Final Review of “Research for Inclusive Development in Sub-Saharan Africa”

Final Report
January 2019
NWO-WOTRO

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Annex E Interview guides for the qualitative interviews
Executive Summary

Syspons was commissioned to conduct the final review of the RIDSSA programme, which is implemented by NWO-WOTRO with funding from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The final review entails an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of NWO-WOTRO in terms of developing, managing and implementing the programme. The main objective of the final review is twofold: On the one hand, it seeks to reveal the results achieved by the programme for purposes of accountability and transparency. On the other hand, it aims to contribute to learning and to inform the future research programming.

The scope of the final review covered the 17 research projects funded by the RIDSSA programme in the years 2013 to 2018 as well as the synthesis studies prepared within the programme. The evaluation took place between May and December 2018. In this period, Syspons conducted an analysis of all relevant documents and data, exploratory and in-depth interviews, an online survey with members of the funded research projects, and four remote case studies with project members and target group representatives of selected projects.

The direct users of this evaluation within NWO-WOTRO are the RIDSSA programme’s Programme Committee (PC) and secretariat. Moreover, it can provide recommendations to the MFA to inform the design of future research programmes. Lastly, it can be of interest to the Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies (INCLUDE), which had guided the RIDSSA programme’s research agenda.

In order to assess the programme’s effectiveness, the final review reconstructed a Theory of Change (ToC) of the programme and conducted a contribution analysis in order to uncover the factors that contribute to achieving the programme objectives of improving the evidence-based knowledge infrastructure on the thematic areas of the calls and of sharing this knowledge with relevant stakeholders. The efficiency assessment was conducted by examining the programme’s governance structure through a RACI-analysis (investigating which actors are responsible, accountable, consulted and informed in the core processes of programme implementation).

Overall, the review collected the following qualitative and quantitative data: Qualitative interviews were conducted with 13 stakeholders from programme design and management. The online survey was open to all researchers and non-scientific consortium members of the funded projects that were in the contact database of NWO-WOTRO. It was sent to 168 consortium members, of which 52 participated. This translated into a response rate of 31% and covered 16 out of the 17 funded research projects. The four remote case studies involved 18 semi-structured interviews with researchers, non-scientific consortium members and representatives of intermediate target groups (e.g. policy-makers or NGO/private sector representatives) of selected research projects covering all three RIDSSA calls for proposals. Pooled together, the different sources of primary data were analysed, systematised and triangulated. In conclusion, the data allowed for the drawing of valid and specific conclusions on the effectiveness and efficiency of the RIDSSA programme.

Effectiveness results

The programme has produced 17 research projects of generally high scientific quality that build upon and expand the existing knowledge infrastructure in the three thematic areas of inclusive development covered by the calls. This knowledge infrastructure was subsequently disseminated to policy-makers and practitioners, which resulted in a deeper understanding of specific topics among target groups, but in a majority of cases not (yet) in actual changes of policy or practice.

By developing three calls that envision a transdisciplinary, international collaboration including practitioners or policy-makers, NWO-WOTRO created the conditions for advancing a relevant knowledge infrastructure on the thematic areas. While the collaboration between researchers was strongest, the early and continuous involvement of stakeholders from a practical or policy background helped research projects to generate high quality and relevant knowledge as the basis for future uptake on the policy and practitioner level. For this purpose, the implementation of interaction workshops...
in the proposal phase or at the outset of the research phase proved instrumental. In particular, the extensive two-stage proposal process in the strategic actors call was useful to develop the research question further in a complex thematic field. This has resulted in more innovative findings and more projects of a high risk / high gain nature due to the diverse nature and intense interaction of involved stakeholders. The programme’s outreach strategy managed to attract qualified applicants, but it could have attracted more and more diverse applications by intensifying outreach activities. In particular, a more proactive use of additional channels including social media could increase the number of applications and hence contribute to a further increase in the scientific quality and innovativeness of funded projects.

Notwithstanding some concerns of uneven representation and the desire for a stronger African involvement in terms of numbers and depth, the envisioned co-creation process was effective in generating evidence-based knowledge on the thematic areas of inclusive development. Co-Creation with other researchers, most commonly through workshop-type interactions, contributed to the enhancement of the research objective, question or approach. Also, interactions with non-scientific consortium members took place regularly and contributed to advancing the research process. In particular, stakeholders from civil society were engaged effectively, which facilitated the generation of relevant knowledge by identifying the right knowledge gaps and adapting the research process if necessary. In this context, it was found that a sufficient buy-in and (political) will is crucial for stakeholders to get engaged.

The academic output produced by the projects is of high scientific quality and contributes to an enhanced evidence-based knowledge infrastructure. In addition to the above-mentioned aspects of call design and the selection process, the support activities provided to projects - particularly workshops and exchange opportunities regarding the analysis and engagement of stakeholders - contributed to increase the scientific quality of projects. Moreover, the review process that involved the International Advisory Committee (IAC) for assessing project proposals and reviews was instrumental for enhancing the quality of research. Merely, the use of impact pathways did not achieve its full potential in terms of guiding the generation of knowledge due to challenges among project members in their application.

Analysing the dissemination of research findings, the uptake process of projects was facilitated by addressing a diverse range of target groups on the local, national and international level. The research findings were translated into different written and oral formats, which in most but not all cases reached the targeted audience. Particularly stakeholders from the public sector could often not be reached, unless there had been existing informal channels prior to the project. Besides policy-briefs, which were prepared as a general requirement of the calls, face-to-face interactions and alternative dissemination formats – such as a theatre play or non-scientific summaries – were most useful to gain the attention of target groups. Moreover, the communication of intermediate findings was instrumental for increasing the interest and acceptance of the project among target groups.

In consequence, the projects supported by the programme have resulted in a deeper understanding of specific topics among target groups, but in a majority of cases not in actual changes of policy or practice. While the time frame provided challenges in terms of achieving long-term results, the challenges in engaging certain target groups and the partly limited translation of findings into applicable formats have contributed to this result. At the same time, some target groups could use the research findings for reflecting or adapting their strategy. In this regard, projects from the strategic actors call tended to be most successful in facilitating changes among target groups, which appears to be a result of the thematic framing and the close and early stakeholder interaction that was facilitated in this call.

On a broader level, the programme facilitated the uptake of knowledge to outer circle stakeholders through cooperation with INCLUDE and the synthesis process. With regards to the former, interactions with members of the INCLUDE platform took place regularly and in a majority of cases resulted in new contacts or actual exchanges with stakeholders from the outer circle as part of the uptake process. Regarding the latter, the ongoing synthesis study is delivering a relevant overview of the funded projects’ findings, which links the knowledge generated to the global debate on inclusive development.
As a result, the RIDSSA programme can be considered **effective with regards to improving an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure** and mostly effective regarding the sharing of findings with relevant stakeholders.

**Efficiency results**

The governance structure of the programme is overall **transparent and balanced**. It combines the key stakeholder’s competencies and interests in the PC as main decision-making body and ensures an independent quality assurance mechanism through the IAC. Through this setup, the PC is enabled to provide suitable and coherent guidance for the RIDSSA programme. The IAC’s independent role and composition with qualified experts from the scientific and practitioner community allowed the programme to be viewed as impartial and to produce high quality and relevant research.

The roles between NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform, however, were found not be sufficiently clarified at the outset of the programme, which resulted in a **diffusion of responsibilities** in some aspects of call design and the facilitation of research uptake. While NWO-WOTRO as implementing agency of the programme and the INCLUDE platform as an independent actor seeking to guide the programme conceptually were aligned in terms of objectives, their approaches at times differed. Here, a stronger guidance from the MFA could have helped clarify roles earlier to avoid unnecessary frictions.

Regarding **service delivery and support structures**, NWO-WOTRO’s secretariat fulfilled its role well in terms of its administrative responsibilities, which are crucial for efficient programme implementation. The services provided gave projects flexibility and helped increase their contributions to programme objectives. Also, the IAC feedback contributed to efficient programme implementation by guiding projects to enhance their results.

In terms of timing, a majority of research projects extended the duration of the project beyond the initially agreed framework. While NWO-WOTRO’s flexible approach to monitoring allowed projects freedom to choose the best strategy for achieving maximum impact, it incentivised projects to divert from basic programme requirements in terms of the projects’ time frames. Here, a more **pro-active and coherent monitoring** of projects could have contributed to a more timely implementation of research projects.

Finally, the pooling of funds from the RIDSSA programme and the INCLUDE platform for synthesis activities allowed the programme to **leverage its resources towards a more profound and relevant overall synthesis**. The synthesis covers all three calls as well as their interlinkages with regards to the overall state of the art knowledge on inclusive development. Both the commissioning and the monitoring of the synthesis process were found to contribute to the successful implementation of the synthesis process.

On the basis of the previous analysis, the review team considers the **management and implementation of the RIDSSA programme as efficient**, while seeing room for improvement in terms of **clarifying roles vis-à-vis supported research projects and the INCLUDE platform**.

Based on the review findings, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions on factors that positively contribute to research uptake and on aspects that enhance efficient programme implementation. A strengthening of these factors can be achieved by realising the following recommendations in future research programming.

**Strategic Recommendations**

1. **NWO-WOTRO should continue to fund international, transdisciplinary collaboration of researchers with practitioners.**

2. **In future research funding programmes, NWO-WOTRO should focus on financing projects which are of a high risk / high gain nature.**

3. **In future research funding programmes, NWO-WOTRO should finance projects which (1) establish close and regular interactions with non-scientific stakeholders and target groups throughout the project, (2) work with specialised interest groups (e.g. civil society or trade organisations), (3) (e.g. civil society or trade organisations), (3) align with the overall objectives and themes of the programme, and (4) contribute to the development of relevant knowledge infrastructure.**
unions) as consortium members to gain access to target groups, (3) address target groups with a (political) will for change and (4) develop suitable practical formats.

4. **NWO-WOTRO should broaden and intensify outreach activities for the calls to attract more and more diverse applicants.**

5. **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should provide more guidance to NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform on their division of roles.**

**Operational recommendations**

6. **NWO-WOTRO should demand the dissemination of intermediate results from research projects in appropriate formats.**

7. **NWO-WOTRO should enhance the review requirements and/or incentive structure for members of the International Advisor Committee.**

8. **NWO-WOTRO should follow a more proactive and coherent monitoring approach of projects to enhance the fulfilment of programme requirements.**
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>UK Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAC</td>
<td>International Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>INCLUDE</td>
<td>Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>KP</td>
<td>Knowledge platform</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMIC</td>
<td>Low- and middle-income country</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWO</td>
<td>The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Programme Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIDSSA</td>
<td>Research for Inclusive Development in Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>ToC</td>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
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<td>WOTRO</td>
<td>NWO-division for Science for Global Development</td>
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1 Introduction

As part of the knowledge agenda of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the division for Science for Global Development of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, NWO-WOTRO, had launched the Research for Inclusive Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (RIDSSA) programme in 2013. The programme’s objective is to contribute to more inclusive policy and practice in Sub-Saharan Africa by generating high quality research and sharing it with relevant policy-makers and practitioners. With the programme coming to close at the end of 2018, NWO-WOTRO seeks to reflect on the results achieved and the approach taken in programme design and implementation.

In this context, Syspons was commissioned to conduct the final review of the RIDSSA programme. The final review entails an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of NWO-WOTRO in terms of developing, managing and implementing the programme. The main objective of the final review is twofold: On the one hand, it seeks to reveal the results achieved by the programme for purposes of accountability and transparency. On the other hand, it aims to contribute to learning and to inform the future research programming.

The scope of the evaluation covered the 17 research projects funded by the RIDSSA programme in the years 2013 to 2018 as well as the synthesis studies prepared within the programme. Furthermore, for analysing aspects of programme design and management, programme documents such as the calls for proposals and annual plans, the roles and responsibilities of the governing actors, and relevant other evaluations such as the pilot study on WOTRO’s research for development approach were within the scope of this review.

The direct users of this evaluation within NWO-WOTRO are the RIDSSA programme’s PC and secretariat. Moreover, it can provide recommendations to the MFA to inform the design of future research programmes. Lastly, it can be of interest to the Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies (INCLUDE), which had guided the RIDSSA programme’s research agenda.

The evaluation took place between May and December 2018. In this period, Syspons conducted an analysis of all relevant documents and data, exploratory and in-depth interviews, an online survey with members of the funded research projects, and four remote case studies with project members and target group representatives of selected projects. A detailed description of the methods applied in this evaluation can be found in chapter 2.2.

The final report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the review objectives and research design;
- **Chapter 3** shortly introduces the RIDSSA programme as well as its institutional and programmatic context;
- **Chapter 4** provides an overview of the 17 research projects of the programme under review;
- **Chapter 5** describes the evaluation results in detail along the review dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency;
- **Chapter 6** presents the review’s main conclusions and recommendations for future research programming;
- **The Annex** contains a list of references, an overview of research projects and a list of interviews conducted. Moreover, the inception report, assessment grid, survey questionnaire and interview guides are attached to this report.
2 Review objectives and design

2.1 Objectives and scope of the final review

With the RIDSSA programme coming to close at the end of 2018, the main purpose of this final review was an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme. In addition, an appraisal of results in terms of outputs, outcomes and potential impacts was conducted in order to make evaluative statements on the programme’s effectiveness. Based on these results, the final review seeks to contribute to learning and informing future research programmes by providing recommendations on improved programme setups and conceptualizations to increase impact.

Based on these objectives and the findings of the inception phase, the key review questions were defined as follows:

- **Effectiveness**: To what extent were the objectives achieved / are likely to be achieved? What factors in programme design, management, implementation and monitoring contribute to the programme objectives of generating and sharing relevant evidence-based knowledge in the three thematic areas of the calls?

- **Efficiency**: Was the programme implemented in line with what NWO-WOTRO was commissioned to do? Were objectives achieved on time and with a correct use of the funds? How are processes in programme design and management implemented to achieve best possible results?

The DAC criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) relevance, impact and sustainability are not part of this final review, as these are addressed to different degrees by the recent impact analysis of eight cases exploring project outcomes on different knowledge platforms (KPs) (Lammers & de Winters 2018) and the ongoing external evaluation of the INCLUDE platform (Perspectivity 2018).

2.2 Research design and approach

In order to examine the effectiveness of the programme, the final review was implemented via a contribution analysis. A key feature of a contribution analysis is the Theory of Change (ToC) that was developed for the programme with the inception report (see chapter 3.3). Based on this ToC, the review team analysed and assessed the specific mechanisms that contribute to the achievement, or non-achievement, of the programme’s objectives. Simply put, the implementation of a contribution analysis as articulated by John Mayne can be broken down into six steps:

1. **Set out the attribution problem to be addressed**: In the case of the RIDSSA programme these are newly produced research insights that contribute to changes in policy-making with regards to inclusive development in countries where research was conducted.

2. **Develop a ToC/ intervention logic**: We developed a ToC for the RIDSSA Programme that is documented in chapter 2.5 of this report. It sets out the specific steps and assumptions of the programme and it clarifies the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts.

3. **Populate the model with existing data and evidence**: Data to populate the models was collected during the data collection phase of the review using a survey and qualitative interviews with researchers and non-scientific stakeholders from the project as well as programme stakeholders such as the members of the PC, the IAC and the INCLUDE platform.

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4. **Assemble and assess the ToC:** Based on the data and evidence assembled during the review process, the overall ToC was critically assessed in discussion with NWO-WOTRO and other relevant stakeholders.

5. **Seek out additional evidence:** During the data collection phase, the review team continuously assessed to what extent the gathered data confirms or rejects the impact hypotheses in the ToC.

6. **Revise the ToC:** The newly collected data and evidence of the review of the RIDSSA programme was used to refine the ToC. This formed the basis for identifying the strengths and weaknesses and laid the foundation for developing recommendations for future programmes.

Moreover, for the analysis of aspects of effectiveness, the review team used an adaptation of the innovation diffusion model to assess the mechanisms and ways that call conditions, selection criteria, aspects of skills development, the generation of new knowledge, the translation into applicable formats, the dissemination of knowledge and the persuasion of policy-makers/practitioners contributed to meet the programme objectives. For further information on the conceptualization using the innovation diffusion model, please refer to the inception report in the annex.

Aspects of efficiency were analysed by means of a RACI-analysis of the governance structure based on the documents provided and the upstream interviews. A RACI-analysis specifies which actor is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed in each core process step of a management structure and thus allows for an investigation of the efficiency aspects in designing, managing and implementing the programme. Subsequently, we analysed to what extent processes are organised and managed efficiently in terms of achieving objectives on time, with the appropriate use of funds and in line with what NWO-WOTRO was commissioned to do.

**Implementation of the review**

As outlined in the inception report, the final review was implemented in three phases between May and December 2018. The project team, consisting of Lennart Raetzell as project lead, Tobias Gerhard as project manager and Portia Kekana as independent expert on inclusive development, worked together by jointly developing all knowledge products of the final review. Within the data collection phase, Mr. Raetzell and Mr. Gerhard were responsible for conducting the online survey and upstream interviews, while Ms. Kekana conducted the four remote case studies due to her regional and thematic expertise. In addition to the regular bi-lateral reflection of methods and findings, the project team conducted joint synthesis workshops in each phase in order to share, triangulate and synthesize the gathered findings.

**Figure 1 - Project design of the final review**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Inception Phase</th>
<th>May - Jul 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis</td>
<td>Aug - Oct 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3: Synthesis and Reporting</td>
<td>Nov - Dec 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Syspons 2018

**Phase 1** aimed to lay the conceptual foundation for the final review of the RIDSSA programme. The phase was launched with a kick-off meeting between the review team and NWO-WOTRO, which served the purpose of introducing the review team and establishing a common understanding of review’s objectives and the system boundaries between the RIDSSA programme and INCLUDE. Moreover, the timeline of the review was discussed and decided upon.

Subsequently, Syspons conducted an in-depth documents analysis of relevant programme and project documents. This included the three calls for proposals, annual reports of the programme, proposals and review documents of the funded research projects, meeting protocols of the programme’s governance
actors, and an outline as well as monitoring documents of the programme’s synthesis study. The full list of documents reviewed is attached in the annex of this report. Moreover, explorative interviews were conducted with key programme stakeholders to identify where particular needs for additional evidence lie.

