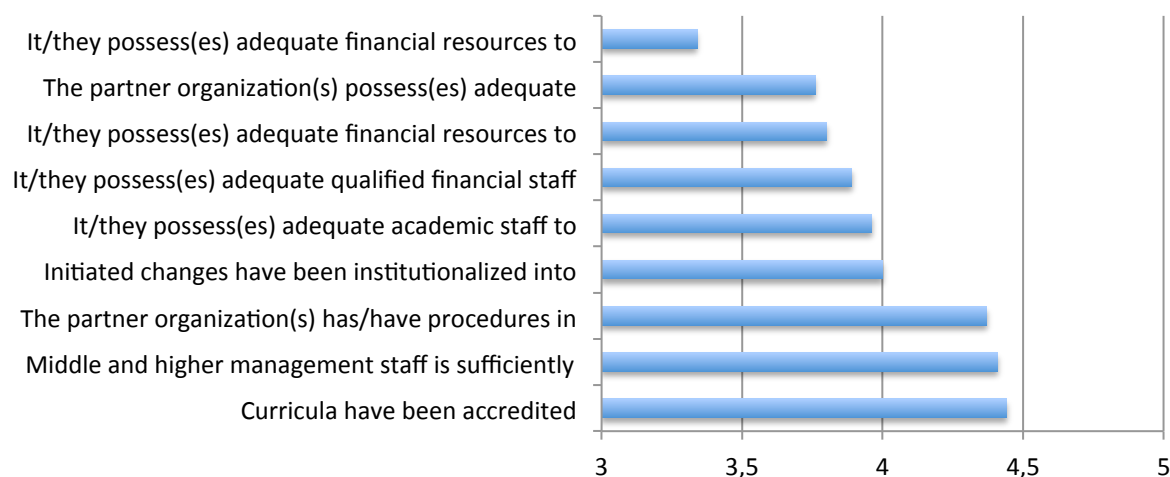
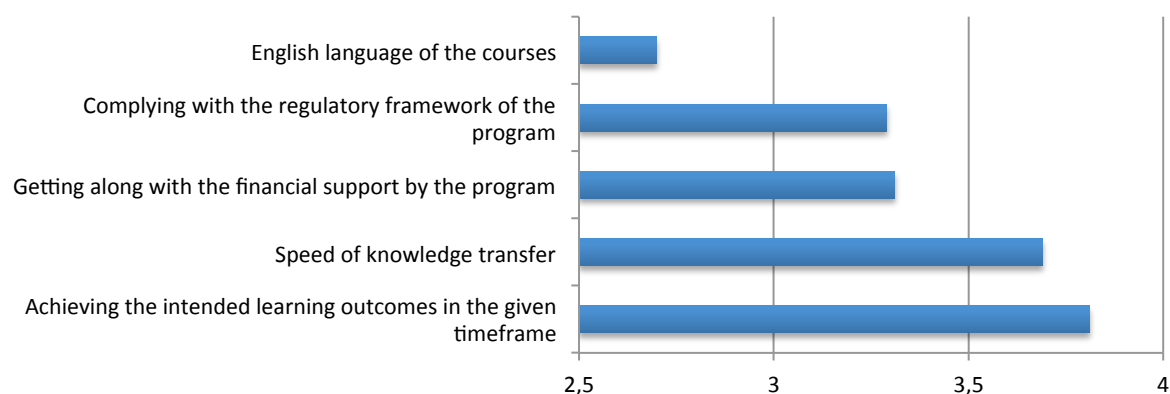


