



# FOCAL POLICY THEMES

Annual Update 2023



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
Our focal policy themes	4
1. Reaching the unreached	4
2. Pro-poor climate resilience	4
3. Value-based systemic change	4
<b>1. REACHING THE UNREACHED</b>	<b>6</b>
Intro	6
Experiences & lessons learned	7
Main lessons	8
What's next	9
Contact	9
<b>2. PRO-POOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE</b>	<b>10</b>
Intro	10
Experiences & lessons learned	11
What's next	12
Fisheries Sri Lanka	12
Contact	13
<b>3. VALUE-BASED SYSTEMIC CHANGE</b>	<b>14</b>
Intro	14
Experiences & lessons learned	15
What's next	16
The Big Four for system change	16
Contact	17



# INTRODUCTION

For the current policy period (2021-2025), Woord en Daad has formulated three focal policy themes:

- Reaching the unreached
- Pro-poor climate resilience
- Value-based systemic change

We consider these so important to achieving our mission and vision in the coming years that we would like to see them integrated in a relevant way in all our programs. For each of these policy themes, a small Learning Lead team has been put together to stimulate and support project teams in integrating the theme into their work.

While the focus in the first two years was on conducting analyses, in 2023 it shifted to following up on those analyses. As last year, the program teams reflected on the extent and manner in which the policy themes have received attention in the various projects. Below you will find the most important experiences and lessons for each of the three policy themes, together with the plans for 2024. As far as we are concerned, this clearly shows that the policy themes are increasingly integrated into our approaches.

Enjoy reading and we are happy to answer any questions or feedback,

*Wim Blok*  
*Antonie Treuren*  
*Jacob Jan Vreugdenhil*

## OUR FOCAL POLICY THEMES



### 1. REACHING THE UNREACHED

A guiding insight that will help us is to not treat 'unreached' as a homogeneous group. The unreached target group is diverse though often characterised by a combination of material, relational and cognitive poverty, which places people in a very vulnerable position. Categories of unreached are geographically isolated people ('white spots'), people excluded from services through gender-related and culturally embedded norms, including people with disabilities and exploited children. To make this policy theme practical, we will invest in a standard exclusion analysis to identify the unreached groups, context- and program-specific. This will inform targeting strategies to make these people groups visible and enable to work on inclusion and monitoring the success of such strategies. We aim to contribute substantially to the reduction of exclusion through an integrated focus on gender and disability in our work, a bias for new programming in white spots, a focus on exploited children (Education program) and collaboration with national and international expert organizations and local churches and community organizations to find entry to unreached communities and individual



### 2. PRO-POOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

We acknowledge that the world's poor are most severely impacted by the effects of climate change. This policy theme, therefore, is closely related to reaching the unreached. People living in vulnerable contexts face even more hardship resulting from extreme weather, freshwater shortages and related issues like growing conflicts over natural resources and irregular migration. In the context of increasing pressure on their livelihoods, we aim to strengthen our target groups' abilities to cope with changing conditions, and where possible benefit from climate change. To do this effectively we will develop tools to assess more precisely how climate change effects people's daily lives. This will be a basis for developing relevant climate resilience programs and searching new partners and donors. Our ambition to build climate resilience in poor communities will be supported by influencing policies of Dutch and EU institutions which have a direct effect on the resilience of our target groups, engaging in dialogue and awareness raising activities with our supporters base, and a sustainable corporate way of working (our CSR and ICSR policies).



