Innovative international cooperation:
Report of the Mid Term Evaluation
of the
Fair, Green and Global Programme
2011-2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.   Introduction: Mid Term Evaluation of the programme of the FGG Alliance

The present evaluation report deals with the Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) of the global programme that was implemented in the period 2011-2014 by the Fair, Green and Global (FGG) Alliance, which consists of six member organisations; ActionAid, Both ENDS, Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie (with Friends of the Earth International), Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (SOMO) and the Transnational Institute.

The FGG Alliance aims to pursue its goal through a programme that is built upon four strategic objectives (SOs), namely: to enhance the capacity of civil societies in the South to develop and promote exemplary policies and practices of, and actions towards, socially just and environmentally sustainable development; to achieve effective corporate accountability measures to ensure that the goals of social justice, decent work and environmental sustainability are furthered; to reorient trade and investment policies to better serve socially just and environmentally sustainable development; to reorient financial policies to better serve socially just and environmentally sustainable development. A fifth SO concerns the learning agenda of the FGG Alliance. The programme, which is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (through the so-called Medefinancieringsstelsel II (MFS II) subsidy framework), is currently halfway through its implementation phase and will run until the end of 2015.

The FGG Alliance decided to commission a MTE of its programme, to be carried out by external consultants from Context, international cooperation, Utrecht, the Netherlands. The objectives of the MTE relate to the relevance, approach and effectiveness of the Alliance. The MTE has been carried out with active involvement of stakeholders in an attempt to contribute to on-going organisational learning within the Alliance.

2.   Major findings regarding relevance, approach and effectiveness

The history of the Fair, Green and Global Alliance is the story of a group of six organisations in the Netherlands that have come together in 2010 on account of a funding opportunity that was offered to (Dutch) civil society organisations, by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Alliance has evolved from a constellation that, in the eyes of the Dutch government, hardly qualified for a subsidy within the MFS II framework, to a frontrunner, a committed group of organisations and individuals, that address relevant issues of global social justice in an effective and innovative manner.

a.   Relevance

The relevance of the FGG programme needs to be acknowledged from a societal perspective, in terms of organisational approach, relationships formed, and organisational form. The Alliance addresses emerging issues in a comprehensive manner, using an innovative approach, which combines the expertise of a variety of organisations and actors, both internally and externally, to eventually contribute to a fundamental shift in the current development paradigm. With the reach of its lobby and advocacy activities at a global level

and with a focus on actors in the Northern hemisphere, the Alliance has positioned itself as avant-garde; well ahead of various (Dutch) development organisations.

The Alliance carries out a global programme and has a strong focus on leveraging power holders. This shows the Alliance's eagerness to trace symptoms of social, environmental and economic problems back to their source and respectively address these on a global scale. At the same time, the Alliance aims to link its efforts in global structures to local realities (in the evaluation report this has come to be referred to as the 'local-global-local' loop).

The way the Alliance has organised its programme aligns well with the objectives it aims to achieve. The relationships that the Alliance members have established and are able to maintain with their partner organisations, contribute to its relevance as well. These relationships are not control-based, but rather trust-based, which is considered to be a valuable aspect of the nature of the relationship by all parties involved.

b. *Approach*

The approach of the FGG Alliance is a multi-track and multi-dimensional one. As a result, the lobby and advocacy activities that are being carried out by the Alliance take multiple forms. This diversity and complementarity in its approaches may be considered as one of the major strengths of the FGG Alliance. As a whole, the Alliance has managed to find a suitable level of complementarity between the various approaches which foster synergy and coherence. A key strength of the Alliance is that all types of approaches are being practised (and are hence accessible) through its diverse network.

Proper follow up, through, among others, exit strategies, continued monitoring of cases where feasible, handing over the responsibility for implementation, and monitoring and following up with other organisations when desirable, may help the Alliance to secure sustainability and increased outcomes and impact of its work both at global and local level.

In view of the nature of its work the Alliance has to find a proper balance between detailed long term planning and responding to emerging issues. A Theory of Change may serve as a compass and might not only give guidance with regard to the selection of strategies, relationships and activities, but may also help in efforts to find balance between the overall breadth and depth of the programme.

A key strength of the Alliance is its focus on alternatives. A Theory of Change with regard to this particular subject may facilitate a more comprehensive approach towards transition, that includes critical analysis of the issue at hand and a review of the available alternatives; the design of a transition process and alternatives; carrying out pilots; conducting hands-on experiments; subsequently managing, monitoring and following up on change; and guaranteeing implementation and eventual knowledge development.

The knowledge development of the Alliance has the potential to be developed further. The Alliance has the potential to make an important strategic contribution, which goes beyond its own interests in this area.

c. Effectiveness

It can confidently be concluded that in all four SOs the effectiveness of the work of the FGG Alliance's outputs and outcomes are 'considerable' to 'high'. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that the impact of the work of the FGG Alliance is likely to occur over time and might not yet be (fully and clearly) visible. The Alliance organises its efforts as long-term programmes, which indeed seems to be the most appropriate way of working. The outputs and outcomes at project level as well as the proxy indicators regarding the impact at programme level are convincing manifestations of the potential of the Alliance. They clearly indicate that the desired outcomes are being achieved and that in due course impact is likely to be realised.

3.   Analysis of the results

There are a number of interrelated, factors that have contributed to the Alliance's success. Among the more important ones are a 'conjuncture' of political and economic developments, which underlined the need for the work of organisations and networks such as FGG and provided opportunities to demonstrate and practice the work of FGG Alliance members; the funding opportunity made available by the Dutch government; the organisation arrangement that has been chosen; quality of the leadership function

Organisations within the FGG Alliance perform different organisational- and programme functions (such as research, advocacy, lobbying, campaigning, activism) in a complementary manner. The autonomy of every organisation collaborating within the Alliance is being respected and valued; collaboration takes place mainly at the level of projects and programmes. In such an arrangement the autonomy of the participating organisations is respected, and organisations can contribute from a position of strength. At the meta level there is a common understanding concerning the strategic direction of the Alliance, which could be elaborated on somewhat further.

At programme level the joint programming within the scope of the four SOs needs to be mentioned. Furthermore, the availability of relevant and professional competencies among staff members of the Alliance, capabilities and capacity at the level of the six organisations, and the functioning of the Alliance as an entity are major assets.

By and large the programme managed to establish good links between the local and the global (and vice versa) and between theory, research and practice.

The Alliance is well managed. Perhaps the coordination is too biased towards a functional orientation and could be given a somewhat broader mandate and be expanded to include knowledge management as well.

An important asset is that the Alliance members have decided to respect the relationship of the member organisations with their Southern partner organisations and have decided not to align – and/or bring on a common platform - the networks in the global South. In such a manner, the creation of artificial donor oriented (i.e. FGG Alliance) networks has been

avoided. At the same time the member organisations have been prepared to share their contact in the global South in functional terms.

4.   A dozen recommendations

The key to ensuring future relevance and effectiveness therefore lies in fostering and consolidating the Alliance's position as a long(er)-term frontrunner through innovative programming. With regard to the future, a dozen, often-interrelated issues, may need attention. These include maintaining - in operational planning - a proper balance between space for emerging issues and a concerted strategy that steers agenda setting over time; it is recommended to continue work on the alternatives agenda – which is basically a transition agenda - thus offering relevant and workable solutions to global and local challenges; balancing breadth and depth; keeping on vesting in the interface between global and local v.v.; it is advised to provide more follow up, more so than is already being done to local level implementation of policy changes; to continue the balancing of different approaches to change; using a network of networks approach and broadening these networks with others 'types', e.g. trade unions, environmental groups, consumer organisations

At organisational level the fifth SO about the joint learning agenda of the Alliance may need to be organised differently.

If the Alliance wants to remain a frontrunner fostering the innovative character of its programme, the learning agenda will require more systematic and explicit attention.

As Capacity Development Support is core to the subsidy framework of the Dutch government (MFS II) as well as the work of the Alliance, it may be considered to develop an overall strategic framework and a strategic approach to CDS.

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ANNEXES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	ActionAid
AASA	ActionAid South Africa
CCC	Clean Clothes Campaign
CDS	Capacity Development Support
ECA	Export Credit Agencies
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGG	Fair, Green and Global
FoEE	Friends of the Earth Europe
FoEI	Friends of the Earth International
IFI	International Financial Institution
MFS II	Medefinancieringsstelsel II (Co-financing Programme for civil society organisations of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
MTE	Mid Term Evaluation
NG(D)O	Non-Governmental (Development) Organisation
NIZA	Nederlands Instituut Zuidelijk Afrika (Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa)
PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
SO	Strategic Objective
SOMO	Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TNI	Transnational Institute
ToR	Terms of Reference

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The present evaluation report deals with the Mid Term Evaluation of the global programme that was implemented in the period 2011-2014 by the Fair, Green and Global (FGG) Alliance, which consists of six member organisations; ActionAid, Both ENDS, Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie (with Friends of the Earth International), Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (SOMO) and the Transnational Institute.

It speaks for itself that such a study cannot be carried out without the active involvement of representatives of various stakeholders. We therefore gratefully acknowledge the professional, valuable and pleasant contributions of, among others, Ms Sandra Ball, Ms Fiona Dove, Mr Ronald Gijsbertsen and Ms Liesbeth van Brink, the task force for this Mid Term Evaluation, the Steering Committee, the Programme Committees, and the Advisory Group, who provided us with valuable and extensive feedback during the process and during the various evaluation exercises which were carried out between April and July 2014. 100 Alliance staff members, policy makers and representatives of partner organisations were so kind as to respond to the online questionnaire. A variety of resource persons provided an outsiders view regarding the programme. For the four case studies, the collaboration with, and assistance of, contact persons at ActionAid, Clean Clothes Campaign, the Transnational Institute, Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen, and Both ENDS as well as representatives from the (local) partner organisations is highly appreciated.

Mr Bas Eickhout (Member of the European Parliament, Mr Roelof van Laar (Member of the Dutch Parliament, Mr Björn Kuil (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Mr Roel Nieuwenkamp (Chair of the OECD Working Group on Responsible Business Conduct) were so kind as to grant a member of the evaluation team (in combination with a staff member from one of the Alliance partner) an interview to enable triangulation of the preliminary findings.

The four members of the Advisory Committee; Mr Floris Blankenberg (Policy and Operations Department (IOB) Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr Michael Koen (Civil Society Research and Support Collective), Ms Maria Eugenia di Paola (Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales), Mr Robert Went (Scientific Council for Government Policy) provided valuable expert advice with regard to the inception report of the study as well as the draft review report.

Staff members of the six organisations that were involved in this review provided (often detailed) constructive feedback towards the draft evaluation report. This feedback was compiled by Ms Lieke Ruijmschoot, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation advisor of the FGG Alliance and our counterpart for this evaluation assignment at Both ENDS

A special thanks goes to Ms Ruijmschoot who has been thoroughly engaged in the evaluation process, providing valuable assistance during all stages of the process and putting in an enormous amount of dedication.

This Mid Term Evaluation proved to be much more complex and labour intensive than originally envisaged. We are therefore grateful for the extra number of consultancy days that were given to us by the FGG Alliance and that within Context, international cooperation,

our colleagues Maaike Beenes, Pol De Greve, Lan Hoang, and Marieke Sterenborg were prepared to 'come to our rescue'. They have been, among others, actively involved in the case studies, and analysis of the online survey. Titus van der Spek took the responsibility for editing of the final report. Notwithstanding this intensive collaboration we, as authors, bear the final responsibility of any shortcomings in this report. Feedback on this evaluation report is solicited at info@developmenttraining.org.