Based on these insights, a ToC of the RIDSSA programme was reconstructed and an assessment grid for the final review was established that matched all review questions with corresponding indicators. At the end of the first phase, an inception report was drafted that summarized the final review’s methodological approach and data collection strategy. The inception report was approved by NWO-WOTRO in August 2018 and thus served as a basis for the implementation of the remaining review phases.

**Phase 2** focused on the collection and first analysis of all necessary data. Hence, the main objective of this phase was to gather the qualitative and quantitative data in order to answer the questions outlined in the assessment grid. Furthermore, internal and external factors of success and failure were identified in order to draw comprehensive conclusions. Syspons’ approach to the data collection phase contained perspectives from both internal and external actors through three main data collection methods: an online survey with consortium members of supported projects, qualitative interviews with “upstream” programme stakeholders and four remote case studies with project members and target groups of selected projects.

In the first part of this phase an online survey with key stakeholders from the 17 research projects that were funded by the programme was conducted. In terms of content the questionnaire covered, among others, the design and implementation of the selection process, the governance of the programme, cooperation with other stakeholders and the monitoring of the programme. The survey addressed both researchers and non-scientific consortium members of the funded projects. Based on the availability of email addresses of NWO-WOTRO, the survey was sent to 168 researchers and non-scientific consortia members, of which 52 participated. This translated into a response rate of 31% and covered 16 of the 17 funded research projects. As can be seen in figure 2 below, the majority of respondents is represented by research institutions (77%). However, also non-scientific consortium members, mostly from civil society organisations (11%) participated. In terms of seniority within the project, 25% of respondents were lead applicants (see figure 3).

**Figure 2 - Share of survey participants by organisation**

![Figure 2 - Share of survey participants by organisation](image-url)

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018
After the survey was completed, Syspons first verified and validated the data and then conducted an in-depth data analysis. Methodologically, the data analysis can be divided into two steps: In a first step data was analysed using univariate statistical analysis such as frequencies, percentages or mean. Then the data was edited, and the results were portrayed in graphs and tables in order to get an overview over the findings. In a second step, these were analysed in depth through a bi-variate analysis in which specific aspects of programme design were correlated with the intensity of uptake results. Due to the relatively low number of respondents, no significant correlations could be identified, hence the data analysis of survey results remained focused on the univariate analysis. Similarly, it was not possible to differentiate responses between different stakeholder groups such as practitioners and researchers or respondents from Northern and Southern institutions. This would have resulted in subgroups of less than 20 respondents, which does not allow to calculate the significance and correlation between background and survey results in a statistically sound way. Therefore, survey results are depicted as aggregate results of all subgroups. By triangulating the results with qualitative data from the interviews, the findings could be validated and where differences between the stakeholder groups applied, these are described accordingly in the review results (see chapter 5).

Secondly, in-depth interviews with relevant “upstream” programme stakeholders were conducted, which included representatives of the MFA, the PC, the IAC and the INCLUDE. These interviews served the purpose of examining the governance structure in detail and analysing specific aspects of programme management and implementation. In particular, specific findings from the online survey could be verified and analysed in more detail.

Lastly, the “downstream” side of the programme was investigated in more detail via four remote case studies of supported research projects. The purpose of these in-depths interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the aspects that contribute to the generation of knowledge and uptake of research findings from the perspective of consortium partners, policy-makers and practitioners. The cases were selected by involving both projects that were successful as well as those that found it challenging to uptake findings to the policy/practitioner level. Selection took place based on a weighted index derived

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2 In a correlation analysis, only those variables that are at least significant at a \( p < 0.05 \) level are considered statistically significant. The \( p \) value is the probability that an observed correlation in the data sample is merely coincidental and does not represent a valid correlation in the population. Hence a \( p \) value smaller than 0.05 means that the probability that the observed correlation in the data does not represent a valid correlation in the population is less than 5%. The correlation efficient (\( r \)) shows the size of the effect. Any effect above 0.2 can be considered large.
from question 26 of the online survey on the uptake results of research projects. Through these means, the following four projects were chosen for the remote case studies:

**Figure 4 - Research projects selected for remote case studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Focus countries</th>
<th>Call</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can inclusive business strategies contribute to inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa? (Prof. Rob von Tulder)</td>
<td>Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Mozambique</td>
<td>Strategic Actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Political Leverage of Informal and Formal Workers' Organisations for Inclusive Development: The cases of Ghana and Benin (M. M.A. Kaag)</td>
<td>Ghana, Benin</td>
<td>Strategic Actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multipliers from Employment Creation: the case of the IT- Industry (Prof. Dr. Barkema)</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Productive Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking the Vicious Circle between Poverty and Ill-Health. Are cash transfers and social health protection policies in Ghana and Kenya mutually complementing? (Dr. Nicky Pouw)</td>
<td>Ghana, Kenya</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently, Syspons prepared interview guides for each of these respective groups that were interviewed (upstream stakeholders, researchers, non-scientific collaborators, target group representatives). The interview guides were shared with NWO-WOTRO and the interview partners beforehand. A full list of all stakeholders that took part in explorative, in-depths and case study interviews can be found in the Annex.

In parallel to the other data collection steps, Syspons conducted an appraisal of results based on the results of the portfolio of project evaluations as well as the (preliminary) results of the pilot study of eight cases exploring the project outcomes and NWO-WOTRO’s contribution, the ongoing evaluation of INCLUDE and the synthesis study of the programme. The findings of this exercise were used to validate the results of the online survey and of the remote case studies in terms of outputs, outcomes and impacts.

After completing the collection of data, **Phase 3** focused on the analysis, synthesis and subsequently on the documentation of findings in the final report. Upon completion of the data collection, all gathered information was aggregated using the assessment grid. For each of the review questions, both quantitative and qualitative information from the online survey and the interviews was synthesized. For the synthesis of aspects of effectiveness, the review results were analysed along the ToC presented in chapter 3.3. As part of the analysis of efficiency, the RACI-matrix of the key actors involved in designing and managing the programme was used to compare the actual governance structure with the one outlined in the programme documents. This approach helped to clarify roles and responsibilities and its systematic analysis allowed to identify potential gaps, overlaps or inefficiencies in the governance structure. Finally, all results were discussed among the members of the review team in an internal synthesis workshop. As such, Syspons ensured that the review results are validated through a data, method and researcher triangulation.

Based upon this analysis, we developed a draft final report of the evaluation and submitted it to NWO-WOTRO at the end of November 2018. The draft report was presented in an interaction workshop in December 2018 to give key stakeholders from NWO-WOTRO headquarters the opportunity to interact on the findings, conclusions and areas for improvement identified in the report. Furthermore, in this workshop we jointly developed the recommendations emanating from this review.

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3 In question 26 of the survey, researchers described their research uptake results, where they were asked to check the ways their target groups took up the research insights and changed their behaviour. Multiple selections were possible. Depending on the impact of each item, each selection was multiplied by an impact factor, which together resulted in a weighted index that reflected the uptake results of the project. For details, see Syspons (2018). Final report of the Evaluation of the Integrated Programms of NWO-WOTRO.
All received feedback from the interaction workshop was incorporated into the report. The final version of the report was then submitted to NWO-WOTRO at the end of December 2018.
3 Description of the RIDSSA programme

3.1 Development of the policy background

In 2012, the MFA established five knowledge platforms (KPs), responsible for formulating research needs as well as for the exchange and usage of knowledge. One of these is INCLUDE, which brings together senior researchers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, NGOs and governments to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better research-policy linkages on inclusive development in Africa. Ultimately, INCLUDE aims to contribute to development policies that are more inclusive and more effective in reducing inequality and generating improved social and economic conditions for all4.

To achieve this aim, the KP promotes evidence-based policy-making on inclusive development in Africa through three types of activities. Firstly, by supporting research projects on the key thematic areas of the platform, which are funded through the RIDSSA programme described below. Secondly, by facilitating knowledge exchange among international researchers and research consortia that include various stakeholders involved in policy-making in Africa from the public, private and civil society sectors. Thirdly, the platform specifically engages in policy dialogues between researchers and policy-makers to facilitate the uptake of research findings to actual policy-making5.

When the RIDSSA programme was launched, however, the INCLUDE platform had not yet put in place its entire institutional structure. Based on the contractual relation between NWO-WOTRO and the MFA, INCLUDE is responsible for identifying, selecting and defining the research questions, i.e. core themes, that guide the RIDSSA programme (MFA 2013). Beyond that, however, it was left unclear what kind of interaction exactly was expected between INCLUDE and the RIDSSA programme as well as its research projects. Consequently, a core group of stakeholders from the MFA and senior researchers first defined three themes on which further research was needed, based on which NWO-WOTRO developed the three RIDSSA calls for proposals (interviews 1,4,7).

The three core themes that were identified by INCLUDE as basis for the research conducted by the RIDSSA programme are the following6:

- **Promoting Productive Employment**: This theme aims to support research on promoting productive employment in Sub-Saharan African partner countries and a research-supported dialogue on employment promoting policies.

- **Identifying and Supporting Strategic Actors for Inclusive Development**: This theme investigates the role that strategic actors can play in implementing policies that favour long-term inclusive development in Sub-Saharan African partner countries.

- **Social Protection**: This call aims to enhance insight into the cost-effectiveness of social protection interventions in achieving inclusive growth, compared to other social policies with the same objective.

Subsequently, the role of INCLUDE vis-à-vis the RIDSSA programme was over time arranged informally as follows: On the one hand, the INCLUDE platform with its wide network could offer the facilitation of disseminating research findings to an “outer circle” of stakeholders that had not previously been in touch with the research projects but might nevertheless be able to make use of the findings. On the other hand, the projects themselves were engaging with an “inner circle” of stakeholders that are expected to benefit from the findings more directly and form the intermediate target group of the programme (interviews 1,9). With the start of projects in the social protection call, an annex outlining the opportunities (such as additional uptake potential) and responsibilities (such as engaging with the platform and sharing (interim) findings) was added to the grant letters, which was shared with projects from the other calls for informative purposes as well (NWO-WOTRO

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4 Retrieved from the internet on 05 July 2018: http://includeplatform.net/about/
5 Ibid. 
6 Retrieved from the internet on 05 July 2018: http://includeplatform.net/about/
2014k). Hence, INCLUDE (co-)organised activities such as trainings, workshops or conferences that facilitate the uptake of (interim) project findings to policy-makers from particularly an “outer circle” of project stakeholders that the projects would otherwise not be engaged with. Moreover, towards the end of the programme, the INCLUDE secretariat was commissioned by, amongst others, NWO-WOTRO to carry out a synthesis study of the research generated through the three RIDSSA calls (NWO-WOTRO 2017a). The purpose of this exercise was to synthesize the findings and make them available in a condensed form to a wider audience.

3.2 RIDSSA programme and its objectives

The RIDSSA programme started in 2013 and is managed by NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development. As part of the EUR 8 million programme, 17 African-Dutch research projects with a duration of 2 to 3 years and a series of overarching synthesis studies were funded. The programme forms part of the knowledge agenda of the MFA. NWO-WOTRO was commissioned by the MFA to carry out the programme as an independent intermediary organisation. In particular, this entailed the setup of calls for proposals, the selection and subsequent support of research projects and the financial and operational management of the research programme. NWO-WOTRO developed the calls based on the thematic scope and research questions provided by INCLUDE (MFA 2013).

As a result, the programme seeks to fund high quality research that has the potential for impact in policy and practice for more inclusive development in Africa. Based on the core themes of INCLUDE (productive employment, strategic actors for inclusive development, social protection), three calls for research projects were organised in 2013 and 2014.

Through these calls, the RIDSSA programme aims to support high quality research projects that:

- contribute to new evidence-based knowledge on the themes of the calls and that can be used to improve policies and practices of relevant actors to promote inclusive development;
- share the evidence-based knowledge with relevant stakeholders to facilitate uptake and application of the newly acquired knowledge.

These objectives were adapted to the more specific needs of each thematic area in the three calls (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f). The aspect of sharing knowledge with the “inner circle” of policy-makers and practitioners close to the research consortia was a responsibility of the research projects and facilitated by the RIDSSA programme through the selection process, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities and specific capacity development. Beyond that, INCLUDE sought to address an “outer circle” of stakeholders through additional activities such as exchange fora between researchers and policy-makers (see chapter 3.1).

NWO-WOTRO, in its capacity as an independent intermediary organisation for research granting, was responsible for the programme development, implementation and administration, including the appraisal and selection of projects and their M&E (MFA 2013). NWO-WOTRO also conducted the programme management, including the commissioning of a programme-level synthesis study within the programme. Further to these formal roles, NWO-WOTRO also applied its expertise regarding research impact enhancement and knowledge brokering strategies in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) by providing capacity development on the use of impact pathways or on pitching to policy-makers.

With the RIDSSA programme coming to close in 2018, NWO-WOTRO had commissioned a programme-level synthesis study, which is coordinated by the INCLUDE secretariat with funding both from the RIDSSA programme and the INCLUDE platform. This synthesis study aims to harvest the final results of the research projects in order to share and discuss these with stakeholders and come up with more concrete policy advice for inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3.2.1 The programme’s target group

The target groups of the programme can be divided on different levels into the following three groups (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f):
• The ultimate target group consists of those segments of the population in the targeted countries that are excluded from mainstream development. These may include women, minorities, youth or any other marginalized group. In the ToC (see chapter 3.3), these groups are addressed indirectly on the impact level by being the beneficiaries of more inclusive development policies.

• The intermediate target group consists of the “inner circle” of project stakeholders that will be directly impacted by the outcomes of the projects: those that will adapt, adjust and apply the generated new knowledge and insights in order to wield new policies for more inclusive development. Depending on the specifics of the call, this intermediate target group may be found among policy-makers (governmental and non-governmental), practitioner organisations (including civil society organisations, think tanks or businesses) or Dutch and international development organisations. In the ToC (see chapter 3.3), these groups are depicted in outcome 2 and on the impact level.

The most immediate target group consists of researchers and their consortium partners that apply for the programme’s calls. Depending on the call, researchers may come from across the globe (in the case of social protection) or from the Netherlands and from the African partner countries (strategic actors and productive employment). The research projects are therefore instrumental in reaching the intermediate and ultimate target groups. The most immediate target group is represented on the output level of the ToC in chapter 3.3.

3.2.2 Selection criteria
In order to be funded by the RIDSSA programme, research projects were selected based on criteria that focused on scientific excellence, developmental relevance and – in the cases of productive employment and strategic actors for inclusive development – transdisciplinary collaboration. These assessment dimensions all carried equal weight in assessing proposals and only applications evaluated as excellent and very good on each of the dimensions were eligible for funding.

More precisely, selection criteria for the calls on productive employment and strategic actors for inclusive development were the following:

I Scientific quality:
• Potential to generate new, evidence-based knowledge
• Multidisciplinary character, adequacy, feasibility, and scientific validity (including the robustness of the conceptual framework and the coherence of the research questions and methods)
• Relevant scientific experience and internationally acknowledged research outputs (such as publications) of the research groups involved.

II Relevance for development:
• The extent to which the proposal relates to the aim of the call and has potential for applications of the intended research results (including the quality of impact pathway and indicators)
• Quality of the stakeholder analysis and feasibility of the proposed approach for knowledge sharing with and utilisation by a broader group of stakeholders, notably policymakers
• Contribution to research capacity strengthening in partner countries

III Quality of collaboration:
• Extent to which the proposal is based on multi-stakeholder involvement and rooted in national practitioners demands\(^7\)
• Synergy, coherence and level of integration of scientific knowledge and practitioners’ knowledge
• Shared ownership by the consortium partners

\(^7\) In the case of the Call for strategic actors for inclusive development, this aspect was specified and assessed by the extent to which the results of the elaboration workshop have been processed in the full proposal. See: NWO-WOTRO 2014c.
The call on social protection adapted and specified the selection criteria as follows and focused on the dimensions of scientific excellence and developmental relevance. Firstly, proposals were assessed based on formal criteria including a fit for call (alignment of the project with the call’s aim, objectives, research foci, methodological obligations etc.), which was assessed based on a letter of intent provided by the applicants. Then, the eligible projects for the second round were assessed against the following criteria:

I Scientific quality:
- Potential to generate new, evidence-based knowledge and insights
- Validity of the conceptual framework (coherence of the objectives, research questions and research methodology)
- Feasibility of the research project to deliver the expected outputs within 24 months
- Appropriateness of internationally acknowledged experience of the consortium members and complementarity and level of integration of their expertise in the project

II Relevance for development:
- Extent to which the proposal is contextualized in the socio-economic policy-making of social protection programmes in the targeted country
- Potential of the research to result in informed advice and policy prescriptions for practitioners, especially policy-makers
- Result-oriented approach of awareness raising and knowledge sharing activities
- Quality of the impact pathway and indicators, including impact for the ultimate (women) target group

Eligible for participation were multinational consortia consisting of the following actors: In the case of productive employment and strategic actors for inclusive development, consortia were required to consist at least out of a research institution from one of the seven African partner countries\(^8\), a Dutch research organisation and a practitioner organisation from the relevant partner country. In the case of social protection, the consortia were required to consist of at least two research organisations from across the globe including at least one from a LMIC, preferably a research institution from one of the seven target countries.

3.3 Theory of Change

The focus of investigation in this review are the mechanisms and factors in programme design, implementation and management that contribute to achieving the programme’s outputs and outcomes. To this end, Syspons conducted a contribution analysis, in which the central hypotheses and mechanisms underlying the results logic of the programme were scrutinized. Since the programme has not explicitly documented its results model in a ToC, Syspons reconstructed a ToC based on the programme documents provided as well as the pilot study of eight cases exploring the project outcomes and NWO-WOTRO’s contribution (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f; Lammers and de Winters 2018) and the conducted explorative interviews (see figure 5). The ToC represents the causal hypotheses of the RIDSSA programme and consists of the following five related components:

- **Inputs**: financial, material and personal resources, which are provided by NWO-WOTRO for implementing the programme
- **Activities**: implemented tasks in order to achieve the envisioned outputs
- **Outputs**: direct effects on the level of the supported projects that result from the use of inputs and the implementation of activities

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8 Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda.
• **Outcomes**: short- and medium-term results on the level of the intermediate target group

• **Impacts**: long-term indirect effects on the overall policy level that are beyond the programme’s immediate horizon

The overarching **impact** (red boxes in figure 5) that NWO-WOTRO aims for with the RIDSSA programme is to contribute to inclusive change in Sub-Saharan Africa resulting from the uptake and application of knowledge (impact 3). This change is expected as an indirect result from the application of knowledge generated through RIDSSA projects by policy-makers (impact 1) and other stakeholders (impact 2). As indicated above however, it is not possible to attribute changes on this level causally, as these results are long-term indirect effects.

