

# The strength of lobbying and advocacy

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## ***Ten recommendations from the field***

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Fair, Green & Global alliance: **Both ENDS, ActionAid, the Clean Clothes Campaign, Friends of the Earth Netherlands, SOMO and the Transnational Institute**



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The strength of lobbying and advocacy

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# Introduction

In her 9 October 2013 letter *Cooperation with civil society in a new context*, Lilianne Ploumen, Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, clearly expresses her idea of the role civil society should play. Indeed, she aims to strengthen its lobbying and advocacy capacity: ‘Relatively speaking, the role of lobbying and advocacy receives less support internationally, and yet international support is crucial for inclusive and sustainable growth.’ Human rights, trade, poverty, climate change, security, food prices, land grabbing, environmental pollution, mining, biofuels, water, production chains – these are all issues that knowledgeable civil society organisations are working on in alliances with southern partners.

*“The participation of civil society organisations in local, national and international policy processes is essential to ensure that policy becomes inclusive and effective. [...]”*

*Civil society organisations have the ability to put issues of general public interest on the agendas of government agencies and market players, at the local, national and international levels.”* Minister Lilianne Ploumen in her letter to Parliament.

**Lobbying and advocacy, or policy influencing, is a powerful tool** – civil society organisations would agree with this statement. Because this tool is used to address systems, rather than symptoms. Advocating for better policies generates positive change for disadvantaged people, groups and countries. Its reach is vast, and its approach tackles the systematic causes of problems, thus empowering local voices and promoting the sustainable development of southern countries. Policy influencing means working with southern partners to influence Dutch, European, international and local policy in government agencies, other NGOs and in the business sector.

**Lobbying and advocacy means acting as a watchdog, and much more than that.** It concerns cooperating, establishing networks and partnerships, complementing each other’s work, conducting in-depth, long-term research, responding flexibly to new knowledge and opinions, developing alternatives and persistently pursuing policy reform.

The *Fair, Green & Global* alliance presents clear insights into the many shapes and forms of policy influencing according to ten factors that lead to success, including recommendations for policy support measures.

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*The Fair, Green & Global alliance consists of Both ENDS, ActionAid, the Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands), SOMO and the Transnational Institute.*

# 1. Knowing when to shift

## *A wide range of interventions*

Lobbying policymakers directly, public campaigns, in-depth research, policy analyses, conferences and seminars, multi-stakeholder dialogues, good media relations, networking and capacity building in partner organisations... **lobbying and advocacy is not 'one size fits all'**. Knowing when to shift between a range of activities in a variety of areas, often with different partner organisations, is the most effective way of influencing policy – from public pressure and one-on-one talks with decision makers, to analyses and the right intervention at the right time.

The fight against food price speculation shows that civil society organisations need to have a wide range of strategies at their disposal. Institutional investors, such as banks, hedge funds and pension funds (including Dutch ones) are speculating on food prices on futures markets. As a result, the futures markets are not functioning as they should anymore, and prices no longer reflect actual food production. More importantly, speculative trading is a significant and particularly murky factor behind rising or strongly fluctuating food prices. It creates a dilemma for farmers who need to sow and want to know how much they can earn. And it is a huge problem for the world's poorest people, who spend at least 80% of their income on food. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations considers food price speculation to be one of the causes of hunger that is afflicting one billion people in the world.

### **Civil society organisations opted for a series of interventions to get measures on the agendas of all parties – in the political, public and financial sectors – that would tackle this problem.**

These measures included technical analyses and reports about legislation and visible protests in Brussels; investigations into the involvement of major Dutch banks and pension funds, and media attention; lobbying during consultations with legislators and putting pressure on financial institutions. Civil society organisations also focused a great deal of attention on European and national politicians and policymakers with their analyses and information and by lobbying for stricter regulation. This attention was important because food price speculation by European players requires a European approach *and* measures were needed to protect public interest from the powerful financial sector lobby. As a result of these interventions, several European banks ceased activities related to food price speculation. Moreover, PGGM, APG and Rabobank decided to reassess their policies. And new European legislation was introduced that put tighter restrictions on food price speculation than previously proposed by the Commission.

