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Mid-term Review of PSD Apps programme

Final report

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1 Executive Summary

Introduction to the PSD Apps programme

The Private Sector Development Apps (PSD Apps) programme has been conceived as an innovative approach to give more effect to the ‘Aid, Trade and Investment-policy’¹ initiated in 2013 by the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. The programme is commissioned by the Department of International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, division Sustainable Economic Development (DDE).

The PSD Apps programme (2014-2017) finances a wide array of PSD Apps² to contribute to a favourable business climate in 68 PSD countries³ and to enhance business opportunities for both local and Dutch entrepreneurs. The main users of the PSD Apps are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, in particular, its embassies in the PSD Apps countries. The PSD Apps programme has been developed and is administered by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), an agency of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Designated PSD coaches from RVO with country-specific knowledge form a central point of contact and work in close cooperation with the relevant embassies to advice on the optimal use (and combination) of PSD Apps.

Framework for this evaluation

RVO requested Technopolis to conduct this external mid-term review (MTR) of the PSD Apps Programme over the period 2014-2017 in accordance with the Framework Contract for the performance of evaluation studies of International Development programs of RVO.

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the overall purpose of the MTR is to provide both the commissioner (DGIS/DDE) and administrator (RVO) of the programme with an independent assessment of the functioning and effectiveness of the PSD Apps programme. It also serves as an in-depth look at the collaboration between the PSD coaches and Dutch embassies in the 68 PSD Apps countries.

The MTR consisted of three parts: (1) a review of the results of the PSD Apps programme and its projects; (2) a review of the programme development and implementation process and; (3) formulating recommendations for further improvement. Therefore, this MTR has both a retrospective as well as a forward-looking perspective.

As specified in the ToR this MTR covered projects and initiatives started within the period 1 January 2014 until 31 December 2017.

Main findings

Relevance and coherence

The policy agenda that was introduced in 2013, which signalled a major shift from ‘aid to trade’, raised the question how the Netherlands can actually support countries in this transition. Many countries were not yet ‘ready’ for immediate large-scale trade & investment relationships due to weak institutions, poor business environments and low capacity for private sector development. As such, the premise that private sector development and business environment are relevant for current development challenges was confirmed by this MTR. Given the focus on promoting knowledge & expertise exchange between

¹ “Wat de wereld verdient: Een nieuwe agenda voor hulp, handel en investeringen”, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 5 april 2013.

² PSD Apps (2017): Government-to-Government cooperation (G2G); Knowledge-to-Knowledge cooperation (K2K); Training for managers and entrepreneurs (NMTP); Incoming and outgoing missions; Trade promotion fairs; Matchmaking; Seminars and round tables; Studies; Impact clusters; Orange Corners.

³ PSD/DGGF-Country list: Annex to “Kamerbrief over aanpassing landenlijst PSD en DGGF”, 2016.

two countries, the relevance of introducing an embassy-led private sector development support programme like PSD Apps was also confirmed.

The review team found an overall positive appreciation of the PSD Apps programme by its main stakeholders and beneficiaries and confirmed a high degree of relevance of the programme to the needs of developing countries, and to the thematic and geographic priorities of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The PSD Apps programme is well placed to achieve both goals of local private sector development and Dutch trade & investment promotion if used in a way that strategically combines local PSD challenges with Dutch expertise as intended.

Optimising one instrument for two objectives (local private sector development and trade & investment opportunities for Dutch firms) can be difficult unless clear synergy is present. This makes the PSD Apps programme somewhat challenging to implement. For a number of internal and external stakeholders, there is significant discrepancy in the understanding of the objectives of the PSD Apps programme. The programme is classified as “official development assistance” (ODA) and has a goal of capacity building, but goes beyond the partner countries⁴, and also operates in countries where embassies have a stronger trade mandate. Frequently, embassy ideas for trade promotion are not in line with the ODA objectives of the PSD Apps programme. However, in practice the portfolio mostly finds the right balance between the two objectives, thanks to intensive exchanges between PSD coaches and embassy staff, although this balance could be improved by further embedding in strategic, bilateral frameworks.

The role, quality and expertise of the PSD coaches is considered crucial for the success of the PSD Apps programme by all stakeholders, and the coaches perform their responsibilities to a very satisfactory degree. The broker services provided by the PSD coaches are highly significant for the relevance and sustainability of the PSD Apps programme and for linking it to the larger portfolio of programmes managed by RVO as well as the embassies. In terms of pipeline generation for other RVO instruments, we see that most projects are not consistently designed with a potential follow-up in mind from the start, although the programme does show examples of interesting follow-up projects through other RVO programmes.

Our findings confirm that embassies are key to align individual projects with the Aid-to-Trade Agenda through their MASP’s and annual plans. Bilateral Strategic Agreements or MoU’s definitely support focussing the use of PSD Apps and ensure consistency in country project portfolios. Besides, the embassies consider the PSD Apps programme as a very useful instrument for their public diplomacy and use it to position the NL government and industry abroad. However, the sustainability of the project results is threatened by a lack of systematic follow-up, varying alignment with strategic frameworks and low long-term consistent capacity in some embassies.

The new policy agenda also raises a number of questions, as it focuses on related but only indirectly relevant topics of youth employment, poverty and security. However, there are also plenty of opportunities for PSD Apps in the new policy agenda and interesting links might be established.

Efficiency

At the level of outputs, we find that the value for money (efficiency) of the PSD Apps programme is relatively high given the contributions to many policy areas. A part of the operating budget is dedicated exclusively to the broker services provided by the PSD coaches. This explains the fairly high percentage of operational costs of the total available programme budget observed and, to some extent, the imbalance between the operating and the programming budget, which has also been emphasised by RVO.

In terms of programme management, RVO succeeded to set up a comprehensive management framework for a complex programme in a relatively short period of time, which was partly the result of the excellent relationship as well as direct lines of frequent communication regarding the PSD Apps programme between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and RVO.

⁴ Partner countries: In the field of foreign trade and development cooperation the Netherlands has a special relationship with certain countries. These are known as ‘partner countries’ when it revolves around development cooperation.

There is room for improvement of the quality and consistency of the programme management by RVO in terms of project administration. At the level of project reporting there is also a considerable variance in quality of the final reports, particularly with regard to quantitative indicators. The new quantitative indicators introduced from 2017 onwards seem not to have fully addressed the M&E challenges yet, although it is still premature to draw conclusions as most projects started in 2017 are not completed yet.

Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast-Asia are the most intensive users of PSD Apps with the G2G App as most frequently used App. The programme gradually augmented the size of the projects to increase the outputs and outcomes. Projects in Dutch partner countries are typically larger than those in non-partner countries. There is both a risk of overlap as well as opportunities for alignment with delegated OS budgets. In countries where embassies struggle with limited staff capacity (sector knowledge, ODA expertise), further compounded by high turnover, it proved much more difficult for coaches to develop a considerable and consistent project portfolio.

Effectiveness & Impacts

The PSD Apps programme is effective in developing, implementing and successfully completing an impressive portfolio of PSD-related projects. Output levels are high, and quality is generally good. PSD Apps are well placed to support private sector development directly, as long as the interventions are highly focused in nature, tackling a very specific challenge in a specific sector and are embedded in a multi-annual strategic plan of the partner countries or in the annual plans of the non-partner countries. However, smaller projects run the risk of delivering too little focused impact at business environment-level to make a sustained difference unless well positioned in a strategy.

We found that PSD Apps are relatively successful instruments for establishing networks and partnerships as a large number of projects result in sustainably active personal or organisational contacts that often go far beyond the project end date. In terms of knowledge uptake & exchange, the results of the programme are less positive. While many projects are of high quality, the required follow-up is often not guaranteed, not by the embassies nor by the project cycle process managed by RVO. This is predominantly because of a lack of capacity and time. Moreover, the attention for dissemination of knowledge is relatively weak, although projects where knowledge production is part of capacity building (G2G and K2K) suffer less from this issue. There are good examples of flexible and smart responses here with considerable positive effects if studies find the right audience.

In its role as a facilitator of PSD activities, entrepreneurial culture and experimentation, the PSD Apps programme is quite successful. Relatively small projects can be preludes to much larger follow-ups, allowing for good positioning of Dutch interventions while showing continued engagement. Such strategic use is often done via ‘treintjes’, i.e. combinations of PSD Apps, which in some countries is successfully done. Furthermore, we found a surprisingly large effect of PSD Apps on economic diplomacy, particularly for countries that have no partner status but still have significant development challenges. For these embassies, PSD Apps is a ‘lifeline’ budget for serious engagement in-country.

At this stage PSD Apps has a relatively limited direct effect so far (i.e. as an immediate consequence of PSD Apps) on private sector development except for a small number of strategic, high impact, large size portfolios in specific countries. However, there are examples of substantial indirect effects (stakeholders using knowledge and partnerships acquired in PSD Apps to engage in direct action), with much potential for long-term impact depending on the quality of the follow-up. We draw the same conclusion for the trade & investment opportunity impact of the programme.

Recommendations

In order to enhance the sustainability and impact of the current programme and as a contribution to further improvement, the review team has drafted the following recommendations:

1. Programme framework

- a. **Develop a PSD Apps 2.0.** Given the high relevance, usefulness and effective support role for many Dutch policy objectives.

- b. **Develop a programme policy framework with clear priorities and distinctions regarding PSD and NL-South and South-South trade and investment objectives.**
- c. **Maintain a relative degree of freedom and focus on local ownership and encouragement of intrapreneurship and policy innovation.**
- d. **Clarify a ‘Primary Goal’** (Local Private Sector Development) and a **‘Secondary Goal’** (NL Trade & Investment Promotion). The secondary goal should be a *means* to achieve the first.
- e. **Develop a clearer distinction in type of Apps and their expected outcomes**, alongside clear ‘frames’ cooperation.
- f. **Review the role of entrepreneurship support** within PSD Apps, with multiple options:
 - (1) Focus only on innovative, fast-growing, competitive start-ups with a clear link to areas of key Dutch expertise/private sector
 - (2) Spin-off entrepreneurship support into a larger, stand-alone instrument, aligned with youth unemployment challenges and drops the requirement of Dutch expertise.
 - (3) Allow for limited entrepreneurship support projects with limited direct impact expectations on either main objectives, but which may play a role in engagement & economic diplomacy more broadly.
- g. **Review the position PSD Apps in the new policy agenda**, with multiple options:
 - (1) Introducing a PSD App for innovative, fast-growing, competitive start-ups with a clear link to areas of key Dutch expertise/private sector.
 - (2) Supporting innovation for competitiveness and development in SMEs, where Dutch expertise can provide innovation support.
 - (3) Sharing Dutch private sector expertise on CSR and development-oriented business practises, including gender issues.
 - (4) Consider supporting the positioning of non-commercial Dutch development expertise (NGOs, Implementers, Consultants) as a ‘sector’ on its own (‘French approach’).

2. Programme management and follow-up

- a. **If the programme is to keep expanding its portfolio, an increase in operational capacity at RVO** for managing the PSD Apps projects is necessary (with or without a flexible pool to respond to urgent policy demands or shifts).
- b. **Finetune quality and coherence in project and programme administration** through streamlined instructions with flexible and less time-consuming procurement processes, above all for smaller size projects.
- c. **Improve the M&E framework in consultation with DDE**, with strong indicators for PSD objectives and making additional sets of quantitative and qualitative indicators apply to specific Apps types only. Increase M&E requirements (e.g. # of indicators, reporting obligations, follow-up/sustainability commitments) for large projects, decrease for small projects.
- d. Improve follow-up monitoring & steering across the board and make ex-post checks a priority for field trips of coaches.
- e. Encourage and facilitate handovers at embassies during country visits and when drafting joint annual plans, especially for small missions
- f. **Strengthen continuous and frequent internal exchange and consultation moments**, in which experiences, problems, lessons learned and cross-over issues are discussed.
- g. **Increase the use of Dutch-local consortia in project implementation**, to improve contribution to local capacity building, network building and knowledge exchange.

3. Programme alignment

- a. **Review the overlap and inconsistencies for some countries in terms of the overall portfolio** of available instruments, including alignment with delegated budgets in partner countries and non-eligibility of larger instruments for PSD countries (for which PSD often is meant to be a facilitator).
- b. **Continue the steady improvement in the quality of the PSD Apps alignment with strategic annual and multi-annual plans**
- c. **Improve the link to wider strategic policy frameworks and use of bilateral partnerships agreements** as a foundation of PSD Apps interventions.
- d. **Encourage more engagement with local policy stakeholders** and donor community in developing the strategic positioning of PSD Apps.
- e. For knowledge products, **good dissemination should be an integral part of project**. An example could be to, as a standard, include a dissemination event in-country and in the Netherlands for any study.

2 Introduction and background of the PSD Apps programme

2.1 Short introduction to the PSD Apps programme

The Private Sector Development Apps (PSD Apps) programme has been conceived as an innovative approach to give effect to the “double-hatted” agenda of the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation⁵. The programme is commissioned by the Department of International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, division Sustainable Economic Development (DDE), making it an ODA⁶ funded programme.

A major strategic objective of the implementation of the PSD Apps by Dutch Embassies is to support the broader ‘Aid, Trade and Investment-policy’ initiated in 2013 by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This policy combines development cooperation with trade and investment policy. Whereas development cooperation aims to increase the rate of development of regions, countries and people and lift them from poverty, the goal of trade and investment policy is to increase the competitiveness and growth of the Dutch and local economy. The combination of the two, as stated in the policy, should lead to a strengthening of the Dutch trade- and investment position and of the private sector and investment climate in developing countries.

The PSD Apps programme (2014-2017) finances a wide array of instruments to contribute to a favourable business climate in 68 PSD countries⁷ and to enhance business opportunities for both local and Dutch entrepreneurs. The main client of the PSD Apps is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, particularly, its embassies in the PSD Apps countries. The PSD Apps programme has been developed and is administered by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), an agency of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Designated PSD coaches from RVO with country-specific knowledge form a central point of contact and work in close cooperation with the relevant embassies to advice on the optimal use (and combination) of PSD Apps.

2.2 Overview of project portfolio and activities

The core activities of the PSD Apps programme are classified into Apps. During the first half of the programme period (2014-2015) Apps and usage varied. During the Modulaire Aanpak pilot programme, six modules were already individually targeted towards embassies and extra modules (Apps) have been added during the implementation of the PSD Apps programme. PSD coaches and embassies can apply the Apps strategically to effectively of positioning a certain sector in a specific country during an extended period. In 2016, Apps were clustered into 10 different Apps, with the addition of “parallel instrument” in 2017 (Orange Corners) and the removal of internal trainings as an independent App.

Halfway through the programme period, in 2016, RVO proposed to bundle the different Apps under the programme into 10 PSD Apps, namely: G2G (government-to-government), K2K (knowledge-to-knowledge), NMTP (Netherlands Management Training Programme), Missions, MFF (match-making-facility), Seminars, Trade Promotion Fairs, Studies, customised training for the embassy and impact clusters. In the course of 2016, the training for embassy staff removed as independent App. In 2017, the “parallel” instrument Orange Corners was developed and implemented, although not as a PSD Apps in the first place. PSD coaches started as well to explore the options for developing Apps to specifically address the issues of youth employment and climate.

⁵ In the 2013 policy agenda ‘A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade, and Investment,’ three main aims were formulated. First: to eradicate extreme poverty (‘getting to zero’) in a single generation. Second: sustainable, inclusive growth all over the world, and third: success for Dutch companies abroad (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2013, p. 6).

⁶ ODA: “Official Development Assistance”

⁷ PSD/DGGF-Country list: Annex to “Kamerbrief over aanpassing landenlijst PSD en DGGF”, 2016.

The Apps established in 2016 will briefly be explained below. Table 1 provides an overview of the amount of Apps developed in the period 2014-2017 and the corresponding BAS-code, which therefore exceeds the 10 current Apps in number.⁸

G2G (government-to-government) and *K2K* (knowledge-to-knowledge) projects are initiated to support the transfer of knowledge between the Dutch governmental organization and knowledge institutes and their foreign counterparts. Specifically addressed are issues related to frictions for the private sector and the creation of an extended network for Dutch knowledge institutes, businesses and governments.⁹

Trade Promotion Fairs can be organised when there is a clear link to development as monitored by the PSD coaches.¹⁰

Impact Clusters is a module introduced in 2016 which allows the PSD coaches to offer multi-annual support to clusters of Dutch companies on interesting market-sector combination. The module helps realise the Aid & Trade goals.

NMTP (Netherlands Management Training Programme) offers training to foreign managers. The programme has the purpose of building international business relations. The programme may include a training in the Netherlands, a training in the PSD country, and a traineeship in the Netherlands for participants from the target country.¹¹

Studies can be done to gain insights into the opportunities in certain sectors of the PSD countries. Market opportunities are often spotted by embassies, but they sometimes require more in-depth knowledge about the market, the strengths and weaknesses in the value chain and the contribution that the Netherlands could provide therein. Studies can be used to then stimulate Dutch companies to become active in a certain country.¹²

Missions (incoming and outgoing) can be organized to make or increase contact of Dutch companies and finding business partners, as well as to gain insights into knowledge of technical issues and development and the role of the Dutch government in the sector.

Goal of the *MMF* (Match-making facility) projects is to match foreign companies from one of the 68 partner countries with potential business partners during a visit to the Netherlands.

Seminars and roundtables can be organized, for instance, to present results as a follow-up to studies that identify concrete business opportunities.¹³

Opleidingsbudget is used for customized training for employees and diplomats at the embassies in PSD countries.

Orange Corners is a “parallel” initiative to stimulate the local entrepreneurial system by setting up a platform for young and starting entrepreneurs to gain new knowledge and insights, grow their business, and extend their network.¹⁴ It is now considered as part of the PSD Apps programme. Please refer to chapter 5.6. for our draft SWOT-analysis of the Orange Corners initiative.

⁸ BAS-code is the administrative identification code used by RVO.

⁹ RVO.nl. Regeling G2G / K2K / NMTP (website: <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-regelingen/g2g-k2k-en-nmtp>)

¹⁰ MoFA. PSD Apps Offerte 2017. 2016, p. 2.

¹¹ RVO.nl. Regeling G2G / K2K / NMTP (website: <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-regelingen/g2g-k2k-en-nmtp>)

¹² RVO. PSD Apps Jaarrapportage 2014, p. 8.

¹³ RVO. PSD Apps Jaarrapportage 2017.

¹⁴ <https://www.orangecorners.com/about/>

Table 1 # of developed projects 2014-2017 and corresponding BAS-codes

PSD App	BAS-code	Total
Government-to-Government cooperation (G2G)	MAG	233
Knowledge-to-Knowledge cooperation (K2K)	MAK	112
Incoming and outgoing missions	MAP	57
Trade promotion fairs	MAB	19
Matchmaking (MMF)	MAM	56
Seminars and round tables	MAN	69
Studies	MAT	125
Impact clusters (IC)	MAI	3
Training for managers and entrepreneurs (NMTP)	NMTP	2
Education embassy	MAO	18
Subsidies projects	MAS	13
Leads for Economic Development (LED)	LED	133
Transitional countries Budget (OVG)	MAV	33
Dutch Resource Facility (DRF)	MAD	6
Subtotal		879
Orange Corners (OC)	-	4
Total		883

Source: Annual reports RVO

2.3 Objectives of the mid-term review

RVO has requested Technopolis to conduct this external mid-term review (MTR) of the PSD Apps Programme 2014-2017 in accordance with the Framework Contract for the performance of evaluation studies of International Development programmes of RVO.

