

Cordaid and participation



Resident of a slum in San Salvador.

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Cape Town, South Africa

Kosovo, one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods of the Philippi district, and the focus area of the Cordaid project Urban Matters. Urban Matters utilises the strength of the city's young population and gets young people involved in the development of their own urban districts.



René Grotenhuis, director of Cordaid:

“Development is emancipation”

Development aid on the way out? Not if Cordaid director René Grotenhuis has anything to say about it. “I see Cordaid as an important actor in social change. We actively participate in global communities of change.”

This new perspective breaks with the old model, under which Cordaid’s most important function was to provide financial aid to the poor. Migration problems, climate change, scarcity of resources and the food crisis are not problems of the southern hemisphere, but of the world. We, too, have a lot of changes to make. Cordaid sees its role as a part of global movements in these areas, all of which, says Grotenhuis, are directly linked to poverty.

“Money does remain an important means of setting off these global changes. In these *communities of change*, the richest shoulders bear the heaviest financial burdens – it’s a simple doctrine of fairness. Which means that the financing function remains part of what Cordaid does, but the responsibilities and the choices are being shifted more and more to our partner organisations. People living on the fringes of society have to have their voices heard; they have to have a say in the discussions and the decision-making affecting their lives. And one way of achieving that is to create more south-south relationships.”

Movements of social change are not something restricted to civil society even though it takes citizens to make things happen. Cordaid actively seeks connections with the business sector, professionals and political players. Worldwide responsibilities call for worldwide knowledge exchange, and for Cordaid, that means spreading knowledge and experiences, not only abroad, but also in the Netherlands.

“Cordaid has not only financial resources, but an extensive network to contribute,” says Grotenhuis. “But it is our partner organisations that know the needs of vulnerable people and marginalised groups best.” “It’s about developing social stakeholding, among our base in the Netherlands and our partners worldwide,” explains Grotenhuis, “These are people who connect with us, who feel a shared sense of ownership, who tell us where we can do better, and who are proud of what we are achieving. I also like to point out that the concept of *global communities of change* is very compatible with the Catholic idea that through compassion for your fellow man, you become a better person.”

Examples of *communities of change* can be found in the work being done in Cordaid’s sectors Health & Well-being, Entrepreneurship, Participation and Emergency Aid & Reconstruction. In Africa, homebased care organisations are using the Cordaid network to exchange knowledge and experience with groups in other parts of the world, like Mexico. In its *Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction* programme, Cordaid is supporting local partners in ten countries on improving readiness for natural disasters like droughts, floods, hurricanes and earthquakes. Partners in the Horn of Africa, for example, are using this programme to exchange experiences on potential adaptations and collaborate on joint lobbying strategies to get governmental authorities involved in setting up precautionary measures.



René Grotenhuis

“By connecting other institutions like research institutions to these kinds of programmes, the process can be further enhanced. But the sense of ownership is crucial, and that means making sure that decisions are made together whenever and wherever possible. What you want to do is spread the process out over more organisations.”

On the ground

The idea of *communities of change* is based on the assumption that people can draw a connection between their own experiences and those of people in other countries. This can be difficult, especially in conflict areas; sometimes the brutality and suffering emerging from each new conflict seems unprecedented. But there are patterns of power, exclusion and marginalisation that can be found everywhere, and this is where Cordaid tries to make connections. Working in fragile states and societies is part and parcel of Cordaid’s work. Cordaid has a long history of emergency aid and conflict control in unstable areas. “It’s in our organisation’s DNA,” says Grotenhuis. “In conflict areas, churches play an important role. Sometimes parishes are the only network that people can fall back on.” Cordaid also identifies and addresses the needs and obstacles faced by migrants and refugees from countries such as Sudan, Angola and Afghanistan in maintaining an active connection with their home countries. Cordaid considers the connection between migration and development aid a critical one in achieving its goals. Cordaid defines the concept of sustainability as not only an ecological question, but a social one as well. Of course, support for fair trade is an important part of this, but for Cordaid, it doesn’t end there. In many cases, the poorest pay the price in the pursuit of natural resources. In Chad, people are being driven

off their lands for the pursuit of oil resources; in Ghana, water supplies are under severe threat from mining operations.

“Development aid is a focal point where social, economic, political, cultural and religious aspects come together,” says Grotenhuis. “The longer I work in the field of development, the more I realise that the root cause of poverty is exclusion, and that development is really a process of emancipation.” He points out that the major emancipation movements, such as the labour movement or the women’s movement, were always centred around marginalised people who were themselves the driving force behind the movement but who also needed sympathisers in other segments of society. “That’s why I see development aid as support for a process that is in the hands of people who are being excluded. And, what’s more, we in the northern hemisphere have to get beyond our self-satisfied attitude and start asking ourselves about our own processes of development. Because our lifestyle is untenable. It’s about time we convince the political sector and the public that global issues are also northern issues. That we are all responsible, and that we can’t solve anything without each other’s knowledge, experience and inspiration.”