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KEY QUOTES

"The work of organisations organised in FGG is extremely relevant from a societal, environmental and political perspective as not many civil society organisations are working in such a comprehensive manner on these issues." (Lobbyists working from an office in The Hague)

"Member organisations of the Alliance have contributed to a change of paradigm within the Minister for Trade and Development. They know how to influence." (Senior civil servant, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Trade Policies)

"To some, the main goal [of this campaign with regard to mining affected communities in South Africa] is changing of legislation, while for me the actual purpose is strengthening the agency of the mining affected communities. To support them to become active citizens in this country; to claim their rights and fulfil their responsibilities." (Legal advisor, Action Aid South Africa)

"We have doubts about capacity strengthening of Southern partners. I want to be convinced." (Account manager, FGG Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

"Even though there is a learning agenda, we may have not paid enough attention to tease out these things. That is one of the gaps: if you want to maximise the on-going learning that is part of a coalition effort, you also need to be prepared to put some time in it. I would like to see that strengthened in the coalition." (Senior staff member, TNI)

"Trust is the cornerstone of our relationship with FGG. Often we do not know what happens at international level, and find it difficult to monitor change at that level. In those cases, FGG helps us out." (Activist, Orissa India about POSCO case)

"Studies with added value; deep (expert) knowledge, shared in conversations; perseverance; intensive contacts with civil servants; strong contacts with parliamentarians; good use of media leading to societal movement, contribute to the success of the FGG Alliance." (Senior civil servant, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Trade Policies)

"Sometimes FGG Alliance members do not reach out to a broad political spectrum (in terms of political parties) within the European parliament. By failing to do so, these organisations miss the opportunity to connect to political parties that are not (yet) paying (sufficient) attention to development and environmental topics. This may lead to the fact that some of these political parties have less knowledge regarding these themes".
(Member of the European parliament)

"The tone of voice of some member organisations of the Alliance is sometimes (too) aggressive, and it is doubtful whether this is smart".
(Member of the European parliament)

I.   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.   Background of the FGG Alliance

ActionAid Netherlands, Both ENDS, the Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie (together with Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)), Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (SOMO) and the Transnational Institute (TNI) have joined forces together through the Fair, Green and Global (FGG) Alliance to 'contribute to required fundamental shifts in policy and practices that integrate new, more socially just and environmentally sustainable approaches towards international economic and social development.'[1] The FGG Alliance aims to pursue its goal through a programme that is built upon four strategic objectives (SOs), namely:

SO 1 **To enhance the capacity of civil societies in the South to develop and promote exemplary policies and practices of, and actions towards, socially just and environmentally sustainable development.** This first SO is aimed at significantly increasing the capacity of communities in the Alliance's partner regions (mainly in Africa and Asia) to claim their rights, freely develop their livelihoods and demonstrate and negotiate their alternatives in practice.

SO 2 **To achieve effective corporate accountability measures to ensure that the goals of social justice, decent work and environmental sustainability are furthered.** This second SO addresses the negative and positive impacts that businesses may have on people's ability to exercise their human and environmental rights, whether from the perspective of individual women and men, as workers, or communities.

SO 3 **To reorient trade and investment policies to better serve socially just and environmentally sustainable development.** This third SO requires strong, trans-nationally networked coalitions of civil society organisations that are able to promote and influence policy in favour of development policy coherence, including alternative trade and investment frameworks geared at meeting the social and environmental imperatives of the 21st century.

SO 4 **To reorient financial policies to better serve socially just and environmentally sustainable development.** To achieve this fourth SO, governments need to look more closely at the role of the financial sector in development, and use the current crisis to identify opportunities to develop effective measures to achieve better coherence respectively.

A fifth SO concerns the learning agenda of the FGG Alliance. For this SO, the Alliance aims to jointly gain knowledge and expertise on two core questions:
- **Question 1:** What key elements contribute to effective agenda setting and policy influencing, which will promote socially just and environmentally sustainable development at different policy levels?
- **Question 2:** How can we best make use of our shared analysis of elements that contribute to successes in agenda setting and policy influencing in the implementation of the FGG's programme activities?

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[1] FGG Alliance, *Annual Report 2012*, 2013: 4.

The programme, which is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (through the so-called Medefinancieringsstelsel II (MFS II) subsidy framework), is currently halfway through its implementation phase and will run until the end of 2015.

2. Objectives of the Mid Term Evaluation

The FGG Alliance decided to commission a Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) of its programme, to be carried out by external consultants in the period April – September 2014.

a. Objectives of the review[2]

The specific objectives of the MTE, as outlined and further specified in the main questions and sub-questions of the evaluation[3], can be summarised as follows:
   a. *Relevance*: to provide feedback about the overall relevance of the programme and its approach, methodologies and activities;
   b. *Effectiveness*: to provide evidence on the extent to which the objectives and envisaged results have been achieved;
   c. *Approach*: to gain a deeper understanding of the FGG Alliance's approach and identify key strengths and weaknesses respectively, in the light of the objectives.

b. Character of the evaluation

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for this assignment and the Annual Plan & Budget 2014 are illustrative of the learning character of the Alliance and the MTE in particular.[4] This evaluation was formative in nature as its purpose was to guide the work of the FGG Alliance in the second half of the implementation phase of the present programme of the FGG Alliance. The character of the study (learning and forward looking) implied active involvement by the staff of the Alliance member organisations involved.[5]

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[2] The main and sub evaluation questions for the MTE can be found in the Terms of Reference, page 3-4 (which is attached as Annex I) and the Inception Report for the study (Annex II)

[3] Ref. Terms of Reference page 2 – 3 (which is attached as Annex I); during the kick-off meeting of the MTE it has been decided that an analysis of the 'process of cooperation within the Alliance' will be dealt with by the FGG Alliance members itself and is not within the scope of the present MTE.

[4] Noteworthy is the fact that already during the evaluation process, the FGG Alliance has actively taken up a number of issues that arose, such as "the mainstreaming and better embedding of [the Alliance's] approach of developing alternatives (transition agenda); clarifying and developing [the Alliance's] mutual capacity development strategy which also explains how [the Alliance] contribute[s] to strengthening an overall enabling environment and agency for civil society actors; defining a joint ToC which addresses the issue of overstretching goals and is based on the reflection on [the Alliance's] current strategic objectives; including in this ToC more explicitly work concerning follow-up and monitoring of changed policies." (FGG Alliance, *FGG Compiled feedback on Draft MTE Report*, 2014: 1).

[5] To avoid misunderstandings, the term 'Alliance member' has been chosen to signify the six organisations that jointly constitute the Alliance, whereas 'Alliance partners' refers to all partner organisations and external parties that collaborate with the Alliance.

c.   Users of the evaluation

The main target group of the MTE are the management and the programme staff of the Alliance members. These are ActionAid Netherlands, Both ENDS, CCC, Milieudefensie (with FoEI), SOMO and TNI.

3.   Methodology and process

From the ToR for this assignment, it was understood that with the MTE of the FGG programme, the Alliance members wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the relevance, effectiveness and approach of the programme.[6]

The evaluation is geared towards both organisational learning among the Alliance members by reflecting on the current situation, and towards obtaining input for strategic decision-making on the future of the programme after its conclusion in 2015.[7]

In view of the multi-dimensional and layered objectives of the evaluation and the fact that (political) change is likely to be long term, with intermediate steps that are often important but possibly intangible, a mixed methods approach was used, including quantitative (online survey) and qualitative (case studies, participatory workshops, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions) research methodologies.[8]

4.   Sequence of activities

In line with the ToR for this review the members of the evaluation team used a mix of evaluation methods. Data was collected from both primary sources (case studies, self-assessment workshops, semi-structured interviews and an online survey) and secondary sources (desk research and consultation of resource persons). Primary data was mainly collected during the development of four case studies, for which stakeholders with different types and degrees of involvement were interviewed and for which focus group discussions were held. Also, a joint learning workshop was held with Alliance members' staff in two parts on June 5 and 27, 2014 respectively. Similarly, a diverse range of stakeholders, namely policy makers (government officials in the Netherlands, Dutch politicians at EU level, in the 'South', at civil society level, and in the corporate sector), partner organisations (in the 'global South' and 'North'), management or staff of the Alliance members, media, academics, financial institutions and investors, and the general public were consulted on the relevance, effectiveness and approach of the FGG programme through an online survey.[9] In

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[6] More specifically, the unit of analysis for this evaluation was (the work of) the Alliance as a whole, rather than (the work of) the individual member organisations within the Alliance. Therefore this evaluation report reports on the Alliance as a whole, and no separate analyses have been done of the findings per organisation.

[7] Moreover, the FGG Alliance has already, during the evaluation process, provided follow-up by incorporating some of the preliminary findings (from the draft review report) in the Theory of Change for its 'Dialogue and Dissent' (the post-2015 subsidy scheme) proposal to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[8] For further details reference is made to the Inception Report (Annex II). The Grounded Theory Approach has been the framework used for the qualitative data analysis. This methodology implies an inductive approach in which data collection forms the basis and backbone of the research, and data collection, analysis and developing a theory are closely interwoven – as an iterative process.

[9] Ref. the report concerning the outcome of the on line survey (Annex IV).

order to address the question of relevance, resource persons have been consulted who have a strategic view on the project, know-how of lobby and advocacy in the fields of FGG's expertise, experience with MFS II alliances and an outsider's view on the programme. To this end the following activities have been carried out:

a.   Initial bilateral interviews

On April 14, 2014 a first briefing and planning session was held with representatives of the FGG Alliance. Subsequently semi-structured interviews have been held with the strategic leaders of the Alliance members. These interviews served as an introduction to the FGG Alliance and to identify the issues most important to the strategic leaders of the six Alliance members, as a basis for setting the scope for the MTE and for further data collection.

b.   'Kick off' meeting

A one-day meeting was organised with the strategic leaders of the six Alliance members, on April 28, 2014. This kick off meeting served primarily to clarify the objectives of the evaluation and to facilitate the emergence of a common understanding and especially more detailed scope and priority areas for this MTE. To this end, the meeting started with a timeline exercise (history line), in which the emergence of the FGG Alliance was reconstructed with the aim of jointly developing an overview of the programme. Secondly, the implicit Theory of Change was reconstructed, mainly to inquire the assumptions on which the programme has been based and to identify the pathways of change that form the basis of the interventions. Thirdly, the evaluation team facilitated a discussion to narrow down the scope of the MTE.

Together with a review of secondary data and the ToR, the kick off meeting formed the basis for the formulation of the Inception Report.

c.   Review of documents

The evaluation team familiarised itself with the FGG programme through review of secondary materials, which have been provided by the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) coordinator of the FGG Alliance. These secondary materials included the application to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Annual Reports, et cetera.[10]

d.   Focus group discussion

On June 4, 2014, a focus group discussion was organised with the Advisory Group of the FGG Alliance, consisting of representatives from the Alliance partners. The discussion was organised using the principles of appreciative inquiry and critical reflection: the participants were invited to reflect on what had been done well and what could have been done differently within the FGG Alliance. Subsequently, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted in which the participants reflected on the relevance, effectiveness and approach of the programme respectively.

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[10] These documents are available in the Dropbox folder, which has been organised for this MTE.

e.   Bilateral interviews

Bilateral interviews have been held with a variety of stakeholders including partner organisations in the global South, policy makers, the management of the six organisations that are working together with FGG, Alliance staff members, including the PME advisor of the Alliance, etcetera.[11] These interviews served to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics within the Alliance and to reflect on issues related to the relevance, effectiveness and approach of the programme.

f.   Case studies

Four case studies[12] have been carried out in order to assess the effectiveness of the programme of the Alliance. During the inception meeting of the present evaluation (kick off meeting on April 28, 2014) it had been decided that the effectiveness of the work of the FGG Alliance would first and foremost be approached through validation of outcome reports which have been submitted to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the FGG Alliance. The outcomes were to be verified through a case study method (outlined in Annex III).[13]

g.   Online survey

In order to be able to position the information that has been generated through the above-mentioned methodologies, and in order to collect information about the main evaluation questions from the broader Dutch and 'Southern' 'target audiences', an online questionnaire (using SurveyMonkey) was organised. This survey was designed on the basis of the main and sub evaluation questions as outlined in the ToR.[14]

The online survey was mailed to 310 respondents. With 100 responses the response rate was 32,3%, which can be seen as considerably high. Furthermore, the survey served as a triangulation method to verify to what extent the opinions expressed during interviews, workshops and focus group discussions were shared amongst stakeholders.

h.   Joint learning workshop June 5, 2014 – part 1

During the FGG Alliance Annual Meeting on June 5, 2014 in Amsterdam, participants[15] gathered in smaller groups to discuss the tentative findings of the evaluation team with regard to the four case studies. The case studies were presented by the responsible Alliance

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[11] For further details reference is made to Annex IX, with a detailed overview of resource persons.

