



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment
Dutch Sustainability Unit



The Dutch Sustainability Unit

Why a Dutch Sustainability Unit?

Activities of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) aim to contribute to sustainable development. The Dutch Sustainability Unit (DSU) has been established in September 2012, to support the MFA and its embassies in achieving this ambition.

The DSU offers both integrated advice on sustainable development and specific expertise on elements of sustainable development, with focus on climate and environment. The DSU integrates gender equality aspects where relevant. Support is free of charge within the limitations of the budget. It offers flexible and quick access to necessary expertise.

The DSU works on demand, but is independent in formulating its advice. Independency ensures that all important issues are addressed, regardless of specific sensitivities stakeholders may have. This is essential for the credibility and influence of its work. To secure this independency, the DSU is hosted by the legally independent Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA).

Case: Accuracy of information on Inga III Hydropower

MFA/DGIS requested the DSU to review the accuracy of information underlying decision-making on the Inga III hydropower dam in the DRC. Most of the technical assistance for this project will be financed by the World Bank. The DSU advice was used by MFA/DGIS as input for the World Bank board meeting in which the project was approved. Critical questions posed in the DSU advice will be taken into account in further project planning.

What is the Dutch Sustainability Unit?

The DSU consists of a core team within the NCEA's secretariat, and a pool of external experts. The core team is responsible for maintaining contact with the embassies and MFA departments, identifying and finding the necessary expertise to support mainstreaming, and safeguarding the quality of this support through monitoring and evaluation. In its services, the DSU makes use of its expert database which includes experts from all segments of society: academia, consultancies, government agencies and NGOs. Experts may be found both within and outside the Netherlands, in developed and developing countries. The DSU closely cooperates with the World Resource Institute (WRI), the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP), the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and the Gender Resource Facility (GRF).

Case: Review of South Sudan Water programmes

The DSU reviewed inception reports of the 'Water for Lakes State' and 'Water for Eastern Equatoria State' programmes in South Sudan. The Netherlands Embassy in Juba, which funds the programmes, requested the reviews. It asked the DSU for suggestions to improve integration of sustainability aspects (environment, climate change, gender equality). In two advisory reports, issued in November and December 2014, the DSU gave detailed recommendations. The Embassy found the DSU review very supportive and indicated that it will use the results in its own review of the inception reports.

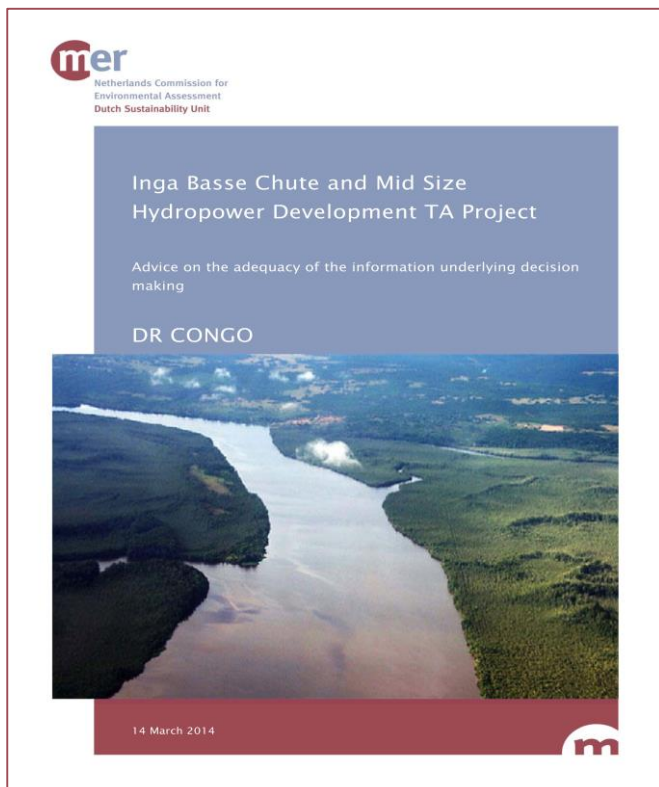
What support can the DSU provide?

The support to embassies is demand driven and includes:

- support in developing Multi-Annual Strategic Plans, result chains, and project portfolios, specifically in integrating environment, climate, sustainable development and gender equality;
- operationalisation of opportunities in these fields, as well as risk management in proposed programmes;
- improvement of monitoring and results measurement on the issues mentioned above;
- support in communicating, reporting and knowledge sharing on the results of mainstreaming sustainable development to administration, public and parliament.

The support to MFA/DGIS may stretch from demand driven to a more proactive role, aiming to inspire and provoke discussion. Examples include:

- provision of quick access to climate and environment information in specific countries or regions, for example in knowledge platforms Water and Food Security;
- environment, climate or sustainability analyses of programmes;
- lectures, workshops or trainings on operationalising sustainable development in development cooperation;
- climate screening of programmes and proposals in line with international agreements.



“The people at DSU know what they are talking about, have strong communication skills and have an excellent ability to facilitate cooperation between the various parties such as the government, businesses and other interest groups.”

Jacob Waslander, Team Manager Inclusive Green Growth and Department Head Climate Team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

What is the added value of using the DSU?

The DSU can help you to:

- get quick access to expertise;
- safeguard quality and consistent approach in integrating sustainable development in strategies and projects;
- monitor and communicate contributions of Dutch development cooperation to sustainable development;
- address intersectoral/nexus issues through coordination with partners such as NWP, CDI, WRI, CDKN, GRF.

Case: Climate Change screening

In 2014, the DSU supported IGG in facilitating a workshop on climate change for Dutch embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa. After the workshop, IGG's WRI-seconded expert Kadi Warner and the DSU, CDI and NWP facilitated screening workshops for individual embassies. These served to estimate the contribution of embassy programmes to Dutch targets on climate change adaptation/mitigation (Rio markers), while also indicating opportunities to operate more climate-smart. The workshops were well received and resulted in requests for similar screenings of DGIS's centrally funded water, food security and private sector development programmes.

Contact

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