

**HOW
WE WORK
TOGETHER
TO ELIMINATE
POVERTY**

© Tim Dirven

**THE BELGIAN
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

.be



de longueur et des mesures

- 1) 15 dam = 150 m
- 2) 1 km + 2 km 8 hm = 3.8 km
- 3) 3 hm 2 dam = 3.2 km
- 4) 5 hm - 1.0 m
- 5) 5 km - 800 m

WELCOME

You have doubtless already come across the concept of development cooperation. You might have already made a donation to a good cause. But do you know what it all means? As you will see, it's about so much more than digging wells and building schools.

What development cooperation means for Belgium is that we are striving to bring about a **world without poverty**, working for **peace and security**, and trying to ensure **equal opportunities for every individual**. Our country is a serious donor. **Year after year, the development aid budget increases**, making Belgium one of the most generous countries in Europe.

But Belgium is not an island. We are joining in with the international efforts towards sustainable development in a fair world. Belgian development cooperation is pursuing the **Millennium Development Goals**:

- In 2000, the United Nations promised to rid the world of the worst hunger and poverty by 2015. That deadline is fast approaching, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Every citizen contributes to development cooperation:

via his taxes, private initiatives or a donation to a good cause. But the bulk of the development cooperation remains little 'visible'. It is administered via the government, it has to prevent hidden disasters, it tends more to be work at depth.

This brochure wants to demonstrate how Belgian development cooperation is working to eliminate poverty.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE BAD NEWS

- About one billion people suffer from hunger or malnutrition
- In the developing countries, maternal mortality in childbirth stands at 450 per 100.000, whereas in Belgium the figure is 10 per 100.000
- Only half of the world's population has access to proper sanitation
- In the developing countries, 1 child in 13 dies before the age of five, whereas in Belgium the figure is 1 child in 200

THE GOOD NEWS

- 30% more people in eastern Asia have gained access to clean drinking water in the past twenty years
- 400 million people escaped from extreme poverty between 1990 and 2005, mainly in China and West Africa
- Over the past ten years, one tenth more children have had access to education
- Twenty years ago, half of the world's population lived in slums, but by 2006 this had been cut to just 36%

Figures that show that aid works!



WHY DO WE DO IT?

Why don't we just leave the poor to their fate?

The world is a village. Globalisation means that we play an important role on each other's lives. What we put on our dinner plate here has consequences for farmers in the South. Desperate refugees are seeking asylum here. Threats such as climate change, terrorism and AIDS are no respecters of borders.

Nobody should be abandoned. Belgium, as a wealthy country, has a moral duty to fight poverty and injustice. Population growth is placing ever greater pressure on scarce resources. A secure world where wealth is distributed better is in everyone's interest.

The government has to set an example. In Belgium, development policy is coordinated by the federal government's Directorate-General for Development (DGD). DGD administers some 60 % of the Belgian development budget.

- In 2009, Belgian official development aid amounted to almost 1.9 billion euro, or 0.55% of gross national income. As from 2010, Belgium is aiming for 0.7%.
- Our people work in sometimes difficult conditions to protect population groups and help rebuild countries.
- Together with the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank and the IMF, we are seeking global solutions to international problems.
- We finance NGOs on the ground, scientific projects, development banks, study grants, emergency aid, etc.

BUDGET SUPPORT, DEBT RELIEF, MICROCREDIT, MULTILATERAL AID

We use all manner of technical terminology in our work. These various types of aid may provide safe drinking water, for example, or stop young mothers from dying. But at the end of the day, our aid – in all its various forms – can only be sustainable if the South itself chooses the road it wishes to follow.

Development cooperation alone cannot rid the world of poverty. Trade, private investments, agriculture, migration, the environment, security... all areas with a big impact on development in the South. It is important to tie these areas together so that they can help to drive back poverty.

WHAT ABOUT THE 0.7% NORM?

In any talk of development cooperation, the figure of 0.7 frequently crops up. But this is nothing new. As long ago as 1970, the United Nations determined that the West was to give 0.7% of its gross national income to development cooperation. Since then, only a handful of donor countries have succeeded in achieving that level.

Over recent years, Belgium has been constantly increasing its spending on official development aid. The figures were 0.43% in 2007, 0.48% in 2008 and 0.55% in 2009. From 2010, we are aiming at 0.7%. This means about 2 billion euro every year to help eradicate poverty.

Since 2004, Rwanda has been working on a large-scale reform of justice. Belgium's support is helping to restore the Rwandan population's confidence in its legal institutions.



HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT AID IS EFFECTIVE?