[12] The original plan to do five case studies (the fifth one on a case highlighting the transition agenda) has been changed due to time constraints. As a consequence, Milieudefensie (and FoEI and FoEE) has not been the explicit focus in any of the case studies. The FGG Alliance has committed itself to study its transition agenda through an additional case study (or case studies).

[13] In this validation, attention was paid to outcomes beyond the scope of the outcome reports. In other words, the possibly broad range of outcomes, which have been produced by the FGG Alliance.

[14] FGG Alliance, *Terms of Reference* 2014: 3-4. Since a wide variety of stakeholders have been engaged in the programme, the survey had to be designed from the perspective of all possible types of respondents, while still keeping it simple and straightforward. The parameters for the survey were (1) to have a focus on relevance, effectiveness and approach; (2) to make it as user friendly and accessible as possible; and (3) to use the individual organisations as entry points, instead of the FGG Alliance as a whole.

[15] Staff members of the Alliance members, the Advisory Board and members of the evaluation team.

member, after which several dimensions of the case studies, as well as the lessons learnt, were discussed. Subsequently, some preliminary findings of the research process were presented and discussed, after which the participants gathered again in smaller groups to discuss these preliminary findings.

i.   Joint learning workshop – part 2

A one-day strategic learning workshop was organised on June 27, 2014. During this workshop, the evaluation team presented the preliminary key findings. These findings were discussed and validated in smaller groups. The key findings served as input for identifying strategic and operational implications for the future of the Alliance.

j.   Interviews with resource persons

To ensure that the Alliance's work was reflected on as well by people other than only the Alliance member organisations' staff, a number of interviews were carried out with resource persons who had sufficient involvement and detachments with regard to the work of the FGG Alliance.

k.   Triangulation through interviews with different stakeholders

Interviews with four independent resource persons were organised in August and September, 2014. These interviews were carried out by a member of the evaluation team in collaboration with a staff member from the FGG Alliance organisations. The interviews served to cross-check the tentative analysis and pay attention to counterfactuals. The outcomes of these interviews were considered highly valuable by the interviewers and were fed back into this final version of the evaluation report.

5.   Evaluation team

A team of two consultants from Context, international cooperation (Utrecht, the Netherlands) carried out the MTE. The overall coordination of the evaluation research was done by Mr Fons van der Velden, director of Context, international cooperation. He worked closely together with Ms Karine Godthelp, consultant at Context, international cooperation. Valuable contributions and assistance, mostly with regard to the case studies, analysis of the online survey and editing of the evaluation report has been provided by Ms Maaike Beenes, Mr Pol De Greve, Ms Lan Hoang, Ms Marieke Sterenborg and Mr Titus van der Spek, all of whom are staff members at Context, international cooperation.

The members of the evaluation team worked closely together with several Alliance staff members. From the side of Both ENDS, the contracting party for the FGG Alliance, Ms Lieke Ruijmschoot was the primary contact person for the team.

6.   Limitations of the study

Overall, in terms of content, the study has been carried out as envisaged at the beginning of the process (in accordance with the ToR). Despite the commitment and involvement of the

various parties involved in making the review a success, and despite the enabling factors mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter, some factors limited the implementation of the study. The following major issues need to be mentioned:

- *Parameters of the evaluation*: in view of the complexity of the MTE in terms of the broadness of the programme, the scope of the evaluation and the diversity of actors involved, the budget and especially the timeframe for the MTE were rather limited.
- *Methodological challenges*: it is widely acknowledged that the outcomes of advocacy and lobby programmes are difficult to measure[16] and as the range of stakeholders in the FGG programme varies tremendously (from ad hoc to semi-permanent and everything in between) and FGG programme components and activities generally emerge from an interactive, iterative, complicated and/or complex process, rather than thorough (linear) planning, and works on a broad range of issues, with a broad range of stakeholders, it was challenging for the evaluation team to deal with such a high number of interrelated and complex issues within the parameters of the MTE (i.e. time framework, budget).
- *Organisational challenges*: due to the high degree of organisational complexity, the, at times, activist culture of Alliance members[17] and possibly different perceptions about the function and role of external evaluators among Alliance staff, it was sometimes difficult to plan the evaluation process as efficiently and thoroughly as desirable.
- *Availability of respondents*: it is common knowledge that policy influencers and policy makers quite often do not wish to participate in this kind of reflective research.[18] This has happened up to a certain degree as well in the present study. The majority of the respondents were either internal respondents or respondents somehow connected to the Alliance, and only to a lesser extent, external resource persons with enough distance to critically reflect on the Alliance. However, against this background, extra efforts have been made to get data validated from other sources and through other research methodologies. This triangulation process has resulted in the valuable consultation and contribution of a number of external resource persons, which has, as an overall effect, enriched the review process.

The consultants are of the opinion that in spite of the above limitations, justice has been done to the ToR for this assignment (see Annex I) and that the evaluation process and its findings meet the internationally agreed upon evaluation standards.

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[16] Ref. the introduction to the case study method in Annex III.

[17] In other words: within the FGG Alliance there generally speaking is an emphasis on 'doing'. Consciously and systematically organised 'reflection' and 'learning' seem to be a lesser part of the culture and systems. This in turn has had implications for the MTE, as the ongoing works of the Alliance members might have at times, by some, been prioritised over the MTE.

[18] Ref. as well Annex III regarding this subject.

II.   DETAILED FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1.   Introduction: the emergence of the programme[19]

In 2009, TNI took the initiative to explore possibilities for collaboration, under the subsidy framework of the Dutch government. The outcome was an Alliance consisting of Both ENDS, CCC, Milieudefensie (with FoEI), SOMO, TNI and Nederlands Instituut Zuidelijk Afrika (NIZA)[20]. Jointly, they went through an energetic and demanding incubation phase. They found each other in an agenda at the meta level, which very broadly came down to addressing social injustice and environmental problems by developing alternative policies and practices. Although there was, at least initially, no common understanding of the approaches to be taken with regard to the alternatives, the organisations shared a sense of importance and urgency to work on their joint agenda and on alternatives. In 2009, the FGG Alliance was born and the organisations jointly submitted a proposal to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for the so-called MFS II: the Dutch subsidy scheme for development cooperation). After a few rounds of negotiation with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 51% of the original budget was approved.

After an intensive incubation phase, the start of the Alliance was somewhat difficult. The Alliance members had to deal with the budget cut and actively seek opportunities for collaborations, which in practice turned out initially to be, to a certain degree, 'add-on' structures for which the commitment among Alliance staff appeared to be limited. As a result of this process the Alliance changed its initial approach and increasingly built on organic, flexible and functional collaborations, instead of artificial and forced integration of, and cooperation between, the Alliance members. This bottom up approach proved to be an important asset for the Alliance (as will be further elaborated on in this report).

From 2012 onwards, the Alliance became more adaptive towards its environment: the strength of the Alliance appeared to lie in its ability to respond to its environment, to communicate its message and to take advantage of opportunities.

The two-pronged strategy towards law – hard law and soft law – enabled the Alliance to better position its work in this field of expertise and increase the synergy between different Alliance members. When possible, the Alliance increasingly worked on hard (i.e. binding) law; as working on corporate power made very clear that there is hard law that protects the interests of corporations while corporations' obligations are governed by soft law. When no consensus could be reached with governments and companies, the Alliance worked on soft (i.e. non-binding) law.

The individual Alliance members all had their own support base (constituency) and reputation; jointly they became increasingly influential over the years. Although some members knew each other before the Alliance was formed, data collected during the evaluation process revealed that significant efforts were made to bring together key persons from the different organisations. Over the years, not only has the influence of the FGG Alliance increased, but so did the trust-based relationships within the Alliance. Whereas

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[19] This section is mainly based on the time line exercise (workshop April 28, 2014)
[20] Which has become ActionAid.

earlier on, the Alliance members felt a degree of competitiveness toward each other, this was reduced (although it did not fully disappear) over the years. Especially from 2013 onwards, the Alliance members sought more and more opportunities for joint external communication and a considerable increase in joint results was observed. Slowly but steadily, the Alliance became more than a group of individual organisations that had come together on the basis of a funding opportunity. Instead, it became more than the sum of its parts as synergy and coherence emerged over time. However, that being said, it has not led to a formal merger of the six organisations; they still function as individual entities.

It should also be pointed out that throughout the process, but from a distance, the Alliance members' partner organisations have been involved.

In the beginning of 2014, the FGG Alliance members had to decide on the nature, design, content and scale of the post MFS II subsidy application ('Dialogue and Dissent'), which was submitted by September 1, 2014.

2.   Relevance of the programme

a.   Introduction

In line with the ToR for the evaluation assignment, the question of relevance was addressed during the evaluation. For the inquiry into whether 'the right things have been done' within the FGG programme, five perspectives concerning relevance have been taken into account and explored, namely:
1. *The relevance from a societal perspective*: to what extent was the project relevant within the wider context within which it was implemented?
2. *The relevance of the SOs and programme*: to what extent were the SOs and programme considered relevant in itself and for achieving the Alliance's objectives?
3. *The relevance of the organisational approach*: to what extent was the organisational approach appropriate for the Alliance members and their individual and joint objectives?
4. *The relevance of the relationships*: to what extent were the relationships –both internally (i.e. within and among Alliance members and their partners) and with external stakeholders- relevant within the FGG programme?
5. *The relevance of the organisational form*: to what extent was the organisational form of the FGG Alliance relevant for working towards the joint objectives of the Alliance members?

b.   Findings

i.   Relevance from a societal perspective

Firstly, statements regarding the societal relevance of the Alliance's work are inherently normative: such opinions depend on the stakeholders' political perspective. Taking that into account, overall assessment regarding the Alliance's societal relevance by both internal and external informants was highly positive. As elaborated on in the introductory chapter, the FGG Alliance was formed under MFS II, a subsidy scheme developed by the Dutch

government, which was aimed at co-financing capacity development of civil society organisations in the global South. With its (global) focus on lobby and advocacy, the FGG Alliance was initially perceived as the odd one out. However in retrospect, when taking a closer look at its relevance from a societal perspective, the Alliance is increasingly being seen as a frontrunner, as was argued by the Alliance's contact person at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Secondly, the relevance of the Alliance is seen not only in its frontrunner role, but also with regard to the newly emerged focus of the Government´s policy with respect to Dutch Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs). The Alliance's contact person at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained how the Alliance's relevance for the Ministry was initially somewhat overlooked, but gradually received increased attention. The fact that the Dutch Minister for Trade and Development, Ms L. Ploumen, has a focus on international trade has enhanced the relevance of the Alliance within Dutch political and governmental circles in general, which focus more and more on international trade and investments.

Thirdly, as several internal and external respondents to the online survey observed, the Alliance's systemic approach, i.e. addressing root causes of the problems it identifies, is considered to be highly suitable in efforts to contribute to social justice at a global level. Through the Alliance's approach, not only are symptoms addressed, but global power structures are scrutinised and influenced as well. Furthermore, the apprehensiveness of the Alliance is appreciated, as is evident from the following quote from externally engaged lobbyists: "The work of organisations organised in FGG is extremely relevant from a societal, environmental and political perspective as not many civil society organisations are working in such a comprehensive manner on these issues." This argument was echoed during the validation interviews with several external resource persons.

