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# The Gold Standard

Exploring the added value of  
the Dutch knowledge platforms





## The Gold Standard

Exploring the added value of  
the Dutch knowledge platforms

## Colophon

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Amsterdam, February 2017

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## The purpose of this learning review

This review provides insights into the activities, achievements and added value of the five knowledge platforms (KPs) that were established following the [Kennisbrief](#) that was sent to Parliament by the Dutch State Secretary for Development Cooperation in 2011. In close consultation with a dedicated Task Force (including the Secretariat Coordinators for each of the five KPs, and two representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and NWO-WOTRO), the reviewers set out to answer two analytical questions:

1. What is the added value of the KPs for the Dutch knowledge system regarding the Netherlands' policy on global development in comparison to the situation before the *Kennisbrief*?
2. How have the different approaches and strategies of the five KPs dealt with their assigned task, and how has their differing institutional embedding influenced the outcomes achieved so far? What have been the most important roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the KPs?

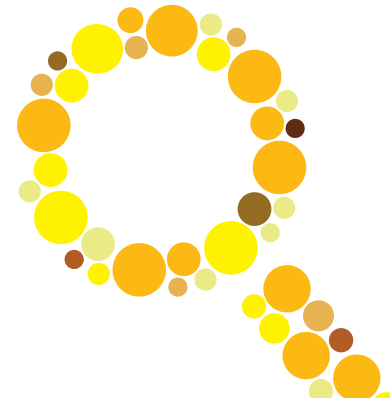
The review was conducted between November 2016 and mid-January 2017. During this period, the reviewers spoke to a total of 33 respondents who have all been directly involved in the establishment of the KPs, the guidance of individual KPs (Steering Group members, MFA coordinators and funding coordinators), and the implementation of the activities of the KPs (Platform Secretariats) (see [Annex 2](#) for list of respondents). Individual interviews and group workshops were conducted to elicit the perceptions of the respondents. This was complemented by extensive document analysis of relevant publications for each platform and general strategic documents (see [Annex 1](#) for list of documents).

This report is an attempt to capture the essence of the five KPs. An ambitious endeavour indeed given that each of the platforms, through experimentation and innovation, charted its own route and strategies for knowledge brokering with and for a wide range of stakeholders in the Netherlands and the South.

While this report offers an opportunity to capitalise on what has been achieved in the past few years, it is important to keep in mind that the platforms do not operate in a vacuum. They are positioned in a context of diverse stakeholders (ministries, NGOs, research institutes, consultancies, businesses, etc.), some of whom fulfil their own brokering roles, and of different views on the importance of knowledge and learning for global development. They are of course also situated in a longer [history of knowledge management](#) policies in the Netherlands.

## List of acronyms

<b>AERC</b>	African Economic Research Consortium	<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>ARF</b>	Applied Research Fund	<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute, United Kingdom
<b>ASC</b>	African Studies Centre, Leiden, the Netherlands	<b>RVO</b>	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland
<b>AWTI</b>	Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovations	<b>SGMs</b>	Sexual and gender minorities
<b>CGD</b>	Center for Global Development, United States	<b>SNV</b>	Netherlands Development Organisation (Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers)
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development, United Kingdom	<b>SRF</b>	Strategic Research Fund
<b>DGIS</b>	Directoraat-generaal Internationale Samenwerking	<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>EKN</b>	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>F&amp;BKP</b>	Food and Business Knowledge Platform	<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>FCAS</b>	Fragile and Conflict Affected States or Settings	<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>GCP</b>	Global Challenges Programme (F&BKP)	<b>WBG</b>	World Bank Group
<b>IDLO</b>	International Development and Law Organisation, The Hague/Rome	<b>WG</b>	Working group
<b>IDS</b>	Institute of Development Studies, United Kingdom	<b>WOTRO</b>	Stichting voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek van de Tropen en Ontwikkelingslanden (WOTRO Science for Global Development)
<b>IOB</b>	Operations Evaluation Department, Dutch MFA	<b>WRR</b>	Scientific Council for Government Policy
<b>KP</b>	Knowledge Platform		
<b>KMF</b>	Knowledge Management Fund		
<b>KPSRL</b>	Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law		
<b>LMICs</b>	Low and Middle Income Countries		
<b>MASP</b>	Multi Annual Strategic Plan		
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs		
<b>MFS</b>	Mede Financierings Stelsel		
<b>NWO</b>	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek		
<b>NWP</b>	Netherlands Water Partnership		



## Executive summary

**This review provides insights into the activities, achievements and added value of the five knowledge platforms (KPs) that were established following the Kennisbrief that was sent to Parliament by the Dutch State Secretary for Development Cooperation in 2011.**

The review was conducted between November 2016 and mid-January 2017 and aims to answer two analytical questions: what is the added value of the KPs for the Dutch knowledge system regarding the Netherlands' policy on global development in comparison to the situation before the *Kennisbrief*; and how have the different approaches and strategies of the five KPs dealt with their assigned tasks, and how their differing institutional embedding influenced the outcomes achieved thus far?

**While this report offers an opportunity to capitalise on what has been achieved in the past few years, it is important to keep in mind that the platforms do not operate in a vacuum.** They are positioned in a context of diverse stakeholders (ministries, NGOs, research institutes, consultancies, businesses, etc.),

some of whom fulfil their own brokering roles, and with different views on the importance of knowledge and learning for global development. They are also situated within a [history of Dutch policies for research and knowledge](#) for international development that started in the 1970s.

**Five KPs were established around the strategic themes following the policy priorities of that time:** food and nutrition security; sexual and reproductive health and rights; security and rule of law; water and sanitation; and inclusive development policies. They were given three goals: (1) knowledge for policy; (2) knowledge for developing countries; and (3) policy for knowledge. At the core of the platforms lies the ambition of enhanced exchange and cooperation between different

sectors in the development field; ranging from academic researchers of different disciplines, private companies and NGOs to government institutions, both national and international.

To present the inspiring developments and achievements of the platforms, it was necessary to agree on a common denominator for the concept of knowledge brokering. In this report, knowledge brokering is conceived as **the iterative and interactive process of knowledge creation, exchange and use**. Knowledge refers to knowledge created through academic or applied research, as well as through the implementation of innovation projects, conducting scoping studies or systematic reviews, gathering lessons learned, etc.

The definition of knowledge brokering, which stresses that it is not a linear but a dynamic process, is put into context in the introduction of this report. Thereafter, the report is structured per the three knowledge categories of creation (Part One), exchange (Part Two) and use (Part Three), which present findings and exemplary cases. The last part of this report, finally, offers an analysis of the added value of the KPs.



## executive summary

### **It has been mentioned on several occasions that the platforms 'have gold in their hands'.**

This statement refers to a 'before and after' situation – the knowledge context in the Netherlands before the *Kennisbrief* was sent to Parliament in 2011, and that same context today after the Knowledge Platforms have been busy finding their feet and establishing themselves in the past few years.

The analysis presented in Part Four does not address whether the political decision for the institutional setup for the platforms, or their thematic foci, was a valid one. What it does offer is an analysis of where the added value of the KPs is found, as presented in three [Gold Standard tables](#). This analysis is based on the findings presented in Parts One to Three, which shows what the platforms have been able to achieve to date within the scope, objectives and resources they were given.

### **The knowledge brokering aspects of creation and exchange have received the most attention – and yielded the most successes.**

Despite the fact that 'gold' has been identified in the third knowledge brokering aspect of *use*, making sure that knowledge created and shared is being used has so far proved the hardest nut to crack for all KPs.

In Part Four, we also offer **a synthesis of the Gold Standard addressing the unique gems we were able to identify for the three knowledge categories**. This includes the multi-stakeholder approach that lies at the core of their institutional strategy, their convening power, and the unique ability to address emerging and contested issues. It shows how Communities of Practice are evolving and knowledge brokering is gradually becoming part of the DNA of the variety of stakeholders involved, which has led to some inspiring examples of tangible contributions to policy development and knowledge for practice.

All platforms are confident that after a few years of experimenting with the innovative KP setup, they are now **gaining momentum**. The foundations are in place to get 'knowledge to work' for the variety of stakeholders involved. The KPs setup already has proven to provide the following **important opportunities to contribute to the development sector**: as an institution (signifying a move away from a knowledge culture based on individual relations towards one that is supported by institutional linkages); in a changing international development climate (offering creative solutions to an increasing need for collaborative approaches due to budget cuts

and competition with other more politically powerful global challenges); and in brokering knowledge (presenting a space where different needs and interests can come together).

**There are considerable differences in how the KPs have organised their platforms and strategies based on the theme and stakeholders addressed.** For each of the relevant stakeholders, the analysis in Part Four offers a selection of types of approaches, and structures or strategies that seems to work best for them.



# Five Quick Guides

One-pagers of Five Knowledge Platforms

## quick guides

<b>Name</b>	Food and Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP)
<b>Website</b>	www.knowledge4food.net
<b>Budget (in million)</b>	€ 3.57 (Secretariat) € 2.63 (KMF) € 30 (WOTRO)
<b>Steering Group</b>	9 members
<b>Secretariat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AgriProFocus</li> <li>• The Broker</li> <li>• Wageningen Center for Development Innovation</li> </ul>
<b>Contract period</b>	2013-2016 (extended to 2018)
<b>Research fund manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development</li> </ul>
<b>Research funds &amp; small grants fund</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Challenges Programme (GCP)</li> <li>• Applied Research Fund (ARF)</li> <li>• Knowledge Management Fund (KMF)</li> </ul>

**Platform structure**

Network of networks

**Identity platform**

F&BKP describes itself as 'an open and independent initiative in which representatives from (inter)national networks and organisations of business, science, civil society and policy work together.'

**Thematic focus**

Food and Nutrition Security, ten sub-themes (food wastage; fruits and vegetables; inclusive business for food security; land governance for food security; nutrition security; partnerships for food security; regional trade; soil management; and youth in agri-food)

**Country focus**

For strategic partnerships and GCP: global, with a special focus on LMICs. For ARF: Dutch partner countries

**Stated goal**

Make knowledge work for policy and practice

- Improve relevance and efficient use of Dutch, local and international knowledge and research capacity
- Strengthen food and nutrition security policies and programmes in the Netherlands and abroad
- Facilitate knowledge and research that are suitable for Dutch and local entrepreneurs and increase investments and collaboration from the Dutch private sector in LIMCs

**Main strategies**

- **Knowledge portal:** providing overviews, disseminating knowledge and inspiring professionals by presenting good practices and cutting edge knowledge under the selected topics on the F&BKP Knowledge Portal
- **Strategic partnerships:** supporting knowledge activities of networks through sharing knowledge, co-creating knowledge, deepening existing knowledge and translating knowledge into policy and practice. For key themes several knowledge initiatives and studies are organised
- **Food and nutrition research:** preparing the scope of NWO-WOTRO's Food & Business GCP and ARF, and actively supporting research teams within these programmes to achieve impact on practice and policy

## quick guides

<b>Name</b>	INCLUDE
<b>Website</b>	www.includeplatform.net
<b>Budget (in million)</b>	€ 2.97 (Secretariat) € 8.3 (WOTRO)
<b>Steering Group</b>	6 members
<b>Secretariat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The African Studies Centre (ASC)</li> <li>• The Broker</li> <li>• The International Institute of Social Sciences (ISS)</li> <li>• African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)</li> </ul>
<b>Contract period</b>	2014-2016 (extended to end of 2018)
<b>Research fund manager</b>	NWO-WOTRO
<b>Research funds &amp; small grants fund</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Actors for Inclusive Development</li> <li>• Productive Employment</li> <li>• Social Protection</li> <li>• National Level Activities</li> </ul>

**Platform structure**

22 platform members – merit-based strategy  
(objective: 50/50 South/Europe)

**Identity platform**

INCLUDE characterises itself by its convening power and ability to generate new insights and make existing knowledge available to decision makers.

# INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

**Thematic focus**

Inclusive development:

- Promoting productive employment
- Identifying and supporting strategic actors for inclusive development
- Social protection

**Country focus**

7 African focus countries: Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda.

**Stated goal**

Getting a better understanding of how to make growth and development in Africa more inclusive – translating economic growth in African countries into development and welfare for the people

**Main strategies**

- **Convening power:** the platform brings together African and Dutch thinkers and think tanks that do not normally work together at biannual meetings as well as online and at national level knowledge policy dialogues.
- **Making knowledge on inclusive development accessible** through expert opinions, the Knowledge Base (online resource hub/archive) and Question of the Week (website), one-pagers, and through expert meetings.
- **Supporting research** on inclusive development with a focus on productive employment, strategic actors and social protection for inclusive development.

## quick guides

<b>Name</b>	Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL)
<b>Website</b>	www.kpsrl.org
<b>Budget (in million)</b>	€ 2.9 (Secretariat) € 15 (WOTRO)
<b>Steering Group</b>	6 members
<b>Secretariat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hague Institute of Global Justice</li> <li>• Conflict Research Unit of Clingendael Institute</li> </ul>
<b>Contract period</b>	2012-2016 (extended in new Secretariat formation to 2020 <sup>1</sup> )
<b>Research fund manager</b>	• NWO-WOTRO
<b>Research funds &amp; small grants fund</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Research Fund (SRF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comprehensive approaches to human security</li> <li>- Employment for stability</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Applied Research Fund (ARF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Addressing mixed migration flows</li> <li>- The influence of transnational challenges in FCAS</li> <li>- Embedding justice in power and politics</li> <li>- Open call for evidence-based policy advice and tools</li> <li>- Open call for evidence-informed ideas</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Platform structure**

Open, informal (online) platform

**Identity platform**

'The platform offers an informal meeting space – offline as well as online – and intellectual stimulus grounded in practice, for its network to share experiences, exchange lessons learned and discuss novel insights.'

**Thematic focus**

- Current and emerging transnational security challenges
- Informal justice systems
- Innovative approaches to security and rule of law programming

**Country focus**

Partner countries SRoL policy of the Netherlands and G7+

**Stated goal**

Promoting knowledge exchange and identifying, defining and answering research questions with the aim of underpinning (and questioning) Dutch development policy in fragile and conflict affected settings and its implementation more adequately; thereby contributing to its effectiveness

- Fundamentally shape our understanding and approaches towards SRoL in FCAS
- Influence and innovate policy and implementation
- Facilitate mutual learning

**Main strategies**

- **Networking and events:** facilitate the exchange and accumulation of knowledge and experiences by building interdisciplinary, cross-sector networks, thereby contributing to the effectiveness of collaboration and programming as well as the evidence base of current policies (including interactive brainstorming)
- **Projects and trainings**
- **Outreach and communications**

## quick guides

<b>Name</b>	Share-Net International
<b>Website</b>	www.share-netinternational.org
<b>Budget (in million)</b>	€ 1.1 (Secretariat) € 2.4 (small grants) € 6 (WOTRO)
<b>Steering Group</b>	6 members
<b>Secretariat</b>	KIT
<b>Contract period</b>	2013-2017
<b>Research fund manager</b>	NWO-WOTRO
<b>Research funds &amp; small grants fund</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SRHR Research Programmes in Bangladesh, Burundi and Jordan</li> <li>• Small grants fund</li> </ul>

**Platform structure**

Paid membership  
(free of charge for students and country node members).

**Identity platform**

'Share-Net International aims to share existing knowledge, generate new knowledge to address prioritised research gaps, and translate knowledge into formats appropriate for intended audiences so as to contribute to the development of better policy and practice.'

**Thematic focus**

Eight concentration points with Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: (1) child marriage and teenage pregnancy; (2) youth friendly health services; (3) comprehensive sexuality education; (4) gender based violence; (5) contraception and abortion; (6) SRHR and HIV integration; (7) engagement with private sector; and (8) sexual diversity.

**Country focus**

Country nodes in: Bangladesh, Burundi, Jordan, the Netherlands, and in other LMICs.

**Stated goal**

The Platform's focus is on strengthening the role knowledge can play in developing evidence-based policies and practices, and ensuring that resources are used strategically and to maximum effect, among others in relation to the four core areas of Dutch policy on SRHR:

- Better information and greater freedom of choice for young people about their sexuality.
- Improved access to reproductive health commodities.
- Better sexual and reproductive health care (during pregnancy and childbirth, including safe abortion).
- Greater respect for the sexual and reproductive rights of groups who are currently denied these rights.

**Main strategies**

- **Network development** (including involvement of Dutch partners, international partners and strategic alliances; and communication with partners and alliances).
- **Research support** (including agenda-setting, development framework for matching knowledge needs, capacity building workshops (e.g. proposal writing, qualitative research), writing group meetings, and management small grants fund).
- **Knowledge management** consisting of four pillars: generation, dissemination, translation, and use (including newsletters, online platforms, expert meetings, working groups, coordination with existing events, monitor and attend international conferences, co-organizing workshops and meetings).

## quick guides

<b>Name</b>	VIA Water
<b>Website</b>	www.viawater.nl
<b>Budget (in million)</b>	€ 1.8 (Secretariat) € 12 (Aqua for All), of which € 2 own contribution
<b>Steering Group</b>	5 members
<b>Secretariat</b>	UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education
<b>Contract period</b>	2013-2018
<b>Fund manager</b>	Aqua for All
<b>Innovation fund</b>	VIA Water fund

**Platform structure**

(Virtual) learning community

**Identity platform**

'VIA Water aims to learn through innovation and the VIA Water Community is the right place for it as VIA Water believes that innovative ideas will come up where different sectors meet.'

**Thematic focus**

12 pressing water needs in African cities: (1) sustainable access to drinking water services; (2) sustainable access to sanitation services; (3) equitable and efficient water use in urban and peri-urban agriculture; (4) more and reliable water harvesting and storage; (5) sustainable use of groundwater resources; (6) improved quality of water resources and distributed water; (7) good quality data gathering, management and sharing; (8) institutional strengthening; (9) sustainable and equitable water allocation; (10) viable financial arrangements and partnerships;



(11) improved urban planning; and (12) preventing and coping with floods, droughts and coastal erosion

**Country focus**

Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan

**Stated goal**

Working towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 – Water in African cities in an innovative way, with new and experienced stakeholders and based on the premise of sustainability.

- Support a lively, active learning community concerning water in cities of the seven focus countries
- Realise applicable innovations in African cities of the seven countries within the framework of the 12 pressing needs

**Main strategies**

- **Creating a learning community** to connect different target groups (including future applicants).
- **Mobilise funds** to support innovative projects with an up-scaling potential.
- **Learning from innovation at three levels:**
  - Project level: the applicants learn how to execute an innovative project and learn from his/her VIA Water project in the Learning Community.
  - Programme level: experts learn more about the water issues (pressing needs) in current African cities and about possible new solutions.
  - Conceptual level: policymakers, fund managers and innovators learn whether or not the VIA Water approach is effective.

## Overview cases

An overview of cases presented in this report

### Food & Business Knowledge Platform

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### INCLUDE

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### Share-Net International

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# The art of knowledge brokering

**knowledge brokering<sup>2</sup> / verb** ~ The set of activities and processes used to facilitate the exchange or sharing of knowledge and technology between different parties in the knowledge processes (demand and supply, generation and use), with an eye to supporting co-development and improving the innovative capability of individuals, organisations and networks.

## Why knowledge brokering?

Let's start out with a question to you, the reader: from where did you get your latest piece of useful information? Probably you checked the news app on your smart phone or perhaps you googled a politician's name you read in the papers today. Or maybe your curiosity was triggered when listening to a colleague who was sharing her latest research findings. Now, would you trust that single piece of information enough to include it in

your next presentation or to have it determine the thematic focus of your organisation? Of course not. Trained to have a critical approach to knowledge, you will most likely argue that you want to fact-check your sources and contextualize the new insights gained. If you had all the time in the world, you would start consulting a range of different knowledge sources – academia, media, practitioners – in order to form a thorough and well-rounded understanding of the issues at hand. Then,

you would mould that combined validated knowledge into a format that best conveys the message to your intended audience. Yes, if only you had the time and capacity...

Today, policymakers and practitioners are confronted with tightening budgets and ever fewer hours available to reflect on the knowledge they possess or need, let alone to articulate their knowledge needs or make their knowledge available to a wider public beyond the usual suspects. At the same time, established academic institutes no longer hold a monopoly on knowledge. New actors are increasingly assuming that role, whether African think tanks or young ICT innovators in Hyderabad, or even for some, social media outlets such as Facebook. In addition, South-South knowledge links are becoming increasingly important in today's world. A world where knowledge is 'made' in practice, and is no longer associated as the privileged property of academia.

To separate the wheat from the chaff, to develop an antenna for important new trends, and to be able to base policy not on intuition or hearsay but on tacit and explicit knowledge, there is a growing need for knowledge brokering to deal with these issues intelligently, timely and more effectively. Dedicated

## introduction

knowledge brokers support the roles played by universities, governments, companies and other social organisations that are not well positioned or do not have sufficient resources, human or institutional capacity to accomplish that brokering role adequately. Their effort is mostly limited to disseminating information, best practices and research results. Their focus is less on knowledge management and knowledge translation, which is more and more recognised as a specific field of expertise.

### A Dutch model

In 2011, the Dutch government subscribed to the importance of knowledge brokering by calling for the establishment of five [Knowledge Platforms \(KPs\)](#).<sup>3</sup> This call came at a time when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was criticised for its poor institutional capacity to absorb and utilise expertise and knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Critics called for a move away from a ministry culture that attracts 'generalists', and a move towards specialised institutions that are able to respond effectively to complex development issues; and are dedicated to interact with policymakers in support of the formulation and implementation of evidence-based policies. While other countries had introduced institutions early on such as the Department for International Development (DFID, Great Britain) and United States Agency for International Development

(USAID), the Netherlands had no such institutional arrangement, leaving policymakers mostly dependent on their personal network of individual experts and institutions for their knowledge needs. Research projects were conducted by a limited pool of Dutch academic researchers only. This created a culture where there was little room for the *unusual suspects* – think of African think tanks, private sector or non-profits – to enter the policy scene as valid and respected knowledge holders. It also meant that the knowledge system for global development in the Netherlands was very fragmented, and so was the attribution of resources. This reality stood in stark contrast with the fact that knowledge and innovation were increasingly recognised internationally as basic ingredients for sustainable economic and social development.

With the introduction of the KPs in the *Kennisbrief* (2011), the Dutch government set out to achieve three goals. The platforms were firstly introduced as an instrument to support more effective policy formulation and implementation in the Dutch development sector (knowledge for policy). This included attracting knowledge from different types of actors and sources. In addition, the platforms were to support development and self-reliance in developing countries (knowledge

for developing countries). And thirdly, the platforms were to promote and support an enhanced learning culture within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (policy for knowledge).<sup>5</sup>

The five strategic themes for the KPs followed the policy priorities of that time: food and nutrition security; sexual and reproductive health and rights; security and rule of law; water and sanitation; and inclusive development policies. After a selection process, each platform was appointed a Steering Group and a Secretariat, and was awarded a budget for both research and knowledge brokering purposes.

## introduction

At the core of the platforms lies the ambition of enhanced exchange and cooperation between different sectors and disciplines in the development field; ranging from academic researchers, private companies, and NGOs to government institutions, both national and international.

Each platform was given four main tasks in their interaction with their respective stakeholders:

- jointly identifying, selecting and defining research questions;
- setting up a coherent joint research agenda;
- mapping and deploying existing knowledge; and,
- linking research findings to policy and practice.

In the past years, the five KPs have each designed strategies to execute these tasks in ways that best respond to the requirements of their thematic policy area and the needs of the platform members and their wider group of stakeholders. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave the KPs the freedom to chart a course that they considered best fitted these needs and objectives and to experiment with innovative strategies to reach the objectives. This means, for example, that one KP agrees on a new knowledge agenda every year, while another continues to work with the agenda that was determined at the start. Or, one platform is developed as a network-based organisation, while the other is structured on individual membership. Some platforms start from the priorities formulated by African members and stakeholders, while others remain closer to the needs and policy priorities of the Dutch Ministry. [The Five Quick Guides](#) provide overviews of the different characteristics for each platform.