#### **Toolbox**

Policymaking requires support: from citizens, policymakers, politicians, the media, civil society organisations and private parties. One group needs information and knowledge, while another needs to be put under pressure, and yet another group needs to serve as opinion shaper. To effectively influence policy, civil society organisations need to have a toolbox at their disposal that they can use to pick clever, strategic and well-timed interventions.

**The strength of a multifaceted approach** is that it uncovers the multiple layers, perspectives and mechanisms – who are we dealing with and where? – behind problems. This contributes to effective legislation and helps to get it the support it needs. In addition, NGOs can combine and share knowledge acquired from multiple fields of work with each other, thus improving their ability to switch flexibly between interventions to achieve better results.

**The recommendation** is that civil society organisations should maintain and use a toolbox of interventions. These organisations or networks of organisations need sufficient leeway to build expertise in different dossiers using a range of strategies – in order to be able to seize opportunities at the right time.

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*The FGG alliance in collaboration with several other organisations for each activity*

## 2. Complementary assets

### Complementarity

Civil society organisations differ in the way they work and in their expertise: while one may excel in research or in its legal and procedural approach, another may be more activist oriented and know how to mobilise public pressure. Effectively exerting influence on policy often requires action to be taken on several fronts – and civil society organisations can benefit tremendously from dividing their tasks and roles and complementing each other's work.

**The 'inside–outside' strategy**, which was used to stop POSCO, a Korean steel company, from land grabbing and violating human rights, is a vivid example of complementary working styles. POSCO has had its eyes on a major steel factory in the Indian state of Odisha, with mines and a private harbour. The investment would have gone hand in hand with land grabbing, loss of livelihood and huge damage to the natural environment and the living environment of the local population – all of which are violations of the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises. The 'inside' strategy was to get a dialogue started. To that end, civil society organisations lodged complaints with the National Contact Points of South Korea, Norway and the Netherlands. In South Korea, the complaint was mainly aimed at POSCO, while in Norway and the Netherlands, it targeted pension funds for their role as institutional investors in POSCO. Informal talks with investors were also part of this strategy. Local, Indian and some Dutch civil society organisations handled the 'outside' strategy. Their tactics were to push for divestment through public pressure and non-violent protest. Some local NGOs even deliberately refrained from participating in the complaint procedure in order to maintain their freedom to take action. This strategy confirmed that investors with a minority interest have to be aware of the OECD guidelines as well, and more importantly, that they have to comply with them.

**The strength of a complementary approach** is that northern and southern NGOs divide tasks and therefore have a larger variety of interventions at their disposal to influence policy. Besides complementarity amongst civil society organisations, they can also complement other actors, such as corporations. Civil society demands for human rights protection can, for example, lead to more goodwill, better reputations and more sustainable entrepreneurship.

**The recommendation** is to support those civil society organisations – both northern and southern – that have a proven track record of joining forces and complementing one another to achieve the same goal. NGOs operating in the sphere of international cooperation are good at 'virtually organising' and effective at working together in networks. This requires acknowledging the value of different forms of cooperation in platforms, alliances and networks, for example. In choosing its partners, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs can ensure the presence of complementary capacities.

#### Individual strengths

Different resources, different players and different roles: complementarity is a useful mechanism to establish dialogue or encourage policy reform. Because not every civil society organisation has an entire array of tools at its disposal to effectively influence policy, and each one has its own individual strengths and skills. Supplementing an outside strategy – for example, mobilising public pressure – with an inside strategy – for example, lodging a formal complaint – is an example of a proven complementary method. The factors for success include close coordination for the division of tasks, the ability to operate in networks and the willingness to let others take credit.

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*The FGG alliance in collaboration with Lok Shakti Abhiyan (India), Korean TNC Watch (South Korea), the Forum for Environment and Development (Norway) and the Mining Zone Peoples' Solidarity Group (USA)*

## 3. Same goal, different path

*Flexible, agile and skilful*

Neither politics nor the political context can be planned five years in advance. Public opinion is not cast in stone. Social circumstances change. As a result, NGOs need to develop strong and sensitive antennae, remain alert and adaptable so they can respond to unfolding events, and use their toolboxes of interventions, which often means deploying different strategies, players and roles. **In other words, a civil society organisation needs to be flexible, agile and skilful to influence policy effectively.**

Civil society organisations can actually use one problem to demonstrate or influence another problem. Trade and investment are a good example. Investment treaties almost invariably contain an investment protection clause that gives multinationals the opportunity to lodge million-dollar claims for loss of profits due to changing government policies.