Figure 15: Challenging aspects for NFP fellows



7.7.2 Tables

Table 17: NICHE cost components at programme management level per year, in Euro

	2012 (NICHE I)	2013 ⁷³	2014 NICHE II	2015 NICHE II	Total
Identification, articulation and assessment	1.126.825	50.316 (NICHE II) 256.092 (NICHE I)	980.279	633.303	3.046.815
Project monitoring	985.134	612.158 (NICHE II) 75.017 (NPT) 689.036 (NICHE I)	1.209.153	1.638.672	5.209.170
Regulation	55.134	154.436 (NICHE II) 8.558 (NICHE I)	80.652	/	298.780
Reporting and communication	158.808	110.908 (NICHE II) 18.266 (NPT) 105.672 (NICHE I)	210.834	170.029	774.517
Management⁷⁴	867.041	5.018 (NPT) 315.995 (NICHE I)	/	/	1.188.054
Programme monitoring and evaluation	67.247	51.475 (NICHE II) 69 (NPT)	232.911	206.929	720.604

⁷³ 2013 must be seen as a transition year, where the management of NPT and NICHE I is gradually transferred to NICHE II. In 2013 NPT became included in NICHE. The first half of the year the annual reports present the management costs related to NICHE II and to NICHE I and NPT separately, the second half of the year all costs relate to NICHE II.

⁷⁴ Since NICHE II the management costs is divided over the other cost components.

		161.973 (NICHE I)			
BTW suppletie 2007-2011	164.214	/	/	/	164.214
Total	3.426.620	1.435.293 (NICHE II)	2.713.829	2.648.933	11.860.371
		98.371 (NPT)			
		1.537.325 (NICHE I)			

Table 18: Overview of the total grant awarded per country⁷⁵ in the period 2012-2015⁷⁶, in Euro

	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Bangladesh	2.499.879	6.981.165	1.685.447	1.199.962	12.366.453
Benin		7.792.615	4.797.458	3.788.400	16.378.473
Birma/Myanmar				999.967	999.967
Colombia	199.818				199.818
Ethiopia	1.767.884	3.374.496		4.599.328	9.741.708
Ghana			3.265.894		3.265.894
Great Lakes Region				998.910	998.910
Indonesia	5.783.936	1.499.540	10.821.846	3.514.913	21.620.235
Kenya	4.582.690	3.315.184	2.747.282	662.767	11.307.923
Mali		1.348.927	4.488.469	499.802	6.337.198
Mozambique	9.214.923	1.699.819	49.753	8.369.747	19.334.242
Palestine Territories				4.548.460	4.548.460
Rwanda	1.798.444	875.000	969.511	9.960.588	13.603.543
South Africa	909.904				909.904
South Sudan	1.705.126				1.705.126
Tanzania				1.824.947	1.824.947
Uganda	2.943.387		1.195.364		4.138.751
Vietnam				24.157	24.157
Total	31.405.991	26.886.746	30.021.024	40.991.948	129.305.709

Table 19: Overview of the project budget granted per type of contracted provider and type of organisations member of a consortium in the period 2012-2015⁷⁷, in Euro

	Type of organisation provider		Type of organisations in consortium	
	#	%	#	%
Consultancy agency	84	38	49	12
Government	1	0	7	2
International educational institute	35	16	34	9
NGO	2	1	32	8
Research centre	3	1	23	6
University	8	4	140	35
University of applied science	67	31	50	13
Private company	/	/	1	0
Other	19	9	36	9
Total	219	100	396	100

Table 20: Overview of the project budget granted per sector in the period 2012-2015⁷⁸, in Euro

	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total	%
Agriculture	8.063.520	9.186.281	5.851.613	14.543.202	37.644.616	29
Water and sanitation	7.258.925	6.906.151	6.511.038	2.997.461	23.673.575	18
Health	0	6.980.405	5.879.381	8.862.645	21.722.431	17

⁷⁵ Egypt and Guatemala are part of the NICHE programme but no grants were awarded to these two countries in the period 2012-2015.

⁷⁶ No grants were awarded to Yemen and Zambia in the period 2012-2015.

⁷⁷ No grants were awarded to non-governmental organisations in the period 2012-2015.

⁷⁸ The formulation of the sectors as applied by EP-Nuffic differs from the formulation of the policy spearheads. Food security is referred to as agriculture and environment, the consultants assume that health refers to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and that good governance relate to rule of law. Private sector development is seen as a separate sector but as understood by the consultants, parts of projects can relate to private sector development and as such part of project budgets is categorized under private sector development.