The two **outcomes** (green boxes) of the programme are reflected in the objectives of the calls, which serve as the basis for the programme’s target system. On the one hand, the programme aims to achieve that the evidence-based knowledge infrastructure on the three thematic areas of the calls has improved (outcome 1). On the other hand, it is sought that findings are shared with relevant stakeholders including the academic community, policy-makers, practitioners and other stakeholders (outcome 2). If both of these outcomes are fulfilled, it can be assumed that the programme contributes to the application of knowledge on the impact level.

In terms of **outputs**, the RIDSSA programme aims to select and support research projects that will generate and disseminate new evidence-based knowledge on specific aspects of inclusive development. In order to achieve this objective, NWO-WOTRO first conducts calls for proposals with relevant conditions in the three thematic areas (output 1) based on which research projects with high scientific quality and high policy relevance are selected (output 2). Once suitable projects have been selected, the skills of researchers are increased (output 3) through specific capacity development activities on the generation and communication of relevant knowledge. Output 4 then captures that research projects have generated relevant knowledge in the three thematic areas, which links up to the first outcome objective of generating an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure. Once the knowledge has been generated, research findings are translated into appropriate formats for policy-makers and practitioners and/or communicated to them appropriately (output 5). This output subsequently leads to the achievement of outcome 2 on the dissemination of findings to relevant stakeholders. Additionally, output 6 captures that INCLUDE is enabled to share synthesized knowledge from the research projects with a wider audience of an “outer circle” of stakeholders. The link between this output and the two outcomes is shown dashed, as these relationships are determined by activities of the INCLUDE platform, which is not part of this review.

NWO-WOTRO’s primary **inputs** (grey boxes) are the financial and personnel resources, which are transformed into the activities of programme design, implementation and management. The implemented **activities** (grey boxes) are closely related to the outputs of the programme as every activity is expected to produce one or several of the programme’s outputs.

Given the specific natures of the NWO-WOTRO approach, of the programme and of this final review, one additional layer was added to the ToC by highlighting the impact hypotheses that this review puts particular focus on (depicted as grey lenses in figure 5). Based on the differentiation of “enabling criteria” (setting conditions for successful projects in the calls for proposals and the selection process) and "intervention criteria" (offering interventions and support towards research uptake throughout the course of research projects)9, these areas represent enabling factors and intervening factors. Enabling factors are aspects that are expected to contribute to achieve a higher quality and relevance of research projects on the level of outputs 1 and 2 by enhancing the development of calls and the selection process and include, for example, a transdisciplinary approach, proposal workshops or the peer review mechanism for selecting quality research. Intervening factors are aspects that are relevant for generating high quality and relevant research (output 4) after research projects have been selected and for reaching the outcomes of an improved evidence-based knowledge infrastructure and its dissemination (outcomes 1 and 2). These aspects include capacity development, the development and use of impact pathways, or the adjustment/re-framing, to the extent possible, of research in case of

9 This conceptual differentiation of criteria was drawn from the pilot study of 8 cases exploring the project outcomes and WOTRO’s contribution (Lammers and de Winter 2018).

Chapter: Description of the RIDSSA programme
changing policy needs by members from the “inner circle” of stakeholders. While the latter factors partly remain outside the sphere of influence of the programme, it will be investigated to what extent research projects or the programme are able to adjust to these factors within the limits of what is possible.

### General assumptions of the NWO-WOTRO approach

The RIDSSA programme has been informed by the unique NWO-WOTRO approach that seeks not only to generate high quality scientific knowledge, but also to increase the practical relevance of research findings for policy-makers and practitioners. To this end, the programme design and implementation are based on three basic assumptions, which are reflected in the programme’s ToC:

- **Programmatic focus**: In order to increase opportunities for synergies between projects and more comprehensive research outcomes that can influence policy and practice, NWO-WOTRO programmes follow an approach of not supporting individual projects but rather groups of projects with a specific programmatic focus.
  - Therefore, the RIDSSA programme offers a programmatic umbrella of 3 research themes under which projects can cross-fertilize each other and generate a common evidence-based knowledge infrastructure. In detail, this means that calls are developed based on the research questions from the INCLUDE platform that are aligned as much as possible with the Dutch policy agenda as well as with Southern policy needs. Exchange activities, such as trainings, country meetings or the annual conferences are organised by the programme or participated in through cooperation with the INCLUDE platform. Moreover, a synthesis study is commissioned to enable the INCLUDE platform to share the generated knowledge with an outer circle of stakeholders.

- **Co-creation**: By involving transdisciplinary research consortia of researchers from different disciplines as well as academic and non-academic project members, and by moreover facilitating frequent interaction between them, NWO-WOTRO seeks to ensure that generated knowledge is relevant for development policy and practice and that the ownership for research findings by policy-makers and practitioners is increased.
  - To this end, the RIDSSA call conditions and selection process include aspects such as multi-stakeholder consortia or a two-stage process including joint (pre-)proposal workshops. Once projects have been selected, interaction is further facilitated by, for example, making use of impact pathways within the projects and involving stakeholder inputs throughout the project. All of these aspects are expected to ultimately lead to an improved evidence-based knowledge infrastructure and a facilitation of uptake.

- **Promoting research uptake**: Building on the approach of co-creation that seeks to enhance practical relevance of research projects, NWO-WOTRO further aims to facilitate the actual uptake of research findings into policy and practice.
  - To this end, the RIDSSA programme first puts emphasis on skills development, for example with regards to using impact pathways or communicating with policy-makers. Then, findings need to be translated into appropriate formats for policy-makers and practitioners and intermediate results may be exchanged with such target groups. Subsequently, opportunities for adjustment/re-framing in case of changing policy needs or based on findings from M&E activities are crucial, so that the results that are ultimately shared with stakeholders also have a good change of actually being applied in policy and practice.
Figure 5 - Theory of Change for the RIDSSA programme

IN1: Financial resources
IN2: Staff capacity
AC1: Development of 3 calls for research proposals in different thematic areas related to inclusive development
AC2: Selection of research projects based on scientific quality, development relevance (and quality of collaboration)
AC3: Funding and administrative support of selected research projects
AC4: Technical support to projects to facilitate uptake
AC5: Monitoring of projects through mid-term review and impact pathways
AC6: Commissioning of a synthesis study on 3 thematic areas

Alignment with Dutch policy agenda; Alignment with Southern policy needs; Two-stage application; North-South partnership; Multi-disciplinary research; Identification of appropriate stakeholders; Two-stage application; Pre-proposal workshops with consultative members; Transdisciplinary IAC; Peer-review mechanism; PC discretion to achieve balance

OP1: 3 calls for research proposals with relevant conditions were conducted
OP2: Research projects with high scientific quality and high relevance for local policy agendas were selected
OP3: Researchers have increased their skills to generate and communicate relevant knowledge for policy-makers & practitioners
OP4: Research projects generated knowledge with practical relevance on 3 thematic areas of inclusive development in targeted countries
OP5: Research findings were translated into appropriate formats for and communicated with policy-makers and practitioners
OP6: INCLUDE platform is enabled to share synthesized knowledge of research projects

OC1: Evidence-based knowledge infrastructure on 3 thematic policy areas has improved
OC2: Findings are shared with the relevant stakeholders (academic community, policy-makers, practitioners, other stakeholders)

Incorporation of stakeholder inputs; Adjustment/ reformulation of changing policy needs; use of policy briefs

IM1: Policy-makers in targeted countries apply knowledge generated by RIDSSA projects in policy-making
IM2: Other stakeholders (from CSOs, international organisations and private sector) apply insights from RIDSSA projects for decision-making
IM3: RIDSSA contributes to inclusive change in Sub-Saharan Africa resulting from the uptake and application of knowledge

Legend
Inputs/Activities
Output
Outcome
Impact
Focus areas of investigation

Source: Syspons 2018
3.4 Programme governance

The RIDSSA programme is implemented by NWO-WOTRO with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and includes the following four actors in its formal governance structure (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f):

- The main decision-making body for the programme is the PC, which combines the interests of different relevant stakeholders. It includes one representative from the MFA, one from the Steering Group of the INCLUDE platform as an observer, one from NWO-WOTRO and one from the international scientific community who can be replaced depending on the topic of the respective call. The PC is responsible for the following activities:
  - Approvement of calls
  - Appointment of the IAC
  - Allocating funding to project proposals, based on the advice of the IAC
  - Approval of final review reports, based on the advice of the IAC
  - Securing alignment with the Knowledge Platform for Development Policies

- The IAC consists of international acknowledged senior researchers with an interdisciplinary background and international representatives from practitioner organisations (civil society organisations (CSOs), policy, business). It is responsible for advising the PC on the quality and subsequent funding of applying projects. The IAC is also responsible for assessing the quality of the midterm and final review reports and advising the PC on approval thereof. Additionally, the IAC can advise the PC on programme matters, in case of a request from the PC.

- The secretariat, which is provided by NWO-WOTRO, is responsible for the day-to-day management of the calls and for all (financial) administration with regard to awarded projects, including organising assessment processes and fulfilling reporting conditions of the calls put forward by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Part of this function is also to provide the secretariat to the PC and IAC, for example in terms of organising and documenting meetings.

- The MFA is funding the programme as part of its knowledge agenda and has commissioned NWO-WOTRO through a framework contract to implement the programme guided by the research questions formulated by the INCLUDE platform.

In addition to the formal members of the governance structure, INCLUDE is a relevant actor for governing the RIDSSA programme, as it is responsible for identifying, selecting and defining the research questions that guide the programme and helps facilitate the uptake of research findings to the "outer circle" of stakeholders beyond the immediate reach of research consortia (see chapter 3.1).

Roles of the actors in the core processes of programme design and implementation

The activities relevant for governing and implementing the programme can be mapped around three core processes: programme design & steering, the selection process, and supporting & reviewing projects. Below, the main work steps in the core processes are described in terms of which actor is responsible (R), accountable (A), consulted (C) or informed (I) in each case based on the documents provided by the programme (see figure 6) (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f & MFA 2013):

The secretariat of NWO-WOTRO is responsible for all aspects of programme management and administration, reporting to MFA and development of the calls. The PC, as the main decision-making body, is accountable for a number of work steps including the development of calls, the allocation of funding, the assessment of applications and project reviews, and the conducting of a synthesis study. For the purpose of the efficiency analysis presented in chapter 5.2, the accountable actor means the one that takes the final decision rather than the one who is accountable to the MFA as funder of the programme, which is NWO-WOTRO. The IAC fulfils its role by assessing proposals and project reviews. The MFA is the accountable actor for the overall programme as its funder, but otherwise only performs...
an indirect role in its capacity as a member to the PC. INCLUDE is playing no formal role in the governance structure. By guiding the programme through its research questions, by conducting the RIDSSA synthesis studies and by providing a member to the PC it nevertheless constitutes a relevant actor.

Figure 6 - RACI-matrix of the core processes according to programme documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core process</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Secretariat</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>IAC</th>
<th>MFA</th>
<th>INCLUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme steering &amp; design</td>
<td>Conceptualization of programme design</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration &amp; alignment with INCLUE knowledge platform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting to the MFA</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of calls based on thematic focus areas</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection process</td>
<td>Coordination of the application process</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of the applications</td>
<td>R (eligibility check)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>C (Social Protection)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allocation of funding to projects</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting and reviewing research projects</td>
<td>Providing administrative support</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing support on aspects of knowledge exchange &amp; research uptake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing quality of mid-term and final reviews</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitation of policy uptake of research findings</td>
<td>R (social protection call)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R [for “outer circle”]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting a synthesis study</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Syspons 2018
4 Overview of funded research projects

The RIDSSA programme supported research projects in the framework of three thematic calls for proposals that were based on the core themes developed by INCLUDE (see chapter 3.1). As basis for the subsequent effectiveness and efficiency analysis, this section provides an overview of the geographic spread, funding and time frames of the funded projects. A complete list of the 17 supported research projects can be found in annex II.

4.1 Project characteristics

Overall, 17 research projects were selected through three competitive call processes from a total of 58 completed (pre-) proposals. In the first call on productive employment, five projects were chosen among 18 proposals handed in based on the criteria of scientific quality, relevance for development and quality of collaboration (see chapter 3.3; NWO-WOTRO 2014b). The second call on strategic actors for inclusive development was structured in a two-step process. Out of 18 pre-proposals handed in, nine projects were pre-selected based on a general fit with the criteria mentioned above. These projects then had the opportunity to elaborate a full proposal with support of a stakeholder workshop financed by RIDSSA to further develop the proposal. Finally, five projects were selected for funding (NWO-WOTRO 2014c). The third call on social protection required interested parties to first hand in a letter of intent, which was assessed based on the general suitability to the call. Proposals were then handed in by 22 applicants, out of which 15 were found eligible. Ultimately, seven projects were selected for funding in this call based on the criteria of scientific quality and relevance for development (NWO-WOTRO 2014d).

Of the 17 projects, ten started in 2014 and seven in 2015. The intended duration of the projects, as indicated in the project proposals, was 30 months for projects under the productive employment and strategic actors calls and 24 months for projects under the social protection call. The majority of projects (14 of 17 projects) extended the planned duration ranging between one month and up to 13 months. Figure 7 provides an overview of projects by call theme and project duration.

Figure 7 - Thematic focus of projects and duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Theme</th>
<th>Number of projects</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Planned duration</th>
<th>Extensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Productive Employment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>30 months</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Actors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>30 months</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014c, 2014d and final reports submitted by research projects

In terms of research location, all research projects were focused on Sub-Saharan Africa. Figure 8 depicts the distribution of field research activities across different countries. Some projects focused on a specific region or district instead of operating on a national basis. In total, eleven research projects focused on one country, while six projects collected data in several countries. Of these six projects operating in more than one country, five compared two countries while one project included six countries. The largest number of projects conducted research in Kenya (eight projects) and Ethiopia (six projects).

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10 Barkema 2018; Elbers 2017a; Fre 2018; Gassmann 2018a; Goodwin 2018; Kaag 2017a; Leung 2018a; Mariara 2018a; Merten 2017a; Nencel 2018a; Pouw 2017a; Romijn 2017a; Uche 2017a, Van Paassen 2017a; Van Reisen 2018a; Van Tulder 2017a; Wong 2018a.
As specified in the selection criteria in chapter 3.3, applying research consortia had to fulfill specific criteria in terms of representing a collaboration of international research institutions (including the seven Sub-Saharan target countries) and practitioner organizations. Of all research projects, 13 main applicants were researchers from Dutch universities while four main applicants came from universities outside of the Netherlands (UK, Kenya, Hong Kong and Switzerland). The countries from which most co-applicants originated were Kenya (represented in seven projects), Ethiopia (in five projects) and the UK (in four projects). A complete overview of geographic spread of involved research institutions is depicted in Figure 9.

The maximum grant awarded as outlined in the calls was 587,500€ per research project for the productive employment and strategic actors calls, and 300,000€ for projects under the social protection call. However, the final amounts of grants that WOTRO paid based on the projects’ expenses were lower on average (see figure 10). Some projects were 100% funded by WOTRO, but a majority of projects (ten projects according to the available data) were financed through co-funding ranging from 44,445€ to 192,974€.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project call</th>
<th>Maximum subsidy per call</th>
<th>Average grant sum per project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>productive employment</td>
<td>587,500€</td>
<td>~543,084 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social protection call</td>
<td>300,000€</td>
<td>~280,875 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategic actors</td>
<td>587,500€</td>
<td>~481,100 €</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Application form submitted by each project for the calls in 2013-2014

Source: Final reports submitted by research projects

Source: Final or financial reports submitted by project

11 Barkema 2018; Elbers 2017a; Fre 2018; Gassmann 2018a; Goodwin 2018; Kaag 2017a; Leung 2018a; Mariara 2018a; Merten 2017a; Nencel 2018a; Pouw 2017a; Romijn 2017a; Uche 2017a, Van Paassen 2017a; Van Reisen 2018a; Van Tulder 2017a; Wong 2018a.


13 Barkema 2018; Elbers 2017a & b; Fre 2018; Gassmann 2018a & b; Goodwin 2018; Kaag 2017a & b; Leung 2018a & b; Mariara 2018a & b; Merten 2017a & b; Nencel 2018a; Pouw 2017a & b; Romijn 2017a & b; Uche 2017a & b; Van Paassen 2017a & b; Van Reisen 2018a & b; Van Tulder 2017a & b; Wong 2018a & b.
5 Review Results

This chapter presents the results of the RIDSSA programme’s final review and assesses the programme’s effectiveness and efficiency. The review results stem from the analysis of programme and project documents, qualitative interviews with programme stakeholders, an online survey with consortium members of the supported research projects and four remote case studies.

The qualitative interviews were conducted with 13 stakeholders from programme design and management. The online survey was open to all researchers and non-scientific consortium members of the funded projects that were in the contact database of NWO-WOTRO. It was sent to 168 consortium members, of which 52 participated. This translated into a response rate of 31% and covered 16 out of the 17 funded research projects. The four remote case studies involved 18 semi-structured interviews with researchers, non-scientific consortium members and representatives of intermediate target groups (e.g. policy-makers or NGO/private sector representatives) of selected research projects covering all three RIDSSA calls for proposals.

Pooled together, these different sources of primary and secondary data were analysed, systematised and triangulated. In conclusion, the data allowed for the drawing of valid and specific conclusions on the effectiveness and efficiency of the RIDSSA programme.

5.1 Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion captures to what extent the objectives of the research programme have been achieved and what mechanisms facilitate or impede the achievement of objectives. It analyses what factors in programme design and management have contributed to the achievement of results. The programme’s ToC presented in chapter 3.3 serves as a starting point for this analysis as it allows for the systematic examination of mechanisms that contribute to meeting the objectives. Consequently, the following subchapters are structured along the two outcomes of the ToC and analyse to what extent the observed outputs of the results chain have contributed to meeting the programme objectives. Moreover, the enabling and intervening factors depicted as grey lenses in the ToC are examined in their contribution to achieve results and are highlighted if they were found to be important contributors.14

The main objective of the RIDSSA programme is to support high quality research projects that contribute to new evidence-based knowledge on the themes of the calls and that share the evidence-based knowledge with relevant stakeholders to facilitate their uptake. In order to achieve this objective, NWO-WOTRO has designed and implemented three calls for proposals and established management structure for the selection, implementation, support and review of research projects. These are all expected to contribute to the improvement of an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure on aspects of inclusive development on the one hand and to the dissemination of research findings with relevant stakeholders on the other hand.

