



**ICCO's Implementation of  
the Programmatic Approach:**

**What Can Learning Histories Tell Us?**

***Many thanks to those ICCO officers,  
field representatives, partners  
and others who have shared their  
experiences and/or contributed  
otherwise to this collection of  
learning histories.***

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## Colophon

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The cartoon on the cover is made by Mark de Koning.

The photographs are made by the people who are involved in the programme concerned.

*(The people on the photographs are not necessarily involved in this Learning Histories).*

## List of abbreviations

AMC	advisory and monitoring committee
APO	assistant programme officer
CB	capacity building
CBO	community-based organisation
CODE	co-responsibility, decentralisation
D&P	democratisation and peacebuilding
DTAT	land rights, water and security
FED	Fair Economic Development
FLACSO	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Faculty of Social Sciences Latin America)
FO	financial officer
LMD	local market development
M&E	monitoring & evaluation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OD	organisational development
PA	programme assistant
PB	peacebuilding
PM	programme manager
PO	programme officer
ProCoDe	programmatic approach, co-responsibility and decentralisation
PS	programme specialist
PSJ	Youth and Security Programme
PSO	PSO is an association that consists of fifty Dutch development organisations. The association focuses on capacity development at social organisations in developing nations.
R&D	Research and Development
RWO	Regional Work Organisation
SFM	sustainable forest management
SFU	sustainable forest use
PSa	personele samenwerking (personnel cooperation)
RWO	Regional Work Office
TA	technical assistance

# Foreword

The ICCO Alliance and in particular ICCO has initiated a rather fundamental change process since the start of the current business plan period. These changes concern the organisational structure and more importantly the manner in which we seek to realize influence of partners and civil society actors from the 'South' on the formulation of ICCO's policies and strategic choices and the implementation of the corporate strategy. This process is known as the ProCoDe process: Programmatic approach, Co-responsibility and Decentralisation.

The learning histories have focused on the programmatic approach implementation process. The programmatic approach implies that ICCO promotes (partner) organisations to work together in addressing a certain problem or working towards specific development objectives. In stead of supporting the work of individual organisations ICCO would like to support and promote collaborative processes.

This document is part of ICCO's intention to learn from the changes we are implementing and to adjust our practice and in particular our way of co-operating with our partner organisations based on lessons learnt. It reflects the experiences that ICCO has gained with its partner organisations from 2007- September 2008 in 6 programmatic approach development processes.

The experiences have been 'investigated' using a learning history method. This implies that participants in the process of programme development have been interviewed and have been asked to reflect upon their experiences in the process and to share their perceptions and understanding in the different phases process of programme development with us.

The use of this method has allowed us to gain insight in the lived experiences of different actors involved, and a better understanding of their appreciation and understanding of what was actually happening and why it happened the way it did.

The cases that form the body of the document were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Regional representation
- Thematic diversity
- History of programmatic approach development (early birds, followers,)
- Different stages of programmatic development
- Different 'types' of programmatic development and roles played by ICCO and partners in the process.

These cases have already served us in deepening our learning about the programmatic approach. We have seen the diversity in the experiences, and have drawn some preliminary conclusions for the manner in which we go about initiating and supporting programme development. We have found some answers to the following questions:

- what are constraining factors,
- what are the driving forces,
- what are the roles to be played by ICCO staff that contribute to or hinder programme development,
- how can we promote truly participatory programme development,
- what are the conditions for this
- what are contextual factors that contribute to or hinder programme formation
- which systemic issues need to be addressed in the funder –funder relation
- which other roles can, could, should ICCO play in this process.

We hope that you as reader find some point of reference in this document that can help you in making choices in programme development and steering a path in the still murky waters of programme development. We hope it inspires you to go on, to share experiences with other organisations and with others in the ICCO Alliance, to sometimes take a step back and reflect, and to learn from your experiences. We will use this document in the ongoing learning process in the ICCO Alliance.

Utrecht, November 2008

Hettie Walters, *Programme Coordinator Capacity Development, ICCO*

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In its 2007-2010 strategic plan, the ICCO Alliance outlines a number of ways in which it intends to change its approach. These changes, which have become known as the ProCoDe process, can be summarised as:

- A programmatic approach, by which different actors achieve greater added value and impact by working in alliances to achieve specific, common goals;
- Co-responsibility, by bringing the design of and decision-making related to processes of change closer to their contexts, by means of programmes, locally-staffed regional work organisations (RWOs) and, in particular, regional councils;
- Decentralisation of the Alliance's operations, leading to the enhanced execution of certain roles (e.g. strategic funding, capacity building, and brokering)<sup>1</sup>.

These changes are a result of a process of reflection on the Alliance's successes and failures, which was initiated in 2005. This process of reflection revealed that as a result of globalisation, changes in global markets and trade, and the development of ICT and mass communications, the development sector has changed dramatically. For example, much more money is now available than was the case twenty or thirty years ago. At the same time, however, there are also many more NGOs and other, newer players in the field of development cooperation. Civil society has gained strength in the South, but on the whole, northern development agencies have not changed their relationships with and stance towards their 'partners' in the South<sup>2</sup>.

By introducing ProCoDe, ICCO aims to increase ownership and responsibility among southern actors, and use the design of strategies for poverty reduction, capacity development and civil society-building to put the relationship between ICCO and its partners on a more equal footing. ProCoDe will enable ICCO to fulfil certain roles that are contributing to its southern partners. While less focus will be given to ICCO's financing role, the organisation will shift its attention to three new roles: brokering, capacity development, and lobbying and advocacy.

In recent years, a wide variety of programmes have been designed and developed in the South. Consultation between ICCO's partners and its officers suggests that transforming a system of bilateral project funding into programmatic cooperation is a process that requires ownership, commitment and trust among the actors involved. Both within ICCO and in the South, there is conviction that the programmatic approach brings added value. However, creating a programme is a significant process. Adopting the approach involves making a number of crucial changes relating to financing, donor relationships and local cooperation, and ICCO's staff members have to adopt a new approach in their daily work in fulfilling their four roles. Despite the magnitude of these changes, ICCO's current portfolio includes a number of programmes under implementation, which are proving to be strategically on-target and effective<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, some processes seem to be encountering barriers during the identification or preparation phases, which are preventing them from moving forward.

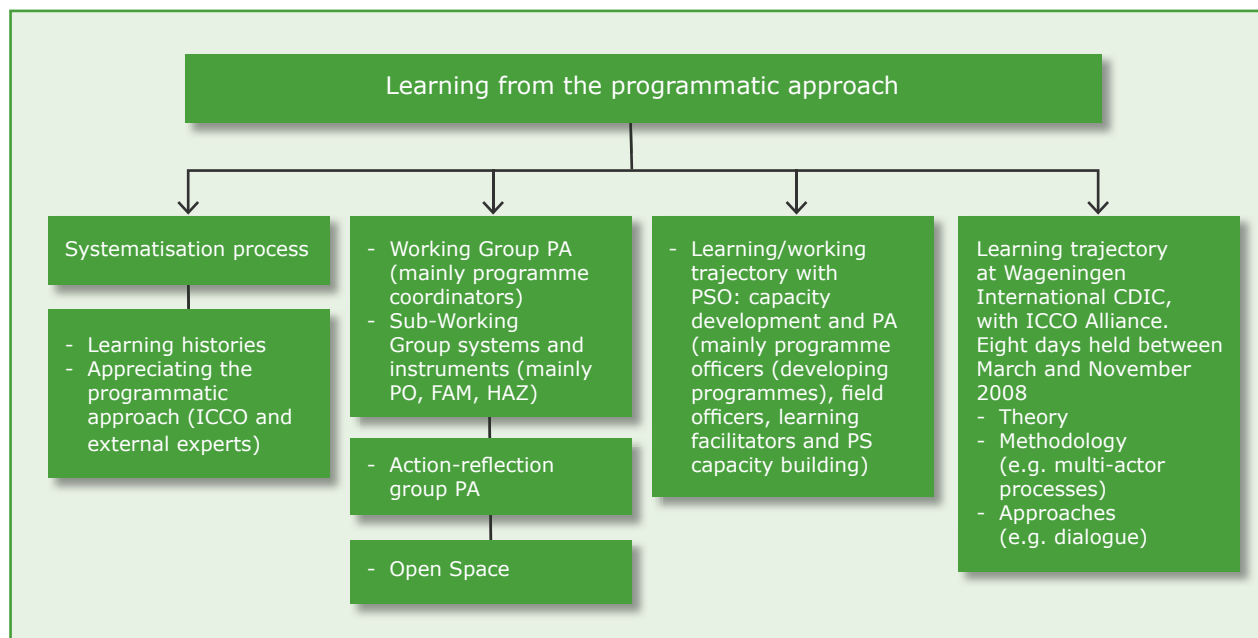
This document focuses on the process of developing the programmatic approach in practice over the last few years. The aim is to learn from stakeholders' perspectives on the theories and practicalities surrounding the programmatic approach, including interlinked efforts to achieve greater levels of co-responsibility and decentralisation. These stakeholders include (amongst others): ICCO personnel involved in the programme design process; ICCO's financial and administrative officers; the Alliance's southern partners; and external consultants and advisors.

1 Retrieved from Derksen, H. (2008) *Programmatic Approach at work. A second update spring 2008*. Utrecht: ICCO

2 Section based on Derksen, H. (2008) *Programmatic Approach. An update of questions and dilemmas in working with the programmatic approach in the ICCO Alliance – June 2007*. Utrecht: ICCO

3 See also Derksen, H. (September 2008) *Overview and analysis of programmes*. Utrecht: ICCO

Within ICCO, particular effort has been put into sharing and learning from the recent experiences of programme officers and field representatives. Different learning trajectories have been established, enabling learning to occur at different levels (see Box 1). A draft version of this document was used for input during an Open Space meeting in September 2008, in which approximately 80 ICCO officers and field representatives shared issues, questions and solutions.



Box 1 Learning initiatives related to ICCO's programmatic approach

## 1.2 Learning histories

This study uses learning histories to gain insights into the process of developing the programmatic approach. A learning history is a document, or series of documents, that helps an organisation to become more aware of its own efforts to learn and change<sup>4</sup>. A learning history presents a collection of perspectives relating to a certain change, set against a factual outline of the process. This data serves as input for further analysis and reflection, and in turn is available to spark open dialogue between not only all the actors involved, but also outsiders who might be interested in the result, and people who will shortly become involved in the process of change and need to learn about the successes and pitfalls that it might bring<sup>5</sup>. It is not so much the making of such a document, than its subsequent dissemination and in-depth dialogue that contributes to learning and finding ways forward. For this reason, this document will be used for future dialogue relating to the programmatic approach.

This document consists of six learning histories covering six different programmes. We do not claim to provide a complete or scientific analysis of the programme development processes within ICCO. Nevertheless, these learning histories do provide us with key insights, enabling us to draw certain lessons that can be taken forward in ICCO's policies and practices.

4 Kleiner, A., and Roth, G.L. (1996) *Field manual for the learning historian. Chapter One: Introduction to learning history theory and practice*. Cambridge: MIT Center for Organisational Learning. URL: <http://ccs.mit.edu/LH/intro.html> (July 28, 2008).

5 See also: Kleiner, A., and Roth, G.L. (1997) *Learning histories: A new tool for turning organisational experience into action*. Cambridge: MIT Center for Organisational Learning. URL: <http://ccs.mit.edu/lh/21CWP002.html> (July 28, 2008).

### 1.3 Case selection

This learning history draws on six programmes in order to illustrate the process of introducing the programmatic approach. The selection is representative of the wide variety of programmes within ICCO. The following criteria were used: (1) representation of continents/regions; (2) representation of different ICCO departments; (3) representation of programmes at different stages of development or implementation; and (4) representation of either national or regional programmes.

The following programmes are covered in this study:

1. The peacebuilding (PB) programme in Liberia
2. The land rights, water and security (DTAT) programme in Brazil
3. The local market development (LMD) programme in Central Asia
4. The sustainable forest management (SFM) programme in the Pacific
5. The youth and security (PSJ) programme in Central America
6. The literacy in non-formal education programme in Mali.

The sixth programme, Mali's 'literacy in non-formal education' programme, has been taken into account in this analysis, based on an existing process description document, which was written in May 2008 by ICCO officers. A brief learning history of the programme's financing structure was added in October 2008. The process description document has not been included in this study, but can be asked for at the ICCO Access to Basic Services department. The financial addendum is presented in chapter 8.

Each of the selected programmes has its own dynamics. One can discern neither one particular approach (the end result), nor one particular route to developing programmes. The development of all of the programmes varies according to factors such as ICCO's history in the region, the context, the set of partners, the financial situation, and so forth. One important aspect is the fact that some programmes were used as pilots for the programmatic approach. These so-called 'forerunners' (such as the programmes in Mali, Central America, and Liberia) paved the way forward in the absence of examples from existing programmes. However, until today, ICCO has had neither the intention to create a blueprint or format for how to develop a programme, nor has it strictly defined its understanding of what a programme is. As a result, programme officers should be open to exploring, and should be prepared to find answers to the many questions that arise when working towards a programmatic approach.

### 1.4 Outline

This report will set out the different visions and ideas surrounding the programmatic approach (see further Chapter Two), and will present a wide variety of programme designs, the difficulties encountered by their designers, and the problems that continue to demand solutions. The study also draws attention to the similarities between the programmes, and a number of creative solutions for key problems. Chapters 3-8 present the six learning histories and the addendum of the literacy programme in Mali. In the final chapter, we turn back to the issues of similarity and difference, and survey the outstanding questions.





## 2 A vision of the programmatic approach

### 2.1 Developing the concept of the programmatic approach

In 2006, the management of ICCO's Research and Development Department introduced its vision and goals relating to the programmatic approach. A number of papers were produced to elaborate and reflect on the concept, and the implications for implementation and the changes that the approach would have for ICCO's employees and partners. A wiki for internal use was also developed<sup>6</sup>.

The programmatic approach should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of the so-called ProCoDe; that is, the three parallel shifts towards the programmatic approach, co-responsibility, and decentralisation. In addition, ICCO shifted from having a regional structure to having a thematic structure. Moreover, it introduced four roles for the organisation to focus on: strategic funding, capacity development, brokerage, and lobbying and advocacy. In some cases, the resulting papers and discussion documents focused on these multiple changes. In this chapter, and in this document as a whole, we focus only on the programmatic approach.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://iccoaliance.progapproach.pbwiki.com>

At the end of 2006, ICCO's management produced one of the first papers on the programmatic approach, among other issues (the so-called '*startnotitie*'). This paper describes the strategic plans that form an essential part of the ICCO Alliance's 2007-2010 strategic plan, and identifies three main objectives:

1. By 2010, the ICCO Alliance aims to work programmatically in 80% of its focus countries;
2. This should be achieved via close collaboration with its partners;
3. The organisation should move towards becoming an international network organisation.

The paper also identifies four strategies for reaching these objectives:

1. Integrating ICCO's international programme department with that of Kerk in Actie (Church in Action);
2. Cooperation within the ICCO Alliance;
3. A process of decentralisation and co-responsibility with the South;
4. Making the necessary changes within ICCO Alliance.

While the paper does set out the new strategy's implications for the changing roles of ICCO's employees, it does not set out a clear definition of the programmatic approach, or its precise implications. As a result, those ICCO officers who took the first steps towards implementing the programmatic approach could face difficulties when explaining these implications to their partners. This initial period was very much a joint exploratory one. The paper was largely written from an ICCO perspective, and provided little on the partners' perspectives.

In March 2007, a paper entitled "The programmatic approach in the ICCO Alliance – Structure and Background, March 2007" was disseminated amongst the ICCO Alliance's employees. This served as a guiding note for the Alliance's employees to start a dialogue with partners on the new programmatic approach.

In May of the same year, a reflection note on the March paper was written. In this, ICCO reflected critically on the process of change, and suggested that certain issues needed clarification or further exploration:

- The idea of adopting the programmatic approach had general support, but the 'why' question was – as of then – unclear;
  - The March document was too ICCO-centric, and the terminology relating to the programmatic approach remained unclear;
  - It was noted that ICCO was changing in many ways, all of which demanded different ways of working from ICCO's employees. In light of this, which change should be given the highest priority?
  - What were the implications for the partners, and where was the added value? Who should make decisions relating to programme content, design, and the partners involved?
  - The relationship between the decentralisation process and the shift towards a programmatic approach was not yet clear.
- Based on this reflection, ICCO decided that the concept required more elaboration, and that more opportunities for learning from experience should be found. Box 1 in paragraph 1.1 illustrates the different learning trajectories in which ICCO is involved.

To provide some more guidance, a list of questions was drawn up that could be used during the programme development process. This list identified four different phases within the programmatic approach.

1. **Identification phase:** the ICCO Alliance identifies opportunities for a possible programme.
2. **Preparation phase:** together with the various actors in a country/sub-region and ICCO Alliance members, a programme is designed that takes account of the four ICCO roles.
3. **Implementation phase:** agreements are made with all the parties involved (partner organisations, ICCO Alliance members, and possibly others) regarding programme duration, the division of tasks and responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation, and the projects and other activities to be financed.
4. **Follow-up phase:** shortly after the programme ends, an evaluation is made of its effectiveness and the roles played by both partners as Alliance members. This lays the foundations for a follow-up programme.

Each phase involves a range of questions that programme officers can use as a checklist. It should be emphasised that although the process is divided in four stages, in practice, it is anything but a linear process. Nevertheless, the division of the process in four phases provides the opportunity to implement and analyse the programmatic approach in a more schematic way. For this reason, the learning histories in this document are ordered in these phases.

In spring 2008, R&D produced another update on the programmatic approach, in response to the fact that the concept, the terminology used, and its implications for operationalisation remained unclear, to a certain extent, from the point of view of ICCO personnel. The term 'programme' was clarified, and more detailed information offered on the implications and experiences relating to the programmatic approach. This document paid more attention to southern perspectives, meaning that not only were the South's role and ownership listed as important factors, as in earlier documents, but measures for implementation were also covered. Despite this, the roles of ICCO's employees remained rather unclear (*"roles of ICCO employees remain relevant"*), as did the roles of other members of the ICCO Alliance (with one exception being the identified need for further training for ICCO's employees).

ICCO does not aim to provide a blueprint or a manual for the programmatic approach, and intends to determine neither what its result should be, nor the road that should be taken to achieve it. Nevertheless, over the past few years, a basic understanding of the concept has emerged. The word "basic" reflects the fact that the concept is based on certain key elements, but does not provide a blueprint for implementation or operationalisation. These key elements of the programmatic approach are as follows<sup>7</sup>:

1. **Multi-actor cooperation:** cooperation with additional and diverse actors is crucial for really achieving change. Working programmatically can only succeed if a programme's participants are prepared to cooperate with each other and with other actors, are open to new ideas, are prepared to look critically at their own functioning, and are willing to develop.
2. **A common vision and a shared goal:** a programme's participants work on the basis of a common vision, try to achieve a common goal that is specific and attainable, and share ownership.
3. **The process is not exclusive but inclusive:** all parties who want to participate in a programme should be able to be part of it. This means that other, non-development industry actors, such as companies, governments, media, and other donors, could become members.
4. The different participants in the programme have different **roles**, such as financing (part of) the programme, building capacity among the programme's participants (if necessary and if thought to be desirable), lobbying (together) for a common goal, and linking organisations for linking, learning, and cooperation among participants.
5. **Specific knowledge** on a specific topic is needed, and the drivers of change should be identified.
6. The programme's participants should be **complementary** to each other, so as to be able to work more effectively and efficiently.

In addition to these six central elements of the programmatic approach, two further elements can be inferred from the list above. In his analysis of the quality of the programmes under development or being implemented by the ICCO Alliance<sup>8</sup>, Harry Derksen refers to four criteria. Two of these – namely, *ownership* and *added value* – are not included in the list above. Ownership implies that "decisions regarding the specific goal, directions and participants in the programme should be taken by a Southern Programme Alliance. And: the management of the programme is under control of the Southern Alliance." Second, one should not lose track of one's final goal. In the end, ICCO believes that working in a programmatic way should create *added value*: "through their cooperation, partners in the programme alliance are able to reach an added value which they could not have achieved on their own".

## 2.2 Field perspectives on the programmatic approach

As explained in the section above, ICCO's vision of the programmatic approach was developed in various papers that were written by the R&D department. The reflection papers in particular were written with a lot of input from "people on the ground". During the interviews that were held for these learning histories, programme officers and other actors involved came forth with additional, interesting perspectives.

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7 See also: <http://iccoalliance-progapproach.pbwiki.com/watisprogramma>

8 Derksen, Harry (August 2008) *Analysis programmes ICCO Alliance. Memo.*

First, it appears that ICCO's field staff felt the concept to be very much an R&D 'product'. Several times, interviewees mentioned that either their perceptions or the programme that they had worked on "differed from the concept as defined by R&D".

Most interviewees supported the programmatic approach as a valuable instrument for development cooperation. The underlying assumption that ownership and decision-making should be shifted to ICCO's partners in the South was seen as progress.

Most interviewees involved in this learning history emphasised that they did not use a fixed definition of the concept in their work. Most officers employed several of the concept's elements when these were perceived to be useful, not least due to the complex conditions in which programmes are developed. In other words, the interviewees acknowledged the concept's potential, but suggested that putting it into practice had been far from easy.

*"I think that the programmatic approach is an interesting concept: it stimulates cooperation and complementariness." (PO, SFM)*

*"In theory, I think that the programmatic approach is beneficial. In practice, it requires a lot of work, both for partners and for ICCO. Starting up demands a rather large investment, both in terms of time and in terms of money. I think ICCO is quite pretentious regarding its four roles." (PO)*

*"In theory, the programmatic approach sounds perfect. It lays the foundations for linking and learning activities, and it stimulates a complementary approach. However, implementation is difficult. It requires partners to cooperate. Cooperation should start from within and should not be created by the 'stick' of funding. Moreover, some partners see each other as competitors." (Post-doc trainee, NFE)*

*"I feel confident with the concept. Within ICCO, different meanings and opinions exist, which in the final two and half years have shifted continuously. I don't think that our programme is 100% programmatic, but we look for those elements and opportunities that comply with the programmatic approach, and link these to ICCO's four roles.*

*I do not believe that this programme is the ideal programme, in the sense that R&D originally planned it. R&D's aim was that a programme could run without the need for ICCO's influence. I think that a programme should be a modality, not an institution." (PO PSJ)*

*"My opinion does not really diverge from ICCO's definition. My definition of the programmatic approach is a working method whereby a diverse set of actors cooperates to solve a problem that they cannot solve or address on their own. Thus, they have a joint goal and work with diverse types of actors, each bringing their own strengths. I believe that it is important to have a multi-actor approach, but the multi-layered aspect is critical, as this enables one to act both at the grassroots level and at a higher, political level. Actually, this is often to be perceived to be crucial by partners. However, sometimes it is difficult to find diverse partners that can cooperate, as they have different working methods and approaches. The programmatic approach is also flexible enough to adjust to ad hoc opportunities and changes." (PS CB)*

*"Within ICCO, we should communicate more about the programmatic approach. My predecessor had a very explicit vision of the programmatic approach: one programme, one goal, and one financial plan. I thought this was the only possible layout for a programme. When I took over the portfolio and the programme design, I thought that this was the only way to go. Now, I have learned that my predecessor's vision is the unique one, when I compare it with other programmes within ICCO." (PO PB)*

*"I have not seen a blueprint or framework for programme financing from R&D. That is great, as blueprints tend to erode local ownership of processes. It was hard for the programme officer to experiment in the absence of guidance or other examples on which to base the programme, however." (PS CB)*

### **An ICCO-initiated concept**

All of the interviewees perceived the concept as an ICCO-led initiative, that was to be communicated to the partners and launched in cooperation with them. In general, the programme officers informed ICCO's partners about these new developments within ICCO during partner meetings. The general view among the interviewees was that there is nothing wrong with an ICCO-initiated programme, as long as southern actors are able to take the process forward.

ICCO sees its role as one of encouraging the partners to be enthusiastic about the concept, and helping them to recognise a potential programme's added value.

*“Cooperation is not common in Liberia. At the very beginning, the partners were not very enthusiastic about the idea of cooperation. However, during the first workshop, in which we launched the idea of working in a more complementary way, I could see the partners beginning to trust each other more, and to experience certain benefits as a result.” (PO1, PB)*

In some cases, additional persuasion from ICCO was required in order to make the partners aware of the programmatic approach's potential benefits. Moving from a conceptual understanding to implementation was perceived to be particularly difficult.

*“The programme officer shared his thoughts on the new programmatic approach. The participants recognised the benefits of this approach, but it has not been put into practice since. Ideas have been shared regarding coordination and implementation, but no concrete agreements have been made. The approach thus remains somewhat abstract.” (Partner, SFM)*

*“I think that it is logical to assume that working according to the programmatic approach will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of individual organisations, as their strengths and capacities will be combined. However, this approach is unusual. And little is known about it. Innovation is challenging, and demands time and commitment from both ICCO and its partners.” (Partner, DTAT)*

The concept can be difficult to grasp at a theoretical level, which sometimes led to different interpretations from those intended by ICCO's R&D Department. In addition, for partners, the many changes that were occurring within ICCO were sometimes thought to be rather confusing.

*“During an in-depth dialogue with one of the partners following the partner meeting, I discovered that the partner did not fully understand why ICCO had changed its scope, and what this would mean for the programme's content and process. It is possible that other partners also do not fully understand our ideas.” (Travel report 2007 PO, SFM)*

*“We are now trying to adopt a programmatic approach for the future, and to look holistically at the entire organisation's activities. We usually submit one project report to each donor, but with ICCO we take a programmatic approach and make one report. We not only look to our project, but also to the development of our organisation.” (Partner, LMD)*

### **Gaining added value from cooperation**

ICCO's programme officers generally agree that complementariness and added value are strengths associated with the programmatic approach. It is commonly thought that a programme involves, or should involve, a structure of relationships in which various organisations work. When compared with how organisations act individually, it is clear that this structure creates added value. In addition, linking heterogeneous organisations, such as grassroots organisations and national-level organisations, allows these organisations to complement one other, in the sense that they work on the same objective from different perspectives. For this reason, it is frequently suggested that reaching this level of complementarity is anything but an easy process.

*“Taking a programmatic approach is not as simple as having a set of partners that are grouped together because they have the same objective. It rather implies linking different organisations and stimulating cooperation. It means enhancing activities that organisations would not be able to carry out on their own, but that together with others become possible. It would imply that the total becomes more than the sum of the individual parts.” (TA1 PSJ)*


*“What makes people collaborate in this programme? If you want to work together, you must have either a common need (e.g. you have a broad lobbying coalition, or a joint learning need); or a common threat (e.g. a draft law that threatened to undermine civil society in a particular country, or a common adversary). You don't need to agree on everything. The key to cooperation is finding a common need or a common threat, and identifying who can complement your efforts. If there do not appear to be any common issues or threats, then collaboration would seem to be unnecessary and ICCO should not insist on it. Unless, of course, the organisations*

*have a poor understanding of the context in which they operate and cannot see the common issues. In that case, ICCO could facilitate a better understanding of the context, and a rethink of the organisations' strategies." (RD, June 2008, PSJ)*

When cooperating in this way, each actor has to visualise the benefits of taking a programmatic approach, as this will motivate organisations to contribute and commit to the programme. In other words, if what is to be gained by taking a programmatic approach remains unclear, then organisations are likely to be hesitant to commit fully to the programme's design and implementation.