Good governance	4.616.778	0	8.122.655	4.866.061	17.605.494	14
Private sector development	9.185.834	1.830.795	1.198.508	2.223.628	14.438.765	11
Other	2.280.934 ⁷⁹	1.983.114 ¹³	2.482.789 ¹³	7.498.951 ⁸⁰	14.245.788	11
Total	31.405.991	26.886.746	30.045.984	40.991.948	129.330.669⁸¹	

Table 21: Overview of the project budget granted per type of contracted institution in the period 2012-2015⁸², in Euro

	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total	%
Consultancy Agency	16.516.396	10.072.152	13.689.144	20.373.649	60.651.341	47
International education institute	3.215.507	9.248.653	3.342.670	7.306.029	23.112.859	18
Other	/	/	/	25.000	25.000	/
Research Centre	2.222.344	1.348.927	49.753	/	1.621.024	1
University	7.080.165	2.675.236	10.545.585	13.287.270	33.588.256	26
University of applied Science	2.371.579	3.541.778	2.393.872	/	8.307.229	6
Total	31.405.991	26.886.746	30.021.024	40.991.948	129.305.709	

Table 22: Grants by type of requesting organisation

Grant modality	Type of requesting organisation	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Both		3 199 323	599 121	1 916 296	16 160 548	21 875 288
	Ministry	1 699 837				1 699 837
	National Agency				9 935 588	9 935 588
	Polytechnic					
	Specialised training institution					
	University			1 916 296	6 224 960	8 141 256
	Vocational Education and Training Institution	1 499 486	599 121			2 098 607
Provider		28 206 668	26 287 625	28 104 728	24 831 400	107 430 421
	Ministry	3 404 941	1 499 540	3 042 715	1 523 518	9 470 714
	National Agency	1 307 365	1 484 389	2 515 092	3 969 734	9 276 580
	Non-governmental Organisation				637 867	637 867
6% of budget for RO	Polytechnic	5 769 520	1 499 998		986 126	8 255 644
	Private company			1 442 632		1 442 632
	Specialised training institution	6 140 905		2 941 892		9 082 797
	University	8 817 475	17 962 422	16 812 799	17 664 998	61 257 694
	Vocational Education and Training Institution	2 766 462	3 841 276	1 349 598	49 157	8 006 493
Requesting Organisation						1 598 713
100%	University					1 598 713
Total		31 405 991	26 886 746	30 021 024	40 991 948	129 305 709

Table 23: Overview of the total grant budget and total budget spent per cost component for 195 projects that were managed in the period 2012-2015, in Euro⁸³

	Total grant budget		Total budget spent		Deviation total expenses from total budget
	Amount	%	Amount	%	

⁷⁹ Education

⁸⁰ Education, gender and not further specified (other)

⁸¹ The difference of 24.960 EUR between the overview of granted budget per country and granted budget per sector cannot be explained by the consultants. Both tables are based on the data delivered by EP-Nuffic.

⁸² No grants were awarded to non-governmental organisations in the period 2012-2015.

⁸³ EP-Nuffic had not yet information on expenses for the last project implementation year(s) for 24 projects (or 12% of the projects), consequently these expenses are not included in the numbers provided for the total budget spent. Projects in fragile states such as Burundi, Great lakes region and Birma/Myanmar have been delayed, no data on budget spent already available.

Time input Dutch/European expertise	78 713 824	30	48 564 150	35	-26%
Time input local/regional expertise	22 511 927	9	12 471 745	9	-35%
Travel/DSA and hotel costs	29 913 225	11	20 844 259	15	-24%
PhD/Ma and other training in Netherlands/Europe	20 872 693	8	9 941 303	7	-51%
PhD/Ma and other training local/regional	21 948 255	8	11 924 904	9	-37%
Investments	51 915 681	20	23 644 642	17	-44%
Other costs	23 128 506	9	10 409 468	8	-41%
Contingencies	12 604 345	5	442 356	0 (<1)	-96%
Total	261 608 455	100	138 242 827	100	-38%
Project management RO	16 307 693	7	9 018 698	7	-36%
Project management DSP	26 906 460	11	18 822 377	14	-21%

Table 24: Overview of budget spent on the management of NFP at programme level per year, in Euro.