### 3. VALUE-BASED SYSTEMIC CHANGE

We respond to the increased complexity of poverty causes by positioning into new roles and focusing interventions on sector level. With systemic change we aim to influence root causes of poverty and social-economic inequality. The scope of our programs will more than before include multiple levels of an area in which we work: national-level government policies, sector-level services, community-level attitudes, and personal-level skills, knowledge and a new way of thinking. We will commit to longer-term partnerships in selected target areas and work with a broader range of stakeholders. In our partnerships we will seek to provide or influence strategic leadership in the implicated sector and bring in innovative capacity. A new emphasis for



our lobby experts working in Brussels and The Hague will be to seek more collaboration and engagement with lobby activities of our Southern partners to support systemic changes, especially in the area of our policy themes. Important for us will be to seek or negotiate for collaboration based on ethical practices that translate our core values. To realize this, we will pro-actively engage in value dialogue. To gain better view on stakeholders and political dynamics in the context, we will introduce (and use existing) tools for system mapping and monitoring. Within our partnerships, we aim to contribute to better decision making in the sector based on reliable data and analysis, with a focus on inclusion. This allows for continuous adjustment of strategies in response to trends and opportunities.

1.



# REACHING THE UNREACHED

## INTRO

Halfway through the current policy period, we note that the policy theme Reaching the unreached has become firmly anchored in our work. Studies conducted in the last two years have provided insight into the exclusion-prone groups and related exclusion mechanisms. They have strengthened awareness among colleagues and partners that the prevention of exclusion requires specific attention in project design and in the implementation phase, particularly in the selection of the participants.

In 2023 we saw an increase in the number of projects in which the integration of the Reaching the Unreached theme received active and substantial attention to a total of 35 projects. In addition, we see that in 2023 the emphasis has shifted from analysis to follow-up, in other words to actual prevention or reduction of exclusion.



## **EXPERIENCES & LESSONS LEARNED**

Exclusion-risks assessments (ERAs) have been carried out in 2023, but we also see a broadening of the repertoire of analysis tools. Examples include context analyses with explicit attention to exclusion risks, studies into the mechanisms of child exploitation, studies into child labor and living income studies. We welcome this broadening of the analytical repertoire because in this way analyses can sometimes be better integrated into the possibilities of a project. It also provides a broader insight into what is needed to achieve better inclusion. It is also good to note that an analysis does not always have to be perfect in design or execution to have added value for promoting inclusion. Experience shows that if the project team is involved in a relevant manner in the analysis process, this raises awareness and brings motivation to work on reaching all those who belong to the intended target group.

Exclusion-prone groups that emerge from the above mentioned studies are very diverse and include the following groups: women and girls, children and adults living with a (physical or mental) handicap, persons living in remote areas, children living under exploitative conditions, immigrant and IDP groups, ethnic minorities, extremely vulnerable individuals (e.g. those living on garbage dumps or in areas dominated by gang violence), (ex-)prostitutes, elderly people without a social network. Some of these groups are present in most contexts and are among the intended target groups of several programs, such as women and girls, people living with disabilities, and exploited children. But other groups are specific to a context/theme combination. In the first case, one could consider mainstreaming approaches aimed at the inclusion of these groups. But in other cases, more tailor-made approaches will have to be sought.

It is also good to realize that extensive exclusion analyzes are not always necessary to work effectively on inclusion. For example, for projects that focus on introducing access to sufficient, clean and safe water as a paid service, it is clear without analysis that very poor people will not have access to this service because they do not have the money for it. In the Water Time project in Uganda the project team consulted with village leaders, who decided that poor village members could receive water for free or at a reduced rate. This way, the concept of sustainable access to safe water through payment remains intact, but everyone has access.

We increasingly see that addressing exclusion risks is receiving explicit attention early on, i.e. in the phase of writing grant proposals and in the inception phase when project designs are being developed. This is to be welcomed because these early phases offer the most opportunities to pay attention to the targeted selection of exclusion-prone groups and the choice of approaches that suit these groups and to facilitate this with the necessary budgets. In this way, achieving exclusion-prone groups is not an add-on but an integral part of the goal and design of the project. If attention to exclusion-prone groups is treated as something extra, then there is a risk that this intention will quickly disappear if the implementation of the project encounters difficulties because solving them then requires priority.

