

Unraveling Knowledge

Brokering Partnerships:

Insights from Collaborations between

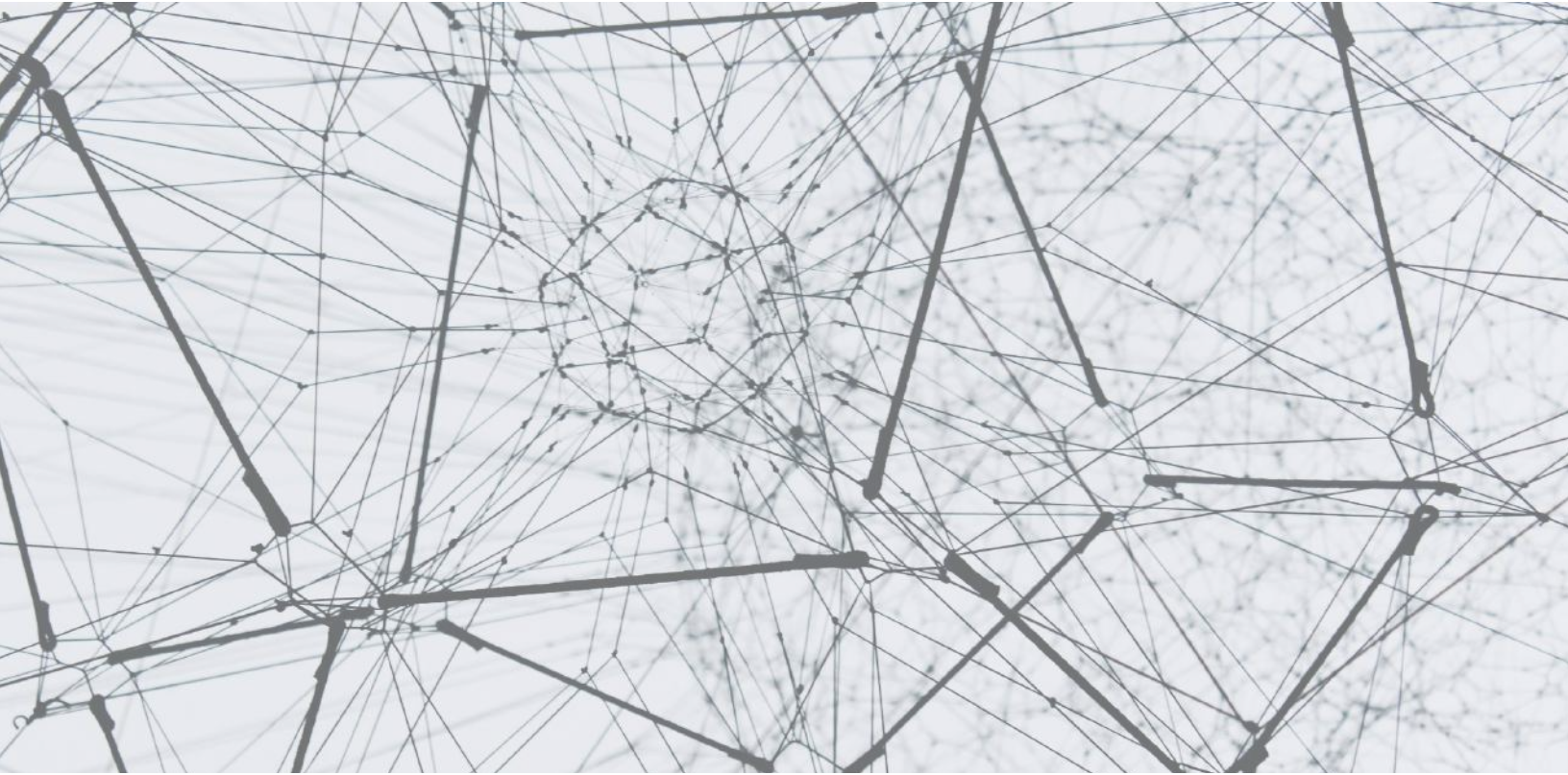
Dutch Knowledge Platforms and

Partners in Low-and Mid dle-Income

Countries

By Sasha Al Busaidy, Rikke van der Veen, Mariëlle Karssenbergh and Vanessa Nigten





Authors

Sasha al Busaidy (The Broker)

Rikke van der Veen (The Broker)

Mariëlle Karssenbergh (The Broker)

Vanessa Nigten (The Broker)

Graphic design

Giovannti Putin (The Broker)

Knowledge Platform Representatives

Bente Meindersma

Knowledge Broker at Netherlands Food Partnership

Meike Stieglis

Netherlands Coordinator at Share-Net

Obadia Miroro

Knowledge Broker at INCLUDE

Sever Dzigurski

Head of secretariat at Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law

Photo credits

Photo by Alina Grubnyak on Unsplash

Contents

Contents	4
Acronyms	6
Introduction	7
Approach and Structure of the Multi-KP Learning Project and this Report	8
Chapter 1: Overview of DGIS Knowledge Platforms	10
The Knowledge Platforms	10
Chapter 2: Literature on Knowledge Brokering with LMIC partners	13
Knowledge Brokering Activities do not Develop in a Vacuum	14
Beyond Linear and Rigid Conceptualisations of Knowledge Brokering Journeys	14
Towards a Flexible Knowledge Brokering Journey	15
Partnership Dynamics in Knowledge Brokering	17
The Barriers to Effective Knowledge Brokering	18
Intrinsic Barriers	18
Mitigation of Barriers	19
Chapter 3: Knowledge Brokering Journeys	21
There is no Standard Approach to Knowledge Brokering	21
INCLUDE	21
Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL)	23
Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP)	24
Share-Net International (SNI)	25
A Note on General Perceived Added Value	26
Chapter 4: Partnership dynamics in practice	27
The Structural Variety Between the KPs Requires Different Approaches to working with LMIC Partners	27
Co-creation in Knowledge Brokering	28
The Level of Co-creation Differs per Case	28
Steering the Initial Project Direction	29
Funding Streams Highlight Power Dynamics	29
The Relationship with the Donor	29
Addressing the Power Imbalance Inherent to Funding Streams	30
A Need for Flexibility in Accountability Mechanisms and Working Methods	31

Reasons Behind Strict Mechanisms	31
Going Beyond Strict Mechanisms and Biases	32
Navigating Trust in Partnerships	32
Chapter 5: Lessons Learned and Avenues for Further Knowledge Sharing Between the KPs	34
The added value of knowledge brokering in partnerships is recognized by all actors involved	34
Towards flexible, equitable, and context-specific knowledge brokering journeys	35
Good Practices and Recommendations for North - South Knowledge Brokering Partnerships	36
Avenues for further knowledge sharing and future research projects	37
References	38
Appendix 1: Case Descriptions	41
INCLUDE	41
Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL)	42
Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP)	43
Share-Net International (SNI)	44

Acronyms

KP	Knowledge Platform
KPSRL	Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law
LMIC	Low-and Middle-Income Country
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NFP	Netherlands Food Partnership
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SNI	Share-Net International

Introduction

Since their inception, the five Dutch Knowledge Platforms for Development Cooperation (KPs) have aimed to inform international development cooperation policies and practices with a solid knowledge base. Hence, knowledge brokering: the process of facilitating the exchange, co-creation and application of knowledge between different stakeholders is fundamental to their operations. The KPs broker between different forms of knowledge, policy and practice by bringing together a wide variety of actors like policymakers, researchers, civil society organizations and private sector organizations on the main themes of Dutch development cooperation policy: security and the rule of law, inclusive economic development, food security, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Despite their often diverging approaches to the ways in which they operate, working in partnerships, especially with low- and middle-income country (LMIC) actors, has been central in their knowledge brokering activities.

While scientists and practitioners traditionally viewed North-South partnerships as a silver bullet for international development cooperation, there is a growing realization that in order for knowledge partnerships between North and South to thrive, equity must be at the forefront of their approach (Martins, 2020; Murunga et al., 2020). This is in line with current calls for the decolonisation of development cooperation (Currion, 2020; Paige, 2021), and aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17.6 that emphasizes the necessity to put the equitable sharing of knowledge in international partnerships at the heart of all actions.

Despite existing research on knowledge brokering and North-South partnerships, there is not much literature available on North - South knowledge brokering partnerships (see for example Lammers & de Winter, 2017, Voller et al., 2022). With this report on the a multi-KP learning project, The Broker, In collaboration with 4 KPs (INCLUDE, Knowledge Platform on Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL) Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP), and Share-Net (SNI) and with support of some of their partners in the Global South, takes a unique first step in filling the aforementioned knowledge gap. The project objectives are twofold: 1). facilitate shared learning between the KPs and 2). better understand the processes, activities, and partnership dynamics involved in knowledge brokering with LMIC partners. The project thereby aims to strengthen knowledge

brokering in partnership with LMIC partners by providing lessons learned and recommendations for future collaboration.