*"Working in a programme means working together, cooperating, and coordinating. Working together is an investment; it takes time, energy and reduces individual freedoms. Participants only will invest if they can gain or benefit from it. Benefits could be seen as, for example, becoming informed, having more impact, access to better resources and/or enjoying increased legitimacy."*

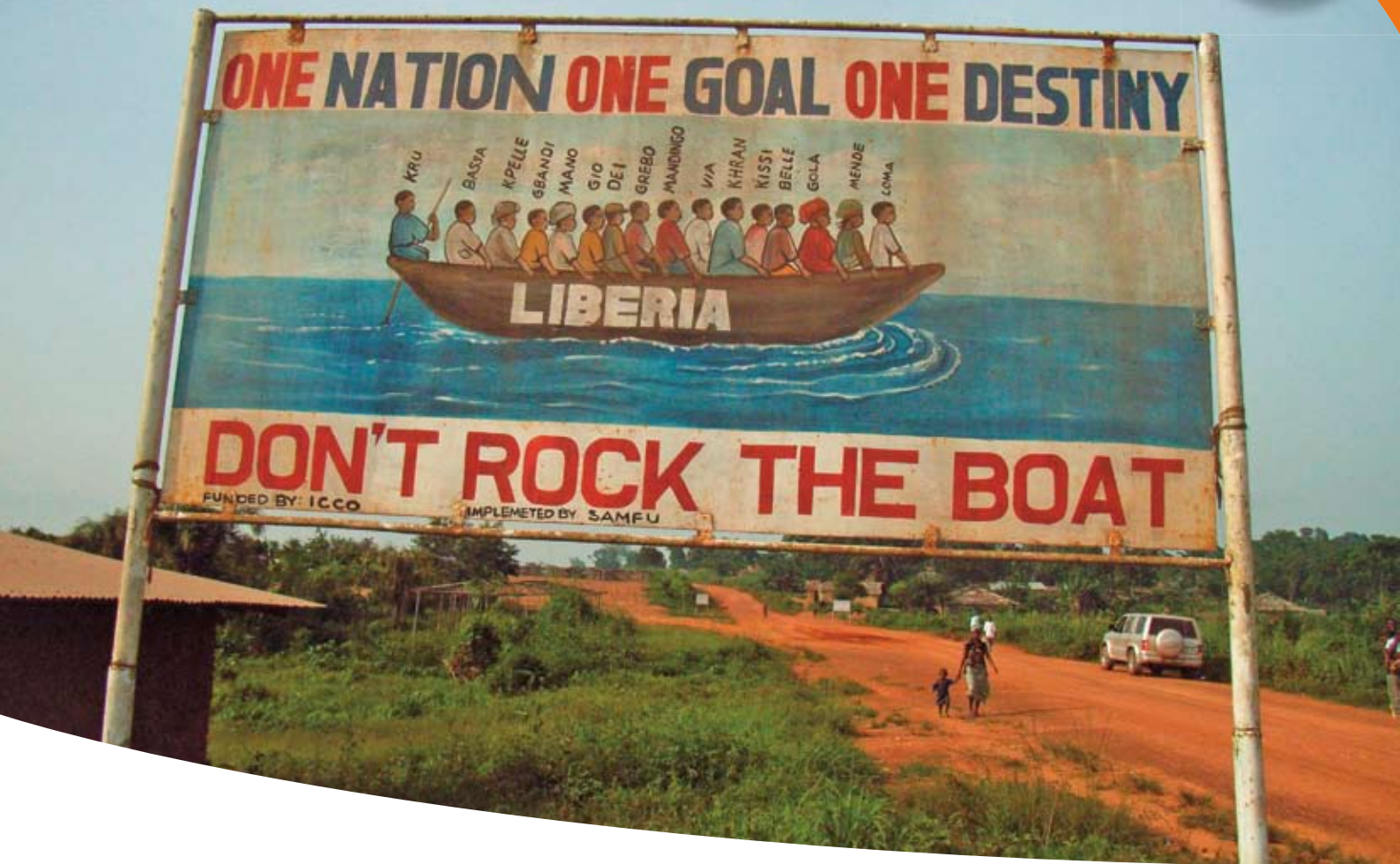
*(Consultants, report Aug 2006, Liberia)*



*Key issues are listed here: time, energy, cooperation, benefits...*

## **2.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has briefly discussed the development of the concept of the programmatic approach, and set out some of the views taken by ICCO's management, staff, and partners. Over time, the concept has developed from one that was originally based on results, to a concept that covers the essential elements of an ideal programme. This transformation has resulted from ongoing reflection on how the programmatic approach has fared in practice, and a solid conviction that no programme should be expected to follow a step-by-step plan. In the next six chapters, we offer an in-depth description of this developing process.



### 3 The Peacebuilding Programme, Liberia

ICCO and Kerk in Actie have worked intermittently in Liberia since the 1980s, particularly in the areas of community development, health, and vocational training. In 2001, ICCO decided to phase out its activities in Liberia. In 2002, however, ICCO decided to reinforce its Liberia programme, due to its intention to cooperate strategically with another Dutch NGO. The programme focused on peacebuilding and democratisation. In addition, together with the Dutch NGO, ICCO continued to provide emergency relief. At times, the civil war prevented projects from being implemented, and the end of the war proved to be a particularly turbulent period.

The civil war ended in 2003. A lot of donor funding entered Liberia as a result, and there was a shift in focus from emergency interventions to rehabilitation projects. As a result of the war, Liberian organisations had little capacity in areas such as management and financial administration. ICCO and Kerk in Actie responded to the new situation by focusing on peace- and capacity building.

In 2005, the country held its first democratic elections. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected, becoming the first female African president. These positive changes put Liberians in a very optimistic mood.

ICCO initiated a capacity-building trajectory in Liberia in 2005. The peacebuilding programme commenced at the end of 2007, the main goal of which was to promote sustainable peacebuilding as the basis for socio-economic development. The objectives were to:

- Strengthen NGOs' institutional capacity
- Improve NGOs' support services to Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) in the areas of rehabilitation, reintegration, reconciliation, and stimulating socio-economic development
- Strengthen NGOs' capacity for networking, lobbying and advocacy
- Increase political awareness and participation
- Increase attention to gender issues within civil society and government

Five clusters, each with their own objectives, are currently operational:

1. Reconciliation
2. Community empowerment
3. Trauma healing
4. Youth and education
5. Community governance and advocacy

The following people were involved in this learning history:

- PO1: programme officer Liberia, 2003 – Spring 2007
- PO2: programme officer Liberia, Spring 2007 – Summer 2008
- PS: programme specialist capacity building, involved in the programme since April 2008

Documents:

*Consultants' Report on Peacebuilding Programme Liberia* (August 2006) Referred to as "Consultants"

*Travel Report programme officer* (July 2006 and November 2006)

*Travel Report by programme specialist capacity building* (April 2008)

*Conclusion from a Trip to Liberia, programme officer* (November 2007)

*Programme Plan* (January 2008)

Data collection took place between July and September 2008.

## IDENTIFICATION PHASE

2003 – July 2006

### Facts and figures

2003	A new programme officer starts work on the Liberia portfolio.
2004	The programme officer asks IC Consult to provide partners with capacity-building services.
2005	Start of a ten-month inception phase for a capacity-building programme. An ICCO partner (Partner A) is contracted to provide capacity-building services.
2003 – 2005	The programme officer expands the number of partners from six to approximately 15.
July 2006	ICCO organises a workshop to evaluate the overall Liberian project portfolio (capacity building and all bilaterally-funded projects). Instead of evaluating past projects, the workshop focuses on the future, and aims to adopt a programmatic approach to working with partner organisations. The result is a shared vision between ICCO and its partners regarding collaboration on peacebuilding, consisting of a programmatic approach featuring five sub-themes. In the months following this workshop, Partner A is contracted to facilitate the programme design. An umbrella organisation, Partner B, is selected to chair the Steering Committee, which includes the overall lead and the cluster lead agencies. Assessments of target groups (per cluster) are planned.



## Peace creates optimism: the first steps towards a programmatic approach

The civil war had just ended when the programme officer started to work on the Liberia portfolio in 2003. The focus of support had shifted from emergency work to more structural support for peacebuilding. When he started to work on the Liberia portfolio, the programme officer sought to identify new partners.

*“In the early years of peace, ICCO’s partners were not very diverse. Missing perspectives were searched for and new partners became included in the ICCO portfolio.” (Consultant)*

In 2004, the programme officer asked IC Consult to start providing its partners with capacity-building services. Using PSO support, a German consultant visited Liberia for an identification mission regarding capacity building. In 2005, this mission resulted in a ten-month inception phase for a capacity-building programme. An ICCO partner, Partner A, was contracted to provide capacity-building services.

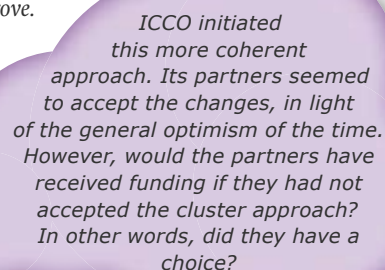
*“ICCO’s partners survived this difficult period after the war by continuing to work in the best way possible, on an ad hoc basis using the scarce funds available. Slowly, small emergency funds became available via ICCO. Some partners succeeded in implementing dispersed activities. However, some of the partners lost human capacity to large international emergency organisations. In addition, being pragmatic, these NGOs functioned as subcontractors for larger international NGOs, and did not invest in their capacity for planning and monitoring.” (PO1 2004)*

The newly peaceful Liberian context seemed to be a major factor behind the partners’ optimistic outlook, and this optimism, in turn, gave momentum to the move to work programmatically. Although at this time, ICCO had not yet developed its programmatic approach, the programme officer was striving for more coherence in the Liberia portfolio. In July 2006, he planned an evaluation of the overall portfolio, covering both bilateral projects and the capacity-building programme. Two consultants, one from IC Consult and a US-based native Liberian, facilitated the resulting workshop.

*“In those days, ICCO often carried out project-based evaluations. I found this inefficient, and wanted to find out the extent to which projects were contributing to overall goals in the new context of peace. This required a different approach: not judging what had gone right or wrong, but identifying what had happened and assessing the overall impact of partners’ efforts. The result was that all of the partners were doing their jobs, but that we had an incoherent gathering of projects in one country. I felt that I should have looked at an earlier stage at the overall composition of the set of partners that I was working with. Although nobody within ICCO had demanded this, or was actually doing it, I wanted a more coherent approach. As a result, I took a cluster approach.” (PO1)*

According to the programme officer, the Liberian partners seemed to be somewhat hesitant to adopt this cluster approach, and lacked experience beyond their own organisational scope. However, the positive changes occurring in Liberia may well have contributed to the partners’ willingness to go along with the ideas that ICCO introduced in the workshop.

*“The two consultants facilitated sessions with the objective of finding out how cooperation could improve. At the beginning of the workshop, none of the partners were interested in cooperation. They all did their work, and that was it. However, during the second day of the workshop, we did an exercise in which we looked at how we could work in complementary ways. Partners were asked to select themes or clusters of themes that the organisation could work on. This was the initiation of the four clusters. Unfortunately, all of the large and most capable organisations were united in one cluster, rather than there being diversification within clusters. It could have been divided up in a better way.” (PO1)*



*ICCO initiated this more coherent approach. Its partners seemed to accept the changes, in light of the general optimism of the time. However, would the partners have received funding if they had not accepted the cluster approach? In other words, did they have a choice?*

*“The positive developments following the war put Liberians in a very optimistic mood. They were open to new ideas and models. The evaluation turned out to be mainly a planning exercise, as the partners very much wanted to look forward and to identify modes of future cooperation. It was in this optimistic context that the idea of cooperation between the partners was introduced. The partners were seeing opportunities rather than obstacles, and the practical implications had not been realised. The programme officer took the first steps towards initiating the programmatic approach. With this momentum, the thematic clusters came into being.” (PO2)*

The result of the workshop was that the partners, facilitated by Partner A, worked on programmes within the selected clusters over the following months. One of these clusters had already been established, due to a pre-existing EU project.

The consultants question the need for a form of cooperation that feels as imposed from the donor's side. They suggest that successful cooperation in Liberia is unique, claiming that there are many examples of networking, but few successful ones. The programme officer also suggests that the Liberian partners should become more interested in networking.

*"The issue of networking, creating alliances or other forms of cooperation, is very critical in Liberia. There are many examples of networking initiatives, but most of them failed, due to political cooptation, internal competition for resources, and low capacity of network leadership and administration." (Consultants)*

The consultants give sharp feedback with regard to the top-down approach of the new programmatic approach. They emphasise partners' drive to join the programme as if it is for the funds.

*"Some of the ICCO partners mentioned that they don't have much in common, which makes it difficult for true networking and cooperation. One of the main critiques of the programme is that the participants do not share a vision or an analysis on the current and future situation of Liberia, and there even has not been a real effort with sufficient time to create something in common. The programme has become quickly operational, without even making true agreements on how to do things together. The participants have not defined their investments and benefits to the programme and have joined mostly since financial resources came along the line." (Consultants, report Aug 2006)*



“Our prominent question is why do all different partner organisations (specialised in environmental protection, human rights, health, etc.) had to go into the handwork of peacebuilding on community level? Why not specialise on levels and fields/themes, instead of the current geographic approach or focus.

In that sense we have to say clearly that ICCO’s programme on Peacebuilding is not a programme yet [HP: date of writing is August 2006]. First of all the participants, or it is better speaking of the owners of the program, have to make explicit their motives why they want to work together in a program. These motives could be different for each participant, but at least have to be agreed on. Then programming as a process becomes relevant in which participants will have time to grow together and exchange crucial elements, joyful and painful at the same time. Joint understanding, vision and trust building will become the direct conditional effects of these programming efforts, before we could speak of a joint impact on the society.” (Consultants)

The preconditions for a programme development process are a shared understanding, shared vision, and building trust.

The programme officer perceived that partners indeed were not very enthusiastic about the issue of networking and cooperation, but that they became more enthusiastic along the way.

“Cooperation is not common in Liberia. At the very beginning, the partners were not very enthusiastic about the idea of cooperation. However, during the workshop, I could see the partners begin to trust one another more, and to experience certain benefits as a result.” (PO1)

One key issue raised above is the need for a shared analysis or vision, a shared objective, and some level of cooperation. The consultants suggest above that a genuinely shared vision or objective was lacking. The programme officer states that they worked towards a common vision, but lacked common objectives.

“We defined a common vision in the workshop. In the period after the workshop the common goals would be finalised.” (PO1)

The first thoughts of a more coherent approach arose before ICCO launched the new concept of the programmatic approach. The programme officer felt the need for more coherence and complementarity, and seemed able to pass on his enthusiasm to the partners. The consultants, however, reflect somewhat more critical to this process, emphasizing that it was ICCO that launched the new approach, and partners had no other option than going along, as they depend on funds.

## PREPARATION PHASE - PROGRAMME DESIGN July 2006 - November 2007

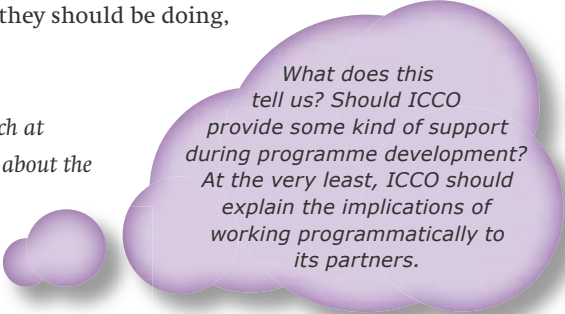
### Facts and figures

Nov. 2006	A meeting takes place in Liberia, facilitated by one of the consultants who had previously facilitated the July workshop. The goal is to develop the programme design.
Apr. 2007	A new programme officer takes over the Liberia portfolio. Both the programme officer and her predecessor visit Liberia in order to attend a new workshop, among other things. The objective is to develop pilot programmes around the four cooperative clusters, with June 2007 as a deadline.  The assessments that were planned in July 2006 have not taken place, with one exception. No mapping process or stakeholder analysis has been carried out.
June 2007	The programme officer receives three proposals. She waits until she has received all of the proposals, as the fourth (and largest) cluster’s proposal will have a significant impact on the entire budget. This results in a delay to the start of the programmes for the three other clusters.
Oct. 2007	The programme officer receives the fourth proposal.
Nov. 2007	The programmes are ready to start, but ICCO delays implementation for administrative reasons.
Dec. 2007	Implementation of the pilot programmes commences.

## A long and slow process

After the workshop in July 2006, it took another 18 months of programme design before implementation could commence. It had been the intention to produce the programme plans between the July 2006 and April 2007 workshops. When the programme officers visited Liberia in April 2007, however, it appeared that nothing had been done. Several factors contributed to this situation. First, although the partners were relatively enthusiastic about the cluster approach, its implications remained unclear. Partners were unsure of what they should be doing, and how they should be doing it.

*“Although I think that the partners were rather enthusiastic about the cluster approach at the July workshop, they did have questions about its implications. The partners asked about the possibility of undertaking individual partner programmes, aside from the joint programme. I replied that bilateral funding would be available, although it would decline.” (Travel Report PO1, November 2006)*



*What does this tell us? Should ICCO provide some kind of support during programme development? At the very least, ICCO should explain the implications of working programmatically to its partners.*

*“When I visited Liberia for the first time in April 2007, it appeared that hardly any progress had been made since autumn 2006. I believe this was not due to a lack of support from the partners, but simply because the process of adopting a programmatic approach is a difficult one. Partners fear for their stable bilateral relationships with ICCO and, inherently, their funding. At that time, there were four clusters, and different partners had applied to join more than one cluster. Partners wanted to spread the risk, and they viewed all the themes as equally important. We agreed that an organisation could only select one theme for the pilot phase. Furthermore, I reassured the partners that if the proposals were of sufficient quality, then all of the partners that were involved in the preparation phase would remain part of the financing scheme until the summer of 2008. An evaluation carried after the pilot phase would form the basis for further decisions about the selection of partners.” (PO2)*

*“The set of partners is rather heterogeneous. In addition, partners have different histories with ICCO and Kerk in Actie. Some organisations had already established long-term relationships with ICCO or Kerk in Actie, while others had started to work with ICCO in 2003. This caused some friction. The newer partners took a more flexible attitude to the changes brought in by ICCO, while the longer-term partners experienced the shift as one of the various developments that ICCO had been through. They felt more insecure and acted in a less flexible way.” (PO2)*

Second, the facilitating organisation, Partner A, and the particular individual who had been selected for this job, lacked the ability to actually facilitate the process.

*“Facilitation during the process was meagre. There was a change of workshop facilitators, which resulted in a loss of momentum. Furthermore, the person from Partner A was incapable of facilitating the design process. His mandate was unclear to the different organisations involved, so they did not contact him. He was more comfortable with the smaller organisations, so he focused on those. It must be said that we did realise that the goals we had set were too ambitious for Partner A, but maybe they were also too ambitious in general.*

*In May 2007, Partner A’s contract ended, but lacking an alternative for the facilitation role, we signed for another term with the partner. I was not happy about that, but felt that I had no choice.” (PO2)*

Third, the many changes occurring within ICCO delayed the process, and made partners insecure about ICCO’s intentions.

*“After the July 2006 meeting, the programme officer worked hard on other issues. Partners waited for instructions from ICCO. Also, the change of programme officer caused some delay, as it was quite difficult to oversee the whole process, especially regarding the finances within the clusters and the relationships and trust-building with partners. In April 2007, the process picked up again. Within ICCO, we have actually discovered that the cluster approach is rather exceptional. The programme is extremely innovative, but it is difficult to translate this into Dynamics. Fortunately, these delays did not lessen the partners’ enthusiasm and commitment.” (Reflection document November 2007, PO2)*

The partners also became more committed due to ICCO's openness about the delays, and its apologies.

*"The partners reacted admirably to the unclear issues and delays. They really were relieved when I expressed the fact that to some extent, ICCO was forcing its partners to work programmatically. This was received as, 'glad that you say so...'. They also reacted positively to my apologies for the delays on our side. The partners say that few donors admit that they cause some problems themselves."*  
(Reflection document November 2007, PO2)

### **It takes a long time to design a programme, doesn't it?**

The two consultants who facilitated the July 2006 workshop suggest that time is a crucial factor in programme development, not only in terms of developing the actual programme, but also in terms of building up trusting relationships with partners.

*"Some conditions for programming are relevant to mention. First of all the participants need to have time and space to sit, reflect, experiment, create and learn. If everyone is caught up in project activities, this condition is absent. Secondly, strong relations and trust is indispensable. This needs to be built by time, and is crucial in post war situations."* (Consultants)

The programme officers also realised that time was a crucial factor in the programme design process. However, they were caught between ICCO regulations and the need to provide partners with enough time. For example, the programme officer decided to set a deadline for the submission of proposals, but realised that this would entail giving partners short notice.

*"I realised that the June 2007 deadline was giving short notice for finishing the programme proposals. However, if we were to take longer, the money would not be available anymore. Therefore, I decided that the projects would be pilots, which meant that the proposals would not have to be perfect."* (PO2)



## From a distance

When the new programme officer started to work on Liberia, she felt a little footloose. She only had direct contact with the lead organisations, and found it difficult to establish a clear picture of what was going on in the clusters and in the programme development process.

*“When I started, it had been agreed that communication would be channelled through the cluster leads. I could not approach partners individually, as this might result in the re-opening of bilateral communication channels. I had jumped on a riding train, It was not wise to break off that role, not least because it would hinder the cluster approach, but it was also difficult to develop a clear understanding of what was really happening.” (PO2)*

In addition, the clusters were not elaborating the demands of target groups.

*“In Liberia, many NGOs were not voicing community needs, but were acting as subcontractors for international and UN organisations. This resulted in some of our partners having poor links with their target groups, and therefore lacking a clear focus on the latter’s demands. Assessments undertaken by each cluster were supposed to give more insights into community needs, but these were not carried out. The facilitating organisation, Partner A, hardly gave any support to the different clusters carrying out identification exercises, and he only worked with the smallest cluster. In the end, the assessment methodology was not objective enough, and the assessment was more or less presented as confirmation of their common activities. The other clusters seemed to have discussed the problem in the office, but nothing was put on paper. It was difficult to learn about the rationales for each cluster.” (PO2)*

## Cooperation and dependency

Cooperation is a key aspect of the programmatic approach. As the partners signed up to the four clusters, they suddenly had to go from what was in most cases an individual approach to work, to cooperating with other organisations. This was not self-evident at the time.

*“The partners were diverse, which did not simplify cooperation. For example, in one of the four clusters, the organisations had similar themes, but the types of organisation differed. One organisation was a national lobbying organisation, and the other was a community-based organisation. The nationally-oriented organisation felt superior to the other, and cooperation did not work out. In the end, we decided to make some changes to the composition of the clusters, as we foresaw that cooperation would not otherwise succeed.” (PO2)*

In contradiction to the last statement, the programme specialist mentions that to a certain extent, the partners cooperated because they were all members of Partner B’s umbrella organisation, which facilitate cooperation. Moreover, the fact that they were located close to one other meant that it was quick and easy to make connections.

*“If you have to build a programme with a set of partners that do not know one other, it becomes a difficult process. In Liberia, however, many of the partners knew one other, and some of them were already working in the same network, which creates trust. When you travel to Liberia, you see that many partners are located in the same area. The distances involved are very short. Different organisations already know one other. The cooperation that is part of the programmatic approach is not such a big deal for partners, as the fact that they know one other very well provides a basis for trust. This makes it easier for ICCO.”(PS)*

The partners viewed the inclusion of new partners as undesirable. The programme officer therefore reassured the partners that funds would be available for all partners who were involved in the preparation process, provided that the quality of the partners’ contributions were sufficient.

*“I sensed the partners’ hesitation to include new partners. Therefore, I promised the partners that those who were involved in the preparation phase would receive funds for the pilot if the proposals were of sufficient quality.” (PO2)*

The programme officer felt that cooperation in the clusters was difficult, as the different organisations were rather heterogeneous. However, the search for new partners ended following the inclusion of about ten new partner organisations, when the programme officer (PO1) started work in Liberia.

*“Once the programme officer had searched for many different partners during his first years in Liberia, he did not look for new partners during the programme design period. He worked with the same set of 16 partners that he used to work with. He was not so much considering which kind of partners he needed for the programme, than looking for the cluster that would be most suitable for his set of partners. However, during this process of choosing clusters, partners exercised ownership.” (PS)*

*“Another time I would probably search for more coherence in the set of partners. I only started to look for more coherence after I had selected various new partners. Next time, I will be more careful during this process.” (PO1)*

The fact that the partners prepared joint proposals meant that they had a certain degree of dependency on one other. When the programme officer received only three proposals in June 2007, she felt that she had to wait for the fourth proposal, as she would not be able to make decisions about funds before she knew the details of the fourth plan.

*“At the time I received three cluster pilot proposals, I could not assign funds for these projects until I had seen the fourth, which was from the largest cluster. I had no idea what the budget would be. Suddenly, all of the Liberian NGOs that had joined this network had become very dependent on one other.” (PO2)*

### **Structures and mandates**

A Steering Committee was appointed during the July 2006 workshop, consisting of Partner B (an umbrella organisation) and the lead organisation from each cluster. The committee was responsible for overall coordination of the programme, and at a later stage, they would do the reporting for the full peacebuilding programme and exchange information. Partner A was appointed to facilitate the programme design phase, in addition to its capacity-building programme. During a visit to Liberia in November 2007, the programme officer drew certain conclusions about the Steering Committee and the clusters' lead agents, which at that time had been operational for about one year.

*“I believe the Steering Committee is well designed, with regard to chairing and the participation of lead agents from all clusters. This is an important element for programme coherence. In practice, however, some problems have been encountered.*

- *The division of tasks between the chair (Partner B) and the capacity-building organisation that is also the facilitator of the Steering Committee (Partner A) is unclear;*
- *The people delegated by the lead agents sometimes lack capacity;*
- *Thematic coordination is needed in order to increase programme coherence.*

*I was surprised to see some lead agents performing better than I had expected, although some performed less well than I had expected. In the next period, I will monitor this process more. This will be aided by the fact that now I really have a better understanding of the relationships between partners.” (Reflection document November 2007, PO2)*

The US-based consultant who had facilitated the July 2006 workshop was appointed as the conceptual facilitator. The two consultants acknowledged the importance of this latter role. Although the programme officer was happy with this choice, the Liberian partners doubted whether this would be the most suitable person to facilitate the programme design process. In the end, the consultant played a minor role in the process.

*“The programming process needs to be facilitated by some one who is not part of the programme itself, but who knows the ins and outs, who can work on the content level and the relation level, who can safeguard the dynamics and speed, and who feels responsible for developing the capacity of the programme as a whole.” (Consultants)*

*“The conceptual facilitator facilitates and coordinates the process of formulating a programme. He is aware of current developments in Liberia. He is an external consultant and therefore he has no personal interest in the programme. He is helping to build trust within the group of partners.*

*However, the partners question the conceptual facilitator's role. If the Steering Committee were to find the role of the conceptual facilitator to be unnecessary, then I would accept their opinion. Moreover, I believe that the partners' knowledge and experience should be utilised as far possible. It has been agreed that Partner A and the Steering Committee will determine whether an external consultant will be hired. They will design a ToR and look for an expert.” (PO1, travel report November 2006)*

*“You cannot really speak of a conceptual facilitator. This consultant only flew in [to Liberia] once more, and that was it.” (PO2)*

The programme officer felt that he should avoid intervening too much, as the programme should be designed ‘from within’. However, looking back on the process, the perception was that the process of programme design was largely dependent on the programme officer.

