TOOLKIT EXIT STRATEGY

HOLD A MIRROR UP TO YOUR CHARITY:
ACT, ASSESS AND ACCOMMODATE
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Contents

Introduction

This toolkit explains how one can make a diagnosis of one's own organization ''organization-here''. It is as if holding up a mirror. For an organization that intends to take formal leave of their partner organization in a developing country ''partner-there'' this diagnosis could play an important role in the exit strategy. The same applies to an organization-here that intends to wind up.

In this toolkit one will find real-life examples, recommendation and components of a responsible exit as well as an exit checklist. The toolkit is based on research into Dutch Private Development Initiatives (PDIs) that were wound up or that had plans to do so.

Three modi operandi: act, assess and accommodate

One of the discoveries in the research into PDIs is that one can distinguish three different modi operandi or operating procedures in the PDI's method of working. Mostly PDIs mix the modi operandi and use all three: they *act, assess* and *accommodate*, whereas some combine just two modi operandi. If one modus is used more often than the other two, we call this the *dominant 'A'*.

Please note: the three 'A' s do not typify an organization as *is*, so it is *not a label*, but it typifies the different *modi operandi* or *patterns of behaviour*.

This toolkit assists an organization-here to find an answer to the questions: what is the dominant pattern of behaviour (the dominant 'A') of our organization and how can we, in the light of our exit, contribute to long-term results of our interventions?

In the next three paragraphs the three different modi operandi are explained.

1 Acting: getting the job done

Getting the job done relates to an organization-here that 'acts' and can be distinguished by their hands-on approach: they build, hand out things or write documents. They take work over from the staff or the board of the partner-there.

In Table 1 you will find the main characteristics of an organization that 'acts'. The characteristics are illustrated with quotations from data in the research material. **Put a tick √ in the appropriate yellow boxes in Table 1 if you recognize the approach of your own organization.**

Read the *quotations* for a better understanding of the characteristics.

Table 1. Main characteristics of an organization-here that acts

Characteristics	Clarification and illumination	
Basic principle *Quotations*	**To improve**. *"… you will respect them in their culture, their whole approach and at the same time you want to let them get other ideas because you know there are better ways."* *"We said this is a good project if only they would organize it better, if it would look better, with better carts, not broken ones, then that would be great."*	☐

	"Sometimes we were a bit too enthusiastic, like when we said we are going to make the world a better place."	
Primary approach	**Getting the job done**: give and distribute things, build and refurbish, prepare documents.	▢
Quotations	*"... I did see his problems and that he could not manage, so I wrote it down myself"*.	
	"… we told them they would get a computer and sports equipment."	
	Donor-driven approach.	▢
Quotations	*"For example, we approached [name of company]. And they had a surplus of stools . We got 150 stools … And at a certain moment one of the greenhouse builders had … a great big water tank to spare … Also chucked it into a container together with the other stuff. … Actually, a little school like that can use anything. As long as it's all in one piece."*	
	"From there, the shop where people bring their excess stuff, we sorted out some stuff and sent it to [country-there]."	
	Problem owner. The organization over here regards itself as (co) problem owner and takes work off their partner's hands.	▢
Quotation	*"My colleague did that for quite some time. Repairing things. But then he stopped doing that and they had to do it themselves. And then when you drive by or pop in for a short visit, you see it … that's a pity now. … And then you indeed, hear, yes, maintenance. That is the big problem".*	
	Own (professional) values and standards with a risk of personal conflicts, because, inter alia, of differences in culture.	▢
Quotations	*"… we'll limit ourselves to education … because we believe that education … is always very important. Education for young children is an investment for the future something that no one can ever take away from them … that gave it extra appeal for me because I was originally in pre-school education … especially because I used to be involved with early childhood development … we thought it was so important".*	
	"... alarm bells were beginning to sound with us … And then I said … You can no longer continue to be the principal of this early childhood education centre. We ask you in the interests of the children and in the interests of the parents to resign. And then she sat up straight: "… absolutely not". Then I repeated again … and I looked very sternly and directly at the chairman. Because it was the chairman who should sack her. … And then we said, OK, what is happening here is unbelievable. We were left with no options … 'we withdraw from this situation, as of now we shall do nothing more for [name partner-there]'. And then the curtain fell. … She did not resign. And the board did not find it necessary to sack her."	