Fourthly, the Alliance has shown a high degree of agility over the last few years as (ref. findings outlined in the case studies) as is evident from the ability of its member organisations to identify emerging opportunities and deal with challenges. This was emphasised by multiple external resource persons (academic and policy makers) who spoke of the Alliance's timeliness and flexibility.

Fifthly, and finally, but certainly not least, online survey respondents (partner organisations, policy makers, academics, Alliance staff and others) and interviewees (including among others a contact person at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a board member of Both ENDS) commended the Alliance for its presentation of a transition agenda and its alternative approaches to development.[21]

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[21] Both ENDS' board member explained that the Alliance has departed from more traditional forms of development cooperation by shifting the focus from supporting (Southern) partner organisations, to an emphasis on the aid and trade agenda, whilst placing ample attention on lobbying and advocacy as well as rigour in business practices of companies respectively.

ii.   Relevance of the Strategic Objectives and programme

The societal relevance of the four SOs is ranked as significant by the vast majority of internal and external survey respondents, members of the Advisory Group and external resource persons. In the words of a member of the Dutch Parliament (Lower House), the strategic focus of the FGG Alliance "Could hardly be more relevant, with the current agenda". According to survey respondents, *reorienting trade and investment policies* (SO 3) is considered highly relevant most often, followed by *enhancing the capacity of civil societies in the South* (SO 1), *reorienting financial policies* (SO 4) and *achieving effective corporate accountability measures* (SO 2). The (statistical) difference i is however insignificant.

Overall, it is argued that the SOs are considered relevant due to their clear ambitions toward fair and sustainable development. The four case studies that have been carried out within the scope of this review are all a case in point. The relevance is identified mostly in terms of the following:

1. *The importance of uncovering hidden trade and investment structures which are highly determinant both locally and globally*. Such factors may potentially affect, among others, human rights situations, social structures and the environment. Working towards this SO may present alternative and more sustainable forms of development, initiate a fair(er) distribution of power and help to work towards a more equal division of wealth. Especially now, since the Dutch Minister for Trade and Development has both development and trade in her portfolio, the time for exploring and bridging the two seems opportune.
2. *The focus on, and importance of, presenting good examples, role models and alternative solutions for all that can be done differently in existing policies.* Uncovering and presenting alternative solutions has the potential to contribute to a change in the current development paradigm and further argue the case for sustainable development. Such examples would give hope and proof that change may indeed be achieved, and may inspire change.
3. *Addressing harmful financial policies*. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have the power to shape development policies, but unfortunately often do more harm to particularly Southern countries in economic, social and environmental terms than good. Moreover, not only the IFIs, but the assessment of their works and the policies themselves as well tend to overlook the impact their actions have on society as a whole.
4. *Achieving effective corporate accountability measures*. Especially as the corporate world is powerful and some companies tend to undermine people's rights and create huge environmental and social problems, particularly in developing countries, survey respondents considered it important to diminish the negative effects of corporate actors; to reduce their power; to ensure they can be held accountable.

With regard to the relevance of the programme activities for achieving the SOs, the vast majority of survey respondents observe a direct link between the programme activities and the SOs. This coherence was recognised by Alliance members' staff and academics, but even more so by partner organisations, policy makers and others respondents. Therefore, the relevance of the programme activities respectively was considered high. It is interesting to

note that one of the Alliance's staff members remarked that the Alliance addresses the root causes of inequality and environmental problems, but not the 'root problems of the root problems', i.e. the values and paradigms that underlie the harmful structures that the Alliance aims to address. It may be argued that in the FGG Alliance's programmes, these values and paradigm issues may need to receive additional attention in order to enhance the Alliance's effectiveness in addressing its objectives.

Furthermore, according to Alliance staff members and partner organisations from the global South, apart from addressing these root causes, additional systematic and conscious monitoring activities may need to take place to assess and measure the actual implementation and changes in policies and practices which the Alliance aims to achieve.[22]

iii.   Relevance of the organisational approach

Within the FGG Alliance, different programme functions are being performed both by different organisations (separately) and jointly. There is a certain degree of complementarity between the six Alliance members which management and staff of the Alliance consider to be key to its well-functioning: the organisations have a shared agenda at the meta level, and engage in joint planning and execution of programmes and projects – "It's a Christmas tree in which every organisation has put its own baubles," one of the strategic leaders of the Alliance illustratively said.

Factors that contributed to the Alliance's functioning include the absence of power struggles and the Alliance's ability to balance the autonomy of its members and the benefits of joint collaboration, as was argued by the Advisory Group and a board member of Both ENDS.

iv.   Relevance of the relationships

Lobby and advocacy, on a global scale, cannot be achieved without relationships with and between a variety of actors. The Alliance's relationships are therefore of high importance and considered highly relevant as well, as was argued by respondents to the online survey[23], and management and staff of the Alliance itself. The Alliance has adopted a network approach, where the six Alliance members function as a network in itself, and the networks of the individual Alliance members additionally act as the backbone for its programme.

Within the Alliance, the existing alliances of both the Alliance members and of the Southern partners have been respected. It was pointed out by Alliance staff that the Alliance has avoided building artificial structures. Instead it has built upon existing energies, seeking alignment with established relationships, and turning the Alliance into a flexible whole with porous, permeable boundaries.

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[22] In order to avoid misunderstandings: such systematic and conscious monitoring of hard and soft law is already taking place in a number of cases, projects and programmes. A good example is the activities of the CCC with regard to the Bangladesh Safety Accord, ref the case study.

[23] More precisely, the Alliance's relationships with partners were highly appreciated by Alliance staff, partner organisations from the South, a Dutch government official and a policy maker at civil society level. The Alliance's broader network was appreciated by Alliance staff, partner organisations from the South and North, academics, policy makers at civil society level and government officials from the Netherlands

The cooperation with Southern partners is generally perceived as good, although some efforts could be made in terms of improved communication, involvement and collaboration, according to partner organisations from the North and South, academics, policy makers from civil society, policy makers in the South. This is echoed by the Advisory Group, which argued that efforts could be made to facilitate interaction among Southern partners, and by one of the external resource persons who suggested that the Alliance may clarify its strategy with regard to involving Southern partners in policy debates in the North. Depending on the particular issue being addressed, the Alliance may decide on the extent to which its partners should be put in the spotlight.

v.   Relevance of the organisational form

Within the Alliance the identity and autonomy of the six Alliance members (which may be characterised as the 'being' of the organisations) are respected and acknowledged. That being said, joint programme delivery ('doing') and operational principles are in functional terms aligned and somewhat integrated. The present organisational form of the Alliance has evolved over the years. Representatives of Alliance management explained that the Alliance members increasingly integrate their work, to jointly deliver programmes and learn from each other.

The fifth SO (learning agenda of the Alliance) may need to be organised differently, finding a proper balance between breadth and depth is an issue of resources as well. It is suggested that efforts are made to integrate the transition agenda ('alternatives') and attention is placed on gender issues at the strategic level within the four SOs.

c.   *Analysis of the relevance of the Alliance*

The relevance of the FGG Alliance is widely acknowledged, in all respects as outlined above: from a societal perspective of the SOs and programme, of the organisational approach, of the relationships and of the organisational form. The Alliance addresses emerging issues in a comprehensive manner, using an innovative approach, which combines the expertise of a variety of organisations and actors, both internally and externally, to eventually contribute to a fundamental shift in the current development paradigm. With the reach of its lobby and advocacy activities at a global level and with a focus on actors in the Northern hemisphere (namely Europe and the USA), the Alliance has positioned itself as avant-garde, well ahead of various (Dutch) development organisations.

Moreover, it should be noted that the Alliance carries out a *global* programme, i.e. it does not limit itself to a small number of programme countries, and has a strong focus on power holders (in the jargon of the Rights Based Approach: duty bearers). This is considered highly important for its overall relevance as well, as it showed the Alliance's eagerness to trace symptoms of social, environmental and economic problems back to their source and respectively addressing these on a global scale. At the same time, the Alliance aims to link its efforts in global structures to local realities.

The way the Alliance has organised its programme seems to align well with the objectives it aims to achieve. The relationships that the Alliance members have established and are being

maintained with their partner organisations seem to have contributed to its relevance as well. These relationships are not control-based, but rather trust-based, which is considered as a valuable aspect of the nature of the relationship by all parties involved. Fostering further collaboration among Southern partners around the work of the FGG Alliance needs to be functional in terms of the objectives of the Alliance and Southern partners and needs – as per the opinion of the members of the review team – to be treated with caution, as it should be avoided that donor (in this case FGG Alliance) centred, artificial structures emerge.

3. Assessment of the FGG Alliance's approach

a. Introduction

A second focus in the evaluation has been the approach of the FGG Alliance. The evaluation aims "to establish what defines the FGG Alliance's way of working, and what the benefits and downsides of this approach are, given the Alliance's objectives."[24] The approach of the Alliance has been a subject of exploration during interviews with staff and with those external resource persons who had knowledge of the Alliance's approach. This exploration was additionally conducted through the online survey, the focus group discussion with the advisory group, the joint learning workshops and the four validation interviews. During these evaluation activities, a number of key issues were identified with regard to the approach, namely the Alliance's aim to present alternatives to current policies and practices; the Alliance's way of dealing with internal and external communication; knowledge development; the way the Alliance balanced between the autonomy of its members and the benefits of joint programming. These key issues are elaborated below, after a section with general observations and remarks concerning the approach of the Alliance.

b. Findings

i. Overall image of the FGG Alliance

Several external speaking partners indicated that the FGG Alliance equals '*durf, creatief & politiek*' in Dutch, which translates to the Alliance being 'audacious', 'creative' and 'political'. With its activist approach whilst simultaneously remaining constructive in its contributions to, among others, the Dutch government, the Alliance has been able to guide its ideas through the internal structures of the government.

Rigour in overall approach, perseverance and tone of voice have been considered highly important factors, which effect the image of the FGG Alliance. Some respondents expressed their apprehensions for the 'tone of voice', which has, at times, been viewed as 'unruly activist' by nature. This viewpoint was, to a certain degree, shared by some of the policy makers and politicians from the Netherlands who were interviewed. In the online survey and in the validation interviews: some of them expressed the viewpoint that the Alliance is, at times, 'too activist' and are of the opinion that not all Alliance members (although not specified) contributed constructively to discussions. "[Some Alliance members] aim for a fundamentally different paradigm, which is currently not realistic. For them it is never enough, regardless of what we change. Even though we try to respond to their needs, it is

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[24] FGG Alliance. *Terms of Reference*. 2014: 3.

still not how they envision change and that makes it difficult to cooperate," a Dutch policy maker explained. This viewpoint was echoed by external resource persons interviewed within the scope validation of the preliminary evaluation findings. At the same time however, several policy makers emphasised the strengths of the Alliance's clear voice, critical and strong common message, openness to discussion and the evidence-led nature of their arguments.

ii.   Complementarity

Information about complementarity of the Alliance members has been collected from Alliance management and staff, as well as being explored through the online survey. To a certain extent, complementarity was recognised with regard to the organisational functions and strategies of the members (This is mainly related to the approach of Alliance member regarding toward research, advocacy, lobbying, campaigning, expertise, and activism.) Although this complementarity is sought from the start,[25] it was initially not seen as a priority in practice. The main reason to collaborate was initially the opportunity at hand; i.e. the financing available. In the process, the value added of being an Alliance was increasingly felt and complementarity increasingly emerged as a result.

iii.   The paradox of a broad alliance

The paradox of a broad alliance refers to the Alliance's quest for a proper balance between breadth and depth; working on a wide range of issues or going in-depth concerning a few issues. The individual Alliance members all have their own focus areas and issues. Additionally (and as indicated earlier), the autonomy of these members is highly valued by the Alliance members themselves. At the same time, addressing too many 'small and big' problems simultaneously can lead to overstretching, a loss of depth (as expressed, among others, by Dutch government officials) and may put too much pressure on Alliance staff.