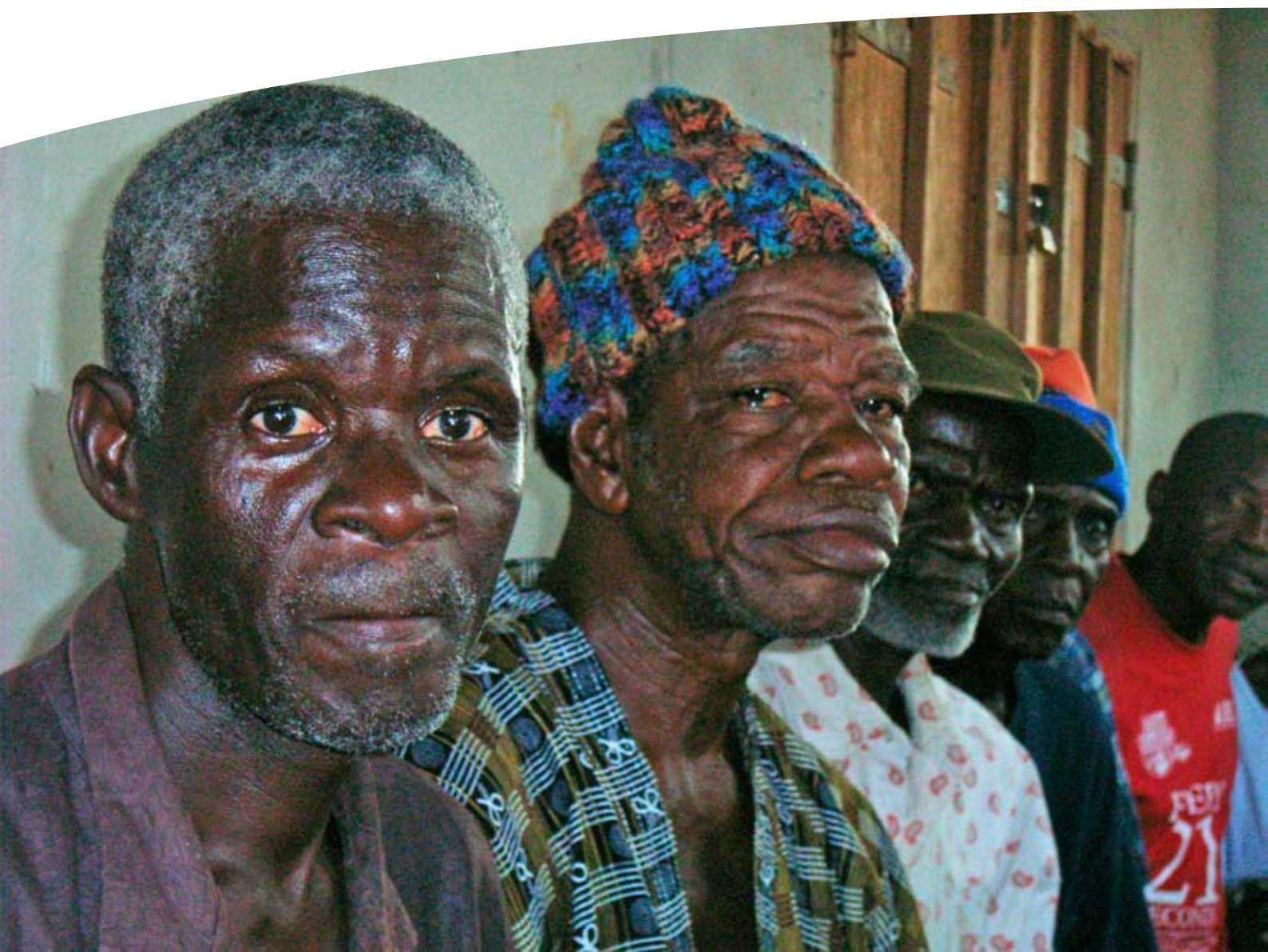
*“The programme’s success is partly due to the entrepreneurship of the (first) programme officer. He had the guts to present the ICCO plan. Often, colleagues are hesitant to assume a dominant or leading role, as it is frequently felt that change should come from the inside. Moreover, the programme officer was convinced of the added value of taking a programmatic approach. This gave passion to his communication, meant he had a vision, and created enthusiasm among the partners.” (PS)*

*“My role was not that dominant, as that would suggest it was donor-driven. I was merely aiming to take a certain (professional) distance from the partners and avoid simply complying with the partners’ wishes.” (PO1)*

*“The development of the programme went quite smoothly where the peacebuilding theme was concerned. Long before ICCO introduced a programmatic approach, the Liberian partners had formed coalitions.” (PO2)*

### **Financing**

Kerk in Actie and ICCO started to cooperate. Kerk in Actie shifted from providing emergency relief to providing more structural support (peacebuilding), resulting in less budget. ICCO had increased funds for supporting peacebuilding in Liberia. Overall, there was an increased budget for Liberia.





Financing was arranged via the clusters, with the partners no longer receiving bilateral financial support. The lead agents from the different clusters and the overall programme coordination received ICCO funds. As a result, ICCO only had direct contact with the leads. Part of the Liberia budget was meant for overall programme- and programme development costs. The first programme officer perceived this as an ideal structure for stimulating ownership and decision-making by the partners.

*“I wanted to stimulate central funding, rather than bilateral funding. This had to do with ownership and ‘growing up’. Partners could or should learn to decide for themselves. This also had to do with the programme officers. In the co-responsibility process, current programme officers will have to hand over control of their programmes to their southern partners. Even though programme officers feel that ‘their’ programmes are somehow their own, they are not: programmes belong to the partners!” (PO1)*

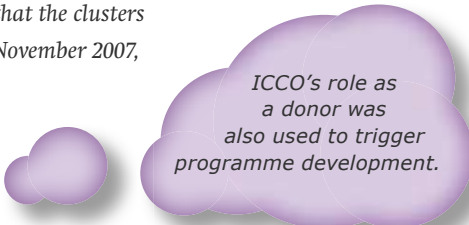
*“In the partner meeting (in November 2006), I answered a question related to the financing structure. I said that each sector group would open a bank account, which would not be in a partner’s name, but in a programme cluster’s name. Representatives of the partner organisations would determine the budget per partner. Following approval, budgets could be transmitted from ICCO to the partners’ individual bank accounts.” (PO1 travel report Nov 2006)*

*“Partners appeared to find this unclear.” (PO2)*

In practice, both ICCO and the partners found the shift in decision-making from ICCO to the Liberian partners to be a difficult one. On the one hand, ICCO had certain ideas regarding programme financing, and was used to playing the role of donor. On the other hand, the partners had to get used to their new roles.

*“Regarding contract arrangements, we should define within ICCO what we want to include in cluster contracts. In particular, the roles and responsibilities of the lead agents should be determined, regarding management, finances and content: control over the complete set of finances, uniform budget planning, uniform cluster time plan, reflection on common goals, and so forth. Until now, all partners have committed to creating MoUs, despite the many consultations that have been needed. Partner A provided insufficient coaching on this point. A positive factor is that the clusters have put effort into making agreements among themselves.” (Reflection document November 2007, PO2)*

*“Funding for projects was only provided via short-term contracts, for example eight-month contracts, in order to keep the programme alive.” (PO2)*

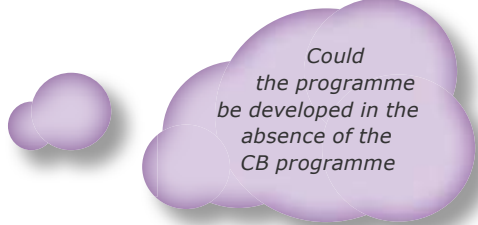


ICCO’s role as a donor was also used to trigger programme development.

### **A simultaneous capacity-building trajectory**

At the same time that the programme was being designed, a capacity-building trajectory was underway. While technically these were two distinct processes, there were also links between them.

*“The capacity-building trajectory and preparing for a programmatic approach involved a lot of change for partners. The capacity-building project helped partners to recognise their strengths and how a complementary approach would benefit their work.” (PO2)*



Could the programme be developed in the absence of the CB programme

When the programme officer travelled to Liberia in November 2007, the programme was ready to start. This was an inspiration for her and for the partners alike.

*“This trip has mapped out a route for the next phase: not only because the funds are about to be transferred, but also because the meetings have again confirmed the joint programme.” (Reflection document November 2007, PO2)*

The programme design was a challenging process for both partners and ICCO officers. From the first workshop in July 2006, it took another one and half year before the programme could start implementing. This section proves us that the design of a programmatic approach has been difficult for both ICCO as partners. No framework could guide the programme officers, and many issues they faced along the way could not be foreseen. For partners, unclear per-

spectives on what implications a programmatic approach would bring, and no clear vision on what steps to take seem the major two reasons for delay. This lack of visibility is partly due to the low capacity of the programme facilitator, appointed from one partner organisation. In the end, it has been valued positively that the programme officer apologized for certain issues, which proves to partners that also ICCO is learning from these processes. In November 2007, partners were positive that the programme could take off.

## IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

December 2007 – to date

### Facts and figures

Dec. 2007	Programme implementation commences. The total programme will last three years, starting with an eight-month pilot.
Apr. 2008	The programme officer and the programme specialist Capacity Building visit Liberia. The programme specialist has been asked to support the capacity-building programme. During this trip, a partner meeting occurs that is entitled, “Unlocking our Potential”. The objective is to review and deepen partners’ understanding of the achievements, challenges and ways forward for the Liberia Peacebuilding and Democracy Programme. Partners express dissatisfaction with programme management and Partner A’s facilitation. It is decided that Partner B will take over the facilitation role, in the person of the workshop’s facilitator.
July 2008	The person who would have become responsible for programme coordination within Partner B leaves the organisation.
Summer '08	The programme officer receives the pilot reports slightly later than expected.
Sept. 2008	The programme officer and the programme specialist decide to send a Dutch consultant to Liberia for assistance.
Oct. 2008	The programme officer receives new proposals for the future programme.

### The Liberian partners and the programme

Implementation of the programme commenced in December 2007. Four months later, the programme officer travelled to Liberia to meet with the partners. Thirty-six participants from 18 partner organisations attended this meeting, and two local facilitators were responsible for the agenda. The meeting had four core objectives:

- Examining the programme’s relevance to national development, target beneficiaries, partner organisations, and conflict transformation in Liberia.
- Rethinking the cluster approach: reviewing what had and had not worked, and making suggestions for change.
- Reviewing the management and administrative challenges.
- Developing strategies for improvement and reviewing capacity-building interventions.

The programme officer was surprised by the partners’ level of support for the programmatic approach. The latter did express some criticisms of programme management.

*“When I travelled to Liberia in April 2008, I expected to hear a lot of criticism from the partners. Also, I expected quite a few of the partners to support a move back to bilateral relations. However, all of the partners supported the cluster approach and asked for more time to improve the model. They were not so happy, though, about the lead and its capacity, and demanded a stronger Steering Committee.” (PO2)*

Furthermore, as the new structure made the programme’s cluster leads and the Steering Committee responsible for communication with ICCO, the partners missed communicating with the programme officer. Equally, the programme officer was having difficulties understanding and monitoring what was happening on the ground.

*“As communication is mostly channelled through clusters, I hardly communicate with the partners. The partners miss this contact. It is also difficult for me to really see what is happening on the ground. The communication I have with the leads informs me about overall issues, but I do not know in detail how the programme contributes to the target group. As far as my own motivation is concerned, this job has become less interesting than it used to be. I had jumped on a riding train, however. It had been agreed that communication would be channelled through the cluster leads. I could not approach partners on an individual basis, as this might result in a re-opening of bilateral communication channels.” (PO2)*

Despite the partners’ support, the programme officer and the programme specialist Capacity Building continued to feel that the programme was not a high priority for the partners.

*“Despite the suggestions for improving coordination, I still doubt whether things will move after ICCO leaves, and once the enthusiasm of the workshop has faded away.” (PS travel report 2008)*

*“The meeting was very fruitful, but one feels that when ICCO leaves the country, the programme ceases to exist.” (PO2)*

### **Programme management: mandate and structure**

A key concern regarding the programme was its management.

*“The model looked excellent on paper: four clusters, each with 4-7 partners. Each cluster had a lead, and these leads were united in a Steering Committee chaired by Partner B. In reality, though, the Steering Committee is playing an insufficient initiating and monitoring role, and the structure therefore appears quite weak.” (PO2)*

A capacity-building trajectory was implemented alongside the peacebuilding programme. The decision to employ Partner A to facilitate both the programme design process and capacity building proved to be an unsuccessful one. With hindsight, the programme officer and the Capacity Building Specialist would have opted to separate these responsibilities.

*“During a session on assessing capacity needs, which was among others an opportunity for participants to reflect on the appropriateness and quality of capacity building services delivered by Partner A. What surprised me was the dissatisfaction openly expressed towards Partner A. The content of the critical opinions on Partner A were not new to me, as I had my doubts too regarding their ability to deliver what was needed and agreed. But my doubts were more than confirmed during this session.*

*Overall, much of the discussion during the partner meeting was about the management of the programme: especially the lack of presence of the Steering Committee, and sometimes also cluster lead agencies, and sometimes Partner A. After all frustrations were aired many ideas for improvement were offered, though mostly of the sort ‘let’s have severe punishment for those who don’t meet deadlines’ etcetera. All this attention for sorting out the coordination of the programme limited the amount of discussion allocated to strategic focus and programme content (‘what does it mean to work on peace and democracy in Liberia?’). Eventually, many suggestions were made about improvement of the coordination and management.” (PS travel report 2008)*

*“Combining a capacity building role and a ‘process facilitation’ role has been complex for Partner A, and has compromised effectiveness of both roles. Initially, the process facilitator’s role was assigned to the US-based Liberian consultant who did the evaluation with the consultant from IC-Consult. After one (useful) mission, partners felt a facilitator at a distance would not be able to give the process proper attention and follow-up. Instead, a local consultancy was sought to take over this role: Partner A. From the beginning, these two roles have been hard to combine for Partner A. Process facilitation sometimes can require a proactive, leading role in getting agencies around the table, ensuring that decisions are taken, that reports are produced, and so on. A capacity building provider is usually keen to stay out of these core processes of decision making, because it can potentially compromise the neutrality and professional distance required for eg. OD interventions. A compounding factor has been that Partner A staff was relatively junior for this combination of roles.” (PS travel report 2008)*

*“It is recommended that Partner B takes over the programme coordination and capacity building functions in the new programme period. Partner B has been informally providing leadership to the Peacebuilding Programme, and has over the last months shown an increasing commitment to push the programme ahead. This has resulted in a more active role in the Steering Committee, and the decision to step out of the Community Governance cluster in order to fulfil a wider role for the programme – not bound to one cluster*

only. Partner B would qualify to take on these functions because they have good strategic vision for the Programme, good level of awareness of development issues in Liberia, and good ideas about civil society's contribution to the rights- and development agenda in Liberia. Furthermore Partner B is respected by partners and other actors to take on more responsibility in this programme." (PS travel report 2008)

*"What if it does not work? Given the past experiences of ICCO, there is a chance that programmatic collaboration will not take off. After an energetic workshop, partners resort to their own agenda's and find it difficult to commit to the agreements made during the workshop. My impression is that there is sufficient willingness to collaborate and sufficient buy-in into this programming process. Therefore, if it does not work it would not be flogging a dead horse per se. It would still have potential to grow if better facilitated. We will have to see whether Partner B is better positioned than Partner A to facilitate this process, and whether Partner B really will put required effort into the process."* (PS travel report 2008)

In the months following this decision, a strong individual was identified to fulfil the role of Programme Coordinator. In July 2008, however, this person decided not to take this job and left Partner B. The programme thus again lacked strong coordination. In September 2008, a Dutch consultant and former ICCO employee was recruited to boost future programme proposals, develop a clearer mandate for the Steering Committee, develop the capacity-building programme, and to work on a concept note for EU funding.

*"There is so little in-country capacity. There are few qualified personnel or consultants to choose from. In addition, there is quite a lot of competition among international and local NGOs for these people. For our programme, Partner B contracted a person to take charge of programme facilitation and capacity-building. One possible risk was that Partner B would gain too much power and would undertake too many roles (Steering Committee, capacity-building programme and overall programme coordination). Unfortunately, in July 2008, this person left the organisation, again leaving us with a shortage of human resources for the programme. We were aware that ICCO had high ambitions, but we wanted the programme to take off. We then looked for an external consultant, possibly one of Dutch nationality. In September, we found a Dutch consultant."* (PS)

A first period of implementation has ended. Facilitation from the south remains an issue, which seems to slow down the development of the programmes towards a more complementary approach. Partners are enthusiastic about the approach, and want to use some more time to fine-tune. However, a tension is felt between providing more time for piloting versus the urge to achieve results. At the time of writing this document, the programme officer felt as if she were at a crossroad, and was about to make decisions for the future.

## FUTURE ISSUES

### On the agenda

<i>Future programme</i>	The pilot phase is about to finish. The programme officer is awaiting the programme reports. Due to internal developments within ICCO and Kerk in Actie, ICCO may phase out its support to Sierra Leone. The programme officer is thus seeking opportunities for linking the Liberia programme with partners from Sierra Leone.
<i>Roles</i>	The roles of the Steering Committee and the capacity-building provider have yet to be defined in detail. The clusters' mandates are to be defined.
<i>Financing</i>	The programme officer is requesting one overall report per cluster, in addition to a narrative and financial report from each partner participating in the clusters. In October 2008, the programme officer will travel to Liberia, along with a Financial Officer. The latter will strengthen partners' capacities in the area of financial administration.
<i>M&amp;E</i>	The programme officer is requesting one overall report per cluster, in addition to a narrative and financial report from each partner participating in the clusters.

## On the agenda

As of October 2008, the programme officer is awaiting the various financial and narrative reports. She is also preparing for a partner meeting in October 2008, at which the future direction of the programme will be decided. One key issue is that the partners are interested in the cluster concept and are demanding more time to fine-tune their joint approach. However, the programme officer is also under pressure to generate results related to peacebuilding.

*“There is tension due to the partners’ desire to have more time to improve the cluster approach. But how much time can we give partners to work on their approach? In the end, it is the result on the ground that matters, and at this point, I’m not seeing many results in that respect. In some clusters, cooperation has resulted in a simple sum of the individual parts, rather than of ‘1+1=3.’*

*The programme will be extended until March 2011. This will allow us more time, in case the ICCO Alliance’s changes a great deal in the coming years. But in this period, we really should get down to achieving results. How much time do we want to spend working on organisational issues?” (PO2)*

From an administrative perspective, the programmatic approach creates additional work:

*“Cooperation between clusters is a difficult model for ICCO to administrate. What is the status of the partners? There are no models for this. In the case of Liberia, we are experimenting.*

*We request individual audit reports from the partners that are cooperating in the clusters. Even though this is demanding for our Financial Officers, we feel that at this stage, we have to continue monitoring the partners’ financial administrative capacity. If we were to focus on the clusters alone, we would miss too much information. Furthermore, we have built up so much knowledge about this in recent years that would be a waste of our capacity not to request them.*

*Thus, we receive 22 financial reports from our partners: 18 individual partner reports, and four cluster reports. There is a lot of work for our Financial Officer, and we have not yet devised a means of handling this. We will receive many documents over the coming period.” (PO2)*

Furthermore, the new facilitation role should be evaluated.

*“My suggestion is to evaluate by the end of 2008 whether a new positive dynamic becomes visible under Partner B’s facilitation.*

*If not, two other solutions can be considered: selecting another regional consultancy to provide input to the process (in support of Partner B), or to recruit an international advisor to be seconded to Partner B. The latter, of course under the condition that partners in the programme provide the mandate for it. The investment costs for opening a separate ICCO office are too high to justify the time investment.” (PS travel report 2008)*

## The role of ICCO

Various ICCO employees have somewhat differing perceptions of ICCO’s role. More interestingly, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with both the view that ICCO has been dominant, and the perception that ICCO has not played a dominant role.

*“ICCO has played quite a demanding and dominant role. I believe that the programme officer felt that ICCO policy was changing, and that he had to go along with it. He focused both on adopting a programmatic approach and on creating co-responsibility and decentralisation. The partners cooperated, as they were dependent on ICCO funding.” (PS)*

*“Before I travelled to Liberia, I thought that it was a very donor-driven initiative. However, the situation on the ground appears to be subtler. I do believe that it is a donor-initiated process, but not so much that it is donor-driven. Although the first programme officer was quite dominant, this benefited the programme.” (PS)*

*“I do not think that I was demanding; maybe I fell short on being monitoring. My role was more one of stimulation than control. I could have been more demanding, and this would have led to more action.” (PO1)*

*“When I started my new job in April 2007, I was told that the process in Liberia was a very indigenous one. At the moment, I believe that ICCO has had a strong presence and has created a stimulating atmosphere that has fostered willingness among the partners to cooperate. However, all good intentions have to be put into practice, and that is difficult.*

*Within ICCO, the Liberia case is held up as a show-case. I disagree with this view, as I think that the programme has been too ICCO-driven. I see the programmatic approach as an instrument for cooperation that is controlled by ICCO. Partners have no choice in this. However, it must be said that in the end, the partners are not that negative about ICCO's role. The context also created space for change." (PO2)*

ICCO appears to have achieved three of the four roles that it had aimed to fulfil: capacity building, funding and brokering. Lobbying has not yet been integrated into the programme.

*"I would like the Steering Committee to brainstorm in order to sharpen ICCO's four roles. Lobbying in particular has been insufficiently implemented." (Reflection document November 2007, PO2).*

The programme officer is currently in a difficult situation. She plans to travel to Liberia in October 2008, and is unhappy with the performance of two of the partners.

*"Who should decide on their future, however? Should ICCO phase out the participation of these two partners, or should the cluster make this decision?" (PO2)*

### **Taking a programmatic approach vs. developments on the ground**

In the end, programme impact is what matters. The current monitoring system does not allow lessons to be learned about what has happened on the ground, and the programmatic approach's added value has yet to be identified.

*"NGOs are poorly anchored in Liberian society. The programmatic approach contributes to networking, learning and the sharing of knowledge. However, we did not manage to properly monitor the impact 'on the ground'. I think that this is the price we have paid for putting a lot of energy into the cluster approach. In the next phase, this has to be improved.*

*It is possible that ICCO has tried to shift the Liberia programme to too high and too ambitious a level. We may have put too much energy into paperwork, and neglected operationalisation. In addition, 'dynamics' and our monitoring system provide us with beautiful words, but do not give us any insights into what is really happening on the ground." (PO2)*

### **The financial mandate**

Funds for programme implementation are channelled through the cluster leads. This is meant to increase partners' responsibilities with regard to the programme, but in practice, this remains a difficult issue.

*"ICCO transfers the funds to the cluster leads, with the intention that the cluster should make funding decisions. In practice, however, the money was divided up immediately amongst the partners, so that each partner could do their own work." (PO2)*

As of yet, ICCO retains its mandate on financial issues, and does not intend to transfer this mandate to its partners. A key issue is how to transfer financial responsibility to the South, given that ICCO also has its own responsibilities, such as accountability to back donors. Additionally, the partners should be ready to assume this role.

*"I believe that it is too early for ICCO to hand over decision-making on financing for the peacebuilding programme to its partners. It would be wise to wait and see whether Partner B is able to function as a lead, and whether the Steering Committee will function. In addition, ICCO has little experience of shifting a financial mandate to the South, thus experimenting would bring a degree of risk." (PS)*

*"What should a programme officer do when a partner does not fulfil expectations? What should the programme coalition do? Who has the mandate to dismiss a partner? In the end, it is money that matters." (PS)*

### **Sierra Leone**

ICCO/Kerk in Actie works with few partners in Sierra Leone, which makes it difficult to take a programmatic approach there. Due to internal developments within ICCO/Kerk in Actie, it has been suggested that support to these

partners should be phased out. The programme officer believes that this would be a mistake, however, and is seeking opportunities to link the Liberia programme with partners from Sierra Leone. A consultant working on a PSO contract is seeking to identify linkages between the two countries.

*“I think that ICCO’s programmes are too defined by national borders. For example, in the region around Liberia, it would be natural to create a regional programme. I would like to open up opportunities for the future. In fact, I think it would be very interesting to link Sierra Leone and Liberia, as although they have rather similar backgrounds in terms of civil wars and periods of peace, the relationship between partner organisations and civil society is very different. In my opinion, added value would be created by holding exchanges on this topic.” (PO2)*

### **To conclude**

To conclude, the creation of the peacebuilding programme was nothing but an easy process. Certain level of pushing can be noticed in the preparation phase although it does not automatically is something negative, as the programme specialist says: *it is an ICCO initiative, but it is locally driven*. Along the process, partners’ enthusiasm increased, and they are passionate to elaborate on the approach. A note should be made that partners remain dependent on donor funds, and it would be an asset to learn about the perceived added value with partners. It is hoped for that the programme finds a strong programme facilitator who is able to take along the programme development and bring the effort to a higher level.



## 4 Democratisation and Rights to Land, Water and Territory Programme, Brazil

*("Democratização e Direito a Terra, Água e Território" (DTAT))*

In 2008, ICCO and its partners began to implement the Democratisation and Rights to Land, Water and Territory Programme (DTAT) in Brazil. Via this programme, ICCO cooperates with 15 NGOs to improve the rights of indigenous communities, landless people, and small farmers to land, water, and territory. Due to large-scale deforestation, cattle breeding, and the farming of soy and sugar cane for export, many indigenous Indian and traditional communities and small farmers have lost their land and, as a result, the basis of their existence. This has resulted in further exclusion, poverty, and environmental degradation. Although Brazilian law recognises these people's right to autonomy, development, food, and health, too often, the government has failed to respect, protect and improve their situation. NGOs and social movements are thus focusing on these people's rights and living conditions.





The DTAT programme addresses the rights of the landless, small farmers and indigenous communities to land, water and territory. DTAT aims to achieve this by improving the position of community-based organisations in the political sphere, especially with regard to government. Furthermore, by means of developing more professional communication strategies and alliances, DTAT aims to increase public support for rights to land, water and territory. Other approaches include lobbying the government and using international fora. The DTAT programme is based on an exchange of knowledge between the different actors involved, which in turn strengthens advocacy.

The following people were consulted for this learning history:

- Programme officer (PO), Democratisation and Peace Building Department (D&P)
- Programme officer, Fair and Economic Development and Innovation Department (PO FED I)
- Two programme officers, Fair and Economic Development department (PO FED II and PO FED III)
- Partner, who is also a member of the Steering Committee

All three FED-based programme officers previously worked on Brazil and Latin America, until ICCO switched from a regional to a thematic structure. Their contribution to this learning history relates to the first stages of the DTAT Programme's development.

#### Documents:

- Programme Plan (PP, December 2007)
- Update Programme Development 'Democratisation and land rights, Brazil' (August 2007)

Data collection took place between July and September 2008.

### IDENTIFICATION PHASE

2006 – mid-2007

#### Facts and figures

<i>End 2006</i>	Prior to ICCO's adoption of a thematic structure, the Latin America Department's programme officers write a policy paper on Brazil.
<i>Early 2007</i>	The programme officers send the draft policy paper to 20 partners for input, before writing the final version. The document is written using the policy framework of the ICCO Strategic Plan 2007-2010, in which ProCoDe is included as part of future policy.
<i>April 2007</i>	A partner meeting takes place in Brazil. ICCO presents the policy paper and its Strategic Plan 2007-2010. About 70 Brazilian ICCO/Kia partners and non-partners attend, as well as thematic experts. ICCO presents four themes for future programmes. At the end of the meeting, four working groups are created, which are divided across the four main themes identified during the meeting. Those partners in the Rights to Land, Water and Territorial Security group are invited to take part in a workshop in August 2007, to elaborate the programme.
<i>Apr – Jun 07</i>	ICCO requests an independent mapping exercise to chart the context and identify stakeholders with respect to the issue of land rights.

#### ICCO's policy paper provides a starting point

Prior to ICCO's restructuring along thematic lines, the Latin America Department's programme officers wrote a policy paper on the region. This resulted from the perception that the regional project portfolio was rather fragmented. One of the main objectives of the exercise was to identify connections between the D&P and FED departments. While the paper was being written, ICCO switched from a regional to a thematic structure. The resulting policy paper, which introduces four themes, is regarded as the starting point for the development of the DTAT programme in Brazil.