Projects increasingly involve and collaborate with organizations that represent exclusion-prone groups or have specific expertise in this area. Examples are organizations of domestic workers who are familiar with exploitative circumstances and how to combat them, or organizations of and for people with disabilities. If people with lived experience are directly involved in projects in this way, access to these groups and the development of effective approaches is greatly enhanced.

### **MAIN LESSONS**

- Some exclusion-prone groups need a combination of different types of support; that is difficult to fit into an existing thematic program and requires a new initiative with an integrated approach and bringing together various local actors - this is the outcome of an ERA by the Hope Enterprises education program in Ethiopia that helps children living on the garbage dump in Koshe, Addis Ababa. During the development of this project, we learned an additional lesson: even though the ERA has identified the vulnerable group, it must always be checked during implementation whether this group is actually being reached with the interventions that are specifically designed for them.
- Involving people who themselves belong to an excluded group in the design and implementation of projects brings extremely relevant awareness, knowledge, expertise and motivation to strengthening the inclusion of these groups – this was experienced in projects focusing on supporting exploited children and youth and in youth employment projects that tried to include young people living with a handicap.
- Carrying out a study focused on exclusion-prone groups (ERA or other type of study) makes teams and partners aware of the problem, gives these groups a face and brings the topic to the table. This provides an indispensable basis for further work on more inclusive projects, even if this initial study is limited in design or imperfectly executed – this is a broadly shared experience.
- Sometimes no extensive analysis is necessary into who is exclusion-prone, but without such an analysis a project design can be chosen that focuses on the inclusion of groups whose exclusion risks are evident.



## WHAT'S NEXT

In recent years, valuable experience has been gained in analyzing exclusion risks and developing strategies to (better) reach exclusion-prone groups. Existing approaches that partners use to reach these groups have also become better visible. By 2024, we will identify and document good inclusion practices for all thematic programs so that these practices can be deployed more widely.

In addition, we want to incorporate the insights gained so far into a Briefing Note that will answer the learning questions we formulated at the start of this policy period.

## CONTACT

*Learning lead:*

Wim Blok

[w.blok@woordendaad.nl](mailto:w.blok@woordendaad.nl)

*Members of the learning team for this theme:*

Judith van den Bogaard

[j.vandenbogaard@woordendaad.nl](mailto:j.vandenbogaard@woordendaad.nl)

Greetje Urban

[g.urban@woordendaad.nl](mailto:g.urban@woordendaad.nl)

Jaco Ottevanger

[j.ottevanger@woordendaad.nl](mailto:j.ottevanger@woordendaad.nl)

2.



# PRO-POOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

## INTRO

For 2023 our goal was to turn the information gained through the Climate Risk Assessments (CRA's) into concrete action plans. The CRA's have proven to be a lean and reliable tool that allowed partnerships to reflect on the role that climate change vulnerability plays in their context and to make specific steps to increase people's ability to cope and adapt. 24 partnerships have put substantial attention towards pro-poor climate resilience. Their learnings have been shared internally and outside the organization. Learning on this focal policy theme takes place in an organic way on various levels: partnership level, with colleagues within Woord en Daad and on the level of the development sector through Partos and EU-Cord. In general, it can be observed that the CRA's, and more general, the attention for climate resilience becomes more explicit throughout our programs.



## EXPERIENCES & LESSONS LEARNED

In the Education program, for some projects, such as those in Sierra Leone, Benin and Uganda, concrete action was taken. Insecurity stopped planned interventions on this theme in Haiti and Burkina Faso. From almost every sponsorship partner information was received about the local situation and needs in regard to climate change and climate education through a small survey rolled out by Woord en Daad. The results were summarized into a three-pager and shared with all partners for inspiration. Also, multiple separate conversations were done with sponsorship partners, sharing about the approach to the topic and potential best practices. On program level research has been carried out on the intersection of climate change, climate education and child exploitation, which has led to valuable insights and recommendations for our exploited children projects. The learning lead team carried out an inventory of the climate related adaptation interventions that we already implement in our programs. One of the interesting findings was that, especially for the Sustainable Water and the Inclusive Agribusiness program, already many climate adaptation measures are an integral part of the current approach. This exercise made us aware that Woord en Daad, together with its partners, already have substantial track record. The aim is to update the inventory annually and to continue growing in our experience.