This notion of a paradox can be observed with regard to organisational form as well, in the balancing act between the autonomy and identity of the Alliance members on the one hand, and the aim to strive toward becoming an Alliance that is more than the sum of its parts on the other. According to the outcomes of the online survey and findings from several interviews with external resource persons, as there is no joint programme as such, the perceived added value of the 'unified' Alliance is not always visible nor recognised by Alliance staff members themselves, or by external stakeholders who are not familiar with the Alliance.

Nevertheless the extent to which the Alliance has been able to sidestep an 'arranged marriage' but still develop a functioning level of collaboration is commendable. This success seems to lie in the ad hoc nature of coalitions and the existence of a shared overarching vision. It is obvious that this leads to, what may be referred to as occasional 'healthy tensions' (i.e. constructive differences of opinion that create and lead to further development) within the Alliance. Alliance staff as well as members of the Advisory Group explained how the Alliance members highly value their 'joint dot on the horizon' (shared

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[25] Reference is made to Fair, Green and Global (2009): *Application MFS II Stage 1 2011-2015.*

vision), and that the Alliance members trust each other in working towards their common goal.

Opinions regarding the strategic approach to achieve this common goal seem to differ greatly within the FGG Alliance. Only the spectrum within which the strategies can be placed has been agreed upon, namely that the strategies should focus on addressing governments, citizens ('people') and the corporate world. Within this spectrum, each member has its own way of working. Therefore forced collaborations were doomed to fail. Only incidental collaborations when the different strategies 'run into each other' and issues are raised, which require further, novel work from the Alliance, have proven to be viable, fruitful and workable. Moreover, the cross point where synergy and coherence develop is reached when multiple actors meet to engage in joint activities. See figure 1 for a graphic representation of this argument.
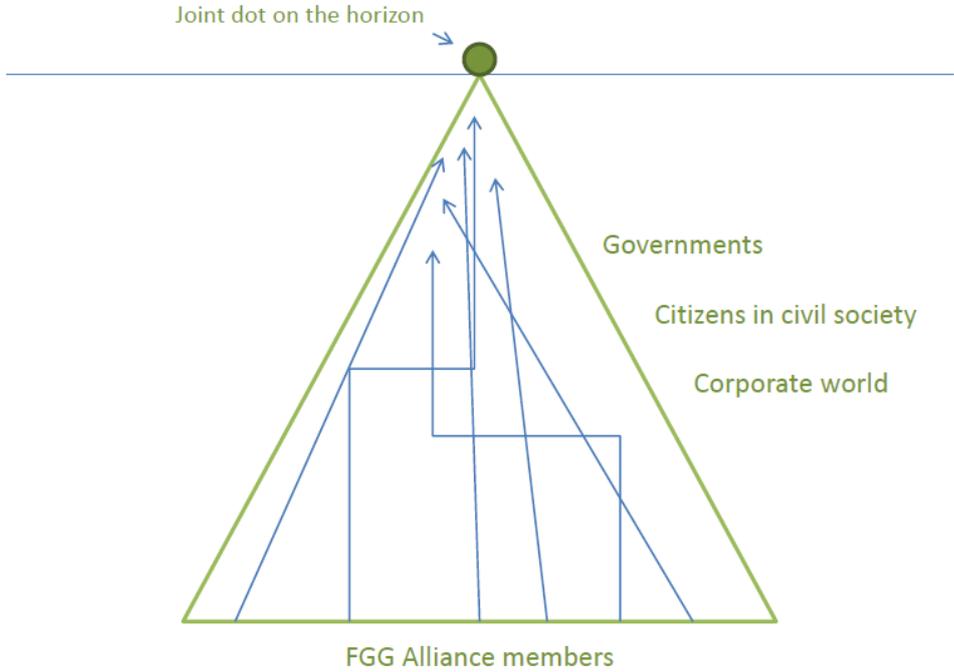
Figure 1

iv.   Management of the Alliance 'relationships'

Various respondents, including Alliance management and staff members, a board member from one of the organisations, and the back donor argue that, after a somewhat difficult start, the FGG programme is, at present, well managed. Within the Alliance, at the strategic, programme and project level, management structures have been put in place where each Alliance member is represented by the directors in the Steering Committee. Additionally, all SOs are now represented in the Programme Committees and several partner organisations have joined in the Advisory Group to advise the Steering Committee and the Programme Committee. Furthermore, project management is taken care of by different Alliance members for different projects and in close collaboration with partner organisations in the global South and North. The overall coordination is taken care of by the PME advisor of the

Alliance through a consultative approach. During the formation of the Alliance, it was decided that Both ENDS would take care of the overall coordination of the Alliance.[26]

v. The local-global-local loop

The Alliance has been very much politically engaged, first and foremost aiming to change policies at the level of corporations, governments and multilateral institutions in the Northern hemisphere. This activism at the global level, however, comes forth from requests, emergencies and needs in local communities all over the world. The FGG Alliance (as a network, thus including and involving the Alliance members' partner organisations) subsequently translates these local realities to their global relevance and vice versa. The loop that is aimed for, from local to global and back to local, which aims to change people's lives on the ground through changes in policies, appears to (on occasion) be a difficult process to grasp, as argued by some individuals within the Alliance management and the Advisory Group. One of the strategic leaders of the Alliance explained that the public image of the Alliance seems to be one of an alliance that takes on issues when they emerge and leaves them as soon as it feels it has done its part of the job, i.e. made efforts to stimulate policy change. This may have to do with the different focus of the Alliance, she explained: "For us the exulting moment is when we achieve policy change, but for local communities that moment only comes when true change is being achieved." In a number of cases, the Alliance members have carefully coordinated follow up after the implementation of policies, but this has not always been the case.

vi. Alternatives: the transition agenda

Part of the first SO is the development and promotion of "exemplary policies and practices of, and actions towards, socially just and environmentally sustainable development."[27] Interviews and the online survey have revealed that the transition agenda is considered to be a core strength of, and value addition to, the Alliance, both by internal Alliance staff as well as externally engaged actors such as policy makers and academics.

Since the original objectives of the transition agenda were highly (or perhaps too) ambitious, much effort has had to be made to exploit the agenda to its fullest. Some Alliance staff members therefore consider the transition agenda to be only limited in its success, whereas others stated that actually the struggles with alternatives fostered a sense of eagerness to work on them. The different opinions that exist about the alternatives should not be regarded as a problem but rather as a manifestation of continued dialogue and trial and error about an issue for which there are no 'quick fixes' (as a manifestation of the earlier indicated 'healthy tension'). Interesting policies and practices are exemplified at local level. Through the process of mainstreaming and considering the possibility of integrating the alternatives in the broader framework of the Alliance, (and thus not treating it as a separate subject or 'ghetto-ising' it in the first SO), this might ensure that the transition agenda is taken up as a crosscutting objective that is key to the Theory of Change of the FGG Alliance.

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[26] The fact that Both ENDS received the lowest budget from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was one of the considerations for assigning the overall coordination to this organisation, therewith balancing the power within the Alliance.

[27] FGG Alliance. *Annual report 2013*: 10.

vii.   Communication

During the evaluation process, the issue of communication was raised and discussed on several occasions. As the Alliance consists (as indicated earlier in this report) of six autonomous members, the primacy of communication rests with the Alliance members. The Alliance proved not to be a merger of organisations, i.e. all six members maintained their responsibility and sovereignty regarding their communication with and towards other Alliance members, their supporting constituencies and other stakeholders. There is no internal and/or external communication strategy and policy and as a result instances have occurred, as explained by a staff member of the Alliance, where different Alliance members communicated their similar messages around the same time, without any coordination, and there with potentially undermining the joint force of the FGG Alliance. Joint communication with a certain 'distinctness and sharpness' has obviously proven to be difficult. This limitation is, in the opinion of the members of the review team, intrinsically linked to the organisational model that the Alliance has adopted. Despite this, it must be noted that the Alliance has managed to use media for the good of its programme. During self-assessments and interviews with resource persons and case informants, various good examples were mentioned in this regard, such as the media successes in the ISDS case[28] and the publication 'Balancing Aid and Trade'.[29]

On particular occasions such as mentioned above, there may be a need for 'light' alignment, coordination and strategizing, to ensure that the Alliance maintains its strong common voice towards the wider public. A joint Theory of Change and/or strategy with regard to communication might be helpful.

Another issue to take into account is that several external respondents informed the members of the review team that Alliance members occasionally displayed 'zendergedrag', which, in Dutch, refers to communication in which an entity does not always demonstrate sufficient empathy for the receiver(s) of its message. The Alliance has obviously been very keen and determined to get the issues on its agenda across to its target audience, but should increasingly consider how best to reach these audiences without coming across as overly confident in its way of communication.

viii.   Knowledge development

On the one hand, knowledge development concerns the cycle in which action, reflection, learning, adaptation and knowledge generation are balanced. On the other hand it concerns the efforts that are made to contribute to the knowledge base of the issues that the FGG Alliance is concerned with.

From interviews, it appears that Alliance management, staff and the back donor all highly appreciate the reporting activities concerning the outputs and outcomes of the Alliance's programme. At the same time questions have been raised regarding the approach to planning of activities (and the use of approaches such as force field analysis, power mapping,

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[28] Ref. for further details Annex VIII.
[29] Fair, Green and Global Alliance (2013) *Balancing Trade & Aid*. Amsterdam: Fair, Green and Global Alliance

Theory of Change), contextualisation, joint collaboration between North and South in this process, development of a joint strategic line and knowledge development in general, about how the Alliance may become more effective itself, and how others can benefit from the learnings that emerge from the Alliance's approach. These issues have been raised by members of the Advisory Group as well.

To guarantee the frontrunner's role of the Alliance, staff members of one of the Alliance members considers, among others, that fostering the innovative character of the programme, ample attention for the development of knowledge, and increased expertise are considered important.

"Even though there is a learning agenda, we may have not paid enough attention to tease out these things. That is one of the gaps: if you want to maximise the on-going learning that is part of a coalition effort, you also need to be prepared to put some time in it. I would like to see that strengthened in the coalition."

ix.   Gender

A last issue that came to light regarding the FGG Alliance's approach is whether sufficient attention has been paid to gender issues and gender sensitive programming. This issue was brought up by Alliance members themselves. It is acknowledged that not in all instances and by all Alliance members enough attention is being paid to gender and gender mainstreaming in the work of the Alliance in general, while a lot of work of the FGG Alliance does have direct or indirect implications for gender issues. In several instances attention for gender is in a sense mainstreamed at operational level: gender is implicitly taken into account, but the gender analysis is not always made explicitly visible.

At the same time however, it must be noted that, although gender mainstreaming does not always receive explicit attention by all FGG Alliance members, the individual organisations have their own gender approaches and monitoring systems. The extent to which a somewhat more strategic focus on gender within the FGG Alliance is desirable, differs from speaking partner to speaking partner. Some suggest that too much focus on gender may be a distraction and negatively affect the strategy of the Alliance as a whole. Other respondents were however of the opinion that a more systematic collection of data on gender issues and a functioning gender working group should still be considered as important and addressed respectively.

c.   *Analysis of the FGG Alliance's approach*

i.   Approaches to change

The approach of the FGG Alliance is a multi-track and multi-dimensional one, not least due to the diverse Alliance members, partner organisations and strategies. As a result, the lobby and advocacy activities that are being carried out by the Alliance take multiple forms. Whereas the strategies of some of the Alliance members may be somewhat more focused on initiating incremental change from within, others aim to contribute to systemic,

transformational change. This diversity and complementarity in its approaches may be considered as one of the major strengths of the FGG Alliance.