According to the Terms of reference (ToR), the overall purpose of the MTR is to provide both the commissioner (DGIS/DDE) and administrator (RVO) of the programme with an independent assessment of the functioning and effectiveness of the PSD Apps programme for the period 2014-2017. It also serves as an in-depth look at the collaboration of PSD coaches and Dutch embassies in the 68 PSD Apps countries.

The MTR consists of three parts: (1) review of the results of the PSD Apps projects/programme and (2) review of the programme development and implementation process and (3) recommendations for further improvement. Therefore, this MTR has a retrospective and a forward-looking perspective.

As specified in the ToR the MTR will cover projects and initiatives started within the period 1 January 2014 until 31 December 2017.

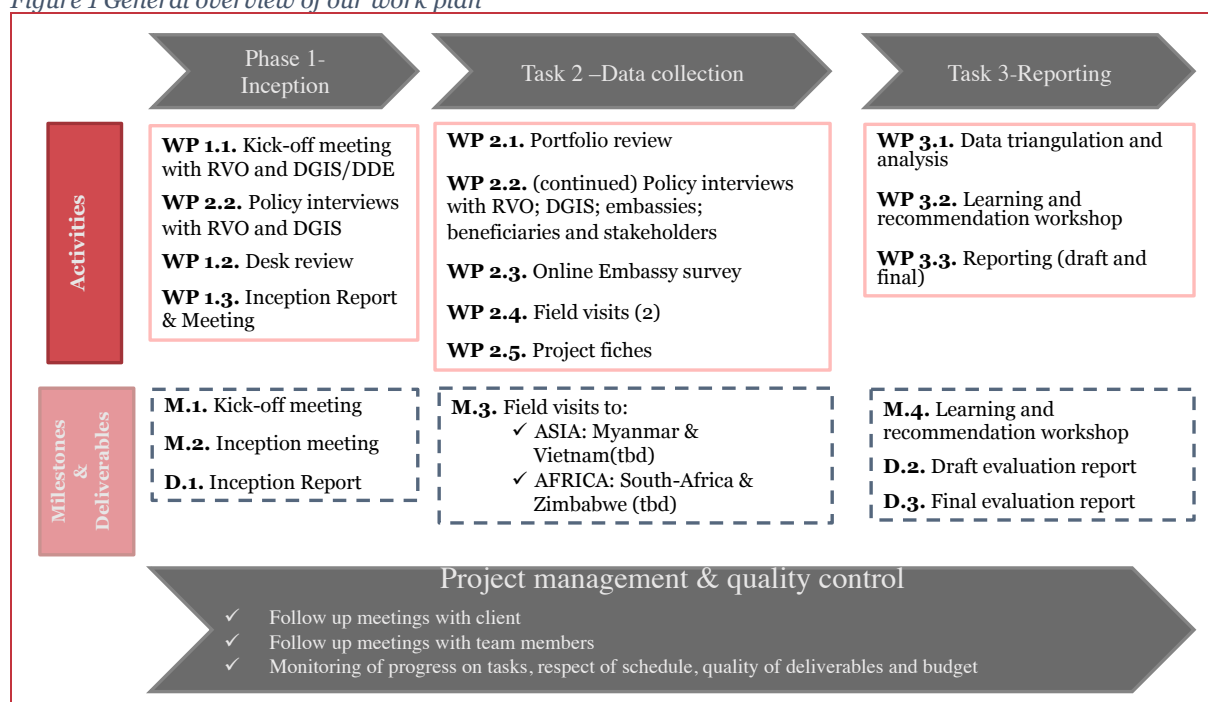
2.4 Evaluation methodology

We have developed a comprehensive evaluation methodology that uses a wide range of sources and quantitative/qualitative perspectives to ensure triangulated findings. These can be distinguished in three highly complementary groups:

- **Broad portfolio data collection tools:** These include mostly the portfolio review and survey, which provide a general picture of the overall PSD Apps portfolio.
- **Deep-dives:** We elaborated 30 project fiches and 2 field missions (where the field missions were also used to develop a number of the project fiches and carry out policy-level interviews) that give a detailed perspective on mechanisms, the process and drivers/barriers for success.
- **Meta-tools:** We carried out policy-level interviews and desk research to analyse aspects such as relevance, inclusion of stakeholders, process (between stakeholders), and sustainability. In addition, we organised a theory of change workshop (linked to inception meeting) and in particular a learnings & recommendation workshop where we jointly reflected with key stakeholders on the draft findings and discussed recommendations. This was an important tool for the formative part of the MTR.

Please refer to Figure 1 for the workplan indicating all evaluation activities.

Figure 1 General overview of our work plan



2.5 Structure of the report

This report is organised in five chapters. After the executive summary and this introductory chapter, we will focus on the Theory of Change that has been developed for this MTR and the coherence and relevance of the PSD Apps programme in chapter 3. Successively we will describe the analyses of the portfolio and the management of the PSD Apps programme as well as the roles of the different stakeholders in chapter 4. In chapter 5 the result expectations (outputs, outcomes, impacts and sustainability) will be presented. We wind this report up with a concluding chapter on main conclusions and recommendations, followed by the appendices.

3 Theory of Change, Relevance and Coherence

3.1 Theory of change

Based on an analysis of project documents, annual proposals and wider policy strategies, a theory of change for the PSD Apps programme was developed in close collaboration with the steering committee during the inception phase. A theory of change provides a useful overview of the hierarchy and causality of different levels of the intended results. The theory of change of PSD Apps is presented in Figure 2 below. A theory of change presents the expected causality from inputs towards impact. The theory of change provided the structure for all methodologies in this review, and was used for data collection tools.

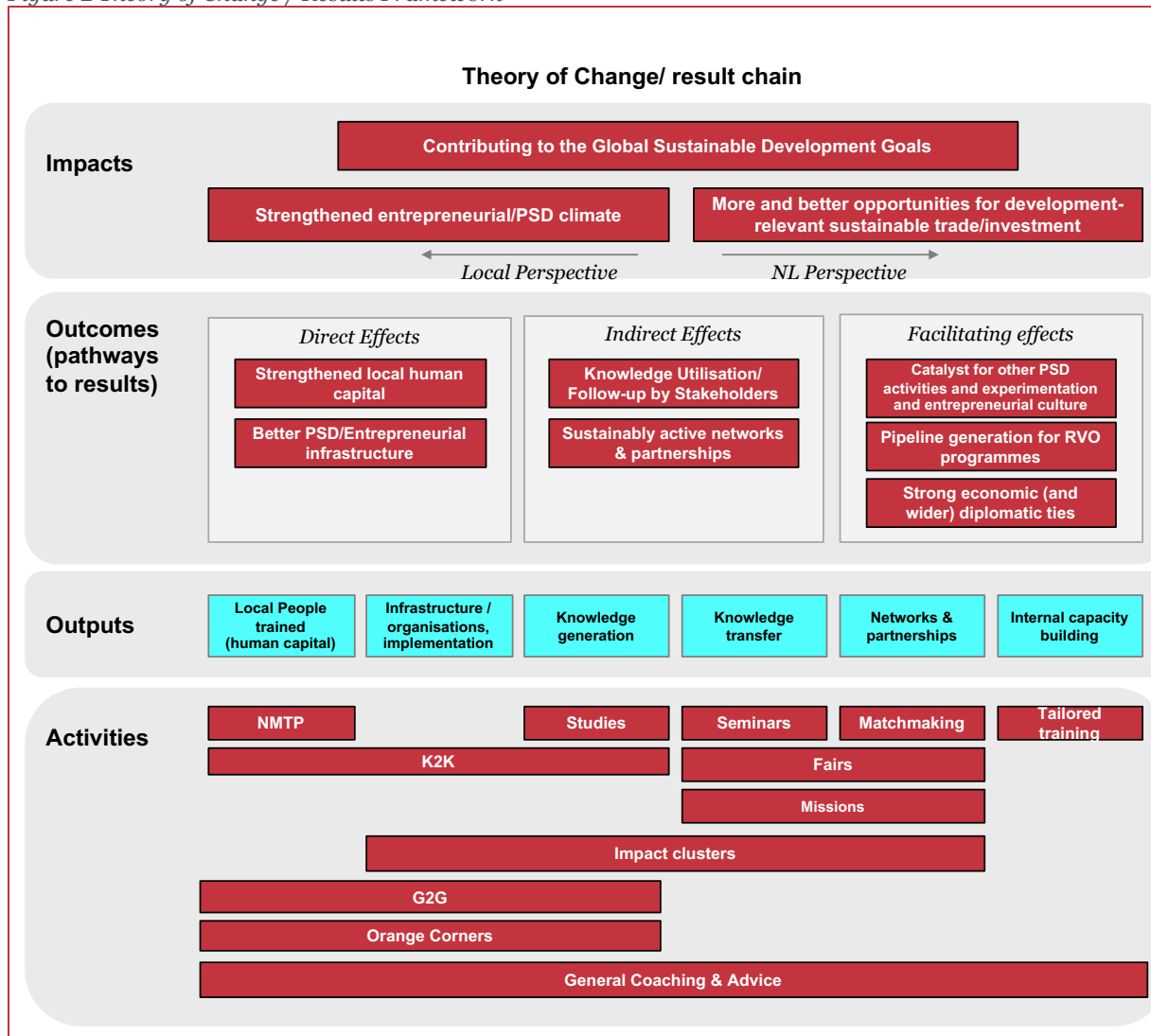
While PSD Apps feature a wide range of interventions in a large number of sectors, our theory change aimed to group these in order to provide more structure for the MTR. Of course, this provides a rather simplified version that does not do justice to all the impact pathways of the As such, the theory of change of the PSD Apps has a number of key features:

- **Activities** - the 10 PSD Apps, 11 including Orange Corners. Note that the coaching and advice provided by the PSD coaches have a transversal character which should support Dutch private sector developments in a broad sense (as such, targeting all key outputs).
- **Outputs** - generalised typical direct results, under the control of the PSD Apps projects. By consolidating in a limited number of typical outputs, comparison and aggregation is facilitated.
- **Outcomes** - We recognise three main modalities through which the PSD Apps aim to contribute to the final impact of global sustainable development:
 - Direct effects: Capacity building in emerging & developing countries, *created directly* through the PSD activities.
 - Indirect effects: Creating knowledge exchange & update, as well as sustainable (lasting) partnerships between NL and emerging and developing countries, *positioning* these actors for better contribution to private sector development.
 - Facilitating effects: PSD Apps as a tool to provide a pipeline for other PSD instruments, to *catalyse* experimentation and drive a cultural shift & capacity building among the Dutch diplomatic corps.
- **Impacts** - There are two main dimensions in which impacts can occur:
 - Contributing directly to stronger local entrepreneurial climates and business environment
 - Contributing to better systematic exchange, pursuit of commercial and social opportunities between NL and developing and emerging countries¹⁵

Both main goals in the end should lead to contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 8 (Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Infrastructure and Innovation).

¹⁵ This 'second objective' is also to support trade between developing countries and emerging countries, but the primary understanding by most stakeholders was that the focus should be on trade relations with the Netherlands

Figure 2 Theory of Change / Results Framework



A key component of a theory of change are the assumptions that have been made between the various causal relations. While it is fairly plausible that the proposed activities will create the outputs presented in the theory of change, the causal relationships between outputs and outcomes, and outcomes and impacts deserve further attention.

From outputs to outcomes, the main assumptions are **effective** activities. For direct capacity building, this means that the training or other support solves a real local human capacity or institutional need, and that it succeeds in raising the capacity. For indirect effects, the main sign of effectiveness and relevance is that interaction between partners results in real relationships that last, and for knowledge uptake the main assumption is that project actively disseminate knowledge to the right stakeholders in the right format. For internal capacity building, the assumption is that there is a latent interest among staff to experiment and be active in programme development. For pipeline generation, the assumption is that there are enough other opportunities in the RVO portfolio, and that the gap is not too large. These assumptions have been investigated and are presented in the effectiveness section.

With respect to the assumptions between outcomes and impacts, the causal links are fairly straightforward for direct effects, as they are simply an aggregation if sustainability (discussed in Section

5) is present. For indirect effects, the assumptions are more elaborate. The assumption here is that better informed and connected partners are more capable of supporting private sector development and trade. This is instinctively true, under the condition that other barriers not directly supported through PSD Apps (finance, regulation) are not so large that any further actions are impossible. While this MTR cannot review this assumption in detail, pathways for case studies will be explored to see what key bottlenecks towards further impact could be. For facilitating effects, the assumption is that other (RVO) instruments are effective and relevant. It is beyond the scope of this MTR to review this assumption.

More high-level assumptions will be discussed in the next section on relevance.

3.2 Design Relevance

The first evaluation criterion, relevance, pertains to the question whether or not an intervention is well aligned with policy objectives and their underlying problems (e.g. market/system failures). Secondly, it also deals with the question whether public intervention is the most logical course of action in order to reach these objectives effectively. Note that this section discusses the relevance from a instrument ‘design’ perspective, and is as such closely linked to the theory of change and assumptions. Whether the actual results were relevant for local PSD and bilateral trade relationships will be discussed in the effectiveness section.

The policy agenda¹⁶ that was introduced in 2013, which signalled a major shift from ‘aid to trade’, raised the question how the Netherlands can actually support countries in this transition. Many countries were not yet ‘ready’ for immediate large-scale trade & investment relationships due to weak institutions, poor business environments and low capacity for private sector development. This shift is consistent with a growing attention for the role of the private sector in sustainable economic growth, and is evidenced by many large-scale policy initiatives¹⁷, benchmark tools¹⁸ and knowledge exchange¹⁹. It is important to note that private sector development and business environment reform is almost a ‘universal’ challenge, relevant for both low, middle and high income countries. Private Sector development is also embedded within the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 8 (Economic Growth) and SDG9 (Industry, Infrastructure & Innovation). As such, the **fact that private sector development and business environment are relevant for current development challenges is evident.**

The second criterion, whether the proposed public intervention is a promising avenue to address these challenges, requires more analysis. First of all, the PSD Apps programme is built on the premise that often the Netherlands (its companies, universities and public organisations) have relevant knowledge and expertise to contribute to private sector development challenges in a developing context. This premise is plausible, given the long history of many Dutch actors using their expertise abroad. The Netherlands has a reputation for having development-oriented companies²⁰ and highly reputable expertise in amongst others water challenges and food and agriculture. However, policy makers have long found that capacity building using development-oriented trade & investment requires pre-competitive public support. Local policy makers and private sector are not always aware of the relevant Dutch expertise, and Dutch businesses are not fully aware of the opportunities for investment & trade in these countries, or find it too risky. Such lack of knowledge and too high risks are classic market failures that merit public intervention. Embassies are, by their very nature, intended to be well-connected both locally and in the Netherlands, and can provide a role as broker and catalyst for the launch of PSD activities. Given the focus on promoting knowledge & expertise exchange between two

¹⁶ “Wat de wereld verdient: Een nieuwe agenda voor hulp, handel en investeringen”, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 5 april 2013.

¹⁷ And sectoral reforms programmes by large multilateral development banks and bilateral donors, eg. eu4business.eu.

¹⁸ Including the World Bank’s Doing Business Dashboard, or the World Economic Forum’s Competitiveness Index, which both have increasing attention for developing countries

¹⁹ For instance the various working groups of the Donor Committee on Enterprise Development

²⁰ For example, see this article in The Economist: <https://www.economist.com/business/2017/08/31/the-parable-of-st-paul>

countries, **the introduction of an embassy-led private sector development support programme like PSD Apps is highly sensible and relevant.**

Through the support of private sector development in developing & emerging countries by using Dutch expertise and know-how, PSD Apps also have a second objective in providing trade and investment opportunities. In principle, this is a very logical conclusion from the design of the PSD Apps, as successful PSD-activities are likely to lead to follow-up business opportunities. However, it should be noted that pursuing multiple policy goals in one instrument can be challenging, with a risk of reaching objectives only partially. The challenging nature of this dual objective is already acknowledged in early documents, with policy makers indicating *that 'win-win' is easy on paper but hard in practice*²¹. However, the total number of PSD challenges worldwide is so large that there should be ample room for the Netherlands to strategically contribute to those areas where the Netherlands clearly has a comparative advantage. This is further supported by the highly relevant examples of good synergy in the recent booklet on synergy potential²². **If used in a way that strategically combines local PSD challenges with Dutch expertise as intended, PSD Apps is well placed to achieve both goals of local private sector development and Dutch trade & investment promotion.** This is a key assumption that will be addressed in this MTR.

However, the use of dual objectives, combined with other policy trends has led to **substantial discrepancies in internal understanding around the use of the PSD Apps**. Wider Dutch PSD investments sometimes fall in a 'grey zone' in terms of framing in between the clear choice for partner countries (aid) and the activities for pure trade promotion, which are open for a wider range of countries. Some embassies in the PSD portfolio were opened with a clear 'trade-only' mandate (e.g. Sri Lanka, Côte d'Ivoire), and not all larger PSD-related instruments (e.g. FDV, OREO, PFW) are open to the PSD Apps country list. This, from the perspective of embassies, creates 'mixed messages' and unclarity of the wider strategy of the Netherlands for these non-partner PSD countries. Examples of some of this confusion is presented below, all quotes of key policy interviewees:

"We do not need ODA-funds to promote trade."

"Our focus is on trade primarily, but on areas where there is a need for a public angle (sustainability, innovation, start-ups)."

"PSD Apps works well for us because our embassy focuses on trade, not development."

"The key focus of PSD Apps is on developing the local business environment and market economy, with support of Dutch entrepreneurs."

"The strategic vision for PSD for non-partner countries is not clear in BZ's policy."

"Our embassy's mission is focused on trade, not development. We often have strong internal discussions whether private sector development should be part of our remit or not."

"In my view the interest of the developing country should be the key factor for PSD Apps, since these are ODA funds. Dutch companies should only be used if they are better than local or others."

"The balance between the OS and PSD domain can also be realized at portfolio level. The right balance is more a 'gut' question."

²¹ 'Afrap Handel en OS' [2013]

²² 'Praktijkverhalen BZ-boek Synergie'

“It needs to be clearer to us what the goal is of PSD Apps: Combating Poverty or Promoting Trade, or both?”

The large variation in responses shows that currently PSD interventions are framed in many different ways. Fortunately, it seems that in practice embassies together with PSD coaches manage to mostly arrive at a sensible middle ground which satisfies both objectives in many cases, but not all. This will be discussed in more detail in section 5.2 and 5.3.

3.3 Coherence

Coherence refers to alignment with the wider policy framework and actions of other stakeholders in the field. We will discuss, in order, the coherence of PSD Apps with wider Dutch development policy, Dutch trade policy, local policy objectives and other development actors. Coherence also considers aspects of complementarity and overlap.