Platforms	Starting date Secretariats	Thematic area
Food & Business Knowledge Platform <a href="http://www.knowledge4food.net">www.knowledge4food.net</a>	2013	Food and nutrition security
INCLUDE <a href="http://www.includeplatform.net">www.includeplatform.net</a>	2014	Inclusive development
Share-Net International <a href="http://www.share-netinternational.org">www.share-netinternational.org</a>	2013	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, HIV and AIDS
Security and Rule of Law <a href="http://www.kpsrl.org">www.kpsrl.org</a>	2012	Security and rule of law
VIA Water <a href="http://www.viawater.nl">www.viawater.nl</a>	2014	Water and sanitation in urban areas

## Bird's eye view: from research to knowledge management in the Netherlands<sup>6</sup>

- With the establishment of the KPs, the Dutch government took a new step in the history of Dutch policies for research and knowledge for international development that had started in the 1970s.
- In **1977**, the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO) was installed to advise the Dutch government on research for development.
- In the **1980s**, the focus was on establishing and improving partnerships between Dutch knowledge institutes and those in developing countries, both of which received direct funding from the Dutch government. (SANPAD and IDPAD)
- In **1992**, Minister Jan Pronk (1989-1998) presented his white paper 'Research and Development'<sup>7</sup>, which became a game changer for the Dutch knowledge sector. Demand-driven research, research capacity building and southern ownership became the hallmark of the Dutch approach for many years to come. (MMRPs)
- In **1998**, under Minister Herfkens (1998-2002), the emphasis on research for development diminished, but most ongoing programmes were continued.
- In **2005**, Minister Van Ardenne (2003-2007) presented her policy note, 'Research in Development'.<sup>8</sup> It represented a shift from a demand-driven research agenda to a focus on research that supported Dutch poverty reduction policies and the functioning of the Ministry. Bridging the gap between science and policy became an important topic. In 2006, Minister Van Ardenne announced that the RAWOO was to be disbanded.
- In **2007**, the IOB published its evaluation of the 1992-2005 DGIS research policy.<sup>9</sup> This provided a further impetus for the new approach that was taking shape: the Dutch knowledge policy shifted from a relatively narrow focus on *research* to a wider focus on *knowledge*. Furthermore, promoting the *use* of knowledge became a central goal. This shift was based on several realisations. First, that knowledge had become even more important as a precondition for development than in the early nineties. Second, that knowledge is produced by a variety of social actors, not only in academic circles. And third, that for knowledge to be used, its production needs to be embedded in interactions between various stakeholders (such as researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, NGOs and other end users).
- In the **mid 2000s**, the importance attributed to the use of knowledge, and the learning needs of DGIS and the Dutch development cooperation sector as a whole, paved the way for initiatives such as the Development Policy Review Network (DPRN, 2005), the IS Academy (2006), and *The Broker* (2007).<sup>10</sup> These all aimed to strengthen the links between research, policy and practice because it had become evident that development policies were rarely evidence-based, while research agendas were not inspired by policy issues. The DPRN and IS Academy were stopped in 2011 and 2014.

## introduction

### ◀ *Bird's eye view: from research to knowledge management in the Netherlands (continued)*

- From **2007-2010** under Minister Koenders, no new policy was introduced. Knowledge was meant to contribute to poverty alleviation and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. He initiated four *Kenniskringen* (knowledge networks) on the themes of growth and equity, gender and reproductive health, climate and energy, and security and good governance. Participation was on invitation and included researchers, NGOs, private sector and policymakers from MFA. It was also around 2007 that NWO-WOTRO started pioneering with funding multi-stakeholder research consortia.
- In **January 2010**, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) published its influential report 'Minder pretentie, meer ambitie. Ontwikkelingshulp die verschil maakt'. The authors argued that things are none too bright with the role of knowledge in Dutch development policy. They suggested that the government consider the establishment of an 'NLAid'.

In the same month, the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovations (AWTI) published its report 'Kennis zonder grenzen, Kennis en Innovatie in mondiaal perspectief', which called for a better alignment between Dutch development policy and Dutch knowledge and innovation policy. Both reports played an important role in the formulation of the 2011 Kennisbrief.

### Changes for different actors

In the slipstream of the developments since 2010, some far-reaching changes affected the budgets available and ways of working of different actors in the Dutch knowledge sector.

- Direct core funding ('*eerste geldstroom*') of Dutch universities and research institutions was stopped for all but six (which continue to receive ODA funds for educational programmes). Research funding is now for a large part dependent on successful competition for the research calls tendered by WOTRO ('*tweede geldstroom*').

- Core funding of research institutions and/or think tanks in the South was also stopped, a considerable blow for institutions that had counted on Dutch support for many years.
- The government changed its funding structure for WOTRO: part of the former core funding budget was changed into programmatic funding linked to the Knowledge Platforms.
- Dutch civil society organisations have also faced a drastic change. From receiving core funding through the Ministry's grant frameworks MFS 1 and 2 (2007-2015), they now have to compete for strategic partnerships with MFA on thematic programmes.

### A common denominator: Knowledge creation, exchange and use

Five years have passed since the introduction of the *Kennisbrief*. The five platforms are eager to assess and show what their added value and contribution to the sector has been to date. To present the inspiring developments and achievements, it was necessary to agree on a common denominator for the concept of knowledge brokering and the activities and strategies this entails in practice. As the platforms were given the liberty to devise their own approaches to the brokering process, studying and comparing the diverse experiences posed some challenges. Through interactive sessions with the platform's Secretariats, the authors came to a common denominator; in this report knowledge brokering is conceived as **the iterative and interactive process of knowledge creation, exchange and use**.

Knowledge **creation** includes strategies that aim at identifying knowledge questions, setting the knowledge agenda, and generating (new) knowledge. The second category, knowledge **exchange**, stands for all strategies and activities that are meant to, firstly, identify and synthesize existing and new knowledge, and secondly,

make this knowledge accessible for policy and practice. And thirdly, knowledge **use** includes strategies that work towards the actual usage of the knowledge (often called 'uptake') that has been created and exchanged by ministries and practitioners.

As our definition shows, knowledge brokering is not a linear but a dynamic, interactive and iterative process. This was emphasised by all people we spoke to. Some illustrated these dynamics by pointing at the fact that knowledge creation takes place in cooperation with others (co-creation), or that knowledge mutates through exchange (and is thus re-created). End users of knowledge have been involved in defining the research agenda, while lessons learned were shared and adapted to local contexts.

Moreover, knowledge not only refers to academic or applied research, but also to conducting scoping studies, implementing innovation projects, gathering lessons learned, and performing systematic reviews. Certain respondents mentioned how different wording might be more appropriate to denote specific processes, such as knowledge translation, research uptake, and linking research, policy and practice. Throughout the report, we have

tried to respect this diversity of interpretations of the knowledge brokering process. But for clarity's sake, we decided to help the reader make sense of this diversity by structuring the report per the three knowledge categories of [creation \(Part 1\)](#), [exchange \(Part 2\)](#) and [use \(Part 3\)](#). [Part 4, Valuing knowledge brokering](#), provides an analysis of the added value of the KPs based on the findings presented in Part 1 to 3.

Part 1  
Knowledge  
Creation





## Knowledge Creation

In this review, *knowledge creation* is understood as the combined process of setting the agenda, identifying knowledge questions and jointly carrying out research and other activities to generate new knowledge.

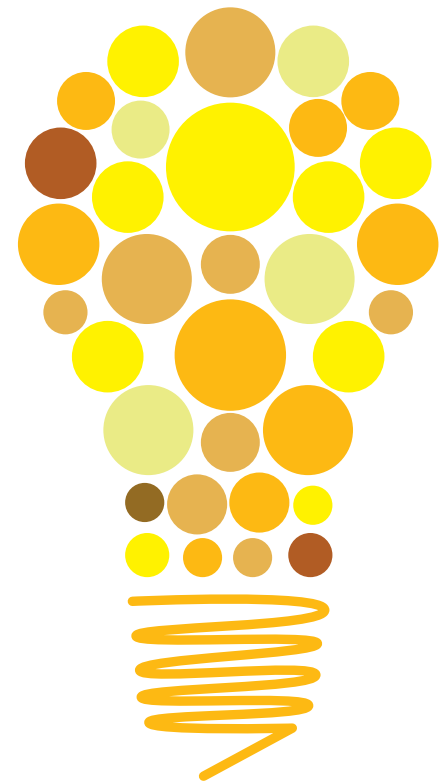
Basically, this means asking oneself: what topics should we know more about and how do we get the answers we need? All Knowledge Platforms emphasised that these questions are neither posed nor answered in isolation, but through the involvement of and in cooperation with a variety of stakeholders from knowledge institutions, NGOs, public organisations and businesses in the North and South. Many of the people we spoke to coined this process *co-creation* rather than creation, as that term more aptly emphasises the collaborative nature of the process.

### Challenges in knowledge creation

The Knowledge Platforms, in their endeavour to support the creation of cutting edge knowledge relevant for policy and practice, started off by identifying the state of (knowledge) affairs in the Netherlands and selected partner countries, the gaps left unattended in terms of content and

audiences, and the creation processes that are most suited to address those challenges. In the first months after the KPs had been established, the members of the Secretariats and Steering Committees posed questions such as: what are the knowledge needs of our stakeholders? How do we solicit their urgent policy and practice questions? Who is served by what type of knowledge? How can we support the creation of this knowledge? Are certain stakeholders left out of the equation?

Their answers to these questions determined the strategic choices they made in shaping the thematic focus areas, activities and target participants and audiences of the platforms. The table below lists the core challenges that all KPs have (had) to address throughout their knowledge creation process, which will be discussed in this section of the report.







Challenges	Approaches
1 <a href="#"><u>Setting the knowledge agenda</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online and face-to-face consultations (F&amp;BKP)</li> <li>• Face-to-face seminars in the North and South (INCLUDE)</li> <li>• Stakeholder mapping and agenda-setting exercises and consultations in the field (Share-Net International)</li> <li>• Offline and online consultations, background studies, expert events (KPSRL)</li> <li>• Condensed platform-led scoping study and (online) consultation (VIA Water)</li> </ul>
2 <a href="#"><u>Ensuring relevance for multiple stakeholders</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising needs of African stakeholders over Dutch policy needs (VIA Water)</li> <li>• Focus on relevance for three country nodes as well as stakeholders in the Netherlands (Share-Net International)</li> <li>• Mix of target partners and audiences (multiple)</li> </ul>
3 <a href="#"><u>Identifying knowledge questions with and for multiple stakeholders</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerging issues for forward-looking knowledge agenda (F&amp;BKP)</li> <li>• Determining new themes annually (KPSRL)</li> <li>• Learning tours and online coaching (VIA Water)</li> <li>• Questionnaire to all members, expert and stakeholder meetings (Share-Net International)</li> </ul>
4 <a href="#"><u>From strategic to applied research to innovation</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversification of research calls and granting schemes (multiple)</li> <li>• Engagement of research consortia throughout research process (multiple)</li> <li>• Secretariat fund for small grants (multiple)</li> <li>• Starting from practice to feed academic research (VIA Water)</li> </ul>



# 1

## Setting the knowledge agenda

The task given to the five KPs was to set the knowledge agenda for their subject area through a joint exercise by as many relevant stakeholders as possible. The purpose was to avoid dominance by either academic or government policy interests, and to allow non-governmental organisations and the private sector to contribute to the Dutch knowledge agenda for global development. Setting the agenda meant determining the overall framework in terms of thematic focus areas that would guide the activities of the platforms.

All five KPs took the assignment of making it a multi-stakeholder endeavour very seriously. The following list describes the different strategies that they employed to achieve this.



In 2014, F&BKP initiated an online consultation on Dutch food security policy (see [Case 'Online consultations for MFA policy letters'](#)). The purpose of the consultation was to ensure that the latest topics and debates on food security were included in the policy paper that the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs intended to send to the Dutch Parliament at the end of that year. For the platform, the consultation functioned as a stakeholder mapping as well as a scoping study of relevant themes. A wide range of professionals participated. F&BKP also organised face-to-face consultation meetings with NGOs, researchers, private sector and thematic networks. The findings (published as a report) were instrumental to the formulation of the WOTRO calls, which were developed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, as well as for other knowledge activities undertaken by F&BKP.

*Focus of the F&BKP knowledge agenda: food wastage; fruits and vegetables; inclusive business for food security; land governance for food security; nutrition security; partnerships for food security; regional trade; soil management; and youth in agrifood.*



To determine the relevant knowledge agenda for the platform, several seminar days were organised with 20+ experts from the North and South in 2012-2013. During the first platform meeting, the overarching theme was determined: Making Development in Africa More Inclusive. Subsequently, three sub-themes were identified that focus on key aspects of inclusive development and the elimination of extreme poverty in African partner countries: productive employment; strategic actors for inclusive development; and social protection. The theme of social protection was especially pushed by the southern members as a key thematic area for African policymakers (see [Case 'Social Protection: from non-issue to buzz word'](#)). Background papers explaining the knowledge gaps within these topics were written and served as the backbone for the WOTRO calls for research proposals.

*Focus of the INCLUDE knowledge agenda: productive employment; strategic actors for inclusive development; and social protection.*


 knowledge creation


 Share-Net International

Share-Net International is the umbrella platform for four country nodes (The Netherlands, Bangladesh, Burundi, and Jordan). For the latter three countries, a local consultant was appointed to identify pressing knowledge issues. A stakeholder mapping was executed of organisations working in the field of SRHR. They were gathered to discuss relevant research questions. The platform eventually delivered a stakeholder mapping and agenda-setting document. The results were leading for the formulation of the WOTRO calls. In the Netherlands, the activities of Share-Net International are grouped under eight thematic areas selected by its members, each guided by a working group.

*Focus of the Share-Net International knowledge agenda: child marriage and teenage pregnancy; comprehensive sexuality education; sexual diversity; gender-based violence; contraception and abortion; youth friendly health services; SRHR and HIV integration; and private sector engagement.*


 KPSRL

Following the first consultations with 'the field', five thematic working groups (WGs) were established. Soon, the platform came to realise that the personal and institutional interests of participants in these WGs were determining the course of decision-making processes about the knowledge agenda and hampered the development of an overall vision. This led the Steering Committee and the Secretariat to take a more proactive attitude towards setting the agenda and selectively involving the network in that process. This has helped to avoid an agenda that is too ad hoc or too scattered. On the other hand, the process has become less transparent for the constituency of the KP (even though preselected themes are vetted at the Annual Conference) and an external review suggested to instigate a two or even three-pronged strategy to choosing the thematic focus for the platform.<sup>11</sup> WOTRO calls are based on the thematic focus areas.

*Focus of the KPSRL knowledge agenda: current and emerging transnational security challenges; informal justice systems; and innovative approaches to security and rule of law programming.<sup>12</sup>*


 VIA Water

The agenda-setting process was initiated and implemented by the Secretariat. In what has been described as a 'pressure cooker process', the coordinator interviewed 80 experts, an online survey was conducted resulting in 200 responses (mainly from NWP and UNESCO-IHE alumni), and a country review was commissioned to the African Studies Centre. The findings of these exercises led to a focus on innovation in practice (initiated by African partners) over academic research, and a decision to focus on 12 pressing water needs in urban settings in seven African countries. Policy officers at MFA consider the chosen focus an example of good foresight as urban areas gain increasingly attention on international development agendas.<sup>13</sup> The choice for urban settings on the other hand reduced the interest of Wageningen University and made for fewer opportunities to link up with Dutch NGOs in the water and sanitation sector, many of which remain focused on rural areas.<sup>14</sup>

*Focus of the VIA Water knowledge agenda: 12 pressing water needs in urban settings in Africa: (1) sustainable access to drinking water services; (2) sustainable access to sanitation services; (3) equitable and efficient water use in urban and peri-urban agriculture; (4) more and reliable water harvesting and storage; (5) sustainable use of groundwater resources; (6) improved quality of water resources and distributed water; (7) good quality data gathering, management and sharing; (8) institutional strengthening; (9) sustainable and equitable water allocation; (10) viable financial arrangements and partnerships; (11) improved urban planning; and (12) preventing and coping with floods, droughts and coastal erosion.*



knowledge creation

## CASE

### Putting emerging issues on the agenda



*On how the platforms work towards identifying trending topics, and through facilitation of (emerging) networks that allow stakeholders to devote time and energy to developing a knowledge base on these emerging issues. F&BKP explores emerging issues that stakeholders perceive as important for the future of food security, yet they are not fully integrated in policy and practice to see whether knowledge activities are needed and collaboration in networks or Communities of Practice could be facilitated.*

The F&BKP identifies such trending topics based on input and demand from the F&BKP network, meetings, documents, amongst which those in the knowledge portal, and the WOTRO research groups. After exploring ideas and demands around a new theme, F&BKP facilitates the gathering of actors willing to devote energy and time to work on emerging knowledge questions and to develop a knowledge network. The examples provided below show how these strategies take shape in practice.

#### Youth

The F&BKP noticed that youth are becoming a key priority on the international development agenda, as that Africa's rapid population growth of youth poses challenges on the demand for employment. The agro-food sector could offer employment but youth rarely feel attracted to agriculture. Knowledge on 'youth and agro-food' is still fragmented. [AgriProFocus](#), the [INCLUDE platform](#) and [F&BKP](#), has

combined their expertise and networks to more effectively explore current knowledge gaps within this emerging theme. In several papers and meetings, many civil society organisations, researchers and policy-makers critically assessed the underlying policy assumptions and shared best approaches on working with youth in agricultural transformation.

#### Horticulture

The fruits and vegetables sector is increasingly perceived to be relevant in many LMICs. It has economic potential and is relevant for women's and young people's employment. The F&BKP in collaboration with TopSector Horticulture and Starting Materials commissioned LEI/WUR to conduct a study to explore the potential of the fruit and vegetable sector for food and nutrition security. Two Dutch expert meetings were organised to discuss (midterm) results of the study. The participants developed a list of potential knowledge questions that deserve further exchange and action.

#### Social entrepreneurship

The theme of 'social entrepreneurship' is gaining more attention as a concept of doing business with a social mission to improve food security. A literature review was conducted that explored four clusters of challenges and opportunities for social entrepreneurship. This formed the basis for a F&BKP project that has been conducted in seven Dutch partner countries to map social entrepreneurs and their challenges and opportunities within their ecosystems. Food security experts of Dutch Embassies within the seven countries have been actively engaged within the project from the beginning. The mapping has resulted in the creation of the 'Social Entrepreneurship Support' initiative to continue information exchange by the entrepreneurs and to follow-up on the recommendations, insights, and conclusions from this synopsis report.



knowledge creation

## CASE

### Social protection: from non-issue to buzz word

*On how the platforms work assertively on agenda-setting. INCLUDE cooperated with UNICEF to advocate for getting a contested topic more prominently on the agenda of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

By building on the increased recognition of social protection as an important tool for inclusive economic development, UNICEF the Netherlands, INCLUDE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are cooperating to identify the positive and negative impacts of social protection, ways to improve social protection programmes, and to find synergies with other policies in the four spearheads of Dutch development cooperation: food security, SRHR, water, and security and rule of law.

“The African partners insisted that this is an important part of African development and social protection has remained on the agenda.” (Member of the SG)

However, this recognition did not come without some effort. During the agenda-setting phase of INCLUDE, the southern platform members actively lobbied to have the topic of social protection on the agenda. Without addressing social protection, they felt the agenda would lose its resonance with the relevant policy debates on inclusive development in the South. Initially, the MFA was strongly against a prominent place for social protection on the INCLUDE agenda as it

**INCLUDE**  
KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

did not sit well with the policy outlook focusing on encouraging productive employment (aid and trade). INCLUDE platform members stood firm and built the case for this theme referring to the available international evidence. As a result, social protection became one of the three core thematic areas of the platform and research calls. Through repeated interactions, INCLUDE continued to convince policymakers at the MFA of the relevance of the theme for its inclusive development approach.

When UNICEF the Netherlands approached INCLUDE to jointly engage the MFA in knowledge exchange on the contested topic, the engagement with the Ministry took a more structured form. A three-pronged strategy was developed for 2016, which included (1) a seminar to share the existing knowledge and evidence, (2) a specific exchange on social protection in relation to the core themes of the MFA, and (3) an informal expert meeting.

“INCLUDE changed something, put something in motion, with regard to the theme social protection.” (MFA coordinator)

The first seminar on June 23, 2016 titled, ‘[Cash transfer or safety net: which social protection programmes are inclusive and cost-effective?](#)’ compiled the most recent evidence on the impact of social protection from practitioners and academic research, including policy evaluations. Based on insights from Armando Barrientos (Global Development Institute), Paul Quarles van Ufford (UNICEF Zambia) and Nicholas Awortwi (INCLUDE), a convincing message emerged: social protection works but should be well aligned with existing and new social policies.



## knowledge creation

Building on this message, the second seminar, 'Leaving no one behind through social protection' addressed the question of how to make optimal use of social protection programmes as complementary and integrated into existing (or new) development policies in the spearheads of Dutch development cooperation.

Of the four spearheads, food security and SRHR were selected as the main themes for this seminar. Together with employability, which is one of the priorities in the Letter on Inclusive Development sent by Minister Lilianne Ploumen to the Dutch Parliament in September 2015, these two themes provided the context in which to explore social protection during the meeting. This was followed by an expert meeting with Stephen Devereux and Keetie Roelen (IDS) on November 7, 2016 and plans to establish a taskforce on this theme within the Ministry.



## 2 Ensuring relevance for multiple stakeholders

The objectives defined in the *Kennisbrief* – to support ‘knowledge for policy’ in the Netherlands and ‘knowledge for developing countries’ – meant that the KPs were given the impossibly broad task of creating relevant knowledge for policymakers *and* practitioners in both the Netherlands *and* the southern partner countries. Knowledge needs of policymakers at the Dutch Ministries of Foreign or Economic Affairs differ from those of the Ministry of Finance in Benin or the Ministry of Gender in Uganda; the knowledge needs of small businesses or NGOs in Eritrea or Bangladesh will not be the same as the needs of Dutch NGOs, start-ups or established enterprises. Serving all these stakeholders at the same time is anything but an easy assignment. The five KPs have dealt with the challenge in different ways.



### F&BKP

F&BKP was established to create added value for the Dutch Diamond, and not to focus exclusively on knowledge questions of policymakers at the Ministry. The fact that the focus of the platform to date has been mostly on the ‘exterior’ (stakeholders in the Netherlands and the South), and less on the ‘interior’ (Dutch Ministry) causes some tension related to relevance experienced by Dutch policymakers. As one of them said, ‘does F&BKP support “knowledge for policy” or “knowledge for the sector”?’<sup>15</sup> The Secretariat however stresses that knowledge that is useful for (Dutch) partners of the Ministry and that relates to the Dutch policy letter on food security should be considered relevant by the Dutch Ministry. Moreover, F&BKP explicitly focuses on knowledge areas in which the Netherlands have a proven added value. Being relevant to a diverse group of stakeholders (government, private sector, knowledge institutes and NGOs) nevertheless remains a challenge and is partly determined by the angle chosen, e.g. specific and concrete topics or more strategic themes and issues. One respondent suggested that the solution may lie in attracting the stakeholders in the ‘pre-competitive domain’, which will allow for discussions and question to develop that are relevant to all.<sup>16</sup>



### INCLUDE

INCLUDE tries to define a balance between serving the needs of their southern stakeholders, represented by high profile professionals who purposely have a large presence within the platform, while simultaneously addressing the often divergent needs of the Dutch development framework. INCLUDE is busy devising strategies to better define and prove its relevance, especially to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While it was a very conscious decision to place the KPs outside of the Ministry, some senior Ministry staff increasingly emphasise that they want to keep better track of ‘how relevant is INCLUDE’s work to us’. The presence of tension here is evident from the responses by some of INCLUDE’s stakeholders, who expressed that if the Platform primarily is there to serve Dutch foreign policy interests ‘then it is not a knowledge platform as such, but becomes an instrument for Dutch policy makers.’<sup>17</sup>


 knowledge creation


**KPSRL**

KPSRL perceives the Ministry as one of its several important stakeholders and partners and considers it a clear asset that it sets out to involve a diverse group of stakeholders. It attempts to ensure the thematic relevance of its work for a wide stakeholder group by determining priority themes through three mechanisms: (1) the understanding of the Steering Group (which includes a policymaker from MFA) on the key policy issues on both the international and the national agenda; (2) the knowledge of the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of Clingendael Institute and the Secretariat of the priorities of the MFA, and (3) the input gathered on an informal basis from the platform participants.<sup>18</sup> While the Ministry initially chose to take on a modest role within the platform, especially in terms of agenda-setting, this has gradually changed especially over the past year. Senior policymakers at the Ministry express that the platform should be able to show its relevance for the Ministry, especially in a time of dwindling resources, or they risk losing interest and support.<sup>19</sup> For the platform, this would also be made easier if the knowledge needs within the Ministry are more clearly articulated. This is part of the reason why in the new setup of KPSRL from 1 January 2017, a Secretariat staff member will be seconded one day a week at the MFA, Department Stabilization and Humanitarian Aid (DSH).


**Share-Net International**

Share-Net International also focuses a large part of its work on policy and practice issues relevant in their three country nodes in Africa and Asia. They emphasise the unique contribution made by the platform in bringing local actors together to discuss and exchange on issues of SRHR, which are politically sensitive issues in Bangladesh, Burundi and Jordan.<sup>20</sup>

In Jordan, Share-Net managed to bring local organisations (NGOs, youth organisations, ministries, universities and research institutes) together with UN organisations such as UNICEF. This kind of exchange was a first in the country. Alongside the activities in the country nodes, Share-Net International has 11 Working Groups in the Netherlands (eight of which are thematic) that bring together partners (Dutch NGOs, knowledge institutions, government, and sometimes international partners such as WHO and UNFPA), and organise expert meetings on topics relevant to SRHR policy and practice in the Netherlands and globally.


**VIA Water**

VIA Water has most clearly chosen to focus first and foremost on the knowledge needs in the South. Its programme focuses on innovation needs for the water and sanitation sector in seven selected partner countries in Africa, supporting knowledge for innovation project implementers to continue, and upscale their projects after the financial support by VIA Water finishes.