Civil society organisations, for example, have skilfully used to their advantage the debate on fracking, a controversial method of extracting shale gas. Fracking is a clear and topical case for revealing that this kind of investment protection is at odds with sustainable economic and energy policies. It is a clear case that illustrates the need for alternative investment treaties. And it is also a clear case that

has enabled NGOs to adeptly adjust their tactics and strategies – by forging new alliances, for example: environmental protection is enjoying more support among critics of investment treaties, and conversely, environmental activists are more aware of the harmful scope of investment protection. Or by shifting from lobbying to mobilising public pressure: when directly lobbying civil servants fails to persuade them to take action, then it is more effective strategically to influence public opinion. And that, in turn, puts pressure on policymakers and civil servants to engage in dialogue. As a result, the investment treaties (which people were initially completely unaware of) and their detrimental effect on public interests now have a prominent place on the European agenda. These treaties are part of a political and growing social debate. Moreover, criticism from the north and south about the one-sided character of ‘investor–state dispute settlement mechanisms’, which may cost governments dearly, is now being heard.

### Skilfully adapt to circumstances

The processes in the world of trade and development are highly complex, particularly when it concerns the balance between public and private interests. These processes are not easy to predict, but civil society organisations are expected to skilfully adapt to circumstances. For these organisations to have maximum impact, they need to seize opportunities, switch between plans, programmes and capacities, and strategies and partners. In short, civil society organisations have to be prepared for the unexpected. So they should have long-term objectives, but not ones that are rigidly and bureaucratically planned.

**The strength of flexibility is customisation.** The right pressure at the right time, the right intervention by the right party: civil society organisations take advantage of the changing political context and social dynamics. This enables them to capitalise on unexpected opportunities, and effectively and creatively influence policy.

**The recommendation** is that civil society organisations – always keeping in mind agreements about objectives and results, of course – should be able to change their path, in terms of both content and organisation. This allows them to navigate the complexity of their work and guarantees maximum impact. Planning, monitoring and evaluation systems have to focus on organisational learning and strategy development, instead of being saddled with massive administrative burdens.

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The FGG alliance in collaboration with, among others, La Via Campesina, the Food First International Action Network, Public Services International, the Social Movement Alliance for an Alternative Asia, EU–ASEAN FTA Campaign, Focus on the Global South (Asia), FTA Watch (Asia), Monitoring Sustainability of Globalisation (Malaysia), Paung Ku (Burma), the Alternative Information and Development Centre (South Africa), the Economic Justice Network (Southern and Eastern Africa), REDES/Friends of the Earth (Uruguay), Equit (Brazil) and the Democracy Centre (Bolivia)

## 4. Nothing about us, without us

### *Global cooperation*

‘Why should we pay more for food, just because your need for energy is growing and you want to battle the accompanying environmental problems?’ These words, spoken by a Tanzanian colleague, illustrate the harmful consequences of Dutch and European policy for the average inhabitant of his country. Since Europe and the Netherlands have made it obligatory for petrol to be mixed with biofuels, clever producers and investors have started to view the fertile land in developing countries as an attractive investment. Food crops there are making way for crops that yield biofuels for our energy needs. As a result, local farmers are losing their land, food prices are increasing, and environmental problems such as deforestations and water scarcity are on the rise.

**A clear illustration of the imbalance in global relations and of the sometimes detrimental global consequences of European and Dutch policy.** In this case, strong global cooperation in civil society confirmed the need for policy reform in the north. The colleagues from Kenyan and Tanzanian NGOs who identified this problem have joined forces to conduct research, support affected communities *and* tell their side of the story with northern partners. For example, they met with Dutch parliamentarians, civil servants, ministers and journalists, to share their experiences and expertise about the impact of biofuel policy ‘here’ on life ‘there’. Testimonies like these and first-hand information encourage policy reform. The debate in the Netherlands and its position on blending fuels is more critical than previously as a result, and members of Parliament that are working on this issue still refer to these visits. So this was the first crucial step towards policy reform, to curb biofuels from food crops and invest in real alternatives. Moreover, the Dutch government has restricted the blending of food crops and is providing support to a similar proposal by the European Commission.