All the results presented in this chapter are triangulated between different data collection methods unless otherwise stated. The graphic representations depict the aggregate survey results of all survey respondents. Where qualifications of the survey results or differences between stakeholder groups were found in the qualitative interviews, this is stated in the paragraphs below the respective graph.

5.1.1 Improvement of an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure

Pursuing inclusive development – involving all segments of society both in terms of development outcomes and the process of development – is a key challenge for all countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

14 The enabling and intervening factors investigated as depicted in the ToC were (see also Figure 1 on p.19): alignment with the Dutch policy agenda and Southern policy needs, two-stage application process, North-South partnership, multi-disciplinary research, identification of appropriate stakeholders, (pre-)proposal workshops with consortium members, transdisciplinary IAC, peer review mechanism, PC discretion to achieve balance, development and use of impact pathways, provision of training and exercises (use of impact pathways, writing policy briefs, speed date policy-makers). Adjustment opportunities based on M&E, incorporation of stakeholder inputs, adjustment/reframing in case of changing policy needs, use of policy briefs, cooperation with INCLUDE to facilitate uptake & engage stakeholders from “outer circle”, dissemination of intermediate results, timing of dissemination.
The knowledge base on this crucial aspect of development is limited however, which makes it difficult for policy-makers and practitioners from public, private or non-governmental organisations to implement evidence-based policies in this regard. The RIDSSA programme therefore set out to broaden this knowledge base by designing and implementing three calls for practically oriented research projects on three specific thematic areas of inclusive development.

**Call conditions**

Building upon the “WOTRO-approach” which envisions a programmatic focus of research, trans-disciplinary and transnational co-creation with a strong focus on the uptake of research findings, three calls for proposals were conducted with the objective of improving the knowledge base on specific aspects of inclusive development (output 1). In the call conditions, this approach was reflected in the following three ways: Firstly, the programmatic focus was established by designing three separate calls for proposals around specific research questions on aspects of inclusive development. Secondly, transdisciplinary and transnational co-creation were foreseen through respective requirements of the research consortium. Thirdly, research uptake was aimed to be facilitated by specifically engaging practitioners in the research consortia (NWO-WOTRO 2013a, 2013b, 2013c).

In order to achieve the programmatic focus on generating knowledge, the three calls for proposals were designed to reflect specific aspects of the research agenda of the INCLUDE platform. In this context, several interview partners confirmed that the three calls resulted in the funding of research projects relevant to the INCLUDE research agenda (interviews 2,3,4,6,8). This approach sought to ensure the alignment with both the Dutch policy agenda and Southern policy needs. Based on the thematic fields provided by the INCLUDE platform, the call conditions were then specifically developed to cater for the respective needs of each call theme. For example, the strategic actors call was considered broader and conceptually more challenging, therefore requiring a two-stage application process for developing the proposal. In contrast to that, the social protection theme was focused on a more narrowly defined comparative cost analysis, hence a more compact call design was chosen (interviews 1,9).

In line with these varying needs of the call themes, the online survey reveals different directions that individual projects under the three calls took in terms of generating knowledge. Figure 11 depicts epistemological characteristics of funded research projects through semantic differentials, whereby survey participants could assess their project anywhere on a seven-point scale between two extremes. The strategic actors call tended to produce more projects of “high risk / high gain” nature (average rating of 3.8 versus 4.8 for the other two calls) and topics that had never been researched before (average rating of 4.5 versus 3.1 and 4.0) than the other two calls. This finding indicates that the thematic area and/or the specific call design including a two-stage proposal process contributed to a more explorative research, which will be analysed further when comparing the call designs (see below). Projects from the productive employment call were considered to have the lowest risk of failing (5.0 versus 3.6 and 4.3), while at the same time tending to be more methodologically innovative (4.2 versus 4.5 and 4.7) than projects in the other calls. The social protection call produced predominantly projects that developed a new theory (4.7 versus 3.8 and 4.1) and had a high risk of failure (3.6 versus 4.3 and 5.0), even though they were also considered least innovative in terms of researching areas that had never been researched before (3.1 versus 4.0 and 4.5). This was explained by the fact that the research question for the social protection call was narrowly focused on cost-effectiveness of social protection which was controversially discussed and therefore resulted in more extreme assessments of the projects than in other cases (interviews 1,7).

When analysing research projects under all calls together, the programme has produced research projects that tend to build upon and expand the existing knowledge infrastructure in their respective fields. While a slight majority of survey participants stated that their research project developed a new theory rather than expanding existing theory, approximately two thirds stated that their research project built on existing research insights rather than being of exploratory nature. Moreover, a vast majority of 84% saw their project as being rather of "low risk / low gain" nature. In this context, the majority of upstream interview partners generally assessed the newness of research findings positive, but they saw different projects meeting this assessment to different degrees (interviews 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8). More
specifically, some qualified this statement by arguing that most findings are new in terms of evidence but less so in terms of generating new theoretical or analytical frameworks and hence rather strengthened the case for existing knowledge (interviews 2, 4 and 8).

Figure 11- Epistemological characteristics of research projects under the three calls

In order to achieve transdisciplinary and transnational research consortia, NWO-WOTRO included specific requirements on the academic and national background of research projects. In particular, the strategic actors and the productive employment calls required applicant consortia to involve at least one research institution from the Netherlands and one from one of the seven African target countries. The assumption was that more diverse backgrounds will facilitate a more profound analysis of complex aspects of inclusive development and hence contribute to the generation of an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure.

In terms of the academic background of consortium members, the calls for proposals resulted in diverse research projects as envisioned by the programme. According to the online survey, all 17 research projects followed a transdisciplinary approach with at least two different academic backgrounds represented in the consortia – most commonly economics (66%), sociology (55%) and political sciences (29%). Natural scientists were also part of the research projects according to 18% of survey respondents (see figure 12). Similarly, the project proposals reveal that at least two different academic disciplines were represented in each research project (Application form submitted by each project for the calls15).

Figure 12 - Academic background of involved researchers

The results of the transdisciplinary approach were seen as overwhelmingly positive in terms of facilitating knowledge generation. 90% of respondents stated that the involvement of researchers from different disciplines (greatly) contributed to refining the research design and methodology (see figure 13). More interestingly, 89% responded that the transdisciplinary approach (greatly) contributed to communicating research results in the research uptake process. Analysing all aspects covered in the online survey together, at least 70% of respondents saw positive effects of the transdisciplinary approach. Likewise, researchers and practical consortium members in the remote case studies reported that the transdisciplinary approach was very beneficial for the projects (interviews 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22 and 23). In one project, for example, the different backgrounds of researchers allowed the project to combine quantitative and qualitative methods with a political economy analysis, which reportedly made the findings more original (interview 11). In another project, it was reported that the different backgrounds allowed the projects to address different needs of different stakeholders with some requiring quantitative data for making generalisations and others being more interested in in-depth qualitative data (interview 30).

Nevertheless, some interview partners cautioned about the limits of the programme’s transdisciplinary approach for knowledge generation. In this context, challenges in managing the approach were reported and it was argued that it may require more time and resources to add real value (interviews 10 and 26).

Figure 13 - results of the transdisciplinary research approach

The involvement of practitioners and/or policy-makers in the research consortia was also a requirement of the RIDSSA programme. The goal of this involvement was to generate knowledge that is more applicable for actual implementation in policy and practice.

As envisioned by the programme, the call conditions facilitated a diverse practical background of consortium members with various sectors involved including civil society, public sector and private sector from the African partner countries and the Netherlands (see figure 14). According to the proposals of supported research projects, most research projects included civil society or non-profit organisations in African countries in their projects (12 projects). Moreover, public and private sector stakeholders from African countries (5 projects each), from the Netherlands (2 projects each) and Dutch or international development organisations / NGOs (4 projects each) were involved in some projects. Hence, the involvement of various practitioners and policy-makers in research projects laid the foundation for the subsequent implementation of findings.
In the assessment of stakeholders both in the qualitative upstream interviews and in the case studies, the regular engagement of practitioners and policy-makers in the research consortia is a key asset and has contributed to the generation of evidence-based knowledge on aspects of inclusive development (interviews 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 26 and 30). In the remote case studies, it was specified that in particular the involvement of civil society organisations in the research consortia greatly contributed to the quality and relevance of the generated knowledge (interviews 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 30).

Moreover, the composition of research projects is international with nine African countries, five European and two Asian countries being represented among the scientific consortium partners, which indicates the existence of a working North-South partnership (see figure 9 in chapter 4.1). However, 14 of the 17 research projects were led by researchers from Dutch universities and only one project was led by a researcher from an African university. Several interview partners shared the perception that many projects were mostly driven by the Dutch side in terms of conceptualizing the research question, the division of labour within project implementation and the interests being pursued (interviews 2, 3, 6 and 25). Moreover, these interview partners expressed the wish and expectation that more projects could be led by researchers from Southern universities without compromising quality (ibid.). This observation was mirrored by some interview partners in the remote case studies as well (interviews 17 and 19).

**Selection process**

In order to identify and form the most suitable research projects for generating high quality and relevant knowledge, the selection process involved a customized process design with different levels of engagement of consortium members already in the application phase. Furthermore, the IAC was involved as an independent advisory body and a targeted outreach strategy was applied to address a maximum number of suitable applicants with the calls.

The specific process design in each call was aimed to contribute to the selection and formation of high-quality research projects and contributed to the generation of evidence-based knowledge. In all three calls, the process design was generally positively assessed by members of the research projects (see figure 15). In particular, the separation into a two-stage process in case of the strategic actors call was perceived very positively in terms of contributing to the refinement of elaboration of the research question (average rating of 5.0 on a scale from 1 to 6) and the better adaptation of the project to the specifics of the call (5.1). Similarly, conducting a proposal workshop helped research projects in the strategic actors call to identify more appropriate non-scientific stakeholders (4.9) and reflect the needs of potential target groups (4.7). Conducting a kick-off workshop in the productive employment call was also considered useful by survey participants, although it rated lower than the steps in the strategic

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actors call on some dimensions that are particularly relevant in the conception phase of a research project (identification of appropriate project stakeholders and adaptation of the project to the specifics of the call with 3.9 each). The letter of intent included in the social protection call was generally assessed positively as well, while at the same time being seen as providing little added benefit by respondents (3.6). Hence, according to survey participants the specific process designs are well suited to contribute to the generation of evidence-based knowledge.

Figure 15 - Assessment of specific aspects in the selection process

The conducted qualitative interviews complete this picture and revealed that particularly interactive components of the selection process such as the proposal and kick-off workshops contributed to the generation of high-quality knowledge. In this respect, interview partners in the upstream interviews found that the two-stage separation of calls is a useful, though resource intense, exercise for clarifying the research question. Moreover, it was argued that the early interaction of stakeholders is a crucial factor for the successful generation of relevant knowledge (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7). The proposal workshop in the strategic actors call was also stated to have contributed to selecting quality and relevant research projects (interviews 4, 6 and 8), while others argued that a kick-off workshop can equally serve this purpose (interviews 1, 2, 3 and 7). Likewise, the remote case studies revealed that either kick-off or proposal workshops were found highly useful for the refinement of research questions and methodology as well as for avoiding ambiguity in relation to research objectives (interviews 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25, 26 and 27).

Also, the quality assurance and selection process of projects through the IAC was assessed as well suited by upstream stakeholders to contribute to the generation of an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure. The composition of the IAC was seen as appropriate which allowed its competent members to recommend the most qualified projects for funding (interviews 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7). It was noted, however, that the turnover in the committee was high and often only a few members could...
contribute to the discussion of proposals or reviews which increased the risk of compromises in the quality of assessment (interviews 1, 6 and 7).

The outreach strategy of NWO-WOTRO sought to attract a maximum number of qualified applicant research projects in order to address existing knowledge gaps. In this context, the data collected shows that while the outreach strategy managed to attract qualified applicants it could have attracted more and more diverse applications by intensifying outreach activities. In total, 48 proposals and pre-proposals were handed in through the three calls, which translates into a success rate of 34% for applicant research consortia given that 17 projects were selected in total (NWO-WOTRO 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). In this context, survey data shows that the majority of researchers learned about the programme through personal recommendation (39%), by screening the website of NWO-WOTRO (33%) or through INCLUDE (31%) (see figure 16). Not a single respondent had learned about the programme through social or traditional media. The analysis of qualitative interviews reveals that some interview partners had the impression that many of the research projects were implemented by researchers with long-standing relations to NWO-WOTRO, which left less room for new ideas and approaches to address the knowledge gaps (interviews 3, 6, 8 and 11). In this context, it was found that a more proactive use of additional channels including social media could increase the number of applications (interviews 8 and 9).

Figure 16 - Communication channel of learning about research programme

Skills generation

NWO-WOTRO organised and facilitated a number of training activities that were in part jointly implemented with the INCLUDE platform or by the projects themselves with funding from the programme. The objective of these activities was to enhance the skills of consortium members and to facilitate reflexion and learning (output 3) to improve the evidence-based knowledge infrastructure on aspects of inclusive development.

The analysis of survey data shows that the vast majority of organised support activities were considered useful by survey participants to increase the scientific quality of research projects (see figure 17). Most surveyed activities were rated useful by over 80% of respondents, in particular with regards to knowledge sharing activities with external stakeholders (95%). The stakeholder engagement workshop (89%) and the stakeholder analysis workshop (87%) were also rated very positively. Likewise, interviews in the remote case studies stressed the usefulness of the stakeholder engagement workshop (interviews 11,15,16,17). Merely, the pitch to a policy-maker workshop was considered useful by a
smaller majority of 64%. In this regard, one respondent in the case studies specified that pitching to a hypothetical policy-maker was found to be inappropriate for the senior researchers present at the meeting (interview 11).

Figure 17 - Usefulness of support activities for increasing scientific quality of the research project

![Figure 17 - Usefulness of support activities for increasing scientific quality of the research project](source: Online survey, Syspons 2018)

In terms of activities organised by the projects themselves, the mid-term and final review workshops were rated (very) useful for generating high quality knowledge by 93% and 87% respectively. Similarly, interview partners in the remote case studies found particularly the knowledge workshops, mid-term and final review workshops useful for increasing the scientific quality of findings (10, 14, 15 and 18). Also, the capacity development activities such as skills development for junior researchers were found useful for increasing the scientific quality by 86% of survey respondents. In the qualitative interviews, it was nevertheless revealed that more capacity development particularly for Southern or more junior research partners would have contributed to further increase ownership and thus be more open for Southern-led projects (interviews 3, 6).

Co-creation of knowledge

Building upon the transdisciplinary, transnational and practical character of research projects envisioned by the three calls for proposals, the programme was expected to advance the evidence-based knowledge infrastructure by facilitating co-creation between actors involved in the projects. The assumption in this case was that the regular and intense interaction of consortium members contributes to identifying the right knowledge gaps, to increasing the quality of research and to generate new ideas.

The survey data shows that interactions were generally highest between the scientific consortium partners, who collaboratively contributed to generating high quality research. More than 80% of respondents stated that they interacted regularly (at least 3 times per year) with other research partners. Particularly with Dutch research institutions, the interaction level was highest with 92% of respondents reporting a frequent interaction of at least 5 times per year (see figure 18). Hence, research projects appear to have been mostly driven by the interaction of involved research institutions, which can also be derived from the fact that 77% of survey participants were representing research institutions and 73% of respondents were researchers (see figures 2 and 3 above in chapter 2.2).

In terms of non-scientific consortium partners in developing countries, non-profit/civil society organisations were engaged most frequently to identify knowledge gaps and to participate in knowledge generation (at least 3 times per year was reported by 76%). Similarly, the remote case studies revealed
that interactions with civil society partners were most frequent (interviews 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 25 and 26). A regular interaction of at least 3 times per year with stakeholders representing local communities, local governments or the private sector in developing countries was in each case reported by between 50% and 60% of respondents. Hence, in the targeted countries the collaboration with practitioners was mostly focused on decentralized actors.

Finally, non-scientific consortium partners from the Netherlands were either interacted with very frequently or very little in comparison. Regular interactions (of at least 3 times per year) with stakeholders from Dutch government institutions and Dutch development organisations were reported by 18% and 14% respectively. In contrast to that, interactions with Dutch private sector stakeholders were reported regularly (at least 3 times per year) by 100% of respondents (in each case the total number of respondents was low though with 7 to 8 respondents each).

Analysis of the type of interaction between project stakeholders equally reveals that the strongest interactions were between researchers. This means that co-creation was pursued most commonly between academic counterparts within the projects. All respondents reported bi-directional workshop-type interactions with research institutions in the targeted countries of the research projects and almost two thirds of respondents (59%) with Dutch research institutions (see figure 19).

Government representatives in the targeted countries, both on the local and national level were also engaged with in various ways to contribute to the generation of high quality and relevant knowledge. Each of these project stakeholder groups was interacted with through both workshop-type bi-directional interactions and uni-directional presentations by at least half of the respondents. Also, non-profit organisations from developing countries were most commonly engaged through presentations (47%) or workshops (41%). Local communities, vulnerable groups and the private sector in developing countries were most frequently interacted with through bi-directional interview-type interactions (72%, 50% and 44% respectively). Hence, the type of preferred interaction depended on the type of stakeholder. On the one hand, government and NGO representatives tended to be engaged with through workshops and presentations. Private sector and community representatives were more commonly
engaged with through interview-type interactions. More generally, the remote case studies found that personal interactions were more common and more successful in contributing to the joint generation of knowledge (interviews 10, 22, 24 and 25).