Quotation	**Human approach**: personal, sometimes close or strong relationships with community members/population. *"... building up trust takes a long time, but quite a few people have nonetheless realized .... It's safe. And that's why they sometimes tell us so many moving things that I think, wow, that you tell and reveal so much to me."*	☐
Sustainability *Quotations*	**Ownership-there**. Ownership implies that the partner-there must have ongoing support from key political and other stakeholders (authorizing environment). The partner-there must also have sufficient know-how, skills and means to acquire and maintain the necessary human, material and financial resources that are needed to run an organization (operational capacity). However, ownership is threatened 1) by philanthropic particularism: the organization-here decides where help is needed and how, and 2) by output interventions: only results that are quantifiable or can be photographed such as things and buildings are accepted. *"So actually when we came back. We then started to think … we … felt a connection with the country you know, especially with [name of city] because there you've actually formed a bond, with the people and with the children"…* *"Then we said … we'll set up a school … 20, 30 computers. And then we'll take the initiative ourselves . … There was this school building that had been standing empty for ages. Renovations have been carried out at the grounds of [name of church organization] and a couple of classrooms have been set up, with toilets and so on …"*	☐
	Results with focus on individuals or small groups, specifically non-quantifiable 'soft outcomes', such as a change of behaviour or capacity building in 'high potentials'. This sometimes appears to lead to reciprocity: wishing to give back, and 'the birth' of a role model. Furthermore self-generated output (quantifiable, visible results), sometimes in cooperation with the partner-there, with emphasis on short term results. *"... every so often I still hear from children that they are still going to school, and that we were there, that's four years ago, so that is really good to hear."* *"... that young woman is now in such a different situation and stands, so much more, on her own two feet than 18 months ago when she was as timid as a mouse and just no longer saw any future for herself."* *"[Name organization-here] paid the costs of the studies 'registered and advanced nurse' for this single mother of two children ... She recently passed her exams and has been given a job in a large hospital."* *"There is now someone who himself wants to set up an NGO there. He has become a pharmacist … who actually wants to give something back. And who wants to do something for the school-age children."*	☐
Quotations		

Orientation in meaning-giving (value orientation)	**Internally-oriented.** Self-referential and rational (construction and power, rationalizing and persuading), with emphasis on the former. One's own ego or that of the the organization is pivotal: what do I/we find important, interesting or good? The focus on solving problems has the advantage that one can determine one's own course and tempo.	☐
Quotations	*"... those children … must learn how to write. They didn't have pencils. So at a given moment we sent, well, the Lord only knows how many pencils we sent them. That is, I also think that from here you really can work out what's needed".*	
	"And so there were things we had to enforce".	
	"... convince everyone of what you yourself believe to be good."	
Exit	**Exit *reasons*, not an exit *strategy*.** Open ended, no strategy, but a spontaneous exit, influenced by internal factors related to the organization-here.	☐
Quotations	*"... those working holidays … we've stopped doing them, because it was just too much work and our board got smaller, and you have to train these youngsters, you have to provide them with information, you have to have someone that goes with them. You have to have someone that is handy in renovations and taking charge … so there came a moment that we said: we have to stop this."*	
	"We are going to retire!! With this in mind, and our return to the Netherlands, we are now involved in giving all the projects an extra last push and finally hand them over to the local leaders."	
	"But then we encountered problems with a contractor … and that is something that's very difficult at a distance. And then someone had to go there for several months, until the building was finished, so then we said we're not going to do that."	

☐

Typical photographs from an organization-here in the acting-modus-operandi are particularly action shots: loading and unloading materials and/or a reception ceremony, with the benefactors in the picture and/or the donated materials in use.

2 Assessing: who pays the piper calls the tune

An organization-here that displays '*assessing'* focuses on financing and controlling. Organizing and controlling incoming and outgoing flows of money are pivotal.

In Table 2 you will find the main characteristics of an organization '*assesses'*. The characteristics are illustrated with quotations from data in the research material. **Put a tick √ in the appropriate blue boxes in Table 2 if you recognize the approach of your own organization.**

Read the *quotations* for a better understanding of the characteristics.