As reasoned by several external resource persons and survey respondents, with regard to the more activist approach, which has a value in itself, it is important to find the right tone of voice, which is regarded by the 'recipient' as constructive and motivating and/or appropriate given the circumstances. Within this context it must however be observed that the Alliance as a whole seems to have managed to find a proper (meaning complementary) balance between the various approach which foster synergy and coherence. A key strength of the Alliance is that all types of approaches are being practised (and are hence accessible) in its diverse network. Key is to use that network, both internally (i.e. the six Alliance members themselves) and externally (i.e. all partner organisations and allies beyond the Alliance itself) to the fullest, while maintaining and appreciating the value of ad hoc coalitions.

ii.   Communication strategies

In terms of communication, there seems to be scope for improving the Alliance's approach to fostering links between its communication strategy and programme staff within the Alliance member organisations. This, with the aim of ensuring that strong content-related messages are being communicated. Also on particular occasions, some reflection may take place to consider the strategic opportunities and benefits of joint communication, or alignment, coordination and strategising, to ensure that the Alliance maintains its strong common voice towards the wider public and strengthen the Alliance's bargaining power.

Development and implementation of a joint Theory of Change and/or strategy in this particular area might ease the alignment and coordination of joint communication. At the same time the members of the evaluation team respect the present communication strategy, which does not require spending much time, money and efforts on joint communication.

iii.   Closing the local-global-local loop

With regard to the local-global-local loop, in a number of instances the Alliance has carefully given follow up to its work. However, such follow up was not provided in every instance by every Alliance member. Proper follow up, among others through exit strategies, continuing monitoring of cases where feasible, handing over the responsibility for implementation, and monitoring and following up to other organisations when desirable, may help the Alliance to secure sustainability and increased outcomes and impact of its work both at global and local level.

iv.   Alternatives in the Theory of Change

As explained in the previous chapter, the Alliance might benefit from placing more attention to its overall Theory of Change.[30] Following the argument made above, a Theory of Change might not only give guidance with regard to the selection of strategies, relationships and

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[30] Noteworthy is the fact that the Alliance has already given follow-up to this recommendation during the evaluation process. As a consequence a more explicit Theory of Change has been developed.

activities of the Alliance, but also help to balance between the overall breadth and depth of the programme.

A key strength of the Alliance, which has been identified during the evaluation process, is its focus on alternatives. A Theory of Change that gives guidance to the work of the Alliance has the ability to redirect existing capacities to imagine a different future at the centre, and subsequently put in place a slightly better process to work on systemic transformation in the long run. Such a process may be based on contemporary principles of innovation management: the Alliance may need to identify and build on impulses for change, and adopt a more comprehensive approach towards transition, that includes critical analysis of the issue at hand and a review of the available alternatives; the design of a transition process and alternatives; carrying out pilots; conducting hands-on experiments; subsequently managing, monitoring and following up on change; and guaranteeing implementation and eventual knowledge development.

v.   Knowledge development as spark for improvement

The knowledge development of the Alliance has the potential to be developed further, despite the fact that it might not directly fit the strong emphasis on 'doing' within the Alliance. Systems, instruments and procedures that facilitate reflection may be built in, and attention should be paid to further development and dissemination of the expertise of the Alliance members. This may furthermore contribute to improving the local-global-local loop as more reflection on the full process of change, and on (the opportunities and limitations of) the Alliance's own role within that process, might be an impetus for ensuring proper follow up of the Alliance's programmes where needed, and for making that follow up visible where possible.

vi.   Gender sensitivity as explicit core component?

The issue of gender has been highlighted in discussions surrounding strategic- and policy-thinking within the FGG Alliance. The case for further exploration of how systems, instruments and procedures already address, or should be developed to address, this issue may require further strategic thought.

The members of the evaluation team are of the opinion that gender strategy may require more systematic and conscious attention at the strategic level within the Alliance. Such reflection may find foothold and considerations for best practice in existing gender policies and practices of Alliance member organisations and the Alliance as a whole.

4.   Effectiveness of the programme

a.   Introduction

Initially, one of the aims of the MTE was "to establish the extent to which the FGG programme achieves its objectives."[31] In view of the complexity of measuring the outcomes

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[31] FGG Alliance. *Terms of Reference*. 2014: 3.

and impact of advocacy and lobby programmes[32] among others due to the fact that outcomes are likely to be achieved and hence identified in the longer-term, it was decided to approach the effectiveness of the FGG Alliance through a validation process involving outcome reports, and analysis of four case studies.[33]

The reports of these four case studies are attached in Annex V-VIII. In the present chapter an overview will be provided of the consolidated findings with regard to the effectiveness of the programme. The subject of Capacity Development Support (CDS) in light of the effectiveness will be discussed as well.

b.   Findings as per category of respondents

i.   Quality of reporting by the FGG Alliance

The reporting of the FGG Alliance has been mainly conducted at the level of outputs and outcomes. The back donor (the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is satisfied with this reporting and expresses satisfaction with the timeliness and up-to-date content of the reports. It is argued that in some instances the targets were somewhat low, given the fact that for these cases the outputs and outcomes exceeded the set goals.

ii.   Perceived effectiveness of Advisory Group and survey respondents

Advisory Group: the effectiveness as perceived by actors involved in the work of the Alliance has been assessed as well. The Advisory Group stated that the Alliance has achieved a number of positive results and impacts.

Survey respondents: the effectiveness of the FGG activities in which survey respondents were engaged, was considered relatively high as well, as the vast majority of both internal and external respondents reported some degree of effectiveness. The efforts for all SOs were considered effective. The positive responses, with regard to the perceived effectiveness, were given by both internal and external stakeholders, i.e. Alliance staff, policy makers at different levels and partner organisations in the global North and South.

Assessment of effectiveness by survey respondents is, in view of the complexity of the issues at hand - limited or lack of information about SMART indicators and the fact that multiple realities do exist - to a certain degree subjective and complicated by the fact that the SOs have been formulated very broadly. Effectiveness might, in the absence of commonly agreed SMART indicators, for one survey respondent mean that an issue has been set on the agenda, whereas for another respondent effect may only be achieved if multiple policies do in fact change and this change is implemented and felt by people whom it concerned. Areas of work in which the Alliance's effectiveness was observed were, among others, an improvement of worker safety and wages (especially in Bangladesh), growing resistance to investor state arbitration, obtaining a legally binding regulation of Export Credit Agencies

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[32] Ref. Annex III about the case study methodology.
[33] Within the scope of the present study, statistical measurement of the relationship between the effectiveness of the Alliance and its relevance has not been traced.

(ECAs) within the European Union, and the increased visibility of trade and investment issues to a wider public.[34]

With regard to the different categories of respondents, there were not many differences in the valuation of the effectiveness of the work of the Alliance. Staff members of the Alliance members valued the effectiveness somewhat higher than policy-makers at the government level in the Netherlands, academics, the general public, and policy makers at government level in the South[35] . The critical remarks that were made by the latter categories (i.e. not the Alliance staff) included the conviction that no results have been accomplished yet and that FGG members do not always take into account the everyday reality.

iii.   Perceived effectiveness by resource persons

As per the feedback from several interviews with resource persons, the Alliance has been able to considerably influence debates and may have even contributed to a paradigm shift in the Dutch government with regard to the policy domain of Trade and Development. An example of this would be the formulation of conditions for investments, which sharpened the discussion within the parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economic Affairs. According to a board member of one of the Alliance members, the Alliance has been mainly effective in initiating discussions, not only within the Dutch government, but also with Dutch companies and community-based organisations in the global South. Although there may still be serious differences of opinion, the board member argued that, several Dutch companies have become increasingly prepared to accept the lobbying activities of NGOs and to further work toward a mutually beneficial environment for the collaboration between these companies and NGOs.

Change was noticed at another level as well, as is illustrated by the following quote from an interview with a contact person of the Alliance at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

"Member organisations of the Alliance have contributed to a change of paradigm of the Minister for Trade and Development. They know how to influence."

More broadly speaking, it was argued by external resource persons that the Alliance has been well able to raise awareness –'a wake-up call'- on particular issues (such as financial policies; the position of mining affected communities in South Africa; the need for higher accountability of financial institutions as evidenced in the POSCO case; working conditions in the garments industry in Bangladesh), to set the political and public agenda (e.g. on the issue of due diligence in investments), and to propose strong alternatives (e.g. in the case of the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Accord).

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[34] For a further elaboration on the perceived effectiveness, reference is made to the analysis of the online survey, attached as Annex IV.
[35] More precisely, the SOs were considered more relevant by 70,1% of the partner organisations, 69,7% of the Alliance staff, 54,9% of the policy makers and 60% of the other respondents.

iv.   Picture that emerges from the four case studies

As has been argued elsewhere already[36], the nature of the issues and challenges that FGG Alliance members are working on are multifaceted, multi-layered and are always being dealt with in a global multi-stakeholder setting. This makes it intrinsically difficult to articulate with clarity where change can be attributed to the involvement of FGG Alliance members and where/how these organisations have contributed. The four in-depth case studies – which can be taken as a proxy indicator for the issue of effectiveness of the Alliance - reveal nevertheless an impressive track record with regard to relevance and effectiveness.

ActionAid South Africa: from the case description of the activities of Action Aid South Africa (AASA) it can be learned that the informal consortium of longstanding partners that were involved in this change process – including Action Aid South Africa – have made an important contribution to raising awareness about the plight of mining affected communities; reaching out to policy makers and politicians; contributing to the local debate in South Africa about this subject; and may in due course contribute to change in policies. What may however be more important is that AASA and other organisations have contributed to the tacit objective of the case: strengthening agency of mining affected communities. Detailed correlations, especially with the FGG Alliance, are difficult to establish as AASA has followed more or less a facilitating approach: 'absolutely present but (almost) totally invisible'. The role of the FGG Alliance in this case, has been one of an enabler (providing finances).

Clean Cloths Campaign: the case study with regard to the role of the Clean Clothes Campaign to working conditions in the Bangladeshi garment industry portrays the image of involvement in a relevant, important and urgent subject, through a multi-strategy approach, with a lot of perseverance, and with global multi-actor involvement. The role and functions that have been performed by the Clean Clothes Campaign and its partner organisations appear to have been crucial in achieving relevant and effective culminating results in the Bangladesh Safety Accord. This is among others due to long systematic preparation in which the Rana Plaza event worked as a catalyst. It should as well be noted that there was an important facilitating contribution of the Clean Clothes Campaign and its ability to respond to emerging opportunities.

Posco: the Alliance's role in the case of POSCO, the fourth largest steelmaker globally, portrays how, through its global reach and confident attitude, Alliance members were able to evoke change in the Eastern Indian state of Orissa where POSCO had established a steel project which (substantially) lacked rigor in assessment of the societal and environmental impact respectively. A primary aim of the Alliance's involvement in this case was to impact the financial sector respectively. Through a multi-pronged approach, the Alliance was able to directly or indirectly ensure that simultaneously three claims were made to the Dutch, Norwegian and South Korean OECD's National Contact Points (NCPs). Through a blend of on-the-ground protests and leverage through the NCPs, this case has led to a growing awareness of the need for increased accountability of the impact of investments made through and by financial institutions. Both ENDS and SOMO have been important players in

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[36] Ref Annex III.

bringing different actors together during this case and in distributing information between the different actors at various levels.