Main research question: *Which lessons can be drawn from the KPs knowledge brokering work in partnership with LMIC actors regarding their ambitions , activities, roles and added value in contributing to more inclusive sustainable development?*

Approach and Structure of the Multi-KP Learning Project and this Report

The first chapter of this report is guided by the question: What are the tasks, roles, mission and vision, as well as ambitions of the knowledge platforms? It provides an overview of the KPs, describing how they view their role, thematic expertise and added value with regard to knowledge brokering in partnership. This is based on a review of internal documents of KPs (i.e. Annual Reports, Theory of Change, etc.) It takes a first step in showing how the work and structure of the KPs differentiate and overlap.

To build the theoretical basis of this report, identify knowledge gaps and steer the project direction, The Broker conducted a quick scan on literature concerning knowledge brokering with LMIC partners. Three prominent narratives were identified which will be discussed in the second chapter: 1). the processes and activities in knowledge brokering, 2). partnership dynamics in knowledge brokering, and 3). the barriers to effective knowledge brokering. An exchange session with the KPs indicated a desire to focus the multi-kp learning project on the first two narratives as the intention was never to evaluate the outcomes of knowledge brokering activities but always to better understand and learn from the process itself.

The third chapter moves from theory to practice. The KPs each selected two knowledge brokering collaborations with LMIC partners as case studies. 17 learning conversations and follow-up emails with representatives from the KPs and their LMIC partners clarified that there is not one approach to knowledge brokering and shed light on the processes and activities in knowledge brokering in partnership. This chapter describes the knowledge brokering journey per KP and is guided by the question: How do KPs'partners in LMIC understand KPs' roles, missions and visions? / To what extent do the perceptions of the KPs and their partners align? Comparing the journeys facilitates shared learning between the KPs.

Chapter four delves deeper into the question above by taking a close look at the partnership dynamics. The guiding question here is how have the KPs gone about setting up partnerships and working with partners in LMICs? This chapter works towards the conclusion by further exploring and comparing the different approaches, barriers, and good practices to knowledge brokering with LMIC partners.

The report concludes in chapter *five* by advocating for the need to foster equitable and flexible co-creation of knowledge as the key means to strengthen knowledge brokering activities in partnerships. It not only shares lessons learned and good practices but also highlights promising avenues for further knowledge sharing.

Chapter 1: Overview of DGIS Knowledge Platforms

The Knowledge Platforms

The four knowledge platforms central in this report are described below. A more elaborated description is shared earlier. This overview is guided by the question: What are the tasks, roles, mission and vision, as well as ambitions of the knowledge platforms? It shows how the knowledge platforms view their own thematic expertise, added value and role in partnerships.

INCLUDE	
Thematic expertise	Platform of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who generate, gather, and disseminate knowledge on inclusive development in Africa. They focus on four thematic areas: economic growth and structural transformation, work and income for women and youth, access to and use of basic services, social protection and cash transfers, and political empowerment.
Role in partnerships	Convene power through partnerships and dialogues which bring together policymakers, researchers, and implementers from governments, civil society, and the private sector. They collectively identify priority policy areas and foster better research-policy linkages among Dutch and African stakeholders. INCLUDE collaborates with various stakeholders to broaden and deepen partnerships related to inclusive development in Africa.
Added value	Contributing to more inclusive and better policies through evidence-based knowledge production. They increase policymakers' understanding of the evidence generation process and provide their members and broader network with key insights and practical guidance. INCLUDE aims to improve socio-economic conditions in Africa and reduce poverty through its diverse membership base of experienced Dutch and African professionals in inclusive and sustainable development.

Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law

Thematic expertise	A network of experts working on generating, sharing, interrogating and applying evidence in the field of security & rule of law. The platform's thematic focus includes current and emerging transnational security challenges, informal justice systems, and innovative approaches to SRL programming.
Role in partnerships	Dedicated to fostering knowledge sharing and learning across diverse organizations that work on security and rule of law. KPSRL's role revolves around two key functions: knowledge generation and knowledge brokering. In KPSRL's work, brokering goes beyond knowledge dissemination, constituting a creative and transformative process that involves tailoring content to the needs, interests, time pressures, and jargon of different network participants.
Added value	Working towards enhancing engagement with and between its network participants is expected to yield several benefits for its network participants and partners. KPSRL expects that its work will strengthen programmatic learning and learning processes for network participants across the board. The platform also hopes to add value for its members and country partners by conveying their needs and perspectives to the Dutch MFA's Department of Stabilization and Humanitarian Aid (DHS), thus influencing relevant policymaking processes. Finally, the platform foresees added value for actors based in LMIC and FCAS in the form of increased funding for research.

Netherlands Food Partnership

Thematic expertise	The partnership focuses on inspiring and convening innovative and collaborative action by Dutch and LMIC partners towards achieving: 1) the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger on food and nutrition security; and 2) food systems transformation. The rationale is that Dutch actors with long standing expertise in the agrifood sector, can play a leading role in fostering appropriate system incentives for actors in LMICs and Europe to develop the needed innovations and business models for the future of food systems
Role in partnerships	NFP assumes the role of neutral convener and facilitator that fosters multi stakeholder interaction— dialogue, knowledge exchange, mutual engagement and/or collaboration. It does so by 1) building impact coalitions and partnerships for food system transformation. 2) facilitating community engagement by enabling a broad community of actors, including policymakers, practitioners, and innovators, to network, exchange knowledge and collectively engage in activities pertaining to food system transformation in LMICs.
Added value	NFP creates added value in three ways. It provides a concrete entry point into Dutch skills, experience and expertise in the agrifood sector for actors in LMICs. NFP supports partners to improve their skills and capacity, and uptake relevant innovations. This leads to increased quality and acceleration of interventions and policies on food and nutrition at a local, national and international level to support food system transformations.

Share-Net International

Thematic expertise	Platform for strengthening the role of knowledge in developing evidence-informed policies and practice around Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Their network combines the strengths of international actors, while harnessing localized knowledge to promote and develop improved SRHR, including HIV.
Role in partnerships	To facilitate the application of knowledge in the development of evidence-informed SRHR policies, programmes and practices, SNI fulfills two key functions. 1) knowledge management through a) knowledge generation b) knowledge sharing c) knowledge translation and d) knowledge uptake – to promote the use of knowledge products by policymakers and practitioners. SNI also functions as a 2) match-maker, matching the needs of its members with the services of its partners,
Added value	The members of SNI enjoy better access to information and knowledge on SRHR. Thanks to this increased access to knowledge, but also to SNI's learning system, the learning needs of its members are better serviced. Finally, SNI members have increased and easier access to financial resources as well as to individuals and organizations capable of implementing change in SRHR.

Chapter 2: Literature on Knowledge Brokering with LMIC partners

The quick scan on knowledge brokering more generally, and knowledge brokering with LMIC partners specifically constitutes a mapping of existing knowledge (including gray and academic literature, podcasts, videos, and blog posts). This resulted in a synthesis short read which will not fully be copied into this report. The intention of this chapter is rather to build the theoretical basis of this report by *first* stressing the definitions of knowledge brokering and the state of the literature. It *secondly* elaborates on the main narratives that informed the case studies and steered the direction of the multi-KP learning project.

Textbox 1: Emerging definitions of knowledge brokering and key associated activities

- Most definitions of knowledge brokering put emphasis on its iterative, multidimensional and complex nature (Cummings et al., 2019; Kislov et al., 2017; Lammers & de Winter, 2017; Martinuzzi & Sedlacko, 2016). Weber & Yanovitzky (2021) understand knowledge brokering as the “iterative process of translating, synthesizing, disseminating, and exchanging research evidence to inform the decisions and actions of practitioners and policymakers. Knowledge brokers therefore play several [...] roles, including knowledge management [...], liaison [...], and building users’ capacity to access, evaluate, and implement research-based knowledge.
- A growing awareness of the multiplicity of knowledge has led to slightly different conceptualizations of knowledge brokering (Cummings et al., 2019). Adelle et al. (2019) define knowledge brokering as the “collaborative process [between science and nonscience actors] of bringing together a plurality of knowledge sources [...] to address a defined problem”.
- Existing definitions of knowledge brokering, as evident above, do not present great substantive differences, however, some confusion emerges either because different terms are used to capture similar or the same knowledge brokering activities, or because different authors attribute greater importance to some activities over others (Rycroft- Smith, 2022). For example, Lammers & de Winter (2017) prioritize knowledge creation, exchange and use, Adelle et al. (2019) emphasize knowledge co-creation (which others refer to as co-production), while Van Ewijk & Ros-Tonen (2021) highlight joint learning.
- The Agenda Knowledge for Development, which aims to complement the SDGs from the perspective of knowledge, puts forth 13 Knowledge Development Goals (KDGs). The KDGs could provide a universal framework for knowledge brokering in international development, ameliorating the confusion described above. However, that will largely depend on its broad acceptance and adoption by the international community (Cummings et al., 2019).