Table 2. Main characteristics of an organization-here that assesses

Characteristics	Clarification and illumination	
Basic principle *Quotation*	**Financing.** *"with stimulating there we then meant … those projects are, sort of, started up on their own initiative. Such as [name of partner-there]. They had their own vision of it. And they wanted to support those children themselves with education and with activities, and we wanted to stimulate that. So not thinking up a solution ourselves and setting up a project, but the projects that were already running, that had been set up on their own initiative, those we wanted to stimulate."*	☐
Main approach *Quotation* *Quotations*	**Who pays the piper calls the tune.** Financing on the basis of the plans supplied the by partner-there, including subsequent accountability. *"Finally we got those NPO's so far that if we were to go there and say what are your plans, may we have a quick look at how you had imagined it would be. They then produced a big Dirk van den Broek supermarket bag … and then came the whole story about building … with all manner of drawings, and this we want like this and that we want like that. Why do you want the eaves so small? We want that there and there, because … So they really had thought about it."* **Limited partner-driven**. Absence of proposals and reports from local partners is problematized. *"We have said, we're stopping. We are no longer going along with your proposals of 'we're going to do a nice this or we're going to do a nice that', we are not going along with it, we are stopping, and that's that. That was our point, we find … no arguments with which we can mobilize or motivate or enthuse the rank and file of our donors for a project. So it has come to an end, and you have yourselves to thank for it. No story, no money."* *"... that at a given moment we had transferred money. I can't remember how much, but it was the second or third time, I don't know … but then we didn't get any receipts, and then we thought, OK, there's something amiss here. Something doesn't feel right. Of course there isn't much you can do, because you are here, they are there. Then you can point it out as often as you will, then*	☐ ☐

	they say yes, I'll send it to you, I will send it, but naturally that never happened. Then I think, OK, that's it then."
Quotation	**The partner-there** is considered to be the **problem owner**. There is a Clear allocation of tasks between north and south. ☐ *"And then there was the allocation of tasks: you develop those villages and you develop those people there. And if you need money for that, then come to us with proposals, then we'll discuss them here, and if they appeal to us, then you will get money … We offer the other the opportunity to formulate their problems in solution models . … Then we get down to work, or rather, they get down to work. Then the ownership of the problem and the ownership of the solution, they lie in the right place."*
Quotations	**Result-oriented approach.** The line of approach is efficiency. Businesslike approach: quality and management requirements. ☐ *… something must come of it. Not drivel."* *"... we received sound reports. There were, you know, organizations there that did fantastic work, and we also received good feedback from them. However, we said at a given moment: listen, we want these project reports in a more structured form sent to us. In other words, there must be a checklist of what are the points that must be filled in, things that are demonstrable. So we can all have a better idea of how the money has been spent."*
Quotations	**Micromanagement** of project money. During visits administration and evidential material are checked. ☐ *"When we arrived, then the principal, she must account for all the paperwork, all the money they received. She had to look after the invoices, receipts et cetera and classify them."* *"She eventually told us a lot about what she had done with the money. Sent a DVD, but apart from that I went there once more. So I've also seen what she has done."* *" … if in fact, if what was in the report, if that actually was so. And you can also see everything on a photo, but of course nothing is as good as being there, walking round and seeing the children, talking with the teachers and listening to their problems. And hopefully it's also good for a bit of motivation."*
Quotations	Good **communications with donors** is important in order to be able to gain new funding. ☐ *"And you can report all this back to the sponsors that have helped you."* *" ... periodically we keep donors up to date with things relating to the study progress and the costs made for education."*