As described in the section 3.2, the PSD Apps programme is well embedded within the wider Dutch development policy objectives. Due to its unique structure as an embassy-led programme, its relative broad scope and flexibility, it is a highly complementary programme. However, some stakeholders indicate there is some overlap with delegated OS budgets in partner countries, which can cover similar activities. In addition, there is some potential overlap with sectoral/thematic instruments due to the high flexibility of PSD Apps, which have driven some embassies to apply for PSD Apps funds instead of these others due to the relatively light administrative requirements. An advantage of these minor overlaps is that PSD Apps can support other instruments in dedicated small follow-ups, support actions etc. that help larger instruments (e.g. ORIO, DRIVE) work better, but the risk could be reduction of pipeline for other instruments. However, we have no evidence that this has so far caused significant problem. In addition to some of these overlaps, policy makers also indicate that there are some ‘gaps’ for a number of countries, such as the case of Zimbabwe. In these cases, countries have limited access to wider PSD instruments due to eligibility restrictions, while PSD Apps programme is meant to provide a catalyst for the wider portfolio of RVO instruments. We also found that embassies do not always seem to be fully aware of highly complementary instruments such as PUM and Nuffic’s OKP.. **Overall, PSD Apps programme is generally coherent and complementary in the wider development policy toolbox**, but also suffers from some missed opportunities and lack of follow-up possibilities for specific countries.

Given the high level of integration of Dutch development & trade policy in their policy strategies, the PSD Apps programme is relatively consistent with Dutch trade policy (as described in the BHOS policy agenda). Given the choice of PSD Apps to mostly focus on sectors/thematic areas where the Netherlands has a competitive edge (e.g. agriculture, water), **it is de facto coherent with Dutch trade and investment priorities**. Similarly, while not explicitly so, the PSD Apps programme in practise links well with the ‘Top Sector’ policy that drives Dutch sectoral and innovation policy strategies, as this was also a selection of the Netherland’s most competitive sectors. **However, policy stakeholders fear potential upcoming policy changes in the field of international trade** that are expected to focus only on a smaller number of ‘sure bets’, leaving behind many of the currently-small but high-potential countries (e.g. fast growing in sectors where NL has a strategic advantage) which are the backbone of the PSD Apps portfolio. Such a move could lead to a divergence of the PSD and trade & investment strategies in terms of coherence.

Naturally, the local policy perspective is highly important when reviewing a programme that focuses on local capacity development for better private sector ecosystems. **A strong aspect of PSD Apps in this regard is the highly demand-driven nature of the instrument**, which are led by local embassies in terms of strategy, with a relatively high degree of freedom. However, our case studies and interviews showed that **such (multi-annual) embassy strategies are not always the product of interaction and engagement with local policy makers in the design phase**²³, and have the risk of an ‘ivory tower’ syndrome. Nonetheless, there were also several examples where PSD strategies

²³ Although local stakeholders are often involved in the individual project execution.

were developed in close interaction with policy stakeholders, or were building on existing bilateral MOUs (see Figure 9). Such strategic frameworks and engagements were often critical success factors in successful projects (see also section 5.2).

Finally, coherence with other development actors is also of importance. Coherence with other development actors is intrinsically difficult when trade agendas are also involved (like in PSD Apps), where there may be a competitive condition with other countries. However, as discussed in section 3.2 the challenge is so substantial that collaboration or complementarity would often make sense. However, we have seen **limited examples of coherent co-ordination on programme level with other bilateral or multilateral development actors** in our case studies and interviews. However, when there is coherence, synergy can be large, which is shown by the case of Myanmar where the World Bank is planning to invest hundreds of millions of euro in a water sector projects partially based of a Dutch PSD Apps Study project.

3.4 New policy agenda: Investing in Global Prospects (Investeren in perspectief)

During the course of this review the new policy agenda for international development and trade was launched²⁴. While not integrated in the theory of change, a brief analysis of potential coherence of PSD Apps with this new policy framework was carried out based on policy interviews. The new policy agenda makes a number of significant shift. First of all, a new regional focus on Middle East, Sahel, Horn of Africa and North Africa. Secondly, a thematic shift to additional focus on youth employment, migration and poverty. Thirdly, a renewed focus on innovation and entrepreneurship.

The new policy agenda offers various opportunities for PSD Apps. Specific opportunities include:

- More/better including of fast-growing, competitive start-ups, including contribution to a better business environment for start-ups, in developing countries and linking these to relevant (Dutch) expertise.
- Supporting the private sector in developing/emerging countries with Dutch expertise on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and development-focused business practises, in which the Dutch private sector can contribute to increasing local impacts on youth employment, gender etc. (currently not a major part of PSD Apps, but could fit the design well).
- Providing PSD support to the new climate investments (40m) per year, which can be supplied by innovative Dutch expertise in partnership with developing/emerging countries.
- Supporting innovation collaboration and joint product/service development, adapting Dutch expertise to local contexts in partnerships, like collaboration with the SBIR programme.

The new policy agenda also raises a number of questions for PSD Apps, according to policy stakeholders. First of all, the range of selected focus countries is relatively narrow (26 out of 70), with relatively few active PSD Apps countries, although some countries have become more active recently. However, a substantial number of countries in this region have poor institutions (business environment), as such requiring major investments in technical assistance, as well limited trade links with the Netherlands, decreasing the possibility to leverage Dutch expertise. Secondly, the increased focus on poverty, migration and youth is something on which PSD capacity building only has a long-term, relatively indirect effects (although highly relevant as a long-term solution), except for entrepreneurship. Finally, entrepreneurship is a challenging and broad concept, whose fit within the PSD Apps portfolio is not always evident (for more, see our separate discussion on Entrepreneurship and Orange Corners on page 41).

²⁴ 'Investing in global prospects', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18-05-2018

4 Programme management and implementation

4.1 Programme budget

The budget of PSD Apps has grown incrementally during the first four years of the programme as foreseen: from €9,87M euros in 2014 to €19.82M in 2017 (see Table 2). The budget was comprised of various funding sources; the primary source being the PSD Apps programme funds to the sum of €30M committed by DGIS of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The budget was complemented by other funding sources adopted under the management of PSD Apps, including in 2014 the Lead Economic Development (LED) Funds, training budget for embassies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Dutch Resource Facility. LED project initiated by the embassies were managed only administratively, although the 2014 annual report emphasis that PSD coaches also contributed on substance.

Table 2 Programme and total budget overview PSD Apps programme

	Programming budget	Programming commitments	Total expected payments	Realised programming expenditure	Total budget committed (+ operating)	Total commitments realized (+ operating)
2014	10,92M	5,90M (54.1%)	€7.78M	€3.11M (40%)	€13M	€7.66M (58.8%)
2015	13,11M	8,94M (68.2%)	€8.61M	€5.91M (68,6%)	€16.59M	€12.23M (73.7%)
2016	17,33M	14,68M (84.7%)	€11.81M	€7.38M (62,5%)	€20.77M	€18M (86.6%)
2017	14,65M	10,19M (69.5%)	€15.89M	€8.57M (53,9%)	€18.59M	€13,9M (74.8%)
Total	56,02M	39,71M (70.9%)	€44.08M	€24.97M (56,6%)	€68.96M	€51.78M (75.1%)

PSD Apps annual reports.

Table 3 Operating budget overview PSD Apps programme

	PSD coaching budget	PSD coaching expenditure	Operating budget	Operating expenditure	Total operating / PSD budget	Realised operating / PSD budget
2014	€281,999	€356,291 (126.3%)	€1.81M	€1,4M (77.1%)	€2.09M	€1.75M (84%)
2015	€327.402	€442,478 (135.1%)	€3.15M	€2,85M (90.4%)	€3.48M	€3.29M (94,6%)
2016	€630,150	€972,172 (154.3%)	€2.81M	€2,34M (83.4%)	€3.44M	€3.31M (96,4%)
2017	€1.03M	€1,27M (124.1%)	€2.91M	€2,43M (83.9%)	€3.93M	€3.71M (94,4%)
Total	€2.27M	€3.05M (134.4%)	€10.67M	€9.0M (84.5%)	€12.94M	€12.07M (93,2%)

RVO Data.

Each consecutive programming year, the budget was not exhausted, however both the operating and the programme expenditures did rise each consecutive year. The operating budget in the first year was exhausted to an extent of only 77.1%. However, the budget for the broker role of the PSD coach was 126%. RVO attributed this to several reasons. Most importantly, PSD coaches were occupied more with broking, promoting and coordinating the use of instrument with embassies and other stakeholders, than with developing projects. This was done mostly due to the fact that the format of the programme was new and certain embassies were initially not very involved, according to the first annual report by RVO.

After the start-up year, the realization of the operating budget rose significantly to between 83.4 and 90.4%.

Realization rates of the programming expenditure are lower over the four-year programming period: 56,6% on programme expenditure and 73.5% average on the committed budget. However, the operating expenditure has increased incrementally – showing the development of the PSD Apps programme and the increased demand from embassies. Nonetheless, the lower levels of exhaustion / commitment of the programming budget has, in the case of PSD Apps, not been an issue internally as it concerns a non-delegated budget, administered centrally.

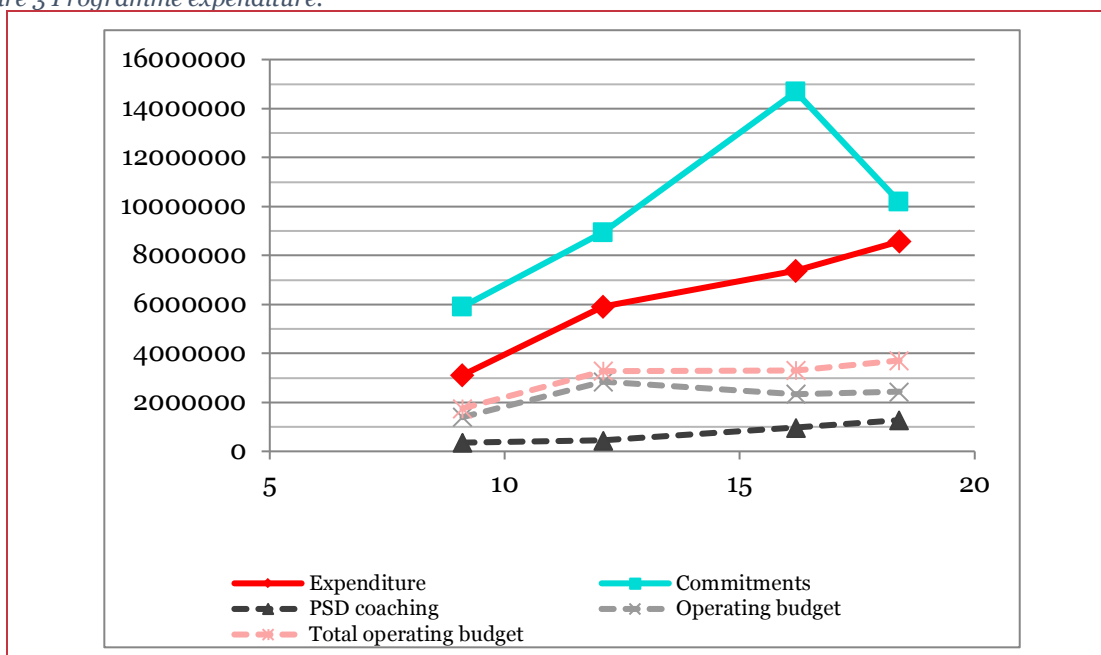
The (near-)full exhaustion of PSD coach budget and the high rate of the operating costs in comparison with the lower rates of programming expenditure, is explained in part because projects, especially larger ones, are only paid after several years. The committed budget is therefore also higher than expenditure: 73.5% on average. Furthermore, in part, the high workload of PSD coaches mentioned through the policy interviews and the interviews for the case studies has affected the programming expenditure/commitment to projects.

Although FTE increased from 9,1 to 18,4 over the four-year period, the programme expenditure is still only used up to 53,9% (2017) / 69,5% committed (2017). Although this can have multiple reasons - possibly related also to the time-consuming procurement processes, unsubstantial project ideas that need a lot of time to be developed, administrative or additional workload of PSD coaches etc. - it is important to state that the work package of PSD coaches is broader than merely the management and monitoring of projects, serving simultaneously as liaison and broker for the embassies and other internal and external stakeholders. **These broker services are highly significant for the relevance and sustainability of the PSD Apps programme and for linking it to the larger portfolio of programmes managed by RVO as well as the embassies.** A part of the operating budget is dedicated exclusively for this broker function. This explains the fairly high percentage of operational costs (2017 = 23%, see Table 2, Table 3 and Figure 3) of the total available programme budget and, to some extent, the imbalance between **the operating and the programming budget**, which has also been emphasised by RVO.

The high operating costs relative to the programming expenditure and commitments also suggests that the small projects under PSD Apps are relatively time consuming and expensive. The inception, management and reporting of these smaller projects (particularly PSD Apps aimed at single interventions and without a definite follow-up) is disproportional. Diversification of management, monitoring and evaluation for these types of projects should therefore be considered, in other words, lessening the administrative burden for smaller projects. **Solving these time-budget and project management issues would facilitate the capacity to work even more on quality and impact and possibility to measure project impact and follow-up.**

In 2017, DDE and RVO decided in consultation to request a budget neutral extension of PSD Apps for 2018, which has been accepted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Figure 3 Programme expenditure.



RVO. PSD Apps annual reports

4.2 Programme portfolio

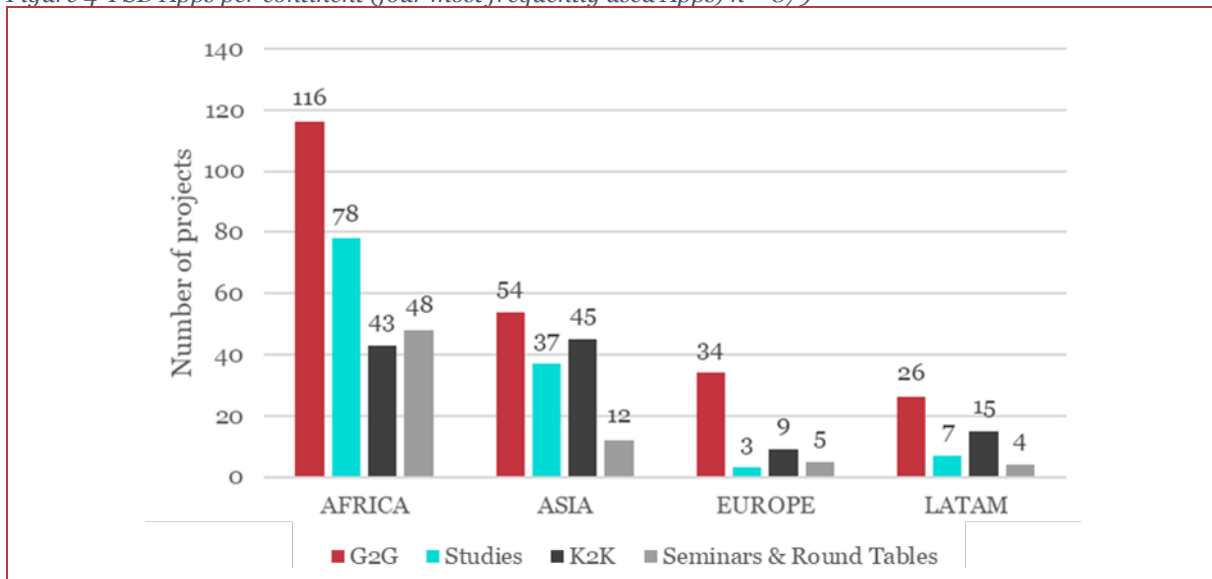
4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Our analysis of the complete project portfolio (n = 879) provides insights on continental, regional and country level. The project portfolio included the following completed indicators: Type of App, country, year started, year finished, budget and budget realised. Technopolis added the indicator partner country/non-partner country to the portfolio. This indicator was added to relate the portfolio further to the Dutch foreign policy strategy.²⁵

On continental level we found that the **government to government App is the most frequently used App in the four continents**. Another observation is that in Africa the Studies App was more frequently started while in Asia there were relatively more knowledge to knowledge and matchmaking projects. Europe and Latin America had a similar distribution of Apps used. In these two continents were mostly government to government projects started followed by knowledge to knowledge projects (see Figure 4).

²⁵ The countries are divided based on the information presented in this policy-document: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ontwikkelingssamenwerking/documenten/rapporten/2014/02/05/meerjarige-strategische-plannen-mj-sp-2014-2017>

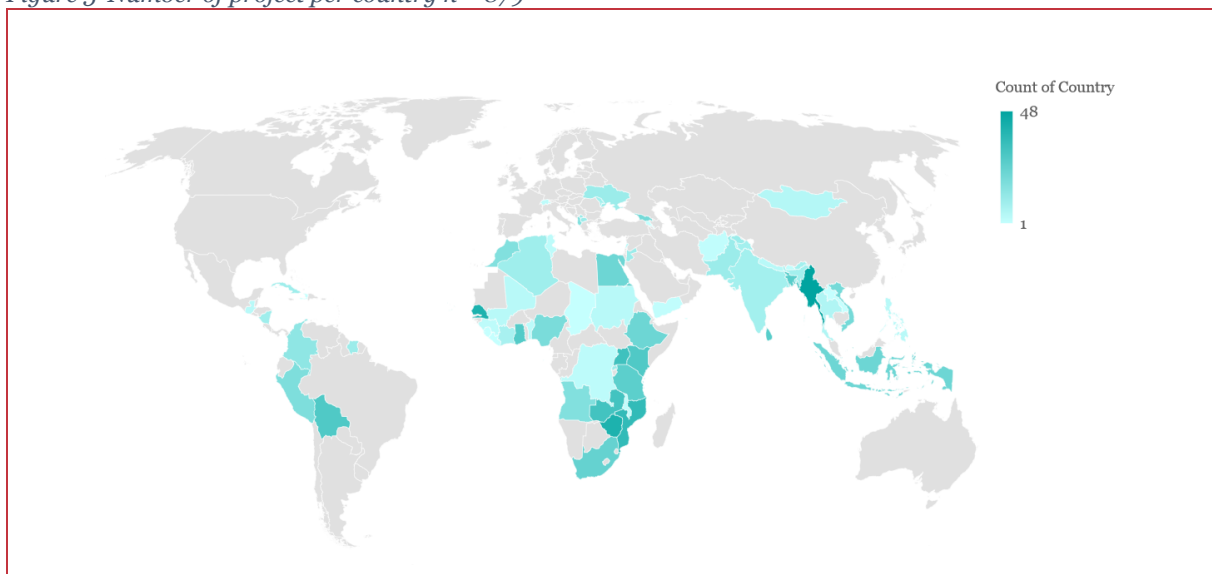
Figure 4 PSD Apps per continent (four most frequently used Apps) n = 879



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The two regions that have made use of the PSD Apps programme most frequently are Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast-Asia. Myanmar has the biggest project portfolio (48 projects), mainly consisting of G2G (18) and K2K (18) projects. The three African countries that have been very active in the programme were Zimbabwe (41), Senegal (41) and Mozambique (36) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Number of project per country n = 879



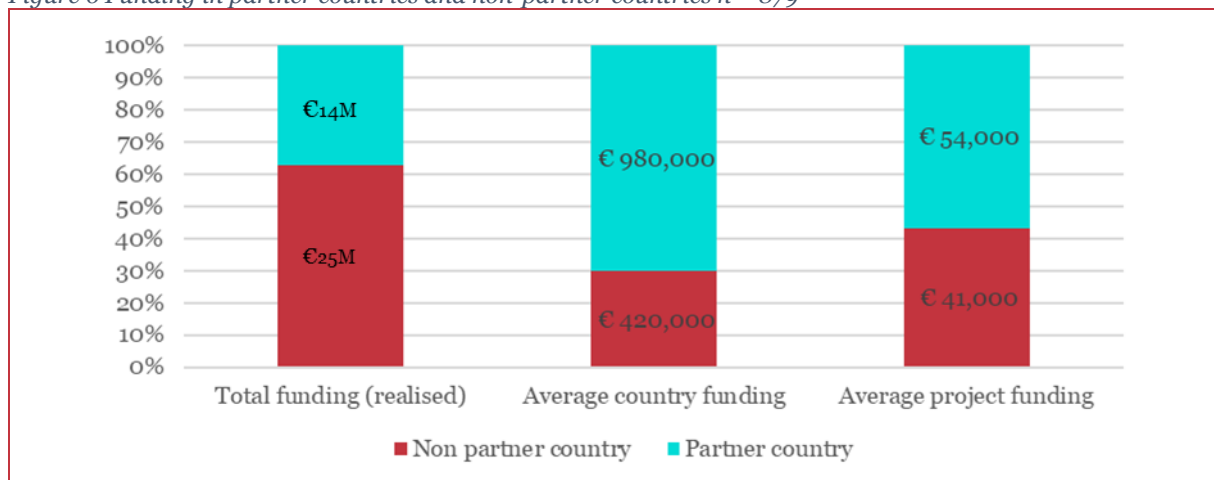
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Similar as in Myanmar, the biggest share of projects in Mozambique were G2G (20) projects. The composition of the project portfolio in Zimbabwe and Senegal differs from Mozambique and Myanmar. As agreed with the embassy, in Zimbabwe G2G projects were not prioritised because of political instability and lack of bilateral relations with the Netherlands. In the case of Senegal, the number of projects per year decreased over the observed period of time. The majority of the Apps used in Senegal were started through the LED-financing construction (18), mainly between 2014 and 2015.