Knowledge Brokering Activities do not Develop in a Vacuum

Processes, activities and types of partnerships in knowledge brokering do not develop in a vacuum. Rather, they are informed by structural issues of power, historically-informed hierarchies, and unequal power dynamics characterizing international development cooperation (Van der Graaf et al., 2021). As such, the notions below on power, equity and partnership should be kept in mind throughout this report.

A note on equitable: It is recognised that for North-South knowledge partnerships to work best, they need to be equitable (Martins, 2020; Murunga et al., 2020). But how does this look in practice? It has generally been assumed that if partners involved are well-intentioned, culturally sensitive, and with due regard for “good partnership” principles, then equitability will automatically ensue (Bradley, 2017). Recently, this assumption has been problematised, as it is increasingly understood that equitability does not only depend on individuals’ attributes, but also, or more so, on redressing existing power imbalances and hierarchies (Dannecker, 2022; Martins, 2020; Van der Graaf et al., 2021).

A note on power: The main focus of this project is on potential lessons that can be drawn from the KPs knowledge brokering partnerships in general and not particularly on shifting power. But it can not be left out when discussing North-South cooperation. Power is defined by Partos as the ability to influence decision-making, mobilize resources, and implement policies.¹ In the context of this report on knowledge brokering activities, *power refers to the ability to decide on topics of interest, division of tasks and responsibilities within knowledge brokering projects and the ability to mobilize resources and/or decide on budget expenditure.*

A note on partnership: There are many different ways to define partnerships. For example, the intensity of the collaboration, or its time frame, or the amount of projects. One could also look at the contract forms or ways of working together. Is there a certain hierarchy? Or do organizations work together in an equitable and trustworthy way? When talking about types of LMIC partners in the context of this project, the KPs mean the type of stakeholder. While aware of the discussions, in this report LMIC partner thus simply refers to an organization situated in an LMIC who collaborates with the KPs and is called a partner by them.

Beyond Linear and Rigid Conceptualisations of Knowledge Brokering Journeys

Knowledge brokering can be seen as a journey, in which diverse actors jointly move through an informed process to achieve desired impact. The *first* narrative identified in the quick scan looked

¹ See <https://www.partos.nl/publicatie/the-power-awareness-tool/>

at the activities and processes within this journey. It identified a shift in knowledge brokering practices from linear and rigid conceptualisations towards more iterative, flexible processes.

The linearity can be seen in the one way direction and categorisations. Supposedly, brokers are responsible for spreading scientific evidence and technical solutions developed by academics to policymakers and practitioners, facilitating knowledge uptake (Cummings et al., 2019; Martinuzzi & Sedlako, 2017; Otto & Kiteme, 2016; Weber & Yanovitzky, 2021). Consider, for example, how the following authors split the knowledge brokering journey in distinct phases:

- Adelle (2019): problem exploration—problem puzzling—problem solving
- Lammers & de Winter (2017): knowledge (co-)creation—knowledge use—knowledge exchange
- de Winter & Lammers (2022): stakeholder mapping & engagement—priority setting workshop—deliberative dialogues—evidence synthesis.

This linear-rational or one-way transfer model of knowledge brokering 1). crystallizes the distinction between “scientific” and “non-scientific” knowledge, prioritizing the former at the expense of the latter; 2). assumes that knowledge moves in one fixed direction, and 3). it centers three supposedly fixed categories of actors, potentially ignoring other relevant stakeholders, such as citizens and the private sector.

Overly linear and stringent models of knowledge brokering are thus increasingly problematised in the literature (Rycroft-Smith, 2022). Concerning the direction of knowledge brokering, the idea that researchers feed “scientific” evidence to policymakers, facilitating a one-way knowledge exchange is challenged, and an alternative vision is put forth (Martinuzzi & Sedlako, 2016).

Towards a Flexible Knowledge Brokering Journey

Effective knowledge brokering, it is argued, should lead to knowledge creation and exchange whereby parties involved in knowledge brokering gain new relevant insights in a collaborative manner (Lammers & de Winter, 2017). Consequently, literature on knowledge brokering and practice are attributing ever-increasing importance to knowledge co-creation, a brokering activity

that hinges on multi stakeholder collaboration. Additionally, it is increasingly understood that linear processes, whereby brokering activities are sequentially implemented, are unlikely to meaningfully include a multiplicity of actors and knowledge. Due to their rigidity, linear brokering processes are also less suitable to redistribute power between involved actors and introduce new roles for each at different phases (Van der Graaf et al., 2021).

Knowledge co-creation is widely recognised as a key process involved in knowledge brokering and is defined as: “the combined process of setting the agenda, identifying knowledge questions and jointly carrying out research and other activities to generate new knowledge” (Lammers & de Winter, 2017).

While practical examples are lacking, literature makes several recommendations on how to surpass rigid and linear knowledge brokering practices:

- **Facilitate flexible and iterative processes** — built-in flexibility and adaptability in the knowledge brokering journey can enable different actors involved to undertake varying roles as needed and at different stages, ensuring that diverse ways of knowing and perspectives are valued and meaningfully included (Grønvad et al., 2017; Van der Graaf et al., 2021). Continuous learning is put forth as a mechanism to ensure flexibility and adaptability (Colvin & McDonagh, 2017).
- **Build in adaptive governance structures** — such structures encourage continuous adaptation and creation of new forms of governance that can, in turn, produce the required knowledge and social dynamics needed to act on that knowledge (Van der Graaf et al., 2021).
- **Put greater emphasis on co-creation** — Co-creation promotes the integration of different kinds of knowledge to solve a common problem along with multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration (Van Ewijk & Ros-Tonen, 2020).

Chapter *three* in this report describes the knowledge brokering journey of the KPs. By providing examples of knowledge brokering journeys, this chapter enables readers to compare and learn from specific cases and see to what extent the KPs already follow the recommendations above.

Partnership Dynamics in Knowledge Brokering

The knowledge brokering journey is surely not a lonely one. The *second* narrative identified in the short read discussed the dynamics in North-South knowledge partnership. It describes how scientists and practitioners who traditionally viewed North-South partnerships as a silver bullet for international development cooperation have recently been questioning if and how mutually beneficial such collaborations are for all parties involved. It is (specifically looking at power imbalances) important to question whose agenda is prioritized in partnership formation; whose interests are ultimately served; and whose learning needs are facilitated (Dannecker, 2022; Weber & Yanovizsky, 2021)?

Setting the agenda in a way that ensures relevance for all stakeholders is a notoriously difficult task (Martins, 2020). For example, the knowledge needs of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs often differ from those at respective Ministries in LMICs, and so are the learning requirements of Dutch NGOs and start-ups compared to those in LMICs.

Consequently, some KPs aligned their thematic agendas more closely with the needs of their LMICs partners, losing some of their relevance for Dutch counterparts, and vice versa.² The practical reality sometimes is that North-South knowledge partnerships are convened for instrumentalist reasons, either because partnerships are a donor precondition to receive funds or, similarly, because that is the only way LMIC partners can access funding (Bradley, 2017; Hatton & Schroeder, 2007).

As also pointed out in the notion on equitability, there is a general understanding that for North-South knowledge partnerships to work best, they need to be equitable (Martins, 2020; Murunga et al., 2020). For this to become a possibility, power imbalances should be acknowledged and addressed (Dannecker, 2022; Martins, 2020; Van der Graaf et al., 2021). Literature proposes the following good practices to work towards more equitable North-South knowledge partnerships:

- **Forging of mutual understanding** — reflective conversations around principles, norms and values at the onset of a partnership is a critical first step towards equitability. Through

² See https://knowledge4food.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/170214_TheGoldStandard.pdf (22/05/2023)

such conversations, partners can clarify their normative positions as knowledge producers, creating fertile ground for mutual understanding and for a common language to emerge (Ott & Kiteme, 2016).

- **Establishing clarity over roles and responsibilities** — establishing clear roles and responsibilities for all involved partners through joint discussion is considered as another key element towards equitability (Voller et al., 2022).

Chapter *four* explores equity and overall dynamics in KP-LMIC knowledge brokering partnerships in practice. It offers valuable perspectives of LMIC partners that are often absent in existing literature.