Sustainability	**Ownership-there**. Ownership implies that the partner-there must have ongoing support from key political and other stakeholders (authorizing environment). The partner-there must also have sufficient know-how, skills and means to acquire and maintain the necessary human, material and financial resources that are needed to run an organization (operational capacity). Possible threats to ownership are philanthropic particularism and strict accountability requirements. Through focus on financing, an organization-here in the assess mode is extra vulnerable if development cooperation loses (political) favour.	☐
Quotations	*"So she has made a plan, and said: 'we need money for all this'. And then we said: 'OK, then we take on only one component of it', because we were sort of realizing they're thinking about money: 'we're just going to send them a whole plan, with this, this and this'. I say: 'if we just begin with a small part of it, the dancing'. Really very simple."* *"... they got money every month, I transferred it in quarterly instalments, so that was a lot of money, but always: this is for the month May, this is for maintenance, this is for food, this is for school materials, that is for trips, that is for electricity, water … municipal taxes."*	
	Results particularly at **material level**: the organization-here provides financial input, which local partner transforms into output (quantifiable and visible results), with emphasis on the short term. Preference for material facilities.	☐
Quotation	*"There were people who then proposed a project. We then wanted to know exactly what that was … and we tried to find sponsors in [country organization-here]. … Look in particular at school buildings, the equipping of them. But we don't support running costs. So not the salaries of teachers there, or that kind of thing."*	
Oriëntation in meaning-giving (value orientation)	**Internally-oriented:** rational and self-referential (rationalizing and persuading, construction and power), with emphasis on the former. One's own ego or the organization's is pivotal: what do I/we find important, interesting or good?	☐
Quotations	*"It didn't feel right because, OK, there's no appreciation, I think that's also important. … I didn't actually see it as appreciation. No it was more like 'OK, this is my bank account number, pay it into that'."* *"We just wanted to stay the size we were. And [name of partner-there] is a small organization, that's perfectly fine, but I'd never be able to get a board together for that. … They said OK guys, we'll go for a number of [name of partner-there]'s, but not for one.*	
Exit	**Exit *reasons*, not an exit *strategy***. Open-ended, no strategy, but a spontaneous exit, particularly finance-related.	☐
Quotations	*"... what had become difficult, is that those sponsors kept a bit of a tight grip on their purses. And then you can say, how can you tempt them into sponsoring? I don't actually know. It didn't happen."*	

	"… then we see our flow of money drying up a bit. I don't know how long we could keep going. … I don't know whether we will succeed in continuing to exist … that is particularly a matter of finance." *"No story, no money."*

Typical photographs from an organization-here in the assessing-modus-operandi are of material improvements and facilities, before and after the intervention, intended as evidence for donors. *"I think this is a very good representative photo. This is the old shelter, which is pretty bad. … So this is the kitchen where they used to cook for 60 children. And this is now the kitchen in which they cook for 65 children."*

3 Accommodating: the bigger picture

If a PDI employs the accommodating mode, it focuses on the development of the partner-there. In order to be able to contribute effectively to poverty reduction and democratic governance, strong and autonomous organizations-there are needed. That comes down to organizing people to enable them to solve their own problems with their own solutions and on their own conditions.

In Table 3 you will find the main characteristics of an organization that displays 'accommodating'. The characteristics are illustrated with quotations from data in the research material. **Put a tick √ in the appropriate pink boxes in Table 3 if you recognize the approach of your own organization.**

Read the *quotations* **for a better understanding of the characteristics.**

Table 3. Main characteristics or an organization-here that accommodates

Characteristics	Clarification and illumination	
Basic principle	**Mediate** and **develop**, by thinking in possibilities: the organization-here offers, but leaves everything open. The partner-there does the choosing, because the basic principle is equality.	
Quotations	*"Those are, say, just the models that you bring with you, from … the historical context of yourself and others, what you've simply learned and what you have*	