4.2.2 Partner countries vs. non-partner countries

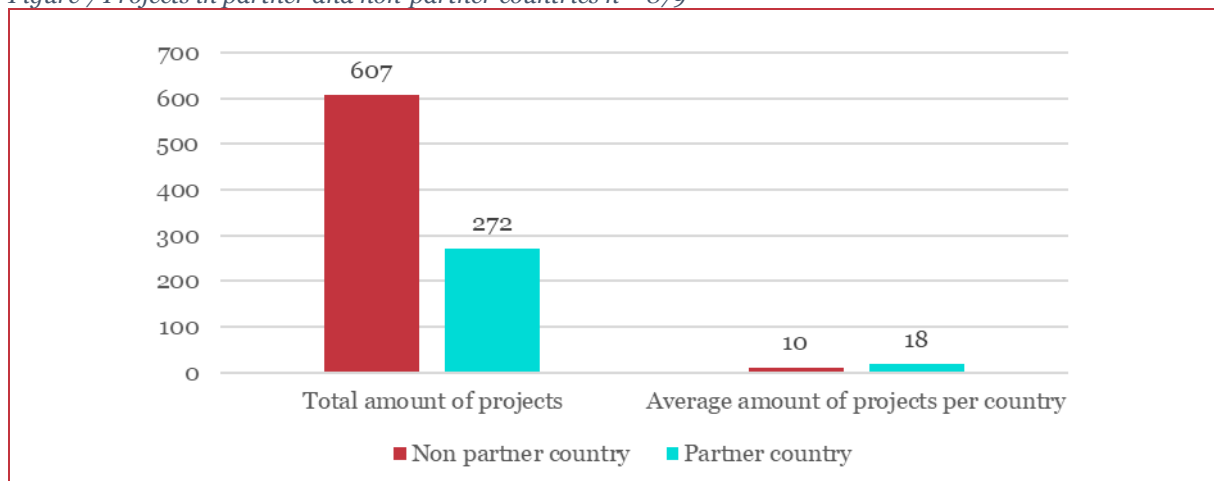
Technopolis found that there were absolute and relative differences between partner and non-partner countries. The absolute majority of the projects took place in a non-partner country (70%) while the other 30% of the project took place in a partner-country (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). However, a partner country was granted an average of 18 projects whereas non-partner countries were granted 10 projects between 2014 and 2017. The average size of a project in a partner country (€54k) was thereby larger than in a non-partner country (€41k). The data support the finding that the **PSD Apps programme followed the prioritisation of the Dutch partner countries by starting more and relatively larger projects in partner countries while supporting less and smaller projects in non-partner countries.** This might be somewhat surprising considering the fact that partner countries also make use of decentralised ODA funds that already allow them to start large development initiatives, although in some cases this made synergies between bigger interventions possible.

Figure 6 Funding in partner countries and non-partner countries n = 879



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Figure 7 Projects in partner and non-partner countries n = 879



Technopolis 2018

The allocation of Apps differs per partner- and non-partner country as shown in Table 4. The Transition Countries Budget (MAV) was fully spent in the partner countries. The Seminars&Round Tables App has been used most frequently in partner countries while trade promotion fairs were more frequently organised in the non-partner countries. The average size of all projects is increasing over time. The size of an average project increased with 33% over the observed period (2014-2017) (Table 5).

Table 4 Amount of projects per App separated on partner and non-partner countries n= 879

App	Partner country	Share of total partner country projects	Non-partner Country	Share of total non-partner country projects
LED (Leads for Economic Development)	10	4%	123	20%
MAB (Beurzen)	1	0%	18	3%
MAD (Dutch Research Facility)	2	1%	4	1%
MAG (G2G)	84	31%	146	23%
MAI (Impact Clusters)	1	0%	2	0%
MAK (K2K)	30	11%	81	13%
MAM (Matchmaking facility)	11	4%	45	7%
MAN (seminars & round tables)	37	14%	32	5%
MAO (Opleidingsbudget)	5	2%	13	2%
MAP (Missies)	21	8%	38	6%
MAS (Subsidies)	2	1%	11	2%
MAT (Studies)	35	13%	92	15%
MAV (Overgangsfaciliteit)	33	12%	0	0%
NMTP (Training for managers and entrepreneurs)	0	0%	2	1%
Total	272	100%	607	100%

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Table 5 Average size of a project over time

Year	Size average project
2014	€30,300
2015	€41,900
2016	€43,600
2017	€44,200

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4.2.3 Overview per App

The budget for the two most frequently used Apps G2G and K2K varied over time. The average budget of a K2K project increased with a factor 3 while the average size of a G2G project decreased with 10% over the same period (2014-2017). The findings from this budget-analysis support the finding that the PSD Apps gradually expanded the importance of the K2K Apps while maintaining G2G as an important App (Table 6 & Table 7).

Table 6 Average size of a project per App per year n = 879 (I/II)

Year	LED	MAB	MAD	MAG	MAI	MAK
2014	€25,200	-	€190,000	€64,800	-	€23,100
2015	€20,100	-	€47,200	€62,200	-	€48,800
2016	€14,500	€20,500	€18,700	€62,700	€441,900	€44,100
2017	-	€13,000	-	€58,900	-	€66,600

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Table 7 Average size of a project per App per year n = 879 (II/II)

Year	MAM	MAN	MAO	MAP	MAS	MAT	MAV
2014	€5,900	-	€33,000	€57,300	-	-	€37,400
2015	€5,600	-	€19,200	€45,800	€85,300	-	€57,500
2016	€8,100	€16,100	€17,100	€32,100	€91,500	€30,000	€139,500
2017	€6,000	€17,300	€10,000	€35,600	€277,500	€30,000	-

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4.3 Programme management

4.3.1 Programme management RVO

The international focus of RVO on emerging markets has grown significantly over the last ten to fifteen years. Most of the international programmes that are administered by RVO are financed by Directorate-General for Foreign Economic Relations (DGBEB) and Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS), such as Partners in Business (PIB), Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF), Partners for Water (PvW), Sustainable Water Fund (FDW). As an ODA funded programme, you would expect that the PSD Apps programme is part of the International Cooperation division of the department International Programmes at RVO. Most of the consultations on matters of content and coordination are actually done with the management and representatives of this division. Nonetheless, **PSD Apps is the administrative and financial responsibility of the trade promotion division of the department International programmes, the division that also manages the DGBEB financed programmes.**

Following the 2013 pilot programme Modulaire Aanpak focussed on 15 PSD countries, RVO, on the request of DGIS of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commenced the implementation of PSD Apps on 1 January 2014 for a period of four years. The programme was opened to all 67 PSD countries, with particular emphasis on the eight transitioning countries specified in 'A World to Gain' as well as to countries with flagship programmes and those embassies that were particularly active in project design. The territorial scope of PSD Apps has fluctuated between 66 to 73 countries.

The objectives and set-up of PSD Apps were formed following the 2013 pilot programme and were partially inspired by the Transition Facility (according to the Transition Facility mid-term review²⁶. See also Figure 8). The Transition Facility was launched in 2011 following recommendations from the

²⁶ "Mid-Term review of the Transition Facility", ERBS BV., commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017

Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy in 2010 to involve the Dutch business community in development cooperation, culminating in the “aid and trade approach”. In “A World to Gain” the new development cooperation policy was further set out to include an increased role for trade and investment in the field of aid.

Figure 8 PSD Apps and Transition Facility

Transition Facility & Strategic Partnerships NL – Vietnam

The Transition Facility (TF), launched in 2011 as ‘a country specific instrument for (near to) middle-income countries’, was opened for Vietnam that same year and closed in 2014, to: 1) enable the shift from a bilateral development relation towards a mutually beneficial economic co-operation (non-Official Development Assistance -ODA objective); 2) improve the business climate in sectors with opportunities for Dutch enterprises’ (ODA objective).

Vietnam is not included in the list of partner countries but is considered as a country with ample trade opportunities. Therefore, it can make use of central ODA instruments like the PSD Apps programme and the wider array of trade promotion funds. Two Strategic Partnerships were signed for bilateral collaboration on Climate Change Adaption and Water Management (2010) and on Sustainable Agriculture and Food security (2014). The PSD Apps projects have primarily been used to give effect to these bilateral agreements. These agreements have a strong focus on supporting trade between Vietnam and the Netherlands, and do not bilaterally elaborate the Aid Agenda.

Particularly in the first year, there was a policy continuum between the TF and PSD Apps, partly as a continuation of initiatives that were rapidly set up under the TF, most of them focusing on trade promotion. Besides the embassy, the Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh also develops PSD Apps projects directly with RVO. These projects tend to show a strong focus on trade promotion with supporting elements focusing on knowledge transfer. The balance between ODA relevance and trade priorities remains a challenge, as generally speaking the development impact cannot be directly ‘attributed’ to the project interventions and are only expected to ‘contribute’ to sustainable development. Examples are projects in which local producers will only -supposedly- benefit in an indirect way but are not included as project beneficiaries through for example capacity building activities.

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In 2014, the objectives of PSD Apps were developed in order to give substance to the development dimension of the new approach specified in “A World to Gain” policy document. Specifically, it was said to be 1) contributing to solving economic problems identified in the Multi-Annual Strategic Plans and the annual plans of the (then) 67 PSD countries, thereby improving the business climate, and 2) contributing to more impact, better results and more projects realised through RVO’s flagship programmes (ORIO, PSI/DGGF, FDW, FDOV, CBI, G4AW, Ghana Wash Window). In the subsequent two years of the programme, the aim of the programme was crystallized further into three objectives with greater emphasis on the role of trade and investment opportunities for the local & Dutch private sector. We have noticed that this crystallization occurred in the same period of the formulation of the Theories of Change for Private Sector Development, developed in the summer of 2015 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the framework of the agenda for aid, trade and investment.²⁷

More concretely, the stated aims of PSD Apps became to: 1) improve the business climate through reducing or removing obstacles to trade and investment, 2) improve the possibilities for trade and investment for both Dutch as well as local private sector, and 3) contribute to more impact, better results and more project of RVO programmes and other PSD partners. **It reflects the assumption that the PSD Apps programme follows the policy trend that considers economic development, trade and investment as the motor for the reduction of poverty.** These objectives were not new for PSD Apps as they had already been stated as sub-objectives for the 8 transitioning countries in 2014. This approach differs substantially from the original objectives stated by DDE (department for

²⁷ Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. Theories of change Speerpunten en Prioritaire Thema’s: Privatesectorontwikkeling. 2015.

development cooperation) of removing economic problems as signaled by embassies and supporting other RVO programmes.

In terms of process, **the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and RVO maintain an excellent relation as well as direct lines of frequent communication regarding PSD Apps, which has been emphasised by both organisations through the policy-interviews.** Following the development of the initial framework for PSD Apps, RVO established a tender for each programming year to specify annual objectives, expected results, details on process and services, and a financial overview.

A report follows annually with achieved results. During the first three years, DDE requested RVO to report mostly on qualitative outputs and best practices. Due to the fact that the PSD Apps differ to such an extent in character that there was no unequivocal evaluation system. However, in the course of 2016, DDE asked RVO to develop M&E protocol that resulted in a results framework that came into practice in 2017. Since then, each project is measured by pre-determined indicators that relate to amongst others 1) the number of programme objectives that the project contributed to, 2) the amount of strengthened economic institutions, 3) the contribution to the various relevant themes (young entrepreneurs, gender, ICSR, climate) and 4) the amount of participants (incoming and outgoing missions, trade promotion fairs, trainings, seminars & round tables). These indicators are laid down in each project, so that they can be measured and aggregated. The IATI concept is used in this respect, so that all ODA parties can update substantial and financial project data as well as results. The plan of advice that is prepared in the inception phase of each project has been updated for the purpose of streamlining this process, so data can be easily transferred through management documentation. The new monitoring and evaluation indicators are ought to make project reporting more quantifiable, which would allow for aggregating the results of PSD Apps.

For the day-to-day management of the PSD Apps the position of PSD coaches was developed. PSD coaches serve as central contact point for the embassies of the countries in their respective portfolios. They work on the design and management of projects, apply and expand their (local) network and (institutional) knowledge and find synergies with other (RVO) programmes. The interviews with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the embassies and other stakeholders, and projects show that the **PSD coaches perform their activities very satisfactorily.** The PSD coaches play a considerable role in finding synergies with other RVO programmes and external partners. Through liaising with colleagues, keeping up-to-date with developments in the PSD countries (including by travelling to the countries in their portfolio) and signalling opportunities for the application of PSD Apps – in coordination with the embassies – the **PSD coaches are able to increase the impact of RVO programmes such as Develop2Build and DRIVE.** From the interviews it appears that while on certain themes at RVO a concertation structure exists, **creating synergies with other RVO programmes depends mostly on the individual efforts of PSD coaches, which is sometimes difficult.**

At the start of PSD Apps in 2014, 15 PSD Coaches started with one or more countries in their portfolio. By the end of 2014, the team of PSD coaches had increased to 18 due to work pressure, increasing further to 22 by 2017, excluding supporting personnel. The total fulltime equivalent (FTE) of the PSD coaches has risen in this period from 9.1 to 18.4 (see Table 8). Programme management support has similarly increased to one full-time and one part-time coordinator.

Table 8 PSD coaches

	PSD coaches	FTE	Realised programming expenditure	Projects developed	Average projects managed	PSD landen
2014	18 (15+3)	9,1	€3.11M	76	44 (end of year)	67
2015	21 (+3)	12,1 (+33%)	€5.90M (+ 89.8%)	213	109-150 (beginning-end of year)	73 (68+5)

2016	22 (+1)	16,2 (+33.9%)	€7.38M (+24.9%)	275	190 average	68
2017	22	18,4 (+13.6%)	€8.57M (+16.2%)	238	433 average	70 (68+2)

RVO. PSD Apps annual reports

4.3.2 Project administration

The quality and consistency of the programme management in terms of project administration is in fairly good order, although some gaps have been noted. Based on the annual reports to DGIS 2014-2017, our calculation for the total of the PSD Apps project portfolio summed up to 802 projects initiated within the timeframe of this MTR. The project database delivered by RVO for the portfolio analysis that was included in our MTR methodology summed up to a total of 840 projects initiated in that same period. Out of this total, Technopolis analysed 247 projects in depth to collect information on the outputs and outcomes of the projects. Technopolis found that from the 247 analysed projects, 25 project folders (including 9 LED projects²⁸) were partly empty, empty or doubled. These 25 folders contained not enough information to include the projects in the final analysis of the database. For the remaining 200 projects, at least the project proposals and final reports were studied.

RVO manages its project administration in fixed four-step form: a) development, b) procurement and award decision, c) management, and d) finalization. RVO performs its administration based on this format. For the remaining 200 projects, Technopolis found that this clear and consistent folder structure was sometimes missing, predominantly for projects prior to 2016. At the level of project reporting, Technopolis also found a high variance in quality of the final reports. The final reports often missed quantitative indicators that could be included in the database composed by Technopolis. This can be explained as these concerned predominantly projects implemented before the introduction of the M&E set of (quantitative) performance indicators early 2017. Most of the projects that started after this introduction of the quantitative performance indicators are still running and have therefore not delivered a final report yet. Therefore TG cannot conclude if project reporting has improved significantly yet. However, the form and quality of the reports seemed to depend to a great extent on the efforts of the implementing consortium as Technopolis could not find a template for annual or final reporting. This makes that important information is not always included, for example on follow-up issues. Particularly research institutes provided in general well organised and structured reports that provided insightful information on outputs and outcomes.

4.3.3 Role PSD coach

One of the main features of the new PSD Apps programme was the introduction in 2014 of the PSD coach. Their role has changed over the years and since 2016 the responsibilities of the PSD coach are defined by four tasks:

2. First contactpoint/liaison (*for embassies and external stakeholders)
3. Advising and coaching
4. Developing and implementing new PSD Apps projects
5. Network development and management in the Netherlands with PSD partners and potential implementers/knowledge providers.

Our desk research as well as the interviews demonstrate that **tasks 1, 2 and 4 are increasingly time consuming and take a significant share of the time-budget spent by the coaches.** Some respondents even express their concern that this increased prominence of the broker role for coaches is jeopardising the development of new projects, although we could not validate this causal assumption directly from our data. Another challenge might be how to maintain and strengthen the so-called “makel-schakel” function of the coaches especially in the case when certain programmes will move

²⁸ “LED project initiated by the embassies were managed only administratively, although the 2014 annual report emphasis that PSD coaches also contributed on substance”.

outdoors to Invest.nl (like DGGF and DRIVE). Some embassies, not too familiar with RVO's funding schemes, express to encounter difficulties with the complexity of its portfolio: there are at least 22 funding instruments, 22 budgets, 22 different administrative procedures. This advocates even further for the liaison role of the coach.

Nonetheless, all four tasks are equally appreciated and considered indispensable by internal and external stakeholders. Most of the respondents of the policy-interviews and the survey underline that **the success of a PSD Apps project is defined by the quality and expertise of the coach**. He/she should be critical, entrepreneurial and enthusiastic and be able to maintain a good network amongst internal and external stakeholders. The fact that some of the policy officials at the embassies were PSD coaches or worked at RVO in the past and therefore have in-depth knowledge of the RVO portfolio and good internal networks is also considered as an added value. Although DDE expects that the embassies take the initiative for designing new projects, it has been mentioned in interviews that coaches should pay continuous attention when new staff are placed at embassies to check if they are up-to-date with the PSD Apps. Moreover, regular consultation with the embassies about the implementation of the programme/projects and field visits for the coaches to keep up with recent local policy and contextual developments has been emphasised and could be standardised among all coaches.