This brochure presents some examples of what Cordaid is doing in the field of participation – what people are doing to highlight injustice and help minorities stand up for themselves. In short, how to initiate change in power relationships. Because the problems of the south are closely interwoven with those of the north, we hope that these examples inspire a new look at development aid. A look that will inspire solidarity.



San Marcos, Guatemala

Native leaders and residents organising their own defence against transnational mining corporations. Large-scale gold mining has a disastrous impact on local Maya communities and the environment in which they live.



San Salvador, El Salvador

One of the biggest challenges in the Mejicanos and Soyapango districts is creating better living conditions in the slums built in unsafe locations. Many slums are hastily thrown together on mountain slopes and are at risk from landslides. Others, like this one, are built right alongside railway lines.

PARTICIPATION

Margriet Nieuwenhuis, Participation sector manager:

“Participation comes with real results”

The Participation sector oversees three programmes: Women & Violence, Slum-dwellers, and Identity & Diversity. All three rely on the target groups themselves to be the driving force initiating change. The Participation sector has less direct involvement in combating poverty than other Cordaid sectors; rather, its focus is on societal reconstruction and influencing policy. All our activities are built around the motto “voice and choice,” giving citizens avenues for co-determination and the ability to make choices on the issues affecting them.

“Participation is not about participation as an end in itself, but you want to see that participation coming back in results,” says sector manager Margriet Nieuwenhuis. “For example, in legislation. An urban development plan, for example. It’s about embedding participation sustainably in a society. To put the spotlight on injustices and to document real-world cases properly.”

Three different tracks

There is a separate programme for Women & Violence, even though Cordaid endeavours to rectify injustice in male-female relationships in all its activities. “But having a specific programme lets us go at it in depth,” says Nieuwenhuis. “It also helps us keep attention focused on gender, and our experiences in the Women & Violence programme

can inspire other programmes.” Knowledge exchange and capacity reinforcement are the central focus. The guiding principle is the Cordaid signature: women tapping their own strengths to find the space for their rights within local standards and values. “Ideally, we prefer to work with the women in the villages directly,” says Nieuwenhuis. “Like with mediators in Sierra Leone. But elsewhere, we are supporting the groups that are trying to change power relationships at a higher level. We prove that change is possible. That’s something that women can draw a lot of hope and inspiration from.” Women can also play a role in reconciliation and justice during conflicts. “Opening up discussions on subjects like rape in conflict situations can set all kinds of changes in motion.”

The Slum-dwellers programme covers very familiar ground for Cordaid. In this programme, Cordaid zooms in on the areas of social housing and basic necessities, and the labour market for young people. The urbanisation of the world is progressing at an ever-increasing rate. In Latin America, eighty per cent of the population now live in cities. The Urban Matters programme is a promising pilot project, involving knowledge exchange and cooperation agreements between the Netherlands and the South.

The Identity & Diversity programme focuses on groups defined by an identity, and who are excluded because of that identity, whether religious, ethnic or cultural. Native peoples' access to natural resources is increasingly under threat from forces like large-scale mining, logging and agriculture. Cordaid helps native peoples and minorities to get their voices heard and win their rights to make choices. Through CISDE, a network of sixteen Catholic development organisations in Europe and North America, Cordaid is working towards legislation that will force multinationals to protect local populations. At present, multinationals can largely act in a sort of legal vacuum in which they have free rein and minorities are powerless to act against them.