	experienced … you pass that on, you try to help them apply it, like how it should look for their area. Because it is and remains theirs."	
	"… they have given and received. And we have given and received."	
	"Our goal was to be a mediator, so projects in that area … we wanted to match them with organizations in [city in The Netherlands]. And that has worked out quite well."	
Main approach	**The bigger picture**. Acquiring context knowledge. Sharing knowledge and expertise: learning, experimenting and innovating together. Focus on development by looking at the bigger picture: the partner-there in its context.	▢
Quotations	*"And, actually, that has been our continuous focus. The money and the material, I just call it the toolbox, that's not what it's about. You look to see what developments are going on with those people …"*	
	"… there was for those security people that had had the training. They then had a certificate, that was very important and that they could give that training. But with this they could also find a security job elsewhere. Then they all changed over to paid work. We didn't really find that a problem … I mean, as that creates work opportunities we don't mind too much. If this helps people to get jobs, then it's also good."	
	"… then someone must have some understanding. … There the entire society is different from here, and we reason on the basis of our experience, of our everyday actions and of our norms. And there it is totally different."	
	Partner-driven. The partner-there is problem-owner and requesting/choosing party.	▢
Quotation	*"Then you ask: what do you prefer, how would you like to see things, and with whom would you like to work together? You then together work that all out into a sort of proposal."*	
	Organization-oriented approach. Line of approach is effectivity of the partner-there. Coaching and bridge building, inter alia by mediating, matching and lobbying.	▢
Quotations	*"I really enjoyed working together with [name of donor organization] really fantastic … people had their training there, and that was especially about looking to see how they could source funding themselves. And [name of partner-there] every so often writes really lyrical reports about this. That it was so useful to them."*	
	"And he has, like, completely supported that secondary school there. So they did that directly. Not via our wallet. … But because we approached that foundation, wrote to them, and we knew them, they got onto that trail and this is now bringing hundreds of thousands or euros their way."	

	"It finally came into being and is still taking further steps. The work that they do in the area, that remains about the same. But the training sessions for the owners of the early childhood development centres and the teachers that are doing the course, that certainly is a growth model. That is also supported by a private group with the government and the district here, that just keeps going. … We are no longer involved in this."	
Sustainability	**Ownership-there** is strengthened by furthering support and legitimacy and operational capacity of partner-there.	▢
Quotations	*"People were also trained from all those organizations that regularly … met up and there regularly discussed how things could be better attuned. There was also an employee wellness programme. Like how do we deal with our own people or staff concerning hiv/aids. Counselling, what if they become sick, how do we arrange things like that. That sort of thing … I think that what we have done is pretty important. I mean, the whole hiv/aids problem, in this we have supported what they were already doing, and as a result that has … gained added depth."* *"...some developments that need a longer development time, you can stay there longer and give support for longer. It is often the case that some short-term things often slow down or cease to exist if you're not involved anymore … We said we've been doing this for ten years now, now is a good time to stop, and actually they were certainly in agreement. It's still functioning, we stopped about 6-7 years ago."* *"... it is an oil stain. If you can make it work with five women in a village, if you can manage to do that, then a large group of people in that village will benefit. … That you see that in those villages things start moving … And if you see that that air of resignation disappears through action. … Yes, then that is of course development. … so much structural change in the people's thinking and doing."* *"And the locals, those businesses, they also benefited from it. If those beaches were to become dangerous because of thieving youths, that would not be good for tourism. So they have a very great interest that the beaches there are, shall I say, safe. So money also came from them. It cost a lot of talking with all the organizations around it."*	
	Results particularly at the level of operational capacity (by training and coaching) and support and legitimacy (by matching and lobbying) of the partner-there. This can be considered as outcomes of the organization-here, that are favourable for the chance that the partner-there can create public value. This is a long-term process of learning and changing.	▢
Quotations	*"The first time we went there … if you then asked those people a question, then they looked down at the ground. And then they gave an answer in Tswana. … The second time they answered in Tswana and they looked at me. And the third time I went they laid their papers on the table and said 'no, that is not correct', in English, and they looked at me. That's the difference. … And now they themselves*	