The minimum average time-spending for the project design and procurement is 3 to 4 months, although projects can be developed in less time if needed. An escalation mechanism with DDE is in place in case RVO and embassies do not reach an agreement on project proposals. **These discussions, although few, frequently have to do with too little or a lack of ODA relevance in the project idea proposed by the embassy**. Easy-to-establish consultation between PSD Apps coordinator and DDE do provide a safety net in those cases but some form of more rigorous pre-check with specific indicators in the design phase could help.

At the majority of embassies no ODA specialists/departments are present anymore. Therefore, the PSD coach have been increasingly trained in ODA issues in order to manage and safeguard ODA relevance in the discussions with embassies and design of PSD Apps projects, without jeopardising the demand-drivenness of the design process.

Particularly the interviews and portfolio analysis show that coaches take considerable freedom in managing their tasks and country portfolios. Considering that most of the projects are "tailor-made", the amount of initiated projects per country/coach differ considerably as well as the quality of administration of project portfolios, and respondents have indicated that some coaches are more proactive than others. Considering the kaleidoscopic nature of their tasks this is not surprising and also not necessarily problematic, but the quality of administration is a point of attention and can be possibly improved as has been said before. **Not necessarily by increasing the administrative burden and checks-and-balances but by providing streamlined instructions in the procurement and implementation phase that allow for a smoother and more consistent administrative process and programme portfolio**. Also **continuous and frequent internal exchange and consultation moments**, in which experiences, problems, lessons learned and cross-over issues are discussed are highly recommended.

During the last year of the scope of this MTR period, the collaboration between the PSD coaches (ODA) and the Business Development Coaches (BEB), who started in 2016, has showed fruitful results. In 2017, the PSD coaches and Business Development Coaches worked on 24 overlapping countries. Agreements have been made between both teams in discussion with embassies how to cooperate most effectively and efficiently. For example, for Colombia and Cuba both coaches have a two-weekly meeting for coordination on ongoing projects as well as on upcoming projects and for Morocco both coaches planned a joint field visit. This coordination is especially valuable for the embassies so that they know who to approach with more business and more development related questions.

4.4 Project articulation, management and implementation

4.4.1 Project cycle

The project cycle of PSD Apps projects maintains a fixed four-step form: Development, procurement and award decision, management, and finalisation. **RVO performs its administration based on this generic project cycle format, which seems to be logical and effective for the wide variety and flexibility of PSD Apps.**

Projects are initiated on the request of the embassy and generally identified either by the PSD coach from RVO or by embassy staff. Projects are demand-driven, reaching the PSD coach or embassy staff through their respective networks or other channels. The programme has explicitly not been publicised to a wider public because the projects are not to be initiated on the request of contracting parties, but in order to support the Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs) and annual plans of the embassies.

Following identification, the PSD coach and/or the embassy composes an advisory report, possibly with input from the embassies or the foreseen contracting party (in case of governmental organizations) or external sector experts. The advisory report contains a concise overview of the purpose, institutional setting, problem analysis, expected results (as well as indicators), and foreseen activities of the project. It also allows for the possibility of noting observations for further development, which is an integral aspect of PSD Apps.

The tendering procedure can proceed through several options. Contract of up to 33.000 euros can be awarded directly to a contracting party. Higher amounts, apart from instances of in-house procurement, are subject to public procurement rules. In such case, RVO has the option to do a market consultation prior to the tendering, which clarifies and potentially limits the amount of parties that can participate in the tendering process.

The awarded contractor experiences, as the interviews with contractors note, substantial freedom in the execution of projects, with periodical reporting and a final report. Given the wide variety and flexibility of PSD Apps interventions possible, this seems to be unproblematic. Depending much on the type of project, the embassy and RVO remain involved during implementation to play a role. This can be important to further public diplomacy and in order to create synergies with current or follow-up projects.

4.4.2 Role Embassies

One of the objectives of the PSD Apps programme is to facilitate the embassies in their implementation of private sector development policies as described in their Multi-Annual Strategic Plans and/or annual plans. Our survey results show that 66% of the survey respondents indicate that the embassies often come with the initial idea for PSD Apps projects. Second in line is RVO, with 45% of the respondents indicating that RVO often comes with the initial idea for projects. The two departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DDE and DIO rarely or never come up with the initial idea (75% and 85% respectively). The embassies can therefore be considered as the main stakeholder and user of the PSD Apps

The embassies are key to place individual projects in a wider and strategic long-term perspective and secure alignment with the Aid-to-Trade Agenda through their MASP's and annual plans. Bilateral Strategic Agreements or MoU's definitely support focussing the use of PSD Apps and ensure consistency in country project portfolios (see Figure 9 case study box "PSD Apps and bilateral agreements"). In some cases, **embassy ideas for trade promotion are not in line with the ODA objectives of the PSD Apps.** The embassies consider the PSD Apps as a very useful instrument for their public diplomacy and use it to position the NL government and industry in new countries with promising potential (like Myanmar), fast-growing emerging markets (like South-Africa and Vietnam) or important trade partners (like Indonesia). Especially in countries that recently opened up, like Myanmar, the PSD Apps programme allows the embassy for a wide range of valuable sector identification and positioning activities.

Stakeholders mentioned the lack of staff capacity and relevant sector specialists at smaller embassies as a serious problem for coaches to develop a considerable and consistent project portfolio in these countries. This is substantiated by the fact that partner countries, with bigger embassies and more sector specialists present, generally implement more and larger projects as they have more capacity to design project proposals. Most of the embassies seem not to think in “Apps” but in opportunities or obstacles or opportunities to be tackled, subsequently they launch project ideas with the coaches at RVO who determine the right App and related budget line.

The embassies have no determined monitoring and evaluation role, so their involvement depends on capacity, type of projects and other interests. Most of the embassies tend to follow G2G projects closely or projects that they consider as highly relevant for their strategic plans, which seems a logical prioritisation. Normally, all embassies provide input to RVO for the final evaluation and closing of projects.

Figure 9 PSD Apps and bilateral agreements

MoU NL – Myanmar

To promote Netherlands-Myanmar trade relations, and support Dutch business in the country, a Netherlands Economic Mission has been established in Yangon in 2013, upgraded to an embassy in 2015. Despite several requests from the embassy, Myanmar was not included in the list of partner countries and is not considered as a priority country for trade relations. Therefore it cannot make use of delegated ODA funds nor the wider array of trade promotion instruments. In 2014 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on intensified bilateral water cooperation and a year later a MoU on bilateral agricultural collaboration.

The PSD Apps programme has turned out to be an excellent instrument to give effect to the objectives of both bilateral agreements. Studies, economic missions and a Water Hub initiative, amongst others, were financed and positioned both the Dutch government as well as business in the water and agricultural sector in Myanmar. The scoping study on the Yangon Water Delta for instance is now being used by the World Bank as a main reference for a multi-million dollar investment in the water sector and it is expected that Dutch water consultancy and engineering companies will be well positioned to receive assignments through this loan to the Myanmar government.

Recently a larger horticulture project (Impact Cluster) supported by a K2K capacity building project were started through the PSD Apps programme as a follow-up to the earlier smaller interventions in the agricultural sector. In addition to that, high-level visits to the Netherlands of the Chief Minister of Yangon Region with the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Environment and Forest and the Minister of Electricity, Industry, Transportation and Communication of Yangon Region Government were successfully organized.

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4.4.3 Role RVO

RVO, as the administrator of the PSD Apps programme, is responsible for the procurement, project and financial administration, main tasks of the PSD coaches (see chapter 4.3.3). Generally speaking, they are also responsible for the formal monitoring (through annual reports) and the final statement of projects. RVO coaches also are increasingly pro-active to launch new initiatives, for example after discussions with local governments, companies or civil society organisations or through suggestions from RVO colleagues responsible for other programmes (like DRIVE/Develop2build, PwW etc.).

In most cases, RVO has an important role in supporting and “coaching” local policy officers at the embassies to formulate and fine-tune the wide variety of project proposals. These exercises can be demanding and time-consuming, especially when embassies encounter lack of staff capacity or relevant sector specialists.

Some embassies mentioned that design and procurement processes at RVO sometimes tend to be somewhat complicated and slow, especially in cases when projects need to be implemented quickly. It

has to be said that stakeholders also mentioned that project ideas launched by embassies can sometimes be without sufficient focus and needs a lot of re-thinking and articulation.

4.4.4 *Role implementing organisations*

Implementing organisations are appointed through direct procurement (for projects < 33k), insources to governmental parties or embassies, or through European public procurement rules whether or not preceded by a market consultation. **Particularly in countries where embassies are building up bilateral relations, it has been mentioned that working with familiar and fixed consortia of implementers is preferable as successful positioning depends on relations of trust. In that context, tendering constructions can produce unexpected surprises.** Implementing organisations can be universities and research institutions, NGO's, consultants, companies. RVO and embassies reflect continuously on the quality of implementers, but a centrally administrated list indicating satisfaction with the implementing parties does not exist but has been mentioned as helpful.

No mandatory rules have been developed for the composition of implementing consortia. Implementing organisations can be either Dutch or local, although most of them tend to be coming from the Netherlands. Although public procurement rules and internal procedures at RVO make it easier to contract Dutch consultants or implementing consortia, local consultants or organisations are definitively considered as an added value for most of the PSD Apps. They bring in local networks and expertise and are more likely to "translate" and adapt Dutch technological knowledge and systems to local circumstances. When a project is politically sensitive, respondents mentioned that it is preferable to contract Dutch implementing organisations. Notwithstanding, **a combined Dutch-local consortium should always be considered as an appropriate option as it contributes to the use of local content and indirectly stimulates two-way knowledge transfer and adaptation.**

4.4.5 *Monitoring & Evaluation*

The flexibility and variety of PSD Apps and projects, and the changing (geographical) contexts in which they are implemented, complicates the monitoring and evaluation process. The indicators appear to be too ambitious in some cases, especially for the smaller projects/interventions where it is difficult to substantiate impact through definite indicators; persons trained in an afternoon-session for example are aggregated in a similar way as a long-term G2G capacity-building project. Indicators for a study are of a complete different nature than indicators for an impact cluster or capacity building project. This has been mitigated to a certain extent by developing different indicator sets for different Apps. Stakeholders mention in the policy-interviews that **employing indicators is more time consuming, both in the design, monitoring and evaluation phase, than is justified by the gained added value so far.** In cases that implementers have to report in detail on the set indicators, extra attention is often necessary.

As mentioned for several Apps, quantifiable data do not always clarify the quality of the intervention. Although already used by missions, seminars and trainings, introducing more qualitative indicators might be considered, for example satisfaction of participants of a study visit. None of the interviewees assumes that projects have really improved since the introduction of the indicator sets.

Embassies tend to be only partially available, especially for monitoring and evaluation. Respondents to the embassy satisfaction survey were asked how often their embassy needs the PSD coach to ensure effective coordination and monitoring of their PSD Apps projects. The figure below shows two major differences: 40% of the respondents always needs a PSD coach to ensure effective coordination and monitoring while 54% of the respondents rarely or never needs a PSD coach for this. This might be explained by the difference in type of projects: projects that do involve government partners are normally closely followed by embassies, other projects fall more under the responsibility of RVO.

Figure 10 Comparison M&E mechanisms in case studies

Comparing the reporting of the study ‘Needs assessment Agriculture Policy Tunisia’ initiated in 2017 under the new M&E mechanism with the ‘Fact-finding Reduction of the use of Pesticides’ in Nigeria initiated in 2016 it appears that it is difficult to quantify the results for some types of Apps. The 2017 study mentions the number of business opportunities identified through the study by the PSD Apps team, as well as an impact tag for the study. However, the significance of these finding remains unclear without the context of the report provided, with not as much added value compared to the 2016 study.

Comparing two G2G project of over 100k, ‘Incoming High Level Energy Study Visit Senegal’ initiated in 2017 under the new M&E system and ‘Ontwikkeling Spoorwegbedrijf Trainkos’ initiated in Kosovo in 2015, the potential of the indicators becomes clearer. The results are more quantifiable since cooperation has been more substantial. The project in Senegal lists the number of participants in the project and the matches made and business opportunities identified. However here too the qualitative context is important. The project in Kosovo is more qualitative in nature, with the quantitative aspect being mentioned in the reporting done by the contractor.

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As most of the Apps are (in theory) facilitating other interventions and relatively small, the question is until what extent it is possible to measure impact of individual project, as strength of these projects lies in the facilitating function. The M&E framework can thus be improved for the inception phase (design/start project), for example for safeguarding ODA relevance or follow-up of projects. After a half year to one year an ex post evaluation could be done by the coach (a yearly evaluation visit in which all projects that were finished in the precedent year are looked at) to decide on whether to arrange a follow-up. However, this would imply freeing up time of PSD coaches by for instance increased supportive staff.

Figure 11 Importance of project alignment

Importance of project alignment

“We should further improve the monitoring and evaluation system for the PSD Apps programme in consultation with DDE. A Tanzanian university received, through different donors amongst which the Dutch, the same kind of training in entrepreneurship over 16 times and still they were not able to develop an incubator. We must be better aware of what other donors do in the same field or sector so that we can align or initiatives with what has already been achieved (or not) by other projects.”

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5 Results: Outputs, outcomes, impacts and sustainability

In this section we will describe the main results of the programme, following the theory of change elements of outputs, outcomes and impacts.

5.1 Outputs

PSD Apps produce a wide range of outputs due to the high variation in types of projects. However, the outputs can be mostly divided into capacity building of organisations and people, of knowledge products, and contacts, depending on the type of App²⁹. Based on our portfolio analysis of 200 projects (out of the total number of 879 projects in our scope), we have estimated the expected total outputs and presented these in Figure 12 below. As such, we can see that the output of the PSD Apps Programme has been considerable, with over 12,000 people directly reached, going up to 23,000 if events are included (RVO estimate). This does not include people indirectly reached through new knowledge products, of which there are expected to be around 500.

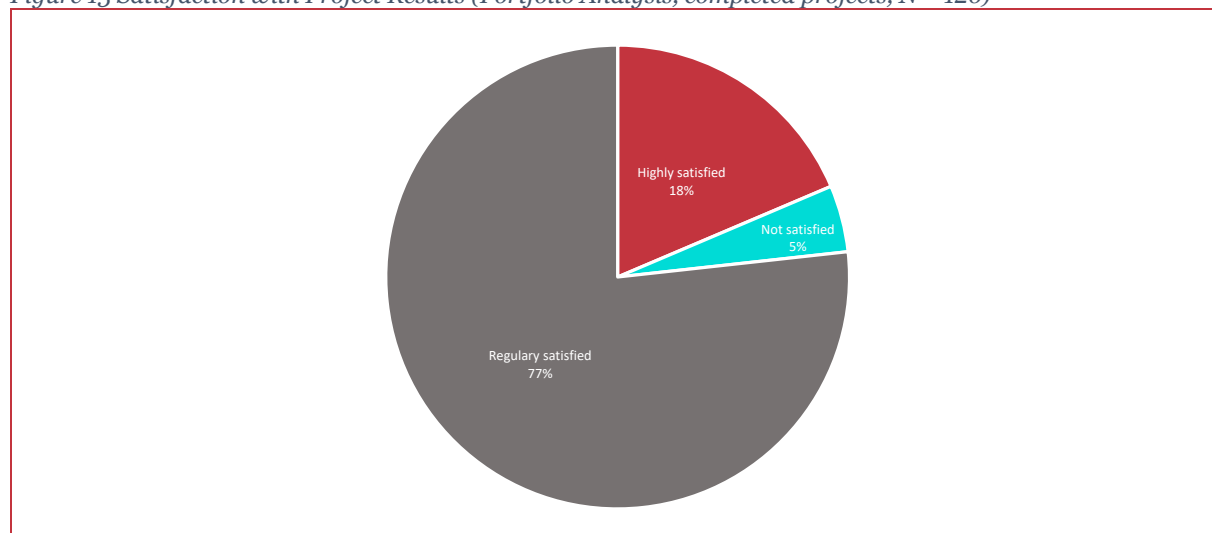
²⁹ The subdivision per type of App is discussed in greater detail in the Value for Money Section

Figure 12 Outputs (Based on portfolio assessment, sample of 200 projects)

Key Output Indicator	Per Project	Total Estimate
People Trained	6,0	±6000
Organisations Supported	0,04	±40
Knowledge Products (Studies, Reports)	0,5	±500
G2G Contacts	0,6	±500
K2K Contacts	0,2	±150
Diplomats trained.	NA	NA
Total Number of People Directly Reached³⁰		
Technopolis Estimate (without events)	12	±12000
RVO Estimate (includes events)	23	±23000

In addition to quantity, the *quality* of these outputs greatly matters since this typically determines the achieved outcomes. Our portfolio analysis shows that project managers in their final reports are typically satisfied with the outputs of these projects (see Figure 13). Only in a small share of projects the results are clearly unsatisfactory. Note that this is not an independent assessment.

Figure 13 Satisfaction with Project Results (Portfolio Analysis, completed projects, N = 126)



However, these findings were also confirmed through our cases studies and interviews, and as such we can conclude that the **quality of these project outputs are generally of a good standard**. However, case studies and interviews show that quality varies based on a number of internal and external factors, like for example:

- Well prepared and contextualised project plan

³⁰ Assuming each K2K and G2G projects entails 10 persons on average.

- Clear articulation of project goals that are relevant to all stakeholders involved
- High quality implementers, preferably mixed NL-local team
- Intensive interaction between project teams and RVO during the project
- Capacity at the mission to support the implementation of the project (knowledge, skills, time, network)

A full assessment of quality of outputs was not possible under the scope of this MTR. Of course, the quality of the outputs is mostly demonstrated through the achievement of outcomes, which will be discussed in the next section.

5.2 Outcomes

As discussed, the PSD Apps have multiple outcome mechanisms towards its impact goals. Following the structure of the ToC, we will discuss direct, indirect and facilitating effects sequentially in this section. It should be noted that this is a mid-term review, not an impact evaluation, and that available data through cases studies, interviews and an embassy survey **only provide a general view on (expected) outcomes.**

Based on our portfolio analysis (project plans and final reports), we have implemented a portfolio outcome objective analysis, in order to systematically identify the outcomes sought through these projects. It is important to note that this is based on descriptions in project plans and final reports, for which the level of detail varies. These figures should therefore be treated as an indicative estimate. The results are presented in Figure 14³¹. The results show that a **majority of the projects (61%) had a direct development objective**, while only 31% has a direct trade promotion objective. Very few projects were focused exclusively on trade promotion (7%), while only 24% share focuses on both. The low share of exclusively trade-focused projects can be explained because of the ‘hard’ criterion of development relevance for project approval. These small number of projects are mostly projects in which the potential development relevance is not necessarily not present, just only articulated explicitly to a limited extent. Note that a substantial share has only indirect trade or development objectives. Key examples include studies (informing both trade and development) and internal projects (e.g. training of diplomats). Figure 15 shows a more detailed analysis of the outcomes projects intend to contribute to (one project can contribute to multiple objectives), these will be further discussed in the sections below.