The Barriers to Effective Knowledge Brokering

While the project's main objective is not to evaluate the impact of knowledge brokering practices, it does acknowledge the significance of addressing barriers to effective knowledge brokering (the *third* narrative stemming from the quick scan). Chapter *four* also outlines barriers encountered in the case studies, providing insights that can potentially strengthen the effectiveness of knowledge brokering with LMIC partners.

Intrinsic Barriers

One of the key barriers identified in the literature is **language**. Diverse actors active in knowledge brokering often speak different languages and respond to different terminology, which can impede understanding and communication (Cummings et al., 2019).

Complex governance structures constitute another barrier to effective knowledge brokering. Knowledge brokering involves multiple, overlapping, intricate processes and activities, organized in and governed through complex structures (Bradley, 2017). While the broker's role is to facilitate (i.e. enable stakeholders to use evidence in practice), these complex structures can often push brokers to switch from facilitating to doing, implementing change on their own (Kislov et al., 2017).

A third obstacle inherent to knowledge brokering relates to issues of **continuity and sustainability**. Brokering is often delegated to individual knowledge brokers, making it highly

contingent on the individual broker's skills, network, knowledge and overall preferences (Chew et al., 2013). This might prevent organizations from developing robust brokering capabilities, rendering them dependent on the individual broker (Long et al., 2013). Questions around continuity and sustainability become particularly urgent, when the individual broker leaves, and their skills and knowledge might be lost (Kislov et al., 2017).

Mitigation of Barriers

The barriers can not be tackled through a single solution. Literature, however, does identify some good practices to mitigate them:

- **Adjust the way of working and partnership requirements to the existing capabilities of LMIC partners** to ensure their meaningful participation and enhance their sense of ownership (Voller et al., 2022)
- **Integrate mutual capacity building** as a key component in North-South knowledge partnerships to address gaps in knowledge infrastructure (Van Ewijk & Ros-Tonnen, 2021)
- Make a shift towards understanding and practicing **knowledge brokering as a collective process** taking place at the organization level to safeguard continuity and sustainability of knowledge brokering efforts. Several steps are incremental in materializing this shift:
 - Recognize knowledge brokering as a central function at an organization level and accordingly provide a range of learning and development opportunities for staff members occupying these “in-between” positions.
 - Establish brokering teams composed of individuals with different professional backgrounds and complementary skills (Kislov et al., 2017).

After this summary of the literature, it is time to move from theory to practice. As mentioned, literature on knowledge brokering consists mainly of theoretical/opinion pieces. Empirical studies, including those focused on knowledge brokering in North-South partnerships, are few (Bradley, 2017; van Ewijk & Ros-Tonen, 2021).

Chapter 3: Knowledge Brokering Journeys

To bridge this gap and learn from practice, the KPs each selected 2 knowledge brokering collaborations with LMIC partners as case studies. The 8 case descriptions are based on internal documents of the KPs and can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

This chapter describes the knowledge brokering journeys of the KPs, drawing from data obtained from internal documents and through learning conversations with representatives from the KPs and their LMIC partners. By doing so, the chapter aims to address questions including *how the LMIC partners perceive the roles, missions, and visions of the KPs*, and *the extent to which these perceptions align with those of the KPs*.

There is no Standard Approach to Knowledge Brokering

A first insight from the learning conversations is that the KPs engage in a wide range of activities and take on diverse roles in their collaborations with LMIC partners, indicating that there is no standard approach to knowledge brokering. In addition, the organizational structure of the KPs differ from platform to platform. Similarly, their LMIC partners also exhibit variations in their organizational structures. This supports arguments against rigid conceptualisations of knowledge brokering processes and is in line with the variety of definitions of knowledge brokering found in the literature.

INCLUDE

In general, The INCLUDE platform, composed of various Dutch and African actors (researchers, practitioners, and policymakers), facilitates different activities in a collaborative manner like knowledge generation, gathering, and dissemination for inclusive development in Africa. Through dialogues, it aims to collectively identify priority policy areas and foster better research-policy linkages among Dutch and African stakeholders. Their desired impact is to improve socio-economic conditions in Africa and reduce poverty by informing policies and practices through evidence-based knowledge production.

The two African Policy Dialogue cases aimed to increase policy debates and evidence uptake around specific topics to inform new policies. In both cases, the platform used knowledge

brokering activities **like facilitating the dissemination of evidence-based practices**, and **co-creation of knowledge** through research and report writing. Depending on the topic, the dialogues included a wide **variety of actors**, including the private sector and civil society actors, thus going beyond the fixed categories of actors in knowledge brokering.

Based on the two cases, the knowledge brokering journey of *INCLUDE* seems to **be flexible and iterative** as multiple actors are involved in co-creation and exchange of knowledge through the dialogues. Looking at **the redistribution of power and equity** in the co-creation of knowledge, it can be highlighted that the LMIC partners are full platform members who suggest research topics and lead the funding application, underlining that *INCLUDE* views knowledge brokering as **a collective process and a central function at the organizational level**.

INCLUDE itself plays a supportive role in the cases through connecting Dutch and African stakeholders and providing highly valued M&E, peer learning and funding support. **These clear roles and responsibilities** are one example of how *INCLUDE* **adjusts the way of working of the partnership to the existing capabilities of the partners**. This is a good practice as it contributes to **mutual trust** between the partners, just like the fact that the partners of *INCLUDE* could involve the stakeholders they deemed most relevant and had the flexibility of working in their own space and pace as timelines and budgets can change in the course of the project if needed.

It can be concluded that the perceptions of the partners and *INCLUDE* align quite well. The flexibility in the knowledge brokering journey furthermore contributes to equitability in partnership. The biggest learning question is around **knowledge uptake**. It is difficult to which level the policy dialogues really influence policy and practice and more flexibility in reporting requirements would be appreciated by partners.

Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL)

In general, the **desired impact** of KPSRL is to strengthen programmatic learning and learning processes for their network **actors** (CSO, knowledge institutes, government) working on security and rule of law. The platform furthermore aims to link its members to the MoFa and influence policy making. The knowledge generation and **brokering activities and processes** are centered

around generating, sharing, interrogating and applying evidence in the field of security & rule of law. In their words, it goes beyond knowledge dissemination, constituting a creative and transformative process that involves tailoring content to the needs, interests, time pressures, and jargon of different network participants.

The cases shared by *KPSRL* stem from their Knowledge Management Fund. A call around a specific security and rule of law topic was sent out and successful proposals were provided with a grant to develop knowledge products. The partners recognize and value the platforms' role as a **funding party and an advisor**. *KPSRL* self identifies as a **connector**, constantly thinking about **uptake opportunities** for the future and **identifying policy level partners** and **showcasing the knowledge products** to a wider audience.

This is recognized by their partners who value that the network indeed gives them rich opportunities **to showcase their work and communicate their knowledge products to a wider audience**. This confirms the assumption that *KPSRL's approach to knowledge brokering* is supplemented by subsequently promoting the uptake of knowledge generated.

Based on the cases, it is difficult to reach conclusions on **the flexibility or rigidity** of the knowledge brokering journey. There is quite some **clarity over the roles and responsibilities** as these are outlined in the funding process. The perceptions of the partners and *KPSRL* seem to align quite well and the partners also highly valued the warm familial environment that *KPSRL* created.

The level of **co-creation** seems to depend on the particular activity. Looking at decision-making power, *KPSRL* does **steer the project direction and budget** by placing the call. Nevertheless, within this framework, the partner has **the ability to shape the project objectives and content** to its context. Additionally, LMIC partners were given the freedom to reallocate funds during the course of developing the knowledge products, contributing to the level of **equitability** in partnership

Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP)

In general, The *NFP* aims to work with **Dutch and LMIC actors** (private sector, knowledge institutes, INGOs, public sector). The partnership fosters multi stakeholder interaction in different **processes** (dialogue, knowledge exchange, mutual engagement and/or collaboration) It does so through **two main activities**: 1). building impact coalitions and partnerships and 2). facilitating community engagement. Their **desired impact** is convening innovative and collaborative action by Dutch and LMIC partners towards achieving food system transformation

The cases shared by *NFP* involved processes of **knowledge co-creation** which contributed to the level of **equitability** in collaboration. The wide variety of actors involved in organizing a summit and the ones involved in building an impact coalition all appreciated their **involvement in discussing the set-up and the content of the projects**. In the case of the impact coalition, it was really a bottom-up process where the actors divided the roles and responsibilities themselves. However, the vision of the project was set by the *NFP* project lead.

This is in line with how *NFP* sees itself; a neutral convener and facilitator of knowledge brokering and multi-stakeholder partnerships. However, in comparison, LMIC partners describe *NFP* as a **database providing knowledge, training, and capacity building for their organization and communities**. The perceptions on **roles** thus seem to differ a bit. *NFP* was positively described as providing legitimacy, funding, and publicity via their network.