Towards a full-spectrum approach

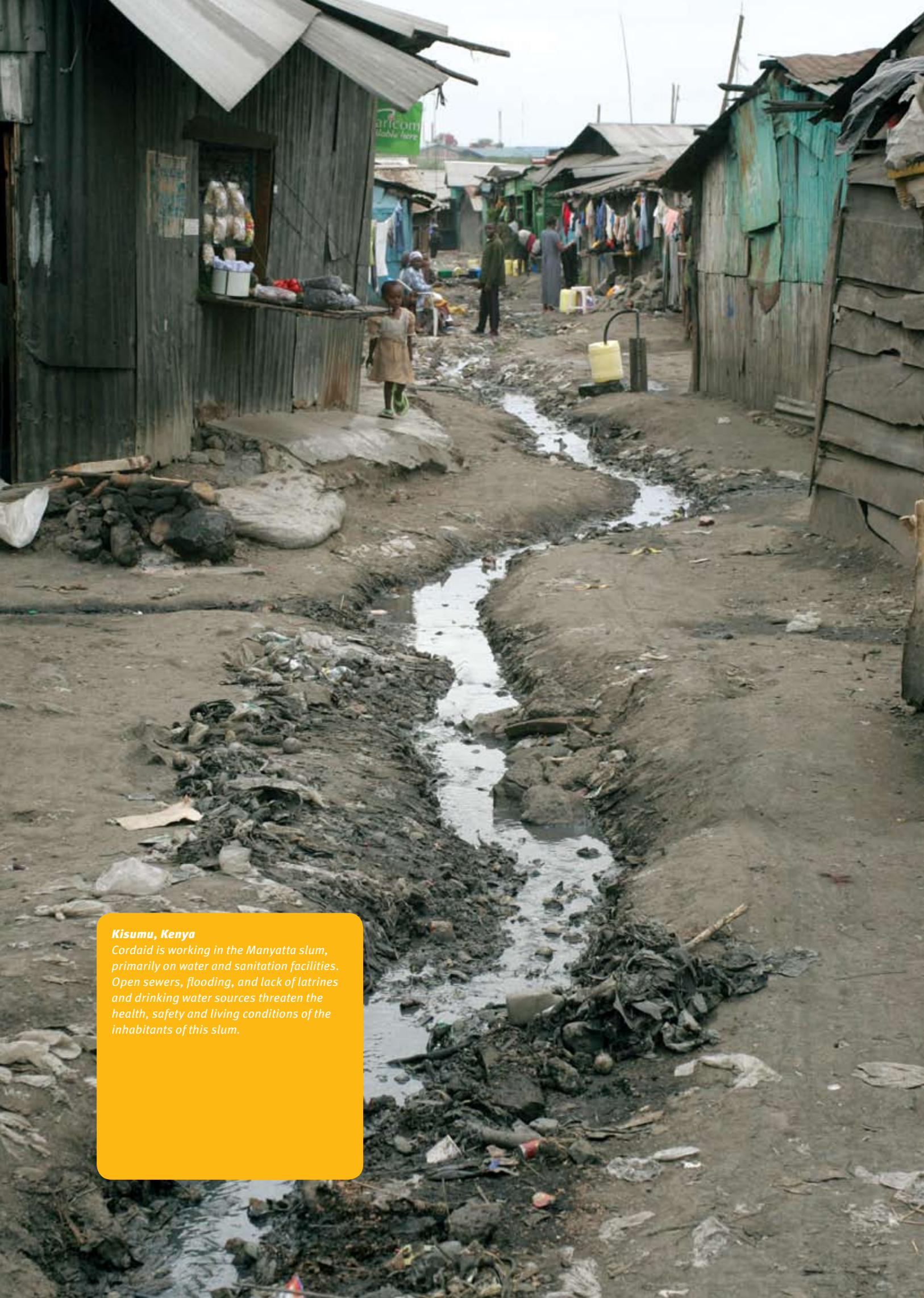
The Participation sector's strategy is to engage in cooperation with more stakeholders. The complexity of the cooperation is increasing, while the focus is shifting towards fewer countries, fewer cities and less poverty-fighting. Nieuwenhuis considers cooperation with social organisations, NGOs, knowledge institutions, companies and governmental authorities, the "programme-based approach," a challenge. "Once it was very much in question whether we could make connections between Africa, Asia and Latin America. But there are common denominators. For example, in the urbanisation issue, we have seen interesting exchanges on citizen participation in Latin America and Africa. And in our lobbying work, we employ good practices from the different continents to better profile a theme." And, with the linking and learning programme, Cordaid creates an interaction between a number of different partners on a single topic.



Margriet Nieuwenhuis

The goal is not just for the Cordaid partners to learn, but for Cordaid itself to learn, too.

In its early days, Cordaid financed projects, and then as many projects as possible with a certain cohesion of theme. Today, Cordaid works not only with the traditional NGO world, but with other networks, governmental authorities and academic centres. In short, there are more stakeholders. And the Urban Matters programme adds yet another, extra dimension: matching the needs of Dutch companies with the needs of partners in the South. Cordaid mediates in connecting the parties. "Financing projects, the way we worked before, is simpler than financing a process, like we do today," says Nieuwenhuis. "Now we have to deal with more and different interests. The added value is the interaction and exchange. So youth organisations in the Netherlands can learn from NGOs working with young people in slums in the South, for example."



Kisumu, Kenya

Cordaid is working in the Manyatta slum, primarily on water and sanitation facilities. Open sewers, flooding, and lack of latrines and drinking water sources threaten the health, safety and living conditions of the inhabitants of this slum.



Identity and Diversity Programme

National economic interests do not mesh with the local interests of native populations. Mining, oil and gas extraction, large-scale agriculture, tourism and climate change all threaten indigenous peoples and their access to land, water and forests. But national governments treat the problems of ethnic, religious and cultural groups as marginal.

With its initiatives under the Identity and Diversity programme, Cordaid is trying to shift power relationships so that minorities can have their say and be heard. The activities of partner organisations focus on strengthening the groups' individual identities, promoting leadership, and breaking through the target group's isolation. This is being done on three continents: in Guatemala, in Kalimantan, and in the Horn of Africa.

