

Reflection on 'Vernieuwd Beleid Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking', with specific attention to migration, security and climate change

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Reducing conflict and halting migration first of all requires less emphasis on business and business development, and more on governance. This will allow for a more equal distribution of the benefits brought by business, and reduce its negative impact such as land grabbing, illegal mining and other irresponsible actions or business-without-care. A renewed focus on disaster risk reduction, poverty alleviation and local economic development in relation to migration seems to us a positive shift. From a policy perspective, such a focus has three components: fighting poverty, establishing security, and combatting climate change; three components which are obviously strongly interrelated.

1. With regard to fighting poverty, we propose the following actions:

Local economic development is a first field of action to combat poverty. Not only through direct foreign investments or direct support to Dutch based business (reducing risks for Dutch investors), but true local economic development focusing on increased local production and purchasing power in response to local needs and demands. Local economic development generates employment for rural youth, and new perspectives in their areas of origin. The creation of "rural hubs" is an interesting concept currently promoted by many, and deserves more attention in the Dutch international agenda. We emphasise the importance of 'good' governance through the development of an area-based or landscape approach. This, with the aim of offering landscape inhabitants a better perspective on a prosperous life, giving people a renewed 'sense of place' and sense of pride, which motivates them to stay where they currently are.

2. With regard to establishing security, we propose the following actions:

A first prerequisite is the reduction of arms trade and military interventions which have proved to be counter-productive. Furthermore, we suggest a policy that stimulates a fair and equal distribution of resources, not only within communities (gender, youth, ethnicity) but also between communities and between classes. Unequal distribution of access to and control over resources has proved to be a continuous source of insecurity. More emphasis on governance (local, regional and global) should therefore be a first priority within the Dutch international development agenda.

3. With regard to combatting climate change, we propose the following:

With regard to climate change there are several areas for action: better understanding of global food systems which demand less meat consumption and food waste in the industrialised world; and drastic CO₂ reduction in the industrialised world. Simultaneously, we propose supporting local adaptation measures in those regions affected by climate change such as climate smart agriculture/pastoralism, climate smart regional planning, and climate smart landscapes. We also propose mitigation measures, especially with regard to reforestation and (forest) landscape restoration, not only to mitigate climate change, but also to generate economic perspectives and rural employment in relation to reforestation and landscape restoration. There are multiple examples of sustainable landscape business models which are based on restoration of the services that landscapes provide; examples which could guide Dutch policies in combatting climate change in vulnerable and migration-prone landscapes.

Policy implications

In short, we propose a strong area-based, spatial or landscape approach that focuses on local opportunities for economic development; that generates local perspectives and futures for potential migrants to build themselves a living in their own place. Local economic development contributes to nurturing a 'sense of place' and pride, which reduces 'push factors' and motivates people to stay in their homes.

Moreover, we propose an area-based, spatial or landscape approach to enhance policy coherence, disaster risk reduction and building strong and resourceful local communities. This is not only related to rural communities, but also to urban communities, as urbanisation is a trend which cannot be avoided hence should not be neglected. This latter implies more emphasis on urban planning, to not only halt rural-urban migration, but anticipate to rural-urban migration, and create facilities and conditions in urban areas to cope with this inevitable process. Examples are the 'sites-and-services' programmes which have been successfully implemented with Dutch funding before. Rural-urban linkages and rural-urban food systems needs special attention, something which requires additional action research in the area of 'metropolitan solutions'.

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