Looking at the responsibilities, there is a wish from LMIC partners for **more flexibility in budget expenditure, timelines, accountability mechanisms, and funding opportunities**. *NFP* collaborates with LMIC partners on a short-term basis to kickstart trajectories. In the case of the impact coalition, it meant that their ability to contribute to food system transformation reduced after *NFP* left as coalition partners lacked funding and the ability to take the role of *NFP* as a facilitator.

In conclusion, **the knowledge brokering journey of *NFP* is quite flexible** looking at the wide variety of actors, bottom-up processes and co-creation of the agenda and project objectives. However, the budget and timeline of the impact coalition shows **some rigidity** which influences **equity in the collaboration**. It might benefit from an adjustment of the partnership requirements

to the capabilities of LMIC partners and the integration of mutual capacity building to ensure a smooth exit of *NFP*.

Share-Net International (SNI)

In general, *Share-Net International* is a membership platform. The LMIC partners of *SNI* become integrated into the platform as national hubs. These national hubs then host *SNI* in their context and work with a **wide variety of actors** (non-governmental organizations, researchers, policy makers, implementers, advocates, students, media, and companies). The **desired impact** of *SNI* is to strengthen the role of knowledge in developing policies for improved Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The platform uses different **activities and processes** to achieve this: 1) knowledge management through a) knowledge generation b) knowledge sharing c) knowledge translation and d) knowledge uptake as well as 2) functioning as a match-maker, matching the needs of its members with the services of its partners.

These different approaches are visible in the two cases shared. The co-creation conference on access to quality information on SRHR and the SHIRIM PLAN-DO-STUDY-ACT cycle both used **co-creation approaches to develop knowledge products** with different stakeholders and focus on **shared learning and knowledge exchange**.

The SHIRIM cycle appears to follow **an iterative knowledge brokering journey**. The method is designed to identify knowledge gaps in a national hub's context and subsequently co-create knowledge and use products to address those gaps. National hubs meet with their members to decide on a relevant challenge or theme to investigate, *SNI* then provides capacity building and expert consultation to assist national hubs in better understanding or mitigating their identified challenge. The theme and capacity building is constantly redefined in order to generate and translate knowledge products relevant for the national policy contexts.

SNI broadens their reach and skills through their national hubs. Their **partners** were selected due to their geographical position and their diversity in skills. They provide expertise on communication and visual content as well as access to the private sector and a business approach. In this way, *SNI* International **establishes brokering teams composed of individuals with**

different professional backgrounds and complementary skills which might contribute to the sustainability of activities.

SNI describes their role as that of a **convener**, bringing together national hubs, ensuring all have the ability to provide input on the development of knowledge products. *SNI* also creates a safe space for hubs where they can seek support and advice in influencing policy on SRHR. The network of *SNI* allows them to showcase the work of their national hubs. This is quite in line with how LMIC partners describe *SNI*. As a **companion in connecting thinking, research, policy and practice** and an avenue for funding. It can therefore be said that **the perceptions of the partners align with those of Share-Net**.

A Note on General Perceived Added Value

In conclusion of this chapter it is good to note that the perceived added value of the KPs in knowledge brokering activities varies for LMIC partners depending on the specific case, knowledge brokering journey, and context. However, overall, all LMIC partners appreciated the connections and networking opportunities provided by the KPs. KP representatives in turn strongly appreciated the in-country networks of the LMIC partners. The KPs all highly value the role of LMIC partners in ensuring that the knowledge brokering activities are context-specific. This was a strong motivation for the KPs to establish the partnership.

The knowledge brokering journeys reveal that all the KPs strive to prioritize co-creation and flexibility, described in literature, as approaches to break away from rigid and linear processes and address power imbalances. However, the effectiveness and variations in implementing these approaches vary in each case as discussed below. The following chapter will elaborate on the empirical findings, focusing on the partnership dynamics involved in knowledge brokering.

Chapter 4: Partnership dynamics in practice

This chapter continues with exploring how LMIC partners view the KPs, their roles and working methods by taking a close look at the partnership dynamics. The guiding question here is how have the KPs gone about setting up partnerships and working with partners in LMICs? By looking at the partnership dynamics, it further explores and compares the different approaches, barriers, and good practices to knowledge brokering with LMIC partners.

The Structural Variety Between the KPs Requires Different Approaches to working with LMIC Partners

The establishment of partnerships and the collaboration between knowledge platforms (KPs) and LMIC partners vary from case to case and from one KP to another. These differences encompass organizational structure, thematic focus, knowledge brokering approaches, and motivations for collaboration. The variations significantly influence the barriers and dynamics experienced in partnerships with LMIC partners. The fact that partners of INCLUDE and SNI become integral parts of the platforms, whereas NFP and KPSRL generally engage with LMIC partners on a project basis for example influences collaboration. The diverse contexts and set-ups of the collaborations thus have a direct influence on the dynamics and barriers experienced by the KPs and their partners.

Having said this, the learning conversations clarified, that the overall dynamics and barriers encountered in knowledge brokering partnerships appear to align with the prevailing power imbalances and hierarchies in typical North-South partnerships for international development cooperation (Dannecker, 2022; Martins, 2020; Van der Graaf et al., 2021). The partnerships are, among other things, influenced by current funding streams, working methods, and accountability mechanisms. Similar to other North-South collaborations, power imbalances impact agenda setting, allocating budgets, and the level of trust between partners.

Another similarity is that all the KP representatives expressed a desire for more equitable partnerships with LMIC partners. However, their visions for achieving equity vary based on partnership structure, type, and existing levels of equity. For example, KPSRL and SNI would like to give LMIC partners direct resource access. NFP prefers a facilitator role, guiding the project

process while partners decide on content and focus. INCLUDE continues to focus on building a network to collaboratively create knowledge-sharing activities among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

Co-creation in Knowledge Brokering

Facilitating flexible and iterative knowledge brokering journeys, while emphasizing the co-creation of knowledge, holds the potential to redistribute power and pave the way towards more equitable and effective knowledge brokering partnerships (Van Ewijk & Ros-Tonen, 2020). During the learning conversations all the participants identified setting the agenda together, as an inherent component to knowledge co-creation, which aligns with the definition given Lammers & de Winter and used in this report (2017). The knowledge brokering journeys furthermore underline the KPs all aspire to co-create knowledge with their LMIC partners.

The Level of Co-creation Differs per Case

Although KP representatives and their partners generally agreed that LMIC partners could co-decide on project objectives, their ability to do so varied on a case-by-case basis. The cases showed that it is connected to the way that roles and tasks are divided and by whom. Establishing clarity over roles and responsibilities is mentioned by Voller et al. (2022) as a prerequisite for equitability.

In the case of SNI, national hubs were responsible for selecting and fine tuning the focus of their project trajectory while the international hub played a supportive and capacity building role. The national hub was responsible for ensuring that the focus of the project was relevant and embedded in their context. The LMIC partners of INCLUDE explicitly mentioned that they valued their role of selecting and engaging with relevant stakeholders in their contexts. They furthermore decide on the research themes, most appropriate evidence uptake and monitoring and evaluation strategies for their context.

LMIC partners of NFP also remarked that their case evolved collectively via equal decision making; all parties were involved in discussing the set-up and content of the YALTA summit and the action agenda of the impact coalition was collectively shaped by all participants. However, in this case the initial idea on content focus was initiated by NFP. While LMIC partners of KPSRL develop their

own project proposal, and have ownership over the research trajectory, they do apply for a certain fund with a specific focus.

Steering the Initial Project Direction

A first cautious insight is that while the LMIC partners are to some extent able to co-create the content of the knowledge brokering activities, it often seems to be the case that the KPs steer the project direction. The initial idea, concept, call, or method is generally proposed by the KP and the LMIC partner co-designed it for their context.

It is a cautious insight as specifically in the cases of INCLUDE and SNI, their partners are members of the platforms and therefore also shape the initial start and further project structure. A representative from Share-Net Bangladesh even questioned why this project talked about collaboration between the hubs as she saw them as being an integral part of the organization receiving funding from MoFa themselves. Further research is thus needed to better understand this dynamic and see how the different organizational structures concretely influence the ability to co-create knowledge and work in an equitable manner.

Funding Streams Highlight Power Dynamics

The flexibility of knowledge brokering activities, as well as the ability to co-create knowledge in an equitable manner, is influenced by multiple factors. KPs often seem to steer the initial project direction due to funding obligations and their direct relationship with the donor. Taking a closer look at the funding streams therefore highlights prevailing power dynamics in knowledge brokering.

The Relationship with the Donor

The KPs receive funding from the Mofa.³ The KPs generally acted as an intermediary, channeling the funds from donor to the LMIC partner. In most cases, the LMIC partner was requested to propose a budget on how the available funds would be allocated which has to be approved by the KP. This means that even when the KP aims to let their LMIC partner decide on project objectives and set-up, they have to be accountable towards the donor.