In April 2007, a partner meeting was held. About 70 Brazilian ICCO/Kia partners and non-partners attended, as well as thematic experts. ICCO presented its Strategic Plan 2007-2010 and the policy paper, including the four themes mentioned above. The policy paper was then discussed in the meeting, with the changes proposed by ICCO drawing some criticism from partners. At the end of the meeting, four working groups were created, which were divided according to the four main themes.

*“The policy paper was written by both D&P and FED. This was actually quite unusual, as individual departments usually work alone on policy papers. We arranged various sessions. When we finished the paper, we sent it to a select group of partners, and integrated their comments. Then, the revised document was circulated, and a meeting was held in which we presented it to the partners. The agenda of this meeting was pretty much ICCO-driven. It included the business plan, ICCO’s restructuring, the programmatic approach, the making of programme plans, and the division of partners into thematic groups. It was a very top-down approach. The partners expressed a lot of resistance to ICCO’s new structure. There was a great lack of clarity on the new departmental division, and how the partners would be linked to the new departments was not explained well. We actually failed to solve this problem at that moment.” (PO FED II)*

*“The partners were unhappy with the four themes presented by ICCO. These themes were not new in themselves, but the resistance expressed by the partners stemmed from past experience. ICCO made the mistake of presenting a new approach without offering sufficient explanation and background. This happened in 2003. The workshop addressed the fact that the partners had been resistant to the suggestions. The partners felt that they had been ‘put into boxes’. Furthermore, as we thought that Brazilian people prefer not to read long documents, we had kept the policy document short and compact, leaving out the main sections on the background and the context analysis. The partners were unhappy with this document, and ICCO made an error of judgment in that respect. We decided not to change the document, but to go ahead while acknowledging its shortcomings. Although the partners were unhappy with the themes, we discussed them intensively, and at the end of the conference, we had agreed upon four themes that the partners could sign up to. In addition, we gave the partners the option of coming up with a new theme, if they thought this necessary, although this did not happen.” (PO)*

*“During the presentation of our policy paper, the partners expressed a great deal of resistance to the plan, for many different reasons. During the partner meeting, we did not consider rewriting the document, but instead opted to identify ways of going forward. We decided to look for common themes or issues, and created four relatively informal working groups.” (PO FED I)*

*“The partners also are accountable to their counterparts; this is their raison d’être. Often their reach is small, and some partners lack management capacity. When ICCO announced that it wanted to work in a more focused way, however, the partners expressed unhappiness with this.” (PO FED III)*

*“It was a brilliant move to invite external actors to the workshop, including non-partners such as consultants, external service providers, and academics. These people kept us focused.” (PO FED III)*



*“In the workshop, there were some misunderstandings about the programmatic approach. The partners said that they were already working programmatically, as they were involved in networks. ICCO sees the programmatic approach as working according to different roles, however. The NGOs didn’t see these roles as their responsibility, and thought that ICCO’s role should be limited to financing.” (PO FED III)*

ICCO employees thought that adopting a central programme theme would make it easier to implementing a programmatic approach together.

*“I think that the FED partners were more on our wavelength than the D&P partners. This was probably because FED’s topics are more concrete. D&P is more politically and ideologically charged.” (PO FED II)*

### **Kick-starting the process**

Of the four themes that were identified during the partner meeting, only one – on Rights to Land, Water and Territorial Security – was taken forward to the programme design process. ICCO requested an independent mapping exercise to chart the context and identify stakeholders on the issue of land rights. The study was carried out between April and June 2007. The partners who had signed up to join this theme were invited to take part in a workshop in August 2007, in order to elaborate the programme.

*“At that time, we had no agreement on follow-up. The programme officer was the only one who took along this group in order to start the programme, and I think he used a direct approach. He explained to his partners that he wanted to have a programme plan by the end of 2007, as this would allow him to secure funds for them. He did not direct the group with respect to content, but he did provide direction on process. Despite this, I would not say that this was an unsuitable approach. Given his starting point, I believe that this was a suitable way to approach his partners, including his department [D&P] and its managers. Compared with my department, for example, there was more pressure [from D&P] to create a programme before the end of 2007.” (PO FED I)*

## PREPARATION PHASE - PROGRAMME DESIGN Mid-August 2007 – Spring 2008

### **Facts and figures**

August 2007	ICCO organises an initial workshop with the DTAT working group, in order to follow up on the April 2007 workshop. A Working Group is established to develop the programme design.
Sept. 2007	An independent consultant carries out a second stakeholder mapping exercise, focusing in particular on actors in government and academia.
Oct. - Nov. 2007	The working group completes a written consultation and SWOT analysis, based on the two mapping exercises.
March 2008	ICCO organises another workshop to elaborate its programmatic approach. A Steering Committee is established. The decision is made to start implementation.

### **Partner meetings and workshops**

Following up on the large-scale workshop that had been held in April 2007, in August 2007, the programme officer brought together all of the partners that had shown an interest in the access to land and water theme. Twelve partners attended, and an external actor facilitated the workshop.

The workshop’s goal was to develop a land rights programme, by determining objectives, the division of labour, and planning the continuation of the mapping. The result of the workshop was that starting-points, values, and future processes were agreed upon. A Working Group was established that would be responsible for programme design. Until March 2008, the Working Group was occupied with drafting the programme in a step-by-step process, in consultation with partners and drawing upon the results of the two mapping exercises.

In September 2007, an independent consultant undertook a second stakeholder mapping, with a particular focus on actors from government and academia. In October and November 2007, the Working Group completed a written consultation and a SWOT analysis, based on the two mappings carried out before.

In March 2008, ICCO organised another workshop to elaborate upon the programmatic approach. The objectives of this workshop were to plan activities for 2008, to define roles and responsibilities, and to reach agreement on structures and mandates. This workshop resulted in a plan for approaching the programme, the establishment of a Steering Committee, and the decision to go ahead with implementation.

*“From the end of 2007 until the end of March 2008, steps will be taken to go from ‘willingness to cooperate’ (the ‘why’) to agreement on ‘what’, ‘how’, and ‘who’ regarding our cooperation.” (PP)*

*“During the March 2008 meeting, there was consensus on the programme’s broader objectives, strategies and activities. However, it was not yet clear what the division of tasks would be, and which resources partners would need in order to be able to perform.” (PO)*

### **Creating a new network or linking to an existing one?**

There is a common understanding among ICCO employees that new programmes can be linked to existing networks. In the case of the DTAT programme, however, taking this approach did not prove to be as easy as it initially appeared.

*“I was working with 12 partners in Brazil. I felt that it was quite a challenge to build a programme with this diverse group. I could have linked up with existing networks, but how would I choose which actors to include? Especially as adding funding to an existing network can do more harm than good.” (PO)*

*“The thing about Brazil is that the organisations have a great deal of capacity. NGOs are often already part of various networks. Creating a new network within the framework of a programmatic approach would thus appear superfluous. Fortunately, ICCO recognises this, and is stimulating organisations to join existing initiatives.” (PO FED I)*

*“I once discussed the issue of linking up with existing networks with the programme officer. I think that I would have tried harder to link to existing networks.” (PO FED II)*

Given the complex Brazilian context, the programme had a national, rather than regional, scope.

*“A regional programme would not have worked for Brazil. Brazil is already a very complex country, not least due to its various cultures, its size and its languages.” (PO)*

### **ICCO’s twelve partners**

ICCO’s partners were the only actors to take part in the DTAT programme’s design process.

*“The set of partners within D&P was very heterogeneous, and this made it difficult to create links between them. By identifying common goals, the PO created a joint agenda.” (PO FED II)*

*“If I were a partner, I would also prefer not to bring in additional partners – as this simply implies that one gets a smaller share of the budget.” (PO)*

To some extent, the partners were unable to select which partners would be in the group. In this respect, the programme officer also perceived difficulties working with such a heterogeneous group of partners.

*“The partners were not very happy about the fact that they could not choose the partners in the group. The group was very diverse and heterogeneous. This created an atmosphere in which the group of partners had to get a feel for which kinds of organisations they were dealing with, which in turn led to a certain degree of dissatisfaction.” (PO)*

*“The programme getting stuck would seem a small ‘risk’ if the actors were able meet their obligations in their ‘contracts’, and deal pragmatically with the diversity of actors and political visions. This tension is seen as a given, and our challenge is to channel this tension towards productivity. It is very important that the different actors’ interests are shared during the identification phase, and are legitimised.” (PP)*

One partner suggests that the process was difficult, but that in the end, the group agreed on the core of the programme.

*“From the moment that ICCO launched its new challenges, the partners contributed to programme design. Our intention was to reach a common objective, via an intensive process of dialogue. We have achieved a programme which does justice to all of the different partners’ visions and experiences.” (Partner)*

### **Roles and responsibilities**

The programme officer aimed to shift control over the process to ICCO’s southern partners. The intention was to give as much responsibility as possible to the partners, and to reformulate ICCO’s four roles.

*“The programme framework has been left with the partners. The partners signed up to the programme and have defined their own roles.” (PO FED I)*

*“The partners understand that ICCO cannot continue to only have a funding role. The partners are willing to brainstorm on how to give ICCO a more proactive role.” (PP)*



A Steering Committee was established during the March 2008 meeting. This had the potential to increase partners' responsibilities, and two partners volunteered to join ICCO on the Steering Committee.

*"Membership of the Steering Committee is open to volunteers. Participating implies more work, of course. Naturally, ICCO is also a participant. Given that ICCO initiated this programme, we are obliged to be part of it. ICCO actually wants to fulfil roles in addition to financing, so I think that we should be willing to do this.*

*The Steering Committee does not have a particular mandate, but sees its key role as one of facilitating and stimulating."* (PO)

Considering ICCO's role, a partner said that they hoped to see a shift in decision-making towards southern partners in future.

*"I think that there will always be limitations to partners' power and decision-making roles. ICCO defines both the programme's direction and which resources are available. In future, I would like to see partners participating more in this process. Nevertheless, within the initial limitations or framework, decisions have been made by mutual agreement."* (Partner)

## **Financing**

During the process, ICCO felt that the lack of clarity regarding funding was hindering the design process. Especially during the programme design process, the partners desired clarity on the implications for bilateral funding.

*"The partners are willing to commit themselves to the programme, but expect a 'fair deal' in the sense that ICCO should continue to give financial support to their individual programmes. Although this is not the only motivation, it is certainly the most important one, as the programme's expected benefits are not yet visible. This willingness and these expectations have been discussed in depth, and can be seen as a kind of 'psychological contract' at the core of this programme.*

*It is important for the process that ICCO makes a quick decision about whether it will continue with bilateral financing, especially for those whose contracts end in 2007. Some partners have been reassured that they will receive funding in future, which is an important precondition for their contribution to the programme."* (PP)

*"Partners expect clarity from ICCO on its individual and collective financial relationships with partners."* (PP)

In the March 2008 meeting, the following agreements were made with respect to financing:

- The total annual budget of the Land Rights programme was set at €1,050,000.
- For 2008, 90% of this fund was to be divided among individual contracts with partners (mostly institutional funding, in accordance with ICCO's partners' policies).
- For 2008, 10% would cover programme funds (which amounted to €100,000 in 2008). The Steering Committee would decide on the programme budget (10%), although this had already been defined in some detail in the programme plan. One of the partners would manage the programme fund (10%).
- It was agreed that ICCO would put aside an increasing percentage of funds (up to 20% in 2010) for joint activities.

*"We did not really discuss the budget."* (PO)

*"I would prefer to continue with bilateral funding. I have seen from other cases that making one partner responsible for money prompts a lot of discussion about this money within the group of partners. Leaving this issue to ICCO would mean that the discussions between the partners would remain focused on content and process."* (PO FED I)

In addition, ICCO's new structure prompted a number of questions regarding financing.

*"The partners had difficulties with ICCO's new structure. They did not know who they should approach on which issue."* (PO)

*"Internally, it is still unclear what we want to do when a partner is linked to more than one ICCO department. Previously, the partners were linked to ICCO's regional department. Now, partners can be connected with more than one*

department. This begs the question, what do we do about financing? It would be inefficient to agree multiple contracts with one partner.” (PO FED I)

### Linking and learning

Linking and learning forms a central element of the programme.

*“Our point of departure was that ICCO’s programmatic ambitions can best be realised by making use of the trust and capacity within our existing Brazilian partner network. This network is ICCO’s main ‘capital’: our partners and our capacity to make choices and create alliances in the very diverse and complex Brazilian context, while at the same time taking into account new policies on the programmatic approach, decentralisation and co-responsibility. This programme was therefore designed in such a way that ICCO and its partners could learn from and experiment with sharing programme design and implementation, while also heightening the programme’s impact.” (PP)*

In March 2008, the entire programme group decided to start with implementation. At that time, a draft programme plan had been produced but not finalised. One programme officer suggested that not every ICCO programme officer found having a programme plan desirable.

*“For another Brazilian programme that I am working on, I do not want to create a programme plan. Instead, I would be happy with having an MoU that sets out a common goal and agreements on complementary strategies. Brazilian NGOs are fully able to join networks and to learn from one other. Adding an ICCO programme to this situation would bring no added value whatsoever.” (PO FED I)*

## IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Spring 2008 – to date

### Facts and figures

March 2008	During the partner meeting, ICCO and its partners agree that implementation of the programme should now begin.
July 2008	The NGO that manages the programme fund is audited by ICCO’s Finance & Control Department, in order to strengthen financial management capacity.

### Ready for implementation

In March 2008, the partners expressed their desire to start implementing the programme. At that time, the paperwork was still incomplete, but there was a common understanding between the partners and ICCO on how to proceed. A Steering Committee was established, with the aim of further elaborating the programme in the following months.

The programme focuses on capacity building (exchanging knowledge) and joint advocacy. An important element of the programme is its linking of small, local organisations to larger, national ones. The partners are responsible for developing an activity work plan.

So as to enhance learning, during the workshop, the group selected four concrete, real-life cases to develop further. The aim was for the partners to gather and record as much information as possible, after which further discussions and learning would take place. The Steering Committee drafted a Terms of Reference, which would help to systematise the information-gathering process to certain extent.

There is a common perception that the programme is in its early stages, and that a great deal still has to be further elaborated. At the time of writing, implementation of the DTAT programme had only been underway for six months,

meaning that the actors involved were unable to comment extensively on the process. There are some issues that will shortly receive further definition, however, such as the Steering Committee's role and mandate, and the programme's financial structure.

*"We are currently setting up the Steering Committee. At this point, it is difficult to say how this will progress. The Committee will be responsible for finding different approaches for our different programmes.*

*Until now, during the six months that I have been a member of the Steering Committee, decisions have been made jointly between ICCO and both partners on the Committee. We have had lots of space to share our opinions and for making joint decisions."* (Partner)

*"Within the Steering Committee, we have had a lot of discussions about programme implementation. Although ICCO can sometimes direct other organisations, within this programme there is no hierarchy. The Steering Committee can be seen as the 'spider in the web.'" (PO)*

## FUTURE ISSUES

### On the agenda

**Implementation**     **Objectives:** capacity-building in the areas of communication and cooperation; research; expert-meetings; and publications.  
**Result:** framework and action plan addressing a) communication; b) new alliances with other social actors in order to increase support; c) influencing government policy.  
 2009: implementation of the programme. Preparation for ICCO-Alliance Business Plan 2010-2014.  
 2009-2010: "Increasing ownership" and grounding programme/establishing support by means of dialogue with diverse social actors.  
 2010: implementation of the programme; evaluation; completing input from the Business Plan 2010-2014. At the same time, a delegated fund will be set up to support local initiatives related to land rights, with an emphasis on supporting women and young people.

**Partners**             **Objectives:** new stakeholders, including academic staff and universities.

Creating a programme always brings its own dynamics and lessons. Reflecting on this, the programme officer listed some "do's and don'ts" in the light of the last 18 months of programme design and the short period of implementation.

*"The success of this programme lies in its openness and transparency. I was able to communicate a lot, and I know the region very well. I have worked there for long time, and I have taken part in this kind of process before. This programme was designed in cooperation with others. I tried to keep the pace going by taking the lead; you cannot contract out such a responsibility. ICCO opted for a programmatic approach, and in view of this, we had to be involved. Taking a programmatic approach has the added value of facilitating lobbying at a higher political level, and it also creates space for dialogue.*

Some 'do's and don'ts' include:

- Keep the pace going. Waiting too long can kill a process, and can be more harmful than doing the wrong thing. One should not wait too long to do something good. Do not be afraid and get started.
- Trust among partners is crucial to a programme's success.
- Know what you are doing and why you are doing it.
- Our 'launch' in March 2007 was too extensive and too diverse.
- Make sure that there is agreement within ICCO before you start to work with partners on taking a programmatic approach. We actually lacked agreements on certain issues, and the partners made the most of this." (PO)

Some thoughts on the future:

*"Later, we will evaluate the programme. I expect capacity to have increased, and I also think that the network will be bigger and more professional."* (PO)



*“I hope that we will be able to develop our plans and obtain results. Currently, we are in the initial phase of the process, which makes it difficult to see into the future. I believe that in the DTAT programme, we have a good plan and commitment from our partners. Now we will see whether we are able to put this into practice.” (Partner)*

*“I think that participating in the DTAT programme will strengthen our work in the coming years, as it will enable us to increase and broaden our knowledge of rural Brazil, and to create relationships with new national and international stakeholders.” (Partner)*

*“Our work within the programmatic framework has led us to apply new lessons and innovations to our old methods. For example, we’ve had an opportunity to increase our knowledge of advocacy methods. From 2009 onwards, we will participate in the learning trajectory that was set up in 2008.” (Partner)*

### **To conclude**

A strong element in the DTAT programme seems the complementarity. Although the programme does not strive for joint activities, the heterogeneous set of partners results to an added value in lobby and advocacy activities as the smaller, grass root organisations can be linked to the larger national lobby organisations. In this way, the grass root organisations give input from their community to the lobby organisations, which can give a voice to the local communities.

The heterogeneous set of partners did not make cooperation easy. Partners felt they had no choice in choosing their partners, and in the mean time it felt as if ICCO pushed towards a programmatic approach. Step by step some more influence and decision making power is shifted towards the South, through the Steering Committee. The partner involved in this study, however, implicitly mentioned that more decision making in the South would be desirable. It appears to be difficult dividing the decision-making power.





## 5 Local Market Development Programme, Central Asia

### Background to the programme

The integration of the farm sector into modern supply chains and associated flows of inputs, technology and capital is essential for productivity increase and growth of the small farms which make up nearly the entire agricultural sector in Kyrgyzstan. The Local Market Development project (LMD) supports all vital aspects of the production and trading process along the value chain from the farmer's field to the end user for selected products. For ICCO, LMD is part of its Fair Economic Development (FED) strategy. The essence of FED is: how can the poor benefit from trade? It is the understanding of Helvetas, a Swiss NGO, with which ICCO cooperates, and ICCO that the value chain approach shall be further developed based on the practical project experience in Kyrgyzstan, capitalised and disseminated to other countries in which Helvetas and ICCO are applying the same strategy. Helvetas and ICCO have decided to collaborate in agricultural value chain development.

The LMD project aims at contributing to the realisation of the objectives of the MDGs and those formulated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Kyrgyz government, where poverty reduction and rural development, especially in remote regions, is stated as one of the main objectives.

In accordance with these objectives, the threefold purpose of the LMD project is:

- Enhancing sustained access of rural small holders to markets through developing technical, commercial and organisational knowledge and skills.
- Strengthening interactions in the product value chain in the F&V and dairy sector and capacities of each value chain actor.
- Facilitating a multi stakeholder approach and stimulating and enabling environment in Kyrgyzstan to advance socio-economic development in rural areas.

The Local Market Development project works within the framework of the Helvetas Natural Resource Management Strategy and ICCO's Fair Economic Development. Special emphasis is put on the following working approaches:

- Sub sector focus: The project works on the basic assumption that a sub sector focus, which offers concrete and sub sector needs-specific solutions is appropriate to building the necessary trust and capacity to enter into commercial relationships in the commodity chain. The project works in the fruit and vegetable processing and dairy sectors.
- Working along value chains: involve and encourage all actors along the value chain by providing the services needed to overcome obstacles, ensure that products are delivered to markets and make sure that farmers receive fair compensation for their efforts.
- Facilitation: setting up a supporting framework for project partners. The project does not subsidise any transaction costs along the chain.
- Customised Multi-Stakeholders technical support: The project shows opportunities to existing stakeholders (donor projects, local extension services, service providers and state organisations) by provision of customised technical assistance to chain actors and motivates them to do it.
- Working with local service providers: the project mandates technical and organisational support of farmers' groups to local service providers.
- Learning platform initiates a dialogue on lessons learnt in project intervention in local market development and farmers' organisation development with the aim of disseminating and capitalising on the project's experience.



The project is working as a facilitator with stakeholders and is focusing its activities on the following issues:

- Support existing farmer groups in improving production and quality of raw material (vegetables and milk) for processing and fresh consumption through training and consultancy;
- Develop trade links, creating and developing trustful relations between actors of the value chain (both up-stream and down-stream linkages);
- Introduce innovations in production and processing systems;

- Support processing and trading companies in market development (packaging, labelling, promotion, etc.) by means of participatory planning and implementing common working plans;
- Exchange experience among actors of the value chains and support organisations within the Platform of Agricultural Chain Development ( extracted from Programme Plan 2006-2008).

The following people were consulted for this learning history:

- Programme officer (ICCO, based in Utrecht).
- Programme advisor (based in Kyrgyzstan).
- Programme manager (Helvetas, a Kyrgyzstan-based Swiss NGO with which ICCO cooperates). The programme manager has worked for Helvetas for 13 years. For the last seven years, the programme manager has worked 80% for Helvetas and 20% for other organisations. Helvetas Kyrgyzstan now has local NGO status.
- Partner, working in the agricultural sector. This NGO aims to help farmers to increase their incomes. In addition to its involvement in the local market development (LMD) project, this NGO assists farmers with selling their products and obtaining good yields.

Furthermore, the following key document was consulted:

- Local Market Development Project in Kyrgyzstan. Project Phase I January 2006 - December 2008.

It should be noted that during the LMD pilot's design phase, ICCO had not yet adopted a programmatic approach.

Data collection took place between July and September 2008.

## IDENTIFICATION - PREPARATION PHASE

2004 - 2006

### Facts and figures

2004	The ICCO programme officer and programme specialist undertake a first identification mission to Kyrgyzstan.
Nov. 2004	A Dutch consultant and the Helvetas programme manager carry out an assessment. They identify three regions for potential further analysis. They undertake more in-depth analysis in these three regions, including stakeholder and context analyses. Based on the outcome of this mission, ICCO and Helvetas decide to cooperate on value chain development.
Jan. 2005	A ten-month inception phase for the LMD project commences.
Sept. 2005	Internal advisors from Helvetas/ICCO HQ conduct a joint internal assessment of the results of the inception period, as input for planning and formulating the first phase of the project.
Jan. 2006	Implementation commences. The first phase will cover a three-year period from January 2006 until December 2008.
2006	ICCO's programme officer and programme manager in Kyrgyzstan make an identification mission to Tajikistan, which also results in a pilot.

### An ICCO initiative

During their first joint identification mission in 2004, ICCO and Helvetas identified opportunities for developing a value chain approach. Partners were consulted during this mission. ICCO/Helvetas decided to start with a ten-month first inception phase in Kyrgyzstan in order to address open questions and to gain further insights, which would feed into a proper formulation of the envisaged project. Helvetas facilitated this inception phase and also further developed the programme. An assessment and more in-depth stakeholder and context analyses laid the foundation for further ideas for the programme. After each mission, a validation workshop involving partners took place. Helvetas and ICCO then finalised the LMD programme, which commenced implementation in early 2006.

*“We did not use an external consultant, as both Helvetas and ICCO had sufficient internal knowledge and expertise for carrying out this evaluation.” (PO)*

*“Before starting the LMD, the programme manager and the ICCO programme officer did a baseline study. They organised an introduction, and later on they launched the LMD.” (Partner)*

From an outsider’s perspective, it appears that ICCO and Helvetas dominated the programme design process. The programme officer reacted in the following way to this observation:

*“I do not believe that all initiatives have to originate from the South, as we are involved in interaction between the North and the South. In this case, ICCO felt that a programmatic approach might work for the region. In-depth consultations with partners were held during the missions and the programme was based on these missions. In addition, all of the missions were validated in joint sessions. It must be said that that many NGOs in the region are far from being real entrepreneurs. They await donors’ interventions, and this is their culture, to a certain extent.” (PO)*

LMD was donor-initiated and donor-driven. Partners were consulted in-depth during all missions, and their view has been integrated in the LMD design.

## IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 2006 - to date

### Facts and figures

2006	ICCO and Helvetas jointly plan and implement the LMD programme.
2006, 2007	Annual partner meetings take place.
2007	A mid-term evaluation is carried out by an external consultant who often does assignments for ICCO, along with the local ICCO Programme Advisor. The Steering Committee follows up on the mid-term review by deciding (among other things) to continue with the pilot phase in Tajikistan until 2008, meaning that a regional programme can commence in 2009.
May 2008	The programme officer visits Kyrgyzstan. A partner meeting takes place involving a smaller group of partners and ICCO/Helvetas representatives, to brainstorm for the 2009-2012 programme phase.

### Capacity building and chain facilitation

The main strategy employed by the LMD programme is that of capacity building. Training, facilitation, and linking and learning are core activities. Approximately 3500 farmers are involved, as well as about 40 stakeholders, including business development services, micro-finance institutions, and tradesmen.

*“Our activities are solely related to capacity building and technical assistance. For instance, we provide farmers with information, so as to improve their knowledge of marketing, contracts, mobilisation, and so on.*

*The key programme activity is spreading stories about people’s successes and failures. Providing detailed descriptions of the process of change will give people insights into what leads to success or failure.” (PM)*

*“We have established a ‘linking and learning’ community. Approximately 40 different organisations are involved, and they all have something to learn or to exchange. One method is that of action research, that is, jointly undertaking simple market research. I am in charge of this kind of action research.” (PA)*

*“We create an atmosphere that allows people to work together and to learn from each other. We have different levels for learning: low field-, institutional-, country- and regional level.” (PM)*

“ICCO provided insights into how we could learn from how other organisations work. Previously, I had little belief in the capacity of the partners here, but ICCO revealed our strengths, and how we could engage in linking and learning. We now have a chance to learn from others in the region. We may try to introduce or to adapt these lessons to our own organisation. These are great opportunities.” (PM)

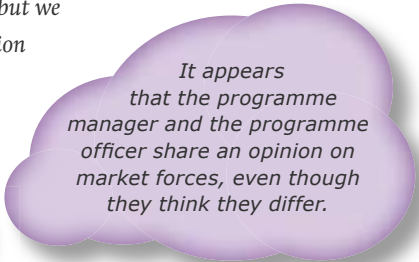
Although the quotes above imply that learning provided a legitimate rationale for partners to join the LMD programme, according to the programme manager, there was also a financial incentive. The next section will further describe the financing structure.

### LMD criteria

As a precondition for receiving LMD funds, partners have to satisfy a number of criteria. This ensures that partners are open to learning and to sharing lessons with others. In addition, setting criteria stimulates a degree of competition, which helps NGOs to maintain a sharp focus.

“I call it healthy competition between organisations. The ICCO programme officer does not like this. It does not matter which actors they serve – donors or NGOs. When they provide services, they compete with each other. The LMD programme does not only work with ICCO’s partners. We present our methodology to organisations, including our requirements. An organisation that submits a proposal should satisfy all requirements relating to methodology. We then provide them with funds; we pay them 70% in advance, and the final 30% once reporting has taken place.

