

Informal summary of the discussion of the WRR report:

1. The role of civil society “to hold the state and private sector accountable” merits more consideration. Active citizens are crucial for good governance at all levels.
2. The human factor in international relationships is underestimated (the WRR report does not show any eye for connectivity, shared values, etc)
3. The report lacks balance between economic development and social development and is using a conservative concept of development
4. The Dutch Ministry should use its experience and position better to influence EU policy. The civil society actors are important part of the national knowledge base
5. The downside of the proposed NLAID agency:
 - a. In many societies it cannot play/support the role of countervailing power as it is an extension of government policy
 - b. The diversity/pluriformity of the civil society arena is not recognized as an added value.
 - c. Society development is context specific – channeling through NLAID should not be a blueprint solution!
6. Transfer of mandate to the South must be integrated part of CS support strategies
7. The WRR report underestimates that development a political issue is. In that sense is knowledge not neutral, but about power. Any knowledge effort must take knowledges/perspectives and polycentrism as point of departure
 - a. Innovative approaches must be uncovered through more flexible ways of knowledge generation
 - b. We must create space/interface between researchers and practitioners
 - c. Existing (scattered) knowledge initiatives must be better linked.

Pieter van Lieshout’s reaction:

1. Civil society might be one of the specialist themes of Dutch Aid
 - a. Professionalism (through NLAID) protects the sector against the political tides and the diplomatic culture;
 - b. Professionalism allows you to be politically more effective
 - c. Concentration increases your potential political impact
2. NNGO can continue to play their Southern CS role, but Dutch bilateral aid will focus on ten countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, thus creating a critical mass.
3. The debate on the role of NNGO is coming anyway – you better be prepared!