In various partnerships pro-poor climate resilience is not only an element of the approach but at the heart of the objectives. Examples are the fisheries project in Sri Lanka and also the Fiber for the Future project in the Philippines. By becoming involved in a value chain that in itself stimulates the production of natural fibers (Abaca) we are naturally combining the objective of increased income of smallholder farmers and the preservation of the natural environment.

The largest climate focused intervention for Woord en Daad is the Benkadi program. Through lobby and advocacy, we aim to have the voice heard of people hit the hardest by climate change in Burkina Faso, Benin, Ivory Coast and Mali. There is a special focus on women, youth and people living with a disability. The objective is that policy makers integrate their stories and rights into effective policy implementation. This is done in West Africa, and also in Brussels and The Hague influencing the Dutch and European government for inclusive climate policies.

In 2023 we engaged in the development of a new partnership in Bangladesh focusing on concrete climate resilient approaches, for example rain harvesters, drill demonstration in case of cyclone and solar based irrigation system. This partnership aims on the one hand to provide people with solutions that have an immediate impact, and on the other hand on supporting the formulation of policies that take the reality of the most vulnerable communities into account. Between partners from Latin America and Africa an exchange has taken place on lessons learned in relation to climate adaptation through education (e.g. the success of climate centered child clubs and the vision as Christian educational partners on climate change efforts). In the future we aim to facilitate more such initiatives.

Within the Inclusive Agribusiness program, in collaboration with strategic partner Inluvest, a learning trajectory has started in 2023 on 'regenerative resource management'. A dedicated team is describing core principles and developing tools that allow the structural integration of this theme into the agribusiness project portfolio. This also involves making sure that the right knowledge partners are on board for effective implementation.

Within the emergency relief and resilience program climate change also becomes an increasingly important element. By increasing the focus on local communities climate resilience gets a more natural place into the partnerships.

In 2023 we worked together with Professor Jan van der Stoep in the formulation of a narrative that will explain, based on the identity of Woord en Daad, why working on climate resilience is important. This narrative will be used in the development of new partnerships on climate change and also in our communication with partners, our constituency and other stakeholders.

## **WHAT'S NEXT**

In 2024 we continue along the same path. We will complete the narrative together with Jan van der Stoep. Together with Partos and RVO we will organize a learning event on the possible impact of public private partnerships (PPP's) in the area of climate adaptation. We will continue to facilitate learning exchanges, also among our partners. Specific topics that will have attention is climate finance and the further development of a vision and methodology concerning regenerative resource management. For Benkadi communication material will be made and a climate learning event will be organized in Benin. Stakeholders from various actors (including the government) will get together to discuss the need for climate inclusive policies. Through video and photos, the challenges related to coastal erosion, deforestation and agricultural production will be made visible for a wide audience for the purpose of awareness raising, policy influencing and partnership building. We will increase our collaboration with stakeholders and platforms in the sector such as with Partos and EU-Cord and also give attention in exchanging lessons learned with other development organizations in the Netherlands.

Finally, also preparations will be made in discussing in what way this focal policy theme will be followed up in the new policy period (2026-2030). It is expected that climate resilience will remain a central point of attention for Woord en Daad.