I occasionally disagree with other donors about our criteria. It’s true that we have a lot of criteria, but we have open dialogues about them, conducted in an open manner. The first criterion, at the pre-selection stage, is interest and commitment on their part. This is clearly satisfied because they come to us, and not the other way round. Another criterion is efficiency. We provide an opportunity for learning from others how to become more efficient. Sometimes organisations are very arrogant, and don’t want to learn from others. In such a case, why should we provide money? We show how an organisation could improve itself and develop its personnel’s skills.” (PM)



It appears that the programme manager and the programme officer share an opinion on market forces, even though they think they differ.

“For many years, ICCO was certain that it would receive funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Now the Ministry has introduced a more competition-based system, which has made us consider more carefully how we distribute our funds. I think this would also be the case for ICCO’s partners, and some competition in the process would do no harm.” (PO)

The partner describes the process of meeting the LMD programme’s requirements:

“Due to the fact that at that time, we had our own chain, we were curious about the new LMD project, and looked into it. During the two ICCO project periods, we were already working in chains, but not focusing on just one product. The high cost of our work means that it is very difficult to find financing, and LMD could provide this. We negotiated, prepared a proposal, and once this had been approved, we became an official LMD partner. Now we have a two-year agreement.

Signing the contract is like a legal process that binds you to LMD. Before, you were free to grow whatever you wanted. As part of LMD, you are not: the programme involves a particular product chain. This is a new approach, and it is more sustainable. Farmers know where to sell their products. In the past, every partner had to innovate. Now, one partner innovates, and other farmers can learn from them.

We call ourselves contractors. Previously, we worked on projects funded by ICCO. ICCO is our main donor, and we have five donors in total. Our first project with ICCO ran from 2003 until 2006. Now we have a project running from 2006 until 2008, establishing groups of farmers.” (Partner)

### Programme versus bilateral funding

The LMD programme is funded by ICCO and Helvetas. ICCO’s 2008 budget is 530,000 euros for two countries, and ICCO has one contract for this programme, namely with the local Helvetas office. Helvetas, meanwhile, has multiple contracts with its partners.

*“Each partner has its own grant agreement, and the LMD programme provides the fund. We submit our proposal to the head of the LMD programme [Helvetas]. Helvetas owns the LMD programme, with ICCO as the co-funder.” (Partner)*

*To what extent does LMD’s financing structure differ from that of project funding in the past?*

Only capacity-building activities receive funding.

*“The LMD programme’s funding is clearly project funding. We pay for training according to the number of farmers trained. We finance many activities related to capacity building.” (PA)*

In addition to the LMD programme, ICCO also has bilateral financial relations with its partners. Bilaterally funded projects can focus on other issues, but also overlap with the LMD programme to some extent. This means that partners receiving bilateral funding do not need to comply with the LMD programme’s requirements. Although ICCO’s programme officer thinks that this overlap inevitably results in a focus on multiple issues that reach beyond LMD, such as social issues, the programme manager senses some tension among the partners on this point.

*“There are two channels. Some partners receive funds from ICCO through the LMD programme, and at the same time, these partners also receive bilateral funding. Some of them have sufficient knowledge about LMD, and they have money. The result is that we require them to work according to certain standards, while at the same time ICCO provides money that is not linked to these requirements. This makes working with these partners difficult, in some respects. Sometimes partners see LMD as a channel for money that has tough standards attached, and sometimes they find our approach too strict, and the requirements too heavy. Such things should be changed. It would be good to discuss these issues and find new solutions for encouraging responsible activities in the future. As a resource organisation, we are creating misunderstandings, and partners are just aiming to get money. I think that it would be good to change this.” (PM)*



## Roles, mandates and structures

Within LMD, three different committees and boards are established to monitor the objectives and the results of the programme: the project implementation unit, the project board and the Advisory and Monitoring Committee.

The project has a project implementation unit (PIU) consisting of a project manager (Helvetas), two project officers working in Osh and Bishkek respectively and the project advisor. The PIU works according to the project document and reports to Project Board and Advisory and Monitoring Committee. The project manager and project officers are responsible for the implementation of the project, the coordination of the work with the involved parties, the facilitation of capacity development of members and the management and secretary of the Platform for Agricultural Chain Development that aims at facilitating interactions and sharing experience between working groups.

The project advisor (PA) is a part of the PIU. His responsibilities are to coach and train service providers, producer organisations and NGO's, to promote and facilitate relations between the stakeholders in the value chain, to facilitate the development and testing of strategies to strengthen farmers in their role in the product chains and to facilitate organisational and institutional learning by stakeholders.

The Project Board consists of programme officers from the Head Quarters of Helvetas and ICCO and the Helvetas Programme Director. The Project Board defines the project strategy and the project expansion to other regions and sub-sectors.

The Advisory and Monitoring Committee (AMC) consists of specialists from Helvetas and ICCO as well as three partner representatives: one from NGOs, one from extension services and one from the Association of Fruit and Vegetable Processing Enterprises. The specialists of Helvetas and ICCO are involved in assessments or reviews. Local representatives will be involved in monitoring of project activities. The members of this team provide necessary consultancy for the PIU and the Project Board. In general, the AMC has a backstopping function.

In order to further integrate the partners, ICCO involved them in the AMC. For some, though, this appeared to be a step too far.

“The implementation of these boards has gone well, although partners have not been embedded in these structures to a great extent. The partners were supposed to take part in the AMC. However, there were so many other developments occurring at the time, that this was asking too much from the partners. However, it is our aim to increasingly involve partners more in the future.” (PO)

While ICCO and Helvetas want the partners to become more involved and more influential in future, this seems quite difficult to achieve in practice.





## Influencing policy

The programme is designed by ICCO and Helvetas, who undertook the first initiatives. In the beginning, the partners exercised little influence on actual programme design. They were able to provide input during the assessments and workshops that formed part of the design phase, however, and during reviews and assessments during implementation. During the implementation phase, ICCO aimed to enable the partners to become more influential.

*“The programme operates as a kind of framework. We have contracts with the partners, stating what they need to do. Then, of course, the project consists of leading. The Steering Committee, which is made up of ICCO and Helvetas, provides the overall framework. The programme manager, who is local and very experienced, is responsible for this. Our LMD project is quite dynamic, and the pace is quite fast. If the design process had been participatory, the process would have taken longer, implying that we would have lost some of our flexibility.” (PA)*

*“We only make up a small part of the LMD programme. We have no influence on policy; that is made at the top. We are the implementers. In a way, though, we have influence. Others can learn from our successful experiences; in this way, we exercise indirect influence. Thus we do have some influence, I suppose. In addition, the LMD programme is based on the partners’ project proposals.” (Partner)*

*“In the beginning, it was very much an ICCO and Helvetas ‘thing’. Now, the partners are much more involved, and their involvement has become more institutionalised. For example, the platform meetings, where partners come together, have a revolving chair, and the agenda is set by the partners. We initiated the platform meetings as such, but we are not involved in actually organising them. We only attend if they want us to.” (PA)*

*“We submit our proposals to the head of the LMD programme [Helvetas]. They have their own committee which is responsible for approval.” (Partner)*



The Programme Advisor suggested that ICCO is prepared to offer more freedom, but that the partners are not ready to take it. The fact that partners are reluctant to take on more responsible and entrepreneurial roles can be traced both to the culture of dependency that arose during the Soviet period, and to poor educational standards in the region.

*“These days, our approach involves more dialogue, and ICCO is not an implementer as such (unlike other donors). There is room for feedback. However, it is difficult to talk to some partners on a strategic level. They are more used to talking at a practical level; just putting things into practice. We are still in the post-Soviet period, and lack good education. We are used to merely putting things into practice, and changing this will take time.” (PA)*

*“ICCO’s flexibility has been one of the LMD programme’s success stories. ICCO is open to innovation, new ideas, and discussion. But it is not only open to ideas; ICCO is also trying to adapt its programmes on the basis of these ideas. When it comes to the LMD project, I am grateful to ICCO for its belief in local people’s abilities. They have handed responsibility to the people here. It is all about decision-making, taking responsibility, and taking risks. It is important for a donor to be able to rely upon local knowledge, people, and initiatives.” (PM)*

*“The technical aspects of the LMD programme, such as how to gain more yield, are always clear. When it comes to structures, or building mutual trust in the group or between the group and its leader, time is an issue. These processes take time, but we have had to develop rapidly.” (PA)*

*“Soon, in September 2008, we will have a partner meeting. At this meeting, we will decide upon a strategy for 2009-2012. We will share experiences and see how we can work together in the future. During platform meetings, there is also time for sharing and providing input, which will feed into policy.” (Partner)*

Although the partner would appreciate having more influence when it comes to programme finances, he did not appear convinced that having greater decision-making powers would bring additional benefits.

*“It would be good if the partners were involved in the decision-making process for approval and funding. My own opinion, however, is that the organisations mostly focus on their own interests. Let’s say that five NGOs apply for one grant. If these NGOs are then involved in decision-making regarding the grant, conflict will occur. In an objective sense, it would be good, but in practice, it would be complicated.” (Partner)*

In June 2008, a meeting occurred that involved a number of partners and representatives from ICCO and Helvetas. The objective was to brainstorm on how the LMD programme could be taken forward. This session was a form of preparation for the planned November 2008 meeting, which will be attended by all of the partners, and at which the second stage of the LMD programme (2009-2012) will be planned.

The programme officer suggested that during this meeting, ICCO and Helvetas emphasised that the “ball was in the partners’ court”. During our interview, however, the partner did not even mention this meeting, which suggests that the June 2008 meeting was not so influential after all. The programme officer reacted to this discrepancy as follows:

*“What I really find difficult about in working in the region is that the organisations lack entrepreneurial characteristics. In June, we really emphasised that the partners should design the next phase, and that they should indicate what their real needs are. Actually, we have done this many times. We really are trying to shift power to the partners, but they are not taking it from us. I don’t understand what we have to do to make our partner organisations more proactive.” (PO)*

In this sense, ICCO’s role and presence in the field is seen as particularly beneficial.

*“Some donors working here try to intervene in project implementation, and some make decisions from offices that are far away. Sometimes, this can be unreasonable. With the LMD programme, however, ICCO is in the field, is intervening, and is more aware.” (PM)*

## Adding value

During the June 2008 meeting, the participants undertook a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. The LMD programme's strengths included stable partnerships, good communication and communication facilities, and opportunities for linking to, learning from and cooperating with many different kinds of actors.

The weaknesses identified at the meeting were related to the intensity level of exchanges between partners and the project and its impact on implementation, the difficulty of replicating lessons learned via the LMD programme, the fact that NGOs give first priority to themselves and their own target groups (rather than the LMD programme's objectives), and finally, dependency on credit.

The major opportunities cited by partners were broadening the LMD programme's scope, and expanding cooperation. Lobbying was also seen as a potential area for exploration.

As for threats, possible changes to the new four-year programme term were mentioned, and the fact that the programme's mandate is controlled by a few individuals. When considering options for transforming these threats into opportunities, ideas considered included identifying new structures that would allow the LMD programme to become less dependent on donor funding, and giving the partners additional responsibilities.

*"So far, the LMD worked with mandates. Nowadays many decisions are in the hands of very few, how to hand over more tasks and decision making to partners and farmers. This is a topic where the partners can provide ideas and suggestions for." (Minutes meeting May 2008)*

In addition to the SWOT analysis, the partners listed their reasons for joining the LMD programme. In short, the key motivation was having the opportunity to learn from others and join a larger network. The partners also appreciated having an opportunity to cooperate. Furthermore, the LMD programme has motivated organisations to shift their focus away from food security and towards the market, thereby increasing their incomes.



The LMD programme framework provides added value compared with individual projects.

## The mid-term review

In year 2007, a mid-term review has been carried out by the "home" external consultant of ICCO, together with the local ICCO Programme Advisor. To give follow up to the MTR, the Steering Committee comes together and make several decisions based on the outcomes of the review. First, more resources will have to be allocated to emphasise ongoing analysis and learning and to strengthen management capabilities and partnership networks. Second, in Kyrgyzstan, focus is on identifying and analysing new and innovative value chains that will become important in the course of the next phase, on analysing and documenting value chain support models that shall be further developed and promoted in the future, and on identifying cooperation opportunities and mechanisms that – supported with knowledge management and advocacy – will improve leverage and outreach in the next phase of the program. Third, in Tajikistan, focus is on expanding the pilot experience in terms of value chains and geographic locations and to learn more about the opportunities and bottlenecks in the selected value chains. The Kyrgyzstan focus on identifying and analysing new and innovative value chains and on cooperation models and mechanisms is of equal relevance for Tajikistan. The pilot phase in Tajikistan will continue until the end of 2008, so that from 2009 onwards, a regional programme can start. The envisaged programme will have a four year duration with a mid term review in 2011 and an end-up phase evaluation, and with the perspective to turn LMD into a Central Asian information / knowledge / competence centre for fair market development in a third phase.

A brief memo outlining the ICCO/Helvetas Steering Committee's response also mentions that the regional LMD programme aims to scale up the programme and enhance its impact, while taking lessons learned into account. The memo lists a number of areas in which improvements need to be made, if a programmatic, regional approach is to be taken. These include enhancing monitoring, knowledge management, and capacity building. Coordination also needs to be improved between the broader partnership and other programmes and agencies in the region.

### The LMD programme vs. taking a programmatic approach

At the time when the LMD programme was being developed, ICCO had not yet adopted a programmatic approach. For that reason, the LMD programme does not “fit” with ICCO’s programmatic approach. At the moment, given that the LMD programme is almost three years into implementation, the programme officer does not see any added value in adapting the LMD programme to fit ICCO’s new approach. Rather, the programme officer applies relevant elements from the programmatic approach.

*“What is the real definition of a programme? The LMD programme does not meet ICCO’s criteria for a programme. For me, a programme establishes sustainable relationships with different actors in a chain, and each organisation contributes what it can. To become sustainable, it needs to react flexibly to change, and its internal relationships need to function properly.” (PO)*

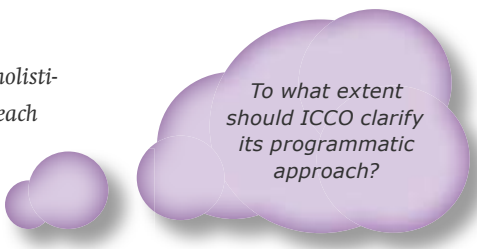
One key aspect of the programmatic approach is defining a common goal.

*“The LMD programme does not meet ICCO’s criteria on having a common goal. Partners have very different stakes in the programme, which makes it neither easy to construct a common goal, nor adds value. I prefer an approach by which different actors in the chain get to know each other, trust each other, and establish sustainable relationships. For example, when it comes to product supply and demand, all actors are aiming for more benefits, and are used to only considering short-term issues. We emphasise the need to have long-term relationships in order to realise long-term benefits. Our first objective is that different actors trust each other and identify issues for cooperation, which can be broadened in the years to come.” (PO)*

Although the programme officer does not intend to adopt the programmatic approach in its entirety, he introduced changes to ICCO’s approach at an early stage, and repeats these messages on various occasions. He last discussed the changes relating to ProCoDe in depth during the May 2008 meeting. The minutes include extensive notes on ProCoDe. Approximately one month later, one of the partners who had attended this meeting was consulted for this study. This partner had a different interpretation of the programmatic approach.



“We are now trying to adopt a programmatic approach for the future, and to look holistically at the entire organisation’s activities. We usually submit one project report to each donor, but with ICCO we take a programmatic approach and make one report. We not only look to our project, but also to the development of our organisation.”  
(Partner)



In addition, during the interview with the Programme Advisor, no clear answer was given concerning the extent to which he was aware of the programmatic approach’s reach.

- “In terms of our approach, we are not programmatic. This is a difficult issue, as the partners are not equal.”
- “I am not very aware of ICCO’s programmatic approach. My experience of ICCO has been very gentle. The programme officer gives us a lot of freedom to address issues. Don’t forget we work with poor people, who have many difficulties accessing the market. ICCO can sometimes put its finger on certain issues.”
- “We have had no ideological discussions such as those that we’ve had with other donors, for example, on whether we have a pro-poor approach or a programmatic approach. In my area of work, we are aware that we are linked to a programmatic approach.”
- “For me, the LMD programme matches my definition of a programmatic approach in the sense that within the LMD programme, we work at e.g. gender inclusiveness or poverty alleviation. The programme defines the areas you work in.” (PA)

There is a perception that ICCO does not put a lot of pressure on its partners to implement the ProCoDe changes.

“We know that change is occurring, but we are focusing on our own mission. Last time we met with the programme officer, he said that we should continue to work according to our own mission. He stressed in a concrete way that changes within ICCO should not change the partners’ work, as these are internal changes, not those within its partner organisations.” (Partner)

FUTURE ISSUES	
<b>On the agenda</b>	
Implementation	In September 2008, a new programme phase for 2009-2012 will be designed.
Roles	A Dutch consultant will undertake a mission in September 2008. The objectives are to stimulate local entrepreneurship among partners, and to shift more accountability and ownership to partners.
Regional Work Office	The RWO should be established in 2009.

The LMD programme is still being developed.

“In September 2008, another mission will be undertaken in order to gauge the feasibility of developing a shared vision and a common goal. However, I do not expect this to be very successful. I would be satisfied if there were to be agreement among the partners at a sub-regional level.” (PO)

“The LMD programme is aiming to expand into more Central Asian countries. Assessment and research studies have taken place, and the LMD programme has got funding until 2012. Every year, we will opt for a new contract.”

The LMD programme is rather new, meaning that it is too early to properly assess its impact. The programme is regarded as having great potential, however.

“The approach taken by the LMD programme is very good, and I hope that it will continue to work in future. The problem is that in Kyrgyzstan, there are few processing companies. If there were more, the LMD programme would be very successful. The LMD programme is extending its number of products. This means that we will also produce fruit, and will establish groups of farmers for this. I hope that the LMD programme will eventually cover all sorts of vegetables.”

*There is also a lack of trust, as we live in an unstable country. Poverty and migration are problems, and many people leave for Russia. Kyrgyzstan is an agricultural country, and there is no industry. People profit from remittances in such situations.” (Partner)*

*“The programmatic approach asks for a multi-year cooperation, implying that ICCO should have a long term commitment in the region and is willing to increase funding levels. Given the back-donor relations, ICCO would not be able to go beyond a 4 year-period. The current ICCO ‘business plan’ lasts from 2007 – 2010; i.e. it cannot give any final promise beyond, since there is no contract with the Dutch government. However, contracts are made between ICCO and partners until 2012, which go beyond the current funding period with the Dutch government, because of the long term relation and commitments.” (Minutes Partner Meeting May 2008)*

### **To conclude**

The programme officer involved in this learning history perceived that the programmes as being developed by the FED-department received less popularity than others. He emphasised that he does not strive to fit his partners into a ICCO-jacket, but to take on elements from the ICCO policy that he finds beneficial for the context he works in. The programme officer emphasised the lack of importance to end up in a discussion whether LMD is using a programmatic approach or not. A programme, which, according to the concept described by ICCO, has one goal, one vision, which is multi-actor and multi-level, brings an added value and whereby the Southern partners have the ownership over the process. Features such as multi-actor, multi-level cooperation, together with a common goal and a shared analysis lay foundation for LMD. The project management strives to increase ownership for some time already, but it is perceived as very difficult, as in the region of Central-Asia partner organisations appear to depend a lot on their donors. In this light, ICCO seems to integrate useful features of the programmatic approach concept, while some other features are perceived as unmatchable with its partners.

It must be remarked that the people involved in this learning history, had no clear understanding of the programmatic approach. This makes this learning history also a bit the odd man out in the series of learning histories on the programmatic approach.



## 6 Sustainable Forest Management Programme, the Pacific

### Introduction

Since 1975, ICCO has been working in four Pacific countries: Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Solomon Islands, (SI), Fiji, and Vanuatu. ICCO has given most support to PNG and SI, both in terms of number of partners and in terms of funds. In 1999 and 2006, ICCO phased out its support to Vanuatu and Fiji respectively.

In the past, ICCO has supported different kinds of activities in the region. After conducting two exploratory missions in 1995 and 2000, ICCO decided to increase its focus on community-based sustainable forest use. In 2001-2002, ICCO developed its 'Pacific Policy Paper 2002-2006'. This policy paper focuses on three areas: sustainable forest use, strengthening civil society, and organisational development. In 2005, ICCO developed its 'ICCO Corporate Forest Strategy', which relates to overall ICCO strategy on sustainable forest management. These papers, plus the ICCO Alliance Business Plan, set out the general framework for sustainable forest management in PNG and SI. ICCO's partners are currently active in the following four areas:

Influencing government policy and practice, and international policies (lobbying and advocacy);

- Legal issues and human rights;
- Sustainable economic development (eco-enterprise and small income-generating activities);
- Capacity building.

The majority of these partners engage in a range of activities, including capacity building, awareness raising, local lobbying, and services and micro projects (often referred to as ‘community development’). A limited number of partners specialise in specific areas, such as legal support, influencing government policy, or promoting community forest certification and access to international (timber) markets.

One of the partners, a not-for-profit company, was consulted for this learning history. This partner runs a service delivery company, which focuses on providing a fair trade label for landowners who have started their own businesses. Furthermore, the partner links these landowners with selected local timber yards in order to sell their products, and these are then linked with exporters. This company aims to achieve greater levels of cooperation and a complementary approach that involves different players in the field. Some of these are ICCO partners.

In 2002-2003, a feasibility study was carried out. This first phase was co-funded by ICCO. In 2004, the partner launched the organisation and became an official ICCO partner. The organisation had previously had a four-year contract with ICCO. Now the partner has another four-year contract, of which the first two years are guaranteed, and the second two depend on reaching set targets (mainly relating to timber export volumes). The organisation presents an interesting case for learning from experience, as it went through a somewhat similar process compared with ICCO in its process of initiating a programmatic approach.

For this learning history, the following people were consulted:

- Assistant programme officer (APO)
- Programme officer (PO)
- Partner (Technical Advisor from a local not-for-profit company)

Furthermore, the following key documents were consulted:

- Programme document (PD), ‘Sustainable Forest Management in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, ICCO programme 2008-2010’
- Travel report by the programme officer, 2007
- Report on partner meeting, November 2007

Data collection took place between July and September 2008.

IDENTIFICATION PHASE circa 2006	
<b>Facts and figures</b>	
<i>Since 1990s</i>	Annual partner meetings (with the exception of 2005).
<i>2006</i>	A partner meeting is held. The programme officer presents general developments in ICCO’s policy and introduces ProCoDe. No steps are taken to adapt the current approach towards this new policy.

### A tradition of partner meetings

There is a long tradition of holding partner meetings in the Pacific region. The aim is to enable participants to exchange experiences and lessons learned. Since the late 1990s, partner meetings have provided annual opportunities for joint learning, exchanging information and collectively developing policy. No meeting occurred in 2005.

In 2005, ICCO commissioned an external evaluation of its strategic choices, priorities, selection of partner organisations, and the impact of its work in the Pacific. The evaluation’s results provoked reflection and communication between ICCO and its partners. ICCO did not agree with all of the resulting recommendations, as they contradicted



ICCO corporate policy and strategy (for example, relating to professionalism and geographical focus). ICCO followed up on recommendations relating to further policy development, forest strategy, programme formulation and coherence, donor dependency, focused organisational development (OD) support, and ICCO partner meetings.

In November 2006, the tradition of holding partner meetings was reinstated. The November 2006 meeting aimed to follow up on previous meetings and the recommendations made in the external evaluation. The programme officer introduced ICCO's programmatic approach. A number of decisions were taken, namely:

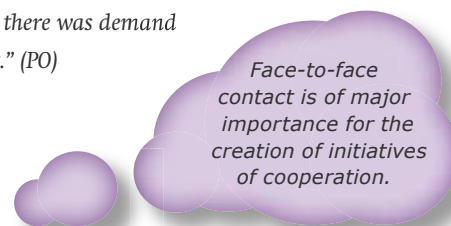
- to end ICCO's involvement in regional Pacific programmes;
- to focus on what was previously termed sustainable forest use (SFU), and is now termed sustainable forest management (SFM);
- to develop a new policy/programme, in close collaboration with the partners.

The partner meetings appear the epicentre of the development of linking and learning initiatives. The interest for complementarity has grown during these gatherings.

*"The initiative to take a complementary approach and unite the partners started at the end of the 1990s. This seems a long time ago. However, the pace was slow, as the emphasis on complementarity only arose during these partner meetings, which only occur once a year." (APO)*

*"Since 2005, I have been working as a programme officer for the Pacific region. I attended my first partner meeting in November 2006. This is actually when it really started for me. I think that the partners are really enthusiastic about the partner meetings, which have been taking place for years. Although the tradition was initiated by ICCO, there was demand for and interest in joint learning, information exchange and joint policy development." (PO)*

*"I first joined a partner meeting in 2004. In this meeting, we discussed general issues and what partners the partners were doing, but concrete cooperation was not discussed." (Partner)*



*"The idea was to make the partner meeting of year 2006 the starting point of a learning cycle with partners, leading to programme formulation, monitoring, learning and reformulation. The next meeting was in November 2007, and the third one is scheduled in October 2008. These partner meetings play a crucial role in developing the SFM programme in PNG and SI." (PD)*

Partners were ahead of the initiative of ICCO to work according programmatically. Partners themselves expressed interest to harmonise their work. Progress was slow though, as the partner meetings were the only moments of gathering, and these gatherings seem to be the ignition of initiatives.

## PREPARATION PHASE - PROGRAMME DESIGN 2007 - to date

### Facts and figures

Early 2007	The programme officer writes a programme plan for the Pacific.
Nov. 2007	A partner meeting is held. The programme officer outlines general developments in ICCO's policy and introduces ProCoDe. The partners and ICCO decide to write a joint policy paper.
Jan. 2008	The programme officer writes a second programme plan for the Pacific, which is awaiting management approval.
Sept. 2008	The writing of the joint policy plan is still ongoing.

## Launching the programmatic approach

From 2006 onwards, ICCO informed partners about the programmatic approach at various points, namely the partner meetings in both 2006 and 2007. Besides the earlier expressed interest from partners for a more complementary approach, the drive from ICCO related to the programmatic approach has not been picked up actively by partners as it appears that this approach did prove to be challenging on a conceptual level.

*“The programme officer shared his thoughts on the new programmatic approach. The participants recognised the benefits of this approach, but it has not been put into practice. Ideas have been suggested regarding coordination and implementation, but no concrete agreements have been made. The approach thus remains somewhat abstract.” (Partner)*

*“During an in-depth dialogue with one of the partners following the partner meeting, I discovered that the partner did not fully understand why ICCO had changed its scope, and what this would mean for the programme’s content and process. It is possible that other partners also do not fully understand our ideas.” (Travel report 2007)*

*While a certain push from ICCO’s programmatic approach could have supported partners’ existing ideas on complementarity, the lack of conceptual understanding may have lowered the interest of partners.*

Thus, the combination of interest from partners and the new policy from ICCO could not speed up the process to work more complementary. It could also be that the confusion regarding the concept slowed down the further process.

## A writing exercise

The programme officer was aware of ICCO’s requirement that he should design programmes. He twice wrote a programme plan, setting out the fundamentals of the programme and its financing.

At the same time, the programme officer felt the need to start up a process towards a joint programme with partners. During the 2007 partner meeting, it was agreed that a joint policy paper should be written by all partners. This paper would form the basis for the future programme. After that, the partners contributed a number of chapters on context analysis, but no dedicated joint mapping exercise was carried out. At the time of writing (September 2008), the paper was still being drafted.