Figure 14 High-level Project Objectives; Portfolio Quick Scan (N = 144)

Direct Trade Objective	Direct Development Objective		Total
	YES	NO	
YES	24%	7%	31%
NO	37%	32%	69%
Total	61%	39%	100%

³¹ These figures are rough estimates only, based on a quick scan of available project plans.

Figure 15 Detailed Project Objectives (based on TOC) (Portfolio Quick Scan, N = 144)

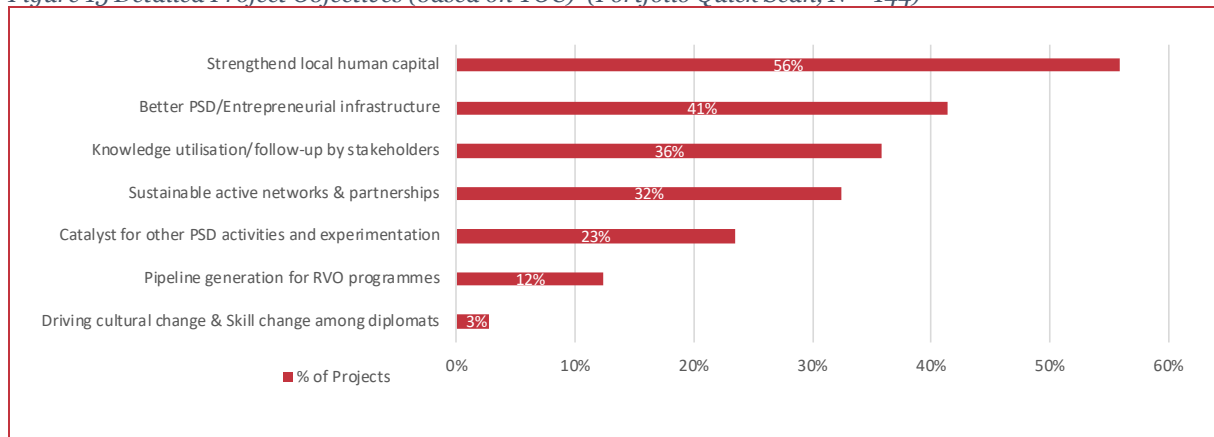
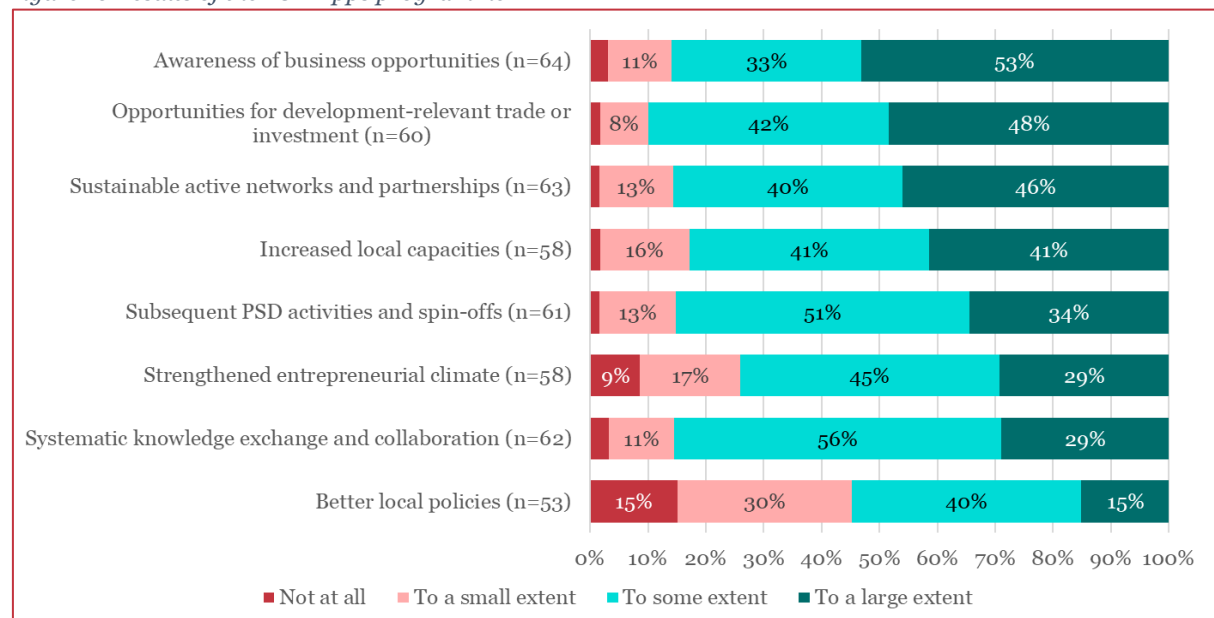


Figure 16 Results of the PSD Apps programme



Source: Embassy Satisfaction Survey 2018

5.2.1 Direct Effects (Capacity Building and entrepreneurial infrastructure)

As can be seen in Figure 16 above, building capacity by strengthening local human capital and promoting better human business climates and entrepreneurial infrastructure are relevant goals for a large share of the PSD Apps. Examples include training of farmers, government officials and entrepreneurship promotion projects (e.g. Orange Corners).

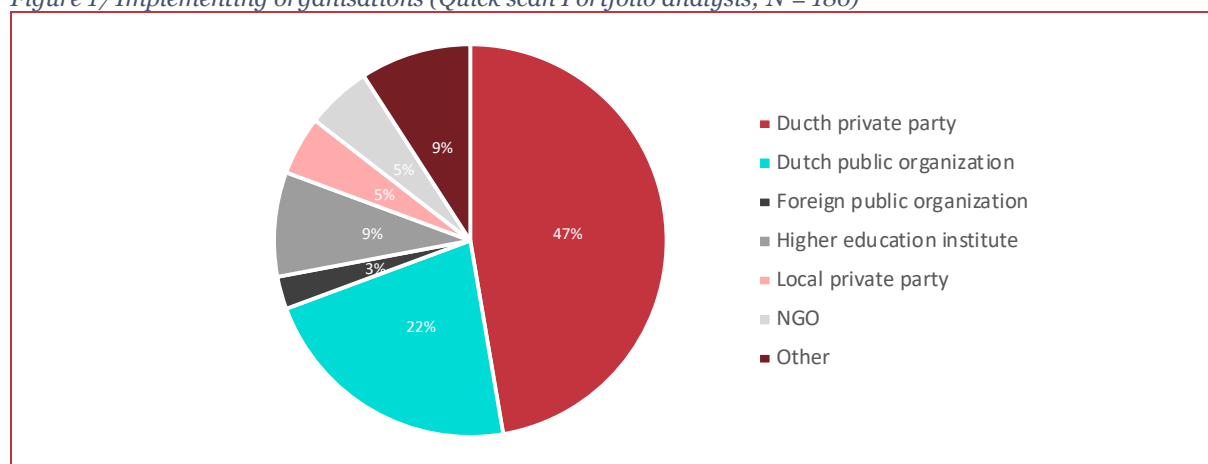
First of all, it should be noted that local private sector development or business environment reform are areas **that require substantial investment in order to generate meaningful change**. Many large private sector development programmes, for instance those run by the World Bank, have budgets of millions of euro and a multi-year investment agenda. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and RVO run similar projects in instruments like FDOV. Obviously, PSD Apps do not have such a broad scope, and are typically of a smaller size (max 600k) and more narrow focus. Of course, when strategically combined with other Apps and other interventions, the collective whole can amount to a substantial investment that does result in a broader effect.

As such, we find through the case studies and portfolio analysis that **PSD Apps are well placed to support private sector development directly, as long as the interventions are highly focused in nature, tackling a very specific challenge in a specific sector (regulatory, capacity), and are embedded in a multi-annual strategic plan of the partner countries or in the annual plans of the non-partner countries.** The PSD Apps portfolio shows several examples of this focus, and the new impact clusters are highly promising in this regard. The interventions reviewed in our case studies were found to be particularly successful if they could build on an existing strategic framework (see Figure 9) and partnership modality (e.g. MOU). Note that we consider entrepreneurship-oriented projects as a class of its own. Please refer to chapter 5.6. on Entrepreneurship & Orange Corners.

However, **smaller projects (in the direct effect category) run the risk of delivering too little focused impact to make a sustained difference at the system-level**, especially if they are not embedded in a more long-term strategic agenda. This high ambition might explain the fact that Dutch embassies are overall least positive about the impact of the PSD Apps portfolio as a whole on the system-level capacity building criteria (see **Error! Reference source not found.**), such as better policies and a better entrepreneurial climate. While some of these projects may contribute to other objectives, they are not likely to lead to significantly better local business environments at the system level. However, effects on **local individual capacity building are typically robustly positive** according to the embassies and our case studies and interviews.

Finally, we observe that there seems to be a missed opportunity in terms of capacity building during project implementation, which is mostly carried out by Dutch parties (see Figure 17). While in many cases this makes sense due to the knowledge transfer character of assignment, or the lack of local expertise, we also understand that in some cases this choice is often driven by pragmatic considerations of ease of procurement, as already stated earlier in chapter 4. Given that capacity building is a key objective of PSD Apps, **more use of local service providers, possibly in a consortium with Dutch parties could be a good model.** This would also be in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which promotes local procurement³²

Figure 17 Implementing organisations (Quick scan Portfolio analysis; N = 186)



5.2.2 Indirect Effects

As can be seen in Figure 17 above, a large share of the projects mainly delivers their impact on private sector development and development-relevant trade in an indirect way. This means that by the nature of the project itself no direct impact will be achieved, but only if the project results receive follow-up real impacts will emerge. Key examples are studies, fairs, missions, where the focus is on knowledge generation and transfer, as well as the establishment of networks. We have seen that in terms of outputs (reports, new contacts) that PSD Apps projects are highly successful in generating these outputs. The

³² <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm>

key question (linked to a main assumption for the pathway to impact) is whether these results also receive follow-up and lead to uptake of knowledge and sustained networks.

The results of the embassy satisfaction survey show that embassies find that **PSD Apps overall is relatively successful in establishing networks and partnerships** (46% indicates a high contribution). This observation is confirmed through our interviews and case studies (see Figure 18), where we find a large number of projects resulting in sustainably active personal or organisational contacts that often go far beyond the project end date. This has definitely led to better awareness of business opportunities for both Dutch and local firms. Given the relatively small costs of these activities, PSD Apps seem to be highly effective to build networks & partnerships.

Figure 18 CSR Lanka – transformative CSR event (2014)

A successful example of a PSD App intervention, sustained through follow-up actions, is the Corporate Social Responsibility Sri Lanka project (CSR Lanka) which sought to introduce the transformative approach of CSR, advocated by MVO Nederland. Through 3 follow-up PSD Apps interventions, Sri Lankan businesses have become familiar with the approach and interested in cooperation with Dutch counterparts. MVO Nederland has used the opportunities that PSD Apps provided to seek closer cooperation with CSR Lanka, signing an MoU, and continuing operations through its own international programmes.

Technopolis 2018

In terms of knowledge uptake & exchange, we find embassies less positive, which resonates with our findings. While many studies are of high quality, the required follow-up is often not guaranteed, not by the embassies nor by the project cycle process managed by RVO, predominantly because of a lack of capacity and time. Besides, attention for dissemination of knowledge is weak, though there are good examples of flexible and smart responses here with considerable positive effects if studies find the right audience (see Figure 19). Another challenge, according to some interviewees, is that the knowledge products are sometimes too theoretical for practical use, and not written with a local audience in mind. A critical success factor for this kind of studies seem to be the use of local (or at least resident) consultants/researchers, or collaborations, to improve the continued presence and dissemination of these knowledge. While it seems that the strategic use and dissemination efforts have been improving over the past few years, there is still room for improvement³³.

Figure 19 Study Zimbabwean Association of Environmental Lawyers

The Zimbabwean Association of Environmental Lawyers (ZELA) is a public interest organisation promoting environmental justice, sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, democracy and good governance in the natural resources and environment sector. They received a subsidy under the PSD Apps scheme which they used to study the financial (mis-)management of a large dam in Zimbabwe. The study gained traction and now ZELA is training Members of Parliament to better hold government accountable in their handling of Zimbabwe's natural resources.

Technopolis 2018

5.2.3 Facilitating effects

Finally, the PSD Apps programme has an important role as a facilitator and catalyst for other PSD activities. We differentiate between three main outcomes: Catalyst for an internal entrepreneurial culture and experimentation, for pipeline generation of RVO projects and for general strengthening of economic diplomatic ties.

First of all, we find that **PSD Apps is quite successful in its role as a facilitator of PSD Activities**, entrepreneurial culture and experimentation. Virtually all embassy staff highlight its virtue

³³ For instance, through systematic dissemination through the RVO Country Pages on its website.

in providing freedom to develop new ideas and potential projects, often referred to as an ‘essential lubricant’. Relatively small projects can be preludes to much larger PSD Apps follow-ups, allowing for good positioning of Dutch interventions while showing continued engagement. Such strategic use is often done via ‘*treintjes*’, i.e. combinations of PSD Apps. In total 41% of embassy survey respondents indicate to use this strategy, of which 88% indicates that this is of high added value. Subsequently, respondents were asked whether their embassy had initiated projects that combined different types of Apps to develop a specific (sub)sector. PSD Apps also provide means for entrepreneurial diplomats to develop tailored approaches for their country, improving motivation and engagement of embassy staff. It is therefore no surprise that 48% of embassy respondents indicates that PSD Apps contribute to their strategic plan to a ‘large extent’. Training is relatively widely available (42% of respondents to the embassy survey had received tailored PSD training), which is quite well received in terms of its effects on capacities.

In terms of pipeline generation for other RVO instruments, we see a mixed picture emerging. First of all, systematic data on pipeline generation is not available, making detailed assessments difficult to make. However, while there are various positive examples of continuation towards other policy instruments, such as PIB, ORIO, D2B, DRIVE, FDW, FDOV, G4AW, Ghana Wash Window, CBI, most projects are not designed with a potential follow-up in terms of instruments in mind from the start. This is partly due to the complexity of the BZ/RVO instruments (and their eligibility criteria), and due to the issues with systematic follow-up in general. Nevertheless, policy interviews at embassies show that PSD Apps may not necessarily lead directly to applications to other instruments but maintain at least a minimum level of continuous engagement that will make it more likely for firms and organisations to apply for other instruments. It is difficult to quantify this effect.

Finally, we found a surprisingly large effect of PSD Apps on economic diplomacy, particularly for countries that have no partner status but still have significant development challenges. Embassies in these countries have limited other means for engagement with government and private sector and find it difficult to be taken seriously without having something to offer. PSD Apps, although often small, can be used to create highly visible, strategic projects that make the Netherlands a more serious partner, benefitting trade but also diplomacy in general (see case study X below). Moreover, PSD Apps solve a problem for embassies that do not have access to other instruments to still engage in economic diplomacy.

5.3 Impacts

5.3.1 Local PSD/entrepreneurial ecosystem development

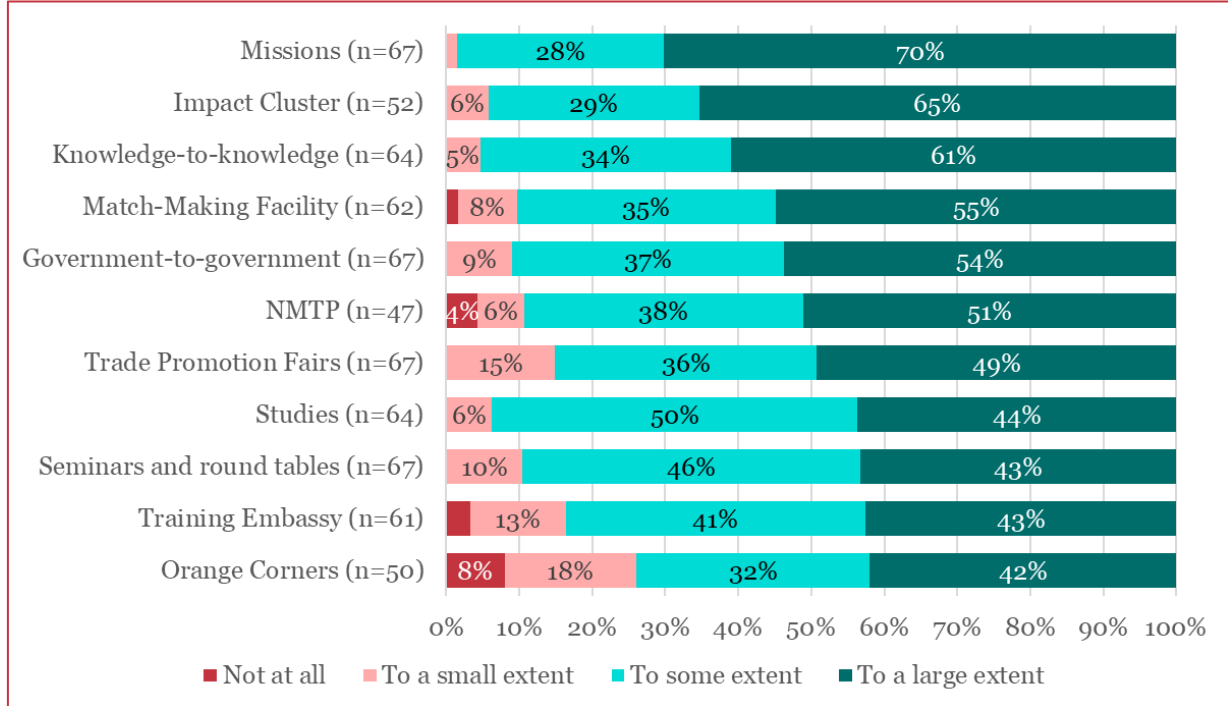
While assessing impacts is beyond the scope of this mid-term review, expected impacts where found will be presented here. As discussed extensively in section 5.2, only in a small number of cases PSD Apps contribute substantially to local PSD/entrepreneurial ecosystem development *in a direct way*. In the case of *indirect contribution*, this number is significantly larger. As this is not an impact assessment, and there typically is a long lag between activities and final impacts, we highlight a number of examples of impacts from our case studies:

- In Western Cape (South Africa), two municipalities changed their waste tendering mechanism to promote circular economy opportunities
- In Mozambique, Orange Corners were among the first to offer entrepreneurship support programmes, having caused a lot of appreciation and follow-up by third parties.
- In Myanmar, the introduction of new horticultural technologies introduced from the Netherlands considerably increased harvest production of local farmers within less than two years already.
- In Vietnam, a quick scan on crop and cropping system level strategies resulted in the commitment of over 40 local farmers to participate in designed pilots to test crops and innovative technologies to produce salt and drought tolerant seed material.