## **FISHERIES SRI LANKA**

In 2022 an action plan based on a CRA was finalized aiming for a start of implementation in the beginning of 2023. Based on the CRA the consortium realized that only further focusing on only conventional fishing would not be sustainable as a long-term approach. Although conventional fishing practices



can generate a good income for fisherman, on the long run it will further contribute to overfishing and the depletion of fish stocks. The CRA revealed an alternative and more sustainable route both economically and ecologically. Through income diversification people from the fishing communities are now motivated to grow seaweed and to breed sea cucumbers. The markets for these products are growing and the impact on the sea's ecosystem is less than conventional fishing. As a result, income diversification also provides more income security for people. If one of their other activities does not prove to be as profitable as anticipated, the income generated through the sale of seaweed or sea cucumbers can mitigate the impact.

Furthermore our partner OPEnE gathered fisheries cooperatives from two provinces and their leadership which are two overarching federations. They organized a meeting and confronted them with the environmental problems in the coastal areas. Together they came up with an action plan which is currently being implemented. Breeding areas are marked in the ocean, fishermen are not allowed to enter. This is enforced by the cooperatives of which they themselves are a member. Other actions in the plan are about stopping dynamite fishing and bottom trawling. We try to link this action plan to government policies by introducing it to the ministry of fisheries and aquaculture, starting with the local level.



## CONTACT

*Learning lead:*  
Antonie Treuren

[a.treuren@woordendaad.nl](mailto:a.treuren@woordendaad.nl)

*Learning team members for this theme:*

Dico van den Noort  
Evert van Grol

[d.vandennoort@woordendaad.nl](mailto:d.vandennoort@woordendaad.nl)  
[e.vangrol@woordendaad.nl](mailto:e.vangrol@woordendaad.nl)



3.



## 3. VALUE-BASED SYSTEMIC CHANGE

### INTRO

As we look back for the third subsequent year in our policy period, there are a lot of intermediate results and learning. The policy theme gains traction, we now have 34 partnerships worldwide that are making steps towards the system change way of working (compared to 11 the year before). This has created an amount of observations and lessons, which we have used both in internal learning sessions and sharing with partners, to grow our joint experience in an organic way. We have this year broadened our focus when it comes to the 'tooling': apart from the home-grown *system change canvas* we have used other studies and methodologies as well for system analysis, while the same core principles and mind-set remain leading. An internal analysis research towards partnerships for system change deepened our understanding (see text box), and resulted in a partnership scan which can help to build strong partnerships for system change.



## EXPERIENCES & LESSONS LEARNED

In designing system change interventions, we have put emphasis on choosing the right **'leverage points'** after having done a full analysis: those actions or interventions that have a likely potential to cause ripple effects and movement in the system. What do some of those leverage points look like in practice? Here are some examples from our portfolio: i) introducing higher-quality paid services to rural communities in cooperation with a regional government, ii) implementing a data monitoring system for a sector service provider, iii) co-producing an improved curriculum for public schools together with the Ministry of education. But also, seemingly simple interventions can cause ripple effects and bring systemic change: iv) establishing cooperatives to connect unlocked production capacity with the market and services in the chain, or v) set-up storage locations for small producers, to be able to sell against off-season prices. As we conclude: leverage points can be found on all different levels, and are very specific to each context.

As we brought the mind-set and methodology of system change to many of our running and starting collaborations, we also re-emphasized this year that there is a place for more direct support for target groups with a strong output focus for the short term. One of our partners phrased it as follows: we work to achieve **change for our target groups today, tomorrow and forever**. While 'change tomorrow' challenges us to sustainably embed local service provision, and 'change forever' requires systemic changes, 'change today' justifies direct responses to the needs of target groups. Still the intention should be to align any intervention, including emergency responses, with a long-term perspective and sustainable outcomes. By experience we also concluded that systemic change ambition has to be lowered when political instability or crisis occur. In countries with an ongoing complex crisis situation, it is wise to stop focusing on a comprehensive systemic change ambition, and make sure limited resources are spend responsibly.