*The design of a programme became a writing exercise of a joint document, but with individual contributions. It could be questioned whether this would create the synergy that is desired for.*

*“The processes relating to the programme plan on the one hand, and the creation of a programme on the other, involve different dynamics and taking different angles. A programme plan is an administrative tool. The creation of a programme with partners is completely different, and is designed using input from partners. Although the ultimate responsibility for both processes lies at this moment with ICCO, the process aims for optimal input and ownership from ICCO’s partners, considers the context and lessons learned, and tries to make programme development a shared responsibility. This process tends to be slow and open-ended. From the start, the writing process [of the programme plan] was more directly linked to the ICCO Alliance Operational Plan and its annual targets. This process is more strictly governed by deadlines imposed by ICCO’s management. However, both processes should eventually converge.” (PO)*

*Producing the programme plan and the policy paper are separate processes. This could result in variations between what is written down on paper, and what partners are planning to put into implementation.*

*“Over the last few years, we have been working on a joint document.. We aim to have to have a framework for advanced cooperation: one goal, and some objectives and strategies.*

*I would not call this a programme, though. Actually, we started before ICCO provided the programme plan format. The programme officer is coordinating the paper. He has invited partners to co-write the document and to formulate the objectives, as this should not be ICCO’s role. Although the partners seem to be enthusiastic about their own contribution to the larger ‘programme’, there is not much enthusiasm about producing the document. The programme officer sent a reminder to partners, after which one partner proposed to hire a consultant to write the document. It appears that this partner does not see this process as one that is beneficial to its own work.*

I do understand that partners are busy with their own projects and their core business, and that they give little priority to this ICCO initiative.” (APO)

“Developing the joint policy document has not really been a smooth process. It has already taken quite a lot of time to prepare it. I believe that I also have to make some contributions to this document. I must admit that this document has not been a priority for us. There are always so many more real issues that have their own deadlines, preventing us from prioritising the document. In addition, it is not very clear what, exactly, is meant to happen. The programme officer also delayed the project, as he had some busy periods in the head office. The programme officer clarified that the programme does carry a number of obligations, which can not simply be met via attending the annual meetings. I think that the programme officer made this very clear to the partners. It is a long-term process, however. Our current contract does not refer to a programme at all. That is probably an additional issue; every partner brings a different set of dynamics and is at a different stage in its contract.” (Partner)

It is striking that while an interest for a more coherent approach, the actual design process demonstrates slow progress. The annual meetings seem to revive the energy and motivation of the complementary approach, but it seems in daily work, the design of such approach is prioritised.

### “Working programmatically” in practice

While the design of the policy paper has not been finished yet, for the group of partners working on SFM cooperation is not a new activity.

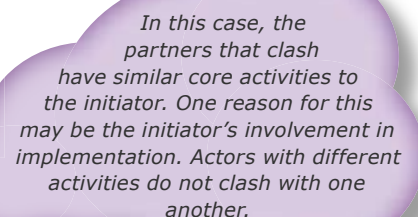
“There is a lot going on already. The partners seem to be willing to cooperate. To a certain extent, cooperation is already occurring. While the partners are engaged in joint activities, however, this does not mean that we have created a programme or that all the partners are cooperating.” (PO)

The perspective of the partner, who has been involved in this study, proves that to work complementary, it is important to have insight into the activities of the partners. The partner meeting of 2007 emphasised amongst others on gaining this insight.

“The 2007 partner meeting was particularly interesting. There was a greater focus on the programmatic approach, and on what each partner was doing in order to identify complementary areas. You hardly saw the other organisations, and therefore hardly knew what they do.” (Partner)

This partner also reflected on their experience of working in a complementary way. The comments suggest that it was not an easy experience.

“My organisation’s aim is to link different actors, some of which are ICCO partners, so as to cooperate. Given the scale of what we do, we cannot be compared with the programmatic approach. However, our approach has similar dynamics. In the beginning, the partners were very enthusiastic, and we organised various discussion sessions, in which the different participants showed commitment and interest. It is difficult for many organisations to get FSC certificates, so many organisations are interested in our work. However, it seems to be much more difficult to really cooperate, as partners have their own visions, strategies, and programmes. Our cooperation with many partners has gone well, but with others, we have to resolve a number of issues. Cooperation did not work out with one particular partner, as the fact that our core activities are the same as theirs meant that they did not want to cooperate. They had their own plan, and seemed to want to demonstrate that they were able to provide certifications too. The fact that our work was similar possibly led to this clash. Another difficult experience occurred when we could not agree on a shared vision and objectives with another partner. We have now reached the stage where we are prepared to give it one more chance. If this does not succeed, we may give up.” (Partner)



In this case, the partners that clash have similar core activities to the initiator. One reason for this may be the initiator’s involvement in implementation. Actors with different activities do not clash with one another.

It may be an added value to reflect on this experience together with the set of partners, as it demonstrates similarities with ICCO’s goals related to the programmatic approach.

## Who has a place at the table?

Only existing partners, rather than potential new ones, have attended partner meetings and contributed to the joint policy document. The current group of partners consists of various types of organisations with different core activities, such as lobbying and legal organisations, grassroots organisations working with CBOs, capacity-building organisations, and a private company. The partners have differing capacities.

*“A programme would include multiple types of actors, including those from government and the business sector. It is already difficult for our current partners to produce one vision and one objective, let alone to strive for this along with governmental and commercial actors, whose interests are very different than those of NGOs.” (APO)*

*“At partner meetings, only ICCO partners (including former partners) are present. The group of partners is very diverse, both in a multi-actor and in a multi-level sense, and this should contribute to the programmatic approach. It may be necessary to look for new partners, however.*

*I can imagine that the partners are fearful about new partners joining. I can't predict what this process will be like. It will be necessary to make clear agreements with one another, and partners should be included in the process of deciding which new partners to invite. ICCO should probably direct this process more.” (Partner)*

*“We have planned a partner meeting for October 2008. We have decided to invite only partners, instead of other actors, as it is already very difficult for our group of partners to construct joint objectives.” (APO)*

*“The composition of the group of partners is very diverse. Some are weak, and others are strong. I imagine that the weak partners will drop out. We have also looked beyond the current set of partners, but I sensed some resistance among the latter. Maybe they do not really know what the new organisations' roles could be, or maybe they do. They may fear competition, however.” (PO)*

The partner meeting presents a useful opportunity for making positive steps. However, the process appears to be a slow and difficult one, according to the programme officer. This is partly to do with the creation of new roles and responsibilities.


*“The 2007 ICCO partners meeting was significant in the sense that the presentation by ICCO on its 'Agenda for Change' provided a bird eye view of how ICCO partners in PNG and SI will work with ICCO in the near future. ICCO is in the process of shedding its former approach of working with partners. Decision making is no longer ICCO's sole prerogative. ICCO wants to work with multi sectoral partners and share decision making. The request by ICCO for contribution in the development of the SFM policy for PNG and SI is an indication of this change. Also, ICCO is engaged with organisations to compliment what it is doing for partners in PNG and SI. The new strategic direction that ICCO is taking would become clearer in the next ICCO partners meeting in 2008.” (Report partner meeting 2007)*

*“Although it was useful to spend some days together, the overall result of the partner meeting was disappointing. The three partners working on capacity building had some disagreements. Other partners could not contribute to solving the issue, which resulted in poor results for this topic. Nevertheless, this does demonstrate that cooperation between ICCO partners, which is one of the aims of the programmatic approach, is neither easy nor even possible.*

*Despite my preparations, we did not manage to link the lessons learned to a future policy on SFM. I believe that the partners did not understand the conceptual aspects.*

*The partners were largely responsible for preparing the meeting. For me, it is clear that ICCO should take a more significant role in preparing for and directing the process (although the content should remain with the partners). It will then be a challenge to retain the sense that this is the participants' meeting. This was definitely the case this time, but the concrete results did not meet my expectations.” (Travel report 2007)*

For an ICCO employee, indeed, it may be difficult to shift responsibilities to partners, as he or she has to let go to some extent own ideas regarding approaches and objectives. One should reflect further on the implications of ICCO's role.



Adding new partners is difficult:  
- ICCO partners may fear new partners  
- the process is already a difficult one.

*“Sometimes ICCO has certain ideas and tries to push these a little too hard. At the moment, ICCO is demanding that we take a business-driven approach, making links with small companies. I really feel this pressure at this moment from ICCO. Pushing NGOs too hard may eventually be counter-productive.” (Partner)*

Furthermore, the decision-making mandates has not been subject of discussion yet, but is something which needs further elaboration. What would be ICCO’s and partners’ mandates? Until now, ICCO has most decision-making mandates, but it struggles with the best way to arrange this.

*“Decision-making should be ICCO’s responsibility. One of ICCO’s characteristics is openness towards new partners. If ICCO were to make its partners responsible for selecting new partners, then existing partners may fail to include new partners due to fear about extra competition and the need to divide funding among additional partners. This, of course, would contradict ICCO’s policy.” (PO)*

### **Local coordination**

One of the partners is a local networking organisation (an umbrella organisation). It has a somewhat dominant position, and is perceived as a natural ‘lead’. Many of ICCO’s partners are also members of this organisation. Although this organisation has no specific responsibility with regard to programme development, it does organise partner meetings. Overall, lead or coordination structures, or any other elaboration of structure and decision-making, have not been established yet.

*“The idea of making the umbrella organisation responsible for coordinating cooperation and sharing lessons was expressed, but this has not been put into practice. At the end of the meeting, it was not clear what should happen, and how.” (Partner)*

*“The umbrella organisation naturally developed a dominant role. This particular NGO is very committed, but has no decision-making power. ICCO makes the decisions. I truly do not know which kinds of decisions the South should make, rather than ICCO. I believe that co-responsibility means that each and every actor has its own responsibilities, and ICCO is responsible for making the final decisions. We cannot expect the partners to judge one other and decide whether or not to continue giving financial support.” (PO)*

*“I think that the umbrella organisation is a logical and effective coordinating organisation, and it would be a good lead organisation for the ICCO programme. The organisation would be a good starting point for establishing leadership in this process, and it is able to mobilise and unite different actors. It would be important to come together and design a joint strategy, paying close attention to each others’ roles and tasks. This is actually not working well within our own project, as each actor has its own objectives and strategies. This organisation has its own strategic plan, which has been co-developed with its members, some of whom are ICCO partners. However, I do not know what would happen if ICCO is to write a new plan. Wouldn’t this in effect mean going down a side-road? Maybe we should link to the umbrella organisation’s existing plan.” (Partner)*

*“The umbrella organisation does not have the lead for this programme, but it does fulfil an important role.” (APO)*

### **Financing**

The financing structure remains the same, with no central or programme financing structure having been established. ICCO funds separate contracts with individual partners, and also funds partner meetings.

*“Financial issues should be organised bilaterally. The finances should remain clear and verifiable. It would not be advantageous to add an additional layer, which would also require more reporting.” (Partner)*

## **FUTURE ISSUES**

### **On the agenda**

<i>Programme plan</i>	The programme officer is aiming to finish the policy document as soon as possible.
<i>Partner meeting</i>	In September 2008, a new partner meeting will be organised. The agenda will include the programmatic approach and complementarity.
<i>Partners</i>	The set of partners remains unchanged.
<i>Monitoring</i>	A joint monitoring system will be established, using existing monitoring systems.

The next step in the design process will be the partner meeting that is planned for September 2008. The agenda for this meeting will include the programmatic approach and the joint document. The programme officer is keen to elaborate on the programmatic approach, although he wants to remain flexible towards the partners.

*“I think that the programmatic approach is an interesting concept: it stimulates cooperation and complementariness. In my opinion, it is good to stimulate cooperation, although it should be limited. I believe that we pushed too much in 2006 and 2007. The paperwork is quite tiresome. I have not created a time schedule, and I am not intending to do so.*

*The problem with a process such as this – that is, moving towards working programmatically – is that it is not as schematic as we would sometimes like it to be. Partners will learn from experience and from practice what needs to be done, and they will define their objectives as a result. It not a linear process as such.” (PO)*

The partner involved in this case study also shared his expectations on the programmatic approach by reflecting on his own experiences.

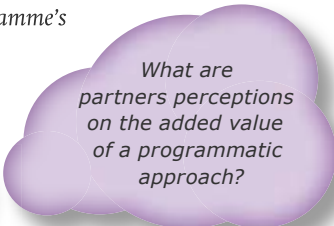
*“In the future, I hope that we can work towards a simple strategy, whereby we know each others’ strengths, and can work in a complementary way. I fear that this will be a difficult process, because capacity is low and many partners are focusing too heavily on their own work. This makes it difficult to unite, or can even cause partners to clash.*

*The main factor promising success will be ICCO avoiding taking too much of a dominant role. I believe that ICCO is aware of this. The organisations involved should cooperate intensively, and the cooperation should be very practical, such as a joint annual plan. I wonder how this will work in practice. At the moment, I think that more can be done. This is dependent, of course, on the partners’ readiness for cooperation. They have their own financial contracts, with different dynamics, which makes it complicated to fine-tune differences. In addition, each partner works differently. ICCO should put more into directing, stimulating action, and bringing partners together, but should allow it to remain a ‘southern effort’.*

*Partners should cooperate closely to design a future programme and produce a joint strategy and activities. Planning at this level will be more concrete and this may facilitate better cooperation. One of the successes of the current process has been that ICCO intends that the programme should be designed locally. ICCO is very aware of its role as a donor.*

*At the moment, I think that we could be trying harder to design a programme. The dynamics of funding and contracts between ICCO and each partner, and partners’ various approaches, may hinder progress, however. ICCO should find a way of demanding slightly more than they do now, but should avoid demanding too much; ownership should remain with the South. However, they should unite different actors and initiate progress. Partners should recognise the benefits of cooperation their own work. If they realise what the programme might bring them, then they will become more committed. Not every partner recognises the programme’s added value, and some of these partners protect their own organisations.*

*ICCO should not put too much emphasis on the partners’ capacities, as the latter may achieve less than had been expected. This should be a calculated risk: success should not depend too much on partners’ input and capacity. Undertaking continuous evaluation would allow ICCO to avoid taking too high a risk, but ICCO should be familiar with this issue already.” (Partner)*



What are partners perceptions on the added value of a programmatic approach?

## Monitoring

The programme officer does not intend to establish a new joint monitoring system, but rather plans to utilise existing monitoring systems.

*“We will not develop one monitoring system. We will use each others’ monitoring systems, although not all of these are well developed. In future, we will monitor progress with respect to our joint objectives.” (PO)*

## To conclude

To conclude, it can be said that the process of reaching a more coherent approach is a slow and difficult one. Despite partners’ enthusiasm for more complementarity, the eventual programme design is not picked up by partners with high priority. Striking is the approach to come to a common approach, which is chosen to be a writing process. It could be questioned whether this would stimulate partners to put efforts in the new approach, while it is perceived that the annual meetings involve much interest, enthusiasm and commitment from partners. The complex concept of the programmatic approach and the insecurity of the benefits may discourage partners to take on forward the programme design.



## 7 Youth Security Programme, Central America

*(Programa Seguridad Juvenil)*

ICCO's Youth Security Programme (Programa Seguridad Juvenil, or PSJ) is being implemented in four Central American countries: Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. Some of the reasons for this focus are the high proportion of young people in the region and a lack of opportunities to resolve their human needs. Many organisations are concerned about youth safety, and in particular youth crime, and are intervening to address the various issues affecting young people.

This learning history describes the process leading up to the implementation of the PSJ. The programme is active in the following areas:

- Its contribution to strengthen an integral regional youth agenda. The regional level lobby activities have proven to provide backing for local and national lobby activities and have contributed to improving partners lobby capacity at the local, national and regional level with regard to this agenda, or parts of it.



- The promotion of an integral understanding of situation of youth, combined with an integral policy agenda and actions framework is still the hallmark of PSJ and has helped deepen partners understanding, improving their actions and has helped position the programme in the region as an reference on this topic, also within official circles and with regard to other donor agencies.
- PSJ emphasises exchange between different Central American organisations, breaking the isolation of civil society organisations, allowing for very stimulating learning processes. This is being done both at the level of similar organisations from different countries as well as different types of organisations that have a lot to learn from each other and need to improve their complementarities (e.g. Community of Practice (CoP)).
- In the course of 2007 it became increasingly clear that there was also a need for improved coordination amongst international institutions on the topic, as many have included youth violence or prevention in their agenda over the last years, but there has been little inter-institutional communication. PSJ was one of the initiators of a round table for international organisations in Central America on the subject (March 2008). This has laid the groundwork for intense inter-institutional communication around the youth policy campaign in relation to the Cumbre Iberoamericana.

Even though this campaign was not foreseen (topic and location of the Cumbre were defined only late 2007), PSJ partners have played a leading role in regional campaigning and setting up youth platforms etc. The synergy created by PSJ has contributed significantly to this current campaigning, which is turning into the first regional youth campaign ever, and is energising regional as well as national networks.

The following people were consulted for this learning history:

- The PSJ coordinator who functions both as a programme officer as well as a capacity building specialist, located in El Salvador (PO)
- Advisor and social scientist, working for FLACSO and PSJ, located in El Salvador (ADV1)
- Advisor and practitioner, working for Red Maraca and PSJ, located in Honduras (ADV2)
- Programme specialist capacity building (PS)

### **Creating a programme learning mechanism: early lessons**

As long as the learning has a direct link to the actual work in which partners are involved, there is much enthusiasm to exchange. The programme's portal "Centroamericajoven.org", which is run by FLACSO El Salvador, has been able to concentrate most of the research done on youth in the region over the last year for online access. Red Maraca has dedicated a large part of its effort to methodological exchange, and is now able to promote a strong methodological recipe to other grass roots organisations working with youth. Because of the distance between participants in four countries, exchange visits are popular and effective. The advisory board of PSJ took the initiative to set up a CoP with the idea to bring different components of the learning agenda together in a discussion fed by knowledge holders in the region. This community is also meant to increase the programmes capacity to learn as it develops.

PSO supports the capacity building component of the programme. Both ICCO and PSO consider the programme to be a continue learning process with regard to the programmatic approach. The Central America programme was proposed to PSO by ICCO, and was approved. It was agreed that ICCO should produce a reflection report. The programme officer and the programme specialist capacity building wrote this report in June 2008, and have already shared its contents with PSO. Once this document has been further elaborated (for instance, more background information will be added), it will be shared with ICCO. Some fragments of the report have been used in this document, and the document is referred to throughout as 'RD'.

More information on the programme can also be found on the PSJ website, [www.centroamericajoven.org](http://www.centroamericajoven.org).

Data collection took place between July and September 2008.



## IDENTIFICATION PHASE

2005

### Facts and figures

2005 The programme officer, at that time a policy advisor to ICCO, asks a Dutch social scientist based at FLACSO (El Salvador) to undertake a consultation exercise focusing on ICCO's and Kerk in Actie's partners, and several experts. The mapping is undertaken in four countries - El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala - and focuses on the issue of youth violence, stakeholders, and existing programmes.

Local ICCO and Kerk in Actie partners produce national documents that are integrated into one regional document. A need has been identified for a deeper understanding of youth issues and for developing concrete strategies.

The exercise concludes that there would be a niche and a need for a programme that links different kinds of organisations.

ICCO facilitates the process of designing and formulating a programme.

At this time, ICCO only has about 8 partners.

### Piloting the programmatic approach

ICCO has a long history in Central America, both in terms of funding and in terms of cooperation. In 2005, besides MFS-funding, some of the ongoing programmes in the region were receiving funding from PSa (Personele Samenwerking, Personnel Cooperation), and thus indirectly from PSO. PSO had adopted a programmatic approach in order to avoid further fragmentation of its projects. PSO was also active commissioning studies in the region, exploring how capacity building could strengthen Central American civil society.

In 2005, PSa and ICCO's Central American section asked the then programme officer, at that time a policy advisor to ICCO, to undertake an exploratory mission. He contacted a Dutch social scientist based in El Salvador at FLACSO, a knowledge institute with a reputation for working on urban youth. The social scientist located at FLACSO El Salvador was at the time working on an ICCO PSa contract, and supported by PSO. This social scientist undertook a consultation exercise focusing on ICCO's and Kerk in Actie's partners, and experts. The mapping exercise was carried out in four countries - El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala - and focused on the issue of youth violence, stakeholders, and the existing programmes and different organisations involved in the issue, both at government level and in civil society. ICCO's and Kerk in Actie's local partners produced documents on their various national contexts, and these were integrated into a regional document. One shared concern related to the social exclusion of young people, and the lack of opportunities for young people to develop into active citizens. The suggestion was that the issue had grown in importance for these organisations, but that there was a need for deeper understanding and for developing concrete strategies.

The conclusion of the exercise was that there would be a niche and a need for a programme that linked different kinds of organisations. Many organisations working on the ground had substantial drive and ambition, but had limited connections to policymakers; while others had a great deal of capacity and had developed networks, but were looking for relevant issues to address. ICCO's general shift towards a programmatic approach convinced the organisation to take up the challenge of adopting a more programmatic approach in the region, and facilitating the process of designing and formulating a programme.

At that time, ICCO's main access to young people was via several partners active in development issues. With input from eleven ICCO partners from the region working on youth issues, the organisation began to analyse how these small entry-points could be developed into a programme consisting of a broader and more diverse set of actors.

Directly involved in the formulation phase were ICCO R&D, ICCO Psa and the advisor/social scientist from FLACSO. The ICCO Latin American department provided some backing and revision of products. The format of the programme was based on the results of the 2005 seminar with partners and other stakeholders. Furthermore the programme proposal was sent to all the partners involved and their feedback was used to improved proposal.

A team consisting of ICCO/Psa, ICCO's Latin America Department and the FLACSO-based social scientist worked together to create a programme format with a thematic focus. The PSJ functioned as a pilot for ICCO to test the programmatic approach. Support came from ICCO Psa and the ICCO Latin America department. In the eyes of those directly involved, decision-making with regard to the programme could have been more expedient.

"The strong interaction with PSO regarding the work in Central America seemed to be an important stimulus to copy the programmatic approach." (PS)

*Introducing the programmatic approach was very much dependent on individual ambitions, as at that time, ICCO's management had not developed an approach to working programmatically and guidance was minimal. R&D and Psa were most interested.*

"The PSJ could be developed because the partners had put a new topic prominently on ICCO's policy agenda. ICCO responded by experimentally linking this challenge to its own agenda of working programmatically. As a result, we were able to simultaneously develop a) a programmatic approach; b) shared responsibility with local stakeholders; and c) decentralised implementation structures. This enabling environment allowed innovation to occur, as did the fact that a few individuals were focused and patient enough to take all the steps required to manoeuvre the idea through the bureaucracy. On the other hand, the term 'enabling environment' probably gives too much credit to ICCO, when in fact it did not give much guidance in this area. ICCO's support in terms of developing a policy framework, timely decision-making, and providing the 'rules of engagement' in order to take the required steps was not always optimal for the programme's developers in those early days." (PO)

*A common interest in the theme and a common need for learning guided participants from the start.*

"In PSJ, the thematic focus on youth exclusion was the driving factor from the beginning, not the availability of TA in the region. It was therefore not difficult to define relevant capacity needs which would contribute to overall programme objectives. It can however be difficult to prioritise capacity needs with all stakeholders, and a key lesson is that a review of these capacity needs is required on a regular basis." (RD)

"Already early on it was clear that within this network of stakeholders, there were many capacity gaps identified. This resulted into the conclusion that a future programme would be likely in need of a capacity development function, which required local coordination and support." (RD)

It can be concluded that the concept of the programmatic approach came from the donors, while local organisations provided the programme's content. While ICCO just started to think of a programmatic approach, PSO played a key role in stimulating ICCO's employees to take a more coherent approach.

## PREPARATION PHASE - PROGRAMME DESIGN 2005 – April 2007

### Facts and figures

- 2005 ICCO organises a seminar in El Salvador to validate the outcomes of the mapping exercise. This is attended by 35 participants, most of whom are partners.  
The first rough outline of the PSJ is produced in close collaboration with the participants.
- End 2006 ICCO approves the programme concept, and programme design gets underway.

## Designing the programme

In 2005, ICCO organised a seminar in El Salvador. This was attended by 35 participants, most of whom were representatives of partner organisations. The outcomes of the mapping exercise were discussed, and verification of the analysis resulted in the first step being taken towards building a programme framework. The first rough outline of the PSJ was also produced, in close collaboration with the seminar's participants. The mapping exercise's conclusions were reflected in the design of the programme. The seminar agreed upon the following two issues:

- The need to promote an integral approach to youth safety. This should be a key feature of the programme, and included in its policy framework. The PSJ's first two strategic objectives reflect this point.
- The aim to work together with different types of organisations, from community organisations specialising in undertaking social work with young people, to human rights groups specialising in documenting violations of youth rights, to research institutes.

ICCO perceived the diversity of its partner organisations as advantageous, and invited its partners to collaborate on developing an integral approach and agenda.

The PSJ puts emphasis on exchange activities between different countries, as well as between different types of organisations. At the end of 2006, ICCO approved the programme concept. The programme framework consists of three strategies, with three corresponding forms of technical assistance (TAs):

- Lobby and advocacy for youth safety public policies;
- developing and sharing methodology for social work focusing on young people;
- knowledge-sharing on issues affecting young people.

The design of the capacity-building component of the programme attempts to achieve a balance between three factors: 1) partners' individual needs, and previous arrangements that had been made with specific partners or groups of partners; 2) the (sometimes different) needs of all partners involved in the PSJ; and 3) the programmatic aspect, specifically the capacity of the programme as a whole, including both partners and technical staff.



## The consequences of being a forerunner

The PSJ was one of the first initiatives to take a programmatic approach. Designing and finalising the programme proved to be a lengthy process. At times, the process was slowed down for months, as staff in the field waited for ICCO HQ to respond to their plans or to approve future plans. Work on the programme design got underway as soon as a representative from ICCO, the current programme officer, started work in the region.

*“Building a programme, with no experience on ICCO’s side and no representatives in the area, was a difficult process. The good thing was that we started from scratch, and did it our way. The programme plan was our framework.” (ADV1)*

*„ICCO hardly provided us with support or answers to our questions. ICCO is quite a large organisation, and in those kinds of situations, you need someone who has the guts to stick their neck out. We had many practical questions, such as who should sign what, and who is responsible for what.*

*We were in a difficult position. Should we wait a long time for answers from head office, or should we address some of the issues ourselves? A lot of these problems cleared up when the programme officer started work in the region.” (ADV1)*

*“Sometimes we had ideas, but we did not know whether ICCO would approve them. We were ahead of ICCO in terms of the programme’s development, and sometimes felt that ICCO was not ready for some of our ideas. It almost got to the point where the partners did not believe in it anymore.” (ADV1)*

*“ICCO should think more about the framework and the context for a programme, whereby programmes are valued on their results.” (PO)*

*“PSJ being one of the earliest programmes to be developed by ICCO within its new 2007-2010 policy framework, the programme has on occasions lacked institutional backing in terms of established “rules of engagement” with regard to ProCoDe (Programmatic focus, Co-responsibility and Decentralisation). The need for clarity has been recognised by ICCO, and clearer more precise policy on ProCoDe is actively being developed. One of the issues in this regard is the programme coordinators exact mandate with regard to different aspects of the programme, including financial aspects. Lack of clarity with regard to the coordinators mandate has made it extra difficult for the programme’s coordinator to establish himself as a credible interlocutor for partners and other stakeholders.” (RD)*

## ICCO’s four roles

ICCO’s programme plan sets out the four roles that the organisation aims to perform: strategic funding, capacity building, brokerage, and lobbying and advocacy. One might thus ask whether this implies that ICCO exercised substantial influence over the programme.

