

KEY QUESTION

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What are the Netherlands' strategic priorities for development?

Focus is on four thematic priorities

The objectives and priorities of Dutch development policy are outlined in the strategy paper: 'A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment' (released in 2013). The Netherlands focuses its development assistance on four thematic priorities: 1) security and the rule of law, 2) water, 3) food security, and 4) sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR, including HIV/AIDS). Other priorities include climate protection, humanitarian aid, private sector development, women's rights, and gender equality. The Netherlands puts a strong emphasis on the interlinkages between these priority themes in its policies and programs. These priorities are based on the 'added value' and expertise of the Netherlands, and large thematic shifts are thus not expected after the elections, though changes in focus within the thematic areas are possible.

Since late 2012, the government has refocused development assistance with the aim of increasing alignment between development cooperation and foreign trade and has involved the private sector more strongly in development programs. Furthermore, the Dutch government has reduced funding to cross-cutting themes, such as good governance and education, to multilateral organizations working on issues that are not Dutch thematic priorities for ODA, and to funding for CSOs.

Increased funding for humanitarian aid and refugees; decreased funding for CSOs

According to OECD data, the Netherlands channeled more than two-thirds (73%, or US\$5.1 billion) of its total ODA bilaterally in 2015. However, nearly one-third (31% or US\$1.6 billion) of this was used to cover the costs of hosting refugees in-country, making it by far the largest expenditure area of Dutch bilateral ODA.

The second-largest share of bilateral ODA was allocated to 'government and civil society' (17%). However, since the end of 2015, funding for CSOs has been sharply cut and replaced by the funding scheme "Dialogue and Dissent. Strategic partnerships for lobby and advocacy" (2016-2020, with a maximum of €185 million per year. This puts an emphasis on advocacy work (as opposed to provision of services and goods) and strategic partnerships.

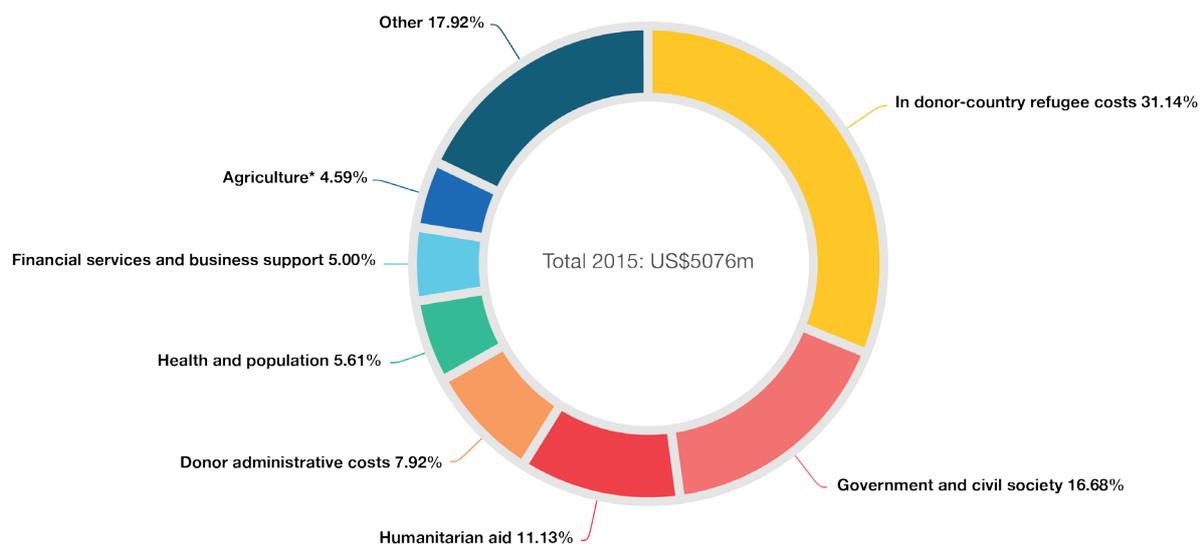
The Netherlands' key development priorities:

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (including HIV/AIDS)
- Security and the rule of law
- Water
- Food security

The Netherlands has stepped up its support for humanitarian aid and is a strong advocate for this at both the United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) level. The country allocated 11% of bilateral ODA to humanitarian aid in 2015. Between 2014 and 2015, the humanitarian aid budget grew by 88%. This increase was driven by the creation of the Emergency Relief Fund (€570 million for 2014 to 2017) to support victims of conflict and natural disasters. This financing comes on top of the humanitarian aid budget line. The Netherlands pledged €125 million at the Syria Conference for 2016, of which €75 million was earmarked for emergency aid and €50 million for stimulating education and employment for refugees. After 2017, spending on humanitarian aid is projected to slightly decrease, as the Emergency Relief Fund will come to an end.

Global health, and particularly SRHR, is another priority. Health accounted for 6% of Dutch bilateral ODA in 2015. However, total ODA to health is much higher as the Netherlands channels more than half (52% in 2015) of health ODA as multilateral ODA. This brings total health ODA to US\$591 million in 2015, or 9% of Dutch ODA, which is on par with the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) average. The Dutch government has recently reaffirmed its leadership on SRHR by launching the global initiative 'She Decides' to support family planning and civil society organizations in response to the decision by the new United States (US) administration to cut funding to organizations that support access to or provide information about safe abortion. (See question six: 'How is Dutch ODA spent?' for more details.) For further information on global health, see "Deep Dive: Global Health".

THE NETHERLANDS' BILATERAL ODA BY SECTOR



Source: OECD CRS. *Includes agriculture, forestry, fishing, and rural development.