	2012 (NFPI)	2013 ⁸⁴	2014	2015	Total
Preparation course offer	103 401	46.811 (first half)	/	/	150.212
Selection of candidates	229.691	124.580 (first half)	/	/	354.271
Screening and selection of candidates	/	383.226 (second half)	370.907	59.768	813.901
Granting old system	/	261.359 (second half)	252.713	170.074	684.146
Granting new system alumni	/	126.343 (second half)	1.531.829	879.109	2.537.170
Digitalisation	658.069	11.736 (second half)	188.341	171.364	371.441
Monitoring and evaluation	262.584	202.576 (first half)	/	/	860.645
Financial management	179.641	110.450 (first half)	95.405	113.566	710.848
Promotion, regulation and communication	303.187	128.844 (second half)	128.844 (second half)		
Management TMT	263.189	86.439 (first half)	/	/	266.080
General management	292.441	159.714 (first half)	298.636	99.154	989.535
		128.844 (second half)			
Total	2.292.204	1.170.093 (first half)	3.123.678	1.983.480	9.731.380
		1.161.925 (second half)			

7.8 Field schedules

7.8.1 Field schedule Benin

Date	Activities	Location
24 oct		
Mon	Meeting at Embassy briefing national consultant	Cotonou
	Group interview with staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, MAEP	Cotonou
	Interview with COWI on project NICHE BEN 167 and the water project of the Dutch Embassy	
25 oct		
Tue	Interview at Belgian Embassy on donor alignment in the sector of health and agriculture/food security	Cotonou
	Interview at the Ministry of Higher Education	Cotonou
	Travel to Parakou	Parakou
26 oct		Parakou
Wed	Courtesy meeting with rector of Parakou University	
	Interview with vice-rector and director of projects 171, 170	
	Interview with coordinator of project 170 and on gender issues	

⁸⁴ 2013 is the transition year from NFP I to NFP II. EP-Nuffic provided financial overviews for the first and the second half of 2013. Since NFP II the cost components have changed.

	Group interview with teachers/researchers beneficiaries and involved in project 203	
	Interview with coordinator of project 203	
	Interview with two deans of the faculties Faculty of Agronomy and FLASH, involved in project NICHE BEN 196 + visit to future lab + equipment lab	
	Interview with researcher that was involved in project 167	
27 oct		Parakou
Thu	Interview with teacher/researcher on project NICHE BEN 196 and 171	
	Interview with coordinator of project NICHE BEN 171	
	Interview with former student, beneficiary of project 171	
	Interview with former student, beneficiary of project 171	
	Interview with former student, beneficiary of project 171	
	Interview with two teachers of the Technical Institute of the University of Parakou on project 203, 171	
	Interview with vice-director of the technical institute on project 171	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
	<i>Organisation and follow-up of additional survey</i>	
28 oct		Parakou
Fri	group interview NICHE BEN 202	
	Visit to the Hospital of Parakou and equipment (projet 202)	
	Timeline exercise with Faculté d'Agronomie on institutional and organisational development	
	Interview with NFP alumni from the Faculty of Agronomy/Parakou	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
29 oct		Parakou
Sat	Telephonic interview with a professor from the Faculty of Agronomy, employer of an NFP alumni	
	Visit to and interview with two representatives from the Business Promotion Centre (UN-project) in relation to project 171	
	Reporting	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
30 oct		
Sun	Travel to Cotonou	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
31 oct		
Mon	Introduction of the evaluation to the team of the Water Institute + first self-evaluation	Cotonou
	Interview with Director of the Water Institute and assistant	
	Interview with Coordinator of the project and the staff member responsible for the OEM (Observatoire de l'emploi et métiers de l'Eau)	
	Interview with staff of the institute responsible for education, research and gender	
	Group interview and self-evaluation session with people involved in project and responsible for the Centre d'Expertise, Centre de Stratégie and Centre de Formation + Coordinator, NICHE BEN 176	
	Interview with the director of project 176 and Dean of the Faculty of Agronomy	
	<i>Focus Group Discussion with 11 NFP alumni</i>	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Porto Novo</i>	
1-nov		
Tue	Reporting and work session with national consultant	Cotonou
2-nov		
Wed	Timeline exercise with the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Parakou with 11 participants	
	Group interview with teachers/lecturers beneficiaries of and staff involved in project 238	
	Interview with expert on food security of EKN	
	Interview with the professor/initiator for the creation of an NFP Alumni Association	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Sakété</i>	
	<i>Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou</i>	
	<i>Focus Group Discussion with NFP Alumni (both national and international consultant present)/Cotonou</i>	
3-nov		Cotonou
Thu	Timeline exercise with the Faculty EPAC (Ecole Polytechnique), Université d'Abomey-Calavi	
	Group interview and evaluation session with researchers/lecturers beneficiaries of and staff of rectorate involved in project NICHE BEN 170, Université d'Abomey Calavi	
	Telephonic interview with the coordinator of project NICHE BEN 196	