*“This does indeed demonstrate that ICCO had a lot of influence over this programme. The plan was written at a time when the plan’s criteria had not yet been agreed. These days, the issue of ICCO’s four roles is discussed in the programme plan, and there are different interpretations of this. One interpretation is that it is ICCO’s plan, thus it sets out ICCO’s roles. A contrary view is that this is a multi-actor programme, and that while ICCO is responsible for some roles, ICCO’s partners are responsible for others. According to this interpretation, the plan should describe the roles, and how and who should carry them out.” (PS)*

*“Sometimes we do forget that ICCO is an actor also in the network, and not an unimportant one, as we bring money.” (RD??)*

*“Because of the diversity of stakeholders and geographical spread, a broker was needed to facilitate the process of collaboration. ICCO was requested to take on that role.” (RD)*

In addition to ICCO, FLACSO also plays a strong role in the programme.

*“FLACSO insisted on having a strong role of this programme, which was formalised in a cooperation agreement between ICCO and FLACSO in 2006. This was not for reasons of funding, but because FLACSO regarded itself as a key actor on the issues of social exclusion of youth, and wanted to ensure that it could continue to drive its agenda. FLACSO saw the programme in development as a way to forward its agenda and intensify its links with local actors in the region.” (RD)*

Not only was the PSJ one of ICCO's first programmes, but also taking a programmatic approach proved to be a new way of working for ICCO's partners. The design phase was a long and slow process, in which various issues caused delays. The fact that programme design was eventually able to proceed appears to be thanks to the drive of the individuals involved. The programme officer's presence in the region speeded up the process.

## IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

April 2007 – to date

### Facts and figures

- Apr. 2007* The programme coordinator arrives in El Salvador and starts setting up the infrastructure of the programme (office, delegated fund, staff, CB planning etc.). Simultaneously, the programme is presented to stakeholders in the region, and some existing ICCO partners are interested in joining the programme, elevating the total participants from 11 to 18 partners. ICCO has no legal office in the country, and the programme officer is stationed at FLACSO.
- Oct. 2007* First PSJ partner meeting where the 1st phase of the programme was revised and planned in a participative format. The participants acknowledge the need to develop a much more detailed mapping instrument, focusing on the activities of the partners involved. In the meeting a thematic mapping of partner activities is carried out. Also the partners themselves carry out a short needs assessment, followed by the planning of the first phase of PSJ in a participative format.
- Nov. 2007* Programme implementation commences in November 2007.
- Dec. 2007* A local employee undertakes short-term logistical work for the PSJ, and another person is employed to work on communication.
- 2008* Two learning facilitators join the PSJ, one in Guatemala, and one in El Salvador.
- Mar. 2008* PSJ organises a large regional conference on Youth, Security and Justice in Guatemala, together with a PSJ partner and a German donor organisation. This conference constitutes the first large scale public launching of PSJ in the region. All PSJ partners participated, many taking part in the conference programme.
- June 2008* PSJ co-organises, together with Action Aid and INICIA México a regional preparatory seminar for civil society lobby and advocacy in relation to the Cumbre in San Salvador
- June 2008* The programme officer and the programme specialist capacity building write a reflection report for PSO.
- August 2008* PSJ organises a regional exchange meeting on the Community of Knowledge and Practice (CofKandP) on youth security. John Smith (an expert in this field) facilitates the process
- August 2008* A regional exchange meeting on innovative methodologies for youth work was organized both for PSJ partners as well as other interested organisations, PSJ and Arte Acción Honduras facilitate the process.

### A showcase programme

ICCO often presents the PSJ as a showcase programme, as it is seen as an example of good practice in a programmatic setting.

*"PSJ has received much interest from many ICCO departments, eager to learn about the process of programme development."*  
(RD)

The interviewees suggest that several programme characteristics contributed to this success. The first of these is ownership; the programme appears to be a locally-driven initiative. Although the programme was initiated and managed by ICCO in its entirety, it appears that its "soft" features are dominant.

*“At the very beginning, the partners influence was low. After a small research project into the regional situation and a process of consultation with local partners ICCO wrote the programme plan. This plan was a kind of projection on ICCO’s part, from the perspective of both a need for change (adopting a programmatic approach and shifting from a regional to a thematic structure) and interest in the topic (youth). The programme was launched from the top down. ICCO’s partners were able to join and to decide for themselves what for the programme would offer them. Partners are used to donor-initiated programmes. That’s why it took time before they found or started to create a more active role for themselves.” (ADV1)*

*“Programmes are vulnerable. You see that the motor is with ICCO. A lot of energy in the initiation phase came from the Dutch people in the field. In Central America ICCO had lots of influence. Also the kick off was with ICCO. ICCO has a quite central position in the group.” (RD)*

Despite the programme’s top-down approach, ICCO undertook intensive consultations with its partners, and involved them during the programme design phase. This means that the programme strongly reflects the ideas and interests of the actors involved.

*“PSJ has been developed with actors in Central America. Within this region, civil society organisations have a reputation for showing mature leadership and willingness to take on responsibility in programmes initiated by ICCO. Some of the common issues with lack of local ownership in development cooperation seem to be less prominent in the interaction with Central American partners.” (RD)*

*“Even during the preparation phase, the partners were able to give input. Input came from local organisations, and not from Utrecht! This was very important, as it created ownership. In the case of Red Maraca, we received funds for a preparatory phase for the network from ICCO, and the text of the programme relating to Maraca was written by its founders.*

*At this stage, we and other the partners did not know whether they would eventually become involved, but they were already part of the process.*

*During the process, one of our strengths was to undertake a good analysis. This prompted a lot of dialogue with partners and experts. We were really looking for a niche, and to have added value. But I think that ICCO facilitated the process, rather than directed it. There was room for partners to choose directions.” (ADV2)*



*“To keep them interested in the programme, the topics needed to be selected by the partners themselves. We aimed to provide added value in the form of topics or themes that were of interest to the partners, but which were difficult to address on their own. This included taking a regional approach.” (PO)*

Slowly, control over the programme shifted towards the partners. Among other things, this was achieved by the establishment of a Consultation Board. Participants of this board are well-known regional experts on the topic of youth security in Central America. The board has six active members, two from El Salvador, two from Guatemala and two from Honduras..

*“ICCO is still a focal point, although there has been a shift towards the Consultation Board. The Board’s influence has increased significantly. During the process, partners’ involvement has increased, resulting in greater ownership.” (PS)*

Another way of increasing local ownership was to set up a delegated fund, managed by the ICCO and FLACSO. Establishing the fund and its local decision-making structures proved to be a challenge.

*“The intention was that decision-making would take place in the region, from the very beginning. The delegated fund was an instrument for achieving this, but it had to be substantial to have this result.” (ADV1)*

*“Some partners participate more in the programme than others, but this is not a bad thing. You cannot really involve 22 organisations in decision-making, and not all of the partners would be interested in participating anyway. The project team does its utmost to listen to the partners’ voices. The partners are very involved in the delegated fund. They can apply to this fund themselves, and also suggest other organisations to be funded.” (ADV2)*

The former quote also refers to the partners’ level of participation. The perception is that not all partners are actively involved in the programme. One reason for this is that some partners have a tendency to wait for donor initiatives. Others are involved in a range of activities alongside the PSJ programme, and the latter is not one of their priorities. As a result, ICCO has to balance playing a proactive and playing a passive role.

*“There is a tension between the dynamics of the creation versus leaving time and space for ownership. There is a tension between ICCO and its partners. Sometimes partners will lean backwards, and await for ICCO to take the lead and undertake initiatives. Sometimes you have interesting ideas and you want it to implement it, yet, you cannot do it if the local community is not taking over the idea. As ICCO you cannot be too pushing but sometimes it is hard to restrain.” (PS)*

*“In Honduras, partners are neither very involved in nor aware of the programme. The local Red Maraca network continues to function. What I learn there, I bring to the to PSJ. I don’t think that the PSJ is really ‘alive’ with local partners, though. Partners see ICCO more as a donor.” (ADV2)*

The following quote demonstrates how difficult it is to explain how ownership constitutes one of the PSJ’s success factors.

*“The positive aspect of the Central America programme is that local partners have a lot of influence on the programme, while at the same time ICCO has a strong position and influence. This creates tension, which is a common occurrence when introducing a programmatic approach. This programme has quite a good balance between local actors and ICCO.” (PS)*

### **Shared interests**

The shared interest in youth-related issues among ICCO’s partners is the second reason for the PSJ’s success. From the very beginning, the organisations involved had a shared interest that brought them to together to collaborate on the programme. All of the interviewees stressed that this shared interest in the theme was a binding factor.

*“Even though partners are different, the common need (and concern) around the issue of youth exclusion in the region has generated extensive collaboration and excellent attendance of events organised in the context of the programme, by partners, as well as by other stakeholders (if invited)” (RD)*

*“One of the PSJ’s successes relates to the relevance of its theme, which was picked well. I think organisations have learned a lot, and a lot of thematic and policy discussions have occurred.” (ADV2)*

A common vision does not seem to be necessary for programme design, however.

“Not all partners share the programme’s vision and objectives of the programme the way we designed at the beginning. This would be too much to ask. The set of actors is very diverse: academics, grass-roots organisations working in jails or in disadvantaged areas, and legal organisations. These organisations have different priorities and contexts, making it very difficult to formulate a joint vision. However, our vision focuses youth, an issue that connects us all. The actors are also brought together by common criticism of the government’s repressive policy.” (ADV1)

### **The partners**

After the design phase, whereby eleven partners are involved, seven more partners gradually join the programme during implementation phase. From the various interviews, a different perception is expressed on the creation of the set of partners. While one perceives the inclusion of various partners as less wished for, others felt it as it was a luxury position to ‘choose’ new partners.

*“One of the most important issues during the programme’s launch was that a large number of partners were included in the programme. We had to include 15 out of 18 partners, but it proved to be a pain for both sides. Some of them were not interested in the theme, some of them were not that interested in participating in a new programme with all the questions that come with it, which was also difficult from our point of view. Head office demanded that we include them, for reasons of loyalty. It is still unclear what kind of mechanism we should use regarding partners’ involvement. Some don’t want to participate, but are involved, while others want to become involved, but aren’t ICCO partners.” (ADV1)*





*"It is not common for ICCO to develop programmes with a high level of ambition, and relatively few partners in the starting phase. Most other programmes are being developed with relatively large groups of existing partners, or with some existing partners and some new actors. The formulation of PSJ was characterised by much freedom for ICCO to focus its context analysis, and with a possibility to choose ('hand-picking') new actors to engage with PSJ. In comparison, it has therefore a much tighter focus and has been working in a clearer niche than many other ICCO D&P programmes." (RD) "It should be added that the handpicking was rather limited, as the programme budget was very tight. So it would be important to mention budget tightness as an added element here." (PO)*

*"The fact that we had only few partners at that time meant that we were starting from zero, and that we could look for partners for the programme ourselves. Selecting our own partners felt like a luxury. We wrote down our goals, and organisations could choose to join on the basis of these. We had three main criteria. First, partners had to possess expertise and knowledge on the subject. Second, they had to have interest in the programme. Third, they had to have interest in cooperation, so that they felt committed to putting effort into the programme." (PS)*

Large differences relating to size, focus and political preference required all of the actors to cooperate in a sensitive manner. The programme officer and the programme specialist reflect on this point as follows:

*"Differences exist between professional NGOs (who have capacity and networks, speak the 'right' language) and community-based organisations or social movements (strong capacity to mobilise groups of people, but limited access to power brokers). Not many people will disagree that these two can complement each others work. But it is hard to design a process in which both types or organisations feel fully engaged and represented. Cultural differences between high- and low educated activists can frustrate efforts. It is essential to reserve space for informal events to get to know each other, as personal relationships will eventually form the cement which will keep the programmatic building blocks in place." (RD)*

Having a large variety of partners made it difficult to agree on a common agenda, and a number of shifts within the group of partners had to occur.

*"If ICCO would engage with all existing partners in this programme, it would be hard to define a sharp common agenda (because of diversity of partners). So it would be crucial to create space for new actors, and at the same time to deliberately exclude some existing partners. Because these new actors were not always involved in the early mapping and planning stages, it would require effort to ensure good ownership on their parts. This was an important objective for the first PSJ partner meeting in October 2007." (RD)*

During the October 2007 partner meeting, the actors involved in the PSJ acknowledged the need to develop a much more detailed mapping instrument covering the activities of the partners involved. As a result, an extensive thematic mapping of partners' activities and a needs assessment were carried out, grouped around the 3 main programme objectives of PSJ. It has not been particularly easy to cooperate with such a heterogeneous group of partners.

*"The disadvantage we faced related to the very diverse group of partners, which had developed over the years and which has not always natural connections. We should carefully look at how much investment cooperation requires from partners, and whether it is rewarding. Successful cooperation requires facilitation, and I sometimes think that ICCO is not aware of this. We should avoid a situation in which partners are only interested in money, and not in learning." (PO)*

## **Programme management**

A team of seven manages the programme, composed of five staff in El Salvador, one in Honduras, and one in Guatemala. This Programme Management Board is responsible for programme management, including everyday issues. The programme officer and the social scientist are located at FLACSO in El Salvador. The programme officer's responsibilities are split fifty-fifty between coordinating the programme and acting as ICCO's representative, and capacity-building related to the programme. The social scientist, meanwhile, divides his time fifty-fifty between working for the programme and for FLACSO, and has a PSO contract. In addition, a communication employee works from the FLACSO office for the PSJ and for the delegated fund. The woman based in Honduras divides her time fifty-fifty between the programme (with Arte Accion in Honduras, which is also a programme partner), and Red Maraca, which is also part of the PSJ. She is also on a PSO contract. At the end of 2007, a temporary employee worked for two months

on logistical issues. In addition, an administrative employee supports programme coordination, and another works on communication. In 2008, two learning facilitators also joined the PSJ, one in Guatemala, and one in El Salvador. They facilitate learning by PSJ partners and partners from the delegated fund.

*“Three times a year, we have team meetings. These meetings are very ‘horizontal’, and have an open atmosphere in which all participants are able to share their expertise. The programme officer facilitates this process well.*

*The presence of local people enriches the team, and they are responsible for the delegated fund.” (ADV2)*

An Advisory Board (consejo consultivo) has also been established to monitor the PSJ’s overall programme policy, as made by the Programme Management Board. The Board consists of two local experts per country.

*“This board is relatively autonomous, members for PSJ team as well as FLACSO’s coordinator do participate in board meeting, but mainly to provide information and to listen to the boards opinion and ask questions.” (PO)*

Decisions on allocating the PSJ’s funds to activities are overseen by the PSJ’s Advisory Board. Programme priorities are set during the Annual General Meeting, which involves all partners.

*“Programme design takes place during the General Meeting (Reunion de Socios), which is a local-level (and in some cases a national-level) meeting. Partners’ influence remains at the general level of priorities and policy outlines, the daily decisions are generally made by the programme team.*

*One of the obstacles we face is the lack of a local ICCO office. ICCO has no legal status in the region. FLACSO receives money from ICCO, and in turn, FLACSO finances the PSJ. FLACSO is the lead organisation. If ICCO were to have an office, then it would be easier to shift decision-making to the partners.*

*In the end, we aim to shift as much control as possible to the partners, but ICCO will retain its decision-making mandate. Partners mostly have control in terms of content, while ICCO’s influence relates more to financing.” (ADV1)*



## Strong Dutch involvement

From the beginning, three Dutch nationals were strongly involved in the programme. This would be normally perceived as a disadvantage, as it can hinder local ownership and cause a large dependency on the international actors. In this case, however, their involvement is thought to have worked out well. It also is felt that in this particular case, the right individuals were involved; that is, people who had long-term experience in the region. The implication is that in this case, programme design was largely dependent on the individuals involved.

*“The PSJ depends a lot on the Dutch staff. The combination of the programme officer, living for 13 years in the region, the coordinator in Honduras who has even a longer experience and myself working with FLACSO -which receives much confidence from ICCO- has worked out well. Without the experiences and the contacts of these people it would have been very difficult to initiate a program the way ICCO initiated PSJ. In the first phase the programme was based very much on Dutch programme staff, on their experiences and attitudes. We should think this through properly, rather than exploring our way as we go. The difficulties we experienced were partly due to changes within ICCO. Now we have survived the first period, and can look forward to making the programme more dependent on the ideas and initiatives of the partners.” (ADV1)*

*“The added value of the programme is said to depend a lot on the lead. There are no systems or agreements in place regarding how the programme is implemented, and how lessons are learned. In addition, all the current changes within ICCO regarding CODE (co-responsibility and decentralisation) mean less focus on the programmatic approach, although a lot is still being done. This may also differ per department.” (PO)*

*“It looks as if the programme has been designed around the TAs, but the opposite is true. The need for TA is derived from the ambitions of the programme. As the programme as a whole was being developed, simultaneously the specific technical assistance components were being developed. These components parted from a history of personnel cooperation with individual partners or with groups of partners that were involved in PSJ. This history of personnel cooperation was seen as an asset and a factor of accumulated experience that should be respected in its own terms as well as be made of use in the context of the programme as a whole. If there had not been a tradition of ICCO TAs in Central America, ICCO might have opted for different instruments for capacity building. But at this moment it is fair to conclude that in the initial stage of the programme it has been fruitful to have three experienced TAs, to encourage partners to step out of a relatively isolated mode of working, and engage with other stakeholders through PSJ. It is important to generate empathy between the technical assistants and the members of the programme. It should be taken into account, that both professional aspects as solidarity aspects are of equal importance. A normative code and interaction ethics should be developed within all the members of the programme.” (RD)*

All three of the Dutch nationals involved have double roles, and work partly for the programme and partly for other organisations (ICCO, FLACSO, and Arte Accion).

*“It was decided that one expat programme coordinator/capacity builder was required for PSJ. Because ICCO understood capacity development as a process closely linked to the core business of the programme (the thematic focus on youth and security), it was felt appropriate to combine the capacity development coordination with the overall programme coordination. ICCO would normally be hesitant to combine roles of programme coordination, with capacity building. But the dynamics between programme participants and ICCO were of such nature that there was little risk of confusion between these roles. We took effort to describe the two 0,5 fte roles in detail, as part of the core programme document which was shared and debated with stakeholders. It is too early to know whether the roles of capacity builder and funding (as well as other roles like brokering and lobby) are confusing.” (RD)*

## Financing the PSJ

ICCO's partner organisations in Central America receive both programme and bilateral funding. The PSJ programme involves 18 organisations, 15 of which have bilateral contracts with ICCO. In addition, only five partners directly receive funds from MFS contracts through the programme.

*“The PSJ has 18 full-partners. Additionally, many other stakeholders become involved because of coordination issues or because of the small projects fund for youth initiatives. The programme has successfully organised formats in which different partners and stakeholders converge and exchange, from relatively small work groups, to a large regional congress on youth security, which was at-*

tended by over 300 people. In order to be able to be of service to all, we gave priority to multi-partner and stakeholder formats instead of one-to-one interaction. However, the need is felt and expressed for individual attention for each of the partners. The programme has not always had the resources and the time to adequately respond to these individual needs. It is also the question under what “rule of engagement” PSJ should take on the individual needs of partners.” (RD)

In general, aside from these five organisations, ICCO’s partners do not receive funds from the PSJ, but the focus is on capacity building services. Some also apply for delegated fund projects.



“It is nice that only some organisations receive money, and many others don’t. This means that these latter organisations joined the PSJ because of their interest in the topic, rather than for funds. Actually, the programme only has a small fund.” (ADV1)

“Partners involved in the programme do not have a financial relationship per se. A large part of the programme consists of collective capacity-building in a programmatic setting. We offer a certain amount of content, and if partners are interested, they can contact us and sign up for capacity building. Not every case requires a contract to be drawn up. Now some partners are involved that were not involved during the programme-writing process.” (RS)

“I think that the partners are drawn by the idea that the PSJ does not involve funds. They are not used to this.” (ADV1).

The PSJ is seen as a showcase programme, due to its high level of ownership and the shared interest in its theme. Interestingly, though, the programme was not founded on joint proposals. While many programmes have experienced difficulties in successfully defining a complementary approach, the PSJ chose a different route, allowing its designers to skip this hurdle. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the flexibility that ICCO is striving for, captured in the idea that no two programmes should be the same.

“The PSJ is not based on a joint proposal, including a joint financial scheme. Maybe we will do this in the future, but you really need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages. The programme forces partners to work in a more complementary way. We decided to focus on content.” (PO)

Given that the PSJ’s theme binds the partners together, the idea that the PSJ would involve funding is a controversial one. On the one hand, some think that offering funding would obscure partners’ rationales for joining the programme.

“If we were to provide funds through the programme, would it still be seen as a programme, or would it be a way of channelling project funding? I think that this would bring us back to square one. Now, we see that the partners are setting up initiatives independently of the donors. I really appreciate this as one of the programme’s best results.” (ADV1)

“One of the key lessons that I have learned from this programmatic approach is that the partners find the programme interesting because it offers something. Although money is important, demand for capacity building and support for lobbying is also high. It is good when a programme proves to be of interest to new partners.” (PS)

“I feel that the programmatic approach enriches our relationship with all the partners. Attention to financial issues moves to the background, while more attention is given to content: capacity building, the sphere of influence, and the regional agenda. I see this as the most important part. I believe that financing should be separated further from content.” (PO)

On the other hand, additional funds would allow the PSJ to support innovative projects.

*“It would be desirable to have more funds, so as to be able to meet the partners’ financial needs. At the moment, the programme has few financial aspects, but a rather large capacity-building section. We are unable to fund innovative proposals, and are slowly working on an integrated programme proposal for funding. At the moment, we are about to decide whether we want this for the next phase.” (RS)*

*“During the development of a programme, new ideas are put forth and members become enthusiastic about them. The programme’s financial structures should be flexible, in order to allow the approval of new initiatives.” (ADV2)*

*“It would be good if we were to dare to invest in new initiatives. If not, we risk ending up in the mainstream with the ‘donor darlings’. The delegated fund is a good instrument for innovation. It is good that the programme is not a straitjacket.”(ADV1)*

### **Administrative issues**

The programme experienced significant delays due to administrative problems. While programme development and implementation were progressing in the region, the perception was that at ICCO head office, no progress was being made with support measures, such as Dynamics.

*“For the financial administrative employees, the adoption of a programmatic approach has been disastrous. Dynamics was not prepared for all the additional programme layers, while we retained individual contracts with the partners in Dynamics.” (PS)*

*“The e-communication of the programme, i.e. with Dynamics project administration system in Utrecht, has not been working well. This is partially due to technical problems, and partially due to the fact that the coordinator has a large package of responsibilities to attend to. It has been so far impossible for him to delegate anything related to communication with the Utrecht office to other staff in the programme, as it requires authorised access (so far only available for the PSJ coordinator) and command of the Dutch language. The coordinator has been taking on tasks which are necessary for programme connection to Utrecht, but which could be arranged on an assistance level, rather than a coordinator level.” (RD)*



The programme officer finds it not very efficient to be involved in financial administration aspects of the programme. He believes that he should be able to focus on content and account management, rather than spending time on administrative tasks. A detailed division of tasks relating to finance and administration has not yet been developed.

*“Someone who is working on content should not be responsible for financial tasks. ICCO’s administration has not adapted to the new programmatic way of working. Currently, administrative issues are dealt with by ICCO’s Financial Department and myself, meaning that everything takes twice the time. It is much too costly to have a programme officer doing this. Moreover, it implies that less time is left for content. For the future Regional Work Office (RWO), it is important that the programme officer does not need to spend his or her time on administrative issues.” (PO)*

In addition, the many changes within ICCO caused delays, including delays to payments, which could have critical consequences for the partners.

*“In July, Arte Accion received the funds that we should have received in January. The shift within HQ had a negative impact on our work here.” (ADV2)*

As ICCO has no legal status in the region, local financial issues are arranged through FLACSO. It is questionable whether this is a desirable arrangement.

*“Administrative tasks are the legal responsibility of FLACSO. Sometimes it is difficult to organise funds to flow from ICCO to PSJ via FLACSO. FLACSO also has its own flows, which are almost the same size. It feels as if FLACSO is functioning as a administrative office, which it is not.” (ADV1)*

### Having a regional vs. a national scope

The fact that the PSJ is a regional programme allows partners to exchange information on a broad scale. The programme’s scope is large, covering four countries. However, at partner level, PSJ’s impact appears to be marginal, especially for countries that lack a national representative, such as Nicaragua.

*“The PSJ is not part of my daily work. Sometimes, when there are regional meetings and workshops, the PSJ is very important to us, but at other times, there is silence for months. Increased communication would keep the programme alive for the partners. A good recent initiative was the newsletter. In addition, it would be an asset to have a national lead representative, responsible for contacting PSJ partners more regularly. I do not want to say, though, that such ‘silence’ is wrong. In a way, it is also good, as the programme is not a fixed framework, and it is flexible.” (ADV2)*

*“The current lack of a national representative makes it more difficult for partners to ask for clarifications.” (ADV2)*

In general, the programme has run into many unforeseen areas during implementation, or at least issues which lack any guidelines. After nearly one year of implementation, a number of questions have been raised which need to be explored further.

## FUTURE ISSUES

### On the agenda

November 2008	A meeting is planned to discuss the results so far and to work on planning PSJ second phase 2009-2010.
January 2009	A new (local) programme coordinator will be appointed
February 2009	A mid-term review is planned
April 2009	All three Dutch people leave in March - April 2009. LJ from Honduras leaves the country and the social scientist from FLACSO may do so as well. The programme officer stays in El Salvador, but will be dedicated to other tasks

### The mid-term review

In ICCO's view, it is time to reassess the programme, and to combine the mid-term review (MTR) with designing the second (2009-2010) phase of the programme, as was foreseen in the original proposal submitted to PSO. There is an adequate budget for designing the second phase, and for doing so in a participatory setting that involves all partners. The MTR will be prepared in November 2008, and will take place in February 2009. The MTR will help ICCO to evaluate and reformulate the programme.

*"The PSJ is a pilot. I am not sure what this really means in practice, though. The reports from 2007 (the first year) and the plan for 2008 address quite a few lessons and dilemmas. I would like these to be fed back to ICCO. In 2009, there will be an MTR. This will be a good moment for reflecting on the programme itself."* (PO)

*"When is ICCO satisfied with the programme results? The programme does not have a baseline of "linkage levels", but the concept is interesting and opportune. The ToR of the MTR may be outlined to help think about the instruments needed to shift from a more traditional approach of measuring progress (mainly through the appreciations of the participating partners and other stakeholders), to working with a sort of "linkage level measurement framework"."* (RD)

*"The PSJ's future is unclear. At this moment, its focus is extremely relevant, so I would definitely continue with it. It would be interesting though, to use the MTR to measure the PSJ's impact, to some extent. I think that we have achieved quite a lot, but now it is time to look forward and to define our future strategy. For me, it would be important to continue to support the knowledge network and the projects. If this does not happen, then what we have built up may collapse. It is too early to phase out these elements, as establishing them takes time."* (ADV2)

An overall exit strategy for the programme has not yet been conceived. There is a lack of clarity within ICCO about how to deal with partners who are not contributing to the programme. Who should decide whether they should leave the programme: ICCO or its partners?