ISDS: the ISDS issue is set in a complex and multi-layered global playing field with many powerful actors. The Alliance members were able to create necessary conditions, opportunities and space for critical dialogue between civil society and key policy makers at EU level and in various countries worldwide (North and South). ISDS is an important policy issue with far stretching consequences especially (but not only) for low and middle income countries and their population. The FGG has shown good internal cooperation and coherence in its views and actions in this field. FGG is quoted and commended by third parties as a relevant and reliable resource of information on ISDS and related issues. The last two years the Alliance is profiting from a new momentum in the global debate on trade and investments with triggers being BIT's within EU and especially TTIP and CETA. The Alliance is contributing to shaping the debate on these critical treaties at EU and national governments levels. Public awareness on ISDS had grown, partly thanks to some key publications, notably the *Profiting from Injustice* report. Increasingly new allies join the work as they realise the link of ISDS with their focus areas of policy work like labour unions (job / labour issues in TTIP), green movement (fracking, land grabbing, GMOs), CS networks (medical sector), and so on.

v.   Perception of resource persons (triangulation interviews)

In order to cross-check the research findings and facilitate the search for counterfactuals, interviews were held with four research persons who were sufficiently detached and involved in the Alliance.[37] In order to establish the link with on-going organisational learning, the interviews were carried out by one member of the review team in combination with a staff member of an Alliance partner organisation. A short item-list, linked to the findings as presented in the draft version of this report, formed the basis for the interview.[38]

The main outcomes of these interviews can be summarised as follows.
- *Overall*: the respondents are not familiar with FGG but with one or more member organisations of the Alliance. Some argue that, in order to enhance effectiveness, it may be desirable to profile FGG a bit more and see to it that the Alliance becomes more visible and therefore a speaking partner for government and industry on particular subjects.
- *Relevance*: the relevance of the work of the Alliance in terms of thematic issues is overall perceived as high.
- *Approach*: the approach is experienced as positive and constructive, sometimes more collaboration with civil servants can be achieved and the involvement and contribution of Southern partners can be more direct and made more visible. It is furthermore suggested that apart from presenting research reports, providing inputs for motions that can be submitted in parliament and personal briefings of politicians

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[37] Mr Bas Eickhout (Member of the European Parliament, Mr Roelof van Laar (Member of Dutch Parliament, Mr Björn Kuil (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Mr Roel Nieuwenkamp (Chair of the OECD Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct).
[38] Detailed interview reports, which have in the meantime been used within Alliance member organisations, are available for each interview.

may enhance approaches that are presently being followed. Working with and around concrete cases helps to inspire the fact that different approaches are possible.

- *Transition agenda*: the work on alternatives is considered to be important as this helps to focus on viable and feasible new propositions and opportunities.
- *Effectiveness*: feedback about the effectiveness is positive, especially with regard to raising awareness about critical issues and agenda setting and has led, in some cases, to lasting contribution to sustainable development policies. Some suggest that a focus on a limited number of sectors may yield greater results. Almost all the respondents in this category suggest additionally establishing linkages with a broader political spectrum and to be more strategic about engagement with politicians and reflect a bit deeper in subject such as: which politician to involve; which political parties; how to present arguments. Effectiveness can sometimes be improved by using a different 'tone of voice'. Furthermore, effectiveness of evidence-based publications can be enhanced by designing a follow up process for the use of such products (proactive dissemination).

Box: Policy and practice of FGG with regard to Capacity Development Support

It should be note that member organisations of the FGG Alliance do provide various types of Capacity Development Support (CDS) to their Southern partner organisations. This work is often integrated through working together and not articulated explicitly in the terminology of CDS and therefore almost invisible (such as on the job training, mentoring and coaching) while other CDS activities are easy to identify (such as trainings and workshops). Currently, the Alliance mainly focuses on gap analysis (capacity assessment) and a call for action. This may not be sufficient to respond to the capacity development needs of the Southern partners, as the key to CDS lies in understanding the type of CDS strategies that can be used to address those respective gaps.

However within the FGG Alliance an overall CDS framework especially a well-articulated, comprehensive strategic approach is missing. In the day-to-day practice two different approaches to CDS seem to exist. (1) The informal and, for many stakeholders, invisible strategic purpose is to strengthen agency of (local) organisations, to contribute to movement support and to bring about transformational change. This can be referred to as the practice of strengthening the *intrinsic* capacity of organisations in the global South to act as robust civil society organisations. The value and importance of such an approach should not be underestimated. (2) At the other end of the spectrum quite a bit of the CDS seems to be geared towards adequate project and programme implementation (e.g. lobby trainings). Such a CDS approach is *instrumental*, in function of direct action. The three main issues for which partners request support are financial management and fundraising, lobby and advocacy, and PME and organisational management. The Alliance responds to the demand for lobby and advocacy CDS, but is less able to respond to the other two. This is either due to the fact that such support would hinder the equal partnership between the Alliance members and the partner organisations, or because the Alliance is not able to provide such support. However, both the instrumental and intrinsic approaches to CDS are within the scope of the overall objectives of the Alliance's legitimacy but different. It would be helpful if priorities at the strategic level would be clarified in a well thought through CDS strategic framework.

Within this context it should be mentioned that it is quite commendable that CDS is not perceived as a one-way exercise by the FGG Alliance, where capacities are only transferred from the North to the South. Besides this mutual and complementary character of CDS, the Alliance also acknowledges that organisations develop capacities as a consequence of many processes, both external and internal. It

is therefore rightly stated that 'as a result, it is not always possible to attribute changes in capacities to activities undertaken for, or with support from, the FGG Alliance'.[39] To address this issue, the monitoring of CDS has included open questions on the support provided by the Alliance, and Alliance members have documented specific capacity development activities undertaken and their effects, as far as possible.

c.   Analysis of the effectiveness of the Alliance

When assessing the effectiveness of the Alliance, it may be argued – as is being done by a variety of stakeholders[40] - that the changes that the FGG Alliance is trying to contribute to 'do not occur overnight'. Long-term objectives in this area require long-term efforts and many of the problems, which are being addressed within the FGG programme are of a long-term nature. Therefore, the FGG Alliance may generate, and be able to show its results, only in the long-term.

A complicating factor in this regard is – as indicated earlier - the perennial challenge regarding attribution versus contribution: FGG member organisations always operate in a multi-stakeholder setting, aiming for long-term (structural) changes which are beyond the control of the FGG Alliance. These are namely changes regarding policies to eventually change people's lives. However, it is next to impossible to attribute eventual changes in policies and people's lives to the efforts of the FGG Alliance.[41]

A number of factors contribute to the effectiveness of the FGG Alliance. These factors include the deep expert knowledge of the Alliance members, leading to studies and publications which are of added value, and shared in conversations[42]; the perseverance of the Alliance member organisations; the intensive contacts with civil servants and strong contacts with parliamentarians; the good use of media leading to societal movement.

The Alliance has been well able to seize opportunities after having built a thorough knowledge and base-network.[43]

In all four SOs the effectiveness of the work of the FGG Alliance in terms of outputs and outcomes has been found to be 'considerable' to 'high'. At the same time, it should be

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[39] Annual Report FGG 2013, page 36. A representative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed that communication about results with regards to strengthening capacity of Southern partners may require more attention. It is argued that although this is core to MFS II subsidy framework, the Alliance has not (yet) been able to show that it contributes to the strengthening and independence of its partner organisations.

[40] Most notably Alliance staff, policy makers at civil society level, academics, and partner organisations from the North and South.

[41] In the case studies, which have been carried out to assess the FGG Alliance's effectiveness, this has been dealt with by only focusing on contribution and collection evidence, as per the suggestion of M.Q, Patton, until a saturation point (no more new cause – effect relationship's emerging) was reached. (For details reference can be made to Annex III.)

[42] As mentioned by several external resource persons during interviews - amongst others a government official involved in the validation interviews.

[43] An example of this is the acceleration of the process of formulating, signing and implementing the Bangladesh Safety Accord by CCC and partners, after the Rana Plaza garment factory collapsed in April 2013. CCC had been working on this case for many years. Its in-depth knowledge of the case enabled the organisation to acquire momentum when it was most necessary.

acknowledged that the impact of the work of the FGG Alliance is likely to occur over time and might not yet be (fully and clearly) visible. The Alliance organises its efforts as long-term programmes, which indeed seems to be the most appropriate way of working. The effects at project level and proxy indicators regarding the effectiveness at programme level are convincing manifestations of the potential of the Alliance. They clearly indicate that the desired outcomes are being achieved.

In view of the type of work Alliance members are involved in, the complexity of the issues and the fact that works takes place in a global multi-stakeholder setting, as well as the fact that opportunities that may facilitate process are difficult to predict, there is bound to be a tension between detailed and accurate medium and long-term planning and flexible, short term ad hoc arrangements. In order to facilitate sufficient organisational (read FGG Alliance) coherence and synergy, to stay focussed and protect staff members from being overloaded with work, a comprehensive well-articulated Theory of Change may serve as a compass. In combination with a somewhat improved planning process this may ensure that enough (financial and human) resources can be allocated to the different themes the Alliance is, has and will work on.

At the same time, it should be acknowledged that within the span of control of the six Alliance members, the current work method in combination with striking whenever an opportunity arises, might prove to be the most viable approach in efforts to contribute toward change.

III. CONCLUSIONS

1. Introduction

In the preceding chapters an overview has been given of the emergence, further development and practices of the Fair, Green and Global Alliance. It is the story of a group of six organisations in the Netherlands that have come together in 2010 on account of a funding opportunity (the so-called MFS II subsidy framework) that was offered to (Dutch) civil society organisations, by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

From a constellation that, in the eyes of the Dutch government, hardly qualified for state funding, the FGG Alliance is at present considered to be a frontrunner, a committed group of organisations and individuals that address issues of global social justice in a professional, innovative manner.

2. Relevance, approach and effectiveness

The feedback from the members of the review team vis-à-vis the main questions that have been raised in the ToR can be summarised as follows.

a. Relevance[44]

The relevance of the FGG Alliance needs to be acknowledged from a societal perspective of the SOs and programme, of the organisational approach, of the relationships formed, and of the organisational form. The Alliance addresses emerging issues in a comprehensive manner, using an innovative approach, which combines the expertise of a variety of organisations and actors, both internally and externally, to eventually contribute to a fundamental shift in the current development paradigm. With the reach of its lobby and advocacy activities at a global level and with a focus on actors in the Northern hemisphere, the Alliance has positioned itself as avant-garde; well ahead of various (Dutch) development organisations.

The Alliance carries out a global programme and has a strong focus on power holders. This shows the Alliance's eagerness to trace symptoms of social, environmental and economic problems back to their source and respectively address these on a global scale. At the same time, the Alliance aims to link its efforts in global structures to local realities.

The way the Alliance has organised its programme aligns well with the objectives it aims to achieve. The relationships that the Alliance members have established and are being maintained with their partner organisations, contribute to its relevance as well. These relationships are not control-based, but rather trust-based, which is considered as a valuable aspect of the nature of the relationship by all parties involved.

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[44] As per the Tor, the following subject will be dealt with In terms of relevance; the aim is to establish the extent to which the FGG programme contributes to the achievement/realisation of the priorities and policies of the Alliance's target groups'.

b.   Approach[45]

The approach of the FGG Alliance is a multi-track and multi-dimensional one. As a result, the lobby and advocacy activities that are being carried out by the Alliance take multiple forms. This diversity and complementarity in its approaches may be considered as one of the major strengths of the FGG Alliance. As a whole, the Alliance has managed to find a proper complementary between the various approaches which foster synergy and coherence. A key strength of the Alliance is that all types of approaches are being practised (and are hence accessible) in its diverse network.

In terms of communication, there seems to be scope for improving the Alliance's approach to fostering links between its communication strategy and programme staff within the Alliance member organisations. Development and implementation of a joint Theory of Change and/or strategy in this particular area might ease the alignment and coordination of future joint communication.

Proper follow up, among others through exit strategies, continued monitoring of cases where feasible, handing over the responsibility for implementation, and monitoring and following up to other organisations when desirable, may help the Alliance to secure sustainability and increased outcomes and impact of its work both at global and local level.