³ In one of the cases explored, other funding institutions (e.g. The IKEA Foundation) served as the main donor.

Two cases showed that contractual obligations to develop impact-oriented activities, along with financial regulations, may have influenced project objectives and timelines. Looking at the impact coalition case of NFP, it could be argued that NFP left the coalition prematurely and provided insufficient funding for the coalition to continue without its support. The LMIC partner argued that an extension of the timeline and access to new funding sources could have enhanced the effectiveness of knowledge brokering activities.

In line with their objective to strengthen organizational autonomy in organizing the co-creation conference, a representative from SNI expressed their intention to directly transfer all funds to their hub in Colombia. However, challenges related to contractual obligations emerged, preventing Share-Net Colombia from successfully booking flights and securing visas for the conference speakers and participants. Consequently, the funds had to be transferred back to Share-Net international so that they could do it.

Addressing the Power Imbalance Inherent to Funding Streams

While funding streams often influence the flexibility of knowledge brokering journeys, the learning conversations outlined two ways on how KPs addressed such power imbalances. First, in most cases, the KP representatives and LMIC partners tried to follow a collaborative approach, recognizing each other's strengths and capabilities. KPSRL for example identifies as a connector, constantly thinking about uptake opportunities for their LMIC partners and identifying possible future collaborations or avenues for informing policy. Representatives expressed the need to be cautious and avoid excessive interference in the work of their LMIC partners, taking the position of a fly on the wall. Both parties shared the understanding that the LMIC partners were well-positioned to determine the most suitable utilization of specific budget allocations. Similarly, in cases from SNI and NFP, partnerships were built and tasks were divided based on actors' competencies and skill sets. For instance, in the case of the YALTA summit, PELUM - with their strength in visual communication and media - was responsible for promoting and engaging around the event. This is in line with the recommendation of Voller et al. (2022) and Kislov et al. (2017) to see knowledge brokering as a collaborative process and recognize the capabilities and added values of each partner.

Second, most project budgets had built-in flexibility to accommodate unforeseen shocks. The LMIC partners of INCLUDE appreciated the ability to extend timelines and when necessary and mentioned that it improved the impact and sustainability of the knowledge brokering activities. This is in line with Van der Graaf et al. (2021) their recommendation to build in adaptive governance structures and advocates for more flexible knowledge brokering journeys.

A Need for Flexibility in Accountability Mechanisms and Working Methods

Linked to the need for built-in flexibility in project budgets is a need for flexibility in accountability mechanisms and working methods. While LMIC partners understood the need for regular meetings, check-ins, and (budget)reporting and monitoring structures, strict mechanisms and use of Northern international development jargon were identified as impeding collaborative efforts. In one case from INCLUDE, one case from KPSRL, and one case from NFP, their LMIC partners expressed feeling overburdened due to the frequency of check-in and reporting measures. Another issue that came up is the fact that such reports often needed to be written in Northern international development jargon and is in line with the barrier described in the literature that different languages can impede successful collaboration (Phipps et al., 2017).

Reasons Behind Strict Mechanisms

Often the motivation behind such mechanisms is the funding responsibility. However in some cases another motivation might be existing biases around the capabilities of organizations from the Global South (Peace direct, 2021). One KP representative concisely expressed that they did not always fully trust the knowledge brokering skills of LMIC partners due to such biases. In turn some LMIC partners shared that they felt like they had to work hard to prove to the KPs that they were capable of doing their work. In one case, an LMIC partner's grant attainment success was attributed to their connection with a partner from the global North with superior grant writing abilities.

According to some LMIC partners, certain mechanisms hinder their ability to fully demonstrate their capabilities and added value in knowledge brokering activities. They believe that more flexibility, along with a better appreciation and understanding of their working methods and contributions, would enhance the knowledge brokering partnerships between KPs and LMIC

partners. By fostering an environment that values and embraces the expertise and unique perspectives of LMIC partners, knowledge brokering activities can be further strengthened and deliver greater impact. This is in line with the recommendations from literature to work in a flexible manner, and forge greater mutual understanding and incorporate reflective conversations from the start onwards (Ott & Kiteme, 2016).

Going Beyond Strict Mechanisms and Biases

During collaborations, flexibility in accountability mechanisms and working methods was seen as an important indicator of trust and equity. LMIC partners of INCLUDE highlighted that the organizations they proposed as relevant partners did not have to undergo a vetting procedure, which played a significant role in building trust between the parties.

Furthermore, the LMIC partners of INCLUDE expressed that being trusted to work in their own space and at their own pace also contributed to the sense of trust in the collaboration. A working relationship based on trust and flexibility allows partners to fully utilize their capabilities and potential.

In recognition of this, a representative from KPSRL explicitly shared their aspiration to become a more flexible donor. They mentioned their intention to eliminate the requirement for receipts, acknowledging that this change would enable partners to choose their own working methods and timelines and foster a relationship of trust and equity.

Navigating Trust in Partnerships

The learning conversations emphasized trust as a fundamental dynamic in partnerships, influencing all aspects of knowledge brokering activities and promoting equitable collaboration. Establishing interpersonal relationships was described by Fransman and Newman (2019) as a vital tool for building trust and fostering a positive working environment. However, it was also noted that trust should extend beyond individuals to organizations to ensure the continuity and sustainability of knowledge brokering activities. Skills and knowledge might be lost when a person leaves, affecting the ongoing projects (Kislov et al., 2017).

Strong personal relationships were perceived as supportive of equitable collaboration, promoting a non-hierarchical and inclusive approach. Respondents expressed appreciation for partners' personalities and positive working relationships. Informal communication via platforms like WhatsApp was valued in three cases,⁴ allowing time for understanding motivations, cultures, and accommodating different time zones. This practice aligns with the recommendation of Ott & Kiteme (2016), emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding as an initial step towards achieving equity.

In a few cases, trust was predominantly placed in individuals rather than organizations. Consequently, when an individual left a project, the trust had to be rebuilt, impacting knowledge brokering activities. For instance, when a representative from NFP left, the trust established did not automatically transfer to their successor. This disrupted the knowledge brokering activities and required additional time to rebuild the relationship, potentially hindering project sustainability. It is advisable to cultivate trust at both institutional and personal levels to ensure continuity even when personnel changes occur.

This chapter has given empirical examples of knowledge brokering partnerships, linking findings to theory. Lessons learned and best practices have been identified and the following final chapter will crystallize these along with recommendations and conclusions.

⁴ The setting up of learning conversations was also done via WhatsApp in 3 cases.

Chapter 5: Lessons Learned and Avenues for Further Knowledge Sharing Between the KPs

Collaborating closely with four knowledge platforms (INCLUDE, KPSRL, NFP, and SNI) and their LMIC partners, The Broker embarked on a purposeful and broad project to comprehend the complexities of knowledge brokering partnerships between the Dutch KPs and LMIC partners. By combining insights from literature and data from case studies, this initiative distilled valuable lessons learned and good practices related to the KPs' ambitions, activities, roles, and contributions to inclusive sustainable development.

The findings presented in this conclusion represent an initial step towards gaining a comprehensive understanding of North-South knowledge brokering partnerships, laying the foundation for the KPs to strengthen their existing partnerships with LMIC actors. Moreover, these findings offer insights that encourage the exploration of diverse avenues for knowledge exchange between KPs.

The broad setup of this project was driven by the recognition of variations between the KPs and their partners. These differences in organizational structures and collaboration setups naturally influenced the dynamics experienced in partnerships with LMIC partners. However, everyone involved in this project was curious to learn from each other's working methods and partnership structure with LMIC partners. While each partnership may have its unique nuances, the project's comprehensive approach allowed for the identification of broader trends and patterns.

The added value of knowledge brokering in partnerships is recognized by all actors involved

Both the representatives of the KPs and their LMIC partners acknowledged the significant value of collaborating on knowledge brokering activities. While the specific benefits varied, with some partners emphasizing a strong knowledge base and others highlighting Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) support, all LMIC partners appreciated the broader network, funding opportunities, and connections provided by the KPs. Similarly, KP representatives highly valued the in-country networks and context-specific knowledge contributed by their LMIC partners. They

recognized the essential role of LMIC partners in ensuring that knowledge brokering activities are tailored to specific contexts. Furthermore, the establishment of strong interpersonal relationships and trust between many LMIC actors and KP representatives was seen as a vital element that enhanced the impact of knowledge brokering activities.

Towards flexible, equitable, and context-specific knowledge brokering journeys

One recurring theme that emerged throughout the project is the undeniable influence of power dynamics in North-South knowledge brokering partnerships. There is a general understanding that for North-South knowledge partnerships to work best, they need to be equitable which is underlined in literature and recognized by both the KPs and their LMIC partners.