	go to government agencies. To arrange for ground for the construction of a factory. They go themselves to Escom to arrange for electricity … That is it."	
	"The most important result that we have achieved is the fact that [name of partner-there] as "project" has been adopted by [name of service club-there] … Ultimately we shall have to wait and see what effect this will have. But the confidence in a good result was written on their faces."	
	"The most important thing you invest in is in the body of thought of people."	
Oriëntatie in betekenisgeving (waardeoriëntatie)	**Externally oriented:** open and social (sense of reality, normalizing and social cohesion). The organization-here takes time to gain insight into the partner's problems and questions, without taking any action. It's about "verstehen" which means understanding as well as empathizing, knowing and comprehending.	▢
Quotation	*"What the board of [name partner-there] has done exceptionally well, is that they said 'listen, we are in the Zulu region … and we must have Zulu men. Because they are the educators. We have young boys so we must have a number of women … but if we're talking about the Zulu culture, if we're talking about structure, security, norms, values, we must have men. We must train them'."*	
	"In short, all the differences, the pain, the powerlesness, the lack of knowledge and the distrust of the participants is always present …"	
Exit	**Exit *strategy***: exit is taken into account from the outset, like a spot on the horizon, also by the partner there. Objective of the organization-here is to become redundant.	▢
Quotations	*"A clear contract was drawn up right at the start. We are not going to just pump money in or train people. It must really be a consistent story whereby [name of partner-there] … it must ultimately rely on its own strength and no longer be dependent on money from [country organization-here]. It must happen here. Here is the problem, this must be solved here. That has also been discussed all along the way. How far are we now? What is needed? What must be adjusted?"*	
	"The aim was to see whether they could ever become self-supporting? Now, we've achieved that. … Yes then we just stopped, because that early childhood development centre was up and running, it was subsidized, had good teachers, yes, then you have to let it carry on independently."	
	"... when we left - we were there for the last time in 2010 - at the time there was a board, at the time there was a labour agreement, at the time there were 24 people on the payroll with pretty good salaries by [country-there] standards, appropriate. … Financing almost completely from [country-there]. And new buildings constructed for which they raised the funds themselves."	

Typical photographs from an organization-here in the accommodating-modus-operandi: groups of strong people: who know what they are doing, who are proud of what they have achieved. Left: "*Explanation of these semi-professional machines ... part of the work of [name of partner-there]."*
Right: "*Her first certificate at 79".*

4 Determine the dominant 'A'

Count the number of boxes you ticked in table 1, 2 and 3 and write the results in the three boxes. Very probably you ticked boxes in two or three tables. Is the number in the yellow box higher than in the other two? Then maybe Acting is your dominant 'A'. A higher number in the blue or pink box? Then maybe Assessing or Accommodating is your dominant 'A. Below you will find some recommendations for the organization-here, based on the dominant 'A'.

RECOMMENDATIONS for organizations-here that display 'ACTING' as their dominant 'A'
Investigate the problem. What is the matter? Whose problem is it? What might be the best way to solve the problem according to the partner-there and stakeholders-there: government, target group, other organizations, et cetera.
Knowledge of the other's culture. Be aware of the information advantage of the partner-there. They know the culture, the norms and values, whereas you are the one who is 'different'.
Less emphasis on internal motivations: donors' and personal motivation, and more emphasis on external motivations: partner-there and context. This is also mentioned by other researchers such as, inter alia, Sara Kinsbergen.
Ownership-there. Ownership is a precondition for sustainable results. Ownership stands for sufficient operational capacity ànd for ongoing support from key political and other stakeholders: the authorizing environment.
Don't walk in front, but next to or behind your partner-there. Don't take work over because 'they can't do it themselves'. Do not offer help, but ask what is needed. Be honest about what you can do and what you cannot do, not only to your partner-there, but also to yourself.
Look into the future. What will happen when you stop 'acting'. Who will take on 'your job'? If materials or bricks will solve (part of) the problem, will the partner-there be able to keep things in order? Does the partner have money, knowledge and skills to do so? Be aware of the fact that material resources are only a means to an end, not development goals as such. That children have access to a classroom does not automatically mean that their school results are better than when the lessons were still being given 'under the tree'.

RECOMMENDATIONS for organizations-here that display '*ASSESSING*' as their dominant 'A'.

Investigate the problem. What is the matter? Whose problem is it? What might be the best way to solve the problem according to the partner-there and stakeholders-there (government, target group, other organizations et cetera). If materials or bricks will solve (part of) the problem, will the partner-there be able to keep things in order? Does the partner have money, knowledge and skills to do so? Be aware of the fact that material resources are only a means to an end, not development goals in themselves. So don't rule out financial support for overhead costs such training and education.

Try and avoid the 'who calls the piper plays the tune' approach. A top-down, who-pays-the-piper-calls-the-tune attitude in which the southern partner is given the role of (sub)contractor instead of that of the leading party, limits ownership-there. Whereas ownership is crucial for sustainability. Therefore: place less emphasis on internal motivations: donors' and personal motivation, and more emphasis on external motivations: partner-there and context.