**Figure 19 - Type of interaction between project stakeholders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of interaction</th>
<th>Workshops-type interactions (bi-directional)</th>
<th>Interview-type interactions (bi-directional)</th>
<th>Formulation of policy papers of briefs (uni-directional)</th>
<th>Presentation of results (uni-directional)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University/research institution in the developing country/countries of your research project</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local/district government representatives in developing countries of your research project</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch university/research institution</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government representatives in developing countries of your research project</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local communities in the developing country/countries of your research project</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit organization representatives in developing countries of your research project</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector in the developing country/countries of your research project</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local vulnerable groups (e.g. women and children) in the developing country/countries of your research project</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local farmers and/or small-holders in the developing country/countries of your research project</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch government representatives, including embassies in the developing country/countries of your research project</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/research institution from a different country in Europe or Asia</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/research institution from a different country in Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector in the Netherlands (e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit organization representatives in the Netherlands</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International non-profit representatives</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives of Dutch development organizations</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives of multilateral organizations and donors</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International private sector</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018

The type of non-scientific consortium partners plays a large role in determining the success of stakeholder involvement in the co-creation process. In this context, the remote case studies reveal that the collaboration with civil society organisations in the target countries was found most fruitful.
to contribute to the generation of high quality and relevant knowledge. It was reported that in several projects they extensively contributed to developing the research questions, defining objectives and providing feedback on the research findings (interviews 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 21). In contrast to that, the public sector in the targeted countries, particularly on the national level, was reported to have showed least interest in participating in the knowledge generation (interviews 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18). The private sector was reported to be involved frequently, when they could be expected to also claim a benefit from the research (interviews 17, 18, 19 and 26).

Looking at the overall results regarding co-creation, it can be stated that in a vast majority of cases, the **co-creation** is seen as contributing to identifying knowledge gaps and increasing the scientific quality of research projects. In this regard, the survey results show that interactions with scientific and non-scientific consortium partners most commonly aim to build relationships (82% and 87% respectively), engage in knowledge exchange (82% and 84%) and communicate research findings to other project members (87% and 78%) (see figure 20). Moreover, the interaction with scientific consortium members served the purpose of communicating research progress and of receiving feedback on research design and methods for 79% of respondents.

**Figure 20 - Purpose of interaction with (non-) scientific project stakeholders**

![Figure 20 - Purpose of interaction with (non-) scientific project stakeholders](image)

Furthermore, the survey results show that 65% of respondents reported that the involvement of scientific consortium partners resulted in changed research questions or changed data collection methods (see figure 21). Moreover, more than half of respondents found that the co-creation with scientific consortium members resulted in changed research objectives. The geographic focus was adapted as a result of interactions with scientific consortium members according to 37% of respondents.
Likewise, the involvement of non-scientific consortium members contributed to the generation of knowledge by identifying the right knowledge gaps and increasing the quality of research, albeit to a lesser extent than the involvement of scientific consortium members (see figure 22). Approximately 40% of survey respondents stated that their involvement resulted in adaptations of the research question, the data collection methods or the geographic focus of research. Additionally, 27% of respondents reported that research objectives were changed as a result of involving non-scientific consortium members.

Figure 22 - Results of interaction with non-scientific project stakeholders

The involvement of non-scientific stakeholders resulted in changed research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Does not apply at all</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
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</table>

The involvement of non-scientific stakeholders resulted in changed research objectives.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>-</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
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<td>21.2%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The involvement of non-scientific stakeholders resulted in changed data collection methods.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
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</table>

The involvement of non-scientific stakeholders resulted in a changed geographic focus.

<table>
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<th>-</th>
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<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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</table>

The involvement of non-scientific stakeholders resulted in a changed research uptake strategy.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>-</th>
<th>/</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Involving non-scientific stakeholders greatly contributed to building relevant relationships within the research uptake process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<th>-</th>
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<th>/</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Involving non-scientific stakeholders greatly contributed to developing capacities within the research uptake process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Involving non-scientific stakeholders greatly contributed to communicating research results in the research uptake process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Involving non-scientific stakeholders greatly contributed to revising our impact pathway within the research uptake process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Does not apply at all</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The involvement of non-scientific stakeholders greatly contributed to the project’s impacts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Does not apply at all</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018
When reflecting about potential future research projects, the data show that the current intensity of interaction between consortium partners is seen as most appropriate to generate high quality and relevant knowledge (see figure 23). A slight majority of survey respondents is in favour of engaging with both scientific and non-scientific stakeholders in the same intensity (53% and 51% respectively). Five or less percent of respondents were unsure or preferred a lower level of engagement with consortium members in future projects.

**Figure 23 - Preference for involvement of (non-) scientific project stakeholders in future projects**

The finding from the remote case studies confirm the usefulness of involving both scientific and non-scientific consortium members in the projects for generating more quality and relevant knowledge. Interview partners from all projects came out highly in favour of involving different stakeholders to increase diversity within the team, which was reported to enrich the analysis and to better address the different needs of different target groups (interviews 12, 13, 14, 18, 24 and 30). Moreover, it was argued that the involvement of different stakeholders contributes to an increase in the quality and relevance of projects (interviews 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 27).

Finally, the quality of the co-creation process was rated overwhelmingly positive by survey participants in terms of various dimensions, which facilitates the generation of quality and relevant knowledge. Over 90% of respondents (strongly) agreed with positive statements on the co-creation process regarding information seeking, information sharing, the provision of feedback, the advocacy of other consortium members and helping each other (see figure 24). Only the statements regarding responsible behaviour (e.g. "my partners in the consortium have followed each other’s directives") and tolerance (e.g. "if a partner in the consortium made a mistake in one of their tasks, I was willing to be patient") were assessed slightly less positive with 78% and 86% respectively.

---

17 Survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement to various statements on the different dimensions of co-creation, which were summarized in indexes for this report. See Question 13 in the survey questionnaire for all statements assessed.
Interview partners in the remote case studies confirmed the findings from the survey that the involvement of different stakeholders facilitated the generation of knowledge. Most interview partners found the level of cooperation to be very open and accommodating of one another (interviews 12, 14, 18, 15, 17, 19, 26, 27 and 30). Moreover, they reported that a good balance was kept between formal and informal interactions depending on the context (interviews 12, 14, 18 and 30). Also, it was reported that in some cases researchers maintained ties and are still collaborating on other projects (interviews 15, 17 and 26).

**Monitoring & evaluation and the use of impact pathways**

The programme’s approach to M&E sought to enhance both the scientific quality and the practical relevance of research projects, thereby contributing to the generation of an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure. All projects were obliged to go through a cycle of mid-term and final reviews that were reviewed by the IAC. Moreover, they had to make use of impact pathways in order to plan and structure their approach of generating knowledge with practical relevance.

The qualitative results show that the **review cycle which involved the independent assessment of the IAC** was very positively assessed and contributed to the generation of high-quality knowledge. Interviewed upstream stakeholders argued that the review system was well chosen, that the advice of the IAC was taken seriously by NWO-WOTRO and subsequently followed-up upon by the research projects if necessary (interviews 2, 3, 6).

Furthermore, the **use of impact pathways** was reported to contribute to the generation of evidence-based knowledge with practical relevance. Here, the survey data reveals that a large majority of consortium partners found the impact pathways useful to improve the knowledge infrastructure (see figure 25). 83% of respondents stated that the impact pathway helped clarify the research question and even 90% found that it helped increase the relevance of the project. Also, several of the qualitative upstream interviews confirmed the usefulness of impact pathways (interviews 2, 3).

At the same time, the effectiveness of impact pathways for generating relevant knowledge was found to be reduced by difficulties in their application. Approximately two thirds of survey respondents stated that the use of impact pathways posed a challenge to both scientific and non-scientific consortium partners. In line with this finding, in the remote case studies interview partners voiced more critical points on the use of impact pathways. While some found it useful to maintain focus and a common understanding between project stakeholders on the objectives (interviews 11 and 12), others saw little use in the impact pathways for neither academic nor practical purposes or found them too vague (interviews 26 and 30). Moreover, several interviewed consortium members were not aware of any impact pathways and their role (interviews 15, 17 and 27).
Evidence-based knowledge infrastructure

Ultimately, the knowledge infrastructure on the three thematic areas of the calls was expected to improve as a result of the implementation of three calls with suitable conditions, of the co-creation process and of appropriate skills generation and monitoring activities. The improvement of this knowledge infrastructure can be analysed through the scientific output produced by the projects and through its qualitative assessments by the interviewed stakeholders.

Firstly, the funded projects produced a wide range of academic outputs that contribute to the generation of an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure (output 4). According to the data of the online survey, research projects produced on average 2.7 academic peer-reviewed publications. While six respondents stated that their projects had not produced any peer-reviewed publication, the highest number of publications produced was stated as 13 publications by one respondent. In the four case studies it was revealed, however, that projects had produced between six and 15 scientific publications if the academic output is considered more broadly and includes publications soon to be expected (Kaag 2017a, Barkema 2018, Pouw 2017a, van Tulder 2017a). This number is roughly in line with the average academic output of projects in the Integrated Programmes supported by NWO-WOTRO, which between 2007 and 2011 had produced on average 11.7 scientific articles (Syspons 2018). Moreover, interview partners from the qualitative interviews stressed that the main purpose of the programme is not to merely produce scientific output, but rather to link research with the policy level and generate relevant knowledge for practitioners and policy-makers (interviews 6 and 7).

Secondly, the knowledge generated was generally seen as being of high scientific quality (output 2a). The interviewed upstream stakeholders reported that most funded projects were of high scientific quality (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6). Minor limitations were only seen in some cases in terms of challenges in collecting suitable data or in the framing of research questions (interview 6, 7 and 8). The scientific quality was determined through a qualitative assessment of upstream interview stakeholders, who were asked to reflect on quality aspects such as a robust methodology and data validity of the funded projects as a whole.

Thirdly, the knowledge generated was reported to be mostly relevant to national demands in the target countries (output 2b). The majority of upstream stakeholders found that research projects raised research questions that are rooted in national demands of the target countries (interviews 1, 2, 4 and 6). Moreover, the remote case studies revealed that the generated knowledge was found relevant for policy-makers in order to address specific policy issues (interviews 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25 and 26). Merely, selected upstream stakeholders found that in some cases policy-driven research themes by African policy-level stakeholders did not receive sufficient attention (interviews 2 and 3).
Finally, according to the conducted interviews the synthesis study of the RIDSSA programme is delivering a profound and relevant overview of findings, which links the newly generated knowledge to the existing body of research. It was reported that results from the research projects were able to give answers to the existing overarching questions and that there is great interest in the synthesized findings (interviews 4 and 8).

However, the link between research projects and the overall themes was sometimes reported to be indirect only, which weakened the development of an evidence-based infrastructure. While the synthesis study contributes to strengthening links between projects, opportunities were seen to enhance the internal coherence of the programme by asking projects to be more specific in defining key terms and linking their projects to the overarching themes in their proposals (ibid.). In line with this observation, Lammers and de Winter found in their study of 8 WOTRO projects that in some programmes the research projects are only loosely related to each other, which makes it more difficult to lift findings to a higher level of analysis (2018, p.71).

5.1.2 Dissemination of findings with relevant stakeholders

The ultimate objective of the programme is to contribute to inclusive development in sub-Saharan Africa resulting from the uptake and application of evidence-based knowledge by policy-makers and practitioners. A prerequisite for applying the knowledge is the sharing of findings in an appropriate format with the right target groups. In order to enable this dissemination of findings, the RIDSSA programme facilitated the interaction with relevant stakeholders, the translation of research into appropriate formats and the synthesis of results.

According to the survey data, the programme has attracted projects with a diverse range of target groups on the local, national and international level, which require diverse forms of communication for disseminating findings (see figure 26). Most commonly addressed were community and government representatives on the local and national level in target countries. At least half of the survey respondents reported representatives of local communities (66%), of local/district governments (61%), of local vulnerable groups (53%) or a national government (50%) from developing countries as their target group. With regards to Dutch organisations, survey participants reported target groups from the Netherlands in less than one third of cases, more specifically Dutch government representatives (32%), Dutch development organisations (13%), the Dutch private sector (8%) and Dutch non-profit organisations (8%).
The type of organisation addressed as target group determined the intensity of interaction with civil society organisations being most closely involved. In this respect, a **sufficient buy-in and (political) will** is crucial for stakeholders to get engaged. As discussed in the previous subchapter, many projects found it challenging to engage with public sector stakeholders, especially on the national level (interviews 11, 12, 17 and 18). It was reported that they often had little interest in the findings, which indicated a limited political will, and in some cases political priorities (e.g. elections) interfered with the project’s timeline (interviews 12 and 15). In contrast to that, civil society organisations were reported to be most closely involved and interested in learning from the findings (interviews 15, 16, 18, 25 and 26). The level of private sector engagement was relevant and intense in selected cases when they had an interest in the research (interviews 16, 17 and 18), for example in a project that investigated the role of the IT-industry for employment creation.

The co-creation within the research consortia contributed to the dissemination of findings by providing a reflection of the uptake process, facilitating access to relevant stakeholders and communicating results. Besides the benefits for knowledge generation discussed in chapter 5.1.1., the interactions among consortium members were reported to allow for feedback on the uptake process by approximately two thirds of respondents (see figure 20). Moreover, the interaction of both scientific and non-scientific consortium members was reported to facilitate access to relevant stakeholders in the uptake process by more than 80% of respondents (see figures 21 and 22). Similarly, more than 80% reported that the interaction with both scientific and non-scientific consortium members resulted in communicating research results in the uptake process (see figures 21 and 22). Interviews in the case studies confirmed that the co-creation contributed to the dissemination of findings by allowing projects to better cater for the different needs of different stakeholders (interviews 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 24).

**Translation of research findings into appropriate formats**

In order to address the above-mentioned target groups most effectively, research findings needed to be translated into appropriate formats (output 5). Based on the assumption that researchers and policy-
makers speak "different languages", the calls for proposals included a budget for developing and implementing specific activities or outputs for sharing findings with respective target groups. Through these means, researchers were expected to be able to achieve the attention, understanding and subsequent application of policy-makers and practitioners.

The survey results show that various formats were chosen to adapt findings for the target groups with policy-briefs, non-scientific summaries and formal as well as informal presentations being the most common ones (see figure 27). Almost all respondents reported that the research findings were translated into a policy-brief (91%), which was a requirement as stated in the calls for proposal (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f). Moreover, findings were summarized and shared in formal and informal meetings according to more than 80% of respondents. The further translation of results into formats such as trainings, tools, manuals non-scientific media publications was reported by less than half of survey respondents. For example, 40% of respondents reported that the findings were shared through social media, 34% stated that practitioners were trained on how to use new methods or tools and 23% reported that findings were translated into local languages or visual forms. In this context, the case studies confirm that policy briefs and particularly workshops were the most prominent application-oriented formats that were developed as a means to disseminate research findings (interviews 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 24, 25, 27 and 30).

When comparing different types of communication formats, personal interactions were often preferred to written communications for disseminating findings to practitioners or policy-makers. As shown in figure 19 in the previous chapter, personal interactions were reported more frequently in the survey than written policy-papers or briefs for all non-scientific stakeholder categories. The remote case studies confirmed this observation. Where communication formats took form of face-to-face exchanges, respondents reported observing clear indications of higher levels of engagement, interest and feedback resulting in co-ownership of the process (interviews 10, 22, 24 and 25). This kind of response was not easily observable with policy briefs.

Moreover, some interview partners reported the use of alternative dissemination formats in order to address target groups more effectively. In one project, for example, a theatre play had been developed to translate findings into a visual form and into the local language (Kaag 2017a). This format was found very useful to disseminate findings to members of the ultimate target group. At the same time, it helped open up opportunities for the engagement of informal workers associations with the Ministry of Labour Relations and was thus found very useful (interviews 10 and 24).
However, it was also found that in some cases the translation of research into appropriate formats as a means to disseminate findings was limited. Several interviewed practitioner stakeholders could not recall any practical formats as project outputs (interviews 16, 17, 21 and 23). In line with this finding, some of the upstream interview partners shared their impression that the level of engagement with target groups was limited in some projects (interviews 1 and 4).

**Interaction with target groups and other stakeholders**

In spite of the challenges that some projects experienced in engaging with target groups, approximately half of the survey respondents engaged with their priority target groups four or more times per year in order to facilitate the dissemination of findings (see figure 28). In line with this, a majority of interview partners in the remote case studies agreed that the ongoing exchange with policy-makers is crucial for bringing research findings to application (interviews 14, 15, 18, 19 and 30). In one project, for example, it was reported that the regular exchange with practitioners and policy-makers was highly useful for sharing the experiences of the project, receiving feedback on these experiences and for determining next steps of the project (interviews 12, 14, 18, 25 and 30).

![Figure 28 - Frequency of interaction with representatives of the target groups](image)

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018

At the same time, some interview partners had the impression that the exchange with target groups could have been intensified to strengthen the dissemination of research findings (interviews 14, 20, 22, 24). Here, it was specified that interaction should not only be seen as an obligatory exercise, but to be integrated into the objectives of the project and address the right type of target groups (interviews 22, 24, 25).

The **communication of intermediate results** was found to be an important aspect in disseminating research findings. In the self-assessment of the online-survey, the communication of intermediate results contributed to an increased interest among target groups and an increased acceptance of the project in the vast majority of cases (see figure 29). Approximately half of the respondents reported that the communication of intermediate results also contributed to adjustments in the research design. Less than 20% saw a risk that sharing intermediate results contributed to premature decisions on behalf of target groups. Likewise, the analysis of other WOTRO-funded research for development projects stressed the importance of sharing intermediate findings for strengthening development efforts in policy and practice (Lammers and de Winter 2018, p.70). Moreover, the majority of researchers and non-scientific consortium members in the remote case studies reported that intermediate results were shared and allowed projects to conduct a reality check of their findings (interviews 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 and 18). This exercise was found particularly useful in cases when policy-makers were also involved (interviews 12 and 14).

However, intermediate results in some cases did not reach the intended target groups, which limited the dissemination of research findings. Several of the interviewed representatives of target groups were not aware of any intermediate findings shared (interviews 20, 22, 23 and 24). In this context, it was reported that target groups, particularly from the public sector, showed little interest and these stakeholders could only be reached through existing informal channels, even though a more formal and high-level communication would have facilitated to further disseminate the intermediate findings.
(interviews 12 and 14). Also, some of the upstream stakeholders stressed the importance of disseminating intermediate results (interviews 1, 4 and 8). For this purpose, they suggested ways to further facilitate and incentivise the dissemination of intermediate results in appropriate formats, for example through informal lunch-meetings with relevant stakeholders, opinion papers or online formats such as blog posts (ibid.).

