



volonteurope

Workshop 'How to develop volunteer links with the third world'

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1. Specific history in the Netherlands on development cooperation

Most western countries have Ministries or Secretaries for Development Coöperation. In Holland this is the case since 1957. In Holland this year the budget for Development Cooperation is 6,3 billion Dutch guilders, about 1,5% of the Netto National Budget.

On this moment one can see three kinds of interferences in the Dutch field of development cooperation:

1. the government itself with a policy and a budget on development cooperation: bilateral, multilateral.
2. non-governmental organisation (mostly fundraising organisations from and for all kinds of sectors: churches, trade unions, private organisations)
3. non-governmental groups for education, information and consciousness-raising on global issues.

In this workshop I want to focus on this last group.

2. The ngo's (non-governemental organisations) for education, information and consciousness-raising.

This kind of groups came into being in the sixties and seventies of this century. It was a broad movement that expressed solidarity with several aspects of Third World countries. Generally spoken the goal of this movement was to convince the Dutch public of a new approach of development cooperation. No longer should be spoken of 'backwardness in third world countries', and of 'help'. Structural injustice in the world's economic, social and political structures and changes in the developed countries became the focal points.

Hundreds of groups arose, mostly run by volunteers. Action groups, solidarity groups, groups for specific countries etc. In this early stage most groups were run by volunteers, who were very engaged with the liberation movements in the Third World. In that time the 'country solidarity committees' came up (for example Vietnam Committee, Angola Committee, Philippines Committee etc. etc.), the Third World Stores (which explicitly sold Third World Products, with the aim of changing the



trade structures), and the educational organisations (which organised all sorts of courses where people learned about the backgrounds of underdevelopment and how to take action.

3. Women and Development.

Also in the sixties and the seventies the women's movement came up. Women, in a range from the United Nations to local groups, in developing and developed countries, brought the issue of 'Women and Development' on the agenda of development organisations, worldwide. This was accompanied by three worldwide United Nations Women's conferences in 1975, 1980 and 1985.

What they made clear was that the share of women in the workload, in the world's economy was completely invisible in all the analysis and statistics. The new research projects came up with new data, which explicitly showed the share of women's work. In the meantime everybody knows the example of the African peasant. In a western male biased concept one would think of a man. Now everybody is supposed to know that the African peasant usually is female. The 'Women and Development' approach also made clear that development projects often worsened the position of women instead of bettering it. Another important issue was that there appeared to be an active women's movement in several Third World countries.

In the context of this workshop it is not possible to go into the details of this Women in Development approach. But what I want to make clear is, that this Third World movement and parts of the women's movement crossed paths.

For about fifteen years (1970-1985) women were able to put foreworth new and crucial items concerning women in third World Countries and women here. In Holland the attention of the public was focussed on items like: trade traffic in women, sex tourism, the mothers of Argentina, women in free trade zones, grassroot womens' movements, women in liberation movements, the World Women's Conferences etc.

Women's issues were 'in' and development issues were 'in'.

4. the subsidies and the funds

*Around 1970 the Dutch government decided to make a specific Fund, named the National Committee on Development Cooperation (NCO), where active groups could get money to cover the costs of their activities.

At the moment the NCO has about 17,5 million Dutch guilders a year at its disposal. There are about five sectors which are subsidized by the NCO: national and regional groups for development coöperation, solidarity groups, regional Center for development Coöperation, education and media.

Goal for the NCO was to increase the broad interest of the Dutch public for development cooperation and to raise the awareness for global problems by funding active groups.

*Only the fact that this fund was founded had its impact on



several aspects like the following:

-Many organisations with professionals turned to the fund asking for subsidies (churches, trade unions, media, universities, political parties).

-New professional organisations arised like for example research groups, women's groups and educational organisations.

-The volunteer groups were able to create paid jobs. At this moment there are about 200 people (135 full-time jobs) payed by NCO subsidies. These kind of groups have many volunteers working for them.

-The last variant are the groups that are still completely working on a voluntary basis and only apply for activity costs (localities, invitations, speakers etc).

-Also on the women's front new activities arose. Since the early seventies women in all the above mentioned groups gathered in a pressure group and demanded for specific criteria for the issue of 'women and development'. The NCO started a policy in which it tried to integrate the 'women and development' issue in its general goal. In 1988 the women asked for a service point for all the women who were working in the issue of 'women and development'. It took another three years. In 1991 the project Coordination for Global Women's movement. I will return to this project later on in the workshop.

*The cultural implications were (put a bit sharply) the following:

-On the side of the groups and the organisations much more time and energy was spend on the fundraising itself.

-The struggle for Third World issues and for 'women and development' issues partly became a struggle with the NCO for money.

-The Third World Movement and the women's movement institutionalised.

The culture of several subsidizers and funds changed, including the culture of the NCO. Was it in the first years common to subsidize 'the good aims' of a group or organisation, in the last five years the NCO asks more and more for results, planning, effectivity and efficiency, quality criteria, new targets groups, range and professionalism.

*Another matter is the role of external factors on the policy and aims of groups and organisations. By that I want to point out changes in society since the start of the Third World movement.

-First there is the matter of 'the time spirit'. The eighties and nineties differ absolutely from the sixties and seventies. The time spirit of engagement and activism is not available anymore. People are not as easy to move for ideological aims as they were twenty years ago. If people want to engage themselves then it is for a short term, for specific aims and for concrete projects.

-Secondly there is the 'competition for the issues'. The Third World movement has to compete with ecological items, items related to the decline of the welfare state, and has also to



compete for the spare time of the people.

-Within the item of Development Cooperation the ngo's have to compete with the big fundraising agencies for the attention of the public, especially because they have access to the media and the financial means.

-All this concerns aswell the women's issues. I think the women have an additional problem having to combine two difficult items: Third World issues and women's issues.

5. the need for professionalisation.

As in circles of Volunteurope perhaps is known, there is a need for professionalisation of volunteer groups. This is also the case in the Third World movement and the 'women and development' movement. It is not enough to formulate good aims and to hope that one meets with a wide response.

I now want to focus on the theme of the workshop: how to involve women from developed countries in development issues.

Therefore I return to the project 'Coordination for the Dutch global women's movement'.

The demand of the women for a service point for themselves was taken up by the NCO after three years of deliberations. The NCO was willing to finance this service point during three years. But the goal for the project was not only being a servicepoint, but it got a specific goal: quality improvement of the Third World Movement on the gender issue.

The project started in 1991 at the CIV. I am the project manager, and I would like to focus now on the need for professionalisation of the sector.

Whether the global women's groups work with paid workers, volunteers or both, they have to realise that they have to improve the quality of their work to get the attention of parts of the Dutch public for women in development.

Despite expertise on the subject itself, we need to focus on quality aspects as the following.

- Attune target groups, means and instruments
- Learn to think in markets, and market segments
- Use instruments of communication strategies
- Pay more attention to fundraising and try to widen the financial base.
- Make clear job descriptions, for professionals as well as for volunteers.

These things have to be learnt and can be learnt. But therefore it is necessary that organisations make a policy (and budget available) for professionalisation for 'paid' workers as well as for volunteers.

The focus on quality improvement does not necessarily mean a defensive strategy. Beside the fact that it is a survival strategy, it can also be a renewal strategy. Because of the fact that circumstances changed, new and more effective means can be sought. And it can be a marketing strategy. The work



has to be made visible and attractive by revealing new results for more men and women.

When we talk about how to involve women from developed countries in helping developing countries through sharing expertise and through fundraising, we'll have to choose to do this in a professional way. Otherwise we are not trustworthy, both for the Dutch public and for the women in developing countries.

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