*“It seems very opportune to take the issue of exit strategies into account as a specific question with regard to the MTR planned in 2009, and with the second phase (2009 – 2010) proposal.” (RD)*

*“It is not easy to phase out the partners, as it is not clear who has the mandate to do so. This should become clear in February 2009, as at that point, we will enter the second phase. It is pretty much ‘not done’ to express dissatisfaction with a partner, and the partners would not do this either.” (PO)*

*“We have no clarity on financial issues for the future. Will financing occur through the PSJ or via Kerk in Actie? I think that ICCO should be cautious about this. I sometimes think that ICCO is not aware of the extent to which partners can become dependent on donors. Often funds include salaries, these come under pressure.” (ADV2)*

*“At the moment, the discussion is how to involve youth in this board, we need to walk the talk on youth empowerment and enable inputs from the youth perspective.” (ADV2)*

## **Conclusion**

Learning about the PSJ programme proved to be an extremely interesting experience. This particular learning history suggests that much of the programme’s success has been due to the perseverance and drive of individuals. In addition, it appears that funds have played a minor role, while content has been central. The topic of youth security drew together different actors in the region, and kept these actors sufficiently motivated to form a programme. However, tight funding has presented some difficulties in developing the programme, and looking for additional funds with other donors has proven to be the best way to overcome those obstacles. Nevertheless, the programme has experienced a number of obstacles, due to a lack of guidance from ICCO HQ. The programme is now once again in a phase in which important decisions need to be made, and it is up to the programme officer to come up with a process that can adequately facilitate the best way forward. It is foreseen that partners and advisory boards should have a key role in this. This tension is creating difficulties for the whole process. The programme’s added value and impact make it all the more important that the actors involved remain committed to making this programme a success, and to further exploring the options.







## 8 Education Programme, Mali, financial issues

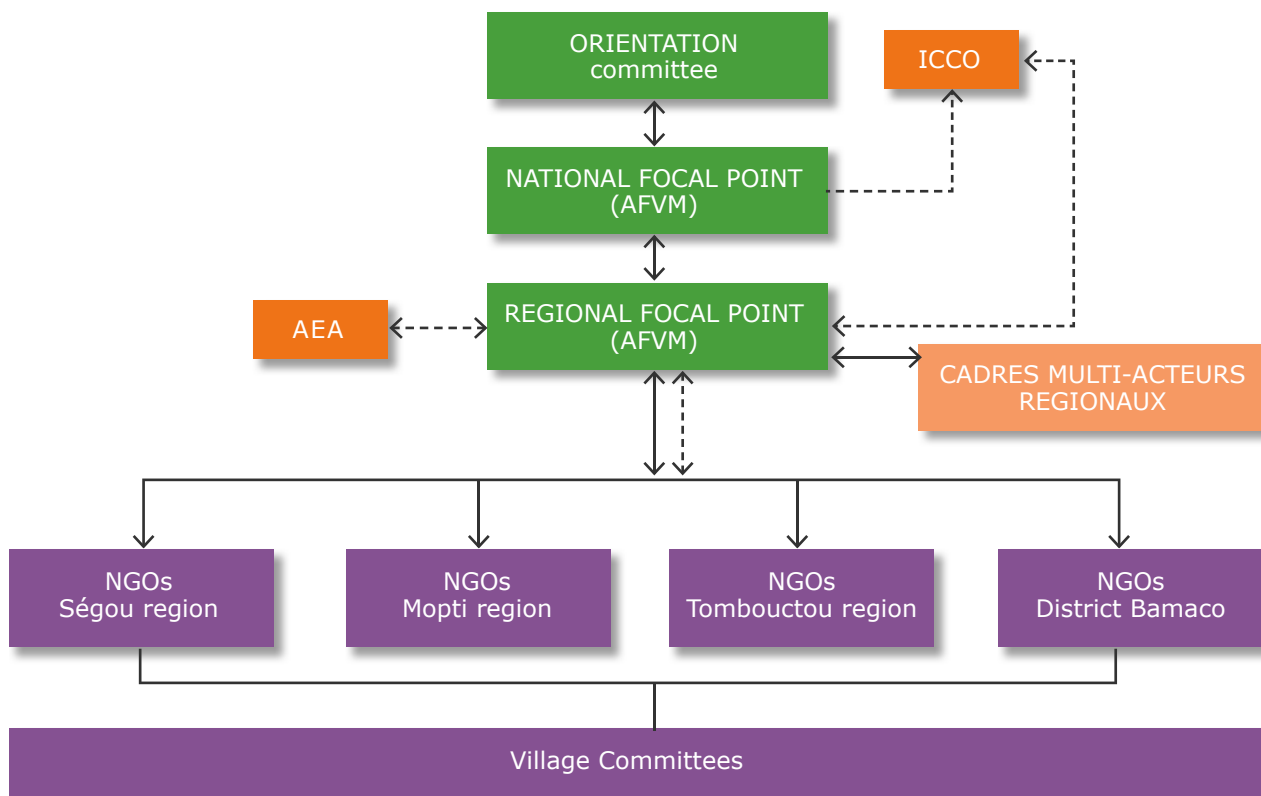
Together with the programme officer and the programme specialist education, a postdoc trainee has written a process description document for the non-formal education programme in Mali. This extensive document sets out the various steps that were taken in order to arrive at the current implementation phase. The Mali programme's financing structure is particularly interesting, and this will be addressed in this supplement to the process description document.

Data collection took place between July and September 2008.

### Decentralised funding

The Mali education programme is characterised by one overall lead (the National Focal Point, or NFP) and four sub-leads (Regional Focal Points, or RFPs). Figure 1, which sets out the organisational structure, shows the collaborative and financial relationships between actors in the programme.

The actors involved opted for a decentralised funding structure for this programme. In practice, this means that the RFPs receive funds from ICCO. The NFP receives a budget from ICCO to cover programme coordination costs and national-level programme objectives. Three RFPs receive ICCO funds for district-level programme implementation, which includes coordination costs. In addition, a fourth district (Bamako) is managed by the lead organisation. This latter organisation was already receiving financial resources from ICCO for its literacy programme, and in this case, no further sub-contracting involving other NGOs has occurred.



----- financial relationships (contractual conditions)  
 ————— collaborative relationships and narrative reporting

Figure 1: organisational structure, Mali education programme

As a result of this structure, ICCO has five contracts with the actors involved. Two of these are with AFEM (one for the organisation’s NFP role, and one for its literacy programme), and the other three contracts are with RFPs.

What lay behind the decision that was taken by the partners, the programme officer and the programme specialist, to use a decentralised financing structure, and why are the regional education programmes structured differently?

*“During the process, we arrived at this decentralised funding structure. ICCO decided to provide funding through the sub-programmes (RFPs) rather than to finance the programme centrally via the NFP. In dialogue with the partners, we tried to find a balanced approach that would allow risks to be spread. We were also in favour of leaving more space and time in which to build up trust among the partners. This would allow them to cooperate on the design and creation of the programme, and to experience the programmatic approach in a smaller group before adopting a centralised funding structure (the NFP). We did not opt for a structure in which all the partners would receive separate funding, since this would mean too much paperwork for ICCO. The Programme Specialist Education and the Programme Officer also took into account the lessons learned from an education programme in Peru (Ruta del Sol).” (PS)*

The decision to implement decentralised funding was considered thoroughly by those involved. The programme specialist and the programme officer interpreted the shift in ownership aimed for by the programmatic approach as a need to address the programme’s financial structure.

*“It is difficult to directly implement central funding. Within a programme, various partners have to start cooperating, despite the fact that they do not know each other very well. They need time to get to know one other in order to achieve mutual trust. On the other hand, by implementing a programmatic approach, we wanted to take some steps forward regarding decision-making and ownership. From this perspective, it was not desirable to continue with bilateral funding.*

Central programme funding per se is not an objective of ICCO's programmatic approach, but if decentralised funding works well, we may want to introduce central funding." (PS)

"As a result of the decentralised funding structure, the amounts of money involved are smaller. This is more desirable at this initial phase." (PO)

It is clear that the partners were somewhat hesitant to adopt all of the changes that came with the programmatic approach.

"The partners were concerned about their bilateral relations with ICCO. Communication and financial issues would from now on be arranged via the RFPs, and the partners would no longer have direct contact with ICCO." (Postdoc Trainee)

ICCO preferred not to have one organisation being responsible for both overall coordination and financing.

"If the NFP had been responsible for both overall coordination and financial issues, then the network would have become like a consortium. This was not our preferred option." (PO)

Mutual agreements have been recorded in Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). At the regional level, the RFPs have signed MoUs with their regional partners. At the national level, a MoU (convention nationale) has been signed by the national partners (including the national government), the four RFPs, and ICCO.

"We strived to design an MoU with the NFP as well, in order to record everyone's responsibilities and commitments." (PO)

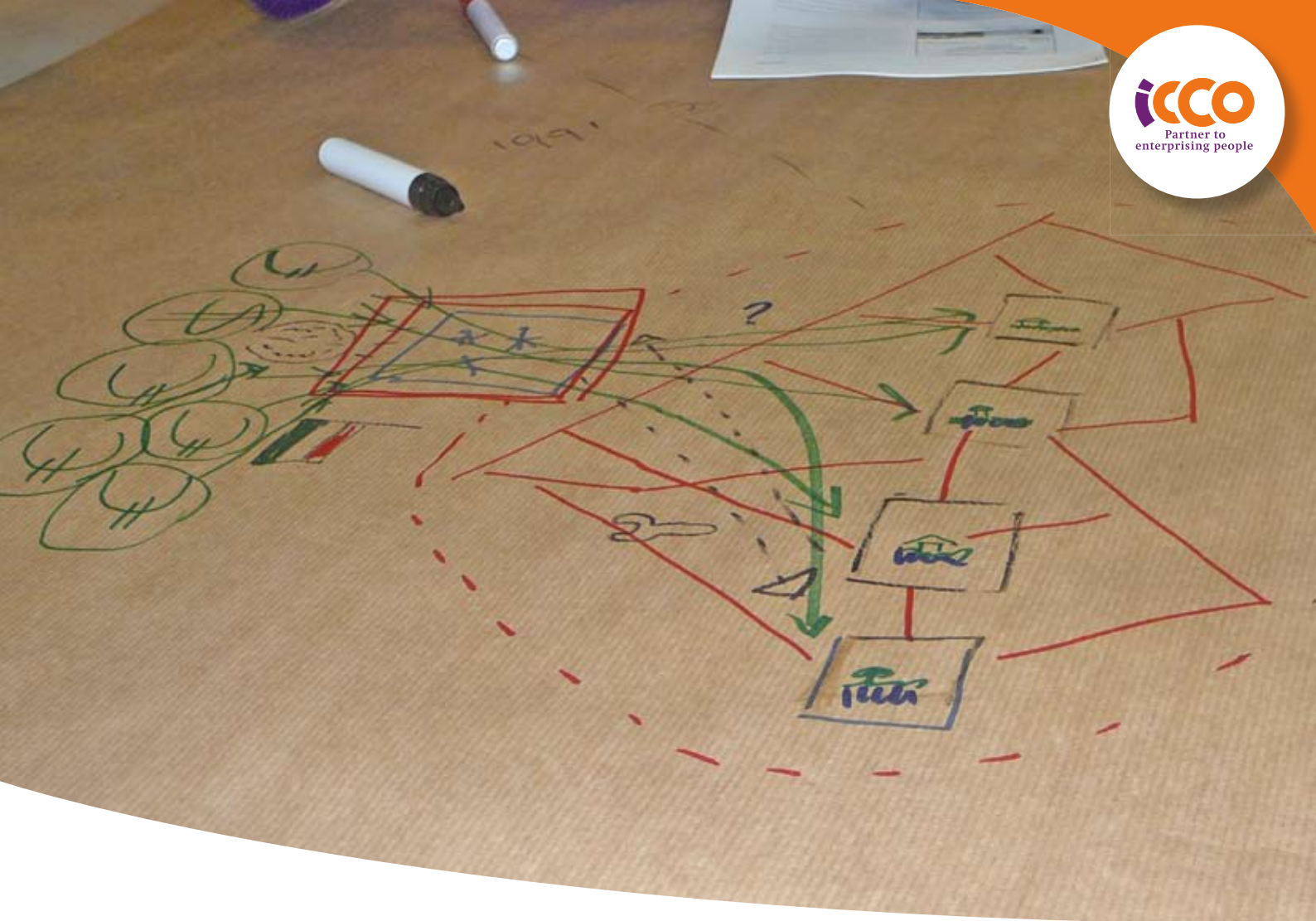
The Finance Officer responsible for the programme has experienced no difficulties integrating the programme funding into Dynamics.

"In Dynamics, I could enter the five contracts with a number of focal points. This did not give me any problems at all." (FO)

The pilot financing structure includes some features that diminish potential risk:

"For the time being, each sub-programme receives funding for a one-year period. As the funding is arranged through the regional divisions, the partners in any given regional cluster are located in the same city. This keeps the communication channels shorter." (PO)

At the time of writing, the programme officer and the programme specialist are very interested in how much progress will be made with implementing these changes to the financial structure. This is a new approach for ICCO, and in the coming months, it will become clear how implementation of the current pilot phase has fared, and whether it has proven to be beneficial.



## 9 Reflections

In this chapter, we present the insights gained from the learning histories. These insights will feed into ICCO’s learning process with regard to the programmatic approach, and in some cases will lead to adaptation of the systems, procedures and work processes involved in implementing the approach.

### 9.1 Multiple and simultaneous changes

The learning histories suggest that the programmatic approach was not introduced in a particularly smooth fashion. This was particularly due to the fact that the process occurred at the same time as many other changes that were being implemented by ICCO: namely, the shift from regional to thematic departments, the introduction of the ProCoDe approach, and the introduction of the new four roles for ICCO staff.

Those programme officers and programme specialists who started to implement the programmatic approach between the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007 thus had to communicate all of these changes to their partners, on the basis of a very partial understanding of what ProCoDe would entail. At that time, the rationale of and intentions behind ProCoDe were still relatively unclear to ICCO’s officers, as well as what the consequences would be in terms of the organisation’s practical structure, systems, processes for financial relations, administrative relations, and the future roles of ICCO-Alliance staff and its partner organisations.

This confusion sometimes led to partially 'incorrect' or incomplete messages. The uncertainty created by introducing all these changes, including the programmatic approach, was probably the reason for the resistance shown by both ICCO's staff and its partners to implementing the new approach. As a result of the shift from a regional to a thematic structure, ICCO's partners were reallocated to new programme officers. Sometimes these partners failed to recognise all of their activities or areas of work in their newly assigned departments. Furthermore, partners were concerned that the more centralised structure that would most likely result from the programmatic approach would undermine their bilateral relationships with ICCO. Also, the fact that ICCO's staff, who were already handling new partner portfolios, needed to play three new roles – those of capacity development, lobbying and advocacy and brokering – in addition their strategic financing role, caused a number of teething problems, to say the least. However, the programmatic approach demanded a shift in mindset from both ICCO's officers and its partners.

### Starting a programme

The learning histories suggest that the process of starting to design a programme is largely dependent on the personal motivations and beliefs of the programme officer involved, and his or her ability to convince and motivate ICCO's partners about the benefits to be gained from taking a programmatic approach. The programmatic approach is an 'ICCO initiative', and as such, programmes have largely been initiated by programme officers and programme specialists. The process is thus dependent upon their drive, motivation, willingness, and ability to actively promote changes in how ICCO relates to its partner organisations, and in the ways in which these organisations relate to one another.

Most of the learning histories suggest that ICCO's staff needed to adopt a directive attitude in order to get the process going. In some cases, context and stakeholder analyses were undertaken in order to create a basis for future interventions. These analyses were done by either local or by Dutch consultants. After all of the analyses had been carried out, ICCO brought its partners together to discuss and validate the outcomes, and to identify opportunities for future programmes.

The fact that ICCO performed its role as a broker allowed the different actors to come on board. However, sometimes programme officers anticipated that bringing all of the partners together would prove to be a major challenge, and thus chose not to search for new actors. It appears that it was crucial to identify one theme or problem of interest to be addressed by a potential programme, so as to allow the programme design to take off.

A programme can be based on either a theme or a problem. In the first case, the programme largely consists of capacity-building activities. In the latter case, complementarity between the different actors involved should allow these organisations to achieve the programme's objective in a way that is both more effective and efficient than if the same organisations were to operate individually.

In both cases, the learning histories show that capacity development is required on the part of participating organisations. By this, we do not mean 'traditional' capacity development with a focus on individual organisations, but rather capacity development that either contributes to strengthening knowledge and developing strategies in a particular sector or a thematic area (such as Youth and Violence, or Chain Development), or capacity development that focuses on building associative structures. This could include supporting partners in developing cooperation via, for example, building trust, jointly developing visions, developing governance structures and systems, monitoring and evaluation, and learning.

The processes of creating a programme and a programme coalition/network are themselves capacity development processes for which support is needed. Although ICCO's officers play a major role in the initial programme development phase, there is widespread support for the idea of shifting ownership to the South. Sometimes this can mean identifying a local organisation that can take a leading or facilitating role. In other cases, a steering committee might be established to monitor the programme progress. Such processes are anything but straightforward, not least because the partners appear to be used to having a controlling donor. It appears to be unusual for partners to take the lead or assume ownership in such situations. Developing partners' capacities for dealing with programme building and programme management is likely to be necessary.

For all of the programme development processes studied, it was thought important to first achieve clarity on the programme's content before attempting to define its vision, objectives, the type of process, and the type of collaboration. Not all of the programmes included in this study reached this advanced level of programme definition. In some cases, the programme officer did not perceive this to be a major requirement. Sometimes, the heterogeneity of the partners complicated the process. Developing a common analysis and a common objective is a multi-stakeholder process that requires repeated rounds of consultations, study, context analysis, stakeholder analysis, and inviting other organisations to take part in the process when required, while the body of the programme is slowly developed. All of the programmes consulted for this study suggest that ideally, ICCO's staff should guide this initial process, together with a steering group consisting of partner organisations (both new and existing). While in reality, it appears to be rather difficult to involve partners at this level, this process has been taken forward.

ICCO's officers acknowledge its partners' interest in the programmatic approach's financial implications. To a certain extent, partners depend on ICCO's funds, meaning that they are keen to have clarity on the approach's financial implications. However, ICCO cannot make decisions about financial structures and available funds in the initial phases, as these are largely dependent on a programme's structure, the quality and scale of the programme plan, and its financial structure. It is, however, important to offer clarity to participating organisations on the available options regarding programme and individual partner funding.

This is particularly important when organisations with different types of 'funding status' are participating in a programme coalition. For example, this might include organisations that do not (yet) have a funding relationship, that have a 'project' funding relationship, or that receive institutional funding from the ICCO-Alliance. Mixed approaches seem to dominate in the learning history cases. Only when a programme and its implications for all of the organisations involved are clear can the implications for the funding structure be identified, and appropriate forms of funding developed.

## 9.2 Roles

### The roles played by ICCO's staff

Programme officers still have a number of doubts about their roles with regard to the programmatic approach. To what extent should they play a directing role during the programme design process, and when is it time for ICCO to step back and leave the process with the partners? This was a key dilemma for all of the programme officers who were involved in the programmes included in this study.

#### Who decides on membership?

The key questions that arose related to the quality of the programme proposals; the inclusion or exclusion of stakeholders (who decides whether to take new partners on board?); the consequences for partners who fail to contribute satisfactorily to the programme; and where to draw the line. ICCO's partners found this issue very difficult, and they asked ICCO to play this role as a result. This seems to have put ICCO in a 'lead' role, thus contradicting the key aim that programmes should be owned and directed by their members, not by ICCO. This problem might also be related to the level at which programmes are actually started; that is, either as endeavours founded by the actors involved, or as ICCO-initiated and ICCO-driven processes. If the organisations involved had a sense of common accountability for the programmes, they might also develop shared responsibility for the composition of the coalition, and develop clear criteria for what is expected of each member. Developing a sound PME framework, for which all of the actors involved are (and feel themselves to be) accountable, might make it easier for coalition members take responsibility for the question of 'who's in and who's out'. Until the writing of this document, this issue continued to be challenge for ICCO officers.

#### The four roles

Taking another perspective, ICCO defined the four roles that it wanted to play: those of strategic funding, capacity development, lobbying and advocacy, and brokerage. From the learning histories, it appears that various ICCO staff played these roles in quite different ways. The programme officers were already familiar with their roles relating to

administrative relations and managing contractual relations. The other roles were played with more (or less) enthusiasm and ability by ICCO's staff. Facilitating learning and change processes, and understanding how processes of change take place, are not skills that all ICCO staff have in equal measure. Not everyone was comfortable dealing with the margin of manoeuvre that this left for ICCO and its partners.

The programme officers faced additional challenges. The development of the systems that were needed to facilitate PME of the programmes lagged behind actual programme development. The mix-up involving the term programme plans at Utrecht and programme plans describing southern programme objectives and results did not help, either. ICCO's officers faced situations in which choices had to be made for the first time, and as a result it sometimes took headquarters a lot of time to provide advice or make decisions. In addition, the introduction of a new administrative and financial management system (Dynamics) created friction, as initially it was unclear how individual partner and programme funding would be integrated into the system.

Not all staff demonstrated the same level of entrepreneurship when it came to implementing a new strategy that lacked clear definition and that needed continuous development. Those officers that did have the necessary entrepreneurial skills were able to form programmes in the most difficult of conditions, involving weak partners in 'fragile' circumstances. Others needed clearer instructions and boundaries. It is exactly that kind of blueprint or guidance that ICCO does not want to provide too much in detail, as programmes should be developed in the course of a joint process in a certain context, which cannot be achieved if a manual or checklist is provided.

From the interviews with ICCO's officers, it appears that ICCO's management demonstrates a reflective attitude related to these initial experiences with the programmatic approach. The various papers written by the management offered reflection of the field's experiences, but they did not provide guidance for the forerunners. The management acknowledged that the approach was new, and that the process would help to identify lessons for the future, but this mainly reflective stance was not especially helpful for pioneering staff. In some cases, this resulted in ICCO's staff making little or very slow progress. In other cases, entrepreneurial staff chose to adopt independent and directive roles.

Looking beyond the learning histories, ICCO's management has begun a new discussion on the scope of the four roles. ICCO prescribed these four roles itself, but the management's opinion is divided on whether the organisation should lean towards implementation or facilitation. For example, should ICCO's staff facilitate the programme design process, or should ICCO seek to identify capable and qualified individuals to take this process forwards? This discussion relates to ICCO's current dilemma about whether being either a facilitator or an implementing actor.

### **Local actors' roles**

For most of ICCO's existing partner organisations, the introduction of the ProCoDe process in partner meetings came as a surprise. The learning histories suggest that there was a 'muddling' of messages concerning the purpose of the Regional Work Organisations, the role and constitution of the Regional Councils, and the programmatic approach. A better communication strategy should have been developed before ICCO's officers were tasked with explaining ProCoDe. The failure to provide more frequent information to partner organisations on developments in ProCoDe is also regrettable.

### **Hesitations**

Partner organisations sometimes saw the ProCoDe process as a means for ICCO to move away from funding individual partners, and towards project-based funding. They feared that the continuity of their funding relationships with ICCO would be interrupted. ICCO's partners also felt that due to the character of their relationships with ICCO, they already 'owned' their programmes. This meant that they did not immediately see how the changes relating to regional councils, regional work organisations (more control??) and the programmes (ICCO-directed??) would lead to a situation in which they would gain more influence, rather than less. In some regions, partner organisations had already formed networks, so they did not see the benefit of establishing (additional) programme coalitions based

on ICCO partner groups. It must be stressed that in the course of introducing the programmatic approach, ICCO's management recognised the importance of linking with existing networks when available, rather than creating new structures.

### Positive experiences

It can be deduced from the learning histories that in some cases, hesitations remain and have delayed the creation of programme coalitions and programmatic cooperation. In other cases, partners have been quick to adopt the approach, or have been more or less directed to work together in areas that were identified in a participatory manner. Once the programmes are underway, however, the experiences are often more positive than initially expected. This is particularly the case when organisations play a key role in defining programme content, and are involved in learning and 'managing' a programme. One key aspect appears to be accountability amongst actors involved in a programme, as there seems to be a direct relationship between accountability and the building of relations based on trust.

### The role of support actors

In most of the learning histories, ICCO engages consultants at different moments in the process of adopting the programmatic approach. These consultants play different roles: some, for example, are engaged to facilitate workshops and partner consultations, a long-standing practice for ICCO and its partner organisations. Looking beyond the learning histories, it appears that in some cases, consultants are also being engaged to facilitate the process of forming regional work organisations and, in particular, regional councils and their predecessors, the regional consultative groups. Sometimes, they are engaged to facilitate the process of defining a programme or a programme coalition. Consultants have also been hired to undertake context analyses, conflict transformation analyses, stakeholder analyses, and thematic analyses. The learning histories suggest that in some cases, consultants have lacked a good understanding of what it takes to form a programme. While some may be good workshop facilitators, they are not necessarily able to facilitate a longer and complex change process satisfactorily. In addition, ICCO has not always provided these consultants with sufficient support, such as adequate background information about ProCoDe or the programmatic approach. The consultants were often engaged on an ad hoc basis, rather than for an entire process. Experience beyond these learning histories suggests that having a good, continuous support function is critical when it comes to starting programmes.

## 9.3 Adjustments

Throughout the implementation of the programmatic approach, a number of insights have been gained that have in some cases led ICCO to adjust its approach. These include:

- Gradually, an understanding emerged that the '80% norm' was unrealistic, and that a degree of flexibility was needed. Programme officers felt under pressure to create programmes, but that this would not necessarily lead to high-quality programmatic cooperation and results. Moreover, effective programme cooperation was delinked from channelling all funding through programmes.
- Various forms of funding relationships remain possible, in addition to programme-level funding (individual, institutional, and earmarked).
- Partner organisations' ownership of programmes is a crucial element of the programmatic approach.
- ICCO's diminishing influence over a programme and the growth of its partners' ownership and influence are slow processes that rely on relationships of trust.
- Developing a governance<sup>9</sup> structure for a programme is also crucial, as ownership of the programme is developed using this structure.

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<sup>9</sup> Organises how decisions are made in a programme, and how responsibilities are divided among the actors involved.



- It is not easy to encourage (equal) relationships in a programme, due to competition, distrust, lack of familiarity, lack of clarity about donors' roles, differing expectations, and so forth. In this sense, programmes are truly multi-stakeholder processes in which different stakeholders have various roles. A great deal of attention needs to be paid to relationship-building in programme development.
- Developing a programme often requires a level of facilitation and support that exceeds the programme officer's abilities (in terms of time, facilitation skills, presence in the country/region, and understanding of collaborative processes). In some cases, consultants or staff with a programme development or capacity development role can be hired, and the programme budget or PSO funding can be used for this.
- In some cases, a programme can be developed by ICCO staff who either work for ICCO HQ and have been posted to the region, or who have been contracted as ICCO field representatives and for programme and capacity development. While relationships between these ICCO officers and partner organisations involved in programmes are mostly positive, attention must be paid to ownership issues (programmes are ultimately not ICCO programmes, and ICCO has different capacities/ roles within programmes).
- Both ICCO and its partners initially seemed ready to accept donor-driven initiatives, and this seems to be what partners expect from donors. Partners' participation in and influence over programmes need to increase, and should be developed and supported.
- It is important for all participants to reach a common understanding of a programme's intentions. This common understanding is not always developed into a shared vision, or even shared programme objectives. Linking and learning appears to be the main purpose of some programmes. This does not necessarily require a shared vision or objective, as long as there is agreement on the programme's intentions. In other cases, there is more initial emphasis on having a shared vision and goals, to which all participants contribute as individual organisations and collectively. In the LMD programme's objectives, the participants' vision was initially developed using a project approach. A project staff and project board were set up, giving direction to the programme. Slowly, using consultative processes and structures, organisations are gaining a greater voice in programme decisions. It is not yet clear whether a programmatic approach headed by a governing coalition is emerging.

## 9.4 Conclusion

By producing these learning histories, the aim was to document the process of designing and implementing various programmes. The resulting process descriptions highlight the factors that have contributed to and hindered the programme process, and the dilemmas faced by ICCO's staff. The intention is that this document should now stimulate further dialogue on the 'why', the 'what', the 'who' and the 'how' questions that have emerged from these experiences with implementing the programmatic approach.

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See for further information on the programmatic approach within the ICCO Alliance on <https://iccoalliance.progapproach.pbwiki.com>