	Interview at the Ministry of Health, dept. Human Ressources Management	
	Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou	
	Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou	
	Interview with NFP alumni/Cotonou	
4-nov		Cotonou
Fri	Debriefing at the Embassy	
	Interview with APEFE on training/capacity needs in the health sector	
	Group interview with dancers of Walö on TMT projects	
	Telephonic interview with director of Walö	

7.8.2 Field schedule Indonesia

Date	Time	Activity	Location
17-Okt	09:00	Internal meeting with local consultant	Jakarta
Mon	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00	Interviews at NESO	
	17:00		
18-Okt	09:00	Interviews at Netherlands embassy	Jakarta
Tue	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00		
19-Okt	09:00		Jakarta
Wed	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00	Focus group discussion with NFP alumni in Jakarta	
20-Okt	09:00	Traveling to Bogor	Jakarta
Thu	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00	Focus group discussion with NFP alumni in Bogor	Bogor
21-Okt	09:00	IDN 078 - Agribusiness IPB	Bogor
Fri	11:00		
	13:00	IDN 223 - Livestock IPB	
	15:00		
22-Okt	09:00		Bogor
Sat	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00		
23-Okt	09:00	Travel to Bandung	Jakarta --> Bandung
Sun	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00		
24-Okt	07:00	Meeting with local consultant and DSP Service provider	Bandung
Mon	09:00	IDN 227 - Padjajaran University	
	11:00		
	13:00		
	14:00	TMT Parahyangan University, Centre of Excellence in Small and Medium Enterprise Development	
	17:00		

25- Okt	09:00	IDN 265 - ITB	Bandung
Tue	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00	FGD with NFP alumni in Bandung	
26- Okt	09:00	Travel to Surabaya	Bandung -- > Surabaya
Wed	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00		
27- Okt	09:00	IDN 265 - Coastalzone Management ITS	Surabaya
Thu	11:00		
	13:00	IDN 186 - Water Management ITS	
	15:00		
	17:00		
28- Okt	09:00		Surabaya
Fri	11:00		
	13:00	IDN 145 - Marine Transportation ITS	
	15:00		
	17:00		
29- Okt	09:00		Surabaya
Sat	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00	Phone Interview with Beneficiary from 145 (Indonesian port authority)	
30- Okt	09:00	Travel to Jakarta	Surabaya - -> Jakarta
Sun	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00		
31- Okt			
Mon			
	13:00	Interview with cooperation partner from 145, Ministry of Transport	
	15:00		
	17:00		
1-Nov	09:00	IDN 225 - Fish Processing STP	Jakarta
Tue	11:00		
	13:00	IDN 228 - International Law UI	
	15:00		
	17:00		
2-Nov	09:00		Jakarta
Wed	11:00		
	13:00	Interview with Employer of Alumni	
	15:00		
	17:00	Interview with NFP alumni	
3-Nov	09:00	IDN 198 - LEMDIKPOL	Jakarta
Thu	11:00		
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00		
4-Nov	10:00	Interview with Dutch Partner - Unpad & Lemdikpol	Jakarta
Fri	12:00	TMT Jakarta Marine Merchant Institute	
	13:00		
	15:00		
	17:00		