Throughout the knowledge brokering journeys examined in this project, it became evident that all the knowledge platforms (KPs) strongly emphasize co-creation and flexibility in partnerships, as advocated in the literature. Such approaches do justice to the iterative and multidimensional nature of knowledge brokering which involves multiple actors and types of knowledge. These approaches aim to break away from rigid and linear definitions of knowledge brokering and address power imbalances that can hinder effective knowledge brokering . However, while these approaches and the overarching goal of equity in partnerships were seen as positive by actors involved, the meaning and implementation of such strategies varied across the case studies. This variability underscores the contextual nuances inherent in knowledge brokering practices.

The learning conversations did reveal that the overall dynamics and barriers encountered in knowledge brokering partnerships appear to align with the prevailing power imbalances and hierarchies in typical North-South partnerships for international development cooperation. The partnerships are influenced by complex governance structures, current funding streams, working methods, and accountability mechanisms. Similar to other North-South collaborations, these and other power imbalances impact decision-making around setting the agenda and allocating budgets, as well as the level of trust between partners.

Good Practices and Recommendations for North - South Knowledge Brokering Partnerships

The data collected from the case studies and learning conversations strengthen and complement the good practices identified in the literature review. By doing so, they supplement theory where empirical studies on knowledge brokering in North-South partnerships are scarce. These insights have been consolidated into a comprehensive recommendation: the need to foster **equitable and flexible co-creation of knowledge** as the key means to strengthen knowledge brokering activities in partnerships. Despite the financial, contractual, and hierarchical barriers discussed above, the case studies and literature revealed good practices to overcome such barriers.

Ensure flexibility in accountability mechanisms and working methods to enhance the knowledge brokering partnerships. It enables LMIC partners to deal with unexpected challenges and fully demonstrate their capabilities and added value in knowledge brokering activities. It can thereby strengthen the sustainability of knowledge brokering activities.

Recognize each other's added value and adjust the project structure to utilize both partners strengths. In most cases, the KP representatives and LMIC partners tried to follow a collaborative approach, recognizing each other's strengths and capabilities. In many learning conversations this was underlined as the predominant way for LMIC partners to use their context-specific knowledge to its fullest potential.

Build trusting and interpersonal relationships to foster equitable collaborations. Taking the time to build trust and understand each others motivations, cultures, and working methods was appreciated as a tool to foster mutual understanding and strong working relationships

Adjust the partnership structure according to the knowledge brokering goals to strengthen its potential. Partners of both *SNI* and *INCLUDE* saw themselves as an inherent part of the platform which seemed to positively influence their ability to set the agenda and co-develop project set-ups and objectives. Further research is needed to better understand how and if the structure of the KPs influences the ability to co-create knowledge.

Avenues for further knowledge sharing and future research projects

A first recommendation for further cooperation and shared learning between the KPs is therefore **to identify how the different organizational structures and partnership set-up influence the sustainability and impact of knowledge brokering activities in cooperation with LMIC actors.**

How to align the goals of the knowledge brokering partnerships to the organizational structure of the knowledge platform and vice versa to increase its effectiveness?

The overarching need to aim towards equity in partnerships is clear. However what this means in practice differs per KP and per partner. There are different organizational structures and many different LMIC partners. Working towards more equitable partnerships thus requires context-specific approaches. It is therefore recommended that **the KPs define both equity and partnerships in their own contexts.**

While both the literature and the learning conversations reflected the importance of co-creation in knowledge brokering, the case studies did reveal that does not always have the same meaning in practice, nor is equitable co-creation of knowledge always possible due to different barriers. Secondly, **developing a clear framework of knowledge co-creation** showing its limits and needs would help to utilize its potential and communicate this clearly to stakeholders like funding parties, building a case against strict accountability mechanisms. This framework could include methods to co-decide on agenda setting and project objectives, as case studies show that some KPs still steer the initial project direction.

This project did not measure or evaluate the impact of the knowledge brokering activities. However topics related to this like the sustainability of knowledge brokering activities, or proof of knowledge uptake were recurrent themes in the learning conversations. Thirdly, **sharing insights on MEL and theories of change** strengthens the ability of the KPs to communicate their achievements to a wider audience. These three recommendations are suggestions for further cooperation and shared learning which can be decided on in consultation, and further explored in the upcoming workshop.

References

- Adelle, C., Pereira, L., Go, T., & Losch, B. (2020). Making sense together: The role of scientists in the coproduction of knowledge for policymaking. *Science and Public Policy*, 47(1), 56-66. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scz046>
- Bradley, M. (2017). Whose agenda? Power, policies, and priorities in North–South research partnerships. In Luc J.A. Mougeot, L. J.A. (Ed.). *Putting knowledge to work: Collaborating, influencing and learning for international development* (37-71). Practical Action Publishing Ltd.
- Chew, S., Armstrong, N., & Martin, G. (2013). Institutionalizing knowledge brokering as a sustainable knowledge translation solution in healthcare: how can it work in practice?. *Evidence & Policy*, 9(3), 335-351.
- Colvin, J., & McDonagh, C. (2017). Working across scales: Learning from seven years of climate compatible development in Asia. Working Paper, Climate & Development Knowledge Network. <https://cdkn.org/resource/working-paper-working-across-scales-learning-from-seven-years-of-climate-compatible-development-in-asia>
- Cummings, S., Kiwanuka, S., Gillman, H., & Regeer, B. (2019). The future of knowledge brokering: perspectives from a generational framework of knowledge management for international development. *Information Development*, 35(5), 781-794. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0266666918800174journals.sagepub.com/home/idv>
- De Winter, D., & Lammers, E. (2022). Public-private partnerships in international agricultural research-Insights from the NL-CGIAR Research Programme: Synthesis paper for the NL-CGIAR Research Programme.
- Dannecker, P. (2022). Collaboration in a ‘North–South’ Context: The Role of Power Relations and the Various Context-Based Conditions. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 34, 1716-1726. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-022-00550-0>
- Grønvad, J. F., Hvidtfeldt, R., & Pedersen, D. B. (2017). Analyzing co-creation in theory and in practice: A systemic review of the SSH impact literature.
- Hatton, M. J., & Schroeder, K. (2007). Partnership Theory and Practice: Time for a New Paradigm. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 28(1), 157-162. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2007.9669192>
- Fransman, J., & Newman, K. (2019). Rethinking research partnerships: evidence and the politics of participation in research partnerships for international development. *Journal of International Development*, 31(7), 523-544. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/jid.3417>

- Kislov, R., Wilson, P., & Boaden R. (2017). The 'dark side' of knowledge brokering. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, 22(2), 107-112.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1355819616653981>
- Lammers, E., De Winter, D. (2017). The Gold Standard: Exploring the added value of the Dutch knowledge platforms. <http://knowledgeplatforms.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Gold-Standard-Exploring-the-added-value-of-the-Dutch-knowledge-platforms.pdf>
- Long, J.C., Cunningham, F. C., & Braithwaite, J. (2013). Bridges, brokers and boundary spanners in collaborative networks: a systematic review. *BMC Health Service Research*, 13.
- Martins, A. (2020). Reimagining equity: redressing power imbalances between the global North and the global South. *Gender & Development*, 28(1), 135-153,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1717172>
- Martinuzzi, A., & Seldacko, M. (2016). *Knowledge Brokerage for Sustainable Development: Innovative Tools for Increasing Research Impact and Evidence-Based Policy-Making*. Greenleaf Publishing Limited.
- Murunga, V. I., Oronje, R.N., Bates, I., Tagoe, N., & Pulford, J. (2020). Review of published evidence on knowledge translation capacity, practice and support among researchers and research institutions in low- and middle income countries. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 18(16), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-019-0524-0>
- Ott, C., & Kiteme, B. (2016). Concepts and practices for the democratization of knowledge generation in research partnerships for sustainable development. *Evidence and Policy*, 12(3), 405-430. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1332/174426416X14700793045951>
- Peace Direct. (2021). PD Impact Report 2021. Retrieved from
<https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/PD-Impact-Report-2021.pdf>
- Phipps, D.J., Brien, D., Echt, L., Kyei-Mensah, G. & Weyrauch, V. (2017). Determinants of successful knowledge brokering: A transnational comparison of knowledge intermediary organizations. *Research for All*, 1 (1), 185–97. <https://doi.org/10.18546/RFA.01.1.15>.
- Rycroft-Smith, L. (2022). Knowledge brokering to bridge the research-practice gap in education: Where are we now?. *Review of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3341>
- Van Ewijk, E., & Ros-Tonen, M. A. (2021). The fruits of knowledge co-creation in agriculture and food-related multi-stakeholder platforms in sub-Saharan Africa—A systematic literature review. *Agricultural Systems*, 186, 102949.
- Van der Graaf, P., Cheetham, M., Redgate, S., Humble, C., & Adamson, A. (2021). Co-production in local government: process, codification and capacity building of new knowledge in collective reflection spaces. Workshops findings from a UK mixed methods study. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 19(12).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-021-00677-2>