**The strength of global cooperation** is that southern partners are involved in policymaking, policy reform and policy evaluation. Their northern partners facilitate access to platforms where they can work together to reform harmful policies in the north. Northern partners, in turn, receive an accurate and clear picture of the consequences in the south. Networks of NGOs like these can work together quickly at a global level, conduct joint research and establish feedback mechanisms. As a result, support for policy influencing and the chances of it succeeding increase exponentially.

**The recommendation** is to shift the emphasis, in this globalised world, from the difference between northern and southern organisations to organisations and networks that understand the dynamics behind globalisation and play a mediating role. It is only through an approach that takes the entire chain into consideration that all voices of change can be heard. Involving civil society organisations from the north *and* the south in the development and evaluation of policy increases effectiveness and policy coherence.

### **Nothing about us, without us**

Because just about every process – policy, production, trade – has a global impact, global cooperation between northern and southern civil society organisations is a logical course of action. Southern partners influence their own governments and share their experiences and knowledge in the north. Conversely, northern partners give southern partners the opportunity to join international platforms that are normally difficult to access. Investigating problems, opening up a discussion *and* influencing policy is more effective when done by such global networks. By conducting research and reporting on it locally and internationally, such networks can clarify problems, consequences and approaches.



## 5. Better, more accurate understanding

### *Knowledge building*

Multinationals want to pay the least amount of taxes as possible, and they devise sophisticated techniques to accomplish that goal. Differences between national tax regimes are what make tax evasion possible: the Netherlands, for example, is popular with mailbox companies, and many African countries offer companies tax exemptions; both in an attempt to attract business. The flipside is capital flight from the south and governments that have less money for education, health care, infrastructure and other public services as a result of lost income. This loss is estimated to be US\$400 billion worldwide – and every year 28 developing countries miss out on €54 million due to tax evasion.

A number of civil society organisations are committed to achieving ‘tax justice’, or fair tax payments, because it is an essential part of corporate social responsibility. Also, companies themselves make use of the public services that are suffering from lost income as a result of tax evasion.

**Achieving tax justice, and thus researching tax evasion, reveals the need for in-depth knowledge building.** Knowledge building that can take years: it is a complex area full of entangled interests and relationships, international and bilateral agreements, and technical details. Data and information come from various sources, or are extremely difficult to attain. The effects of agreements

and treaties need to be explained, as do the interests of nations and the nature of their relations. All this knowledge is crucial to understand underlying causes and structures. In this case, in-depth research resulted in reports about Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, for example, which was offered to decision makers, fellow NGOs and the media. Southern partners also have a Tax Justice Toolkit at their disposal now, which they can use to build capacity. In the Netherlands, NGOs have used their expertise and facts to help bring substantial media attention to tax-evading mailbox companies. Moreover, the Dutch government has offered to incorporate anti-abuse provisions in the tax treaties with 23 developing countries.

**The strength of building knowledge** is that it exposes structures and causes – which enables us to develop a better, more accurate understanding of where change is needed. Knowledge also acts as a bridge between academics, technical experts, activists, policymakers and policy influencers. Moreover, knowledge-intensive civil society organisations are a reliable source for the media: by publishing and building up knowledge for years, they are always ready when news breaks.

#### Fragmented and entangled

Policy is not a question of instinct, it is based on knowledge. If civil society organisations want to understand the forces behind decision making and influence policy effectively, then they will have to conduct in-depth research in the policy area – because the material is often complex, the underlying power relations unclear and the interests entangled, and the sources and data are fragmented. This is work that requires time and capacity, as if you are starting your research from scratch each time. The expertise that civil society organisations have accumulated makes them legitimate partners for decision makers and policymakers. Moreover, they can ‘translate’ complex information for the general public so they can understand the issues and form their own opinions.

**The recommendation** is to take into account whether civil society organisations have a proven track record in specific policy areas when it comes to funding. The organisation should possess technical and legal knowledge of the issue, understand how policy works in practice, and have an international network and a solid force-field analysis. In addition, knowledge development must be an element of the partnership between northern and southern partners.