7.8.3 Field schedule Mozambique

Date	Time			Location
22-Okt				
23-Okt	9:00			Maputo
Sun	11:00	Arrival in Maputo		
	13:00	Internal meeting with local consultant		
	15:00			
	17:00			
24-Okt	9:00	Briefing meeting at Netherlands embassy	Embassy	Maputo
Mon	11:00	Interviews at Netherlands embassy		
	13:00	Interviews at Netherlands embassy		
	15:00	Meeting with internal consultant for further planning		
	17:00			
25-Okt	9:00	Visit to first NICHE requesting organisation, UEM	UEM	Maputo
Tue	11:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	UEM	
	13:00	Meeting with internal consultant for further planning		
	15:00			
	17:00			
26-Okt	9:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	UEM	Maputo
Wed	11:00			
	13:00			
	15:00			
	17:00			
27-Okt	9:00	Individual interview with ministry official	Ministry of education	Maputo
Thu	11:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation (TMT)	Skype	
	13:00			
	15:00	Meeting of Alumni Association	Embassy	
	17:00	Interview with head of Alumni Association	Embassy	
28-Okt	9:00	Transcriptions	Hotel	Maputo
Fri	11:00			
	13:00	Transcriptions		
	15:00			
	17:00			
29-Okt	9:00	FGD with NFP alumni in Maputo	Cafe Acacia	Maputo
Sat	11:00			
	13:00	Transcriptions		
	15:00			
	17:00			
30-Okt	7:00	Travel to Chokwe		Chokwe
Sun	9:00	Travel to Chokwe		
	11:00	Travel to Chokwe		
	13:00	Transcriptions		
	14:00			
	17:00			
31-Okt	9:00	Visit to second NICHE requesting organisation - ISPG	ISPG	Chokwe, Gaza
Mon	11:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation		
	13:00	Group interview with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	ISPG	
	15:00			
	17:00			
1-Nov	9:00	Visit to third NICHE requesting organisation (ESNEC-UEM) group session	UEM-ESNEC	Chibuto, Gaza
Tue	11:00			
	13:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	UEM-ESNEC	
	15:00			
	17:00			
2-Nov	9:00	Visit to fourth NICHE requesting organisation (CNAQ) group session	CNAQ	Maputo
Wed	11:00			
	13:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation - TMT DINAT	DINAT	
	15:00			
	17:00			
3-Nov	9:00	Debriefing Embassy	Embassy	Maputo

Thu	11:00	Individual interview with Ministry official/employer	Ministry of education	
	13:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at fifth requesting organisation	FIPAG	
	15:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation -		
	17:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation -		
4-Nov	9:00	Interviews with NFP alumni in Maputo	WFP	Maputo
Fri	11:00		Cafe	
	13:00	Debriefing consultant		
	15:00	Flight back		
	17:00			