Figure 29 - Results of the communication of intermediate findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to an increased interest in the findings by the target group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4% 10.3% 34.5% 51.7%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to an increased acceptance of relevant evidence-based knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7% 16.7% 40.0% 36.7%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to the subsequent adjustment of our data collection approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.9% 10.7% 14.3% 17.9% 21.4% 17.9%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to the subsequent adjustment of our research question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.7% 7.4% 11.1% 22.2% 11.1% 7.4%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to premature decisions by our target group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.3% 20.8% 4.2% 4.2% 8.3%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018

In case interactions with other RIDSSA projects took place, they often had a positive impact for the uptake process. More than 60% of survey respondents reported that they interacted with other RIDSSA projects at least once per year (see figure 30). Besides knowledge-related learning aspects, this interaction resulted in new contacts or exchanges with target groups in almost 40% of cases (see figure 31). In this respect, qualitative interviews from the remote case studies specified that interactions were useful when there were common approaches and challenges to discuss, for example among projects of one thematic area (interviews 11 and 30). Similarly, the synthesis workshops in the Netherlands were pointed out as useful for developing common lessons learned (ibid.).

Interactions with members of the INCLUDE platform also took place regularly and in a majority of cases resulted in new contacts or actual exchanges as part of the wider uptake process. More than 50% of survey participants reported an exchange of at least 3 times per year with policy-makers or practitioners from the outer circle of stakeholders (see figure 30). Around 60% reported participation in events (co-)hosted by the INCLUDE platform at least once per year. As a result of these interactions, around two thirds found that they had either gained contacts or actually been able to exchange knowledge with outer circle policy-makers or practitioners (see figure 31). Findings from the remote case studies confirm that in many cases interactions with INCLUDE were instrumental for demonstrating the practical relevance of findings and sharing them with appropriate stakeholders (interviews 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25, 26 and 30).

Figure 30 - Frequency of interaction with other stakeholders from the RIDSSA programme or the INCLUDE platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>N</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researchers or consortium members from other research projects funded by the RIDSSA programme</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.5% 43.8% 6.3% 12.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the INCLUDE knowledge platform</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.0% 28.6% 37.1% 14.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy-makers or practitioners as part of events (co-)organized by the INCLUDE knowledge platform</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.2% 32.4% 23.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than once per year 1-2 times per year 3-4 times per year 5 and more times per year

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018

Chapter: Review Results
Synthesis of research findings

The final step that is expected to contribute to the sharing of relevant findings with policy-makers and practitioners is related to the synthesis of research findings. For each of the three calls, a synthesis study was implemented in collaboration with the secretariat of the INCLUDE platform as the main coordinator. Additionally, an overall synthesis on inclusive development is conducted to link the findings in each call to the overarching theme of inclusive development. At the time of writing this report, the synthesis process is not yet finalized. The formulation of lessons learned for the MFA and beyond as well as the outreach to other stakeholders have just been initiated. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the extent to which the INCLUDE platform was enabled to share synthesized knowledge (output 6).

The purpose of the synthesis studies is to facilitate and promote research uptake of the study findings from the RIDSSA projects at call and programme level and to link up the knowledge to the global academic debate on inclusive development (NWO-WOTRO n.d. a). In line with this objective, interviewed stakeholders expected the synthesis study to link up the findings to existing policy research and to generate a consolidated body of knowledge that is more than the sum of individual research projects on their own (interviews 1, 5 and 8). The synthesis reports for each of the three calls were presented at a conference organised by INCLUDE in Leiden in November 2018, where results were discussed with representatives of the funded projects, INCLUDE, NWO-WOTRO and the MFA. Each of the synthesis reports formulates specific policy messages from the condensed learnings of the projects in order to lift the generated knowledge to the practical level (INCLUDE 2018e, 2018f, 2018g).

Reflecting on the results achieved so far, the results of the synthesis study are expected to contribute to the programme objective of sharing the generated knowledge with relevant stakeholders. In this context, the interview partners in the qualitative interviews confirmed that the synthesis of research findings is able to bring a considerable body of new knowledge into the academic discussion (interviews 4 and 8). It was reported that there is great interest in the findings, not only from researchers and the MFA but also from other international development organisations, such as OECD or the UK Department for International Development (DFID) (ibid.).

Uptake of research findings

The ultimate objective of the research programme, besides improving the evidence-based knowledge infrastructure, is to allow policy-makers and practitioners to make use of research findings as a basis for evidence-based policy and practice in their work. By drawing on new scientific insights on specific aspects of inclusive development, the assumption is that policy-makers and practitioners will be able to adapt their work informally, pursue organisational changes, or develop new strategies and policies.

The survey data reveals that a vast majority of stakeholders gained a deeper understanding of the research topic (79%) and voiced a desire to apply new insights to their work (71%) (see figure 32).
Also, an increased capacity to participate in debates on the research topic was reported by slightly more than half of the respondents. Hence, a successful knowledge exchange that sparked interest by the target groups took place in the majority of projects in each of the three calls.

**Figure 32 - Results of the research project for policy-makers and practitioners**

![Graph showing results of the research project for policy-makers and practitioners](source.png)

Similarly, the remote case studies revealed that target groups in many cases deepened their knowledge as a result of the research project (interviews 14, 15, 18, 25, 26 and 30). While the results chain was often too long or the time frame of the project too short for causal effects in changed behaviour, learnings on the topic were observed more frequently. For example, it was reported that research findings helped to showcase successful strategies to target groups from civil society or the public sector (interviews 15, 18 and 26).

Actual changes in the work of target groups also occurred, but less frequently. While findings were directly contained in new strategy or policy documents in only 10% of projects, informal changes in the work of target groups were reported in considerably more cases. 39% of respondents reported that the project’s findings resulted in informal changes in some aspects of their work and 13% saw substantial changes in their way of working at the organisational level. In this context, stakeholders in one project reported that policy-makers used the finding to build new relationships with certain vulnerable groups and used the findings to enhance access of government services to these groups, which was corroborated by respondents from two different state departments (interviews 14, 24 and 25).
When comparing the three calls, projects from the strategic actors call achieve better uptake results with regards to several dimensions of changes. For example, 64% of respondents from the strategic actors call reported informal changes and 14% formal changes among target groups as opposed to an overall average of 39% and 7% respectively (see figure 32). Moreover, 14% from the strategic actors call reported a substantial change in strategy compared to an average of 9%. The more profound uptake results in the strategic actors call are in part a result of the call design. Observations in the previous chapter revealed that the strategic actors call focused more on innovative and high risk / high gain research topics and emphasized early interactions between project stakeholders through a two-stage application process (see figures 11 and 15). Also interview partners in the remote case studies stressed that the proposal workshop helped not only to refine the research question but also to enhance practitioner involvement, which subsequently helped facilitate the uptake process (interviews 12, 13, 14, 25 and 30). In line with this, the synthesis results indicate that building trust and forming alliances between different actors is a slow and challenging process, which however crucially contributes to facilitate change in the long run (INCLUDE 2017, p.6).

Lastly, the thematic framing of issues by the research project was viewed as useful for facilitating the uptake process in the remote case studies. Several stakeholders reported that the project’s framing helped engage stakeholders with the research both on the level of personal interactions (interviews 22, 24 and 25) and of the project in general (interviews 13, 14, 19, 20 and 27).
5.1.3 Effectiveness assessment

Drawing conclusions from the analysis, the review team considers the RIDSSA programme effective with regards to improving an evidence-based knowledge infrastructure and mostly effective regarding the sharing of findings with relevant stakeholders. The programme has produced 17 research projects of high scientific quality that build upon and expand the existing knowledge infrastructure in the three thematic areas of inclusive development covered by the calls. This knowledge infrastructure was subsequently disseminated to policy-makers and practitioners, which resulted in a deeper understanding of specific topics among target groups, but in a majority of cases not (yet) in actual changes of policy or practice.

By developing three calls that envision a transdisciplinary, international collaboration including practitioners or policy-makers, NWO-WOTRO created the conditions for advancing a relevant knowledge infrastructure on the thematic areas. While the collaboration between researchers was strongest, the early and continuous involvement of stakeholders from a practical or policy background helped research projects to generate high quality and relevant knowledge as the basis for future uptake on the policy and practitioner level. For this purpose, the implementation of interaction workshops in the proposal phase or at the outset of the research phase proved instrumental. In particular, the extensive two-stage proposal process in the strategic actors call was useful to develop the research question further in a complex thematic field. This has resulted in more innovative findings and more projects of a high risk / high gain nature due to the diverse nature and intense interaction of involved stakeholders. The programme’s outreach strategy managed to attract qualified applicants, but it could have attracted more and more diverse applications by intensifying outreach activities. In particular, a more proactive use of additional channels including social media could increase the number of applications and hence contribute to a further increase in the scientific quality and innovativeness of funded projects.

Notwithstanding some concerns of uneven representation and the desire for a stronger African involvement in terms of numbers and depth, the envisioned co-creation process was effective in generating evidence-based knowledge on the thematic areas of inclusive development. Co-Creation with other researchers, most commonly through workshop-type interactions, contributed to the enhancement of the research objective, question or approach. Also, interactions with non-scientific consortium members took place regularly and contributed to advancing the research process. In particular, stakeholders from civil society were engaged with effectively, which facilitated the generation of relevant knowledge by identifying the right knowledge gaps and adapting the research process if necessary. In this context, it was found that a sufficient buy-in and (political) will is crucial for stakeholders to get engaged.

The academic output produced by the projects is of high scientific quality and contributes to an enhanced evidence-based knowledge infrastructure. In addition to the above-mentioned aspects of call design and the selection process, the support activities provided to projects - particularly workshops and exchange opportunities regarding the analysis and engagement of stakeholders - contributed to increase the scientific quality of projects. Moreover, the review process that involved the IAC for assessing project proposals and reviews was instrumental for enhancing the quality of research. Merely, the use of impact pathways did not achieve its full potential in terms of guiding the generation of knowledge due to challenges among project members in their application.

In terms of the dissemination of research findings, the uptake process of projects was facilitated by addressing a diverse range of target groups on the local, national and international level. The research findings were translated into different written and oral formats, which in most but not all cases reached the targeted audience. Particularly stakeholders from the public sector could often not be reached, unless there had been existing informal channels prior to the project. Besides policy-briefs, which were prepared as a general requirement of the calls, face-to-face interactions and alternative dissemination formats – such as a theatre play or non-scientific summaries – were most useful to gain the attention of target groups. Moreover, the communication of intermediate findings was instrumental for increasing the interest and acceptance of the project among target groups.
In consequence, the projects supported by the programme have resulted in a deeper understanding of specific topics among target groups, but in a majority of cases not in actual changes of policy or practice. While the time frame provided challenges in terms of achieving long-term results, the challenges in engaging certain target groups and the partly limited translation of findings into applicable formats have contributed to this result. At the same time, some target groups could use the research findings for reflecting or adapting their strategy. In this regard, projects from the strategic actors call tended to be most successful in facilitating changes among target groups, which appears to be a result of the thematic framing and the close and early stakeholder interaction that was facilitated in this call.

On a broader level, the programme facilitated the uptake of knowledge to outer circle stakeholders through cooperation with INCLUDE and the synthesis process. With regards to the former, interactions with members of the INCLUDE platform took place regularly and in a majority of cases resulted in new contacts or actual exchanges with stakeholders from the outer circle as part of the uptake process. Regarding the latter, the ongoing synthesis process links the knowledge generated to the global debate on inclusive development and has at the time of writing this report made a plausible contribution to this effect.

5.2 Efficiency

The efficiency criterion assesses to what extent the resources were applied to achieve maximum results. Hence, in order to assess the efficiency of the RIDSSA programme, this review examines to what extent processes in programme design, management and implementation were organised to achieve best possible results. As part of this exercise, it is investigated to what extent the programme was implemented in line with what NWO-WOTRO was commissioned to do. Moreover, the extent to which objectives were achieved on time and with a correct use of funds is examined.

5.2.1 Programme governance

In order to assess the efficiency of the RIDSSA programme, it is crucial to first clarify the way that processes are structured in terms of designing, planning and implementing the programme. In chapter 2.4, the governance structure as depicted in the programme documents is described. Subsequently, core stakeholders from programme management and implementation, including members of the PC and the IAC were asked to report and assess the roles and responsibilities of the core actors involved in governing the programme. This provided the basis for an analysis of the relationships between the secretariat, the PC, IAC, MFA and the INCLUDE platform as well as of the extent to which processes were designed to achieve best possible results.

Figure 33 below depicts the governance structure as it is perceived by the key programme stakeholders that participated in the qualitative interviews. It specifies which actor is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed in each core process. Highlighted in red circles are the areas that differed most strongly between the governance structure as derived from the documents and the one reported in the interviews. In the following, the roles and responsibilities of each key actor will be analysed separately and put into relation to each other.
• The programme secretariat provided by NWO-WOTRO is the actor with responsibility in the majority of work steps of programme governance including programme design, the selection process and the support and review process of research projects. In some areas, such as the collaboration with INCLUDE and project support in terms of knowledge exchange and research uptake, the roles had not been clearly assigned at the outset of the programme. Here, interview partners saw NWO-WOTRO increasingly in the role of a responsible actor (interviews 1 and 8). For the synthesis study, NWO-WOTRO played a contributing role by providing project insights, monitoring progress and consulting with the PC and IAC where necessary (NWO-WOTRO n.d. a).

The responsibility of the secretariat is focused on the formal and administrative aspects of programme management, however, which at times created tensions and hence inefficiencies when expectations on this role differed. On the one hand, both the formal governance structure and the evolving informal arrangements assigned responsibility to NWO-WOTRO's secretariat in a large number of processes including knowledge exchange and research uptake (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f; interviews 1 and 8). On the other hand, some interview partners saw NWO-WOTRO’s secretariat mostly as a service-provider with the INCLUDE platform leading activities such as project support, the facilitation of knowledge exchange and even call development (interviews 1, 7 and 8). Moreover, some stakeholders noted that NWO-WOTRO’s approach to programme management tended to be bureaucratic and process-oriented, which made cooperation more difficult (interviews 1, 4 and 8). Ultimately, it was reported though, that arrangements were found for NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform to work together efficiently and effectively (interviews 1, 4, 7 and 8).

• The PC is the key decision-maker and accountable actor within the RIDSSA programme. In particular, it is accountable for crucial aspects in the selection process (assessing applications and allocating funding based on the IAC’s recommendation), the review process (approving project reviews based on the IAC’s recommendation) and in steering the synthesis process. It combines the expertise and interests of NWO-WOTRO, the MFA, the INCLUDE platform as well as the international scientific community.

This structure of the PC reportedly contributed to the efficient management of the programme. By involving representatives from all relevant stakeholder parties, it managed to achieve a good

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**Figure 33 - RACI-matrix of the programme as reported in the upstream interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core process</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Secretariat</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>IAC</th>
<th>MFA</th>
<th>INCLUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme steering &amp; design</td>
<td>Conceptualization of programme design</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration &amp; alignment with INCLUDE knowledge platform</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting to the MFA</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of calls based on thematic focus areas</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection process</td>
<td>Coordination of the application process</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of the applications (eligibility check)</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allocation of funding to projects</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting and reviewing</td>
<td>Providing administrative support</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research projects</td>
<td>Providing support on aspects of knowledge exchange &amp; research uptake</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing quality of mid-term and final reviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitation of policy uptake of research findings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting a synthesis study</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Qualitative interviews, Syspons 2018
balance of interests (interviews 1, 2, 3 and 6). Moreover, the clear separation of roles from the IAC in terms of assessing the quality of proposals and project reviews reportedly strengthened the integrity of the PC (interviews 2, 3 and 5).

Yet, some factors were identified that limited the efficiency of the PC’s engagement. On the one hand, it was pointed out that the composition of the PC was rather small which meant that there was a risk of knowledge loss if one of the members left which happened repeatedly over the course of the programme (interviews 5 and 7). In this context, it was also noteworthy that not all interview partners were fully aware of each other’s roles in the governance structure or understood it differently from the rest (interviews 5 and 6). On the other hand, some interview partners noted that the governance structure was asymmetric with regards to the interaction between Northern/Dutch and Southern stakeholders, which potentially compromised the decision-making (interviews 2 and 3).

• The MFA is funding the programme and therefore accountable in terms of NWO-WOTRO’s reporting. It contributes one representative to the PC and it played a more active role indirectly at the outset of the programme. At that time, the INCLUDE secretariat was embodied by a representative of the MFA, who crucially contributed to conceptualizing the programme design and developing the calls in this capacity (interviews 1 and 7). Subsequently, the MFA did not play an active role in the implementation of the programme anymore beyond its representation in the PC.

Hence, the MFA’s involvement contributed to the efficient management and implementation of the programme. Engagement took place in processes where necessary, in particular in the conceptualisation phase; beyond that, the MFA remained in its outside role as the funder of the programme (ibid.).

Merely in terms of the policy objectives, differing views were partly observed. In this regard, some interview partners challenged the above-mentioned view that the governance structure required a stronger Southern representation to enhance efficiency (interviews 1 and 4). Rather, it was argued that Dutch policy objectives required more consideration in steering the programme (interview 1) or that a more long-term approach would be necessary for a stronger involvement of Southern representatives in decision-making (interview 4).

• The IAC plays a crucial role for the quality assurance of research proposals and the review of projects. In these areas it is the sole responsible actor as its members assess the proposals and project reviews independently and then provide a recommendation to the PC on the acceptance, rejection or revision of the projects’ documents. The IAC is accountable to the PC and is supported by NWO-WOTRO as the secretariat in terms of activities such as the eligibility check of proposals. Beyond that, the IAC is not involved in managing or steering the programme (NWO-WOTRO 2013b, 2014e, 2014f).

In its independent capacity, the IAC contributes to an efficient selection and review process by ensuring a high scientific quality of projects and strengthening the integrity of the programme’s selection and review process. The interviewed stakeholders agreed that the IAC served as a useful and qualified actor to ensure the scientific quality of projects on the one hand and the independence of decision-making on the other hand (interviews 2, 3, 6 and 7). It ensured scientific quality because of the high expertise of its members and it strengthened the independence of the selection and review process because of the fact that the IAC was otherwise not involved in managing or steering the programme (ibid.).

The fluctuation of IAC membership and a limited engagement of all IAC members were seen as limiting the efficiency, however. For example, it was reported that project reviews were often closely read only by the two persons specifically foreseen for each project. As a result, respondents stated that profound discussions on the level of all projects were difficult (interviews 1, 3, 6 and 7). Moreover, it was noted that some involved interview partners could not recall the implemented independent peer review mechanism of proposals prior to the IAC assessment.
Ultimately, it was argued that more resources devoted to the review process could have increased participation and commitment to this task (interviews 3 and 6).