The knowledge needs of Dutch Ministries are deemed relevant, but the added value for the Ministry is considered more on a strategic level: VIA Water offers knowledge and lessons learned on 'how to innovate', 'what approach works in an urban environment', 'how to prepare innovations to scale' and 'how to increase revenues in the water sector'. The platform therefore sees its relevance in going beyond one directorate (IGG) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also addressing strategic issues that can also be of interest to the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment.







## CASE

## Country nodes in Bangladesh, Burundi and Jordan

*On the platforms ambitions to engage in knowledge creation that has high relevance for the stakeholders involved. In the case of Share-Net International, the choice was made to set up three country nodes in Bangladesh, Burundi and Jordan respectively. With platform representation in each node, Share-Net International aims to strengthen the relevance of the knowledge brokering process for local counterparts.*

The country nodes serve as conduits for situation assessments, defining research priorities, facilitating research participation by country institutions, and hosting the local knowledge base/platform. The presence of the nodes also stimulates the participation of key international partners and regional and national actors in SRHR based in their countries. In Burundi and Bangladesh, local institutions were identified, visited and consulted in 2014. Specific selection criteria were developed and institutions in these countries were invited to submit a proposal to function as the local Secretariats.

Their responsibilities are like Share-Net Netherlands. In Bangladesh, a partnership between the Centre for Gender and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (CGSRHR) based at BRAC Institute of Global Health and RedOrange acts as coordinator. In Burundi, Population Media Centre was selected. A year later in 2015, the Higher Population Council (HPC) was appointed as the host organisation for the country node in Jordan.



## CASE

## Toolkit: gender-sensitive conflict analysis

*On how the platforms encourage the creation of relevant and applicable knowledge by and for NGOs. The toolkit for gender-sensitive conflict analysis developed by Saferworld is an example of how research funds contribute to direct implementation value.*

Over the past two decades, there has been increasing recognition that to understand the nature of conflict and design effective responses, peacebuilders must consider gender. The different roles and behaviours of women, men and sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) affect the way that conflicts play out, as well as the impacts they have on people's lives.

The [toolkit for gender analysis of conflict](#) is intended to help national and international NGOs and other peacebuilding practitioners to integrate gender perspectives into conflict analysis by providing a foundation for more gender-sensitive peacebuilding programmes. While there are many different ways in which the links between gender and conflict can be analysed, this toolkit focuses on one angle which is often ignored. It seeks to understand how gender norms – the ways in which societies pressure their male and female members to behave – can either drive conflict and insecurity or be resources for peace. The kit was developed and tested with support from KPSRL and the WOTRO grant of the Open Call for Evidence Based Policy Advice and Tools and is being used by Saferworld and partners.





### 3

## Identifying knowledge questions with and for multiple stakeholders

The knowledge agendas of the KPs, which serve as their backbone, are meant to bring more focus and coherence to the knowledge activities of the platforms and their constituencies in the Netherlands and the South. For F&BKP and KPSRL in particular, these agendas are not set in stone, as they wish to allow emerging themes and urgent policy priorities to be added if and when relevant. While the knowledge agendas thus provide the contours, specific knowledge questions to be answered by strategic or applied research, short-term studies and reviews as well as input for other sorts of knowledge brokering events, are solicited from the platform stakeholders. It is the job of the Secretariats to facilitate the articulation of the most relevant or cutting edge questions and to translate these in such a way that the questions become meaningful to and serve the wider network of stakeholders. Several Secretariats indicate that this poses quite a few challenges.

A first challenge is ensuring that this process is not reduced to an 'agenda-plugging exercise'. KPSRL noted that this is what was de facto happening in the early days of the platform when stakeholders were mostly keen to discover what would be in it for their own organisations, not least in terms of the available research financing.<sup>21</sup>

A second challenge is making sure that the knowledge questions are not so specific that they are only relevant to that one stakeholder. Each platform upholds certain criteria and standards for the knowledge questions and activities they can approve for funding through the Secretariat and for questions that may be included in research calls. F&BKP mentioned that network organisations often have difficulties defining questions that fit the niche and criteria of the platform. Especially Dutch private sector partners have felt discouraged by the strict criteria used by the Secretariat.<sup>22</sup>

The flipside of the coin and the third challenge, because there are so many stakeholders involved, there is a risk that the platforms end up with consensus-type questions that are broadly defined and as a result less likely to generate useful evidence or lessons learned for concrete policy and practice issues.<sup>23</sup>

VIA Water notes that it proves difficult to steer people's attention to the full range of 12 pressing needs identified by the platform. Most innovation questions received so far concern the pressing needs related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). While this is understandable because these are the immediate problems people encounter every day when it is not well organised, the platform would like to encourage more questions concerning water allocation, financial arrangements and efficient water use in urban and peri-urban agriculture. Organisations working on the latter however are more likely to look for funding in the agricultural sector.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, nearly all KP Secretariats indicated that an important challenge is the insufficient capacity amongst many stakeholders to formulate appropriate knowledge questions and quality project proposals.



### Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Nearly all KPs mention that MFA staff are not particularly good at defining knowledge questions, which limits the opportunities for the platforms to respond to the knowledge needs of policymakers. Senior MFA staff confirm that formulating a specific, targeted question that does not merely reflect the political whims of the day is a challenge for most policymakers.<sup>25</sup> It was suggested that policymakers not only lack the time and resources, but also a common vision on the importance of knowledge management.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, KPs should make it their challenge to proactively support policymakers in this process.



### Southern partners (knowledge institutions, NGOs, business)

Certain platforms mentioned that southern partners often have difficulties formulating research and project proposals that meet the standards demanded by the fund managers. Share-Net International organised writeshops in Bangladesh, Burundi and Jordan to improve proposal writing capacity. VIA Water organises learning tours and innovation challenges in

the seven African partner countries for the same reason. One of the specific difficulties encountered is ensuring that the innovation questions posed by African applicants address issues of upscaling and a forward-looking approach, instead of being limited to one specific problem in one specific context (see [Box 'VIA Water: lower success rates for African applicants'](#)).



### Dutch NGOs

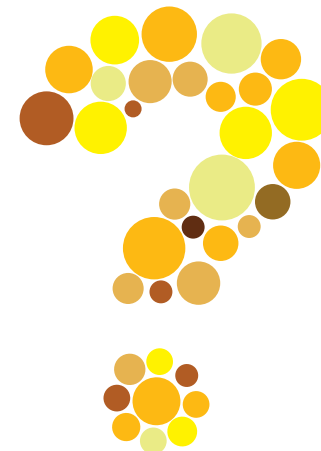
There was little mention of difficulties experienced with the identification and formulation of knowledge questions by Dutch NGOs. However, their increasingly limited capacity (in terms of financial and human resources, and emphasis on project implementation) seemed in part responsible for their ability to make available sufficient capacity to develop questions or proposals.



### Private sector

It was argued that the private sector, and especially Dutch small and medium-sized companies, seek answers that serve their immediate, practical needs for business development. They do not have the time or

capacity to discuss on more abstract levels on the importance of knowledge management, which results in a diminished interest from the Dutch private sector in co-formulating knowledge questions.<sup>27</sup> Private sector actors from the South who participate in the VIA Water innovation projects receive support in formulating their questions. Businesses from the South are frequent partners in the F&BKP research projects (especially ARF). Knowledge institutes, agencies and NGOs are mostly in the lead and develop proposals in consultation with private companies. Besides, southern applicants regularly ask support from their Dutch partners when formulating their knowledge questions and proposals, which serves a capacity building purpose.





### knowledge creation

## VIA Water: lower success rates for African applicants<sup>28</sup>

VIA Water has managed to involve many partners from Africa: 82% of all applications for innovation projects are submitted by African lead partners. The success rate of their applications however is much lower than that of Dutch applicants: 1 in 16 versus 1 in 4.

The reasons identified for the lower success ratio for African applicants are:

- Most applications come from individuals and are therefore not eligible
- Many applicants have a different understanding of what innovation means
- Many applicants have to write the project proposals in their spare time
- Applicants are easily discouraged by the review process, which requires continued work to improve their proposals
- Proposal writing capacity is limited
- Applicants from non-English speaking countries experience an additional hurdle as they are not used to communicate their knowledge and ideas in English

## CASE

VIA Water

### Innovation Challenge

*On how the platforms support their stakeholders to become better knowledge brokers. VIA Water managed to strengthen the capacity of its stakeholders to such a degree that their abilities were recognised by international stakeholders.*

“ *This is exactly what young entrepreneurs in Africa need. Give people the chance to test, probably fail and improve their ideas. That's how all great inventors succeed.’ (Isaac, participant VIA Water Innovation Challenge 2015)*

In 2015 and 2016, VIA Water organised two online Innovation Challenge events. Selected participants were invited to join an eight-week accelerator, which led to a full written proposal. During the Innovation Challenge, workshops and one-on-one sessions are organised in which experts train the participants on project management, business case development, budgeting, proposal writing and more. Furthermore, the group process allows for exchange between the participants as well. The focus of these accelerators lies on the African submissions to the VIA Water fund: through this sort of training the playing field becomes more levelled thus giving the African applicants a fair chance of realising their potential innovations.

Two of the participants of the 2015 edition of the Innovation Challenge were selected for prestigious international competitions afterwards. Kevin Mureithi of Trace was one of the finalists of the African Entrepreneurship Award 2016. He pitched his project in the Presidential Round in Casablanca in November-December 2016. Dickson Ochieng of VIA Water project Sanivation won the Get in the Ring Battle during the High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Development Cooperation in Nairobi in November 2016. Ochieng was granted a ticket to the Global Get in the Ring event in Singapore. He was able to practice in the VIA Water Sharing Skills Seminar, and with the help of his fellow project leaders, was able to highly improve his presentation.

## 4 Creating knowledge: from strategic to applied research to innovation




In the *Kennisbrief*, a clear role was set out for an intermediate independent organisation responsible for tendering research for the five KPs and ensuring the scientific quality

of the selected research projects. For four of the platforms, the NWO division WOTRO Science for Global Development (from now on, WOTRO<sup>29</sup>) was contracted by the Ministry to fulfil this role. In the case of VIA Water, Aqua for All is the funding agency. The tasks given to the KPs (i.e. to support more effective policy formulation and implementation by different actors in the Dutch development sector, and to contribute to knowledge for developing countries) demanded an innovative vision about the design of knowledge and research projects.

One parameter was clear from the start: they had to involve different stakeholders and not only academic researchers. WOTRO had already started pioneering with such

multi-stakeholder research consortia, for example with the CoCooN programme in 2007.<sup>30</sup>

All research projects contracted by WOTRO for the KPs are carried out by consortia that may include partners from academia and other knowledge institutes, NGOs, public organisations and the private sector from the North and South (see visual below). Partners involved in the water innovation projects funded through Aqua for All also come from these different sectors.

Research projects managed by NWO WOTRO & AquaForAll*		F&BKP	INCLUDE	KPSRL	SHARE-NET	VIA WATER
 Number of calls and projects	Strategic calls	3	3	2	2	0
	Number of projects (consortia)	22	17	9	8	0
	Applied calls	3	0	5	0	1
	Number of projects (consortia)	36	0	30	0	28
 Type of stakeholders involved	Total calls	6	3	7	2	1
	Total projects (consortia)	58	17	39	8	28
	NGO partner	47	36	54	11	27
	Business partner	40	15	4	2	47
 Location stakeholders	Governmental partner	12	4	5	0	9
	Research partner	127	49	69	13	15
	Dutch partners	70	31	43	7	36
	Southern partners	142	62	64	23	56
	Other international partners	14	11	25	3	6

\* source: data provided by NWO WOTRO and Secretariats Knowledge Platforms



## knowledge creation

The second parameter concerns the type or character of the research projects. All research financed by WOTRO in the context of the KPs can be defined as somewhere on a continuum from strategic to applied research. No fundamental or purely academic research is being funded. Thirdly, in terms of timeframe, the knowledge and research projects funded

by WOTRO and Aqua for All vary in length from three months to five years. Decisions regarding the type of research as well as the timeframe have been subject of discussion and negotiation among the four KPs and WOTRO in the past four years. Research models and calls have been adjusted several times. VIA Water is the only platform that has had only

one funding model, which was designed as soon as the decision was taken to focus on water innovation projects in partner countries rather than on applied or strategic research.

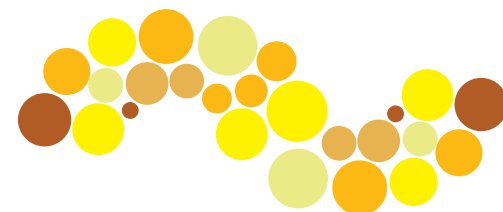
### VIA Water: knowledge for innovation

The condensed agenda-setting exercise conducted by the VIA Water Secretariat revealed that the Dutch water sector would have very little interest in the platform if it were to focus exclusively on long-term academic research. VIA Water then designed an approach to knowledge brokering that explicitly started from the practical needs in a selected number of African countries.

The focus was to be on practical and tangible innovation projects, which is a type of project that is not part of the granting portfolio offered by NWO-WOTRO. VIA Water therefore chose to cooperate with Aqua for All as their fund manager. The platform's target is to fund 60 innovation

projects by 2017 with a maximum budget of € 200,000 per project with a maximum duration of two years. The chosen approach does not mean that the work has no relation or relevance to academic research. Instead, the innovation projects generate rich case material from seven different African countries that can be analysed and used by academic researchers working in the field of water and sanitation, as well as by researchers working on theory and practice of innovation models.

To start an exploration of the case material and lessons learned, a postdoc researcher will be employed starting in 2017 by VIA Water and the Centre for Frugal Innovation in Africa.



#### 4.1 Diversification of research calls and granting schemes

Based on experiences with the first round of research calls, several KPs started a conversation with WOTRO on how to adjust the terms, conditions, duration and/or scope of the calls to make them fit better for purposes of a variety of stakeholders. The motivation for these adjustments was twofold. First, it was inspired by the feedback from stakeholders (especially NGOs and businesses) that the terms and conditions made it difficult for them to be successful applicants. Second, there was a realisation on the part of the KPs that the initially more long-term and more academically-oriented research from the first calls was more difficult to translate to improved policy and practice. The long lead time for research findings to become available was considered an obstacle to policy relevance. In the IOB report of 2015, this criticism was also presented from the perspective of policymakers at MFA, who perceived some WOTRO funded research as too long-term, too academic and of too little relevance for policy.<sup>31</sup> The adjustments made to the calls in the past few years have generally led to a larger focus on applied research compared to strategic research. A balance needs to be maintained

between research that addresses relatively immediate policy or programming questions and research that focuses on long-term trends, which would put the platforms ahead of the game and less subject to the whim of the day.<sup>32</sup>

The F&BKP Secretariat and WOTRO together improved the F&BKP calls. As for the GCP ([Global Challenges Programme](#)) calls, which are strategic calls with a maximum duration of five years that focus on global food security challenges, adjustments included a better tuning of peer reviewers and International Advisory Committees to the themes of the calls. In addition to the 'Integrated Projects', 'Fast Track Projects' (maximum of three years and a shorter assessment procedure) were introduced to allow for businesses to participate more and have research results available sooner. F&BKP was surprised to find that businesses did not significantly prefer the shorter project duration. Another important change in approach is the decision to make the fourth GCP call a joint call with CGIAR. This was decided to enhance synergy in international research. For the ARF ([Applied Research Fund](#)) calls, which focus on food security as a local challenge and have a maximum duration of three years, conditions were adjusted including the salary levels of researchers. This made it easier for Dutch knowledge institutions to

participate in the ARF calls. ARF proposals are submitted by a local practitioner organisation (demand-driven), but need to be strategically linked to the Multi Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs) of the Dutch Embassies. On request of the embassies, the third ARF call started a pilot to link the proposals to concrete themes and activities of embassies to increase synergy.

Share-Net International does not distinguish between applied and strategic calls. However, based on the experiences with the two calls for Bangladesh and Burundi that were launched in 2015, Share-Net stressed the need with WOTRO to adjust the third call for Jordan, most importantly, to make it less focused on academic-oriented research only. The call was launched in July 2016 and solicits proposals from consortia made up of at least one research or practitioner organisation from Jordan.<sup>33</sup>

VIA Water too has only one type of funding, yet specifically refers to this not as funding for research but funding for innovation projects. INCLUDE has a primary orientation towards strategic research calls. KPSRL initiated the most thorough review process of the WOTRO research calls, which led to far-reaching adjustments especially in terms of the duration of the research (see [Case 'Review of WOTRO call process and parameters'](#))

## CASE

## Review of WOTRO call process and parameters



*On the platforms' abilities to respond to the needs and requirements of a diversity of stakeholders. KPSRL responded proactively to the feedback received to the first two calls for proposals. These were considered too restrictive for participation by non-academic institutions. They engaged in a review process with WOTRO to assess what bottlenecks were experienced, and how they could respond to these adequately.*

After receiving feedback from their stakeholders regarding the (practical) restrictions to the research calls, the Secretariat discussed with WOTRO to develop a call 'new style'. This led to a shift in the balance between strategic and applied research, with greater emphasis on applied research. The review process led to a rather drastic shortening of the research period in the research calls, to a maximum of six months, and a stronger emphasis on the short-term policy relevance of the research findings. The criteria for eligibility and assessment were also adjusted to increase the opportunities to apply for practitioner organisations from the North and the South, and the assessment procedures were shortened. Practitioner organisations can now be lead applicants in the calls, as is also the case with the Applied Research Fund of F&BKP.

However, some caution was expressed as well by a SG member: 'We have to be careful that the applied research funds do not turn into a resource for "quick and dirty" jobs. This can be very damaging to policy makers when they would refer to these ungrounded statements in policy letters.' Others argued, namely WOTRO, that the quality of the selected projects and the independence of the selection procedure might be hurt if the procedures would be shortened even more. By guarding this process, the funding agencies can ensure that the research projects maintain their quality, avoid providing predictable answers that policymakers could come up with by themselves if they would have time to reflect, avoid repetition but encourage renewal, and make sure they do not support existing policy that would give fewer opportunities for actual agenda-setting.







## 4.2 Matching research, policy and practice

The adjustments made to the research calls are meant to help improve the contributions that the research findings can make to policy and practice of governments, NGOs, as well as private sector organisations. The academic bias as well as (for some) relative distance to policy priorities were addressed. Nevertheless, it seems that at the Dutch Ministry the impression continues to exist of a mismatch between what the policymakers want and need, and what the research tendered through the KPs has to offer. This means that to prove their relevance, the KPs must find ways to align their findings and innovations better to the specific needs of policy and practice.

One way to tackle this is to consistently encourage interaction with the research consortia throughout the research period, instead of only at the end when final findings become available. Therefore, WOTRO calls are designed in such a way that researchers and practitioners work together from formulating the research project, executing it and sharing (intermediate) results with stakeholders beyond the consortium. Still, this can be quite a challenge. Academically-oriented researchers are especially less inclined to share results of

## CASE

## INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

### Knowledge Policy Dialogue

*On how the platforms engage with the research consortia of the WOTRO funded projects in order to stimulate relevant interlinkages between academically-oriented research and policy relevance.*

Ever since the first research consortia got underway, INCLUDE has invited research groups to their biannual meetings to promote exchange and dialogue between researchers, platform members and policy stakeholders. In September 2016 when research findings were maturing, INCLUDE organised a Knowledge Policy Dialogue to encourage research consortia and policymakers to engage in dialogue.

On September 30, 2016, INCLUDE organised the event '[How to make development policies in Africa more inclusive?](#)' in Leiden, the Netherlands. All consortia were invited to present their research findings to date in a session of 20 minutes, followed by a feedback round in which three people could offer their perspectives. They included one researcher from another INCLUDE research consortium, one policymaker at MFA, and one INCLUDE platform member. The event attracted approximately 65 attendees, of which ten senior policymakers at MFA, 14 out of the 17 research consortia and the Dutch platform members of INCLUDE. The Secretariat noticed a strong enthusiasm and was excited to see actual dialogue taking place between the diverse stakeholders.



## knowledge creation

their research during the research process. They may be concerned about the validity of mid-term findings, the decontextualized relevance of the findings, or worry about academic competition. In order to encourage them to shed these hesitations and start sharing preliminary results, all platforms engage in different activities to get the research consortia on board (see [Case 'Knowledge policy dialogue'](#)). Early dialogues with policymakers and practitioners may moreover help researchers to reflect on their findings and preliminary conclusions, and possibly adjust certain parameters of the research in order to fine-tune to the needs of interested stakeholders from policy and practice. WOTRO also stresses that for many academic researchers effectively engaging in dialogue with others outside academia 'is not a trick they can easily make their own. Researchers need to learn to look beyond their borders and initiate activities that fit that approach. It is something that needs to become imprinted on their hardware.'<sup>34</sup>

Involving and engaging the researchers proves quite a time-consuming effort for most Secretariats (due to limited capacity and large numbers of research consortia). Effective cooperation between WOTRO and the KPs Secretariats is very helpful in this respect.

Platform	Short-term Grants	Conditions
Share-Net International	Small Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One call per year per country node</li> <li>• Max budget of €25,000 per project, open only for members</li> </ul>
KPSRL	Fund for Network Activities Knowledge Management Fund (starting 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six per year</li> <li>• Max budget of € 10,000 per event</li> </ul>
INCLUDE	Support for National Level Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities in the South initiated by platform members</li> <li>• Max budget of € 70,000 per activity</li> </ul>
F&BKP	Knowledge Management Fund (KMF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open to organisations, networks, ministries, embassies, and Steering Committee</li> <li>• Max € 50,000 per project</li> </ul>

For instance, on request of KPSRL, WOTRO provided a clear overview per research project of consortia members, contact persons, research questions, country focuses, planning (and delays if incurred), outputs (and when to expect them), and reviews of the project by the International Advisory Committee. These data have facilitated the work of the Secretariat in terms of keeping in touch with the research consortia, targeting individual researchers to contribute to expert meetings or the Annual Conference (see [Case 'Hard Contexts, Hard Choices'](#)), and in general for improving the feedback loop from research findings to a wide network of interested stakeholders.

### 4.3 Secretariat fund for small grants

To meet short-term needs and demands of policymakers and practitioners in the thematic areas of the KPs, four Secretariats also manage a fund for small grants that can be used for knowledge events, short-term studies, reviews, etc. The table above offers an overview of the different grants that were developed over time to meet this need. F&BKP had included its Knowledge Management Fund from the very start of the platform. It must be stressed that these funds are meant for activities that cover the full spectrum of knowledge brokering activities, from creation to exchange and use.



## CASE



## Small grants fund

*On how the platforms have introduced small grants facilities to meet the needs for short-term, practice-oriented studies or knowledge brokering events. The Share-Net International's small grants fund opens possibilities for small organisations from the country nodes to address important topics that often have no place in mainstream debates and research.*

In 2014, the Share-Net International Secretariat published its first small grants call. Two more calls followed in 2015 and 2016, which were open to applicants from all country nodes. A total of 26 projects have been granted funding. They all involve collaboration between different stakeholders. The short-term projects have a maximum budget of €25,000. This makes it possible for smaller organisations to apply and benefit from the fund instead of serving only the 'usual suspects' (e.g. established NGOs or research institutes). The short span of the projects moreover means that results become available for dissemination rather quickly. Because the projects are practice-oriented, the results often have direct implications for policy and practice.

To encourage mutual learning, Share-Net International often makes sure that several projects present their findings and recommendations at joint events. In January 2017 for instance, the findings of 17 projects were shared at a lively event in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Implications for policy, practice and follow-up research were discussed in plenary and groups sessions with invited guests from Bangladesh and Burundi. This was followed by a 'market place' that encouraged interaction between participants (including researchers, policymakers

from MFA, students, practitioners, etc.) through poster presentations and animations of projects by dance4life, GNP+, ISM&RH, ISS, i+solutions, Oxfam Novib, Prayas & PRC, RedOrange, Simavi and UMC Utrecht.

The 26 projects funded so far show a great variation in topics. Often these are topics that are either ignored or too sensitive to be eligible for mainstream funding sources.

Examples are:

- A project that disseminates knowledge and increases awareness about infertility and involuntary childlessness in Ghana and Kenya, and explores the impact of activities that address infertility in resource poor areas.
- An explorative study of mental health needs and support systems among the LGBT population in Bangladesh.
- Project that explores sexuality of physically disabled people in Bangladesh through photonarratives in order to start advocacy around disability, sexuality and SRHR in Bangladesh and initiate interventions for disabled adolescents and youth.
- Project that raises awareness about disrespect and abuse during facility-based childbirth in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan), including a pilot to include an ethical code in the constitution of the professional organisations for midwives and OB/GYNs in Kyrgyzstan.



knowledge creation

## CASE

### Knowledge Management Fund

*On how the platforms have incorporated small grants facilities in order to meet the needs of stakeholders for short-term analysis or knowledge brokering events that encourage knowledge creation, exchange and uptake, and which fall outside of the scope of the WOTRO research calls.*

The objective of the Knowledge Management Facility (KMF) is to financially support the knowledge management of the various stakeholders. The facility finances external events in cooperation with stakeholders (including in specific cases Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies) and existing and emerging thematic networks. The facility also finances short-term analysis relevant for food and nutrition security and private sector development policy goals, on request of the Steering Committee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and one of the embassies in the partner countries. When appropriate, F&BKP advised on the objective and scope of the project, the timely involvement of the various stakeholders, businesses, civil society, research and government, and overall outreach strategy including dissemination of the results.