Every Belgian gives an average of half a euro a day towards development cooperation through his taxes.

This money obviously has to be spent judiciously. **An efficient development policy delivers better results** in the struggle against poverty. We are focusing increasingly on impacts in the long term and on a large scale, and seeking to achieve better coherence between all development actions and better harmonisation with international policy.

That is why we ensure that:

- **the aid is used for the right purposes** and we control carefully where the money goes
- **the aid combats poverty in the best possible way**
- **countries are helped to stamp out corruption**, via the courts, parliament and campaigns.

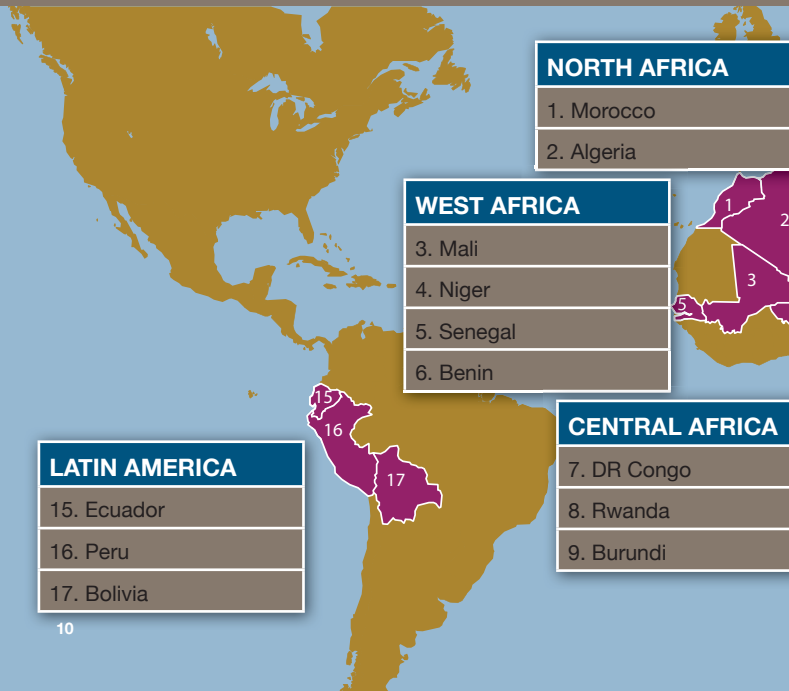
One major threat to efficient cooperation is **corruption**. Corruption occurs everywhere, but it is the poorest who suffer the most as a result of it. As long as a country is riddled with corruption, no sustainable development is possible.

This offers the developing countries themselves a major role. They cannot pursue any efficient policy without **good governance, fighting corruption, a just distribution of wealth, respect for the rule of law and properly functioning institutions**. This calls for political will. Belgium regularly calls the developing countries to account about this.

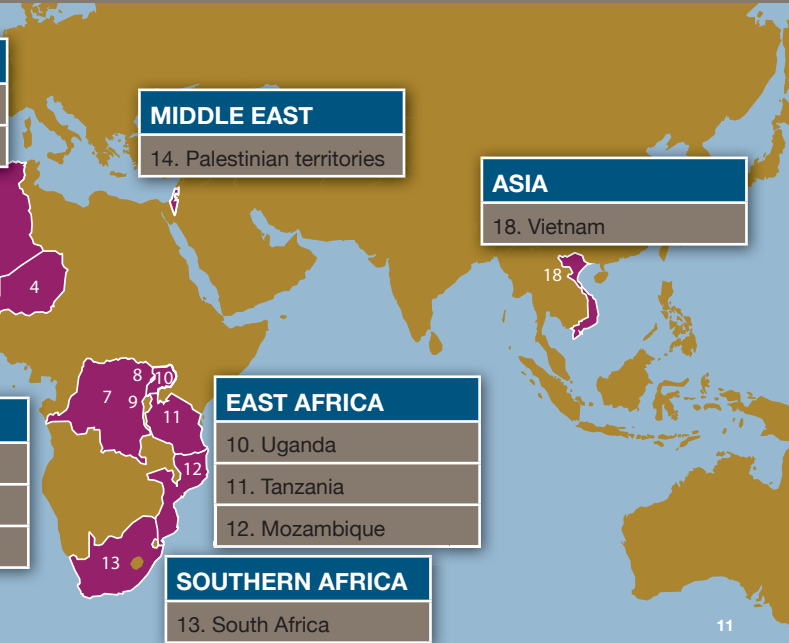
WHERE ARE WE ACTIVE?