- The **INCLUDE platform** does not play a formal role in the governance structure of the RIDSSA programme beyond its representation in the PC. As depicted in figure 34, however, it does play a relevant role in the core processes of programme design, supporting projects and conducting the synthesis study. In terms of designing the programme, the role of the platform was a consulting function, in which INCLUDE contributed the guiding questions for the calls (MFA 2013) but then also took part in developing the calls together with NWO-WOTRO (interviews 1,7). The task of supporting research projects on knowledge exchange and facilitating research uptake was seen as a joint responsibility of NWO-WOTRO and the KP, which developed over time (interviews 1,7,8). More precisely, NWO-WOTRO’s secretariat was seen as being responsible with regards to the “inner circle” of project stakeholders and INCLUDE as being responsible for disseminating results to the “outer circle” of additional stakeholders (interviews 1,9). Finally, the synthesis study was implemented by the INCLUDE secretariat in consultation with NWO-WOTRO and the funded projects based on a decision of the PC (NWO-WOTRO n.d. a).

In retrospect, the INCLUDE platform played a more prominent role in practice than initially envisioned. Both in the core processes of programme design and of project support, the INCLUDE platform was seen to fulfil at least a consulting function, if not a role of co-responsibility (interviews 1,7). In particular, some upstream interview partners stated that while they saw NWO-WOTRO formally responsible for aspects such as call development and facilitating research uptake in the projects, they rather found the INCLUDE platform being in the lead in terms of implementation (interviews 1,7,8). Moreover, it was argued that since the interest of projects to interact with policy-makers was limited in some cases, the engagement with the INCLUDE platform helped to encourage such interaction (interviews 4,7). In this respect, the survey results confirm that two thirds of respondents were able to exchange knowledge with policy-makers and practitioners as a result of participation in events co-organised by INCLUDE (see figure 31 above).

Overall, the formal division of roles between NWO-WOTRO and INCLUDE was left unclear in the beginning, which in some areas resulted in a diffusion of roles or the perception thereof. For example, discussions had taken place on the contents of calls or on the best ways to disseminate findings, because responsibilities had not been fully clear (interviews 7,8). Here, it was found that while NWO-WOTRO and INCLUDE share the same objectives, they are following different approaches to achieve them (ibid.). Nevertheless, a suitable informal relationship and division of labour was developed over time. The result of these developments is depicted in the red circles in figure 34. The relationship was partly formalized, for example through the annex to the grant letter in the social protection call that specified expectations and opportunities for projects vis-à-vis cooperation with the INCLUDE platform (NWO-WOTRO 2014k).

Ultimately, working relations were reported to be fruitful with regular meetings and room for exchange on both sides (interviews 4, 7 and 8).

The decision-making and selection processes of the RIDSSA governance structure were seen to a large extent as impartial, thus providing the basis for efficient programme management and implementation. In this regard, the separation of the IAC from the rest of the governance structure was reported to be particularly useful (interviews 2, 3 and 6). Also, the possibility of the PC to shift ranking, which was sometimes applied to achieve a geographic and thematic balance, was found not to compromise the impartiality, as it went along with the general recommendations of the IAC (ibid.). Merely, it was critically reflected that the majority of projects appeared to come from an existing network of NWO-WOTRO with established relations, which might have compromised the perception of impartiality towards outsiders (interviews 3 and 6).

### 5.2.2 Support structures and service delivery

In order to achieve maximum results with the given resources in programme management and implementation, the RIDSSA programme needs to have appropriate support structures and service delivery mechanisms in place. In line with the previous chapter’s observation that NWO-WOTRO’s...
secretariat is in charge of the majority of process steps in terms of managing and implementing the programme, its processes of support provision and service delivery were analysed from the perspectives of research consortium members on the one hand and programme stakeholders on the other hand. Additionally, the IAC’s review mechanism was assessed as a crucial aspect of programmatic support structures.

In terms of the efficient fulfilment of administrative responsibilities, the support structures of NWO-WOTRO’s secretariat were assessed very positively by project stakeholders (see figure 35). Here, 90% of survey respondents stated that NWO-WOTRO helped the projects in dealing with administrative challenges. Support was also provided on aspects of research dissemination, which took place for example by providing supporting documents (positively assessed by 83%), but also through content, for example by acting as a sparring partner (positively assessed by 69%). Moreover, 86% of survey respondents stated that NWO-WOTRO encouraged projects to increase activities for developmental impacts.

Figure 34 - Type of support provided by NWO-WOTRO to research projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Moreover</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped us in dealing with challenges in the project’s administration.</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected us with other projects with similar topics.</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided us with supportive documents for disseminating research results.</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acted as a sparring partner on the topic of results dissemination.</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged us to increase our activities for developmental impacts.</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018

When looking more closely at the quality of service delivery for efficient programme management, projects could overwhelmingly benefit from the administrative support received from NWO-WOTRO’s secretariat (see figure 35). Almost 90% of respondents reported their satisfaction with the quality of the non-financial support provided and over 90% were satisfied with the timely disbursement of funds to the project. Even 100% of respondents were satisfied with the flexibility, understanding and timeliness of responses to inquiries by NWO-WOTRO. Merely the feedback loops after project milestones were seen critically by some (21%), which can be considered negligible in relation to the overall positive assessment of service delivery.
In contrast to that, some of the upstream interview partners shared concerns on the efficient delivery of services and support structures. In this respect, some had the impression that NWO-WOTRO tended to engage too much in lengthy and process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented procedures which created challenges when dealing with other stakeholders (interviews 1, 4 and 8). Others indicated that in spite of the overall balance and impartial decision-making structure, the closeness and flexibility of NWO-WOTRO towards many of the projects had resulted in projects allowing themselves more freedom than appropriate, for example by changing the research design or extending the time frame without seeking approval for it (interviews 2 and 6).

Finally, the IAC feedback was reported to greatly contribute to the efficient programme implementation. The survey data reveals that all respondents found the IAC assessment of their project accurate in terms of scientific quality and the practical relevance (see figure 35). Moreover, 89% found that the mid-term review helped to refine aspects of data collection to enhance scientific quality and 83% found it helpful to refine the approach towards research uptake. These findings underline that the IAC was a highly useful actor for the qualified and independent decision-making with regards to the projects funded by the programme.
5.2.3 Timing of programme implementation

Another important aspect for the analysis of efficiency is the ability of the programme and of its projects to achieve the objectives with the available resources on time. Therefore, it was investigated to what extent the funded research projects managed to remain within the envisioned time frames and to what extent timing aspects played a role for meeting the needs of target groups.

As outlined in chapter 3.1, a majority of the supported research projects (14 of 17 projects) extended the planned duration ranging between one month and up to 13 months. In each of the three calls for proposals, only one consortium completed their research project within the initially planned time frame of up to 30 months in the strategic actors and productive employment calls and 24 months in the social protection call. In order to investigate reasons for these delays, the review team had developed a number of hypotheses, which might have contributed to the delays. These hypotheses included the dissemination of intermediate results, the ongoing exchange with policy-makers or practitioners from the target groups, the participation in events (co-)organised with INCLUDE and the adjustment of projects based on the results of M&E milestones such as the mid-term assessment.

The survey data shows that none of these factors can explain the majority of projects not terminating their project on time. Only 3% of respondents stated that the dissemination of intermediate results had a negative effect on meeting project objectives on time. Also, the exchange with policy-makers and practitioners from the intermediate target groups or from the outer circle of stakeholders through events (co-)organised with INCLUDE were only considered to impede the timely meeting of project objectives by 9% and 13% respectively. The most frequently observed challenge in this regard was seen by 24% in the need for adjustments after M&E milestones. In this context, the feedback loops after project milestones such as the mid-term review were considered long by 21%, which contributed to the latter challenge (see figure 37 in chapter 5.2.2). In sum, however, neither aspects of knowledge exchange and uptake nor the M&E milestones were seen as a major reason for the project extensions of a majority of funded projects.

Source: Online survey, Syspons 2018
Likewise, the upstream stakeholders and interviewed project stakeholders saw knowledge exchange, research uptake or M&E milestones as important factors for meeting programme objectives, but not as critical inhibiting factors for their timely accomplishment. On the contrary, knowledge exchange and sharing intermediate results were seen as facilitating factors for meeting objectives on time by upstream stakeholders (interviews 2 and 3), while all aspects were seen as crucial for meeting programme objectives even if they impede the process (interviews 1, 3 and 4). In the remote case studies, several interview partners confirmed that these activities helped reflect on findings early on, which contributed to timely implementation (interviews 10, 12, 14, 15, 18 and 19). Only some stated that they were not sure about the effects or that they can slow down processes of project implementation (interviews 13 and 26).

However, the approach to monitoring projects has played a role in determining the timely implementation of projects. In this context, some interview partners shared their impression that researchers often feel overburdened with additional requirements and that their closeness to NWO-WOTRO lead the programme management to be too accommodating to individual wishes of researchers regarding the adherence to project requirements including the time frames (interviews 1 and 6). Similarly, Lammers and de Winter found a tendency of projects being monitored too flexibly to assess the project’s progress and to ensure strengthening outcomes towards research for development impact (2018, p.71). The overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding the flexibility and responsiveness of NWO-WOTRO vis-à-vis research projects (see figure 36 in chapter 5.2.2), despite its merits in terms of allowing research projects to focus on achieving a maximum impact rather than timely finalisation only, strengthens this hypothesis.

Finally, timing aspects played an important role for determining the success of dissemination activities. The remote case studies revealed that engaging public sector representatives was most effective when the dissemination coincided with political needs of target groups (interviews 14 and 24). At the same time, different political priorities (e.g. elections) or staff turnover in public institutions often limited the openness to discuss and learn from the projects’ insights (interviews 11 and 22). Thus, the appropriate timing of sharing research findings is a key challenge for projects. While the political priorities and organisational challenges of target groups are beyond the projects’ sphere of influence, these are crucial aspects to consider when developing and implementing the uptake strategy.

### 5.2.4 Commissioning and Monitoring of the synthesis study

Lastly, the synthesis process is a crucial aspect of programme management, which was investigated in terms of implementation efficiency. Therefore, it was analysed to what extent the processes of commissioning and monitoring the synthesis study were appropriate to achieve the best possible results.

At the time of writing this report, the synthesis process is still ongoing. The three thematic synthesis reports are however expected to be finalized in parallel to this final review of the RIDSSA programme and the overall synthesis shortly after. In order to assess the commissioning and monitoring of the
synthesis process, the key involved programme stakeholders were asked how they assessed specific aspects of the process and were invited to elaborate on this.

To achieve maximum results in terms of improving the knowledge infrastructure with the available resources, the RIDSSA programme joined forces with the INCLUDE platform on conducting a synthesis. Initially, the RIDSSA programme had only foreseen and budgeted a synthesis study for the social protection call. Over the course of the programme, however, it was found that a synthesis for each of the three calls as well as an overall synthesis would be useful to produce an aggregated body of knowledge on all themes that is relevant for both policy and academic stakeholders. The INCLUDE platform had also budgeted a synthesis of the three individual thematic areas but lacked the resources to conduct three thematic synthesis studies as well as an overall synthesis. Given the common objective of improving the evidence-based knowledge infrastructure on inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa, it was decided to pool the budgets and conduct a synthesis study of each call as well as an overall synthesis on inclusive development together. Because the INCLUDE platform was in the position of having both contact with the RIDSSA projects as well as with a relevant audience of policy-makers, practitioners and researchers, the PC commissioned the conduct of the overall synthesis work to the INCLUDE secretariat. In terms of the budget, NWO-WOTRO contributed 120,000 EUR, hence roughly one third, to the overall budget of 426,960 EUR for the synthesis studies.

The commissioning process was assessed very positively by all relevant stakeholders in terms of achieving maximum results with the given resources. Firstly, it was reported that the Terms of Reference for the synthesis study were clear and transparent (interviews 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8). Hence, a solid foundation for conducting the synthesis study was laid. Secondly, interview partners found that with the INCLUDE platform a qualified actor was found to implement the synthesis (interviews 4, 7 and 8). Also, the monitoring process from the RIDSSA programme was considered to be efficiently managed in terms of achieving best possible results with the resources (interviews 4, 7 and 8). The process took place through (bi-) monthly meetings with INCLUDE and two specific consultation moments for each theme (plus the overall synthesis) with the PC. It was pointed out that quite some time was spent discussing the synthesis outline. In this regard, it was found important to go back to the content of the original calls which ultimately contributed to meeting the intended objective of the synthesis outline (interviews 5 and 7). Moreover, the monitoring process contributed to meet the needs of policy-makers and practitioners as final users by, for example, outlining the importance of pro-actively informing policy debates (NWO-WOTRO n.d. g; interview 1).

5.2.5 Efficiency assessment

On the basis of the previous analysis, the review team considers the management and implementation of the RIDSSA programme as efficient, while seeing room for improvement in terms of clarifying roles vis-à-vis supported research projects and the INCLUDE platform.

The governance structure of the programme is overall transparent and balanced. It combines the key stakeholder’s competencies and interests in the PC as main decision-making body and ensures an independent quality assurance mechanism through the IAC. Through this setup, the PC is enabled to provide suitable and coherent guidance for the RIDSSA programme. The IAC’s independent role and composition with qualified experts from the scientific and practitioner community allowed the programme to be viewed as impartial and to produce high quality and relevant research.

The roles between NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform, however, were not sufficiently clarified at the outset of the programme, which resulted in a diffusion of responsibilities in some aspects of call design and the facilitation of research uptake. While NWO-WOTRO as implementing agency of the programme and the INCLUDE platform as an independent actor seeking to guide the programme conceptually were aligned in terms of objectives, their approaches at times differed. Here, a stronger guidance from the MFA could have helped clarify roles earlier to avoid unnecessary frictions.

Regarding service delivery and support structures, NWO-WOTRO’s secretariat fulfilled its role well in terms of its administrative responsibilities, which are crucial for efficient programme implementation. The services provided gave projects flexibility and helped increase their contributions to programme
objectives. Also, the IAC feedback contributed to efficient programme implementation by guiding projects to enhance their results.

In terms of timing, a majority of research projects extended the duration of the project beyond the initially agreed framework. While NWO-WOTRO’s flexible approach to monitoring allowed projects freedom to choose the best strategy for achieving maximum impact, it incentivised projects to divert from basic programme requirements. Here, a more pro-active and coherent monitoring of projects could have contributed to a more timely implementation of research projects.

Finally, the pooling of funds from the RIDSSA programme and the INCLUDE platform for synthesis activities allowed the programme to leverage its resources towards a more profound and relevant overall synthesis. The synthesis covers all three calls as well as their interlinkages with regards to the overall state of the art knowledge on inclusive development. Both the commissioning and the monitoring of the synthesis process were found to contribute to the successful implementation of the synthesis process.
6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

Conclusion on the effectiveness of the RIDSSA programme

The review team concludes that the RIDSSA programme is effective at reaching the programme objectives, while seeing some limitations with regards to the dissemination of research findings. The programme manages to create scientific output that is extending the existing knowledge infrastructure in the respective subfields of inclusive development. The design of the calls that envisions a transdisciplinary, international collaboration including practitioners or policy-makers is creating the conditions for advancing a relevant knowledge infrastructure on the three themes of the calls (output 1). While the interaction and collaboration between researchers was strongest, the early and continuous involvement of stakeholders from a practical or policy background helped research projects to generate high quality and relevant knowledge as the basis for future uptake on the policy and practitioner level.

Selection process

The selection process, which was specifically designed to address the different needs of each research theme, proved useful to select appropriate research projects and further develop the respective research questions (output 2). Both the proposal workshop in the two-stage process of the strategic actors call as well as the kick-off workshop of the productive employment call were crucial engagement opportunities for project partners to sharpen the research question and involve inputs from practitioners into the research process as was shown by the survey results and interview results. In particular, the extensive two-stage selection phase of the strategic actors call facilitated the development of more innovative projects, which ultimately were more successful in changing policy and practice than projects in the other calls. The collaborations that were established through the research projects were cooperative and sometimes resulted in further cooperation beyond the project itself. Merely, a majority of funded projects came from existing networks of NWO-WOTRO, which put limits on the quantity and diversity of applicant projects and thus innovative ideas to choose from. Here, a more proactive use of additional channels including social media could increase the number of applications and hence contribute to a further increase in the scientific quality and innovativeness of funded projects.

Knowledge generation

The support activities provided to projects, including workshops, exchange opportunities and the IAC feedback, contributed to increase the scientific quality of projects by enhancing skills to generate and communicate relevant knowledge (output 3). However, the use of impact pathways did not achieve its full potential because some projects found it difficult to apply them effectively.

In terms of the knowledge generated, the scientific quality of the funded research is assessed as high and as extending the existing evidence-based knowledge infrastructure (output 4). Also, in terms of quantity, the academic output produced by the projects compares to that of similar research programmes. Furthermore, the synthesis study is found to be a useful instrument to consolidate the knowledge of the three calls and to link it to the existing academic and practitioner knowledge on aspects of inclusive development. By cooperating with INCLUDE, this knowledge can then be further disseminated beyond the immediate horizon of the funded research projects (output 6).

Dissemination of findings

Regarding the dissemination of research results, developing tools, translating findings into appropriate formats or training target groups is a critical prerequisite for achieving research uptake (output 5), which was not always fully exploited. While the knowledge generated by projects was relevant and a majority of projects managed to achieve new insights as well as an interest in changing behaviour among their target groups, the consideration of the new insights in policies, strategies or changes in
the formal or information operations of target groups were less frequent. Particularly on the levels of national or international policy-makers, projects found it challenging to uptake findings into practice. In this context, review results revealed that civil society organisations and special interest groups showed most interest in working with the projects. Moreover, regular and personal interactions and the use of different dissemination formats were found to be a crucial contributing factors for research uptake.

**Overall conclusions**

Based on the review findings, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions on factors that positively contribute to research uptake. Firstly, the RIDSSA programme is more successful in achieving impacts in the practice of civil society organisations or local governments than on the level of national policies. In this regard, a crucial prerequisite for engaging target groups from any sector is an honest buy-in and (political) will to address the specific aspects of inclusive development in question. Secondly, researchers who emphasized intense relationship-building with non-scientific stakeholders tended to be more effective in influencing their target groups to apply research insights. Thirdly, building and maintaining a close link to decision-makers right from the start of the project and supporting them by translating findings into appropriate formats positively contributed to achieve research uptake. Lastly, researchers who characterized their research as being of a high-risk / high gain nature tended to be more likely to influence the practices of their respective target groups. In the future, selection and support mechanisms may be adjusted in order to reflect these factors.