Beware of micromanagement. Strict accountability requirements can adversely affect the extent of ownership-there, because they can cause stress and trigger (deliberate) misleading. For a good partnership the basic principle should be equality.

Look into the future. Ask yourself what will happen when you stop your financial support. Will the partner-there be able to continue? Does the partner have money, knowledge and skills to do so? It seems that in principle a donor that is lost must be replaced by another. Most organizations-there will depend on subsidies and donations, be it national or international, just like organizations anywhere in the world. If the partner-there is fully depending on your aid (help paralysis), then try to gradually cut down while assisting with capacity building. Such as financing education and training in fund raising and sharing information about alternative donors.

RECOMMENDATIONS for organizations-here that display '*ACCOMMODATING*' as their dominant 'A'.

Find donors that agree with your own organization. The Achilles heel of the accommodating-modus-operandi is that real changes take time and that needs long-term investment. Unfortunately many private donors and charitable organizations seem to have a short-term horizon of 1-3 years. Maybe benefactors are more inclined to give their support if short-term interventions are linked with long-term interventions. This might prevent your organization from running out of money. This could be an additional reason to mix and vary between the three modi operandi. Please note that when your main modus operandi is Accommodating, it might be rather difficult to communicate with a donor who reasons in a self-referential way: the own organization or self as starting point as well as in a rational way: focus on efficiency and short-term results,

Think what your organization would like to 'bequeath', because that is what it is about: "*It's what remains that really matters*". Strive for a responsible exit by combining the most important components of a responsible exit strategy (see page 16), because this appears to offer the greatest chance of sustainable results. The furtherance of operational capacity seems to be by far the most important. Also, letting go in stages, and continuing to support the partner throughout this period, appears to be important. This also applies to allowing the opportunity for a new relationship to come into being with the local partner *after* the exit.
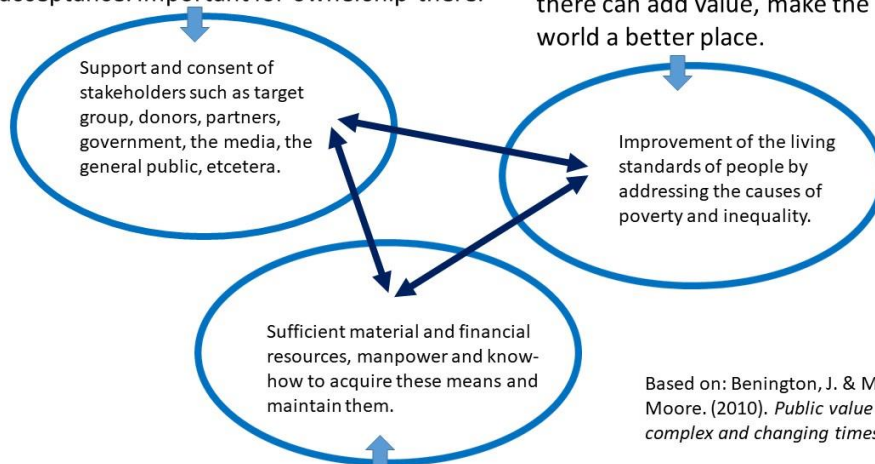
5   Achieving sustainable results

In order to be able to achieve sustainable results – positive changes on the long-term – three conditions must be met:

- The partner-there has sufficient *operational capacity*. This means that the organization has *sufficient know-how, skills and means* to acquire and maintain the necessary human, material and financial resources to run an organization. Operational capacity is crucial for *ownership-there.*
- The partner-there gets *support and legitimacy*. An organization is not an island, but a part of society: it needs support. Support means that the organization gains support and legitimacy from everyone that could have an interest in the organization, such as target group, beneficiaries, donors, partners and colleagues, but also the government and the media, up to and including the general public. A school that is not acknowledged by the government and as a subsequence does not receive a governmental subsidy, has insufficient support and legitimacy. Support and legitimacy are also very important for ownership-there.
- The partner-there can create *public value* at outcome or impact level. The more operational capacity and support and legitimacy, the more chance of creating public value: bringing about changes in the living standards of the target group/local population (*outcome*) or society (*impact*) by addressing the causes of poverty and inequality.