From 2014-2016, 43 projects received financial support and nearly all were finalised before 2017. Seven additional KMF financed projects started at the end of 2016. The 43 projects met the criteria and contributed to the objectives of the KMF.



The partners involved (i.e. who applied for the support) varied: ten were initiated by Dutch Ministries, of which two were by Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN); four by the F&BKP Office; and 29 by partners. As a further breakdown of these 29 projects, networks and platforms active in the F&BKP initiated 12 of the 29 projects, new or emerging networks initiated five, temporary coalitions proposed seven projects, and five individual organisations brought forth projects. Eleven studies and events were explorative with a theme or specific question. Four studies included harvesting lessons learned and analysis. Seven projects supported the policy formulation of Ministries and EKNs. In total, 16 projects included learning events, e.g. expert meetings, and six focused on capacity building and training. Most projects included an internal report and/or news item on the website, while 15 projects delivered an external publication in either an article or brochure. Dissemination of project results was initiated mostly by the partners themselves and/or by the F&BKP.

## Cooperation between WOTRO and the Knowledge Platforms

The design of the KPs, with both the Secretariats and WOTRO as partners in a joint structure, requires effective working relationships between the two. WOTRO is very positive about the effects of its cooperation with the KPs as 'the long-term partnerships that have developed with the platforms allow us to be engaged in knowledge exchange and uptake activities in a more sustainable, structured fashion.'<sup>35</sup> While the KPs also give an impression of constructive and fruitful cooperation, this has and at times still is challenged by at least three factors.

First, WOTRO and the Secretariats each have separate contracts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This means that WOTRO formally reports on progress with the research calls and consortia to the MFA and not to the KPs, even though the KPs are responsible for setting the agenda and drafting the themes and content of the research calls. In the case of KPSRL, the disadvantages of this setup were reduced partly thanks to the strategic policy advisor of DSH, who played an important role in making sure that the two separate contracts were aligned, and because the KPSRL Secretariat and Steering Committee were given the

opportunity to comment on the Annual Plans and Reports of WOTRO.<sup>36</sup>

A second factor is an extension of the first: the research consortia are formally accountable to and thus report back to their funder, WOTRO. Yet the KP Secretariats also want to have a close working relationship with the consortia because they are tasked with communicating and translating their findings to a wider audience. While for the consortia it has been confusing at times to know who to report what to, some Secretariats felt that their efforts at getting the relevant information (e.g. progress reports) from either the consortia or WOTRO were quite time-consuming. While WOTRO indicates that all relevant data are always shared with the Secretariats, some Secretariats feel that the procedures for sharing information are not always as efficient and transparent as they could be. In later calls, the expectations and obligations of the research consortia in terms of contributing the knowledge brokering objectives and activities of the KPs has been made more explicit from the start. This is done so they know exactly 'what they are signing up for' and perceive their work as part of the platform's mission to create, exchange and promote the use of their research results.

A third factor concerns the differences and overlaps in the responsibility for knowledge brokering assigned to WOTRO and the Secretariats. The KPs were assigned to look beyond the scope of the research consortia,

and bridge worlds of knowledge between existing networks, emerging themes, across sectoral boundaries and all this with a visionary approach. WOTRO was given a more project-focused objective, namely to guard the quality of knowledge co-creation *within* the consortia and with local level stakeholders ('inner circle') and to prepare those research consortia for enhanced exchange of their findings with other stakeholders.<sup>37</sup> While it is important that Communities of Practice develop among the research consortia of the WOTRO calls, which indeed seems to be happening; the KPs consider it equally important that research findings are shared and validated with stakeholders outside the consortia (e.g. policymakers and businesses in the partner countries and the Netherlands).

This is why, for instance, F&BKP insisted to organise an additional 'thematic day' with wide participation from all sectors during the seminar co-organised with WOTRO in Benin (see [Case 'Three-day seminar in Benin'](#)) Or, why INCLUDE connects their biannual symposium with international actors such as the African Development Bank (see [Case 'Panel at AfDB Annual Meetings'](#)). The budget that WOTRO receives for communication and knowledge brokering/uptake activities differs per KP. F&BKP for instance works closely together with WOTRO on knowledge uptake activities related to the GCP and ARF calls because in their case WOTRO was awarded earmarked budget for this, which is not the case for INCLUDE.





Part 2  
Knowledge  
Exchange



knowledge exchange

## Knowledge Exchange

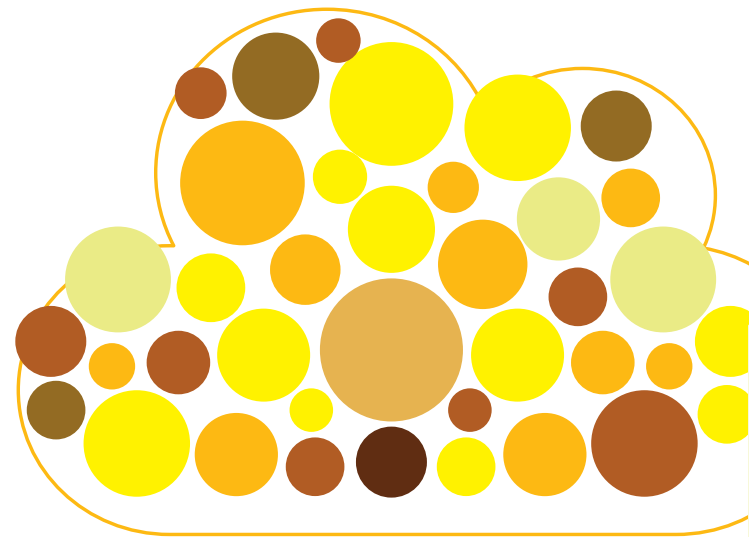
**In this review, *knowledge exchange* is understood as all strategies and activities that are meant to, firstly, identify and synthesise existing and new knowledge, and secondly, make this knowledge accessible for policy and practice.**

In a linear model, exchange follows creation. However, all platforms emphasise that knowledge creation and exchange are part of an iterative process: during the exchange (between discussants in an expert meeting, contributors to a blog, participants in a writeshop, etc.), new knowledge is often co-created. Knowledge exchange may well be considered the essence of the knowledge brokering role; its success depends on the ways in which the Knowledge Platforms manage to deploy their 'convening power'.

### Challenges of knowledge exchange

In the knowledge exchange activities implemented by the five platforms, many different stakeholders are involved: individuals and organisations across sectors and disciplines, in the South and North. Because these stakeholders have different interests, needs and commitments, different engagement

strategies are needed to get and keep them on board. Furthermore, the tasks that the platforms were given to 'map and deploy existing knowledge' and to 'link research findings to policy and practice' require more than just disseminating information. Attracting your stakeholders' attention is not always easy in a world inundated by an information overload, and where people are moreover under high pressure to 'get the job done'. The challenge for the KPs therefore is to help foster dialogues that help co-create knowledge that can be used to improve policy and practice.

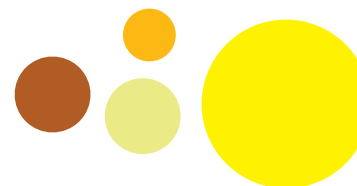






## knowledge exchange

Challenges	Approaches
1 <u>Building Communities of Practice</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network of networks (F&amp;BKP)</li> <li>• African and Dutch platform members (INCLUDE)</li> <li>• Fee-paying membership (Share-Net International, not for country nodes)</li> <li>• Open and fluid network (KPSRL)</li> <li>• Learning community for innovation (VIA Water)</li> </ul>
2 <u>Seducing your stakeholders into knowledge exchange</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face contact (all)</li> <li>• Creating a safe environment (KPSRL)</li> <li>• Getting the incentives right (products, formats, activities and events)</li> <li>• Using soft pressure (face-to-face, capacity building) and hard pressure (contractual obligations) to share (VIA Water)</li> </ul>
3 <u>Positioning yourself as a knowledge broker</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert, facilitator or mediator</li> </ul>





knowledge exchange

# 1 Building Communities of Practice

The KPs were set up to bring people and organisations together from different sectors and disciplines with the goal of enhancing knowledge for policy and practice. Each of the platforms thus had to pose the question who should be involved as primary and secondary stakeholders and through which mechanisms they could be attracted to participate and contribute to both knowledge creation and exchange activities. The five platforms each formulated their own strategies to engage different partners and stakeholder groups, which largely determined the structure and identity of the platforms.

## Structure of the KPs:



F&BKP was set up as a 'network of networks', to support and facilitate collaboration between national, regional and international networks and organisations of business, science, civil society and policy in the field of food and nutrition security. F&BKP does not have members - partners are those who 'vote with their feet' - and consequently the network is fluid. F&BKP distinguishes between facilitating emerging networks, supporting established networks, and building strategic partnerships (see three cases).



INCLUDE was set up from the start as a platform with members recruited on personal title and merit. The platform consists of Dutch and African professionals (currently twelve African, nine Dutch) who contribute their expertise on a voluntary basis and come together twice a year for platform meetings. The Steering Committee currently has four Dutch and two African members.



Share-Net International is a membership organisation open to organisations, universities and individuals working on SRHR issues. Members pay an annual fee (between € 165 (for individuals) and € 4500, based on the annual turnover of organisations/institutions; universities pay € 1000). In 2016, Share-Net International counted 36 Dutch organisations and universities and 15 Dutch individuals among its members; non-Dutch membership included 45 organisations (Burundi and Jordan) and 497 individuals (Bangladesh). Members are invited to participate in the 11 thematic working groups. Share-Net International is the umbrella platforms for four country nodes: Share-Net Netherlands, Bangladesh, Burundi and Jordan. The country nodes are set up in a similar way, except that members do not pay fees. They automatically gain free membership of Share-Net International.



## knowledge exchange

### KPSRL

KPSRL is open to any individual, organisation or university interested in the thematic issues covered by the platform's activities and research programmes. It does not have members in the strict sense of the word; anyone who subscribes to the newsletter is considered part of the (fluid) community. In 2016, there are 2600 subscribers, of whom 350 are considered 'active' contributors to the platform's activities.

### VIA Water

VIA Water presents itself as a programme rather than a platform for innovative water and sanitation solutions in African cities. The online VIA Water Community has 400 members who share and exchange knowledge and experiences through the online forum. In the seven partner countries, VIA Water brings together (potential) innovators in learning and sharing activities.

People working on global development issues at governments, NGOs, research institutions and private sector are all first and foremost busy with their core tasks: formulating and implementing policy, conducting research, publishing academic papers, developing profitable business cases, etc. Sharing knowledge and learning are not usually their priority, nor do they have the financial resources to make this a priority. This means

that the KPs, which want to 'seduce' all these actors into knowledge exchange, need to get the incentives right. All five KPs have used their convening power to engage the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a range of southern stakeholders, Dutch NGOs, private sector actors and international knowledge networks. The challenges faced in engaging them and the strategies used to address these are discussed for each of the stakeholder groups.

## Convening power in practice

'F&BKP is good at combining networks and knowledge, especially when a new topic emerges and several actors start working in a field where a network does not yet exist. The platform has a strong convening power and some contributors state that it transforms the research world by connecting unusual networks.'<sup>38</sup>

'Individuals and organisations who have been regularly involved in the activities of KPSRL sense that there now exists a community of actors around the issue of Security and Rule of Law, which did not exist before. Both academics and practitioners appreciated working together in a consortium, as it really sharpened their thinking.'<sup>39</sup>

'We have clearly witnessed a Community of Practice develop over the years of researchers involved in the many different consortia.'<sup>40</sup>

'Researchers and practitioners in the Netherlands view Share-Net International as the platform par excellence to be part of when working on SRHR issues with an international outlook.'<sup>41</sup> 'The added value is in the whole: the multiplicity and diversity of activities and how these complement each other.'<sup>42</sup>

'The convening power of INCLUDE is frequently lauded. The platform has established a network of experts, researchers, policymakers and other key influencers in policymaking and development.'<sup>43</sup>



## knowledge exchange

### KPSRL events: degree of stakeholder representation

Composition platform participants	International	Researchers	Policymakers	Practitioners
Average interactive brainstorm	28%	47%	26%	26%
Average networking events	Insufficient data	35%	14%	52%
Average ad hoc events	28%	30%	24%	44%
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>40%</b>

#### 1.1 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The KPs are meant to help inform and strengthen the global development policies of the Dutch government. However, the Secretariats of all five platforms note that it is not easy to bridge the proverbial distance between the partners involved in the platforms and their counterparts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, let alone other relevant ministries. The gaps they refer to in terms of knowledge needs and relevance and time horizons were discussed in part 1. Disconnects in language are discussed below under section 2. In this section, we discuss the importance of personal relationships – and the risks of depending too much on these.

All KPs feel that they are currently gaining momentum and that their opportunities for engagement with MFA and other ministries are likely to increase considerably from 2017 onward. As for the current active involvement of MFA staff in exchange activities organised by the platforms, we observe a mixed picture. On one hand, we have heard Secretariat staff point out that some policymakers at the Ministry 'assume what we offer is not relevant to their day-to-day work', or that 'Ministry staff are quite interested in *receiving* knowledge, assuming that researchers or the platforms as intermediaries will tell them what to do and how to do it.' INCLUDE emphasises that getting policymakers to engage in real dialogue based on research findings and other evidence takes

considerable time investments, but if one is persistent, it can turn out to be rewarding (see [Case 'Knowledge Policy Dialogue'](#)). Some platforms are very positive about the engagement of 'a loyal group of policymakers' that attends seminars and meetings 'even when these don't take place in The Hague' (Share-Net International), the good turnout at lunch seminars organised at the Ministry (INCLUDE), or the growing interest in the outcomes of the research projects that are presented at various events (KPSRL).

Policy makers of MFA contribute to all five KPs, firstly by being members (and often acting as the chair) of the Steering Committees. Each platform in addition has a direct counterpart at



### knowledge exchange

the MFA, the 'coordinator' (*dossierhouder*), who usually is a senior policy maker. What comes across quite strongly in the conversations with both staff of Secretariats and policymakers at MFA is that the level of engagement in platform activities depends for a considerable part on the relations and good rapport established with individual policy makers at the Ministry. In that sense, most platforms credit a large part of their success in 'entering the Ministry' to their direct MFA counterparts, who often play a proactive role in bringing the platform activities to the attention of their colleagues (KPSRL, Share-Net, INCLUDE, F&BKP) and actively give feedback to the Secretariat on possible ways forward (VIA Water).

## Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The KPs all have the ambition to liaise with and be of relevance to the embassies in the countries where they organise activities and where research projects are conducted. However, in terms of structural engagement with the embassies, a very mixed picture appears. There is active engagement with some, passive involvement of others, and non-existing relationships in certain countries. Reasons might be that: there is too little thematic overlap with existing programmes of the embassies; that the embassies were not consulted prior to the launch of individual platforms, which limits their acceptance and understanding of the KPs' aims and objectives<sup>44</sup>; or that it again depends considerably on personal contacts with and interests in knowledge management of embassy personnel. The high turnover of embassy personnel is not helpful in this regard either. Several positive examples are:

- For Share-Net International, the embassies have been involved from the start as an important ally. In Bangladesh and Burundi, SRHR is one of the focus areas of the embassies and they have assigned staff to work on it. They can give guidance on content and priority issues to the country nodes and help in suggesting relevant local actors. In Bangladesh, an embassy representative

is a member of the Steering Committee of the country node. The Embassy in Jordan does not focus on SRHR, but staff are informed of the Share-Net activities and supported the establishment of the country node.

- VIA Water has good and frequent contacts with the Embassies in Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Rwanda and Mozambique, and close cooperation takes place with the Embassy in Benin (see [Case 'Cooperation VIA Water and Embassy in Benin'](#)). In all countries, all project proposals are shared with the embassies for feedback.
- F&BKP supported several studies for embassies and was involved in the organisation of the Food Security Exchange Week for food and nutrition security specialists and agricultural counsellors of the embassies. A condition for the F&BKP ARF proposals is that they are linked to the Multi Annual Strategic Plans of the embassies. After receiving complaints that ARF projects were not sufficiently linked to embassy activities, F&BKP started a pilot to let embassy staff define the specific scope of the ARF call for their country.
- INCLUDE researchers have close engagements with the Economic Attaché at the Embassies in Kenya and Nigeria, while the Embassies in Mozambique and Ghana participate in the policy-knowledge communities on youth employment in their respective countries.



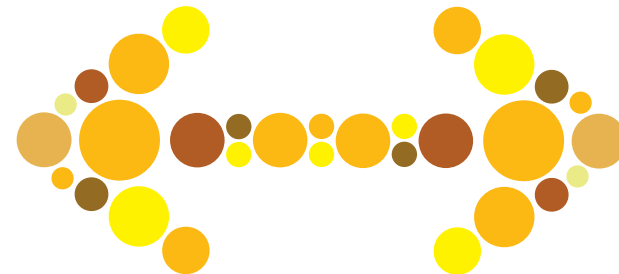
## knowledge exchange

An issue that came up in conversations with all KPs is the need for physical presence of Secretariat staff at the MFA. It is increasingly realised that this is a condition for achieving effective and relevant exchange between the platforms and the ministry. As one MFA staff member put it, 'it is important that the Secretariats have a person who spends considerable time at the ministry. Not coming in for one or two meetings and then off you go again, but spending the day, having ears and eyes open, participating in meetings, talking to as many people as possible. One day a week at least is needed to build up rapport and get to know each other.'<sup>45</sup> Another MFA staff member emphasised it is not only about 'knowing the people and them knowing you, it is also about learning to understand how this institution operates and how to navigate its social rules and codes.'<sup>46</sup> One other MFA staff member said, 'research is only one instrument of the knowledge agenda. Knowledge is embedded in people. We therefore need to stimulate a culture that encourages human interaction.'<sup>47</sup>

Share-Net International and VIA Water both had a Secretariat staff member spending one day a week or fortnight at the MFA for some time. Both evaluated this as a positive arrangement, allowing for 'korte lijntjes'. A staff member of Share-Net used to spend Mondays

at the Ministry once in a fortnight where she participated in meetings, while VIA Water participated in the weekly department meeting. Both platforms stopped this structural presence for unclear reasons, mostly pointing at logistical limitations. The new KPSRL Secretariat (which from 1 January 2017 will be hosted by Clingendael Institute and be run jointly with Saferworld (UK) in close cooperation with the International Development and Law Organisation (IDLO, The Hague/Rome)) will institute an arrangement as above, and INCLUDE is also exploring the possibilities.

F&BKP is developing strategies to interact more intensively with the Cluster Food and Nutrition Security and its four thematic teams, for instance by regularly participating in (strategic) meetings and organising in-house lunch meetings. The Secretariats emphasise that they wish to be included in the Ministry's strategic meetings and working groups in order to maximise the benefits of such an arrangement. An INCLUDE staff member reflected, 'as the Ministry's formal knowledge partner it makes sense to be included in their strategic working groups. We want to be like "a mole in the ministry"'. However, so far our attempts at organising this have been met with reserve on the part of the Ministry'.<sup>48</sup>





knowledge exchange

## CASE

### 4th Annual Conference 'Hard contexts, hard choices'



*On how the platforms manage to connect new topics and organisations and engage with multi-stakeholders in innovative exchange processes. KPSRL has developed a creative approach to the platform's annual conference to meet the diverse interests and knowledge needs of the mixed audience.*

The latest annual meeting took place on April 7, 2016. The day-long event was creatively constructed based on a menu of 24 break-out sessions across three themes from which participants were free to pick and choose. The event attracted a total of 180 researchers, policymakers and practitioners (Dutch and international), and was organised in cooperation with 32 platform member organisations. KPSRL uses their annual platform meetings, which are open to all interested participants, to agree on the three main research areas and programmatic themes for the coming year. This is reflected in the [conference report](#) and [video](#). While building on research themes of the past years, the platform at the same time looks ahead at 'emerging challenges' to ensure they create a forward-looking agenda. The Secretariat takes the lead in the coordination of the events, but invites organisations to organise and facilitate different sessions.

KPSRL ensures that the sessions are organised in such a way that a mix of 'unusual suspects' are invited to take responsibility for the organisation of the event or the delivery of the content. This encourages interaction between organisations that might not normally meet each other, but have shared common interests. By making organisations responsible for the content and organisation of the meeting, KPSRL creates a sense of ownership over the knowledge process. As the activities taking place in the following year are based on the outcomes of the annual conference, the approach ensures continuous stakeholder support for the thematic focus of the platform. The WOTRO call for proposals also follows the results of the event, and thus creates another avenue for strengthening ownership and support for the thematic focus of the platform.





knowledge exchange

## CASE

### Youth Week

*On how the platforms stimulate exchange of knowledge between sectors, disciplines, and geographies. Share-Net International organised the Youth Week in September 2016 in order to stimulate knowledge exchange on the topic of meaningful youth participation and to create a growing sense of ownership over the process.*

Share-Net International organised a week filled with debates, workshops, presentations and networking activities on the topic of Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE); two relevant thematic areas in their field of work. The events attracted 260 participants from 40 organisations and universities, among them Share-Net platform members, MFA policymakers, NGOs, UN organisations, and researchers. The content of the week was co-organised by the platform members from three working groups: YFHS, CSE and Linking Research, Policy and Practice. The **Youth Week** is an example of how the identification of knowledge questions and the sharing of knowledge of topical themes works best in an environment of action learning, where all partners and stakeholders contribute and start to feel ownership over the process.



## 1.2 Southern stakeholders

One of the three objectives for the KPs as laid down in the *Kennisbrief* is 'knowledge for developing countries'. This is understood as contributing to (access to) knowledge in developing countries in order to support the policies of local and national governments, NGOs, businesses and other stakeholders in the South. Who exactly to engage and how to go about this is a challenge that each platform tackled in its own way.

First, the KP Secretariats made different strategic choices about their structural presence in the South. Not all platforms have a structural presence in the South, which may limit the degree to which structural and continuous input from the South is integrated into the setup of the platform. INCLUDE, Share-Net International and VIA Water have most clearly chosen to make southern engagement a priority. That said, all five platforms engage southern stakeholders in many of their activities. F&BKP and KPSRL organise and support knowledge activities in the South such as studies, events, conferences, expert meetings, etc. They also invite experts from the South to participate and contribute to meetings in the Netherlands or Europe





## knowledge exchange

(see the cases presented in the following pages). The KPSRL Secretariat emphasises that in all their activities, they attempt to bring together and link up actors from different sectors or disciplines depending on the questions that are being addressed. Southern partners, like all other stakeholders, are thus invited based on their expertise rather than their southern identity per se.

### Structural presence in the South:

#### F&BKP

No structural presence in the South as F&BKP Secretariat, but through all network partners of F&BKP including AgriProFocus (co-host of Secretariat) which is a membership organisation with a wide network of members in the South. Focus is global but most activities take place in LMICs; no selection made of individual focus countries. F&BKP's ARF is limited to Dutch partner countries.

#### INCLUDE

The platform has 12 members who are African nationals (currently from eight different countries) and high calibre professionals from academia, think tanks, NGOs, business and multilateral institutions. AERC acts as consortium partner in the Secretariat. Their close involvement with the platform ensures a certain level of presence in the South, at the minimum the involvement of the institutions that these individuals hail from.

#### KPSRL

No structural presence in the South as KPSRL Secretariat. Focus is on Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS); no selection made of individual focus countries. Though in an effort to further internationalise the platform, two additional international Steering Group members were appointed in 2014, while events were given a stronger involvement of key international experts and local expertise. Also, one of the consortium partners in the new Secretariat from January 1, 2017 onward is Saferworld, a British NGO with field offices. The Secretariat will use Saferworld's presence in fragile states to increase the activities in the field.

#### Share-Net International

Institutionalised presence in three partner countries: Bangladesh, Burundi and Jordan. Bangladesh and Burundi were selected from the list of 15 Dutch partner countries. Selection criteria were: countries with a SRHR policy in place, one Anglophone, one Francophone and one fragile state. For the selection of a third country node, members could 'pitch' their proposals for countries, which resulted in the choice for Jordan. Local partners in each country fulfil the role of Secretariat of the 'country node'.

#### VIA Water

VIA Water's activities are all focused on seven partner countries in Africa: Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Sudan. They were selected from the list of 15 Dutch partner countries, based on whether the governments had chosen water as one of their three policy priorities in their engagement with the Netherlands as donor country. In five out of seven countries, VIA Water has local liaisons who carry out country-related VIA Water activities and support potential applicants.



## knowledge exchange

Furthermore, as was discussed in part 1 (see Box [Research Calls and Projects](#)), the 150 research consortia that are conducting applied and strategic research in different countries in the South, have over 340 southern organisations (universities and other knowledge institutes, NGOs and businesses) as partners in these projects.

Whether the southern partners are the lead applicants in the tender procedure, this differs per platform and per call. For F&BKP's ARF for instance, there is a condition that the lead applicant is a southern organisation, and in that sense is fully 'demand-driven'.