In view of the nature of its work the Alliance has to find a proper balance between detailed long term planning and responding to emerging issues. A Theory of Change may serve as a compass and might not only give guidance with regard to the selection of strategies, relationships and activities, but also help to balance between the overall breadth and depth of the programme.

A key strength of the Alliance is its focus on alternatives. A Theory of Change with regard to this particular subject may facilitate a more comprehensive approach towards transition, that includes critical analysis of the issue at hand and a review of the available alternatives; the design of a transition process and alternatives; carrying out pilots; conducting hands-on experiments; subsequently managing, monitoring and following up on change; and guaranteeing implementation and eventual knowledge development.

The knowledge development of the Alliance has the potential to be developed further. The Alliance has the potential to make an important strategic contribution, which goes beyond its own (parochial) interests in this area.

c.   Effectiveness[46]

Despite the fact that it is inherently difficult to indicate where changes can directly be 'attributed' to the work of the Alliance and where 'contribution' is the case, it can confidently be concluded that in all four SOs the effectiveness of the work of the FGG

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[45] 'In terms of approach, the aim is to establish what defines the FGG alliance's way of working, and what the benefits and downsides of this approach are, given the alliance's objectives'.
[46] 'In terms of effectiveness, the aim is to establish the extent to which the FGG programme attains its objectives'.

Alliance's outputs and outcomes are 'considerable' to 'high'. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that the impact of the work of the FGG Alliance is likely to occur over time and might not yet be (fully and clearly) visible. The Alliance organises its efforts as long-term programmes, which indeed seems to be the most appropriate way of working. The outputs and outcomes at project level and proxy indicators regarding the impact at programme level are convincing manifestations of the potential of the Alliance. They clearly indicate that the desired outcomes are being achieved and that in due course impact is likely to be achieved.

3.   Analysis of the results

How has this been achieved? A number of, often interrelated, factors has contributed to this success.

a.   Context

In the post 2008 economic recession and related developments in different – though not all – parts of the world there has been, what can be called, a 'conjuncture' of political and economic developments which underlined the need for the work of organisations and networks such as FGG and provided opportunities to demonstrate and practice the work of FGG Alliance members. All four case studies that have been investigated within the scope of this review are, with regard to the issue at hand, a case in point.

As indicated earlier (and less overarching yet important), the funding opportunity made available by the Dutch government can as well be perceived as an important enabling factor.

b.   Organisational factors

The FGG Alliance is the coming together of six organisations and their networks in functional terms. It is a funding arrangement, which has, over the years, developed into more than just that, but which is not a merger. In this process the Alliance has built on what was (and is) already there within the six organisations (embodied knowledge, competencies, capabilities, capacities, network, reputation et cetera). Such a functional collaboration has fostered the gradual emergence of coherence, synergy and joint action.

The quality of the leadership function (not to be misunderstood as leaders) is another contributing factor. In an intelligent matrix model organisational functions have been organised within the Alliance. These are being taken care of by representatives of the six organisations in a manner that respects and does justice to the 'unity in diversity'.

In general terms there exists, what Peter Senge[47] calls, a 'healthy tension' within the Alliance around strategic and operational issues, which do not seem to hinder the joint collaboration but instead facilitate and catalyse alertness, debate and agility.

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[47] Known for his innovative work about the learning organisation, see e.g.
http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Senge

Within this context it needs to be observed as well that the Alliance involved the coming together of six relatively small, rather 'flat' and therefore flexible organisations that share a number of organisational characteristics.

In terms of dealing with issues and tension around institutional interests and power, it seems to have been an excellent decision to allow one of the smaller recipients of the grant of the Dutch Ministry (namely Both ENDS in MFS II) to act as the lead agent of the consortium.

c. Approach of the Alliance

In other words, organisations within the FGG Alliance perform different organisational- and programme functions (such as research, advocacy, lobbying, campaigning, activism) in a complementary manner. The autonomy ('being') of every organisation collaborating within the Alliance is being respected and valued; collaboration takes place mainly at the level of projects and programmes (in the 'doing'). In such an arrangement the autonomy of the participating organisations is respected, and organisations can contribute from a position of strength. At the meta level there is a common understanding concerning the strategic direction of the Alliance, which could be elaborated somewhat further (ref. the comments about the need for a more comprehensive joint Theory of Change); at operational level there are functional operational principles.

d. Programme factors

At programme level the joint programming within the scope of the 4 SOs needs to be mentioned. Furthermore the availability of relevant and professional competencies among staff members of the Alliance[48], capabilities and capacity at the level of the six organisations and the functioning of the Alliance as an entity are major assets.

By and large the programme managed to establish good links between the local and the global (and vice versa) and between theory, research and practice.

e. Relationships

The Alliance is well managed with respect to the autonomy of the organisations and, at the same time, its commitment and responsibility for the 'whole'.[49]

Perhaps the coordination is too biased towards a functional orientation and could be given a somewhat broader mandate and be expanded to include knowledge management as well.

An important asset is that the Alliance members have decided to respect the relationship of the member organisations with their Southern partner organisations and have decided not to align – and/or bring on a common platform - the networks in the global South. In such a

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[48] Within the scope of the present review no detailed analysis of the competencies of staff members working for Alliance member organisations, has been carried out. This assessment is based on input and feedback from third party respondents.

[49] There are not too many (although some) elephants in the room.

manner, the creation of artificial donor oriented (i.e. FGG Alliance) networks has been avoided. At the same time the member organisations have been prepared to share their contact in the global South in functional terms.

IV.   LESSONS LEARNT AND A DOZEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

With changes in the political perspective of the role of Dutch civil society organisations, the Alliance's approach gradually emerged from the odd-one-out position to being a frontrunner in meeting the new (Dutch) political agenda. The key to ensuring future relevance and effectiveness therefore lies in fostering and consolidating the Alliance's position as a long(er)-term frontrunner through innovative programming.

1.   Balancing emergence and planning

The Alliance's approach to strategy development is a combination of strategic and operational planning in combination with attention for emerging opportunities and challenges (in the respective SO's domains). A balance needs to be continuously sought between capturing emerging critical processes and a concerted strategy that steers agenda setting over time. Finding such a balance in a focal range between addressing "the root of the root problems" (values and paradigms underlying harmful structures) and actual implementation of policies in specific contexts, will never be easy. The Alliance will always face the dilemma between firm planning and flexibility in action. So far the Alliance has managed this balance remarkably well. However, in order to safeguard the sustainability of this equilibrium longer-term strategies will preferably be anchored in a stronger embedded strategic framework based on a jointly developed Theory of Change.

2.   Transition agenda

To counterbalance, among others, the risk of being regarded as 'unruly' ideological activists that tackle public and private sector opponents with rigorous perseverance, and to contribute especially to the ability of the Alliance to imagine a different future it is recommended to continue work on the alternatives agenda – which is basically a transition agenda - thus offering relevant and workable solutions to global and local challenges. Major challenges hereby are (1) finding a good combination of 'expose', 'propose' and 'practice' and (2) mainstreaming and integrating the alternatives in the broader work of the FGG and thereby making it more of a crosscutting issue. A Theory of Change that gives guidance to the innovation of the Alliance might put transition at the centre, and subsequently streamline the work on concrete alternatives at different levels (local, regional, national and global).

3.   Breadth and depth

A potential pitfall lies in the tendency to broaden the scope of action as - admittedly new and interesting - opportunities keep arising in the policy arenas covered. This development is observed in, among others, the trade and investment area where a relatively small group of highly qualified and equally motivated experts is covering a complex and increasingly widening field of topics in a dynamic playing field of forceful actors at local, national, multilateral (e.g. EU) and global levels.[50] Apart from the human factor (resource constraints and workload), over-stretching one's scope may adversely affect the quality and depth of the policy analysis and subsequent lobby and advocacy interventions. A Theory of Change

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[50] Reference can be made to the ISDS case in Annex VIII.

which is understood, accepted and internalised by all can be useful in setting a joint horizon and making strategic choices, provided flexibility in response to emergence of issues is not being curtailed

4.   'Glocal'

A key characteristic of the FGG Alliance is its eagerness to trace symptoms of social, environmental and economic problems back to their source and bringing these to higher levels with an aim to induce structural policy changes that address the issues, then linking global structures back to local realities. The link from global to local appears to be relatively less well developed within the Alliance (as compared to the local–global link) and may deserve some more systematic and conscious attention in the nearby future.

5.   Monitoring of change

It is furthermore advised to provide more follow up than is already being done to local level implementation of policy changes, to put in place appropriate exit strategies, and to especially continue monitoring cases. The Alliance may not have the capacity to do it all but is advised to define a division of labour between members and partners regarding responsibility for implementation, monitoring and follow up with partner organisations and allies.

6.   Complementarity of approaches

A key strength of the Alliance is that it avails of many types of approaches and working methods in its diverse network. One of the major strengths of the Alliance is the balancing of these different approaches to change, by seeking a continuous flow between the different types of change. This complementarity of approaches may be fostered and needs to be continued in order to maintain an Alliance that is flexible enough to foster different practices and histories of members, while at the same time applying these practices in a complementary and value-adding manner.

7.   Working with allies and strategic partners

Using a network of networks approach and broadening these networks with others 'types', e.g. trade unions, environmental groups, consumer organisations, is becoming a key feature of the Alliance's strategy. This may be further pursued. This is indeed an appropriate way not only to increase its political bargaining power but also to 'lighten the burden' on the FGG member organisations and staff. In addition, it allows members to more fully exploit their comparative advantages and strengths, hence leading to improved effectiveness.

8.   Strategic objectives (SOs)

The relevance of the themes of the 4 SOs is 'considerable' to 'high'. The fifth SO about the joint learning agenda of the Alliance may need to be organised differently, finding a proper balance between breadth and depth is an issue of resources as well. It is suggested that

efforts are made to integrate the transition agenda ('alternatives') and that attention is placed on gender issues at the strategic level within the four SOs.

The first objective (enhancing capacities of civil society in the South) faces particular challenges, most notably with regard to the necessity to realise the Alliance's capacity limitations and to optimise its returns on available resources.

The cooperation with Southern partners is trust-based and works well even though some further efforts could be made in streamlining communication, involvement and collaboration. Nevertheless, it might not be recommendable for FGG to work more on interaction between partner organisations in the global South. Such interaction may take the form of a donor-led platform that follows the money and stops when the money flow ends.

Apart from these eight points, four crosscutting areas require specific attention.

9.   Knowledge development

If the Alliance wants to remain a frontrunner fostering the innovative character of its programme, the learning agenda will require more systematic and explicit attention (and, as a consequence, resources). This applies particularly to the learning cycle dynamics (of action, reflection, adaptation and knowledge development) but equally to strengthening the local-global-local loop in the Alliance's different areas of work.

10.   Gender

Focus on, and monitoring, gender problems and solutions may need to be done more systematically and consciously. Apart from this it is desirable to pay more attention to gender issues and gender sensitivity at the strategic level within the Alliance

11.   Capacity Development Support.

FGG Alliance member organisations do provide various types of direct and indirect forms of Capacity Development Support (CDS) whereby the project and programme capacity and/or the intrinsic capacity of the organisations are being strengthened. CDS is not perceived as a one-way exercise by FGG. In view of the often tacit nature of such processes the Alliance faces difficulties with result measurement in the area. However, quantitative and qualitative measurement approaches and tools are being put in place. The strategy in the area remains often quite implicit. As CDS is core to the subsidy framework of the Dutch government (MFS II), the Alliance may consider to develop an overall strategic framework and a strategic approach to CDS.

12.   Communication

There is a need for better alignment, coordination and strategising of the communication to ensure that FGG speaks with a common voice about the structures it aims to change. A start in this regard can be made, by developing a communication strategy and approach (both

internal and external). A strong Theory of Change would be instrumental in developing a clearer communication framework.