

Darts and horse racing for a sustainable future

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The DEALS programme, aimed at cities in Latin America, Africa and Asia, is showing progress. Great progress has been made building partnerships in the cities of Beira, Pereira, Kumasi, Sèmè-Podji and Manila, with only Pathein lagging behind, although it has been catching up recently. Most of the achievements were made in the fields of coordination within and between governments, and cooperation with non-government stakeholders. This is the positive image that emerged from the expert meeting on the DEALS programme (see box) on 18 January.

DEALS, an inclusive sustainable urban development programme targeting medium-sized cities in Latin America, Africa and Asia, has been up and running for almost a year and a half now. Seventeen experts from the Netherlands and the target cities gathered in a tiny room at Pulchri Studio in The Hague to discuss progress and key elements. In her keynote speech, associate expert Ellen van Reesch pointed out that complex challenges, such as the ones DEALS is facing, can't be treated in silos: they demand integrated solutions. Environmental sustainability must be linked to social inclusion and citizen rights.

Focusing on one problem, such as waste, is too narrow an approach. On the other hand, you can look at waste from different perspectives: an economic, environmental, spatial, governmental or social one, for example. Waste not only pollutes, it also presents opportunities, such as generating income for the poor, one of DEALS' key targets. A multi-stakeholder approach is crucial because the interests of people living in informal settlements are easily neglected.

Six key elements

Governments tend to act in silos: they have separate departments for each policy issue. This hampers an integrated approach. The Netherlands tried to break with this pattern in 2015 by decentralising some major tasks in the social domain.

A new law on the physical environment, which emphasizes the need for integrated approaches, will go into effect in 2021. Cooperation among all stakeholders is a key ingredient in these approaches.

Ellen felt that local, bottom-up transition movements are the ones that have managed to introduce new models for a more sustainable society. The energy transition is a good catalyst. Energy cooperatives, for example, can serve as the starting point for other activities. 'There's a lot of energy in society, and often one thing leads to another,' she said. 'But it doesn't start by putting experts in a room; it's about confronting the views of all types of stakeholders.'

She distinguished six key elements for an integrated approach to inclusive sustainable urban development in DEALS:

SIX KEY ELEMENTS

Six key elements for an integrated approach to inclusive sustainable urban development in DEALS:

- Coordination (of strategies, plans, budgets and activities) within the local government
- Coordination between the local government and other governments
- Cooperation with non-government stakeholders, such as citizens and businesses
- An area-based pilot approach based on the needs of the people involved
- Integrating investments in infrastructure with institutional and management capacities and active participation of all stakeholders
- Targets and indicators for integrated thinking and a methodology for learning

Each key element is linked to six or seven sub-questions, such as: what were the outputs and which actors participated. Taken together, the elements act as a monitoring instrument that helps participants to find out what works and why. 'It makes things more specific than "we had a nice meeting",' Ellen explained. The instrument is output oriented: the impact and outcomes of the programme are measured with other instruments.



Horse Race

Programme manager Irene Oostveen then announced a horse race. She invited the experts to put dots, representing horses, on a form showing six tracks, representing the key elements. If little progress was made in a target city, the dot needed to be put at the beginning of the track, and if much progress was made, it needed to be put at the end of it. The outcome of this entertaining exercise showed a clear pattern: the first three key elements, the internal and external coordination and cooperation with non-government stakeholders, scored best. The ends of the corresponding tracks were scattered with dots. Next best was the area-based pilot approach. But key elements five and six, investments and targets, lagged far behind. None of the target cities scored high on these elements.

Expert Jean Eigeman commented that the key elements are closely related: investment decisions, for example, should be influenced by the outcomes of the other elements. Causing laughter, Irene Oostveen admitted that the scheme was not meant as 'a silo monitoring instrument'. Anne-Marie Schreven of VNG International said she missed the wider environment in which a city operates, which can be very conducive (or not) to reaching a deal. According to Ellen van Reesch this issue is addressed in separate factsheets that describe the context for the target cities. The factsheets contain the non-changeable data, the monitoring instrument contains the changeable data.

Dartboards

The horse race was followed by another sport: darts. With some help from her five-year-old son, Irene Oostveen constructed two dartboards. The experts were invited to form groups related to the target cities. One dartboard was intended for the delta cities (Manila, Beira and Pathein), while the other one was for the non-delta cities (Kumasi, Pereira and Sèmè-Podji). Each group was given three arrows. The participants were asked to write interventions in 'their' city on the arrows and to value them with a maximum of 60 points, just like a high score of triple 20 in darts.

After serious deliberation, the nine arrows were attached to the dartboards. This exercise demonstrated that building trust and personal bonds were highly valued. The visits of the city delegations to the Netherlands received high scores, for example, as did the meetings in rooftop bars with strategic counterparts and the linking with key players in the target cities. In Kumasi a lecturer came on board, connecting the scientific and the non-scientific world. A good relationship was also established in Kumasi with a young and passionate council member representing one of



the poorest neighbourhoods. Other high scores went to cooperation with counterparts, such as the League of Cities of the Philippines, and the ratification of crucial plans, such as the land administration improvement plan in Beira. A workshop in Beira, in which all stakeholders participated, also received a high score because it strengthened ownership and led to follow-up meetings.

Overall, five of the six target cities did quite well, scoring between 120 and 150 points, with Beira in the lead. Only Pathein in Myanmar lagged behind, with 76 points. The good news, as Anne-Marie Schreven pointed out, is that all of Pathein's points were earned in the last four months. A city focal person, linking the city with the Dutch parties involved, was appointed, an identification workshop was held and a delegation from Pathein visited the Netherlands in September. The latter was considered an unexpected breakthrough.



WHAT IS DEALS?

Inclusive sustainable urban development in developing countries is such a complex matter that it can only be dealt with by working in close cooperation with other partners. That's the basic idea behind DEALS. It's a multi-stakeholder programme: not only does it target local governments, but companies, CSOs, other governments and particularly citizens in the partner countries are also expected to join in. The target cities are Beira in Mozambique, Kumasi in Ghana, Patheingyi in Myanmar, Pereira in Colombia, Sèmè-Podji in Benin and Manila in the Philippines.

Each city develops a tailored programme, based on local priorities. The interests of people who earn less than 1.25 dollar a day come first. VNG-I and several Dutch municipalities support the cities. The ultimate deal will be an agreement signed by all stakeholders that aims to solve an urgent problem and achieve an 'attractive aspiration'. Moreover, the deal is innovative, sets an (inter)national example and will generate tangible results. Solutions must be sustainable, receive broad support and tackle the underlying causes of the deal's main challenge.

DEALS was launched on 1 September 2017 and will end in August 2022. In September 2018, delegations from Beira, Kumasi, Patheingyi, Pereira and Sèmè-Podji visited the Netherlands. In the following months, Dutch delegations made trips to the partner cities. In addition to VNG-I and Dutch municipalities, the programme is supported by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. It is financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The budget is around €5 million.

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