



Desk Research: Positioning The Netherlands Within The Inclusive Governance Debate

- **Goal:** More strategic Dutch approach to international policy influencing within the field of inclusive governance.
- **Deliverable:** Overview of international debate on inclusive governance with recommendations for positioning The Netherlands, linked to Dutch priorities, capacities, added value and existing partners.
- **Process:** Desk research by consultant and subsequent MFA brainstorm.

Background: DSH's positioning within 'inclusive governance'

A more strategic approach to policy influencing is an overarching learning goal DSH has set for itself. A particular subtheme within DSH/RV that could benefit greatly from that goal, is inclusive governance. A clearer overview of the current debate on inclusive governance is needed, including where The Netherlands can 'push buttons' - especially given the limited FTE capacity within DSH to influence such international debate.

A topical issue that demands such choices in a focus within the wide field of inclusive governance, is the current (revitalized) emphasis on *localization*. The overall purpose is to improve ownership and resilience of beneficiaries of development aid. Especially during a crisis – a pandemic - decisions tend to be made within a short time window, without taking the time for inclusive decision-making. In terms of inclusive governance, localization should enable recipient governments to make inclusive decisions on COVID-response. Amongst others, this entails including Southern partners (formal and informal representatives) in donors' policy and implementation processes – where their input should be considerably decisive - and arranging multilateral channels (UN, WB) in such a way that they stimulate local processes. How would The Netherlands position itself in such a debate, where does it take place and how to influence its direction effectively?

Of course, a more coherent diplomatic approach to inclusive governance - communicated in the right fora or to the right partners - has already been of relevance for DSH before BBB. Practical examples of where this can be put to use are (1) providing input to a UN draft resolution on increased accountability and transparency of government actors regarding an increase of GBV during the pandemic and (2) cooperating with DMM on an EU action plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

Purpose

Bringing this together, the purpose of this desk research is to provide an overview of where and how The Netherlands can effectively participate in and influence international debates on stimulating inclusive governance in fragile countries. This question should also be considered in relation to where Dutch added value lies and in relation to the emphasis on *localization* (local resilience), given the role inclusive governance would play in shaping and achieving this ambition.

To sharpen this purpose, the following points need to be taken into account:

- Guiding for which 'buttons' would be desirable, are (1) the ambitions in the BHOS-note¹ and the SRoL Theory of Change, (2) the qualities of strategic partners VNG, NIMD and International IDEA and (3) DSH's current emphasis on localization (local resilience) within Building Back Better.

¹ Including notable aspects such as a focus on fragile states and a focus on trust in (local) governments and civil participation in decision making processes. Inclusive governance is not just a goal in itself, but also a means to achieve broader Security & Rule of Law policy goals.

- The limited FTE capacity at the Ministry, implying a focus on where The Netherlands has a true comparative advantage and taking note of the risk of ‘doing nothing’.
- Internal MFA ambitions, such as defragmenting its portfolio.
- The paper should not only enable DSH to position itself within the inclusive governance debate, but also explain how inclusive governance relates to the BBB and localization agenda’s, and suggest focus and priorities for policy influencing

Research questions

To achieve that purpose, the paper should at least answer the following questions:

1. What is the current state-of-play in the parts of the Inclusive Governance debate that are most relevant for Dutch priorities?
 - Includes: Landmark goals, commitments and conventions (e.g. SDGs); most prominent lenses and definitions within the debate (e.g. democratization, accountability, transparency, inclusivity), divergent interpretations/approaches (political vs. technical, international community vs. local perceptions of inclusive governance).
2. Which fora and actors are most influential and do they align with Dutch priorities?
 - Includes: Actors like OECD, WB, EU, UN, regional players and specialized organizations (e.g. OGP, EITI, DeLog); possibly some important trajectories and processes (e.g. BBB); special attention to partners NL already works with.

Procedure

To write this desk research, a consultant can be hired from the MFA’s budget from the Knowledge Management Fund. The writing should be iterative, giving room for back-and-forth between the researcher and policy maker, as delving into the broad ‘inclusive governance landscape’ will raise issues where the MFA might have to further prioritize along the line.

Given the expectation of a packed end of the year, the planning would be as follows:

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| 1. Terms of Reference | December 18 rd |
| 2. Contracting researcher | January 15 th |
| 3. Discussing first draft | February 19 th |
| 4. Final version | March 19 th |
| 5. Brainstorm MFA | March 30 th |