The VIA Water Secretariat emphasises that presence in and familiarity with their partner countries is a *sine qua non* for the matchmaking activities (between innovators, companies, universities) that the platform sees as its core business. All projects have African partners and in half of the projects they are the lead applicants. Most projects have a Dutch partner, which turns out to be an added value for offering access to knowledge and experience from other geographical contexts, and for supporting African partners who often lack the capacity to submit proposals that comply with the strict funding criteria. Dutch partners moreover play a role in inserting a wider outlook, most importantly in terms of the possibilities for upscaling the innovations.

## CASE

VIA Water

### Sharing Skills seminar

*On how platforms devote attention to bringing together southern partners from different countries for exchange activities, many of whom previously had little or no access to such knowledge brokering opportunities. VIA Water organised a three-day event in Nairobi in November 2016 to strengthen the skills of the implementers of their innovation projects.*

In November-December 2016, VIA Water organised a three-day seminar in Nairobi, Kenya. From almost all 30 projects and from eight different countries, a project leader joined the training on leadership skills, (intercultural) communication and project management, with topics participants indicated themselves. The conference was set-up to inspire in-depth learning from each other where participants exchanged experiences about their project work, received advice from experienced project owners, and solutions were created together. This has formed the basis for continued knowledge exchange between the project leaders, one-on-one, and through the VIA Water online community.

According to the survey that was conducted afterwards, the seminar greatly inspired the project leaders. It taught them about their personality and in which way this influences their way of leading, and has given them tools to communicate more easily internally and externally. Lastly, it has given them more confidence in their roles, and a support network of fellow project leaders to exchange experiences with.



## knowledge exchange

Engaging and involving policymakers of local and national governments in the South in a structural way proves to be a challenge for many of the platforms. We notice a similar trend to what was observed about relationships

with the Dutch Ministry, i.e. making inroads depends for a large part on personal contacts. In the case of Share-Net International, the set up with three country nodes and local coordinators on the ground in Bangladesh,

### Unusual suspects

Some KPs make a conscious and dedicated effort to include 'unusual suspects' in their knowledge exchange activities.

- F&BKP is dedicated to including unusual suspects, which can be small, local NGOs or young entrepreneurs in events organised in the South.
- KPSRL has made a point of involving 'real outsiders' (e.g. behavioural economists or techies) in their conferences and expert meetings, and in putting together a panel that includes, for instance, a person working on demobilization of Libyan rebel groups and someone working on psychological aspects of radicalisation. KPSRL notices that this approach attracts people to join their events. They receive positive feedback from participants who value the co-creation of new knowledge and insights that happens when unusual

suspects are challenged to engage in dialogue and find new common ground.

The networking activities that are financially supported and facilitated by the Secretariat have in some cases led to the establishment of new partnerships. An inspiring example is the policy research network Plural Security Insights, which was set up as a spin-off of a KPSRL-funded activity (see [Case 'Supporting new collaborations'](#)).

- VIA Water decided to focus on cities in Africa partly because of the presence of innovators and innovation hubs there. The platform wants to engage unusual suspects from outside the water sector in order to bring a new dynamic to this largely conservative sector (which, because water is a public good, is dominated by government involvement). Most successful so far has been the engagement of the ICT sector in the partner countries.

Burundi and Jordan is an asset when it comes to local policy influencing. In the case of INCLUDE, the fact that high calibre African professionals are members of the platform certainly helps in engaging policymakers in and from different African countries. Some key African policymakers have also spoken at INCLUDE's biannual platform meetings, such as Charles Ombuki (Senior Economist, Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services, Kenya), Ida Kigonya (Principal Women in Development Officer, Ministry of Gender Uganda), and Njuguna Ndung'u (former governor of the Central Bank of Kenya).<sup>49</sup> Policymakers are also reached through National Level Activities (see [Case 'Ghana: Youth & Unemployment'](#)).

VIA Water managed to establish some first contacts with the Ministries of Water in Mozambique and Kenya through personal contacts of a staff member with the fund manager of Aqua for All. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between VIA Water and PLAMA (*Plataforma Moçambicana da Água*), the Mozambican compeer of the Dutch NWP (Netherlands Water Partnership). PLAMA brings together private and public actors, including the big utilities, which may prove to be a useful conduit to establish more structural relations with government policy circles in Mozambique. VIA Water plans to organise a session in 2017 with all leaders of innovation projects in Kenya and Ghana to exchange experiences and lessons learned with Kenyan and Ghanaian policymakers.



knowledge exchange

## CASE

### National Level Dialogue: youth and unemployment in Ghana

*On how the platforms stimulate southern stakeholders in their knowledge creation and exchange processes. INCLUDE supported seven policy-knowledge communities to stimulate dialogue on relevant themes for inclusive development in the Global South.*

INCLUDE has provided a budget to activities in partner countries to respond to the need of stimulating policy dialogue based on research in the focus countries of INCLUDE and where possible, to support short-term research. Seven such communities have been developed, of which some are focused on incorporating the results of the research consortia of INCLUDE in the national policy dialogue (i.e. in Uganda), others are focused on complementing the work of the WOTRO research with additional research activities.

In Ghana, ACET organised two dialogues in the run-up to the elections in 2016 where they invited a number of parties to engage in discussions on the crucial socio-economic issue that the country is facing: youth and unemployment. The activities organised by ACET have the purpose to engage political parties in a discussion before they acquire their seats in Parliament so that a consensus has been reached on the labour market challenges and important avenues for solutions, which will lay a factual basis for further political debate. Such evidence-based dialogue may lead to more inclusive development policies was, for example, reflected in the political programmes of some participants in the dialogues.

## INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

## CASE

### Workshop series: using local research capacity in fragile and conflict affected states



*On how the platforms include local stakeholders in the research and knowledge dialogue. KPSRL supported networking activities in three countries that enabled exchange between local research actors, implementers and donors on the state of research on specific topical interests.*

The workshop series were organised by Integrity Research Consultancy and SPARK, and was financially and content-wise supported by the KPSRL Secretariat. The series occurred in: Bamako, Mali on March 16, 2015; in Juba, South Sudan on March 20, 2015; and in Beirut (for Syria) on April 23, 2015.

The objectives of the workshop series were to:

- Bring local research actors, implementers and donors together to discuss the state of research in and on South Sudan, Mali and the Syria crisis, with a focus on youth education and entrepreneurship;
- Identify the most urgent and policy-relevant barriers and enabling factors to utilising local research capacity in conflict and fragile environments; and
- Develop and agree to 'best practices' among the development community for engaging local research capacity in conflict and fragile environments.

Three field study trips and local expert meetings resulted in the identification of key barriers and recommendations for tackling these objectives. The three local events were followed by several meetings in The Hague and London to share and discuss the findings with a broader network. A report with main outcomes and best practices was published and distributed.



## knowledge exchange

### 1.3 International knowledge networks

The legitimacy of the Dutch Knowledge Platforms is strengthened if they can develop themselves as valued and trusted knowledge partners internationally. Given the considerable number of renowned knowledge centres and networks on global development that exist in Europe, USA and increasingly also in Asia and Africa, this is no easy challenge. For INCLUDE, it is not easy to formulate its unique contribution internationally given the many established development organisations and agencies that are involved in inclusive development, such as International Finance Corporation, African Development Bank (AfDB), World Bank and DFID.<sup>50</sup> A useful strategy in that case is to seek cooperation with such institutes as INCLUDE successfully did with the AfDB (see [Case 'Panel at AfDB Annual Meetings'](#)) and UNECA (Addis, 2014).

## CASE

### Panel at AfDB Annual Meeting

*On how platforms manage to forge linkages with international knowledge networks. INCLUDE co-hosted a side panel at the African Development Bank Annual Meetings in May 2016.*

INCLUDE co-hosted a widely appreciated side panel on 'Jobs for women and young people – the transformative potential of agribusiness' at the Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Lusaka, Zambia, on May 23, 2016. The AfDB is interested in agricultural transformation and agribusiness as part of its ['High 5s'](#) agenda: the five top priorities for transforming Africa. The speakers at the AfDB/INCLUDE panel were all renowned African professionals from the agricultural business and research sectors. INCLUDE published a [report](#) about the event, which reflects on the presentations. The discussions show that it is certainly possible to create productive employment through agribusiness interventions in Africa. However, only if barriers in the political economy as well as gender inequality are addressed, and strategies devised that make agribusiness a viable and attractive venture for youth, which means a focus on changing mindsets. Ownership and use of land is a key issue for engaging both women and youth. The side panel was followed by a two-day INCLUDE platform meeting. INCLUDE's African membership base and orientation, as well as intensive preparations, facilitated the organisation of this panel, which also provided an interesting audience for platform members and researchers who forged new connections.

## INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES



knowledge exchange

## CASE

VIA Water

### Faecal Sludge conference in India

*On the platforms' ability to seek synergy with international relevant debates. VIA Water will contribute three case studies at an international seminar in India in 2017.*

In February 2017, VIA Water will join the 4th Faecal Sludge Management Conference (FSM 4) in India. This conference is one of the largest in the faecal sludge industry, and this year's focus will be on innovative and practical solutions that can be scaled up. For this purpose, VIA Water has submitted a paper, which was admitted for a session with the subject, 'VIA Water Innovations: marketing of faecal sludge valorisation end-products and how these products contribute to a successful sanitation chain'.

The participation in this seminar has been the result of a year-long focus on faecal sludge. With help from faecal sludge expert Jan Spit (who will also represent VIA Water during FSM4), VIA Water organised several webinars and articles on the topic in 2016, and the programme was able to spread some much needed technical know-how and help along many (VIA Water) projects or projects-to-be.

Several of the VIA Water projects focus on faecal sludge, and they have been involved in the writing of this paper, which showcases their faecal sludge innovations. Some of these projects will also join VIA Water during the conference and help showcase the VIA Water innovations to a worldwide audience.



## CASE

### Facilitating international partnerships

*On how the platforms can act as facilitators for the establishment of Dutch relations with international networks. F&BKP manages to organise linkages between recognised international institutions in support of Dutch Food Security interests.*

In 2015, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs accomplished two strategic partnerships with the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR) and with the World Bank Group (WBG) respectively. These partnerships are meant to reach synergy at the international level and as such, strengthen the food and nutrition security knowledge system. The F&BKP acts as Secretariat and facilitates the collaboration between stakeholders for both partnerships.

Four priority knowledge domains were defined in which Dutch stakeholders develop intensive collaboration with the 2017-2022 CGIAR Research Programmes. In addition, the Netherlands has added value on the systems approach, enabling and scaling and working in public-private partnerships (PPPs). In cooperation with CGIAR, both ministries, IDH, SNV, and F&BKP organised a successful meeting on the collaboration with the private sector in research programmes.

The Netherlands will take a leadership role in stimulating PPPs in CGIAR. A joint call of the GCP and the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) is under development to combine resources and achieve synergy.



## knowledge exchange

F&BKP supports the working group on the *World Bank Group – Netherlands Partnership 'Food for All'*. The aim of the partnership is to jointly contribute to transformational change in agriculture around the world by bringing knowledge, innovation and sustainable growth into the food system, and by mobilising joint public and private action. The partnership will link knowledge and innovation from the public and private sectors in the Netherlands and leverage the relevant Dutch expertise with the operations supported by the WBG. A learning tour on food safety was organised for the WBG.

Some of the other KPs are also reflecting on this issue and undertaking steps to explore the possibilities of cooperating more closely and on a structural basis with international centres of knowledge and expertise.

Share-Net International has developed a Terms of Reference (ToR) for a consultant to assess the platform's added value internationally, assess whether its foci are in line with the agendas and priority settings of other organisations in the field of SRHR, to explore possibilities for enforcing collaboration, as well as possible future international donors. Share-Net International is moreover exploring how to better align the research projects with the knowledge agendas of other international actors, among whom the WHO and UNFPA.

F&BKP too is increasingly linking up strategically with international actors. Opportunities to do so are helped by the fact that F&BKP operates as a 'network of networks'. The internationally recognised and valued expertise of the Netherlands in the food sector is also helpful in this respect. One example are the current efforts to link up the research themes of the GCP 4 call to a research programme of CGIAR on climate smart agriculture in order to publish a joint call. F&BKP facilitates the strategic partnerships (see [Case 'Facilitating international partnerships'](#)) of the Ministries of Foreign and Economic Affairs with CGIAR and the World Bank Group that were established in 2015.

VIA Water is working towards a Memorandum of Understanding with AfriAlliance, the Africa-EU Innovation Alliance for Water and Climate. It supports existing (knowledge) networks in identifying appropriate social innovation and technological solutions for key water and climate change challenges. Rather than creating new networks, the ambition of the 16 EU and African partners in the AfriAlliance is to consolidate existing networks that consist of scientists, decision makers, practitioners, citizens and other key stakeholders. AfriAlliance will support effective means of knowledge sharing and technology transfer within Africa and between Africa and the EU.

WOTRO observes that people and organisations internationally are increasingly becoming aware of the KP structure established in the Netherlands. They are interested to learn more about the added value of this typical Dutch 'polder' alternative to a USAID/DFID approach and it is evident from the requests that WOTRO has been receiving from international stakeholders to cooperate. Several individual KPs have also received such requests.



## knowledge exchange

### 1.4 Private sector

The multi-stakeholder setup of the Knowledge Platforms is meant to encourage the participation of private sector actors in the 'knowledge for policy' and 'knowledge for developing countries' objectives of the KPs. The platforms have succeeded in involving businesses to different degrees.

In the research consortia of F&BKP, both the applied (ARF) and strategic (GCP) calls include many private sector partners. The 36 ARF research consortia and 22 GCP include 40 business partners. Especially businesses in developing countries have proven to be quite eager to take part in the calls; they are enthusiastic because they consider the added value of knowledge that they receive and can tap from the platform. Through private sector co-financing instruments, F&BKP had mobilised about five million euro in private money for the GCP/ARF research calls by end 2015.

In terms of participation of Dutch businesses in the platform's research and other activities, a mixed picture appears. On the one hand, it is suggested that involving them in the identification of knowledge questions and research is very difficult because the knowledge

activities are considered 'too abstract' and the transaction costs (not least in terms of time spent) for participation is too high.<sup>51</sup> Outcomes are unclear and thus businesses are uncertain how to answer the question 'what's in it for us'. This is also an issue for KPSRL, where this question may be even harder to answer given the insecure situations in the fragile and conflict-affected states that are the focus of the platform's activities. Sensitive subjects in this context, especially concerning human rights, make it even harder for KPSRL 'to sell our story'.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, F&BKP stresses that the networks that the platform supports or facilitates (e.g. inclusive business, inclusive finance) engage private sector actors in their activities, while businesses also take part in events and projects supported or funded by the platform, such as the Food Connection Challenge (which brings together Ghanaian companies, Dutch students and Dutch companies to work on fit-to-purpose solutions for postharvest food losses in Ghana), a study on social entrepreneurs, or the 2016 Integrated Nutrition Conference. Engaging businesses in activities that have a clear and tangible value for them is certainly possible. A senior Dutch policymaker noted that the F&BKP team does a lot to strengthen the link with the private sector,

not least by making sure they are embedded in several structures where they meet with the top sectors.<sup>53</sup>

For Share-Net International, private sector involvement is one of the core themes, evidenced by the working group (WG) private sector (1 of 11 WGs). The WG brought together several private sector actors (Bayer, Philips, Nationale Postcode Loterij, Triggerise, Heineken Foundation, Healthy Entrepreneurs, Female Health Company) and universities and NGOs to discuss collaboration and to understand their knowledge questions. A literature study on collaborations in the field of SRHR and private sector was conducted, and through the small grants fund, a study was conducted in India by dance4life. Share-Net International also has a very active private sector Steering Committee member.

VIA Water has succeeded in involving a steady number of businesses, both from the Netherlands and the African partner countries in their projects, which is clearly helped by the approach taken by the platform to focus on tangible and concrete innovation needs.

For INCLUDE, the participation of private sector actors has remained a challenge. Apart from the involvement of business professionals such





## knowledge exchange

as INCLUDE members Maggie Kigozi from the Uganda Investment Authority and Marina Diboma from the Netherlands-African Business Council, it proves difficult to achieve more structural engagement. The private sector is motivated by considerations of 'profit or loss' and 'maintaining a competitive edge'. While most businesses think in terms of scenarios and have the capacity to think along a 'time horizon', attracting their participation usually demands that short-term benefits (what's in it for us) are very clear. The INCLUDE Secretariat also considers the platform's thematic focus on the socio-economic issues of employment and development rather than private sector aligned themes such as food, water and business a disadvantage in this respect.<sup>54</sup>

### 1.5 Non-governmental organisations

All platforms acknowledge the importance of involving Dutch practitioners', non-governmental or civil society organisations as stakeholders in their knowledge brokering activities. The thematic and geographical knowledge that is available within such organisations is often vast, built up over decades, and fed by close contact and cooperation with local partners in the countries

where they operate. However, this knowledge often remains very much 'locked' within the organisation. At the same time, because of their close linkages to 'the field', NGOs are in a good position to identify current and pressing knowledge needs that are of direct relevance to countries in the South. When discussing challenges of knowledge brokering with each of the Secretariats, the NGOs were least mentioned; they were perceived as accessible partners in the brokering process. Other stakeholders, such as MFA, too have the impression that NGOs are 'natural' partners of the platforms: 'the platforms seem to be better embedded within the NGO world.'

“*Non-governmental actors can constructively debate and influence policy formulation. And, not to forget, implementation of Dutch development policy and programming is largely done through practitioner organisations, whose knowledge and experience can add a lot of value to policy formulation and improve programming.*”

However, the diversity of 'competitor' networks and collectives present in the Dutch NGO environment was mentioned as a possible

challenge by the platforms in terms of getting them on board. As was mentioned in relation to F&BKP, 'there are a lot of competitive relations where NGOs already meet. Think of the strategic partnerships and AgriProFocus in this regard.'<sup>55</sup> Share-Net International does not share this experience; instead the platform appears to be considered by NGOs working in the field of SRHR as the key network to be part of. This may be partly explained by the fact that Share-Net Netherlands already had a wide membership base before the start of the KPs.

During the 'stakeholder mapping' sessions with the Secretariats, all platforms mentioned various national and international NGOs that were either active platform members as Steering Committee members (INCLUDE), as paying members (Share-Net International), as participants and contributors to events (KPSRL) or as partners of thematic networks that the platform engages in (F&BKP). VIA Water strongly encourages the participation of established NGOs in the focus countries in their innovation projects. The country nodes of Share-Net International also by definition involves local NGOs in their knowledge brokering work.

Both Dutch NGOs and civil society organisations from developing countries are also strongly involved as partners in nearly all



## knowledge exchange

research consortia that have been established under the wings of the platforms. As the [infographic Research Calls and Projects](#) has made visible, about 30% of consortia partners have a non-governmental background. Initially, there were complaints from NGOs that the terms and conditions of the calls, and the emphasis on academic-oriented research made it harder for them to be successful applicants. This feedback has been addressed with the shift to more applied research calls alongside strategic calls (see [part 1, section 4](#)). NGOs also make use of the small grants fund that most KP Secretariats manage for short-term, practice-oriented studies and events in the Netherlands and the South (see [Case 'Knowledge Management Fund'](#) and [Case 'Small grants fund'](#)).

## 2 Seducing your stakeholders into knowledge exchange

Knowledge exchange. Convening power. Matchmaking. Co-creation. These are the terms that describe what the Knowledge Platforms ought to do – and in many cases successfully do. Several challenges are observed in encouraging individuals and organisations to engage in exchange activities.



First, facilitating only online, virtual exchange is bound to have limited success. VIA Water for instance notices this with the online Learning Community that it tries to promote. People are more keen to actively contribute to an online community once they have had meaningful face-to-face contact. INCLUDE also notes a difference between online and offline engagement. While the platform is viewed as hugely successful in convening high quality meetings attended by notable experts and thought leaders, which are highly rated and considered beneficial by the stakeholders, the online convening power on the virtual Platform (website) is still developing. This is partly due to the fact that a lot of time and effort needs to be invested in attracting people to one's website, and making sure they keep coming back. The introduction of the Question of the Week (see [Case 'Question of the Week'](#)) appears to be one potentially effective strategy to achieve this.

To encourage sharing online, VIA Water not only trains its project leaders on brokering skills, but also includes obligations in the contracts with them on the number of blog posts they need to write to share their experiences, the meetings they must attend for the same purpose, etc. The last 10% of the funds transferred to the innovation project leaders depends on their compliance with these targets.





## knowledge exchange

A second challenge is creating a safe environment in which stakeholders, who may not be familiar with each other, feel comfortable enough to share experiences and insights. This was noted by KPSRL and has a lot to do with the (politically) sensitive topics and contexts where their stakeholders work. KPSRL decides on a case by case basis what is the best strategy. Sometimes this is limiting the group of participants, for instance in a closed expert meeting, to enhance trust; however, this limits the possibility of sharing results widely. Chatham House rules are applied, but for some stakeholders that is not enough to guarantee open dialogue. In order to 'seduce' people into reciprocity, KPSRL tries to frame discussions 'on the intersections'. The KPSRL Secretariat considers 'actually getting people to share' a central challenge in its operation. 'On paper, people easily commit to being willing to share. But when push comes to shove, they often mean they want *others* to share, and are reluctant to open up themselves.'<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, several Secretariats (KPSRL, F&BKP and Share-Net International) mention a trend that they observe, that is due to dwindling (government) budgets for global development, there is more awareness among stakeholders of the need to cooperate. This is noticed among NGOs, but also at the Ministry, where

due to shrinking budgets at departmental levels, and consequently shrinking human resources, a growing need for cooperation with the Knowledge Platforms is observed by some. F&BKP also notices a shift in the kind of questions that are formulated, which are more geared towards finding integrated solutions. In the context of KPSRL, it has also been pointed out that the knowledge infrastructure within the MFA has become quite significantly reduced over the last years as a response to budget cuts.

This may further strengthen the importance of a Knowledge Platform that can help ensure that the knowledge basis underneath policymaking does not get undermined.<sup>57</sup> These same budget cuts are also a reason for policymakers to be more alert about the immediate relevance of the contributions made by the platform. As one person pointed out, 'we find ourselves in very different times than four years ago when DSH had much more financial and human resources. This is one reason why we need to make sure that current themes are taken on board, for instance that hot issues like migration are included in the agenda of the Knowledge Platform.'<sup>58</sup>

Another challenge is to get the incentives for participation in knowledge exchange right. Activities need to be both appealing and

relevant to the interests and objectives of their stakeholders. Language used to share and disseminate information needs to be spot on and targeted at the recipient partner. This issue is especially relevant when translating research findings to documents that policymakers and business partners want to and have the time to read, or events they are keen to attend.

Language is a key factor. Length of documents and discussions is too. MFA staff observe that some Secretariats still have difficulties getting this right ('get rid of the word "context-specific" or policymakers will lose interest, dare to show the bigger picture in plain language'<sup>59</sup>) and that this negatively influences their possibilities to engage policy makers. What is needed at the Secretariat: people with a skill for both content and communication. VIA Water has consciously chosen for a communication style that appeals to their target audience: little to no policy jargon, honest and contemporary.



knowledge exchange

## CASE



### Working Group Linking Research, Policy and Practice

*On how the platforms have structured their multi-stakeholder approach towards identifying knowledge questions and sharing knowledge that addresses the needs and interests from a diverse set of actors in the field. Share-Net International organises this by tapping into the networks established through their eleven working groups.*

One of the eleven working groups of Share-Net International is the WG Linking Research, Policy and Practice (LRPP). This group contributes to strengthening the involvement of academic researchers and academic institutes in the nexus of research, policy and practice. Their activities focus on learning about linking research, policy and practice and the role of knowledge in the field of SRHR and HIV and AIDS by: (1) stimulating research-informed policy and practice; and (2) stimulating research relevance for policy and practice. Three examples illustrate the strategies used to achieve these goals.

#### Study conducted

The WG conducted a study in 2015 about strengthening linkages between research, policy and practice. This included literature research as well as interviews with members from different sectors (policymakers, researchers and practitioners). The findings were presented in a [working paper](#) and discussed at a symposium.

#### Research informed policy and practice

The WG LRPP is essential in identifying knowledge questions for each of the ten WGs in the preparation for the annual meeting for students and NGOs. It visits all member organisations (NGOs, research, the Ministry) and asks them to share their knowledge needs and questions. The results are presented in a fact sheet and shared at the annual meeting for students and NGOs. Based on this, students can pick up relevant themes and research needs for internships within non-profit organisations, or for master research projects or further research.