## 6. Slow cooking

### *Lengthy processes*

Bangladesh, 24 April 2013: more than 1,100 employees, mostly women, die when Rana Plaza, a factory that produces clothing for major western brands, collapses. Massive media attention forces the realisation on governments, businesses, shareholders and an international audience that action needs to be taken. This accelerates the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh – an accord that was actually already waiting to be ratified. This legally binding agreement between international clothing enterprises, trade unions and civil society organisations makes provisions for independent safety inspections. It also obliges signatories to be transparent about the supply chain and labour conditions and provide a safe work environment.

#### **Tragic events such as this can be prevented by better policies. But achieving this takes**

**endurance.** To begin with, it takes a long time for messages – in this case, safe work environments in low-wage countries – to get across to involved parties and the public at large. It then takes a long time to get these parties on the same wavelength. And finally, it takes a long time to get all parties to develop and implement useful agreements – in this case, a binding accord and equally binding agreements.

International and Bengali trade unions were already searching for the minimum requirement of four signatories in 2010 in order to get the accord ratified. The basic outlines were already in place in response to factory fires and collapsing buildings in Bangladesh and inadequate voluntary efforts on the part of international brands and retailers to prevent further disasters from taking place. Many years of preparation and lengthy partnerships between businesses, trade unions and civil society organisations resulted in sound agreements that fully represented the point of view of employees. Within a month after 'Rana', there were 31 signatories, and in 2014 this increased to 151, as a result of which 1,700 Bengali factories (more than half!) are covered by the accord.

**The strength of endurance** is that all parties develop a growing awareness of a given problem. Together they develop a vision and if possible a solution. This increases the support for policy reform. Moreover, policy and industry are globalised, which requires time-intensive knowledge and research, as well as developing an understanding of the causes and context of the problems.

**The recommendation** is a lengthy commitment with civil society organisations that work on influencing policy - with concrete programmes that invest in civil society networks, so that they can build public pressure and forge agreements. Sustained involvement, good monitoring and educational systems, and training and support for vulnerable groups or victims are urgently needed after the media hype has subsided.

#### **Bringing about change**

Develop a network and long-lasting relationships with stakeholders. Provide all parties, governments and others involved with accurate information. Exercise and maintain pressure. Coordinate with the various parties. In short, bringing about change in a policy area requires lengthy, knowledge-intensive, often behind-the-scenes invisible preparation and sustained commitment. This is especially true when private parties are involved that need to be persuaded to protect people's safety, human rights or the environment. Moreover, policy processes are erratic and last a long time. And even if sustained commitment does not lead to immediate policy reform, it often at least prevents even more harmful policy.

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The FGG alliance in collaboration with NGWF (the National Garment Workers Federation), BCWS (the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity), BGWIF (the Bangladesh Garment Workers International Federation) and AMRF (the Asia Movement for Resources and Freedom)

## 7. Knowledge and strength on both sides

### *Mutual capacity development*

**What do a melting glacier in Peru and a drying river in Ghana have in common?** The Green Climate Fund. An extensive United Nations fund that aims, among other things, to combat the effects of climate change in southern countries. The question occupying the Fund's board

and NGOs is: what is the best way to spend the money? This is a question that clearly shows the need for northern *and* southern civil society organisations to join forces to effectively influence policy. The glacier and the river require tailor-made interventions, suitable to the specific or local climate problem. A Peruvian farmer will often know exactly what can be improved, and that will differ strongly from what is needed in Ghana. Indeed, the Green Climate Fund cannot be effective without southern expertise: local knowledge has to be conveyed to decision makers, and decision makers have to ensure that money earmarked for climate change interventions finds its way to local groups. This requires the express participation of southern NGOs.

#### From north to south and vice versa

Whether it concerns poverty, health, dry rivers or sustainable energy, local communities know what the most practical and sustainable answers are to their problems. Mutual capacity building – from the south to the north and vice versa – has made both sides stronger. Northern organisations learn to adapt their way of working based on local knowledge and experience transmitted by southern organisations. Southern organisations can build on northern experiences in influencing policy, which gives them a stronger voice, internationally and in their own countries. Often, local organisations in particular still have too little knowledge of national and international political processes and insufficient financial resources to effectively exert influence. In short, the mutual sharing of knowledge is important so that the entire network, from north to south, has access to policymakers and information at different levels.