One feature of groups defined by an identity is that they are excluded based on their religion, ethnicity or culture.

The most important thing is for these groups to relate their problems and needs themselves, and learn to negotiate with other parties on them. They must not only stand up for their legal rights, but fight for social acceptance, in arenas like the media, until dominant groups ultimately learn to see minorities differently.

PROGRAMME 1 - IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY - GUATEMALA

Right to land

Cordaid wants to make sure that when indigenous peoples' land is threatened by large-scale mining or agriculture, the local population no longer has to sit back and take it. Together with partner organisations and local networks, we are helping make them more resistant to this type of threat. And we help them in their legal struggle to have their rights recognised.

This is being done in Guatemala (mining) Kalimantan (palm oil plantations), and Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia (pastoral farmers). There are similarities, for example, between the native Dayak in Kalimantan and the threat they face from palm oil plantations, and the position of Indians in Latin America versus mining operations. Both cases involve aggressive industrial expansion and tense situations that can flare up into conflicts. States and companies interpret laws in their own interest, without respecting the ancient land rights of local populations. Indigenous peoples give away their land for a token fee, and then are forced to hire themselves out to the plantations, losing not only their land but also their mutual solidarity in the process. They become estranged from their culture. And the situation only gets worse when the palm oil plantations or mines are no longer productive, and the day labourers lose their source of income.

Firstly, Cordaid considers it important for marginalised people to organise themselves and explain their issues and needs. Secondly, they have to learn to negotiate with the other party. Thirdly, they have to have their legal position reinforced. And finally, dominant parties have to adjust their preconceptions of groups defined by an identity, like the nomadic livestock keepers (pastoralists) in Africa or Indians in Latin America. Research, and the production of DVDs, are important means for Cordaid in achieving these goals.

Holding out

In Guatemala, the many mining concessions pose serious problems for the indigenous Maya people. Cordaid researched how mining company Goldcorp appropriated the land for the "Marlin" mine. The company threatened and intimidated the Maya, shamelessly exploiting their poverty very successfully (under the guise of voluntary land transactions) and disregarded the fact that the Maya had been living off that land for hundreds of years.

The object of the study was to initiate legal proceedings, to ensure that other companies respect the rights of indigenous peoples in the future, and to get the land rights of native peoples on the political agenda. Cordaid produced a DVD showing exactly how the mining industry drives out communities, destroys the existing economy and social structure, and put the indigenous population's health at risk by using potassium cyanide in mining. Not only in Guatemala, but all over Latin America.

Cordaid's Nico van Leeuwen explains: "Guatemala has sound legislation on the land rights of indigenous peoples, based on the international standards of the UN. But the local population doesn't know this legislation exists, let alone know what their rights to the soil and the land are. That's why we do everything we can to spread this type of knowledge as broadly as possible, including at the international level. For example, the study shows that as a group, you're stronger in enforcing your rights to the land and the forest than you are as an individual farmer." Historically, native peoples have had a strong position: their collective rights are recognised in a number of different international treaties. When the population then stands up for their rights, Cordaid supports them. "It takes a long time to achieve results that really make a difference to the local

WHAT

Defending ancient land rights

WHY

To prevent exploitation of indigenous peoples

HOW

With research, legislation and visual media



Guatemala

Local inhabitants demonstrate against the wholesale plundering of natural resources.

people. Land rights are a politically charged topic. Plus our results are difficult to measure. How many people succeed in having a say at the municipal level? Or actively participating in advocacy organisations?"

Cordaid works closely with farmer organisations and the local population. "We focus very strongly on building up these farmer organisations," says Van Leeuwen. "So their voice is really heard, and so that they can assert their rights to their land and water sources. Today there are many farmer organisations active in the advisory bodies set up by the government. They organise referendums that give them a chance to voice their view on important decisions. That's how they are fighting for their rights, going public with their stories, and doing more than just waiting. They are letting the voice of the South be heard."

PROGRAMME 1 - IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY - INDIA

Courageous women in Northeast India

Under India’s booming economy, there is a hidden drama. For fifty years, northeast India has been oppressed by armed conflict between government troops, armed insurgents and independence movements. And it is the citizens, native groups, who bear the brunt of this violence. Rapes and murders are commonplace, committed by all parties, including the pride of the Indian army, the “security forces.”

Smart

“The humiliation of women is built into our patriarchal culture,” explains one local woman. “Women have no rights of ownership or inheritance. When their husbands are killed, they are left with their children and no property. Poverty forces them into the sex trade, or they become the sex slaves of a unit of combatants.”