Belgium's development cooperation concentrates on her 18 partner countries. A look at the map shows that the main focus is on Africa.

The execution of Belgian aid to these countries is the responsibility of the BTC, the Belgian development agency. BTC runs around 300 projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



But we also reach a host of other countries. Our country makes a major contribution to European development cooperation and the policy of international organisations such as the UN and the World Bank. So our aid really does go round the world. We also support NGOs and Belgian universities which are active in sixty or so developing countries.



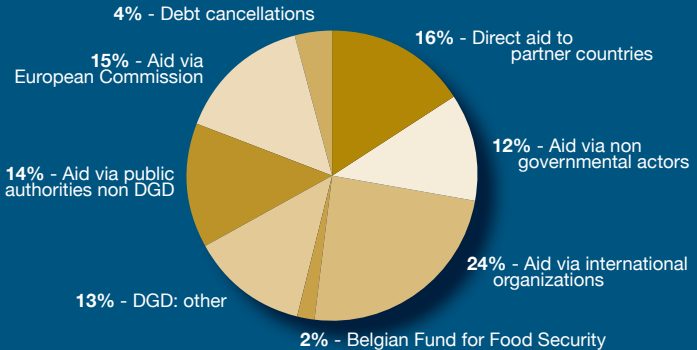


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In Congo, Belgium is focusing on agriculture and rural development. Ten thousand kilometres of rebuilt roads are helping farmers to get their products to the markets more quickly.

WHAT DO WE CONCENTRATE ON?

OFFICIAL BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (2009)



FOOD FOR ALL

Half of the active population in the South lives from farming; the corresponding figure in Belgium is under 2%. This makes agriculture by far the most important source of food and revenue for the South. A failed harvest can trigger a humanitarian disaster. With the world's population continuing to expand, about one billion people today are undernourished.

Agriculture and food security are therefore absolute priorities in our development policy. We meet the food and production requirements of hungry people and small farmers. The amount of our aid that we devote to this is likely to increase further.



In Cote d'Ivoire, hundreds of thousands of children work on plantations. All too often, they are mistreated and smuggled in from neighbouring countries. Belgium is working with Unicef to combat the worst forms of child exploitation.

Humanitarian actions are of vital importance. Our contributions towards humanitarian aid have increased sharply in recent years. In 2009, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) named Belgium as “one of the most generous donors”. We buy food aid wherever possible from farmers in the South, so as not to disrupt the local markets with our food surpluses.

We also carry out more structural work to increase food production. But naturally, production is not the only factor. The population also needs to be able to buy enough food. The **Belgian Fund for Food Security** is tackling the food problem on the widest possible front. It targets the most vulnerable population groups in the poorest African countries.

BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE...

...you would expect that all of them would have enough to eat, get the chance to go to school and enjoy protection. Unfortunately that is not the case. Many of them are in a vulnerable position and need extra protection. This is why Belgium is making children’s rights into a spearhead in its development policy.

So we are asking our partner countries to offer education in the children’s mother tongue or a local language that the children understand. Because every child has the right to education. That is the only way to break the vicious circle of poverty. In addition, education is very important in the fight against child labour and child trafficking.

BECAUSE WOMEN MAKE UP HALF OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION...

... you would expect that they would have the same opportunities as men. Unfortunately that is not always the case. Yet this equality is a necessary prerequisite for sustainable development and social cohesion. We believe that **equal rights for men and women** are fundamental.

Alongside education and economic independence for women, health and sexual rights are another issue of importance. This is because a mother's level of education has a major bearing on the health chances of her children, and a lack of clean water or decent housing will lead to health problems.

HEALTHCARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Health problems hamper economic development and the welfare of the sick and their families. High costs for medical treatment keep untold numbers of families trapped in poverty.

That is why Belgium puts quality healthcare high on the agenda. We help poor countries to organise **efficient and accessible healthcare**. In so doing, we attach great importance to training local health personnel, in order to guarantee results in the longer term.

Mothers and children have the right to particular care and support.



Niger has just one doctor per 25,000 inhabitants. Maternal and infant mortality is also very high. Belgium is helping by training health personnel and supporting the Ministry of Public Health. This will help the government of Niger to drive down the country's high mortality rates.

PEACE IS THE PREREQUISITE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It is the task of governments to protect the population against war, hunger and disease. But in fragile States or countries locked in conflict, governments lack the resources or the political will to guarantee their citizens' safety and tackle poverty efficiently. The population is the first victim.

Peace and security are not just basic needs, they also form a prerequisite for sustainable development. And conversely, development is also a prerequisite for maintaining security.