Unlike the boards at the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, for example, the board of the Green Climate Fund is equally represented by members from the south and the north. This still revolutionary development within international organisations now needs to be replicated in the work of civil society organisations. **Two-way interaction is crucial in policy influencing:** northern and southern partners contribute equally, learn from each other and make each other stronger. Indeed, the active observers from civil society at board meetings of the Climate Fund literally represent two voices: a Malaysian and an American, both of whom contribute equally. They receive inputs from more than 30 civil society organisations, local networks and

grassroots organisations. As a result, all participants in the negotiations, from the north and the south, have established relationships with their national policymakers, who play a crucial role in the implementation of the Fund. Moreover, southern civil society is actively participating in talks related to the Climate Fund as a result of this strong cooperation.

**The strength of two-way interaction** is that it produces tailor-made solutions that are used in the places where they are needed. This approach ensures that those involved feel responsible for their decisions. And that makes policy more successful and sustainable – after all, you are more committed when you have conceived and implemented something yourself.

**The recommendation** is to create more leeway for local knowledge in decision making, both nationally and internationally. There are two ways of achieving this in partnerships. One: the Netherlands often has a voice in international policymaking involving southern countries, and can lobby to get this leeway. Two: Dutch support to southern partners is crucial so they can influence policy at this level and at their own national level.

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The FGG alliance in collaboration with, among others, AKSI! (Indonesia), the Development Institute (Ghana), M'bigua (Argentina) and Keystone (India)

## 8. Enabling environment

### *A recognised partner*

**The Indonesian island Bangka is increasingly looking like a moon landscape.** Tin is being mined on the island on a large, industrial scale. The tin is used in almost every smartphone, tablet and laptop, as well as other electronic products. Farmers' businesses are disappearing, fishermen are disappearing, incomes are disappearing, because once mined, the land becomes completely unsuitable for farming.

The felling of Indonesian tropical rainforest for major palm oil plantations – raw material for biofuels – is another example with a similar impact: a lack of agricultural land, food scarcity and the violation of indigenous people's rights.

Such problems only change when each link in the chain is put under pressure: investors, buyers, and those who buy from buyers, local governments that permit this to happen, and consumers who buy the product. Civil society organisations need to exercise this pressure in consultation with southern partners. Campaigns, media attention, raising awareness among businesses and consumers about their choices and power... all this attention puts southern partners in the limelight so that they are taken seriously. One of the most important achievements in this case is that Milieudefensie, WALHI and other local organisations, and the international umbrella organisation for electronics enterprises, have started working on a system to make tin extraction in Indonesia more sustainable.

**Being acknowledged as a legitimate counterpart internationally, nationally and locally is what enables civil society organisations to do their work.** After all, they provide information, conduct the research, campaign to involve businesses in the dialogue, and are right at the centre of the problem and the solution. This recognition also provides the government with legitimacy that enables it to make demands in terms of a sustainable supply chain, for example.

**The strength of having a recognised partner** is that it gives governments leverage vis-à-vis businesses. For example, because consultations with NGOs generate information and insight into the damage caused by mining or deforestation. Consequently this allows government to make clear demands to businesses to make their supply chain more sustainable. And as a result, businesses become a serious partner as well. After all, they are increasingly wary of developing a reputation of being a polluter.

**The recommendation** is that the Dutch government should make an effort to legitimise civil society organisations worldwide as partners in policymaking. In addition, it should promote democratic principles such as participation and transparency in the EU and in its diplomatic relations. And as an accompanying policy, it should reinforce civil society's legal status in countries with repressive regimes so that they can influence policy processes as well.

### Enabling environment

Recognising the people you deal with is the key to influencing policy. In order to give civil society organisations, and their partners in the south, sufficient leeway to be effectively influential, you must legitimise them as partners. This requires an enabling environment. The attention of governments from other countries, global NGOs and the international press increases the prestige and influence of local organisations in their own countries. After all, it is difficult for these NGOs to achieve anything when they are obstructed, vilified, outlawed, persecuted or ignored. The Dutch government can engage in diplomacy by consulting local and Dutch NGOs. Not only would this give civil society organisations, 'here' and 'there', access to the process of policy influencing, it would also serve as a good example and send local governments a signal that the problem is being taken seriously.