**Conclusion on the efficiency of the RIDSSA programme**

In terms of programme management and implementation, the review team concludes that the RIDSSA programme is efficient, while seeing some room for improvement in terms of clarifying roles and intensifying outreach activities in future calls for proposals.

**Governance structure**

Overall, the transparent and balanced governance structure helped to steer the programme effectively and efficiently. The governance structure combines the key stakeholder’s competencies and interests in the PC as the main decision-making body and ensures an independent quality assurance mechanism through the IAC. Merely the fluctuation in both organs creates a risk in terms of losing institutional memory if individual members stepped down. Hence, an expansion of membership, an enhanced incentive structure or a more long-term planning approach could prove useful to avoid a loss of knowledge.

In terms of the relationship between NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform, however, a further clarification of roles is needed. While successful working relations and cooperation mechanisms had been established over time and an informal division of labour was established, the respective roles continue to be vague in some areas. Here, it would be useful to receive more guidance from the MFA on the respective roles of each actor. In this context, NWO-WOTRO could either more clearly be assigned to fulfil the administrative functions of the secretariat, while leaving all aspects of research uptake in the hands of the INCLUDE platform. Alternatively, it could be allowed more freedom to pursue such activities on its own and engage the INCLUDE platform as a service provider for itself, as was done in the synthesis process.

**Service delivery**

In terms of support structures, NWO-WOTRO’s secretariat was providing efficient and useful support to the research projects. In particular, projects received strong support on administrative aspects of project implementation, but they were also supported conceptually, for example through access to networks, by providing supporting documents or by acting as a sparring partner.

Nevertheless, room for improvement was seen in terms of two aspects of programme management. Firstly, given that a majority of research projects extended the duration of their projects beyond the initially agreed framework, a more pro-active and coherent monitoring of projects could have contributed to a timelier implementation of research projects. Secondly, a majority of projects was
reported to come from established networks of NWO-WOTRO or the KP, which means that opportunities for outsiders to join the programme were limited. Hence, attracting more applicants from other networks, for example through additional communication channels, could have further increased the quality and the level of innovation of projects funded.

**Synthesis process**

Lastly, the pooling of funds from the RIDSSA programme and the INCLUDE platform for a comprehensive synthesis on inclusive development allowed the programme to **leverage its resources** for a more profound and relevant overall synthesis that covers all three calls and their interlinkages with regards to state-of-the-art knowledge on inclusive development. Both the commissioning and the monitoring of the synthesis process were found to contribute to the successful implementation of the synthesis process.

### 6.2 Recommendations

The review results show that the RIDSSA programme is an effective and efficient programme, but they also reveal potential for future development. To make use of this potential, the review team derived the subsequent strategic and operational recommendations from the review results.

#### 6.2.1 Strategic recommendations

Recommendations to better reach the programme objectives of generating and disseminating relevant knowledge:

1. **NWO-WOTRO should continue to fund international, transdisciplinary collaboration of researchers with practitioners.**

   The RIDSSA programme seeks to expand the existing knowledge infrastructure on inclusive development for policy-makers and practitioners to make use of this knowledge. As the review results reveal, the established research collaborations have positive effects both on the researchers and the quality of scientific outputs. Researchers from different disciplines and countries could not only learn from each other but also contribute different approaches to the research design and validate each other's findings. The early and continuous involvement of stakeholders from a practical or policy background helped research projects to identify the right knowledge gaps and to increase the relevance of findings. Moreover, the collaborations formed partnerships that were instrumental for the subsequent process of disseminating findings to the practical level. Combining these aspects facilitates generation of both high quality and relevant knowledge. Therefore, NWO-WOTRO should continue to fund international, transdisciplinary and practical research partnerships.

2. **In future research funding programmes, NWO-WOTRO should focus on financing projects which are of a high risk / high gain nature.**

   The RIDSSA programme seeks to generate evidence-based knowledge that is both of high scientific quality and is shared with relevant stakeholders. While aspects of scientific rigor are a crucial prerequisite for scientific quality, a project’s innovativeness can contribute to increasing its scientific quality, which may require taking a certain level of risk in order to increase the relevance for practical stakeholders. The review results demonstrated that projects in the strategic actors call were more of a high risk / high gain nature and were more likely to be shared as well as to actually result in changes on the level of target groups. In order to incentivize consortia to develop more innovative projects, projects should hence be encouraged to take a certain level of risk. Therefore, NWO-WOTRO should consider both aspects of projects’ potential impacts and risk levels in future programme design and selection processes.

3. **In future research funding programmes, NWO-WOTRO should finance projects which (1) establish close and regular interactions with non-scientific stakeholders and target groups throughout the project, (2) work with specialised interest groups (e.g. civil society or trade unions) as consortium members to gain access to target groups, (3) address target groups with a (political) will for change and (4) develop suitable practical formats.**
In order to facilitate the dissemination of relevant knowledge, NWO-WOTRO has designed specific criteria and call conditions for the funded research consortia. Among these factors, the survey results revealed that the following factors particularly contributed to the sharing of results. Firstly, projects that had a closer relationship including face-to-face and more regular interactions with non-scientific stakeholders were more successful in achieving results on the level of target groups than other projects. Secondly, projects with consortium members from civil society organisations or specialised interest groups such as trade unions tended to gain best access to policy-makers and to uptake findings. Thirdly, for any type of target group, particularly from the public sector, an honest buy-in and (political) will were crucial prerequisites for subsequent change. Moreover, successful projects were marked by the implementation of practical formats including workshops, trainings or alternative formats such as a theatre performance to address relevant target groups. As a result, NWO-WOTRO should take these factors into account when designing future research funding programmes.

4. **NWO-WOTRO should broaden and intensify outreach activities for the calls to attract more and more diverse applicants.**

The RIDSSA programme seeks to attract leading international researchers working in collaboration with practitioners in order to generate high quality evidence-based knowledge. While the programme was open to applicants from various institutions including those in the targeted countries, the review results show that a majority of research projects were recruited from within existing networks of NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform. This implies that the room for completely new ideas and approaches to address the knowledge gaps were limited. While risks could be lowered by building on long-standing relations, a wider outreach to attract more and new applicants from the institutions in the Netherlands, the target countries or worldwide could increase the chances of generating more innovative and out-of-the-box knowledge. Moreover, a higher number of proposals could further increase the scientific quality by widening the applicant base to choose from. Therefore, it is recommended to intensify outreach activities on the calls for proposals in order to facilitate the reception of more and more diverse applications, for example by making use of social media and allowing for longer application periods.

**Recommendations to enhance the efficiency of programme implementation:**

5. **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should provide more guidance to NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform on their division of roles.**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned NWO-WOTRO to fund research projects on inclusive development based on research questions provided by the INCLUDE platform. With this purpose, resources were provided to NWO-WOTRO to achieve maximum results in terms of knowledge generation and research uptake. The analysis has shown, however, that the roles and responsibilities were not clearly assigned at the outset of the programme. NWO-WOTRO as implementing agency of the programme and the INCLUDE platform as an independent actor seeking to guide the programme conceptually were aligned in terms of objectives, but their approaches in terms of addressing knowledge exchange or research uptake at times differed. Hence, while successful working relations were developed over time, different understandings of each other’s roles nevertheless prevailed which resulted in inefficiencies. Hence, in order to clarify roles and responsibilities of NWO-WOTRO and the INCLUDE platform more guidance should be provided by the MFA. In this context, two options can be followed in terms of NWO-WOTRO’s institutional role. Either, NWO-WOTRO could more clearly be assigned to fulfil administrative functions only, while leaving all aspects of research uptake in the hands of the INCLUDE platform. Alternatively, it should be allowed more freedom to pursue such activities on its own and engage the INCLUDE platform as a service provider to this effect. This clarification of roles would allow each actor to focus on its core functions and thereby contribute to maximise results of generating and disseminating relevant knowledge.
6.2.2 Operational recommendations

Recommendations to better reach the programme objectives of generating and disseminating relevant knowledge:

6. NWO-WOTRO should demand the dissemination of intermediate results from research projects in appropriate formats.

The RIDSSA programme seeks disseminate evidence-based knowledge to relevant stakeholders. In this context, the review results have revealed that the dissemination of intermediate results is crucial for validating hypothesis, sharpening the research design and gaining interest of target groups. It was, however, also found that intermediate results often did not reach the right target groups even if efforts were made. Therefore, NWO-WOTRO should encourage the dissemination of intermediate results through different suitable formats, depending on the specific requirements of the target groups. In a first step, informal channels such as lunch-meetings with relevant stakeholders could lower the barrier for policy-makers or business representatives to engage with the projects and opinion papers or blog posts could facilitate the engagement of civil society organisations and academic stakeholders. In a second step, the informal means should be complemented with more formal formats to address higher level stakeholders otherwise unreachable.

Recommendations to enhance the efficiency of programme implementation:

7. NWO-WOTRO should enhance the review requirements and/or incentive structure for members of the International Advisor Committee.

The IAC plays a crucial role for ensuring the scientific quality and relevance of projects and for facilitating the efficient service delivery to research projects. In this context, it was found to provide highly useful and appropriate feedback to the funded projects. Yet, while the governance structure including the IAC was found to be transparent, balanced and efficient, challenges were identified in terms of the institutional memory and capacity of the IAC. On the one hand the fluctuation of IAC members was high, on the other hand project reviews were examined in detail by two persons only. Both of these factors inhibited opportunities for a more profound and qualified discussion of research projects in IAC meetings. While the latter was in line with the basic requirements, the resources devoted to the process were found to be limited, which contributed to both of these challenges. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen the review requirements and/or the incentive structure for members of the IAC to facilitate an even more qualified and profound reflexion of all projects in the review process.

8. NWO-WOTRO should follow a more proactive and coherent monitoring approach of projects to enhance the fulfilment of programme requirements.

By providing the secretariat to the RIDSSA programme, NWO-WOTRO seeks to ensure the efficient and timely implementation of the programme and its funded projects. The analysis has shown that a majority of research projects extended the initial time frame and some projects had changed the research design without seeking prior approval for it. While the support structures and service delivery from NWO-WOTRO were assessed very positively by the projects, the secretariat’s flexibility towards the projects’ needs is likely to have facilitated this tendency. If it is wished that the timely implementation of projects is pursued more rigorously, then NWO-WOTRO should follow a more pro-active and coherent monitoring approach of projects in order to enhance the fulfilment of programme requirements. This would require a clear communication of monitoring expectations including the sharing of intermediate results in the calls for proposals and the subsequent follow-up on in regular intervals during project implementation.
## Annex

### I. RIDSSA projects overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Nr.</th>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Countries covered in research</th>
<th>Theme (one of three calls)</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.08.370.102</td>
<td>Changing the Mindset of Ugandan Entrepreneurs: From Muppets to Gazelles (Dr. H.A. Romijn)</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Productive Employment</td>
<td>NWO grant: 493,949€, realised: 459,017€ (project total: 732,161€ (including co-funding: 205,756€))</td>
<td>01/10/2014 – 31/12/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.08.370.103</td>
<td>Multipliers from Employment Creation: the case of the IT- Industry (Prof. Dr. Barkema)</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Productive Employment</td>
<td>NWO grant: 581,500€, realised: 522,832.27€ (project total: 798,490€ (including co-funding: 211,832.27€))</td>
<td>01/10/2014 – 31/12/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.08.370.104</td>
<td>Productive Employment in the Segmented Markets of Fresh Produce (Jane Mariara PhD)</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Productive Employment</td>
<td>NWO grant: 587,500€, realised: 522,832.27€ (project total: 765,500€ (including co-funding: 211,765.85€))</td>
<td>01/09/2014 – 30/04/2018</td>
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<td>W.08.390.001</td>
<td>Cost-benefit analysis of cash transfer programs and post-trauma services for economic empowerment of women in Uganda (Prof. Dr. M. van Reisen)</td>
<td>Uganda, Ethiopia</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>NWO grant: 212,650€, realised: 212,230.83€</td>
<td>15/05/2015 – 15/12/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.08.390.002</td>
<td>The Cost Effectiveness of Integrating Weather Index Agricultural Insurance into the Productive Safety Net program in Ethiopia (Ho Lun Wong)</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>NWO grant: 302,500€, realised: 282,547.93€</td>
<td>01/10/2015 – 30/04/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.08.390.003</td>
<td>Building the economic case for investments in social protection in Uganda (Franziska Gassmann)</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>NWO grant: 275,100€, realised: 271,532€</td>
<td>15/07/2015 – 31/10/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.08.390.004</td>
<td>Breaking the Vicious Circle between Poverty and Ill-Health. Are cash transfers and social health protection policies in Ghana and Kenya mutually complementing? (Dr Nicky Pouw)</td>
<td>Ghana, Kenya</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>NWO grant: 296,200€, realised: 282,547.93€ (project total: 342,800€ (including co-funding: 63,442€))</td>
<td>10/05/2015 – 07/07/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.08.390.005</td>
<td>Social Protection for Inclusive Development in the Afar Region of Ethiopia (SPIDA) (Dr. Zeremariam Fre)</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>NWO grant: 301,436€, realised: 292,096€ (project total: 469,736€ (including co-funding: 168,300€))</td>
<td>01/08/2015 – 30/11/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.08.390.006</td>
<td>Inclusive growth through social protection in maternal health programs in Kenya (Sonja Merten)</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>NWO grant: 302,180€, realised: 292,096€</td>
<td>01/07/2015 – 30/06/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.0.390.007</td>
<td>Comparing the impact and cost effectiveness of two social protection interventions in Kenya: fee waiver versus social health insurance scheme (Prof. Chris Elbers)</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>NWO grant: 300,000€, realised: 292,096€ (project total: 370,419€ (including co-funding: 110,761€))</td>
<td>01/05/2015 – 31/08/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.08.350.103</td>
<td>Increasing Political Leverage of Informal and Formal Workers’ Organisations for Inclusive Development: The cases of Ghana and Benin (M. M.A. Kaag)</td>
<td>Ghana, Benin</td>
<td>Strategic Actors</td>
<td>NWO grant: 581,000 €, realised: 525,941.02€</td>
<td>01/10/2014 – 31/09/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.08.350.104</td>
<td>Partnerships arrangements as strategic action for inclusive development; Practice and Outcome (Annemarie van Passes)</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Strategic Actors</td>
<td>NWO grant: 497,654€, project total: 604,454€ (including co-funding:106,800€)</td>
<td>01/10/2014 – 15/03/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. References


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III. List of interviews conducted

Explorative interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role in the RIDSSA programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria Verschoor</td>
<td>Day-to-day coordinator of the RIDSSA programme, NWO-WOTRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith de Kroon</td>
<td>former RIDSSA programme coordinator, NWO-WOTRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa Baud</td>
<td>Chair of the steering group of the INCLUDE knowledge platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marleen Dekker</td>
<td>Coordinator of the INCLUDE secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nele Blommestein</td>
<td>external evaluator of the INCLUDE knowledge platform</td>
</tr>
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Upstream interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role in the RIDSSA programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Annelies Zoomers</td>
<td>Chair of PC, Representative for WOTRO, Utrecht University the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Rob Bijl</td>
<td>Observer member of PC, Chair Steering Committee Knowledge Platform and Deputy Director Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Margriet Kuster</td>
<td>MFA member of PC, Policy officer DGIS/DSO (retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Stubbs</td>
<td>IAC member and chair for the first two IAC meetings, Senior Research Fellow in Permanent Position EIZ (The Institute of Economics, Zagreb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Adesina</td>
<td>IAC member from African University, DST/NRF SARChI Chair in Social Policy at the University of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Katseli</td>
<td>Academic and practitioner member of IAC, OECD Development Centre, Issy-les-Moulineaux, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa Baud</td>
<td>Chair of INCLUDE Steering Group, Emeritus Professor in International Development Studies at the University of Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marleen Dekker</td>
<td>Coordinator of INCLUDE secretariat, Professor of Inclusive Development in Africa at the African Studies Centre, Leiden University</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Remote case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role in the Research Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Mayke Kaag</td>
<td>Lead Researcher, African Study Center in Leiden (Ghana and Benin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Boateng</td>
<td>Research Team Leader, International Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Ghana (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrie Roeper</td>
<td>Consortium member, FNV Mondiaal (Ghana and Benin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deborah Freeman</td>
<td>Consortium member, General Secretary of UNIWA (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther Droppers</td>
<td>Consortium member, Trade Union Member in the Netherlands, member of consortium, CNV International (Benin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theodore Mawuli</td>
<td>Intermediate target group, Policy Planning Officer, Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasila Siita Akil</td>
<td>Intermediate target group, Development Planning Officer, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Ghana)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Breaking the Vicious Cycle Between Poverty and Ill-Health. Are Cash Transfers & Social Health Protection Policies in Ghana & Kenya Mutually Complementing?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Nicky Pouw</td>
<td>Lead Researcher, University of Amsterdam (Ghana &amp; Kenya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Niyuni</td>
<td>Intermediate target group, Deputy Director of LEAP Programme, Ministry of Gender, Children &amp; Social Protection (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzigbordi Kofi Agbekpormu</td>
<td>Intermediate target group, National Manager of LEAP Programme, Ministry of Gender, Children &amp; Social Protection (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Osei-Bimpeh</td>
<td>Intermediate target group, Country Director, SENDWEST GHANA (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Karori</td>
<td>Intermediate target group, CEO of Kenya Association for Maternal &amp; Neonatal Health (Kenya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Gyabaah</td>
<td>Consortium member, Social Enterprise Development Foundation (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How can inclusive business strategies contribute to inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addisu Abebe Lashitew</td>
<td>Post-Doctoral Researcher, Erasmus University Rotterdam (Kenya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Peter Kiuluku</td>
<td>Researcher and team leader (Kenya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yalew Demissie</td>
<td>Consortium member, Eastern &amp; Southern African Management Institute (Ethiopia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andre Vording</td>
<td>Consortium member, Part of the Business Incubation Unit of ICCO Cooperation (Kenya)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Multipliers from Employment Creation: the case of the IT- Industry**

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Nasubo Ongoma</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV.

Questionnaire of the Conducted Online-Survey

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