#### Stimulating research relevance

The Share-Net Young Investigators Network on SRHR and HIV and AIDS consist of researchers working on these topics in international development. In 2015, the network started an NGO tour to contribute to dialogues between research, policy and practice. In addition, the platform wanted to offer networking opportunities for young professionals seeking a career in the field. Central to the interaction is the exchange of knowledge amongst researchers and practitioners who work on the same topics and areas of interest. The innovative approach attracts young researchers to present their work while organisations get the opportunity to respond to the findings and engage in a dialogue with other stakeholders to further the research.



knowledge exchange

## CASE

## INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

### Question of the Week

*On how the platforms develop innovative approaches to reach out to the stakeholders and engage them in sharing knowledge.*

The Question of the Week offers the opportunity to identify relevant knowledge questions for policy and practice and to generate exchange between different stakeholders on possible answers and new viewpoints. It is an online tool that INCLUDE disperses among its newsletter subscribers, through their website, social media, and through direct engagement of relevant stakeholders. Not just any question is deemed suitable: the INCLUDE Secretariat has set the criteria that the question has to have policy relevance and address one of the three core thematic areas of the platform: productive employment, social protection and strategic actors. Examples of questions are, 'to what extent are cash transfers effective in promoting women's employment in Africa?' and 'what are promising examples of development policies and programmes based on recognition and equitable participation of informal workers' organisations?' To date, the initiative has attracted response from many policymakers, especially those based in African focus countries. The tool was designed during the year in which the Secretariat received additional support in developing and implementing a dedicated outreach strategy.

Number of questions posed	20
Number of replies by visitors	160 (Average: 8)
Number of respondents	104 African users: 39
Number of organisations represented	Total: 79 Academic/research institutions: 58 Civil society: 12 Government: 11 Private sector: 2
Number of page views (questions)	3200 views (2216 unique views)
Number of page views (overview page)	1054 views (684 unique views)
Number of replies sent (own initiative)	29 (18.1% of total replies)
Number of invitations sent	766 (12.8% success rate)



## knowledge exchange

### Exchange strategies and activities:

#### **F&BKP**

- Expert meetings organised by F&BKP and/or partners in the Netherlands and in LIMCs
- Newsletter, Twitter
- Website including Knowledge Portal (= online knowledge repository)

#### **INCLUDE**

- Biannual platform meeting
- Conferences and seminars
- Lunch seminars at MFA
- National Level Activities (in partner country)
- Newsletter
- Website including Knowledge Base (= online knowledge repository)
- Question of the Week

#### **Share-Net International**

- Annual meetings (one Annual Business Meeting for members; one annual meeting of the WG Linking Research, Policy and Practice for NGOs, MFA and students)
- Four thematic meetings per year
- Eleven plus working group meetings per year
- Seminars at MFA, (de)briefing meetings around conferences
- Online community through individual websites for Share-Net International, Bangladesh, Burundi and the Netherlands
- Newsletter
- Resource centre (= online knowledge repository)  
NB. The country nodes engage in very similar activities in their respective countries

#### **KPSRL**

- Annual conference
- Interactive brainstorming
- Expert meetings
- Blog series
- Online Platform
- Newsletter

#### **VIA Water**

- Learning tours (in partner country)
- Sharing Skills Seminar
- Innovation challenge (online)
- Learning community (online)
- Knowledge Hub (= online knowledge repository)
- Contractual obligation to share



knowledge exchange

### 3 Positioning yourself as knowledge broker

The Knowledge Platforms were given the freedom to develop their role of 'broker' in the ways they saw fit. For all five platforms, this has been a learning experience defined by trial and error.

For instance, do you position and 'sell' yourself as facilitator, mediator, convener, executor, or expert? Do you as Secretariat take a lead in defining the knowledge questions (KPSRL), or do you let your selected company of platform members take charge over this (INCLUDE)? Is it the platform's primary role to serve its members, or vice versa? Does the Secretariat operate supply-driven or demand-driven? Some platforms emphasised that they 'aspire to be more than the sum of their parts' (F&BKP), or achieve more than 'speldenprikken uitdelen' (VIA Water). But it was observed, also by other Secretariats, that the opportunity to be more than a facilitator depends partly on the possibilities granted by the setup/structure of the platform and the resources (both financial and human) awarded to the Secretariats.

#### Characteristics of a strong knowledge broker<sup>60</sup>

**They are transdisciplinary thinkers...**  
who consider it obvious to seek out knowledge to answer pressing questions... and are in a position to freely explore knowledge.

**They have an external orientation...**  
and a curiosity to explore forward-looking agendas, combined with a skill to reflect critically beyond existing frameworks.

**They are good at finding answers quickly (by mobilising others) ...**  
but also have the boldness to pose counter-questions.

**They are innovative...**  
and network-savvy.





### knowledge exchange

It also depends on how the other stakeholders – and in this case, most importantly the Ministry – views the platform’s role. What was observed during this review is that while most Secretariats have so far focused on a more modest role as facilitator serving ‘other’ knowledge holders – a role certainly recognised and appreciated – the Ministry would welcome a more assertive role taken on by the Secretariats. They may consider and present themselves not only as facilitators and mediators, but also as knowledgeable professionals in their own right, who can be called upon to contribute to strategic discussions on content.

### CASE



## Supporting new collaborations: Plural Security Insights

*On how the platforms manage to stimulate new partnerships between stakeholders. Through the networking activities supported by the KPSRL Secretariat, stakeholders managed to develop a basis for cooperation on new research topics.*

The purpose of the project was to generate knowledge and inform policy on plural security provision in urban contexts by focusing on the role played by local governments. It was initiated by the Conflict Research Unit of Clingendael Institute, the University of Amsterdam and UNHABITAT. The networking activity was supported financially and content-wise by the KPSRL Secretariat. Experts from the three organising institutions conducted collaborative research. The activities undertaken with the platform included a joint field study mission to Lebanon to observe how the rule of law is pluralistically enforced, and how state actors – such as Municipal Presidents (mayors), *mukhtars*, district administrators and municipal councils – can assert a positive role in guaranteeing citizens’ security as a public good. It also included two expert meetings, one in Lebanon and one in Amsterdam, to engage a broader group of experts, to identify questions for further research and to disseminate the findings. News items, blog posts and a policy brief were published. This networking activity led to a successful application to the WOTRO research funds affiliated to the KPSRL, which in turn led to the formal establishment of a new research collaborative, [Plural Security Insights](#).





knowledge exchange

## CASE

### Facilitating existing networks: LANDac

*On the platforms' flexible institutional framework that lends itself for multiple knowledge brokering purposes. F&BKP has taken on roles as facilitator and supporter of existing platforms that required additional support in realising their objectives. This case offers an insight in their facilitating and supportive role for the Dutch network, The Netherlands Academy on Land Governance.*

The Netherlands Academy on Land Governance ([LANDac](#)), supported by F&BKP developed a range of activities around the theme of land governance and food security. A scoping study was firstly conducted on the local impacts of Dutch floriculture investments based on fieldwork from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. It assessed the impact of Dutch flower farms on local food security in relation to land governance in eastern Africa. With encouragement from F&BKP, LANDac ensured that lessons were widely shared and discussed with international stakeholders online, and at several meetings including at the World Bank, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Society for International Development, the MasterCard Foundation, the LANDac International Conference, RVO, and the Dutch television program, Zembla.

Three four-day capacity building trajectories were held on the same theme of land governance and food security in Uganda, Kenya and Ghana with representatives from civil societies, local governments, researchers and the private sector. As such, the general knowledge on the link between land governance and food security including



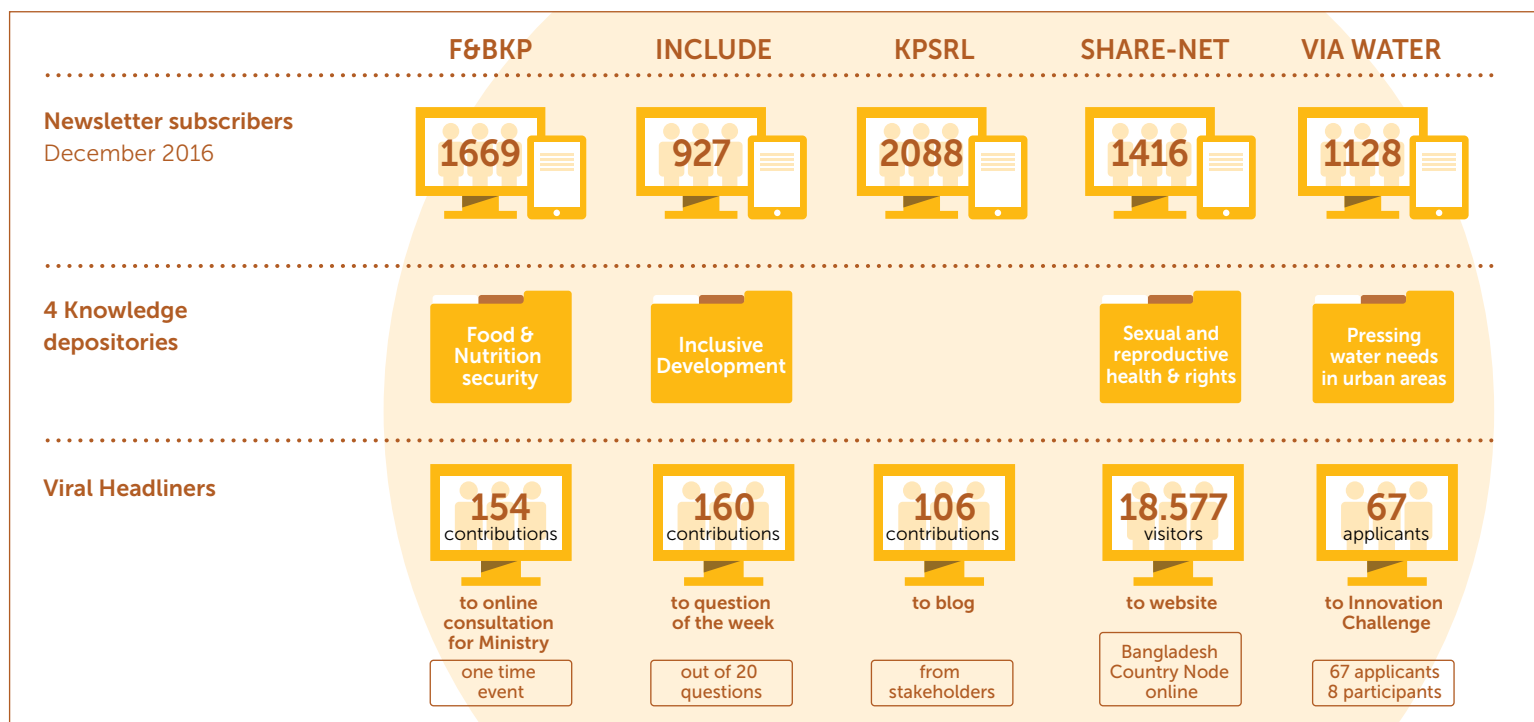
conclusions from the flower study was adapted to country-specific contexts. A reflection paper brought together the main findings and outcomes with policy recommendations for improved land governance and food security in Africa. In line with F&BKP emphasis on concrete follow-up activities, the capacity building days resulted in an exchange forum for the private sector and NGOs in Uganda, the integration of the theme in university training programmes in Ethiopia, and in a Knowledge Platform in Ghana. Also, guidelines were drafted for Dutch investors operating in Ghana.

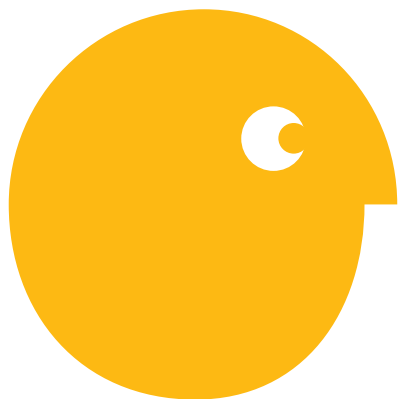
To strengthen these activities, 13 fact sheets were updated and extended with an overview of legal and policy frameworks on land governance within these countries. The fact sheets are now being used for various capacity building workshops. LANDac and F&BKP are continuing the knowledge trajectory of land governance and food security learning hubs as they will be developed in three Dutch partner countries in Africa.



knowledge exchange

## Platforms going Viral





Part 3  
**Knowledge  
Use**





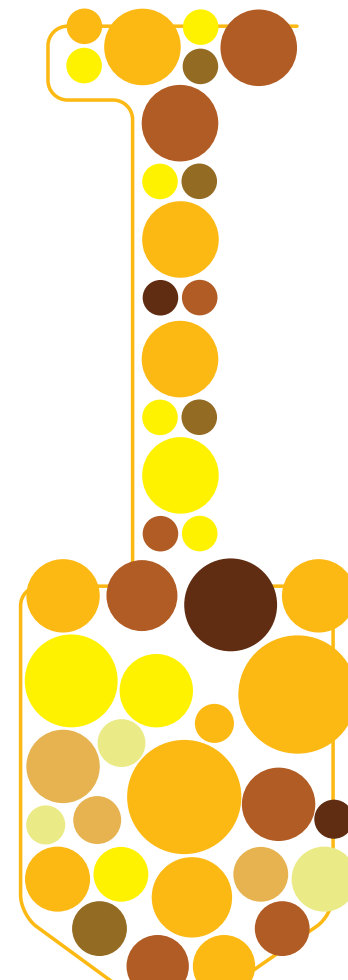
## Knowledge Use

**Part 1 and 2 showed that knowledge brokering is an iterative process: knowledge is constantly created, exchanged, and re-created through multi-stakeholder processes that involve researchers, (I)NGO practitioners, businesses and policymakers in local and national governments. During these activities, people receive, absorb and co-create knowledge. However whether this knowledge is being used is a different story.**

The objective of the Knowledge Platforms is not only to promote cutting edge research or innovation knowledge, organise well-attended seminars or inspiring expert meetings. Their mission is to make sure that the insights co-created or the lessons learned are being used and applied – whether this means informing the next policy briefing by the minister, boosting the upscaling chances of African entrepreneurs, creating tools that improve the practice of non-profits working in global development, or strengthening the curriculum at an African university. The KPs want their partners to participate in their activities because *they* hope and expect to use the knowledge gained to improve their policies and practices.

### Challenges in knowledge use

For all Knowledge Platforms, making sure that knowledge created and shared is being used has so far proved the hardest nut to crack. Partly this is because it is very hard to establish, let alone measure, whether and how knowledge is used. A reason why knowledge use is harder to prove at this point is because – as each of the Secretariats argue – only now are they really ‘gaining momentum’. This sense of energy is shared with stakeholders involved with the platforms who argue that ‘in recent months we have seen them gain confidence’ or ‘suddenly we see everything starts moving’. There has been a lot of trial and error in the first two to three years of this completely new KP setup, and those involved are feeling





## knowledge use

more confident that meaningful and relevant processes are now in place. What also plays a part is that the platforms have only just started wheeling in the results from the first projects and research calls. The time is ripe to yield the fruits of all that labour. However, that brings up a very practical issue: human resources. Time and again it was emphasised that promoting knowledge uptake is an extremely time consuming process. The Secretariats on the whole feel that they have good people on board to tackle the challenge, but simply not enough FTE – or as someone put it, ‘with the current capacity, it is like trying to win the Tour de France on a city bike’.<sup>61</sup>

And, there is also an aspect that the KPs have little influence over: decisions about what knowledge is used or dismissed often hinge on ‘politically’ driven processes. This is certainly true for knowledge use by the Ministry, but also for NGOs (which also make strategic choices about their thematic and geographical priorities) and businesses. With all these challenges in mind, an important lesson is that the KPs try to generate as much ownership over the knowledge creation process as possible, as this will always increase the chances that the outcomes are eventually being used. Ownership, in brief, is one of the principles of effectiveness and sustainable impact.

Challenges	Approaches
1 <a href="#">Creating ownership over knowledge</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in development research calls (KPSRL)</li> <li>• Repeating interaction (INCLUDE)</li> <li>• Identifying local knowledge and innovation questions and involving local partners including government authorities (VIA Water and Share-Net International)</li> <li>• Inviting stakeholders to events around research kick-off meetings (F&amp;BKP)</li> </ul>
2 <a href="#">Responding to the knowledge use needs</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising on policy strategies (KPSRL)</li> <li>• The appeal of practice-oriented projects (VIA Water)</li> <li>• Support consultations among the sector (INCLUDE &amp; F&amp;BKP)</li> </ul>
3 <a href="#">Structural challenges within MFA</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for absorption capacity (in progress at MFA)</li> <li>• Responding to moving knowledge agenda and policy priorities (strategies in progress by KPs)</li> </ul>
4 <a href="#">Measuring knowledge use: a black box</a>	WOTRO SURE research call





knowledge use

## 1 Creating ownership over knowledge

The experience of the platforms shows that when stakeholders are involved at different stages of the knowledge brokering process, their sense of ownership increases. This in turn increases the chances that knowledge is being used. In practice, this means that the KPs need to engage relevant stakeholders as early on in the brokering process as possible.

In the case of the WOTRO research calls, consortia are asked to provide thoughts on 'Impact Pathways' already in their proposals, and obliged to design a budget for communication and outreach that involves external stakeholders at different points during the research process. All KPs have put in effort together with WOTRO to stress the importance of stakeholder involvement (co-creating), as well as provide training for research uptake at research kick-off meetings or soon after. INCLUDE and WOTRO co-organised workshops on research uptake during the biannual working conferences, such as a training on pitching (Nairobi, May 2015). In 2016, F&BKP organised a three-day seminar

### CASE

#### Three-day seminar in Benin

*On how the platforms stimulate knowledge exchange with southern stakeholders through thematic linking and learning activities. F&BKP complemented a two-day Applied Research Fund (ARF) event in Benin, with an additional thematic day to give practitioner and public organisations the opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge with the ARF researchers.*

In October 2016 in Benin, F&BKP and WOTRO, in collaboration with the AgriProFocus country network, organised a three-day exchange and learning workshop for practitioners and researchers of 17 projects within the second call of the Applied Research Fund (ARF). F&BKP gave presentations on research uptake and possible ways to cooperate with the platform. Interactive exercises were done based on project experiences and ideas on co-creation, stakeholder engagement and capacity building. Other topics of discussion were communication and packaging of the research process and results for a wider community to strengthen the approaches of the project teams and catalyse cross-fertilisation between ARF projects and with other F&BKP knowledge activities.

A further exchange on research uptake was stimulated during the third workshop day when participants exchanged with 40 practitioners from Benin on nutrition and agriculture linkages for better informed policies and practices. Starting from the 'Dutch diamond approach', project members and participants deepened their thematic and methodological knowledge and broadened their network. The exchanges strengthened the research groups in improving their internal and external research processes to generate more impact for food security.





## knowledge use

for the 17 consortia of the ARF-2 call in Benin (see [Case 'Three-day seminar in Benin'](#)). As a result of these joint efforts, WOTRO notices a changing and more proactive attitude among certain consortia when it comes to thinking about and working towards research uptake (see [Case 'GCP: changing attitudes'](#)).

To enhance a wider ownership over innovations, VIA Water stresses at the start of every project that not only a committed local African partner should be part of the project, but also – when relevant – local and central authorities. Their participation is proactively sought as it is these authorities that will most likely have an important role to play to (help) upscaling the initial VIA Water project. To be able and willing to take responsibility for this, they need to gain knowledge of and become enthused by the project from the very start. Involving local authorities can be extended to involving the Dutch Embassies with the innovation projects, as was successfully achieved in Benin (see [Case 'Cooperation VIA Water and Embassy in Benin'](#)).

## CASE

## VIA Water

### Cooperation VIA Water and Embassy in Benin

*On how the Knowledge Platforms seek opportunities for cross-fertilisation between their activities and the broader Dutch development programme. VIA Water identified synergies with the bilateral programme of the Netherlands Embassy in Benin, which led to a new structural alliance.*

The bilateral Dutch water programme in Benin was put on hold for a year due to corruption allegations on the part of the government. Meanwhile, VIA Water continued its activities in the country and managed to identify several potential innovation projects. The water expert of the Dutch Embassy attended one of VIA Water's Learning Tours in the country, where one of the potential projects was presented. It focuses on better mapping of the locations of groundwater reservoirs so that groundwater can be pumped up with more precision. When the embassy started to formulate the new bilateral programme, synergies were sought.

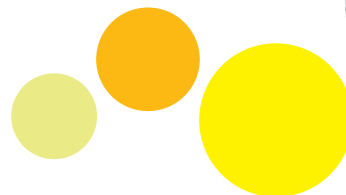
VIA Water will fund the innovation project, while the embassy intends to add a component to the bilateral programme that aims at improving the groundwater situation in Benin. What has been helpful in this example is the close cooperation of VIA Water with the core advisor for Benin of the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP). Another spin-off is the establishment of a 'mini' innovation fund in Benin, managed by SNV, which takes on board VIA Water's lessons learned with funding innovation projects.



## knowledge use

In the case of ownership over knowledge by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, several experiences were shared by the platforms. INCLUDE noted that it is of vital importance to win over a few key persons at the relevant departments. They engineered such relations with the theme social protection (see [Case 'Social Protection: from non-issue to buzz word'](#)) and with 'informal sector' through the introduction of a few Questions of the Week (see [Case 'Question of the Week'](#)) and face-to-face meetings. Yet, then INCLUDE is faced with the challenge: how do we let this budding exchange continue and take it beyond a one-off? Ideally, INCLUDE expressed a wish to be represented in several of the MFA strategic working groups to make this happen.

KPSRL stresses that it does not privilege the Ministry in its efforts at knowledge uptake, but considers NGOs similarly important stakeholders and clients who ideally have a similar sense of ownership. When the agenda of the platform is geared too strongly towards one audience group, such as the MFA or researchers, this may undermine the sense of ownership of the other platform participants. KPSRL has attempted to maintain a balance by having three types of events: 1) the interactive brainstorm sessions are most closely aligned with the thematic priorities of the platform and



organised by the Secretariat; 2) the network activities are also aligned but emanate from platform members, sometimes in co-creation with the Secretariat; and 3) ad hoc events show the most flexibility.<sup>62</sup> On the whole though, also KPSRL has noted that it is much easier to involve stakeholders, both MFA staff and NGOs, if they have been involved actively from the onset, for instance by co-determining priority thematic areas, organising events, or developing research calls. This is confirmed by these stakeholders, who state that the knowledge they acquired during KPSRL events translated most directly into increases in effectiveness of programming when the event was more tailored to their specific operational needs, and when they were more in control of the agenda and who to invite.<sup>63</sup>



As for a sense of ownership over knowledge at the Ministry, it was noted in part 1 that many policymakers have difficulties formulating knowledge questions. While this is partly due to a lack of time and resources, it also reflects a more profound issue. There appears to be a back-and-forth movement at the MFA between the ambition to 'seriously deal with knowledge' and the question 'but what's in it for us'. These conflicting attitudes determine the sense of ownership, or lack thereof, over a solid knowledge management process at the Ministry. It determines which approach is given priority, which can be summarised by the questions, 'are we doing things right' (short-term measuring and knowing), or 'are we doing the right things' (ambitious knowledge agenda of strategic and applied research).<sup>64</sup>





knowledge use

## CASE

### Global Challenges Programme: changing attitudes

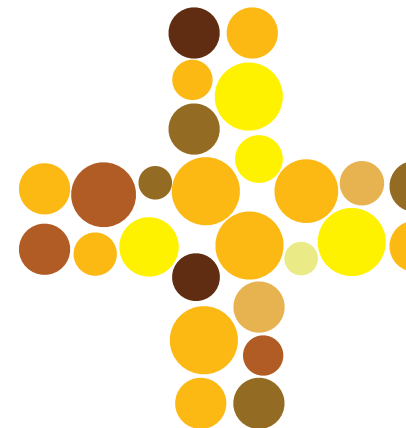
*On how the platforms work towards making the importance of knowledge brokering for social impact of research part of the DNA of researchers. On request of the GCP researchers, F&BKP and WOTRO co-organised a specific training to explore approaches for measuring the social impact created by research.*

A mandatory component in the research proposals for GCP is to develop 'Impact Pathways' where research consortia must specify the expected social impact of their research. They are also requested to identify what avenues will be used to achieve this. WOTRO asked the consortia to measure their progress in achieving results in terms of changes in policy and interventions. The traditional method of using quantifiable indicators to measure these changes is not always a satisfactory way to show what type of social impact the research and related activities may have. Upon request from the researchers in the Global Challenges Programme, WOTRO and F&BKP organised an 'Outcome Mapping' workshop to explore alternative approaches to measuring impact.

On June 8, 2016, the Outcome Mapping training was held at Wageningen University, and funded by the F&BKP. Jan van Ongevalle trained a total of 25 participants from GCP 1 and GCP2. GCP 1 consortia are approaching their midterm reviews and the training



was meant to inform them on how to formulate, track and document outcomes. The participants learned about Outcome Mapping being an actor-oriented approach that focuses on change in behaviour of partners and stakeholders. All desired outcomes relate to changes in behaviour of actors involved, and projects can plan for their contributions with this change. Attention was paid to the limitations to influence and the need to identify partners that are crucial for achieving the desired change (Boundary Partners) to be able to focus efforts. Monitoring change can be done through the formulation of Progress Markers – a type of indicators that differentiates between what consortia expect to see happening, would like to see happening, and would love to see happening. Monitoring tools, such as Outcome Journals, were also discussed. The [report](#) is available here.





knowledge use

## 2 Responding to the knowledge use needs

It may sound obvious, but understanding what are the knowledge use needs of different stakeholders will greatly help the KPs in making sure the knowledge they create and share is put to use. In brief, a demand-driven approach helps in ensuring knowledge uptake. While the private sector may be most interested in context-specific knowledge about a market segment or target group (e.g. social media use in agriculture), the Ministry is more likely to seek strategic advice on a thematic policy area that is not too context-specific but relevant across the board.