7.8.4 Field schedule Nigeria

Date	Time			Location
22-Okt				
23-Okt	9:00			Maputo
Sun	11:00	Arrival in Maputo		
	13:00	Internal meeting with local consultant		
	15:00			
	17:00			
24-Okt	9:00	Briefing meeting at Netherlands embassy	Embassy	Maputo
Mon	11:00	Interviews at Netherlands embassy		
	13:00	Interviews at Netherlands embassy		
	15:00	Meeting with internal consultant for further planning		
	17:00			
25-Okt	9:00	Visit to first NICHE requesting organisation, UEM	UEM	Maputo
Tue	11:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	UEM	
	13:00	Meeting with internal consultant for further planning		
	15:00			
	17:00			
26-Okt	9:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	UEM	Maputo
Wed	11:00			
	13:00			
	15:00			
	17:00			
27-Okt	9:00	Individual interview with ministry official	Ministry of education	Maputo
Thu	11:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation (TMT)	Skype	
	13:00			
	15:00	Meeting of Alumni Association	Embassy	
	17:00	Interview with head of Alumni Association	Embassy	
28-Okt	9:00	Transcriptions	Hotel	Maputo
Fri	11:00			
	13:00	Transcriptions		
	15:00			
	17:00			
29-Okt	9:00	FGD with NFP alumni in Maputo	Cafe Acacia	Maputo
Sat	11:00			
	13:00	Transcriptions		
	15:00			
	17:00			
30-Okt	7:00	Travel to Chokwe		Chokwe
Sun	9:00	Travel to Chokwe		
	11:00	Travel to Chokwe		
	13:00	Transcriptions		
	14:00			
	17:00			
31-Okt	9:00	Visit to second NICHE requesting organisation - ISPG	ISPG	Chokwe,
Mon	11:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation		Gaza

	13:00	Group interview with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	ISPG	
	15:00			
	17:00			
1-Nov	9:00	Visit to third NICHE requesting organisation (ESNEC-UEM)	UEM-ESNEC	Chibuto, Gaza
Tue	11:00	group session		
	13:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation	UEM-ESNEC	
	15:00			
	17:00			
2-Nov	9:00	Visit to fourth NICHE requesting organisation (CNAQ)	CNAQ	Maputo
Wed	11:00	group session		
	13:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation - TMT DINAT	DINAT	
	15:00			
	17:00			
3-Nov	9:00	Debriefing Embassy	Embassy	Maputo
Thu	11:00	Individual interview with Ministry official/employer	Ministry of education	
	13:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at fifth requesting organisation	FIPAG	
	15:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation -		
	17:00	Individual interviews with key stakeholders at requesting organisation -		
4-Nov	9:00	Interviews with NFP alumni in Maputo	WFP	Maputo
Fri	11:00		Cafe	
	13:00	Debriefing consultant		
	15:00	Flight back		
	17:00			

7.9 List of interviewees (in alphabetical order)

It has to be added that particularly during the FGDs it was not always possible to get the names and affiliations of all participants.

Name	Affiliation
Abayomi Bamidele Adisa	Continental Broadcasting Services
Abiola Adebisi Olugbusi	FCT Water Board Abuja
Abiose Haruna	ActionAid Nigeria (AAN)
Aboubakar Kissira	Doyen de la Faculté FASEG, Université de Parakou
Adegebe Oyeronke M	Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research
Adeola Eleri	Energy Commission of Nigeria
Adeyemi Arowosebe	Nigeria Intergrated water resource Management Commission
Adjiwanou, Rosemonde	secrétaire projet, université d'Abomey-Calavi
Adomahoua Raymond	Institut de L'eau
Agassounon Micheline	enseignante Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Agbala Chimenzi Anthony	
Agbossou, Mr, E.	Directeur du projet et de l'Institut de l'Eau, Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Agogbete Florentine	Université d'Abomey Calavi
Ahamide, B.	Institut de L'eau
Ahontondji Armand	IUT, Université de Parakou
Ahouannou Clément	EPAC, Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Ahouanson, Wilfrid	Université d'Abomey Calavi
Ahoussi D	EPAC, Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Akanbi Namikole Williams	Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research
Akponikpe I.	Chef de dépt. FA, Université de Parakou
Albert Gambakpo	Affaires Générales, EKN
Alidou Djaoudath	IUT, Université de Parakou
Alkoiret, Mr, I. , Prof.	directeur du projet, Université de Parakou
Allode, S.	Doyen FM, Université de Parakou
Amadou, Moktar	Fac de Droit, Université de Parakou
Anné Padmos	STC-Group, IDN 145
Annelies van den Berg	expert sécurité alimentaire, EKN
Anthony Onugba	Lux Terra Foundation
Antunes, Eleasara	EKN
Ardogan, C	Institut de L'eau