Despite it all, the women still seek a peaceful solution. Cordaid supports women’s networks in opposing systematic violence and discrimination against women. One of these networks is the North East India Women’s Network. It’s the first time that women’s organisations from different ethnic groups have united under one network. Their goal is to increase women’s say in decision-making processes within their own community and in government and militant circles. Cordaid’s coordinator says, “The network has a clear vision: if peace is ever to happen, the citizens must be involved in the peace process. Secondly, their motto is that peace can only come if there is a solution with all groups. That means a cross-ethnic solution. Thirdly, they stand for the role of women in conflict solutions and throwing light on injustice. Under ‘mother-to-mother contacts,’ women have more room than men to meet people from other ethnic groups. Because they are considered so insignificant, they have more room to do what they have to do.”

But when they meet, what they talk about is of a very different nature: they negotiate with the armed groups. Frequently, women are able to prevent escalation of violence, sometimes by preventing abductions and defusing tensions. Or by ostracising the perpetrators of violence and protecting the victims.

“Given the terrible circumstances,” says the Cordaid coordinator, it’s simply incredible how strategically the women go about it, the kind of courage they keep up every day, in the face of risk to their own lives.”

Lobby

Strengthening the capacity of woman leaders and women’s organisations is part of what Cordaid stands for: increasing the participation of women of ethnic minorities in decision-making processes.

With quiet diplomacy, Cordaid supports the reconciliation process and helps the women’s lobby identify human rights violations by armed groups and government forces. Cordaid also keeps these women’s groups informed of similar initiatives by women elsewhere in India, and organises conferences with human rights groups. Women’s networks in several different states are now in contact with each other. “For the first time, women from these isolated ethnic

WHAT

Strengthening women’s networks and leadership. Lobbying for identifying human rights violations.

WHY

To give woman victims of double-discrimination participation and help them play a role in the peace process.

HOW

Through capacity growth and lobbying. Local women’s organisations get training and advising in human rights, women’s rights and peace processes.

groups are in contact with minority groups in other states,” says the Cordaid coordinator. “They recognise each other’s situations. They feel solidarity, and exchange strategies and good ideas. How do you document human rights violations? How do you set up a monitoring system? How do you submit a report to a national and international human rights commission? The spin-off effect is that slowly but surely, other people in India are starting to find this hidden situation in northeast India unacceptable.”

Cordaid expects to see a backlash from the armed groups, the government, the women’s own communities, and even NGO leaders. As Cordaid sees it, the women have come too far, too fast, to not make some waves. “But we can deal with that counterforce strategically,” the Cordaid coordinator explains. “And we will also make sure that the Indian government keeps talking and looking for allies within all factions. With silent diplomacy, we are trying to bring out the voice of the citizen and create room for the added value of the role of women.”

Manipur, Northeast India
Women demonstrate against the Indian army.



Gwalabi, Manipur, Northeast India

On September 7, security forces stopped a freight lorry and executed five passengers. "Rebels," claimed the army. "Civilians," claim the demonstrators. In protest of the killings, these women blockade a main road in Manipur that the army uses for its movements.





Slum-dwellers programme

For over twenty years, Cordaid has been a leader with its initiatives in slums. And its investment is desperately needed: more than half of the world's population lives in cities. And in Latin America, thirty per cent of city-dwellers live in slums. In Sub-Saharan Africa, that number is seventy per cent.

There are many actors working to improve urban living conditions. In many cases, governments have set aside funds for infrastructure and public facilities. And the private sector is also investing. Slum-dwellers are trying to improve their living conditions with the support of NGOs and other social institutions, and Cordaid is trying to bring all these parties together. Our goal is to change power relationships in urban societies via these partners, so slum-dwellers can take a proactive role in the decision-making on the development of their local environments. The private and public sector, civil society, and the population are pursuing community development in Africa and Latin America.

A newcomer is the Urban Matters pilot, under which organisations in the south work with companies in the Netherlands on total community improvement.

Urban Matters is an exponent of how Cordaid looks at the urbanisation issue: a city – with all its dynamics – offers opportunities. By bringing the various different players in a community together, social housing, waste processing, urban planning, transport, employment and youth work all get a boost. Bundling ideas, resources and initiatives of civil society, the government, knowledge institutions and the private sector can be a better way to approach slum improvement projects.

PROGRAMME 2 - SLUMS - EL SALVADOR

Urban Matters: synergy in slums

Urban Matters is a new cooperative project between Cordaid and the Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment. It is being carried out in the cities Kisumu (Kenya), Cape Town (South Africa) and San Salvador (El Salvador), where Cordaid is supporting local partners. The goal: a full-spectrum approach to improving slum communities.

The objective of Urban Matters is to get Dutch companies, like housing corporations, waste processing and water companies, proactively responding to questions from partners in the South. Organisations, governmental authorities and residents in North and South are working together on full-spectrum improvements to their communities. This means better housing, sound basic facilities, healthy waste processing, more employment and improved safety. Through Urban Matters, Cordaid is a broker bringing parties together to find common solutions. “We support the cooperation because we have strong local networks,” says Cordaid’s Christel Hoogland. “Bringing parties together, analysing problems as a group, and making maximum use of the strengths of Dutch industry partners, all that means added value. This kind of cooperation leads to new and innovative solutions faster.”