The cases presented below are proof of the fact that different Knowledge Platforms are more and more in tune with the needs of their partners and stakeholders. Of course there is still room for improvement. As for the MFA, it has been suggested that the KPs need to invest more in exploring the relationship with DGIS and learning to understand each other. As one person observed, 'the KPs have been too preoccupied with setting the agenda, and too little time has been invested in relationship management. This is important because you need to understand the knowledge needs of your partners.'<sup>65</sup>

### CASE

## Contribution to MFA Theory of Change

*On how the platforms have directly contributed to the development of policy strategies for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands.*

KPSRL has a working group that brings together all the implementers of the Reconstruction Tender initiated by MFA. This working group has conducted a 'mapping exercise' of the outcomes and outputs of the Reconstruction Tender projects vis-à-vis the four policy objectives of the MFA Security and Rule of Law policy. By mapping the project proposals under this tender in relation to the policy goals, the working group identified how the different projects will contribute to the implementation of these goals and where these projects will leave gaps in their implementation. This, and consecutive meetings at MFA, have contributed to the development of the Theory of Change for the MFA policy priority 'Security and Rule of Law'. The lessons learned following the mapping were also incorporated in the Addressing Root Causes (ARC) Tender initiated by MFA in January 2016.



For KPSRL, there are several instances where a relatively direct relationship can be seen between knowledge generated by the platform and subsequent policy or programming. The work done by the platform on analysing the Theory of Change of the Dutch policy on Security and Rule of Law is an important example (see [Case 'Contribution to MFA Theory of Change'](#)), while the contributions by the platform to the thought processes at the Ministry on informal justice also shows a clear

demand-driven approach (see [Case 'Expert meeting Informal Justice'](#)).

KPSRL funded activities also led to knowledge use by NGOs and other stakeholders. Particularly toolkits developed with funding from the KPSRL-WOTRO Open Call are being put to use. Examples are the trialling tools for participatory gender analysis of conflict in Uganda, which is used by Saferworld and partners (see [Case 'Toolkit: gender-sensitive conflict analysis'](#)) and the toolkit for 'Enhancing Local Peace Committees', which is





## knowledge use

used by ZOA and partners to facilitate stakeholder debate on the strategic choices involved in transitional justice in Burundi and DR Congo. The Justice Box is a tool for evidence-based policy and legal empowerment in Mali, which is used by the Ministry of Justice in Mali.<sup>66</sup>

VIA Water emphasises two lessons learned. First, the more practice-oriented the knowledge you develop and share, the more chance it will be used by others. Stay small, close to people's needs on the ground if you want people to benefit from water innovations.

Secondly, VIA Water learned that the knowledge needs of their partners are mostly related to project management and soft skills. Expertise on technical or thematic content can be provided by Dutch experts, however there is a greater need for capacity building that touches on the art of writing a solid project proposal or business plan, the skills of good leadership, etc. Responding effectively to these needs takes a lot of time because it requires custom-made approaches. VIA Water thought through the learning and knowledge needs not only of its project leaders

in Africa, but distinguished three levels at which learning happens – project, programme and concept – in its Learning Strategy (May 2015). At the project level, the applicant learns how to execute an innovation project and shares his/her learnings in the online Learning Community. At the programme level, experts learn more about the current pressing water issues in African cities, and about possible new solutions. At the conceptual level, policymakers, fund managers, and innovators learn whether or not the VIA Water innovation approach is effective.<sup>67</sup>

## CASE

### Expert meeting on informal justice

*On how the platforms engage in specific demand-driven knowledge brokering exercises. This example of KPSRL shows a demand-driven activity that delivered policy relevant contribution to policy formulation process of MFA.*

'Should donors engage informal justice systems when developing justice related programming? And, if so, how?' This was the central question discussed during the Interactive Brainstorm meeting on October 20, 2016. The discussions of the day were based on the report, 'Understanding and Engaging Informal Justice' written by Geoffrey



Swenson on behalf of the KPSRL Secretariat. This report, as well as the insights from the event, fed into a policy brief that provides donors with key considerations on how to best consider and engage informal justice systems when developing justice related programming in developing states. Pitches by the experts sparked debate on a multitude of issues, and experiences from Mali, Sierra Leone, DR Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Bangladesh were shared. The event was based on direct demand of the DSH/MFA. The subsequent study and the event itself were developed in close collaboration with colleagues at the MFA. The event effectively built on the collective inputs of international experts, demand from the MFA as well as the findings of a good number of the research consortia supported by the WOTRO grants affiliated with KPSRL. The resulting policy brief built on all of these in developing a set of key considerations for engagement.



knowledge use

## CASE

### Online consultations for MFA policy letters

*On how the platforms have learned from each other and built on each other's experiences in meeting the knowledge use needs of their stakeholders. Both F&BKP and INCLUDE have organised online consultations upon request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, respectively on food security and on inclusive development, supported by The Broker.*

#### F&BKP

In summer 2014 at the request of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the F&BKP organised a public online consultation for professionals directly or indirectly connected with the Dutch food security policy. The aim was to ensure that the latest topics and debates on food and nutrition security would be included in the review of Dutch food security policy by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs. Actively engaged by the F&BKP, a total of 82 national and international representatives from civil society, businesses, the academic community, and technical experts participated in the [consultation](#) and shared their ideas.

An open conversation took place on the F&BKP website during two months, all around five themes that derived from the international food security targets of the Zero Hunger Challenge. This resulted in 154 contributions that served as the basis for a 20 page [synopsis report](#) with clear recommendations published in September. The consultation provided valuable input for the [policy letter](#) that



**INCLUDE**  
KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

was sent to the Dutch Parliament by the Ministers for Trade and Development Cooperation and Agriculture in November 2014.

#### INCLUDE

In a debate in Dutch Parliament in October 2014, Minister Lilianne Ploumen for International Trade and Development Cooperation committed to send a letter to Parliament in Spring 2015 on the inclusiveness of Dutch projects and programmes. The letter would have to address *inter alia* 'the problem that the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups are not reached sufficiently'. The letter needed to identify ways to strengthen efforts within the framework of current policy for trade and international cooperation. In preparing this letter, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched an [online consultation](#), which was conducted by The Broker and INCLUDE and ran on the INCLUDE website for one month.

A wide range of researchers, development practitioners and policymakers who were pooled from the networks of the five Knowledge Platforms were asked to write short contributions, which were published on the INCLUDE website and brought together in a synthesis report. The consultation attracted 106 responses originating from 18 different countries. Contributions were shared mostly by academics and think tanks (49) and non-profit organisations (35), while others from the private sector and the government shared their perspectives as well, though in a lesser degree. Minister Ploumen sent the policy letter '[Inclusive development in the Dutch programmes for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation](#)' to Parliament on September 28, 2015.



### 3 Structural challenges within the MFA

Policymakers at the MFA are very aware of the limitations in terms of knowledge management and uptake at the Ministry. The issue of too little ownership was mentioned above. Closely related to this is what one senior policymaker said, 'within DGIS, knowledge is not one of our guiding parameters; those are finances/ budget and policy outcomes. As long as we stick to that attitude, knowledge management will remain dependent on the goodwill of individuals.'<sup>68</sup> Another person shared that, 'at MFA we need to move away from being passive receivers, to active participants in the process of knowledge creation.'<sup>69</sup>

The KPs notice these trends and especially mention the 'lack of absorption capacity' at the MFA, which limits the chances of effective knowledge use almost regardless of efforts made by the KPs. The limits to the absorption capacity of policymakers is confirmed by ministry staff and Steering Committee members.<sup>70</sup> Some point at the relative lack of senior level officials who really have the clout to influence policy or programming, at events organised by the KPs. Some people mention

a tendency amongst policymakers that send information rather than being open to receiving it. Again however, impressions are very personal and also seem to be event-specific because there are certainly also KP members who are impressed with the high degree of commitment and openness of MFA staff.<sup>71</sup>

Shrinking budgets and overloaded agendas do not help, but most importantly there seems to be a lack of a shared vision on the importance of mapping the knowledge use channels and strategies of MFA staff. As one person put it, 'the way in which MFA policymakers use knowledge, is unclear. People who work here know a lot, but much of that is based on "uncodified" knowledge from projects, seminars and reports.'<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, there is a strong awareness among some senior staff that knowledge management is a sine qua non for improving the level of professionalization of MFA staff. Those individuals point at the need to stimulate exchange between policymakers and knowledge holders (whether researchers or practitioners) throughout and as part of the core job description. Interaction, networking, attending seminars and expert meetings, should happen all the time and not only when final results of a research project are being presented.<sup>73</sup>

A second structural challenge is the fact that MFA does not have a static but a 'moving knowledge agenda' as that formulation of

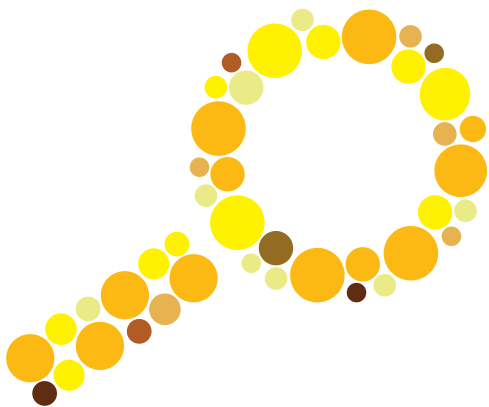
policy and political priorities is an ongoing process. New questions emerge that may not be answered by the research that was commissioned two years ago. One example is that industrialisation policy is a very hot issue at the moment, but was not so much when INCLUDE formulated its three priority themes.

However, to be relevant, INCLUDE has to be on top of such emerging hot issues, and for instance address how international institutions such as AfDB, African Union and African think tanks relate to these shifting policy themes. The KPs in other words have to respond dynamically to a shifting and changing policy agenda. While they make efforts to do so, it certainly means extra pressure on Secretariats to map existing and cutting edge knowledge and gather up to date knowledge sources in addition to their job of keeping in touch with the research consortia. Secretariats feel that they have too few resources (people and money) to do this in a satisfactory way. Nevertheless, to be optimally relevant the KPs should find ways to support the Ministry in spotting new issues on the international agendas and strategic, forward-looking questions – even if only to counterbalance the fact that the majority of policymakers are almost by default (and through no fault of their own) stuck in the 'whims of the day'.<sup>74</sup>



## 4 Measuring knowledge use

All Knowledge Platforms mention how difficult it is to say with certainty that the knowledge they make available is being used. They ask: how can we map the trajectory between output and use; will proof of actual use only become visible in the long run; and how do we prove the platform's attribution and effect of uptake activities?



Certain platforms argue, which was confirmed by stakeholders at the MFA, that a stronger investment in understanding the relations between stakeholders and of dynamics within institutions of stakeholders would contribute to more effective strategies for knowledge uptake. Share-Net International for example wonders 'what do people really do with the knowledge and insights gained during our thematic meetings?' INCLUDE finds that 'we need a better understanding of the internal processes at the Ministry: how is their knowledge structure organised internally?' F&BKP too concurs that they wish to have 'a better understanding of how the knowledge shared and co-created during our activities is picked up by their stakeholders, the Ministry as well as partners "on the ground".' They wonder, 'how can we map the trajectory between output and use?'

Besides a need for more insight in internal knowledge brokering processes, the platforms also realise that the possibilities for measuring the effect of their strategies at this time are limited. As was mentioned above, stakeholders find that the KPs are currently gaining 'momentum' and are thus starting to give more priority to their uptake strategies and activities. At the same time, it is considered important that the KPs devise their own mechanisms for

assessing their effectiveness by means of a monitoring and evaluation framework.<sup>75</sup> This is important in order to be able to go beyond the anecdotal evidence of the KPs impact. As one person put it in relation to the ministry: 'At this point it is difficult to measure the institutional added value and effectiveness of a platform for MFA because much is based on the individual impressions of individual policymakers.'<sup>76</sup>

Some level of measuring is of course possible by looking at how insights from research or even sentences from policy briefs are used in for instance Multi Annual Strategy Plans of embassies or policy letters by ministers. Or how lessons learned are implemented by local stakeholders and adapted to their contexts. Several times, Secretariats learned only by chance that a certain research briefing, paper or event summary was used and cited by sometimes high profile professionals within their own networks. The [Science for Using Research Call](#) (SURE) for proposals that was published by NWO-WOTRO in December 2016 is fully devoted to gaining research-based insights that will underpin, improve or refine the knowledge-brokering approaches and activities performed by the Knowledge Platforms or by the project consortia of research projects funded by WOTRO.



## Use to what end?

The ultimate goal of the KPs is that stakeholders *use* the knowledge that was created or exchanged. Yet what does that mean, at what level does it need to be used, and what impact should it serve?

F&BKP tackles these questions in the development of its Theory of Change. The answers determine the objectives and formulation of realistic outcomes of the platform. For partners in the South, F&BKP argues impact of the knowledge brokering by the platform often means something different than it does to Dutch stakeholders. Partners in the South speak of impact when communities enjoy better food security. While it is indeed F&BKP's ultimate objective to support increased food and nutrition security in LMICs, whether or not this is achieved is beyond the platform's sphere of influence.

An evaluation of their relevance and impact can thus only be measured at the outcome level, for instance, the contributions made to the expertise of local partners on inclusive finance or other themes, or less fragmentation of knowledge sources in the Dutch sector.

For VIA Water, the question 'knowledge to what end' would be answered if by the end of the programme they can show a portfolio of water innovation projects that can be scaled up and are sustainable even after conclusion of the VIA Water programme.





knowledge use

## CASE

### Inclusive Finance Platform



*On how the platforms engage in a knowledge trajectory where experiences, information and knowledge is shared and discussed with a multiplicity of stakeholders and related to new contexts. F&BKP cooperated with a Dutch platform to bring together a diverse set of stakeholders to improve their work in addressing the structural causes of food (in)security.*

Smallholder farmers often struggle to gain access to finance to increase their productivity. The Dutch Platform for Inclusive Finance and AgriProFocus, supported by F&BKP, brought together the private sector, financial institutions and civil society to exchange knowledge on how to improve the financial services to smallholder farmers and how to reduce the risk of agricultural activities.

The study [Finance for Smallholders: Opportunities for risk management by linking financial institutions and producer organizations](#) analysed 15 innovative African projects that successfully provided financial services to farmers. The study also focused on reducing the risk of agricultural activities so that financial institutions are prepared to provide loans to farmers. The research covered four countries – Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Mali – that addressed 20 different crops, seven types of producer organisations, seven financing models and 14 financial institutions that serve over 500,000 farmers.

The many lessons learned from this research were shared at eight expert meetings in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal, and received 40 to 50 participants per meeting. Attendees represented farming and producer organisations, microfinance institutions, central banks, national and international development organizations, insurance companies, governmental institutions and consultant agencies. Next to these meetings, the lessons learned were also shared on several websites and in direct communication with international organisations.

During these exchanges, the relevance of the knowledge following the research that was co-created and instigated by F&BKP became apparent and was much in tune with the knowledge needs of the southern stakeholders. The approach to knowledge in this case was very well aligned with the local needs.



## Part 4

# Valuing Knowledge Brokering

Now, how do we make sense of this compilation of objectives, types of institutions, stakeholders, activities, strategies and results? As the previous parts have shown, the Knowledge Platforms have each developed their individual identity, which allowed them to closely align their strategies and activities with the knowledge needs of their stakeholders.

At the same time, this diversity complicates matters when trying to demonstrate the added value of the Knowledge Platforms as an innovative institutional setup. In this last chapter, the authors nevertheless trust that they, based on the rigorous review conducted, can present their perspectives of the added value of the five Knowledge Platforms, or, as was frequently emphasised, attempt to show 'that we have gold in our hands'.



## valuing knowledge brokering

# 1 The Gold Standard

Once upon a time, there was a *Kennisbrief*. This policy letter proposed a plan to reshape how knowledge was created, exchanged and used in the Dutch development sector. Rather than creating a Dutch institutional version of DFID or USAID, an NLAIid if you will; State Secretary Ben Knapen in 2011 proposed a different approach by calling for the establishment of five Knowledge Platforms. Each platform was to focus on one of the priority thematic areas of the Dutch development policy: food and

nutrition, security and rule of law, sexual and reproductive health and rights, water, and a more general one focusing on inclusive development policies.

It has been mentioned on several occasions that the platforms ‘have gold in their hands’ – a bold statement if not. This statement refers to a ‘before and after’ situation: the knowledge context in the Netherlands before the *Kennisbrief* was sent to Parliament in 2011, and that same context today – after the Knowledge Platforms have been busy finding their feet and establishing themselves in the past few years.

If we want to show what ‘gold’ it is the Knowledge Platforms hold, we must note what was missing beforehand. In the *Kennisbrief* and other reflection documents of the Dutch knowledge sector, specific gaps were identified. These included a lack of focus and coherence in research programming, weak relations between different stakeholders (including the Ministry, knowledge institutes, NGOs and private companies), and the fragmented funding and use of knowledge by ministries and other practitioners.

### Lacunae in Dutch knowledge management identified in 2011

Creation	Exchange	Use
Knowledge questions for new research are not clear	Networks of a multiplicity of stakeholders are insufficiently developed	Fragmented use of knowledge by ministries and practitioners (in the Netherlands and Dutch partner countries in the South)
Lack of focus and coherence in research programming	Unsatisfactory relations and mutual benefits between Ministry, knowledge institutes, companies and civil society organisations	Lack of capacity (professionalization) of organisations in the Netherlands and Dutch partner countries in the South
	Inadequate access to new and existing (including tacit) knowledge for other stakeholders	

## valuing knowledge brokering

The Gold Standard tables presented in the following pages are based on our findings presented in parts 1 to 3. The tables show how the Knowledge Platforms have succeeded in addressing certain lacunas of the pre-*Kennisbrief* era, and what challenges they still face in achieving and strengthening their impact.

As is clear from the findings and cases in part 1 to part 3, the platforms have not dallied along these past few years. They have made strong headway in reaching their objectives, or in some cases, in reflecting whether their initial objectives withstood the critical eye of their multiple stakeholders – and if not, changed course. However, comparing the platforms in terms of their individual added value is a near impossible task because of the different approaches each of them took. How do we measure the added value of one over the other if strategies, audiences and activities differ as much as they do? This is certainly not meant as a note of criticism to those who designed and implemented the KPs' strategies; instead it is a direct result of the fact that the *Kennisbrief* gave the KPs the near impossible broad task of co-creating knowledge fit for use by policymakers *and* practitioners of different sorts in both the Netherlands *and* the southern partner countries.

At the end of the day therefore, how the Gold Standard is interpreted – or, to extend the metaphor, whether one attributes 10, 18 or perhaps 24 karats to certain golden achievements – for a considerable part depends on the beholder and his or her strategic interests in what the platforms have to offer. We return to that notion at the end of this chapter.

It is important to keep in mind that the analysis in this chapter does not address whether the political decision for the institutional setup for the platforms, or their chosen thematic foci, was a valid one. What this report does is first offer the reader an idea of what the platforms have been able to achieve to date and where their added value is found, all within the scope, objectives and resources they were given (see Gold Standard tables below). Then, in the second part of this chapter, the authors offer their reflection on these findings by addressing the two guiding questions of this review.

## The Gold Standard tables

Creation		
Pre-Kennisbrief situation	Added value of Knowledge Platforms	
Knowledge questions for new research are not clear	<p><b>Gold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current and emerging knowledge questions identified through open and accessible, multi-stakeholder approaches</li> <li>• Southern partners involved in identification of urgent issues on both policy and practice level; demand-driven approach strengthened</li> <li>• Joint approach to identification increases relevance for different stakeholders and strengthens ownership</li> <li>• Distinction made between strategic and applied knowledge needs and both addressed in multi-stakeholder manner</li> <li>• Small grants funds allow for short-term policy and practice needs to be addressed</li> <li>• Capacity building activities undertaken to support partners to engage in knowledge need and question formulation exercises</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there enough capacity among different stakeholders to formulate knowledge questions?</li> </ul>
Lack of focus and coherence in research programming	<p><b>Gold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased multi-stakeholder approaches to agenda-setting of priority research themes</li> <li>• Accessibility to research opportunities for a wider group of stakeholders (especially NGOs and businesses)</li> <li>• Increased focus by prioritising research in five Dutch spear point policy areas</li> <li>• Innovative, multi-stakeholder research consortia conducting research and co-creating knowledge in developing countries; findings starting to become available</li> <li>• Avoiding dominant interests to prevail</li> <li>• Linking up with international research institutes and networks for synergy (joint call)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to stimulate cross-fertilisation between KPs and interests at MFA?</li> <li>• How to align more with TopSectoren and the private sector?</li> </ul>

Exchange		
Pre-Kennisbrief situation	Added value of Knowledge Platforms	
Networks of a multiplicity of stakeholders are insufficiently developed	<p><b>Gold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities of Practice have been established and strengthened within and among research institutes, public organisations, NGOs and businesses</li> <li>• KPs are making a name for themselves as relevant for a in the Dutch knowledge arena</li> <li>• Existing and emerging thematic networks are facilitated to improve synergy and avoid duplication</li> <li>• Links established with well-regarded institutions in the South</li> <li>• Unusual suspects have more opportunities for involvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to position the KPs in relation to other networks, both national and international?</li> <li>• What avenues would work best to involve the embassies more?</li> <li>• What is needed to effectively attract virtual network engagement?</li> </ul>
Unsatisfactory relations and mutual benefits between the Ministry, knowledge institutes, companies and civil society organisations	<p><b>Gold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge Platforms have proved their convening power</li> <li>• Potential for increased structural knowledge presence in the South; links established with knowledge institutes in the South</li> <li>• Facilitated the establishment of formal and informal networks within southern countries where this was non-existent before</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to structurally strengthen relations with MFA?</li> <li>• How to identify for each audience 'what's in it for them?'</li> <li>• What is needed to ensure relevance for a broad and diverse stakeholder audience?</li> </ul>
Inadequate access to new and existing (including tacit) knowledge for other stakeholders	<p><b>Gold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many well-attended events organised (expert meetings, conferences, seminars, etc.) where people met, discussed and co-created knowledge across sectors and disciplines</li> <li>• Increased emphasis on relevance for outreach and research uptake</li> <li>• More attention among research consortia for importance of translation of knowledge targeted to specific needs of different audiences</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to balance time and resources required of Secretariat with the ambitious expectations of making both existing and new knowledge available?</li> </ul>

## valuing knowledge brokering

Use		
Pre-Kennisbrief situation	Added value of Knowledge Platforms	
Fragmented use of knowledge by ministries and practitioners (in the Netherlands and focus countries)	<p><b>Gold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the institutional potential to increase sense of ownership over knowledge</li> <li>• Engage in stocktaking exercises to identify diverse knowledge needs</li> <li>• KPs as intermediary instead of one-to-one relations with limited pool of research institutes</li> <li>• Certain KPs directly contributed to formulation or underpinning of policy strategies</li> <li>• KPs increasingly making inroads into MFA and able to show their relevance</li> <li>• KPs supported development of practice-oriented tools and innovation that are used</li> <li>• Increased participation by MFA in KP events</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to respond to shifting and changing (inter) national policy agendas and urgent issues?</li> </ul>
Lack of capacity (professionalization) of organisations in the Netherlands and focus countries	<p><b>Gold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promising institutional framework is in place to support and embed knowledge brokering</li> <li>• Stakeholders more involved in knowledge management process e.g. through participation in consortia</li> <li>• Importance of knowledge brokering and uptake and working towards social impact is more and more part of the DNA of researchers (as result of contractual obligations and trainings)</li> <li>• KPs have a 'critical mass' to push for attention for forward-looking or contested issues</li> <li>• Some KPs formulated learning strategy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what way can the platforms contribute to strengthening the absorption capacity at MFA and make the knowledge brokering process a two-way street?</li> <li>• What is required for KPs to act confidently and to take more assertive and expert roles towards MFA and other stakeholders?</li> <li>• How to measure the impact of knowledge brokering, and that of use?</li> <li>• What type of monitoring, evaluation and learning framework would be most supportive for the work of the Knowledge Platforms?</li> </ul>

## 2 Reflections on added value

In the past few years, the Knowledge Platforms dedicated most efforts and resources to determining what the knowledge needs of the stakeholders are, how to identify knowledge questions, and how they can best fulfil their roles to facilitate exchange, co-creation and mutual learning among different partners, beneficiaries and wider audiences.

The knowledge brokering aspects of *creation* and *exchange* have thus received the most attention – and yielded most successes. Despite the fact that ‘gold’ has been identified in the third knowledge brokering aspect of *use*, making sure that knowledge created and shared is being used, has so far proved the hardest nut to crack for all KPs. At the same time, all KPs are confident that, after a few years of experimenting with this innovative setup, they are gaining momentum. Meaningful and relevant processes are underway, opportunities for engagement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are likely to increase considerably from 2017 onward, and the foundations are in place to get ‘knowledge to work’ for the variety of stakeholders involved.