Where we see the best dynamics in our partnerships is where somebody in a key position fully owns the rationale for system change and has a drive for operating in a sector-wide partnership: **orchestrating leadership** (see also text box). This can be a local WD project manager, a staff from a partner, or a key figure from an important stakeholder (like government). We have clear showcases across the portfolio with promising results: scaling value-based school curricula in Guatemala, influencing regional cooperation on improved watershed management in Ethiopia, combining different product cycles (honey and cashew) for small producers to boost complementary value chains in Uganda, or improving labor market dynamics resulting in youth employment in Burkina Faso.

We have been engaged in a learning trajectory on **monitoring systemic change**, where experiences and questions from actual partnerships were shared, coupled with theories and available tools in the sector. The outcome mapping methodology seems to be a useful tool to be used as a basis, to be further tailored per context and partnership. One of the earlier used versions of a system change framework (in a water sector

program, Tigray) was concluded to be rather effective in capturing systemic changes. Still, improvements are possible and are taken up, for example through improved linkages between qualitative and quantitative monitoring and specifically monitoring on crosscutting factors (like cooperation or advocacy activity).

An inventory was made by a student on how particular **values are integrated and recognized** by partners in ongoing collaboration. People-centeredness, trust and empowerment were noted as values feeding stronger links in sustained partnerships. Involved partners recognized the value profile of WD to a large extent and appreciated the importance of these values. Initiatives across our portfolio to emphasize value-dialogues more explicitly throughout aspects of the partnership were backed by the research. The theme of local-led development and southern leadership is one such area for exchanging views and values going forward.

## WHAT'S NEXT

As our learning curve progresses steadily, we will continue and aim to reach next levels on topics we have looked into. Further steps on monitoring system change stays a priority. We will also reflect on work done and anchor the gained knowledge and lessons learned. In 2024 we aim to create an overview of what we have learned so far on this policy theme, including tools and good practices. We can then use this for a dual purpose: to transfer and secure knowledge among both new and existing colleagues, and secondly, to use it towards other organizations and donors as a track record.

We will also explore new directions and practices in our programs. Areas for growth were highlighted in a consultation from all programs: how to facilitate shared vision in a diverse group of system actors, creating a joint advocacy towards public offices with a diverse group holding different stakes, and how to better mobilize system resources once a shared vision has been created? In some cases where we see good dynamics on a local level, the question of scaling pops up. We want to develop explicit strategies to see regional systemic change gain potential nation-wide impact. This offers an agenda to learn on how to work best with governments. With examples from the running portfolio, we will try to engage with these questions in a practical way, and bring it very close to our teams and partners.

## THE BIG FOUR FOR SYSTEM CHANGE

Woord en Daad looked at a portfolio of 16 projects between 2015-2022 for which we were in the lead ranging from public-private partnerships, multi-actor partnerships and system change initiatives. The results are published in the report 'Analysis Partnerships aimed at System Change' (January 2023), and can be found in [this link](#).

The major outcomes of the study point at 'the big four' for system change:



1) continuous context analysis, 2) adaptive management, 3) a flexible funding mechanism, and 4) the presence of orchestrating leadership.

Successful strategies for achieving system change require an approach in which the donor understands and allows for an a partly 'unknown' activity scope, while the members of the partnership continuously look beyond the borders of their intervention to what happens in the environment and sector and adjust accordingly. This means being in touch with a range of stakeholders not directly in the partnership. A strong orchestrating role needs to be played to indeed keep an eye on developments in the context, the give-and-take of partnership members and communicating to all sides for the sake of the system change ambition. Compared to the 'project implementation' we know, this asks a very deliberate extra mile from all involved!

## **CONTACT**

*Learning lead:*

Jacob Jan Vreugdenhil

[jj.vreugdenhil@woordendaad.nl](mailto:jj.vreugdenhil@woordendaad.nl)

*Learning team members for this theme:*

Pascal Ooms

[p.ooms@woordendaad.nl](mailto:p.ooms@woordendaad.nl)

Nelline Roest

[n.roest@woordendaad.nl](mailto:n.roest@woordendaad.nl)