Fresh look

Cordaid partner Fundasal and the two municipalities of Mejicanos and Soyapango (50,000 inhabitants) in San Salvador are the initiators behind the programme. Locally, eight Dutch parties worked with local parties for a week on an action plan for these two

San Salvador

However small the dwellings in the slums of San Salvador may be, everyone tries to make theirs a home. And a very strong faith in God is something that binds virtually all Salvadorans.

poor municipalities. The various parties reviewed all problems in the community, such as overpopulation, pollution, lack of facilities, and location (on steep slopes). The result was a declaration of intent signed by the Salvadoran Minister of Housing to create an urban development plan, with water and sanitation as a priority. One of the concrete proposals is waste recycling, and setting up a waste processing operation to do it. Another is the Mobile Factory, which will produce construction materials from construction rubble (one major source of pollution in the area). At the same time, this initiative is creating employment, both in the factory and in the construction sector. One of the problems is the many half-collapsed houses in the city, which are not being demolished because they are on lots so small that the demolition cranes cannot reach them. A participant in Urban Matters brought in precision technology to break down houses on these types of difficult lots, square metre by square metre, improving the property value and making the land available for social housing or project developers.

WHAT

Integral urban improvement

WHY

To solve slum problems

HOW

Via synergy between Dutch companies and organisations and governments in the south

“In the coming period, it will be exciting to see how well the parties from the south and the Netherlands mesh, and whether they can achieve concrete results.”

The Dutch companies also have their own interests in the cooperation. It allows them to tap into new markets. They can experiment with new materials and methods, and profile themselves with socially responsible business. They can use their experiences in San Salvador in Dutch problem neighbourhoods. Which is one reason why the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment is behind the project.

Hoogland has been pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm of Dutch companies and consulting and engineering firms. “Slums will keep spreading throughout the world. Dutch companies are looking for new markets for social housing or want to launch alternative construction materials and technologies. And there are companies, like water boards, that are motivated to make a contribution to achieving the Millennium Goals.”



PROGRAMME 2 - SLUMS - CAMEROON

Citizens are being heard in Cameroon

In Cameroon, the implementation of the decentralisation of authorities is proving to be a slow process. There is little cooperation between the government and social organisations, money is scarce, and corruption is rampant. Actions Solidaires de Soutien aux Organisations et d'Appui aux Libertés (ASSOAL), founded by students, took on the urban problems. Like the lack of sanitary and social facilities, but also the lack of information and participation. That decentralisation is the key to offering the urban residents the option to participate in the administration of their city or community. Their mission became: give slum-dwellers their say.

ASSOAL knows how to work with governmental authorities constructively. On the one hand, these authorities have a pronounced need for an effective civil society, but on the other hand they have problems sharing authority. And ASSOAL also knows how to mitigate, to some extent, the public's attitude towards the government - mistrust rooted in corruption and overhead costs. What ASSOAL does is focus on cooperation with the local authorities, by making proposals for community development plans, in which residents, the government, the private sector and civil society contribute. Proposals and ideas are collected through community committees set up and trained to do this with project support. The most urgent problems local residents raised was the lack of drinking water and infrastructure. Their communities are isolated, far away from markets and from schools. "The ultimate result was that money was set aside in the municipal investment budget for the construction of infrastructure," says Cordaid's Roos Wilhelm.

Cameroon
Community residents take a hand in local administration.

Participatory budget

The second result is that residents will take part in the decision-making on the budget for local investments. Community representatives put forward priorities on which the budget should be spent. The big advantage of this approach is that the investments now answer to the needs of the poor. Additionally, there is now social control on government expenditures. One disadvantage is that it is a fairly labour-intensive method. "The question is whether working with a participatory budget is always a good solution," says Wilhelm. "But right now it is: government funding can no longer be used for prestige projects, and instead is getting to the poor."

ASSOAL is strong in self-reflection and in cooperation. Which is unusual, because civil society in Cameroon is fragmented, and NGOs tend to see themselves more as competitors than as partners. ASSOAL, on the other hand, reinforces other actors. Like community organisations working towards an alternative health insurance in another district. ASSOAL brought them together, supported their organisation and, for the time being, continues to contribute to their thought processes.

Cooperation

In 2007, through the national network Réseau National des Habitants de Cameroun,



WHAT

Access to basic facilities in slums

WHY

To make communities socio-economically stronger

HOW

Through participation in community development plans and cooperation with government

ASSOAL brought together hundreds of local organisations, from small village organisations to large NGOs, to produce recommendations for community development. This was a rare opportunity for citizens to have their voices heard loud and clear by the government. And this method also helps counter the long-standing and strong distrust of the government. "ASSOAL shows how important it is to cooperate with the government diplomatically," says Wilhelm. "Thanks to their work, cooperation with the government really means something."