Two questions guided this review from the start:

- What is the added value of the Knowledge Platforms for the Dutch knowledge system regarding the Netherlands policy on global development, in comparison to the situation before the Kennisbrief?
- How have the different approaches and strategies of the five KPs dealt with their assigned task, and how has their different institutional embedding influenced the outcomes achieved so far? What have been the most important roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the KPs?

Here, the authors offer their reflections on the findings while providing answers and recommendations to enhance future knowledge brokering opportunities.

## valuing knowledge brokering

### A What is the added value of the Knowledge Platforms for the Dutch knowledge system regarding the Netherlands policy on global development, in comparison to the situation before the *Kennisbrief*?

The Gold Standard tables show that the KPs have been working, each in their own way, towards addressing the lacunas in the Dutch knowledge sector for global development. The Gold Standard shows which strategies have been adopted and activities undertaken to successfully address the gaps in creation, exchange and use. Here we present a synthesis

of the golden bullets, showing which strategies of the platforms prove to be most valuable across the board – in brief, their gems when it comes to added value. It captures not only what the KPs have already achieved, but also where their future potential lies.

The fact that the platforms have made a multi-stakeholder approach the core of their institutional strategy proves to be of great added value. It shows that the KP approach is not a one-trick pony, installed to fulfil the needs of the Dutch government, but a meaningful way to take stock of multiple perspectives in order to achieve a greater good.

The platforms, through their convening power, bring stakeholders together to co-create the knowledge required to inform and strengthen policies for the long haul, combining this with applied research that responds to more immediate knowledge needs. The latter gains in relevance as it builds on the long-term strategic perspectives. As the platforms are embedded in networks of stakeholders that bring along multiple sources and kinds of knowledge, they are able to step into the wormhole and look beyond the whim of the day, identifying emerging topics and addressing contested issues to make sure policy and practice stays ahead of the game.

Brokering	The Gems
<b>Creation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique, structural multi-stakeholder approach: not a one-trick pony but acknowledging value of each as part of DNA</li> <li>• Valuing both strategic and applied knowledge: accepting one needs the other to grow stronger, qualify and legitimize</li> <li>• Stepping into the wormhole: looking forward and beyond at emerging and contested issues</li> </ul>
<b>Exchange</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better together...: stakeholders are gradually finding each other (thanks to the convening power of the KPs)</li> <li>• ...with a little help from their friends: and experience the benefits of collaboration (resulting in Communities of Practice)</li> </ul>
<b>Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘What? They didn’t broker in the old days?’: how working towards knowledge use is gradually becoming the new ‘business as usual’</li> <li>• Reaping the benefits: increasingly tangible contributions to policy development and knowledge for practice</li> </ul>



## valuing knowledge brokering

The approach towards knowledge brokering in a multi-stakeholder setting is catching on. Stakeholders are gradually finding each other by their own means, developing Communities of Practice, and through the persistent efforts of those involved in the platforms, they are increasingly viewing *brokering* as a necessary part of their DNA. At the same time, knowledge brokering remains a field of expertise that is not easily incorporated to the daily routines of institutions that may not have dedicated time and resources devoted to it. The platforms therefore fulfil an important role and have been able to bring together unusual suspects to exchange knowledge and learn from each other.

The many activities organised over the past years and the persistent efforts on the part of the Knowledge Platforms to experiment with suitable and attractive approaches to co-creation and exchange is starting to bear fruit. The platforms are gaining momentum and step forward with growing confidence to show that knowledge brokering is not a one-way street. This has translated into both new partnerships and tangible contributions to policy advice and development, agenda-setting and knowledge for practice.

Let us take the analysis one step further. Now that we have an idea of what the platforms have contributed at the three different levels of the knowledge brokering process, let us reflect on the added value of the platforms as a new institutional setup in the Dutch knowledge landscape. Three distinct added values can be distinguished that show how the KPs as an institutional novelty (can) contribute to the Dutch international development sector.

### Added value as an institution:

The platforms underscore the importance of moving away from a knowledge culture based on individual relations towards an environment that is supported by institutional linkages. The Knowledge Platforms have managed to instigate a move away from the almost exclusive dependence on personal connections with a selection of institutes to address knowledge needs. They offer an opportunity to move towards institutionalisation of knowledge relations, which however remains a rather formidable task. Internationally, the Dutch approach to knowledge brokering is well-received. International stakeholders seem increasingly aware of the KP structure and have expressed interest to learn more about the added value of such an approach to the sector.

### Added value in a changing international development climate:

The Dutch development sector is experiencing budget cuts that reinforce the need to cooperate. This is noticed among NGOs, but also at the Ministry and DGIS in particular. Creative solutions and innovative approaches are needed to provide for both strategic and applied knowledge needs and the partnerships to make this happen. Given that there is a growing need (and budding desire) for collaborative approaches between a multiplicity of stakeholders, the platforms are well positioned to act as mediator and facilitator for those interactions and to ensure that the knowledge basis underneath policymaking does not get undermined. They may help to give the development sector enough 'clout' to keep its voice heard in a world dominated by other political interests.

### Added value in brokering knowledge:

At the time of the *Kennisbrief*, the sector was in search of a way to combine different growing knowledge needs: a continued interest in strategic knowledge that can lay the basis for long and medium-term policy strategies; a desire for applied research identifying

## valuing knowledge brokering

innovative approaches for practitioners and for more effective implementation of policy; and a difference in knowledge questions from strategically relevant to sector-specific. The platforms provide a space where the different needs that follow the interests of multiple stakeholders can come together. A space for co-creation, mutual learning, and critical discussion on how to make use of the insights gained.

### Recommendations

- The KPs should work towards establishing a strong identity that allows them to present themselves confidently as an innovative brokering institution to both national and international stakeholders. This will aid in clarifying their role vis-à-vis stakeholders that currently might struggle in understanding 'what's in it for us'.
- The KPs should step up the efforts to learn from each other, identify possible synergies and opportunities for cross-fertilisation, and reflect on more profound issues, such as the pros and cons of a focused, in-depth programme approach versus a broader and more fluid network approach.
- Knowledge brokering is not a one-way street. To benefit maximally from the opportunities that the platforms offer for creation, exchange and use, their partners and stakeholders should invest in capacity, resources and training to develop an effective knowledge management culture within their own institutions.
- The KPs should jointly work on designing relevant monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks in order to strengthen their ability to measure the impact and effectiveness of their knowledge brokering strategies and efforts.



## valuing knowledge brokering

### B

**How have the different approaches and strategies of the five KPs dealt with their assigned task, and how has their different institutional embedding influenced the outcomes achieved so far? What have been the most important roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the KPs?**

The added value is in the whole: the multiplicity and diversity of activities and how these complement each other. There are considerable differences in how the KPs have organised and shaped their platform. For instance, from fee-paying members (Share-Net International) to network of networks (F&BKP) to open and fluid (virtual) meeting place (KPSRL). The focus of their activities ranges from promoting tangible innovations (VIA Water) to focusing on research (INCLUDE) to organising all kinds of expert meetings, brainstorm sessions, workshops and conferences (all of them). Who the KPs consider their primary 'client' also differs (from the Dutch Diamond stakeholders to African NGOs, private sector and MFA). With so many different approaches, what are the strengths of each of them?

### F&BKP

The choice of F&BKP to act as a network of networks has given the platform a flexibility that seems to resonate well with the needs of the sector. The platform now is able to act as network builder, facilitator, and broker, allowing them to deal with emerging topics, established partnerships and forging relations where synergies might be missing. The network approach includes working with networks that have members in LMICs, and thus integrating the southern link in a structural way.

### INCLUDE

By establishing themselves as a platform that includes high profile platform members of both the South and the North, INCLUDE ensured from the start a stronghold in their focus countries. This structural presence has on several occasions ensured that topics or approaches relevant to the South were adopted that would otherwise have been left aside.

### KPSRL

The open attitude of the SRL platform has allowed for a broad diversity of stakeholders, especially those from practitioners' organisations. Their non-traditional style of

event organisation has resonated well with their audience. They have actively pursued to include and connect non-usual suspects, which has led to the development of new relationships and perspectives.

### Share-Net International

Building on their established network and recognition in the sector as Share-Net Netherlands, the platform had little trouble establishing itself as a relevant player in the field. In addition, their choice for paid membership also was said to positively influence the active engagement of their members. The country nodes keep the platform alert to current knowledge needs in the South.

### VIA Water

Their alternative approach to financing innovation projects in Africa, rather than academic research programmes, was a conscious response to the needs expressed by the Dutch water sector. As many networks were already operational at the time of the introduction of VIA Water, their approach to identifying a specific niche in the field allowed for almost guaranteed relevance of the projects supported and stakeholders involved.

## valuing knowledge brokering

The thematic focus of a platform, and not just its chosen structure, also determines the possibilities for engagement with its stakeholders, the political relevance or irrelevance, and the national and international attention it can expect. While some platforms work on highly sensitive issues (such as abortion rights), others deal with strategic themes that may seem more abstract (such as inclusive development), and again others benefit from an international recognition of a Dutch approach (on food and nutrition). The platforms have strategically used these (dis)advantages as the cases presented in parts 1 to 3 have attempted to show.

We can also turn this picture around and ask the same question not from the perspective of the platforms, but from that of their intended stakeholders, partners and audience. After all, as we said before, the interpretation of the Gold Standard for a considerable part depends on the beholder. What approach, structure or strategy works best or is most helpful for each of them? The suggestions presented below build on the perceptions of those closely involved with the platforms. It provides a basis for further discussion with the stakeholders that the platforms wish to serve, some of whose perspectives were not part of this review due to the scope.

### Ministry of Foreign Affairs

For the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we can distil from the numerous discussions that:

- They are looking for an **assertive approach** from the platforms; drawing the attention of policymakers to current international topics and offering (access to) expert insights into the policy implications of these.
- At the same time, departments at the Ministry would benefit from additional support in **articulating knowledge questions** and discovering what it is they require to develop and enhance their policies.

### Recommendations

- MFA can be more inviting towards the KPs and let Secretariat staff participate or sit in on a structural basis in relevant policy processes and strategic working groups.
- Policymakers across all Directorates need to be more convinced of the added value of knowledge for policy making and implementation. Therefore, MFA should invest in capacity, resources and training to establish a knowledge culture.
- KPs should engage more proactively with policymakers to identify their knowledge needs, and respond to these needs through attractive knowledge products and events.

### Non-Governmental Organisations

Based on the insights of the respondents, we find that NGOs have a need for:

- **Flexible research projects** that legitimise and value tacit knowledge and experience on an equal footing to academic track records in multi-stakeholder projects.
- **Alliances and partnerships** that strengthen their position through the most optimal division of roles, responsibilities and resources.
- Allow opportunities to also address **non-mainstream issues** and sensitive topics.

### Recommendations

- KPs make use of their convening power to help NGOs build partnerships to strengthen their position and voice in the changing international climate.
- KPs should learn from each other in developing innovative models that invite and attract NGOs to take part in co-creation and sharing of their knowledge.
- KPs support capacity needs of southern stakeholders in developing proposals that meet the requirements of Dutch funding agencies.

## valuing knowledge brokering

### Private sector

From the experience of the KPs, we understand that the private sector would be:

- Especially interested in cooperating when they can get **short-term benefits** out of the collaboration.
- Attracted to discussions when they can be assured that these will not take place at a level that is **too abstract**.
- Engaging more actively in a multi-stakeholder environment they deem **safe**; allowing discussions to take place that would not damage their corporate interests.
- Southern businesses are interested in **matchmaking** with Dutch partners to jointly develop project proposals.

### Recommendations

- The KPs should dedicate small grants funds to exploring the knowledge needs, exchange mechanisms and opportunities for engagement with the private sector in international development.
- The KPs should explore and learn from each other about different types and styles of knowledge exchange events that attract the private sector and their interest in applied knowledge and innovation.
- The KPs should capitalize on the interest from southern private sector stakeholders showing eagerness to participate in multi-stakeholder collaborations and support matchmaking activities.

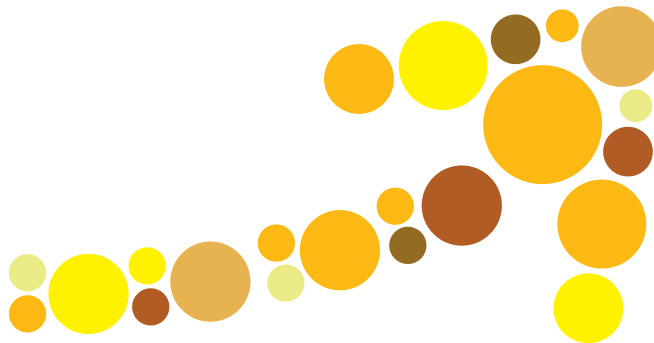
### Research institutions

The discussions with respondents suggested that research institutions require:

- Support in **translating** academic findings to relevant knowledge for policy and practice to enable social impact.
- Access to more multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to **diversify their funding base** in a changing environment.
- Enhanced **ownership** over knowledge brokering processes at national level in the South.

### Recommendations

- The KPs and fund managers build on their good practices to help academic researchers adopt knowledge brokering strategies as part of their work routine.
- The KPs use their convening power to stimulate dialogue between researchers, policymakers and practitioners to ensure that research both draws on and feeds into knowledge and needs from policy and practice to enhance social relevance, especially in the South.



# Annex 1

## List of documents reviewed

### Policy and background documents

Bieckmann, Lammers en Quak (2012)  
[Een troebel beeld. Kennisbrief een mengeling van oud en nieuw](#), The Broker

DGIS (2011) Kamerbrief Kennisbeleid en samenwerking met kennisinstututen op het terrein van ontwikkelingsamenwerking.  
 November 14, 2011

IOB (2015) Ontwikkeling Kennisplatforms 2012-2014. IOB review op verzoek van DGIS.  
 Maart 2015

Molenaar (2014) Knowledge on the move.  
 Dutch debates on research for development.

NWO-WOTRO (2015) Policy readiness level van onderzoek

NWO-WOTRO (2015) Verslag Raamconvenant DGIS-WOTRO. Presentation DGIS  
 June 24, 2015

NWO-WOTRO (2016) [Science for Using Research – SURE. Call for Proposals 2016](#).  
 The Hague, December 8, 2016.

NWO-WOTRO Research Impact:  
<http://www.nwo.nl/en/about-nwo/organisation/nwo-domains/wotro/Impact+toolkit>

Taskforce (2016) Results Framework.

Quak (2012) [Van onderzoek naar kennisintensivering. Historisch overzicht kennisdebat](#), The Broker

### Websites

[www.knowledge4food.net](http://www.knowledge4food.net)  
[www.includeplatform.net](http://www.includeplatform.net)  
[www.kpsrl.org](http://www.kpsrl.org)  
[www.share-net.nl](http://www.share-net.nl)  
[www.viawater.nl](http://www.viawater.nl)

## annex 1

## Platform documents

## F&amp;BKP

- F&BKP Annual Plan 2015 budget
- F&BKP Annual Report 2015
- F&BKP Annual Report Executive Summary
- F&BKP Annual Plan 2016 budget
- F&BKP Proposal 2016-2018
- Reflection document GCP and ARF
- Theory of Change F&BKP Jan 2016
- Review 2016 Stakeholder Perceptions and Future Outlook

## INCLUDE

- Guiding concept of INCLUDE
- Narrative report 2014 INCLUDE
- Narrative report 2015 INCLUDE
- Management response INCLUDE to MTR IOB
- Interim report new functionalities INCLUDE
- 2-year online presence INCLUDE
- INCLUDE MTR report February 2016

## KPSRL

- 2012-2013 Project Proposal SRoL Platform
- 2013 Annual Report SRoL Platform
- 2014 Annual Plan SRoL Platform
- 2014 Annual Report SRoL Platform
- 2014 Mid Term Review SRoL Platform
- 2015 Annual Plan SRoL Platform
- 2015 Annual Report SRoL Platform

- 2016 Annual Plan SRoL Platform
- 2016 End of Project Review report
- Review Calls WOTRO-ARF: recommendations platform

## Share-Net International

- Share-Net Stocktaking Assessment, findings and recommendations, by Esther Jurgens, 2010
- Perspectives on strengthening linkages between Research, Policy and Practice, working paper by Billie de Haas, 2016.
- Work plan 2014-2017
- Narrative report 2014 Share-Net International
- Final work plan 2015
- Narrative report 2015 Share-Net International
- Share-Net Work plan 2016

## VIA Water

- Project voorstel Secretariaat co-created Knowledge Platform water & development
- Strategisch beleidskader – onstaansgeschiedenis
- Strategisch beleidskader – governance
- Annual activity report 2015
- Learning Strategy
- Programming 2016
- Mid Term Review 2016 (draft version)

## Annex 2

# List of respondents

### F&BKP

	Role in Platform	Organisation	Spoke on
1	Coordinator Secretariat	F&BKP	18 November 2016 29 November 2016
2	Secretariat	The Broker	29 November 2016
3	Secretariat	AgriProFocus	29 November 2016
4	Secretariat	CDI Wageningen	29 November 2016
5	Secretariat	The Broker	29 November 2016
6	Secretariat	Trainee AMID	29 November 2016
7	Steering Committee (former)		
	MFA & World Bank		05 December 2016
8	Steering Committee, coordinator KP MFA	MFA (IGG)	07 December 2016

### INCLUDE

	Role in Platform	Organisation	Spoke on
9	Coordinator Secretariat	African Studies Centre	14 November 2016 2 December 2016
10	Secretariat	African Studies Centre	2 December 2016
11	Secretariat	The Broker	2 December 2016
12	Steering Committee, coordinator KP MFA	MFA (DDE)	13 December 2016



## annex 2

## KPSRL

	Role in Platform	Organisation	Spoke on
13	Coordinator Secretariat	The Hague Institute of Global Justice	10 November 2016 6 December 2016
14	Secretariat	The Hague Institute of Global Justice	6 December 2016
15	Secretariat	Clingendael Institute	6 December 2016
16	Steering Committee (chair)	Tilburg University	30 November 2016
17	Steering Committee, coordinator KP MFA	MFA (DSH)	13 December 2016

## Share-Net International

	Role in Platform	Organisation	Spoke on
18	(interim) Coordinator Secretariat	KIT	9 November 2016 24 November 2016
19	Secretariat	KIT	24 November 2016
20	Secretariat	KIT	9 November 2016 24 November 2016
21	Steering Committee	Rutgers / UU	12 December 2016

## annex 2

## VIA Water

	Role in Platform	Organisation	Spoke on
22	Coordinator Secretariat	UNESCO-IHE	17 November 2016 15 December 2016
23	Fund manager	Aqua for All	15 December 2016
24	Steering Committee	WASTE	15 December 2016
25	Steering Committee	MFA	13 December 2016
26	Coordinator KP MFA	MFA (IGG)	13 December 2016

## NWO-WOTRO

	Role in KP's	Organisation	Spoke on
27	Fund manager	NWO WOTRO	07 December 2016
28	Fund manager	NWO WOTRO	07 December 2016
29	Fund manager	NWO WOTRO	07 December 2016

## Before and After reflection group

	Role in KP's	Organisation	Spoke on
30	Ambassador MFA	MFA	14 December 2016
31	Policy advisor	MFA	14 December 2016
32	Involved at start as director NWO-WOTRO	Nationale Wetenschapsagenda	14 December 2016
33	Involved at start	African Studies Centre	14 December 2016

## Notes

- 1 From January 1, 2017, the new Secretariat will be hosted by Clingendael Institute and be run jointly with Saferworld (UK) in close cooperation with the International Development and Law Organisation (IDLO, The Hague/Rome).
- 2 Source: NWO-WOTRO, 2016, SURe Call for proposals.
- 3 Kennisbrief 2011.
- 4 See for instance WRR report (2010) Minder pretentie, meer ambitie. Ontwikkelingshulp die verschil maakt.
- 5 Kennisbrief 2011, p. 3.
- 6 For the text of this box, we drew on the following sources:
  - 1) Molenaar, Henk (2008) Knowledge on the Move. Dutch debates on research for development;
  - 2) IOB (2015) Ontwikkeling Kennisplatforms 2012-2014. IOB Review op verzoek van DGIS. Maart 2015;
  - 3) [www.thebrokeronline.eu/Special-Reports/Kennis-voor-mondiale-ontwikkeling/Een-troebeel-beeld](http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Special-Reports/Kennis-voor-mondiale-ontwikkeling/Een-troebeel-beeld) and [www.thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/Van-onderzoek-naar-kennisintensivering](http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/Van-onderzoek-naar-kennisintensivering).
- 7 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Research and Development. Policy Document of the Government of the Netherlands, June, 1992.
- 8 Research in Development. Policy Memorandum, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 2005.
- 9 IOB, Evaluation of the Netherlands Research Policy 1992-2005. Experiences with a new approach in six countries: Bolivia, Ghana, Mali, South Africa, Tanzania and Vietnam, IOB Evaluation, No. 304, Summary, May 2007.
- 10 [www.thebrokeronline.eu](http://www.thebrokeronline.eu)
- 11 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 3 and p. 13.
- 12 These are the thematic focus areas of 2016, which build on prior research, thematic focus and activities of previous years, see: <http://kpsrl.org/our-work>
- 13 Meeting at MFA, December 13, 2016.
- 14 MTR VIA Water 2016, p. 6.
- 15 Meeting at MFA, December 7, 2016.
- 16 Meeting Steering Committee, December 5, 2016.
- 17 MTR INCLUDE 2016, p. 10 and p. 30.
- 18 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 14.
- 19 Meeting at MFA, December 13, 2016.
- 20 Meeting Share-Net Secretariat, November 9 and 24, 2016.
- 21 Meeting with Secretariat and Steering Committee, November 10 and 30, 2016; EOP KPSRL 2016, p.13.
- 22 Meeting with F&BKP Secretariat, November 29, 2016.
- 23 Meeting with WOTRO, December 7, 2016.
- 24 MTR VIA Water 2016, p. 7.
- 25 Meetings at MFA on December 13 and 14, 2016.
- 26 Meeting at MFA on December 22, 2016.
- 27 Meeting with F&BKP Secretariat and Steering Committee, November 29 and December 5, 2016.
- 28 MTR Via Water 2016
- 29 For reasons of readability, we use the shorthand 'WOTRO' in this review.
- 30 [www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/programmes/Conflict+and+Cooperation+over+Natural+Resources+in+Developing+Countries+\(CoCooN\)](http://www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/programmes/Conflict+and+Cooperation+over+Natural+Resources+in+Developing+Countries+(CoCooN))

## notes

- 31 Source: IOB Report (2015).
- 32 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 3.
- 33 [www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/programmes/sexual+and+reproductive+health+and+rights/background](http://www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/programmes/sexual+and+reproductive+health+and+rights/background)
- 34 Meeting with WOTRO, December 7, 2016.
- 35 Meeting with WOTRO December 7, 2016.
- 36 KPSRL EOP 2016, p.17.
- 37 Meeting with WOTRO, December 7, 2016.
- 38 Adapted from Review F&BKP 2016, p. 6 and p. 26.
- 39 Adapted from EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 19.
- 40 Meeting with WOTRO December 7, 2016.
- 41 Meeting Steering Committee, December 12, 2016.
- 42 Meeting Steering Committee, December 12, 2016.
- 43 MTR INCLUDE 2016, p. 17 and p. 22.
- 44 MTR INCLUDE 2016, p. 15.
- 45 Meeting at MFA, December 13, 2016.
- 46 Interview MFA/SG, December 13, 2016.
- 47 Meeting at MFA, December 7, 2016.
- 48 Meeting INCLUDE Secretariat, November 29, 2016.
- 49 MTR INCLUDE 2016, p. 13.
- 50 MTR INCLUDE 2016, p. 33.
- 51 Meeting at MFA, December 14, 2016;  
Meeting Secretariat November 29, 2016.
- 52 Meeting Secretariat KPSRL, December 6, 2016.
- 53 Interview MFA/SG, December 5, 2016.
- 54 MTR INCLUDE 2016, p. 13 and p. 33.
- 55 Meeting at MFA, December 7, 2016.
- 56 Meeting Secretariat, December 6, 2016.
- 57 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 11.
- 58 Meeting at MFA, December 13, 2016.
- 59 Meeting at MFA, December 13, 2016.
- 60 Meeting at MFA, December 14, 2016 and meetings at MFA on December 13, 2016.
- 61 Meeting INCLUDE Secretariat, December 2, 2016.
- 62 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 20.
- 63 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 12.
- 64 Meeting at MFA, December 14, 2016.
- 65 Meeting at MFA, December 14, 2016.
- 66 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 12.
- 67 MTR VIA Water 2016, p. 4.
- 68 Meeting at MFA, December 14, 2016.
- 69 Meeting at MFA, December 14, 2016.
- 70 Meeting Steering Committee, November 30, 2016, MFA December 5, 2016.
- 71 EOP KPSRL 2016, p.14, and various interviews.
- 72 Meeting at MFA, December 13, 2016.
- 73 Meetings at MFA, December 7 and 13, 2016.
- 74 Interview MFA/SG December 5, 2016.
- 75 EOP KPSRL 2016, p. 12.
- 76 Meeting SG, November 30, 2016.