Belgium plays a particular role in this field, because one third of its partner countries are fragile States. Our aid to countries locked in conflict helps them to restore peace and security. Reconciliation, the fostering of democracy and the rebuilding of the State are the priorities.

But giving aid to fragile States is very complex, and the results are often uncertain. Many donor countries have made major reductions in their development assistance to fragile States. But Belgium is committed to continuing to support these countries for the very reason that that is where the need is greatest. We also believe that a stable South serves the interests of our own security: one need only think about refugees and terrorism.

In Eastern Congo, rape is used as a weapon of war. Belgium is making the battle against sexual violence into a priority and condemning this scandal internationally. We are helping victims to speak out and giving them a voice.



© 2010 Lightroom photos

Belgium's commitment to the disarmament and reintegration of rebels in Central Africa enjoys international recognition. During international meetings, Belgium is regularly drawing attention to the "forgotten conflicts" in this region.



SUPPORT TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AID FOR TRADE AND FAIR TRADE

Trade is the engine driving economic development. That is why we need to give the private sector every chance to use its full potential. But in the developing countries, small and medium-sized enterprises are beset by problems such as complicated regulations, a lack of infrastructure and inadequate financial resources.

To help alleviate these problems, Belgium has a unique instrument: the **Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO)**. BIO lends investment capital to SMEs and micro-finance institutions in the South. In this way, we are giving entrepreneurs more competitive power and helping to create new jobs.

But money is not the only problem. Farmers in the South want to be able to sell their products on the European market. But what happens? There is inadequate infrastructure, the procedures are too complex and the European quality standards too strict. By building up these farmers' capacities, **Aid for Trade** must help them to gain access to our markets.

Belgium has also set up a **Trade for Development Centre**, promoting fair and sustainable trade. It supports producers in the South, gathers expertise and builds support for **Fair Trade** among consumers and government in Belgium.



DEBT CANCELLATION PROVIDES A BREATHER

Many poor countries are crippled by heavy debts. These often go back to the seventies or eighties, when their governments took out huge loans. The consequence is a debt burden that has become intolerable. They could no longer repay the debts.

In 1996, this situation led to an international initiative whereby heavily indebted poor countries can have their debts cancelled by their creditors, until they get to a point where the burden of debt is bearable. However, the countries do have to undertake some reforms in order to improve governance.

Debt cancellation gives the favoured countries a breather when they draw up their budgets. This means they can release more money to combat poverty.

Between 2002 and 2009, Belgium wrote off almost 2 billion euro worth of debt from developing countries.

A CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

We have been burning colossal amounts of oil, coal and gas for 200 years now to create energy. This has released a mass of CO₂ which is causing global temperatures to rise. **Climate change** causes floods and extreme drought events, but it also threatens water reserves and food security.

Although rich countries have historically borne more responsibility for global warming, the **developing countries are affected more quickly and more severely**.

For this reason, we must:

- **help the South to arm itself against the worst consequences** of climate change
- **promote renewable energy sources** so that developing countries can achieve sustainable growth
- drastically **drive down our global CO₂ emissions** with an ambitious and binding climate agreement.

Many development projects are sensitive to the consequences of climate change. Extreme droughts, for instance, can cause agricultural projects to fail. According to the World Bank, climate change threatens one quarter of its projects. This figure can rise to 65 % in countries such as Mali and Niger. These are sobering figures indeed. That is why we are looking for ways of making our **development policy more conscious to the climate**.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There are loads of ways to make a commitment to the South, to a fair world and fair trade. We'll be happy to help you on your way.

- **Be aware of the way you live.** Every one of us has the power to improve the lives of thousands of small producers. So choose Fair Trade. And protect the environment, because otherwise, no sustainable development is possible.
www.befair.be
- **Help determine the political agenda.** Talk about the problem of poverty in class or at work, get some discussions going with your friends and show that you are committed. The only way to put pressure on policy-makers is to make your views known.
- **Give your support or help.** You can volunteer through lots of organisations, or donate to help provide clean drinking water, build schools, combat infant mortality and so on. Without your help, none of these things can be done.
www.11.be and www.cncd.be
- **Keep your eyes and ears open.** Interested in international cooperation or the burning questions of the day? Why not subscribe to Dimension 3, the free magazine about Belgian development cooperation.
www.dg-d.be



MORE INFORMATION

DGD – Directorate-General Development

FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and
Development Cooperation
Rue des Petits Carmes 15
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BTC – Belgian Development Agency

Belgian Technical Cooperation
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Trade for Development Centre

www.befair.be

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