As such, we will conclude that **PSD Apps has a relatively limited direct effect at the system-level so far, but a substantial indirect effect, depending on the quality of the follow-up.**

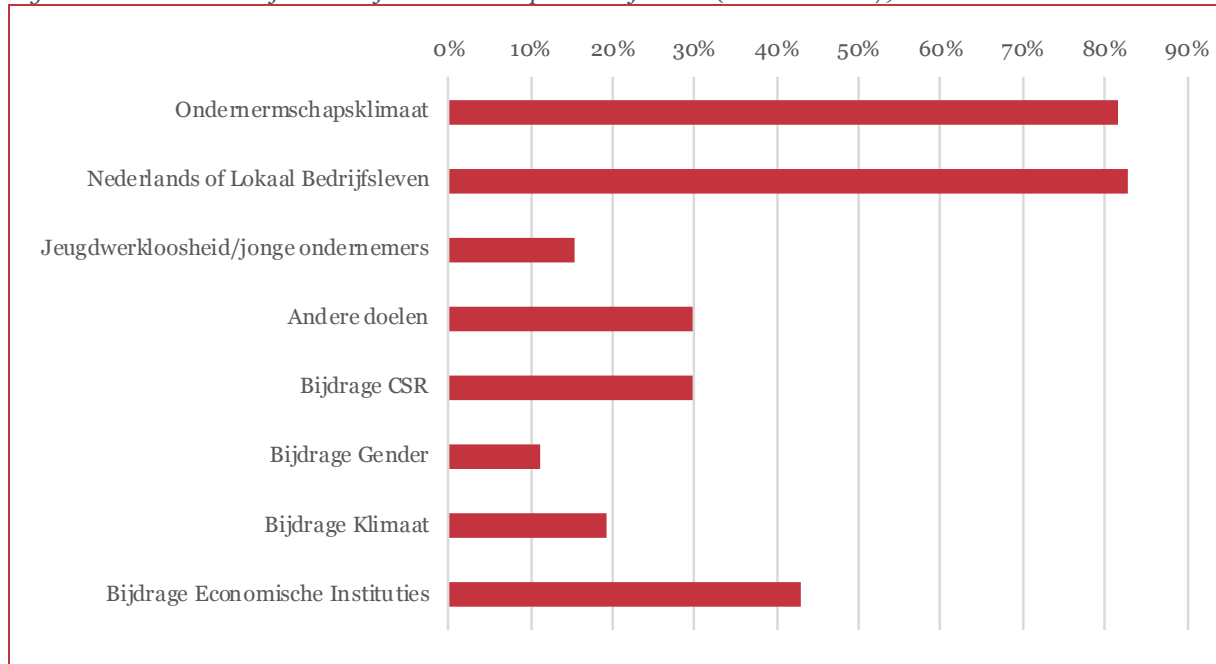
Embassy staff were asked to comment on which Apps they consider most successful in contributing to private sector development (See Figure 20). We find that impact clusters, knowledge-to-knowledge and government-to-government score high in terms of potential, which all are often the relatively larger, focused strategic projects that have the potential to generate direct change. Missions are also seen of high potential.

Figure 20 Potential to contribute to stronger PSD/entrepreneurial climate in host country



Source: Embassy Satisfaction Survey 2018

Figure 21 Contribution of PSD Projects to Development objectives (data RVO 2017)



5.3.2 *More opportunities for development-relevant trade and investment*

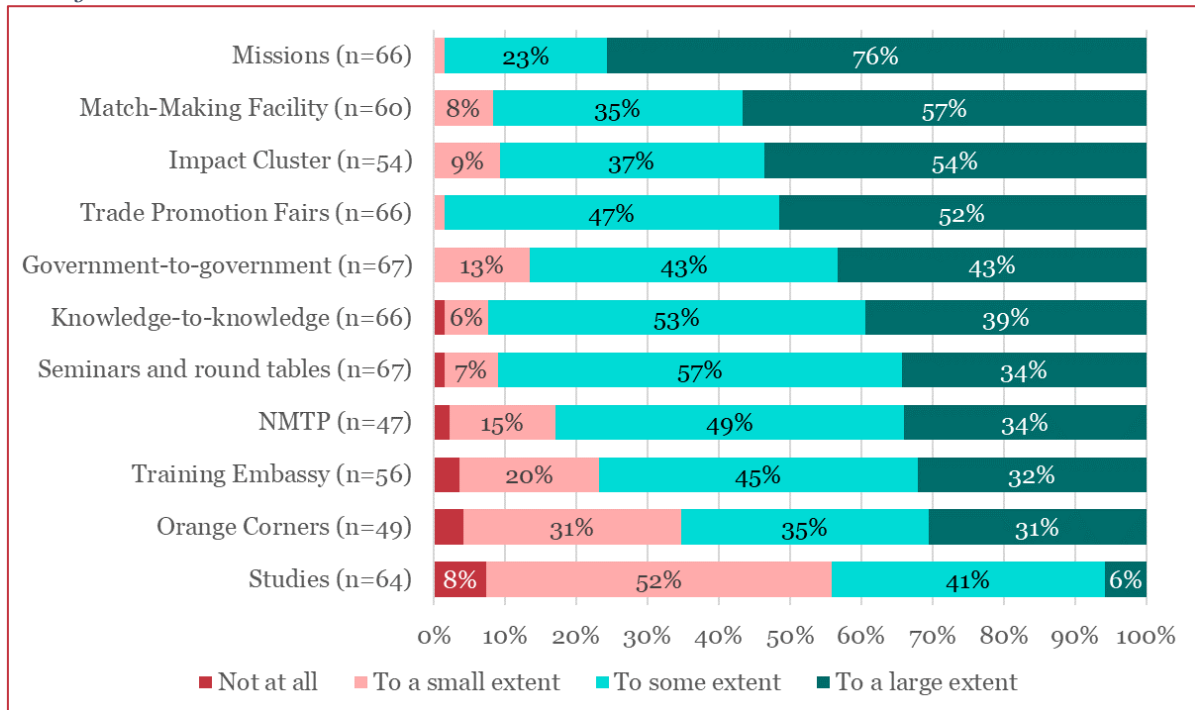
Section 5.2 showed us that PSD Apps are quite successful in developing contacts and networks, and embassies are highly positive about the number of business opportunities generated. As such, **PSD Apps are a useful method of supporting trade and investment promotion, especially for developing countries with limited existing trade links to the Netherlands. The extent to which this promotion is successful cannot be quantified for this mid-term review**, and due to the lack of information on follow-up (see section 5.4) it is difficult to investigate even in a qualitative way. Our case studies highlight a number of examples, where especially the match-making type of Apps had direct results in this area:

- In Zimbabwe, a first small batch of smart farming equipment has been ordered from a Dutch firm, after successful collaboration in a PSD Match Making Facility
- In South Africa, one of the entrepreneurship exchange projects under the ‘CoCreate Accelerator’ Project resulted in a joint venture game company that has successful revenue.
- In Vietnam, after matchmaking sessions during a 5-day mission to the Netherlands on horticulture and animal breeding, four companies signed commercial contracts to buy horticulture machinery from the Netherlands.
- In Jordan, a matchmaking mission of Jordanian women business owners to the Netherlands has resulted in the signing of at least 3 contracts related to the priority sectors of ICT, agri-food, wellness and creative.

According to a number of interviewees, based on their experience, one of the pitfalls of the trade and investment promotion is that local challenges often require tailored solutions, and that too much ‘supply push’ with Dutch solution often could work counterproductively. Solutions/products developed in strategic partnerships are less likely to suffer from these challenges. Another challenge is that Dutch expertise is often of high quality but relatively expensive, and not all markets are ready for these type of product offering.

According to embassies, Missions are the best App to achieve better trade & investment opportunities (see Figure 22). Other key tools are matchmaking facility, trade promotion fairs and impact clusters. Interestingly, studies are seen as of very limited use for trade & investment promotion, even though some studies’ objectives are to give insight into trade & investment opportunities for the Dutch private sector. This observation is consistent with our discussion on knowledge products in 5.2.2.

Figure 22 Potential to contribute to more trade/investment opportunities for the Dutch private sector in host country



Source: Embassy Satisfaction Survey 2018

5.4 Sustainability and Follow-up

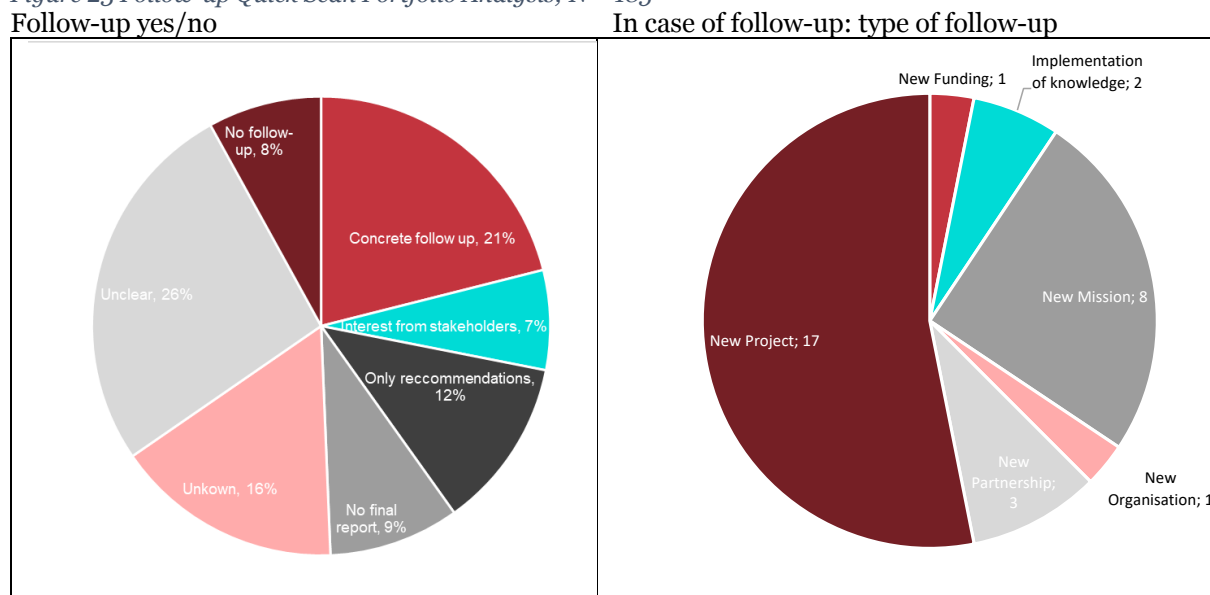
Sustainability, the extent to which effects are lasting after the interventions have ended, is a key factor for a successful instrument. For an instrument like PSD Apps with relatively small, short interventions this is of additional concern. Successful private sector development, especially business environment reforms, are in principle very sustainable interventions, as true lasting change can be achieved and a successful private sector does not require continued public support. However, as noted before, PSD Apps aims to focus on providing stepping stones towards that final goal, being a catalyst and initiator, not a full-fledged reform programme. For trade & investment promotion goals, the situation is similar.

PSD Apps provides initial contacts through missions and fairs, key insights through studies and knowledge exchanges, but does not systematically guide organisations (firms, public, semi-public) from first visit to a successful ‘deal’, although it may in some cases serve this function. This is not a problem as other instruments serve those purposes, but it does mean concrete follow-up is often required for PSD Apps to have an effect. However, an assessment of all available project documentation for our portfolio analysis shows that planning for follow-up is limited and reporting on projected follow-up at the end of the project is poor. Only 29% of the final project reports had concrete information on follow-up. Of courses, PSD coaches often have their own method of collecting and organizing such strategic information, although approaches vary. **As such, evidence of systematic programmatic planning and monitoring of follow-up is relatively poor.** Of these 29%, 21% point report an (expected) follow-up. These follow-ups are often new projects, follow-up missions, rarely directly contracts or investments (fitting with the picture that PSD Apps is a catalyst rather than a method for direct impact. See Figure 23).

However, this **lack of programmatic focus on follow-up is often, but not always, mitigated by good strategic planning at embassies, in close coordination with PSD coaches.** Embassies, in their strategic multi-annual plans can make sure that follow-up is ensured by pursuing a strategic portfolio approach, in which a range of small intervention together make up a coherent effort in a specific sector or thematic area (which can go beyond the PSD Apps instrument). This is already done by a significant share of missions, but not all. Such a strategic portfolio approach does face a

number of challenges. First of all, small missions can suffer greatly from the inherently high staff turnover of a diplomatic service, which was not designed with economic diplomacy in mind. As one diplomat tells: “After four years I am finally very effective in private sector development and trade promotion: I have all the knowledge, contacts, reputation, I can get thing done. And now I have to leave”. This is further complicated by a limited handover (often of a non-overlapping ‘cold nature’). Interestingly, one of the most successful PSD Apps countries is Zambia, due to the long-term presence of a consultant (ex-local embassy employee) who is highly networked and effective. Secondly, embassies indicate that they are not always fully included and informed once the project design face is over and ‘RVO takes over’. Finally, some embassies operate in countries for which very few of the potential follow-up instruments are available due to country eligibility. There is a risk country strategies stay ‘stuck’ at a relatively basic level in these countries, since follow-up funding is not possible unless other funders are found. Honest expectation management may be difficult in these situations.

Figure 23 Follow-up Quick Scan Portfolio Analysis; N = 185



5.5 Value for Money

Value for money, or efficiency, is relevant for all public expenditure. Calculating a detailed ‘bang for the buck’ is beyond the scope of this mid-term review and intrinsically very difficult for a diverse programme such as PSD Apps. Nonetheless, we have investigated value for money from a number of perspectives.

First of all, quantitative estimates are available to some extent for output data. In order to compare Apps in terms of their outputs, Figure 24 shows the average outputs for each of the App types. For very rough comparison, we have also calculated a composite score for each App and value/for money score in terms of contact reached. Unsurprisingly, fairs reach a high number of contacts per euro, as do seminars. Using the calculations described before in section 5.1; we find that the PSD Apps instrument reaches 1 person per ±3600 EUR project funding invested (Technopolis estimate), or ±2000 EUR per person if events are included (RVO estimate). These costs seem not unreasonable considering the fact that PSD Apps are a highly international instrument, with a lot of expensive international travel. As discussed before, this might be considered poor value for money and regarded a purely local private sector development project, but the purposes of these projects are inherently of a dual character, making direct comparisons difficult.

Figure 24 Efficiency Table; Based on Quick Scan Portfolio Data

Project Type	# Projects (total)	Average Budget per project	# People Trained (est)	# Organisations supported (est)	# Knowledge Products	#G2G contacts	# K2K contacts	Sum Index ³⁴	Score per 10k EUR
LED	133	25 841 €	0,3	0,0	0,4	22,7	1,0	27,6	10,67
BEURS	19	17 221 €	0,0	0,0	1,0	40,0	0,0	50,0	29,03
MAD	6	66 892 €	0,0	0,0	1,0	71,0	0,0	81,0	12,11
G2G	233	74 485€	14,1	0,1	0,7	14,5	1,1	37,1	4,98
K2K	112	51 756 €	2,1	0,1	0,4	13,4	0,3	20,5	3,97
MMF	56	6 260 €	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,6	0,0	1,6	2,56
Seminar	69	19 303 €	1,3	0,1	0,6	44,5	0,1	52,1	26,98
OPL	18	20 811 €	3,0	0,0	0,0	5,3	0,0	8,3	3,96
Missie	57	46 112 €	0,0	0,0	0,3	17,9	0,3	20,7	4,48
MAS (Subsidie)	13	192 821 €	59,2	0,2	0,6	59,2	0,0	126,1	6,54
Study	127	29 626 €	0,8	0,0	0,8	2,2	0,5	11,5	3,89
MAI	3	42 651 €	0,0	0,0	0,5	13,0	0,0	18,0	4,22
MAV	33	73 058 €	0,0	0,0	0,4	30,3	0,8	35,1	4,80

5.6 Orange Corners

As introduced in 2016, Orange Corners is a relatively new model for Private Sector Capacity Building, focusing exclusively on entrepreneurial ecosystem support and related capacity building. Although not one of the PSD Apps itself, Orange Corners has benefitted substantially through the PSD Apps programme. PSD Apps projects have been used as seed money for feasibility studies, side-projects and other support, which resulted in significant follow-up investment from private sources afterwards. Orange Corners has been successfully implemented in South Africa and Mozambique, also supported with PSD Apps, with several other potential expansion options in the pipeline.

While it is beyond the scope of this review to carry out a full external evaluation of the Orange Corner, the terms of reference did ask for additional attention that could feed into a current internal strategic review of Orange Corners. As such, we present a draft SWOT-analysis (See Table 9) based on observations of policy stakeholders and case studies during the course of the review.

We find that Orange Corners significantly different from other PSD Apps in its unique focus on local entrepreneurship ecosystems. While this fully relates to the local capacity building objective of PSD Apps, the unique know-how of Dutch private sector expertise is less present in most cases. However,

³⁴ (10 voor Organisation Supported, 10 voor Knowledge product)

the Netherlands has a strong entrepreneurship support system, with various strong players that do have the requisite knowledge and expertise to provide technical assistance.

In addition, entrepreneurship support is a relatively complex ‘niche’ with many context-specific challenges and actors operating at sometimes very large scale. As such, the position of entrepreneurship in the new policy agenda (see also section 3.4) and in particular its relationship to PSD Apps requires careful positioning and a tailored strategy (which might entail a focus on countries where the added value of intervention is highest). Nonetheless, we can conclude that PSD Apps has played a crucial role in enabling the experimentation, development and successful launch of Orange Corners in a number of countries, highlighting the important role of PSD Apps for policy innovation.

Table 9 Draft SWOT-analysis Orange Corners

Strengths/Opportunities	Weakness/Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurship is a positive frame that fits Dutch wider economic diplomacy well. - Orange Corner activities can be quite diverse and demand-driven and based on an analysis of gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. OC can deal flexibly with challenges from mindset to skills, from mobilising enthusiasm among students to providing acceleration capital. - Many (Dutch) multinationals have a need to fulfil local content or CSR requirements, for which entrepreneurship engagement is a good candidate - Topic of very high current relevance due to link to youth unemployment. - Highly visible intervention, good for ‘Holland branding’ and reputation of embassy (if intervention is unique). - Might particularly be of added value in very weak entrepreneurial ecosystems where Orange Corner can give an initial boost (e.g. in Mozambique), since a small intervention like OC can have important catalytic effects. - Could link to prioritised issues in new policy agenda, e.g. youth unemployment and entrepreneurship. - Remarkable success in South Africa with current full funding, through a trust, by Dutch multinationals, although the embassy provides a substantial in-kind support. Mozambique has shown it can also respond to different contexts. - Might have the potential to promote more K2K collaboration on entrepreneurship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OC is dependent on entrepreneurship of a small number of driven individuals within RVO and the embassies, raising sustainability questions. - Strategy and positioning within the wider policy agenda is not yet very clear for many policy stakeholders. - Less strategically linked to Dutch value chains (outside of CSR aspect) - There is some doubt whether the current ‘two-week fly in model’ (after 2 weeks of desk research) gives enough basis for a targeted intervention. It can take more time to get to know the challenges in the ecosystem in order to be truly complementary. As such, scaling up quickly might be difficult. Use of local consultants could be considered for preliminary work. - Developing, overseeing and partially implementing an entrepreneurship programme requires specific skills and knowledge that are not widely present in embassies. - Many (non-Dutch) actors are currently entering the space of entrepreneurship, often on a much bigger scale: risk of competition or lack of complementarity in the future. Current model of targeting specific focus groups is a good solution. - Scale of activities is mostly relatively small. High overhead costs (also implicit) to set up and sustainably manage have been mentioned, raising value for money questions. - The embassy satisfaction survey showed that only a minority of embassies see OC as a potentially useful model for their country, perhaps also due to unfamiliarity with the model due to the current selective scaling strategy..

