

2011

VENRO-Strategy 2011–2016

Table of Contents

I. Introduction – 3

II. Challenges – 3

III. The association's tasks – 4

1. Political work and representation of interests – 4
2. Qualification and transfer of knowledge – 4
3. Networking – 4
4. Setting standards – 4
5. Communication – 4

IV. Strategic goals for 2011 to 2016 – 5

- Goal 1** VENRO will adopt the role of opinion-leader and coordinator in working out a sustainable understanding of development in Germany. – 5
- Goal 2** VENRO will continue to expand its influence on processes of political decision-making. – 5
- Goal 3** VENRO is committed to the abolition of structural disadvantages and discrimination. – 6
- Goal 4** VENRO will adopt a leading and innovative role in the discourse on the quality of the work of development and humanitarian NGOs and in the development and implementation of standards in this area. – 6
- Goal 5** VENRO will strengthen its institutional and financial sustainability. – 7
- Goal 6** VENRO will increase its networking activities with external actors in order to raise the status of development politics within society and to strengthen its political feasibility. – 7

I. Introduction

The basis and starting point of the strategy of the umbrella organisation of development non-governmental organisations in Germany (VENRO) are its statutes, which define both the mandate and the goals of the association's work. As VENRO's member organisations, we created this association to "increase our contribution to more justice in One World". It is our joint mission to "serve the fight against poverty, the realisation of human rights and the conservation of natural resources as effectively as possible". On the basis of this strategy, we are committed to the changes we deem important and we express how we intend to implement them. The

association's fundamental goals remain unchanged. This strategy paper is not intended to underline or list individual issues. All topics of overriding interest will continue to find room within VENRO as umbrella organisation.

The strategy came into effect after it was passed by our members' general assembly on 16 December 2010. It will be put into operation in our members' annual plans, where measures or activities aimed at the realisation of our goals will be identified. We are also developing indicators for individual areas of performance in order to monitor target achievement.

II. Challenges

Numerous global crises of recent years with all their negative consequences have marked both the failure and the end of an unsustainable world-order. However, they also provide an opportunity of identifying and shaping key elements for a viable and sustainable globalisation. One of these key elements is the realisation that self-interest and self-regulating markets are not enough sufficient to organise national or global economies. This can only be achieved by a more rule-based system which takes social and environmental dimensions into consideration. Moreover, global warming, increasing violent conflicts and natural disasters considerably raise the risks of a number of further crises: an energy crisis, a food crisis, a security crisis and a crisis of social justice. One particularly urgent challenge is the need to convert the global economy to a low-carbon system which is no longer based on the consumption of fossil energy sources. Globalisation no longer means Americanisation or the assertion of Western values. The world has become multi-polar. This multi-polarity, however, has not yet developed any ordered processes which could shape a framework for new global governance. A growing global economy with ever closer networks is among the biggest contributing factors to increasing injustice in individual countries. Hence, it is one of the causes for the struggle for survival of two billion people who are forced to exist on less than two US-Dollars

a day. The fact that so many people are excluded from participation in economic activities is not only an indication of the deficits of globalisation, but also marks the biggest challenges faced by development policy in the coming years. Even though the international community has limited itself to the modest number of eight development goals, it has become evident that they will not be achieved and that poverty has become permanent in many countries. Without prospects for the poor and for all people who have no opportunity of becoming active economically, politically or socially, there can be no fair world order. Germany and Europe must become far more active in the struggle for sustainable globalisation without poverty and this is what we are committed to, both in our daily work and within the association.

Development policy and humanitarian aid – and thus our association – are facing numerous further challenges: The concept of development is in need of review, the general legitimacy of development cooperation is questioned and the contribution by civil society is scrutinised increasingly critically. Our issues hold only minor significance in the public's perception. In this context, the debate about the quality of the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is gaining in importance. We are increasingly confronted with relevant external norms and criteria of effectiveness.

Germany and other donor countries have furthermore changed their parameters: “effectiveness” and a more result-based management have acquired higher priority. Additionally, donors are increasingly linking the allocation of resources for NGOs to certain conditions, at the same time neglecting the issue of their own responsibility for development funding. The Federal German Government still subordinates its development goals to the interests of foreign and economic policy, and no serious endeavour for coordinated development cooperation or coherence of the various sector policies towards the global South can be discerned. On the contrary, German development policy

is designed to suit the context of economic and security interests and is thus losing sight of its guiding principle of poverty reduction.

It has been established for years that the participation of women in the development process is a key factor in poverty reduction and the attainment of human rights. Still, interests and potential of women as motor for change are not sufficiently taken into consideration. Neither do the implementation of children's rights and the inclusion of disabled persons receive adequate attention.

The strategy paper at hand is our association's reaction to the challenges outlined above.

III. The association's tasks

During the past 15 years, VENRO has established itself as an active and assertive representative of development-NGOs. By addressing the following tasks, it will continue to assume this role in the future.

1. Political work and representation of interests

VENRO's members will address concerns of development policy in Germany as well as internationally. The association represents common interests vis-à-vis the government, parliament and other national and international actors. This representation of interests includes all issues of development policy and humanitarian aid as well as legal and other parameters for the work of NGOs.

2. Qualification and transfer of knowledge

The association contributes to the further qualification of our work and to a mutual transfer of knowledge. The association enables reciprocal learning through the exchange of knowledge, ideas and experience and offers options for advanced education.