Via Linking & Learning, Cordaid organised exchanges on citizen participation between French-speaking Africa (with ASSOAL and others) and Latin America. Despite the completely different context, the participants learned a lot about the participatory budget, which has been used in Latin America for some time. And about how community residents can participate effectively in their community. "We are still seeing exchanges of good examples from both continents," says Wilhelm. "ASSOAL conducted a work visit to Peru, which led to self-reflection among aid workers and development workers, who are typically more doers. It is important to organise this type of linking and learning process at the personal, small-scale level, so people don't get hung up on the great differences between the continents."





Nairobi, Kenya

People with a little money purchase corrugated metal as a construction material: strong, and no holes, but very hot in summer.



Cape Town, South Africa

Clothes are washed in the muddy pool. In the background, government-installed latrines, which are used by multiple households.



Programme Women and Violence

With the Women and Violence programme, Cordaid is combating domestic and sexual violence against women while demanding a greater role for women in conflict control and peace processes. In this programme, Cordaid is working with organisations that have the goal of opening up the subjects of violence, rape and other forms of abuse and identifying abuses.

Cordaid wants to make it possible for women to develop their potential and stand up for their rights. To succeed, it is important for women to be able to let themselves be heard in family circles, in the local community and at the political level. The ultimate goal is not only for them to gain authority over their own lives, but to teach others in the community to give them the room to do so.

With its partner organisations, Cordaid is working towards changing standards, values and local practices that perpetuate violence, with the object of increasing women's impact in society. Cordaid also lobbies for making abuse against women a crime, because as long as violence against women can be committed with impunity, women are even more vulnerable.

And Cordaid encourages women to take on a clear role in addressing conflicts, alongside men in this role. And Cordaid encourages women to take on a clear role in conflict control, alongside men in this role - something that is reflected in UN resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace & Security. In these resolutions, the UN Security Council recognises that sexual violence against women is a major tool of power in armed conflicts, and calls for women to be given an equal voice in peace processes. As such, this is an important area of lobbying for Cordaid and its partners in fragile societies.

PROGRAMME 3 - WOMEN AND VIOLENCE - COLUMBIA

Women's bodies are not the spoils of war

For over forty years, the population of Colombia has been at the mercy of violence from paramilitaries, guerrillas and the army. Violence against women, including rape, murder and trafficking in women to intimidate communities continues unabated. Many conflicts are over land suitable for coca growing, mega-projects or other purposes, and the rightful inhabitants are often driven off. Four million people displaced by the conflict have ended up in urban slums, and eighty per cent of these are women and children: primarily farmer women, indigenous women and Afro-Columbian women, who, once in the city, are the victims of severe discrimination. Colombia has good legislation protecting the rights of women, but yet, these crimes still go largely unpunished.

The Colombian women's movement strongly opposes the sexual violence that all armed parties commit. Women have forged local and national solidarity networks and ally themselves with international women's networks. In Colombia, Cordaid does not support individual partners, but the women's movement, to which local and national networks, NGOs and research institutes belong.

Forcing compliance with the law

The women's movement in Colombia has achieved a lot. They have exposed the scope and nature of the violence. Legally, politically and in the media. "Violence against women is on the agenda, certainly with local authorities," says Cordaid's Margreet Houdijk. The women's movement is also promoting better compliance with the law. For example, there is national legislation for displaced persons, but local authorities do not know these laws, so they have no effect. In the network of displaced women, attorneys have trained representatives to go into the country to explain what the law can mean for women.

"Now, displaced women are in a better position to claim their rights," says Houdijk. "This legislation really means something to them. For these women, it's not just about political participation, but exposing violence against women and fighting impunity." A historic judgement came in 2008: the judicial acknowledgement that the parties in the conflict commit widespread sexual abuse and exploitation of displaced women, and the recognition that the state has to do everything possible to stop the violence.

Women demand legislation and satisfaction for female victims of violence in Colombia. More and more, society is coming to see violence against women as socially unacceptable. Cordaid expects that the efforts of these determined women will ultimately lead to new power relationships and less violence against women. Cordaid fully supports the women's movement in Colombia, promotes knowledge-sharing between women's organisations and reinforces their lobbying message, all the way to the international political level. Where called upon to do so, Cordaid helps women's organisations to become more professional, by promoting aspects such as better planning



WHAT

Fighting for the safety of women

WHY

To swing public opinion about violence against women from "normal" to unacceptable violence

HOW

By ensuring that this violence does not go unpunished, and changing standards and values

of monitoring, evaluation and budgeting of projects.

The functioning of the Colombian women's network is a model for a community of change. "Women in Colombia look for their own allies, while Cordaid contributes international contacts and partners. For example, there is a major women's organisation in New York lobbying for UN resolution 1325. We made sure that the women's network in Colombia got in touch with them, to put violence against women in Colombia on the international agenda."