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

A. Relevance and coherence

- 1) The PSD Apps programme is **highly relevant for the Dutch development agenda**. Private Sector Development is potentially a very natural bridge between Aid and Trade and has a high potential to make a coherent contribution, especially when implemented through strategic partnerships.
- 2) If strategically used in areas of key Dutch expertise, **the PSD Apps programme is well placed to achieve both goals of local private sector development and Dutch trade & investment promotion**.
- 3) However, optimizing one instrument for two objectives is often difficult unless clear synergy is present (e.g. in the case of strategic partnerships), and there is inherently a risk of compromising both goals. In fact, PSD Apps even seems to have many other objectives. **This makes PSD Apps a challenging instrument to implement**.
- 4) Additionally, for a number of internal and external stakeholders, **there is significant discrepancy in the understanding of the objectives of PSD Apps**. It is classified as ODA and has a goal of capacity building, but goes beyond the partner countries, and also operates in countries where embassies have a strong trade mandate.
- 5) In practice the **portfolio mostly seems to find the right balance between the two objectives**, thanks to intensive exchanges between PSD coaches and embassy staff, although this balance could be improved by further embedding in strategic, bilateral frameworks.
- 6) **The new policy agenda (2018) raises a number of questions**, as it focuses on related but only indirectly relevant topics of youth employment, poverty and security. However, there are also plenty of opportunities for PSD Apps in the new policy agenda and interesting links might be established.
- 7) **The PSD Apps programme is generally complementary to other Dutch development & trade policies**, although there is risk of some overlap and inconsistencies with other instruments for a number of countries. Coherence with local policy agenda's varies due to varying systematic engagement with policy makers, alignment with other international donors is limited.

B. Portfolio, Process & Implementation

- 1) **The broker services provided by the PSD coaches are highly significant for the relevance and sustainability of the PSD Apps programme and for linking it to the larger portfolio of programmes managed by RVO as well as the embassies**. A part of the operating budget is dedicated exclusively for this broker function. This explains the fairly high percentage of operational costs (2017 = 23%) of the total available programme budget and, to some extent, the imbalance between the **the operating and the programming budget**, which has also been emphasised by RVO.
- 2) Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast-Asia are the most intensive users of PSD Apps, G2G App is the most frequently used App. The programme **gradually augmented the size of the projects** to increase the outputs and outcomes.
- 3) Projects in Dutch partner countries are typically larger than those in non-partner countries. **There is both a risk of overlap as well as opportunities for alignment with delegated OS Budgets**.
- 4) In terms of programme management, **RVO succeeded to set up a comprehensive management framework for a complex programme in a relatively short period of time**, which was partly the result of the excellent relationship as well as direct lines of frequent communication regarding PSD Apps between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and RVO.

- 5) The role, quality and expertise of the PSD coaches is considered crucial for the success of the PSD Apps by all stakeholders, and the **coaches perform their responsibilities to a very satisfactory degree.**
- 6) There is room for improvement of the quality and consistency of the programme management by RVO in terms of project administration. At the level of project reporting there is also a **considerable variance in quality of the final reports**, particularly with regard to quantitative indicators.
- 7) The **new quantitative indicators introduced from 2017 onwards seem not to have fully addressed the M&E challenges yet, although it is still premature to draw conclusions.**
- 8) If **RVO and embassies do not reach an agreement on project proposals**, this is mainly because of discussions that focus on the **level or lack of ODA relevance** in the project idea proposed by the embassy.
- 9) The embassies are key to align individual projects with the Aid-to-Trade Agenda through their MASP's and annual plans. **Bilateral Strategic Agreements or MoU's definitely support focussing the use of PSD Apps and ensure consistency in country project portfolios.**
- 10) **The embassies consider the PSD Apps as a very useful instrument for their public diplomacy** and use it to position the NL government and industry abroad. Not infrequently, embassy ideas for trade promotion are not in line with the ODA objectives of the PSD Apps.
- 11) A **significant number of embassies struggle with limited staff capacity** (sector knowledge, ODA expertise), further compounded by high turnover, making it much more difficult for coaches to develop a considerable and consistent project portfolio in these countries.
- 12) RVO makes **only limited use of local contractors**, mostly because of procurement challenges.

C. Effectiveness, Impacts & Efficiency

- 1) PSD Apps is **highly effective in developing, implementing and successfully completing an impressive portfolio of PSD-related projects.** Output levels are high, and quality is generally good.
- 2) **PSD Apps are well placed to support local PSD capacity building directly, as long as the interventions are highly focused in nature**, tackling a very specific challenge in a specific sector (regulatory, capacity), and are embedded in a strategic framework.
- 3) However, **smaller projects run the risk of delivering too little focused impact at business environment-level to make a sustained difference unless well positioned in a strategy.**
- 4) PSD Apps overall is **relatively successful in establishing new or improved sustainably active networks and partnerships.**
- 5) While **knowledge production (Studies) is typically of high quality, knowledge uptake & exchange is suboptimal because of a lack of follow-up**, in particular directed dissemination, although this has recently been improving. Projects where knowledge production is part of capacity building (G2G and K2K) suffer less from this issue.
- 6) PSD Apps is **successful in its role as a facilitator, catalyst and experimentation for subsequent PSD Activities.**
- 7) In terms of **pipeline generation for other RVO instruments, results are mixed.** we see a number of very successful examples, but strategic portfolio management and follow-up is often lacking.
- 8) Finally, we found a **surprisingly large effect of PSD Apps on wider economic diplomacy**, especially in countries with a relatively small budget. For some embassies PSD Apps is a 'lifeline' budget for serious engagement in-country.

- 9) As such, on local private sector development, we conclude that at this stage **PSD Apps so far has a relatively limited direct effect** (i.e. as an immediate consequence of PSD Apps) **on private sector development except for a small number of strategic, high impact, large size portfolios in specific countries.** However, there are examples of **substantial indirect effects (stakeholders using knowledge and partnerships acquired in PSD Apps to engage in direct action) with much potential for long-term impact depending on the quality of the follow-up.**
- 10) PSD Apps similarly has mostly an **indirect effect for trade & investment opportunity impact.**
- 11) Sustainability is threatened by a **lack of systematic follow-up, varying alignment with strategic frameworks and low long-term consistent capacity** in some embassies.
- 12) At the level of outputs, value for money (efficiency) of the PSD Apps programme seems relatively high given the contributions to many policy areas. Outcome & impact level efficiency is difficult to assess within the scope of this mid-term review.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion and recommendations, having analysed the underlying objectives of the current projects, the review team has developed a potential new typology of Apps that could help clarify the strategic intent of the programme as a whole. Note that implicitly the current portfolio operates in this manner to a large degree already, but the framework presented below might be a useful tool for starting a discussion on the future evolution of the PSD Apps framework.

Figure 25 Typology of Apps

	<i>Type 1: Catalyst</i>	<i>2) Strategic Partnerships for PSD</i>	<i>3) Flexible Engagement Support</i>
Main function	Seed money, positioning, engagement	Direct impact generation on PSD capacities	Positioning, continued engagement, agility
Role of Strategic Policy Framework	Can contribute to its development/positioning	Fully built on strategic policy framework	Linked but more flexible
Typical Size	Small/Medium (up to 100k)	Large (up to 600k)	Small (up to 33k)
Average number of projects per country per year	1-2	0-1	2-3
PSD Expectations	High Potential	High	Should fit with local PSD Agenda
Dutch expertise relevance	High Potential	High	Encouraged but no hard requirement
Expected follow-up	Type 2 Partnerships Other instruments	Larger instruments or Trade Instruments (e.g. PIB)	Indirect results only

Typical Type of Apps	Studies Missions Seminars Fairs	Impact Clusters G2G K2K	Training Missions Seminars Fairs
Type of embassies	Requires some capacity and sector knowledge	Requires significant capacity, preferably sector specialists	Small embassies with limited other budget
M&E	Focused on follow-up	Full-fledged	Light

In reference to this potential new framework we have formulated the following recommendations:

1. Programme framework

- a. **Develop a PSD Apps 2.0.** given the high relevance, usefulness and effective support role for many Dutch policy objectives.
- b. **Develop a programme policy framework with clear priorities and distinctions regarding PSD and NL-South and South-South trade and investment objectives.**
- c. **Maintain a relative degree of freedom and focus on local ownership and encouragement of intrapreneurship and policy innovation.**
- d. **Clarify a ‘Primary Goal’** (Local Private Sector Development) and a **‘Secondary Goal’** (NL Trade & Investment Promotion). The secondary goal should be a *means* to achieve the first.
- e. **Develop a clearer distinction in type of Apps and their expected outcomes,** alongside clear ‘frames’ cooperation.
- f. **Review the role of entrepreneurship support** within PSD Apps, with multiple options:
 - (4) Focus only on innovative, fast-growing, competitive start-ups with a clear link to areas of key Dutch expertise/private sector
 - (5) Spin-off entrepreneurship support into a larger, stand-alone instrument, aligned with youth unemployment challenges and drops the requirement of Dutch expertise.
 - (6) Allow for limited entrepreneurship support projects with limited direct impact expectations on either main objectives, but which may play a role in engagement & economic diplomacy more broadly.
- g. **Review the position PSD Apps in the new policy agenda,** with multiple options:
 - (5) Introducing a PSD App for innovative, fast-growing, competitive start-ups with a clear link to areas of key Dutch expertise/private sector.
 - (6) Supporting innovation for competitiveness and development in SMEs, where Dutch expertise can provide innovation support.
 - (7) Sharing Dutch private sector expertise on CSR and development-oriented business practises, including gender issues.
 - (8) Consider supporting the positioning of non-commercial Dutch development expertise (NGOs, Implementers, Consultants) as a ‘sector’ on its own (‘French approach’).

2. Programme management and follow-up

- a) **If the programme is to keep expanding its portfolio, an increase in operational capacity at RVO** for managing the PSD Apps projects is necessary (with or without a flexible pool to respond to urgent policy demands or shifts).
- b) **Finetune quality and coherence in project and programme administration** through streamlined instructions with flexible and less time-consuming procurement processes, above all for smaller size projects.
- c) **Improve the M&E framework in consultation with DDE**, with strong indicators for PSD objectives and making additional sets of quantitative and qualitative indicators apply to specific Apps types only. Increase M&E requirements (e.g. # of indicators, reporting obligations, follow-up/sustainability commitments) for large projects, decrease for small projects.
- d) Improve follow-up monitoring & steering across the board and make ex-post checks a priority for field trips of coaches.
- e) Encourage and facilitate handovers at embassies during country visits and when drafting joint annual plans, especially for small missions
- f) **Strengthen continuous and frequent internal exchange and consultation moments**, in which experiences, problems, lessons learned and cross-over issues are discussed.
- g) **Increase the use of Dutch-local consortia in project implementation**, to improve contribution to local capacity building, network building and knowledge exchange.

3. Programme alignment

- a) **Review the overlap and inconsistencies for some countries in terms of the overall portfolio** of available instruments, including alignment with delegated budgets in partner countries and non-eligibility of larger instruments for PSD countries (for which PSD often is meant to be a facilitator).
- b) **Continue the steady improvement in the quality of the PSD Apps alignment with strategic annual and multi-annual plans**
- c) **Improve the link to wider strategic policy frameworks and use of bilateral partnerships agreements** as a foundation of PSD Apps interventions.
- d) **Encourage more engagement with local policy stakeholders** and donor community in developing the strategic positioning of PSD Apps.
- e) For knowledge products, **good dissemination should be an integral part of project**. An example could be to, as a standard, include a dissemination event in-country and in the Netherlands for any study.

Appendix A Data collection

A.1 List interviewees (includes field visits)

#	Interviewee	Type of stakeholder	Date/time
1	Johan Veul	MoFA (DGIS/DDE)	6 April
2	Marc Mazairac	MoFA (DGIS/DDE)	9 April
3	Job Runhaar	MoFA (DGIS/DDE)	9 April
4	Robert Dijksterhuis	RVO (International programmes)	11 April
5	Robert van der Hum	MoFA (DGIS/DDE)	28 May
6	Sjoerd Smit	MOFA (KHA-plv)	29 May
7	Geert Westenbrink	Ministry of Economic Affairs	16 May
8	Annemarie Küppers	RVO (PSD coach coordinator)	24 May
9	Brigitta Groenland	RVO (PSD coach)	24 May
10	Frank Buizer	RVO (PSD coach)	24 May
11	Rosalind Boschloo	RVO (PSD coach)	22 May
12	Annette Weijman	RVO (PSD coach)	24 May
13	Theodore Klouvas	RVO (Orange corners)	28 May
14	Jurian Muller/ Andres van Niekerk	First and Second Secretary for Political and Economic affairs - EKN Mozambique	7 May
15	Huub Buise	Head Economic Affairs - EKN Myanmar (Yangon)	5 June
16	Frederik Heijink	Agricultural counsellor – EKN Myanmar (Yangon)	29 May
17	Armand Evers	Water Counsellor – EKN Myanmar (Yangon)	5 June
18	Marc van der Linden	First Secretary for Political and Economic affairs – EKN Vietnam (Hanoi)	11 June
19	Arie Veldhuizen	Agricultural counsellor – EKN Vietnam (Hanoi)	11 June
20	Laurent Umans	Water counsellor – EKN Vietnam (Hanoi)	11 June
21	Carel Richter	Economic Counsellor – Consulate Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam	13 June
22	Pavel Poskakukhin	Chairman - Dutch Business Association Vietnam	14 June
23	Dr. Pham Ngoc MAU	Director of Bilateral Cooperation Division – Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development, International Co-operation Department	11 June
24	Dirk Jan Koch	Chief Scientific Officer – Ministry of Foreign Affairs	17 June
25	Raissa Marteaux	Head Economic Affairs – EKN Ivoorkust	14 June
26	Jack Vera	Agricultural counsellor – EKN Zuid-Afrika	7 June
27	Bonnie Horbach (& Claude van Wyck)	Consulaat Generaal – Kaapstad (Zuid-Afrika) + (Local Economic Policy Officer)	5 June
28	Andre Loozekoot (& Teresa Bascerano, Deirdre Batchelor)	Head of Economic Affairs – EKN Zuid-Afrika + Local Economic Policy Officers	8 June
29	Anne Sietske Brinks (& Busie Gomez)	HEA Harare – EKN Zimbabwe (Local Economic Policy Officer)	29 May

#	Interviewee	Type of stakeholder	Date/time
30	Group Interview RVO	Fernanda van der Velde – Partners voor Water Anne Ligthelm – Transitiefaciliteit & DGGF technische assistentie Kim Tran – DRIVE & PSD coach Vietnam Sipora Suripatty – Partners for International Business	3 July
31	Group Interview Nuffic	Trix van Hoof; David van Kampen; Jolie Franke; Birgitte Vos; Armand Gaikema – Global development department	3 July

A.2 List of case studies

	Inhoudelijk App	BAS referentie	Projecttitel	Dossier-status	Uitvoerder	Land	Gecommitteerd
1	G2G	MAG16BO04	NVWA e-certification follow-up	Afgehandeld	Voedsel en Waren Autoriteit	Bolivia	200.000
2	Studie	MAT16CO01	Fact Finding Water and Mining	Afgehandeld	Witteveen en Bos B.V.	Colombia	35.457
3	NMTP	MAK15GU01	Management Training and Roadshow Network	Afgehandeld	Reflex Horti Consultancy BV	Guatemala	44.946
4	Studie	MAT17CI01	Space Based Cocoa Certification	Afgehandeld	Waterwatch Projects B.V.	Ivoorkust	30.250
5	Missie	MAP15JOR02	Inkomende vrouwenmissie Jordanië (JEBA)	Afgehandeld	Nederlandse Export Combinatie (NEC)	Jordanië	67.462
6	G2G	MAG14KO01	Ontwikkeling spoorwegbedrijf	Afgehandeld	Ies Asset Management	Kosovo	298.260
7	G2G	MAG17MZ05	Support Orange Corner	Beheer	IdeiaLab	Mozambique	170.000
8	Studie	MAT17MY02	Myanmar Water Hub	Lopend	2Bglobal B.V.	Myanmar	32.928
9	K2K	MAS16MY01	VegCAP Myanmar	Beheer	Stichting DLO	Myanmar	400.000
10	Impactcluster	MAI16MY01	VEG Impact Myanmar	Beheer	Advance Consulting B.V.	Myanmar	441.870
11	G2G	MAG15MY08	Pesticide Registration Programme Myanmar	Lopend	Alterra B.V.	Myanmar	232.242
12	Missie	MAP17NI01	Insecten training en excursie	Lopend	New Generation Nutrition B.V.	Nigeria	30.190
13	K2K	MAK15PG01	SPARK ICT startups pitch event during Bilateral Forum	Afgehandeld	Spark	Palestijnse gebieden	11.456
14	Missie	MAP16PE02	Handelsmissie voor de tuinbouwsector naar Peru	Lopend	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland	Peru	84.771
15	K2K	LED14COL01	CRS Sri Lanka	Afgehandeld	MVO Nederland	Sri Lanka	21.910
16	Impactcluster	MAI17TZ01	FoodTechAfrica: Sustainable aquaculture best practices Tanz	Beheer	Larive International B.V.	Tanzania	449.657
17	Impactcluster	MAI17UG01	Kajjansi urban development impact cluster	Beheer	TwentyOne Coöperatief U.A.	Uganda	423.762
18	Studie	MAG15VN01	Feasibility Study SATRA	Afgehandeld	Fresh Studio	Vietnam	4.200
19	MMF	MAM14VN05	MMF Visit program Nhat Linh Company Limited	Afgehandeld	Nederlandse Export Combinatie (NEC)	Vietnam	6.000

20	Missie	MAP16VN01	Private Sector and DARD mission	Afgehandeld	Nederlandse Export Combinatie (NEC)	Vietnam	59.366
21	Studie	MAT16VN06	Salt and drought tolerant Crops	Afgehandeld	Stichting DLO	Vietnam	32.999
22	Beurs	LED15HAR06	Vakantiebeurs logistics ZTB	Afgehandeld	Zambia Tourism Board	Zambia	9.822
23	Studie	LED15HAR02	Agribusiness follow up of market study	Afgehandeld	NABC - Netherlands-African Business Council	Zimbabwe	41.427
24	Seminar	MAN17ZW01	Round table horticulture Zimbabwe	Lopend	Green Works Consultancy	Zimbabwe	5.965
25	Opleiding	MAO15ZW01	Training ambassade Harare PPP	Afgehandeld	Crosswise Works	Zimbabwe	13.078
26	G2G	MAK17ZA01	Cocreate Accelerate	Afgehandeld	Stichting Dutchbasecamp	Zuid-Afrika	24.110
27	K2K	MAS16ZW01	ZELA resource governance	Beheer	Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA)	Zimbabwe	300.000
28	Beurs	MAB16ZA01A	Aquaculture Conference	Afgehandeld	Dutch Embassy Pretoria	Zuid-Afrika	12.500
29	G2G	MAG16ZA01	Orange Corners	Afgehandeld	Theodore A. Klouvas DESIGN & ADVISE	Zuid-Afrika	69.999
30	K2K	MAK17ZA02A	CoCreateMyCityUrban	Lopend	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	Zuid-Afrika	25.000
31	G2G	MAG16ZA05	G2G Waste Economy	Afgehandeld	Stichting Energieonderzoek Centrum Nederland	Zuid-Afrika	19.999

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