## 9. Serving as a global model

*Identify, develop and promote alternatives*

There is more to lobbying and advocacy than critically monitoring existing policy. It also entails developing and implementing realistic alternatives. Policy influencing is strengthened by demonstrating the effectiveness of innovative practices and of alternative approaches to policymaking: designing more bottom-up, participatory processes. These alternatives can then serve as models to other civil society organisations, and national and local governments – because there is no point in reinventing the wheel.

**The ‘global negotiation’ model** of the Freedom of Association Protocol Indonesia is an example of an effective alternative. It was conceived during the Play Fair campaign at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, and established in June 2011 as an agreement between the Indonesian textile, clothing and footwear unions, the major suppliers, and Adidas, Nike and Puma. This historical agreement states that all of these parties have the right to organise themselves in Indonesian factories: employees can join a trade union, and salespeople can enter the workplace to talk and negotiate with management. This

industry employs 700,000 people. In many countries, trade union rights – a human right – are still badly regulated. Even if labour law is at a reasonable level, and the right to join a union respected, many companies still actively pursue anti-union policies or forbid employees to join. Employees that do join often face demotions, intimidation or dismissal.

### Alternatives that work

Policy in trade and development stands to benefit from alternative methods precisely because solutions for human rights issues and development cooperation require different processes, different agreements or ground rules, or because new insights have emerged. It is essential to have a multi-stakeholder environment and to ensure that those concerned are no longer objects but subjects. Civil society organisations can come up with these alternatives and study, evaluate, adapt and document them. And once they are deemed effective, they can serve as a model for solutions elsewhere in the world – similar to a sewing pattern that is constantly applied to a different fabric and tailor-made.

### The alternative approach in this process is evident at several levels.

To begin with, there is the leading role of the trade unions and local groups. This is different from the top-down process often used by companies such as Nike, Nokia and Apple to respond to poor working conditions in southern production countries – when all kinds of experts appear with their checklists in the workplace. The new approach assigns that role to trade unions: they can monitor the situation on a daily basis and respond quickly. Second, this alternative approach is the result of global negotiations, in which employers, manufacturers and sports brands directly participated. This led to concrete, measurable action and agreements at a national level, developed by NGOs, civil society organisations, local governments and international companies.

**The strength of alternatives is that all stakeholders ‘win’.** Following the ‘global negotiation’ alternative enabled international enterprises to take their social responsibility: they had a weapon at their disposal to ‘force’ suppliers to respect human rights. And factory workers are no longer objects but are able to engage with decision makers on their own account. Moreover, local groups with little influence can become more powerful and negotiate with direct and indirect employers.

**The recommendation** is to fund civil society organisations that develop alternatives based on principles of participation and equity. They need leeway to test, promote and scale up methods themselves.

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The FGG alliance in collaboration with Garteks-Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (GARTEKS-SBSI, the Federation of Garment, Crafting, Textile, Leather and Shoes), Serikat Pekerja Nasional (SPN, the National Labor Union), Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (KASBI, the Indonesian Workers’ Alliance Congress) and Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia (GSBI, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions)

## 10. Keeping policymakers on their toes

### *Vigilance*

A bank that changes its investment policy after a wake-up call; a government that makes its procurement policy more sustainable after a great deal of lobbying: these examples of policy reform inspire hope. **They are also a reason for civil society organisations to keep monitoring whether this policy becomes practice, and whether this practice is here to stay.** In short, perseverance is highly valued in the world of lobbying and advocacy.

Take the Dutch government's procurement policy, for example. Its array of construction projects make the government a major consumer of wood – and partly in response to campaigns undertaken by civil society organisations, the government decided in 2010 to only buy sustainable wood. That means wood that will not harm the environment or violate human rights; wood that has not been illegally harvested; and wood that has FSC or similar certification. This commitment meant that the state assumed immediate responsibility for the oversight of 100% sustainable wood; municipalities, provinces and the district water boards will comply by 2015. One year after the fact, Milieudefensie checked to see whether things were going according to plan, and how sustainable certification was being verified. This investigation was a considerable task, and it revealed that agencies at all levels were running behind the policy targets and that a great deal of illegal wood was still in circulation. **Concrete recommendations regarding monitoring procurement and for the construction help bring the sustainable goals closer.**