Houdijk says that it is a challenge, both for Cordaid and the women's movement, to make the results concrete. "One thing we want to do is document cases that profile the qualitative effects of our work. Like giving women control over their bodies and their lives. Like participation in political processes and in brokering peace in the country. Finally, it is a Challenge for Cordaid to find the right balance between keeping control and keeping distance. In the initiatives we support, there has to be, firstly, enough room in the women's movement for their Colombian methods and their own learning process."

Departement Chocó, Colombia

Group work during an initial women's meeting in July 2009.

Photo, page 18

Chocó, Colombia

Delis Palacios is a representative of the Asociación de Desplazados Dos de Mayo (Association of displaced persons 2 May). Here she speaks during a meeting of the Asociaciones de Desplazados de Quibdó (Quibdó association of displaced persons (July 2009)).

PROGRAMME 3 - WOMEN AND VIOLENCE - SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone: act local, think big

It is the isolated south of Sierra Leone that has perhaps seen the most fighting and abuse of women in the country's twelve years of civil war. The legacy of the war is still very visible in this extremely poor and isolated area, and this is seen in aspects like domestic violence.

PRM, the Peace and Reconciliation Movement, has its roots in the war. Because conflict resolution was originally a man's area, it is predominantly men who work in PRM. These men are now joining together with a few women to stand up for women's rights. And the results show.

The key lies in the work of Peace Monitors, volunteers who come from the villages and who are selected by the community itself. Village committees, consisting of both traditional and religious leaders and respected village women, are now also playing a role. Their major advantage is that they are intimately familiar with the socio-cultural habits and sensibilities of the village. The Peace Monitors and the village committees are jointly responsible for supervision.

Mediators

"In 2007, the government of Sierra Leone adopted a set of legislation known as the Gender Acts," explains Cordaid's Sanne Bijlsma. "Since then, domestic violence has been punishable as a crime. But very few people are aware of these laws, so in practice women cannot always claim their newly acquired rights. This is why PRM provided legal training not only for the Peace Monitors, but for local authorities. Now, things like rapes are being reported, and we are gradually seeing the impunity of the perpetrators disappearing."

The Peace Monitors are seen as an authority, and their help is frequently called upon in cases of domestic and sexual violence, such as rape, forced marriage and abandonment. Because the area is so isolated, it is simply



not realistic to bring every case before a judge. There is also social pressure: not only the perpetrator, but the entire family suffers from the shame of a crime. For less serious violations, the Peace Monitors often look for a middle ground between the traditional and the official justice systems. But rapes are always brought before the police or the courts.

In one example, a Peace Monitor sent primary schoolchildren to the health centre for evidence of their being raped by their teacher, and this evidence led to the teacher being convicted in court and sent to prison.

Clever excuse

In addition to the work of the mediators, there is a radio programme on violence against women and the causes and effects of imbalanced power relationships. PMR also puts on cultural shows to introduce their projects in the community, and documents all cases of violence against women. Finally, PMR organises a soap-making course for victims, to allow them to have some type of income. "The soap-making gives PMR an excuse to get a foothold in the village and to start talking with the women about these difficult topics," says Bijlsma. "With the money they earn, they can send

WHAT

Mediating domestic and sexual violence

WHY

To ensure that this violence is punished, and to change power relationships

HOW

With the dedication of voluntary mediators from the villages themselves

Tiwai Island, Sierra Leone

For the first time, women attend an important meeting to discuss solutions for local conflicts.

their children to school and buy food, rather than funnelling it to their husbands, as would normally happen. That independence makes it easier for them to stand up for their rights."

These crimes are no longer going unpunished, the women are gaining their voices, the communities are beginning to discuss these sensitive subjects, and women are becoming a part of important discussions in the village. Power relationships are changing.

Sanne Bijlsma is particularly impressed by how PMR is rooted in the community. "PRM has succeeded in building up local structures in a vast area. They also have good contacts with local authorities. Both men and women are happy with the project. Before, women punished men by cooking badly and denying them sex. Now that they have more control, that has changed." PRM's vision of peace and reconciliation at the local level is, as PRM sees it, essential for peace in the country, and can help keep conflicts from escalating out of control.

Cordaid is a Dutch development aid organisation which passionately endeavours to turn the tide in the battle against injustice and poverty. We believe in social and economic justice for everyone. Along with this, we trust in the power of individuals to build their own future. Together with our local partner organisations, we encourage and help underprivileged people to do just this. Our hope is that in this way they will gain a better life and a valuable place in society.

Cordaid is active in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and focuses on the following fields of activity: emergency aid and reconstruction, health and well-being, entrepreneurship and economic independence, participation and strengthening the position of minorities.

You can find more information about these fields of activity in the following four brochures:

Cordaid and
participation

Cordaid and
**emergency aid
and
reconstruction**

Cordaid and
entrepreneurship

Cordaid and
**health and
well-being**