

KEY QUESTIONS

the big six

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Who are the main actors in the Netherlands' development cooperation?

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation leads on strategy; embassies administer bilateral ODA

Prime Minister Mark Rutte (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD), currently in his third term of office, has led a coalition government with the social-liberal Democrats 66 (D66), the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), and the Christian Union (CU) since 2017. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) defines priorities for Dutch development policy, currently under the leadership of Stef Blok (VVD). Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (MFTDC) Sigrid Kaag (D66) leads the MFA's work on development cooperation. Within the MFA, the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) is responsible for designing and coordinating the implementation of development policy.

Unlike many other donors, the Netherlands does not have a development agency. The implementation of Dutch bilateral programs in partner countries falls under the remit of Dutch embassies. They do so according to the Multi-Annual Strategic Plans (MJSPs), developed by the MFA for all partner countries. MJSPs cover a period of four years, although interim adjustments are possible. The latest public MJSPs ran from 2014 to 2017. New Multi-Annual Strategic Plans, now renamed Multi-Annual Country Strategies, are currently under development and will cover the period from 2019 to 2022. These documents will no longer be publicly available. A number of Dutch civil society organizations (CSOs) and members of parliament have called for more transparency and are

advocating for shorter public versions of these strategies to be openly available, when finalized.

The role of Parliament is to scrutinize development policy and budget allocations. Parliament can annually amend the government's draft budget bill. Parliamentary debates in November/December can lead to significant changes to the ODA budget.

Dutch civil society organizations (CSOs) play an active role in Dutch development cooperation. The development CSO umbrella association, Partos, represents over 100 organizations. They engage with the Parliament and the MFA to influence policy and funding decisions. Many CSOs implement their own programs in developing countries and are funded by the Dutch government and through private donations. In 2015, program funding for CSOs was sharply cut, and since then, a larger focus has been placed on strategic partnerships and advocacy. Since 2016, funding for civil society organizations (CSOs) is increasingly channeled through the funding scheme 'Dialogue and Dissent. Strategic partnerships for lobby and advocacy' (2016-2020). This scheme puts an emphasis on advocacy work (as opposed to provision of services and goods) and strategic partnerships and strategic partnerships between 25 CSOs and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. A subsequent 'Dialogue and Dissent' policy framework for 2020 to 2024 was presented on June 20, 2019 and will be debated in Parliament on September 5, 2019. It largely maintains the same programs and funding modalities of the earlier policy framework.

THE NETHERLANDS' DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION SYSTEM