In a second example, banks and pension funds received a wake-up call about the harmful effects of their investment policies. Civil society organisations presented evidence of the impact of palm oil plantations in Uganda and Liberia, and mining in Indonesia: illegal logging, land grabbing, the violation of human rights, environmental damage and unsafe working conditions. One immediate result was that a number of financial institutions jointly put pressure on the largest trader of palm oil. Policy was tightened or rewritten as a consequence – an example being the 'Equator Principles', a set of social and environmental standards for evaluating projects, drafted by the banking sector and signed by more than 60 banks. **Waking people up is one thing, but civil society organisations do not want policy reform to remain a paper tiger.** And that requires them to be persistent and vigilant: is the situation in mines improving? Have banks stopped investing in harmful projects? Will policy become a deep-rooted reality?

**The strength of vigilance** is that civil society organisations do not treat lobbying and advocacy like a flash in the pan, but give it the time and attention it needs. And fuelled by knowledge and insight from southern partners, they steer it in the right direction so that banks, businesses and governments that change their policies stay on the right path. This approach has worked in the Netherlands *and* in the south.

**The recommendation** is to ensure that civil society follows up on issues after policies have changed on paper. After all, if policy influencing is to have a long-term impact, then civil society organisations have to free up time to investigate the implementation of the policy in the field and keep banks, businesses and governments on their toes with their findings and recommendations.

#### Putting ideas into practice

A commitment or policy reform is an initial achievement for the work of civil society organisations. But effective lobbying and advocacy requires going further than a hit-and-run campaign – 'here is the evidence, do something about it.' It means consistently keeping the business sector and governments on their toes to ensure that they are really working to fulfil their promises: are they putting their ideas into practice? Are they implementing their new policy, and will it last? This perseverance is necessary to bring us closer to our goals, such as the sustainable extraction of raw materials, fair incomes, trade union rights, safety, health, human rights, and so on.

## In closing...

Civil society organisations are indispensable in the world of development and trade. Their role as influencers of local, national and international policy processes is essential for sustainable, effective and inclusive development, and for the lives of disadvantaged citizens, workers and farmers. The *Fair, Green & Global* alliance has shown ten examples of how lobbying and advocacy can be effective and successful.

### THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

- ▶ **A wide range of interventions** Civil society organisations should build expertise in different dossiers and on a range of strategies. Programmes and planning need to be well balanced so they can seize opportunities at the right time.
- ▶ **Complementarity** Northern and southern civil society organisations benefit when they complement each other with their expertise and arsenal of tools, and work effectively together. This requires acknowledging the value of different forms of cooperation in platforms, alliances and networks.
- ▶ **Flexibility** For these organisations to have maximum impact, they need to seize opportunities, switch between plans, programmes and capacities, and strategies and partners. So they should be able to change their path, without planning too rigidly.
- ▶ **Global cooperation** It is not the difference between northern and southern organisations that matters but what connects them. Collaboration between global actors with different perspectives allows all voices of change to be heard.
- ▶ **Knowledge building** Because effective policy influencing is impossible without in-depth research and knowledge building, civil society organisations need financial and human resources to invest in this.
- ▶ **Lengthy processes** Bringing about change requires lengthy, often behind-the-scenes preparation. This requires long-term commitment with civil society and concrete programmes that invest in civil society networks.
- ▶ **Mutual capacity building** The mutual sharing of knowledge from south to north and vice versa makes both sides stronger. Local, southern knowledge must be given a place in decision making, at the national and international levels.
- ▶ **A recognised partner** The Dutch government can make an effort to legitimise civil society organisations worldwide as partners in policymaking. In addition, it should promote democratic principles such as participation and transparency in the EU and in its diplomatic relations.
- ▶ **Develop and promote alternatives** Civil society organisations are necessary because they conceive, study, evaluate and scale up alternative methods. Sometimes this requires investing in processes, the outcome of which is not always clear in advance.
- ▶ **Vigilance** If policy influencing is to have a long-term impact, then civil society organisations have to invest in monitoring the implementation of the policy in the long term.



**Both ENDS**  
Connecting people for change

**Clean  
Clothes  
Campaign**

  
**milieudefensie**  
anders kijken, anders kiezen

**act:onaid**

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