Ayenda, K	Ministère d'Agriculture MAEP
Ayindé Soulé	Expert Commerce, EKN
Ayo Olalusi C. I	Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research
Babadankpdji, Pascaline	FSA, Univerité d'Abomey-Calavi
Babatunde Oresanya	National Salaries Income and Wages Commission
Bankoje Michael	Lagos State Ministry of Environment
Barnabas Atiyaye	Nigerian Institute of Town Planners/ENVICON Consulting
Bernad Bassey	GUARDS AFFAIRS LIMITED
Bert Geers	Delft University of Technology, IDN 265
Biaou, Honoré	Coordinateur du projet, Université de Parakou
Bio Idrissou Mireille	Chargée des activités communautaire, Association Communautaire Béninoise de Marketing Social
Blom, Marlies	EKN
Boko Gisèle	CPUAQ, Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Céline Sodjiedo	coordinatrice de projets ONG ABAEF
Chikou Antoine	FSA, Univerité d'Abomey-Calavi
Chirindza, Flora	CNAQ
Chiziane, Orcidia	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane
Clappers, Mr, J.,	CINOP
Clercx, Luud	TASTE
Codo François	Institut de L'eau
Contronhar, Ana	FIPAG
Correira, Edson	Consulting company
Cossa, Eugênia	Ministry of Education
Cuamba, Boaventura	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane
D'Almeida, Théophile	Ministère d'Agriculture MAEP
Da Cruz Maxime	Vice-recteur, Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Daniel	danseur de Walö
Daouda, I.	ENSAP
Davane, Moiseis	CNAQ
David Quenum	Macro-économiste, EKN
de Sousa, Lateiro	Instituto Superior Politecnio de Gaza
Dedehou, Romary	Business Promotion Centre Parakou
Degla Chantal	Secrétaire vice-recteur, université d'Abomey-Calavi
Degla P.	FA, université de Parakou
Dele Olatunji	FCT Water Board Abuja
Denise	danseur de Walö
Dieu Donné Konnon	Directeur Général du CIDEN ONG
Dijksta, Sandra	Energy Academy
Dimande, Armindo	FIPAG
Dimande, Paula	ACIPOL
Djaoudath Alidou	enseignante IUT et membre de la Cellule CPUAQ Genre, Université de Parakou
Djohoun Clément	ENAM, Université d'Abomey Calavi
Dr. Aminu Haruna Issa	The Energy Commission of Nigeria
Dr. Bokossa	expert Santé, Ambassade du Royaume de Belgique
Dr. Sherif Razack	The Nigerian Institute of Town Planners
Edah Justin	Ministère d'Agriculture MAEP
Edja Honorat	Doyen FA, Université de Parakou
Edja, Mr, H., Dr	Université de Parakou
Emmanuel F. Myade	Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research
Eng James A Gana	The Energy Commission of Nigeria
Esther den Hartog	VU, IDN 228
Etotéfé Sogbohossou	enseignant/chercheur FSA Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Euloge Togbe	Enseignant à l'Université d'Abomey Calavi
Fadonougbo Boko	enseignant IUT, Université de Parakou
Fagnisse, Siméon	Coordinateur du projet, Université de Parakou
Farougou, Mr, S., Dr	Directeur du projet et vice-recteur, enseignant/chercheur EPAC, Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Fatima Bachabi	assistante de recherche AfricaRice
Felicia Ogwuche	Lux Terra Foundation
Florence Ademokur	
Florent Okry	Enseignante/chercheur Université d'Abomey-Calavi in Kétou
Florice Sagbohan	Chargé de suivi et communication à Social Watch Benin
Fognyfanou, Nadia	FSA, Univerité d'Abomey-Calavi

Fote, Isidro	Free consultant
Fr Georuge Ehusan	Lux Terra Foundation (Leader)
Franklin	danseur de Walö
Fringe, Jorge	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane
Gbaguidi Arnauld	Université d'Abomey Calavi
Gbaguidi Miguel	comptable du projet, université d'Abomey-Calavi
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