Voller, S., Chitalu, C.C. M., Nyondo-Mipando, A. L., Opobo, T., Bangirana, C. A., Thorogood, N., SchellenberG, J., & ChI, P. (2022). “We should be at the table together from the beginning”: perspectives on partnership from stakeholders at four research institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-022-01707-3>

Weber, M. S., & Yanovitzky (Eds.). (2021). *Networks, Knowledge Brokers, and the Public Policymaking Process*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78755-4>

Appendix 1: Case Descriptions

INCLUDE

INCLUDE: African Policy Dialogues “Productive and decent work for youth and women in Uganda” (2021)	
Case description and objective	This African Policy Dialogue (APD) aimed to generate and share evidence on opportunities, sources of productive and decent employment , and effective strategies to promote job creation along strategic agro-industrialization (AGI) value chains. Overall, the objective was to increase policy debates and evidence uptake for the enhancement of productive and decent jobs for sustainable AGI value chains.
LMIC partner	Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC)
Knowledge brokering activities and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creation of reports and newspaper articles to influence policies on youth employment. • Influencing the implementation and revision of the 2011 National Employment Policy of Uganda.
Role division	African partners suggest research topics and lead the funding application. INCLUDE supports this by connecting African and Dutch researchers and providing M&E support and a link with the MoFa and the Dutch policy environment.

INCLUDE: African Policy Dialogues “Local governance practitioners forum” Ghana 2019-2021	
Case description and objective	This practitioners forum was established to learn from past failures of the Ghanaian government during the implementation of two major policies on industrialization programs and the promotion of democratic local governance and popular participation. Through their knowledge brokering activities, the overall objective was to start a Democratic Developmental Local Governance (DDLG) platform to facilitate a structured relationship between government and private investors to enable feedback on the implementation of the policies and programs. This helps to increase the likelihood of policies attaining their intended outcomes.
LMIC partner	Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS)
Knowledge brokering activities and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the historical, social, political and economic context where the policies would be implemented • Facilitate the dissemination of evidence-based practices to use when developing and implementing new policies

Role division	African partners suggest research topics and lead the funding application. INCLUDE supports this by connecting African and Dutch researchers and providing M&E support and a link with the MoFa and the Dutch policy environment.
---------------	---

Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL)

Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law: Knowledge Management Fund “Maskani Commons Digital Peacebuilding” in Kenya (2020)

Case description and objective	This project piloted a 3-month intervention challenging online polarization on social media in Kenya , engaging students in the promotion of constructive and depolarizing dialogue across ethnic, gender and age demographics. The objective was to equip students to mitigate division and conflict in Kenya. They focused on ethnic divisiveness, political instability in the lead up to the 2022 elections, and misinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic.
LMIC partner	Rongo University and Build Up
Knowledge brokering activities and processes	Build Up (a USA based startup focused on peace building) and Rongo University, teamed up to apply for funding via KPSRL’s knowledge management fund. Students were trained in online peace building techniques and became ambassadors in their (online) communities. This collective ultimately positively affected the safety during election time.
Role division	KPSRL sends out calls for proposals and serves as the funding party for knowledge brokering projects. LMIC partners with specific skills and context-specific experience for the requested call apply and develop knowledge products for their LMIC context.

Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law: Knowledge Management Fund “Enhance Community Resilience on Countering Violent Extremism in Manderu Triangle” in Kenya (2022)

Case description and objective	This project researched trends of violent extremism in Manderu Triangle in January 2022 . This research aimed to investigate the cause and changing trends of extremism and help recommend strategies to counter them using CVE strategies at the community-level. These strategies included exploring the strengths of relationships between communities, as well as those of state and non-state actors countering violent extremism.
LMIC partner	Young Africans for Peace and Development (YAPAD)
Knowledge brokering activities and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a research report including literature review, key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussion, and site visits • Develop a documentary on “Root Causes for Joining Violent Extremist Groups in the Manderu Triangle”

Role division	KPSRL sends out calls for proposals and serves as the funding party for knowledge brokering projects. LMIC partners with specific skills and context-specific experience for the requested call apply and develop knowledge products for their LMIC context.
---------------	--

Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP)

Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP): YALTA Regional Summit Uganda (2022)	
Case description and objective	The Youth Agroecology and Business Learning Track Africa (YALTA) brings together a wide range of stakeholders and youth networks in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda to work on identifying major issues and co-develop solutions around youth agripreneurship . The YALTA regional summit in Uganda brought together many YALTA stakeholders to celebrate successes, exchange insights and lessons learned, drive regional policy processes, network and facilitate a regional platform for interactions between youth, agroecology stakeholders, policy makers, service providers, investors.
LMIC partner	PELUM Uganda
Knowledge brokering activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share and facilitate knowledge exchange among a wide audience of professionals active in agroecology and youth employment. • Together identify strategies to scale up innovative models in agribusiness
Role division	NFP serves as a connector bringing organizations together to work on YALTA and organize the summit. The partner brings the contextual knowledge and organizes the actual summit, selecting relevant speakers and developing communication products.

Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP): Ghana Urban Food Environments (2020 – 2022)	
Case description and objective	Ghanan Urban Food Environments is a Dutch – Ghanaian collective impact coalition that brought together a diverse range of Dutch and Ghanaian stakeholders with the objective to enable urban consumers to make healthier food choices .
LMIC partner	MDF Ghana
Knowledge brokering activities and processes	Forming the collective impact coalition was a bottom-up process . It stimulated different types of stakeholders with different professional backgrounds and active in different sectors to participate and share knowledge on urban food environments from their point of view. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four action groups were formed with Dutch and Ghanaian co-leads focused on different topics within Urban Food Environments.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Action Group members co-created an action plan within their sub-domain to address challenges and ultimately improve food environments.
Role division	NFP serves as a neutral facilitator of the impact coalition. The Dutch and international partners lead the content agenda and develop action plans.

Share-Net International (SNI)

Share-NET International: Co-Creation Conference in Colombia (2022): ‘Access to Quality Information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights’.	
Case description and objective	The Co-Creation Conference is a bi-annual event during which concrete knowledge products are developed to influence SRHR policy and practice. For this study, the focus is on the Co-Creation Conference in Colombia: “Access to Quality Information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.” It had the specific objective to present, develop and share knowledge and evidence on access to Quality Information on SRHR and bring together the relevant Colombian and international actors
LMIC partner	Share-net Colombia (internal partner)
Knowledge brokering activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translate knowledge and evidence around Access to Quality information on SRHR into usable products that organizations can use to improve policy and practice Co-create knowledge products with a wide variety of actors Present knowledge products to a wide audience and offer the opportunity to learn and exchange knowledge with international actors on SRHR
Role division	Share-Net International facilitates the co-creation of the bi-annual conference by connecting national hubs with other hubs and experts on SRHR topics. They support their partners with capacity building if necessary. Their partners become imbedded in the Share-Net organization and add context-specific knowledge and expertise

Share-NET International: Rapid Improvement Model (SHIRIM): “National Action Plan for Implementing the Recommendations of the “Child Marriage in Jordan”	
Case description and objective	The SHIRIM is always based on in-country needs and entails a PLAN-DO-STUDY-ACT cycle. This case aims to improve the access to climate change and SRHR information and education for policymakers in Bangladesh. Share-Net Bangladesh developed a policy brief , conducted research on connection between climate change and SRHR.
LMIC partner	Share-Net Bangladesh (internal)

<p>Knowledge brokering activities</p>	<p>A PLAN-DO-STUDY-ACT cycle is a 18-months learning system. It uses a collaborative approach with a focus on experimenting with knowledge translation strategies, as well as the development of knowledge products</p> <p>SHIRIM is led by SNI with facilitation from external knowledge experts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● During international learning sessions participants learn how to implement the Collaborative Approach in their own context, and gain new insights from experts. ● Country hubs then develop a change package at a national level. These packages encompass strategies for knowledge translation to address context-specific challenges. ● The country hubs set up a collaboration with their stakeholders. Here, they translate relevant learnings from the international sessions and adapt the change package based on the input of key stakeholders. ● The strategies for knowledge translation are then implemented during the action period.
<p>Role division</p>	<p>Share-Net International supports national hubs and LMIC partners with training on collaborative approaches and knowledge translation strategies. The country hubs apply these methods in their own countries to develop change packages and implement them.</p>