3. Networking

VENRO offers us an opportunity for effective networking within the association and facilitates the forming of coalitions of interests. When necessary, the association will cooperate with other national and international actors.

4. Setting standards

The association develops its own standards. This contributes to increased quality and transparency of our work. We are guided by the principle that as part of civil society, we have to adopt an independent role with specific responsibilities in the area of development cooperation.

5. Communication

In order to achieve VENRO's goals, we communicate our positions in the media and in the public discourse. This also serves to define our profile as a national association. We are committed to rendering civil society's perspective on development policy more prevalent in the public's perception.

IV. Strategic goals for 2011 to 2016

Goal 1

VENRO will adopt the role of opinion-leader and coordinator in working out a sustainable understanding of development in Germany

- As an umbrella association, we will organise public discourse on development issues which will also serve to find a distinct determination of what development signifies. We are aware that the North, too, will have to develop further, since our ways of life and of management are not sustainable.
- We will align our activities along the guiding aims of all international policy: poverty reduction, implementing human rights, safeguarding natural resources and social justice.
- We regard humanitarian aid as an expression of international solidarity and thus as an important element of development.
- We campaign for policies on trade, international relations and economy to follow the dictate of coherence and to avoid counter-acting goals of development policy.
- As members of the association, we underline the importance of this process' grounding in society, of variety of positions and extensive competence of non-government organisations. These will legitimise the association's receipt and spending of public funds.
- In our domestic work, we contribute to a better understanding of our country's obligations and support the autonomy of "Development Policy" as an area of policy.

Goal 2

VENRO continues to expand its influence on processes of political decision-making

In the interest of its members, VENRO will adopt a coordinating role in important political processes. Examples include parliamentary elections, coalition negotiations and international summit meetings.

- The association will continue to represent our interests vis-à-vis the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in particular through professional and political dialogue.
- We will expand the dialogue with other federal departments, such as the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the chancellery. Our aim is a coherent and cohesive policy in keeping with VENRO's guiding principles.
- We will systematise and strengthen our advocacy activities vis-à-vis the German parliament.
- We will campaign for humanitarian aid to be carried out regardless of national and military interests and to follow only the humanitarian decrees of international law.
- Through the association, we will become more active on a European level, especially within the framework of CONCORD. We will take part in international discussions of new global governance, which is to increase opportunities for participation of NGOs both from the South and the North.
- As an association, we will aim to become established with all relevant political decision makers and to be appreciated as a competent partner for dialogue. We are developing a communication strategy in order to achieve this.

Goal 3

VENRO is committed to the abolition of structural disadvantages and discrimination

- The association is particularly committed to the equal treatment and participation of women as well as to the implementation of human rights concerning children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups. We are integrating human rights- and gender-perspectives into an increasing number of advocacy initiatives.
- Within the association, we will strengthen skills to include these perspectives into our own work.
- In its external communications, VENRO will highlight the key role of women within the development process as well as the need for inclusiveness in this process.

Goal 4

VENRO will adopt a leading and innovative role in the discourse on the quality of the work of development and humanitarian NGOs as well as in the development and implementation of quality standards in this area.

- Within the association, we aim to promote the further development and implementation of our own standards, which correspond both to civil society's self-image and our various fields of activity (projects, lobbying and education).
- In order to implement these quality standards, we will improve the transfer of knowledge among ourselves as well as the options for advanced education and consultancy offered by the association. In addition, we are investigating whether it is expedient and financially feasible to install a separate field of "Consultancy and Advanced Education", which would be available both to members and external users.
- Through the association, we will actively introduce our perspective and our experience into the public discourse on quality and effectiveness of development cooperation.
- In negotiations on standards of NGO-work outside the association (f.i. with the German Central Institute for Social Issues, DZI) we will concentrate the association's capacities and interests. We will establish the association as a central partner for determining and processing quality criteria and standards of transparency.

Goal 5

VENRO will strengthen its institutional and financial sustainability.

- We will strengthen and expand the options of becoming more active within and for the association (e.g. through the model of elected representatives or the annual meeting of chief executives). The role of working groups as the core of all association work must be systematically linked in with our new instruments.
- We will try out new methods of internal networking. We will expand our internal processes and structures of communication and develop innovative ways of networking.
- We are exploring the option of securing the association's funding by expanding and extending our sources of income (e.g. by acquiring new members whose activities show large areas of overlap with our work).
- The association and its members will ensure that their own work is increasingly geared towards standards of sustainable development.

Goal 6

VENRO will increase its networking activities with external actors in order to raise the status of development policy within society and to strengthen its political feasibility.

- The association will seek strategic alliances with actors outside the field of development politics if this serves to achieve our common objectives (e.g. from the fields of science, the private sector, migrants living in Germany and their organisations and other NGO-networks).
- We will expand the association's activities in committees outside the field of development cooperation, such as the increased acquisition of mandates for external committees (e.g. the Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit).
- Events will be realised as cooperation projects wherever possible. We will seek to cooperate with partners who have so far not been in VENRO's focus. VENRO will only take part in projects where the association can take an active part in the design.

Published by:

Association of German Development NGOs (VENRO)
Dr. Werner-Schuster-Haus
Kaiserstr. 201
D-53113 Bonn, Germany

Phone: +49 (0) 228/9 46 77-0
Fax: +49 (0) 228/9 46 77-99

Email: sekretariat@venro.org
Website: www.venro.org

Bonn, July 2011

Translated by: Elena Krüskemper,
www.local-international.de