

Local ownership is the key to success of endogenous capacity building

He likes to inspire people. That is heart of the being of dr. Dominique Hounkonnou. Not only is he an expert on endogenous capacity building or local development dynamics, but also a member of the International Advisory Board of PSO. The man from Benin is in the Netherlands at the moment for the Annual General Meeting of PSO and also to talk about his work.

Endogenous capacity building means that the members of PSO have to strengthen the civil society in the countries in which they operate by making use of the available knowledge, resources and infrastructure. 'If you want to facilitate local development, action should be based on the use local infrastructure and knowledge. Instead of trying to invent development projects for the local people,' says Hounkonnou. 'It is also very important to review the needs of the locals with them, discover the limitations together and then let them decide on which solutions they find necessary to bring in, when and for how long.'

The important components needed for local development dynamics are local infrastructure, knowledge and people. For endogenous capacity building to be a success, the local community must be involved. 'You have to make sure the locals understand that the project is theirs; it's for their community. The so-called local ownership guarantees success, because the community is going to make sure that everything runs smoothly.'

The past few days have been hectic for Hounkonnou. He's had meetings and has given an inspiring lecture on local development dynamics at the head office of International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) in Delft. The expert from Africa feels very much at home in The Netherlands. After all, he studied at the Wageningen University. He has inspired a lot of people with his visit, but has he been inspired by others? 'Of course, I am a permanent learner. A lot of platforms talk about learning. It's all talk and no action,' he says. 'The IRC has a program called Learning, alliances approach and development. I like this program because it links learning to action, namely providing water for people.' He managed to bring local development dynamics into the limelight during his visit. What can we expect from him in the future? 'Well, I will keep working hard to keep the focus on local development dynamics. And I am going to update my book on local development dynamics with new ideas, because I feel there is a need for my work.'