Strategic triangle of public value

SUPPORT AND LEGITIMACY: partner-there has gained acceptance. Important for ownership-there.

Support and consent of stakeholders such as target group, donors, partners, government, the media, the general public, etcetera.

PUBLIC VALUE CREATION: partner-there can add value, make the world a better place.

Improvement of the living standards of people by addressing the causes of poverty and inequality.

Sufficient material and financial resources, manpower and know-how to acquire these means and maintain them.

Based on: Benington, J. & M. Moore. (2010). *Public value in complex and changing times.*

OPERATIONAL CAPACITY: partner-there has know-how, skills and means to do the job. Important for ownership-there.

A responsible exit strategy is not about 'winding up'. It is about making yourself superfluous. It is about working yourself out of the job.

6   Components of a responsible exit strategy

Several components can be identified in a responsible exit strategy. These components are: furthering operational capacity, donor diversification and donor coordination (consultation between donors), a phased exit and ex post involvement. Some components should be more crucial than others. *Furthering operational*

capacity is by far the most important component of an exit strategy. *Phased letting go* and the continued support of the partner during this period is also important. This also applies to *allowing a new relationship* to come into being with the partner-there after the exit. In this period the partner could be supported by mentoring, for example. Early consideration of an exit is not seen as being necessary, but only after it appears that the activities are successful. Perhaps it is not realistic to think too early about an exit, since things change, and what has developed in the beginning may have become outdated. Furthermore the context can change, such as laws and regulations.

Exit tips and tricks

The key question is: why winding up? Is it *for internal reasons*, with the focus on reasons on your side? Or is it for *external reasons*, with the focus on reasons on your partner's side or context? Or is it a mix of internal and external reasons? In the literature (see page 21) you can find examples of exit reasons. In Table 4 and 5 a number of exit reasons are given, together with some questions. In your communications with the partner-there first try to come up with as many questions as you can and only then start thinking about the answers.

Table 4. Common *internal exit reasons*, issues concerning the organization-here

Exit reasons	Some relevant questions
The goals have been achieved.	Does the partner-there agree that the goals have been achieved? Did we communicate repeatedly that the exit was forthcoming and did our partner-there fully understand? Do we have a proper understanding of the timetable and the run-down of our aid (financially and morally)? What does the partner-there need to continue without our support? Can we offer that? If not, who can? What will the new relationship after the exit be like? Et cetera.
Not enough manpower, time, energy, passion, knowledge or expertise because people quit and cannot be replaced. Ages of trustees and health problems are often a problem, whereas rejuvenating the board is not always easy. Young people seem to be less inclined to commit themselves for longer periods of time.	Could we find another organization that would be prepared to take over or merge with our organization? Have we considered the consequences for our partner-there and have we discussed this with our partner-there? Could the partner-there be 'adopted' by the new organization (after take over or merge)? What do we do with the remaining funds? Would any of the present trustees be willing to continue as a trustee of the new organization? Et cetera.
Not enough money or donors. For example because the government ceased to make money available for development aid in specific countries.	Have we discussed the problem with our partner-there? Would there be any donors that we can still approach? Would the partner-there be able to raise funds in its own country? Could we enable the partner-there to raise their own funds and could we make money available to that end? Do we know about education and training about fund raising for the partner-there? Could the partner-there hire a professional fund-raiser? Et cetera.
'Giving while living' strategy: giving until the capital is used up.	Does our partner-there know about our strategy? Did we inform our partner-there in time that we are running out of money? See also above. Et cetera.

Conflicts within your own organization. For example because of fraud, differences of opinion or personal conflicts.	Is fraud suspected? Can it be investigated? What else can we do? In the event of a (personal) conflict could we engage a mediator? Do we look after the interests of our partner and our own interests? Do we take costs and reputation damage into account? Et cetera.

Table 5. Common *external exit reasons*, issues concerning the partner-there

Exit reasons	Some relevant questions
Fraud, theft, misuse or other irregularities.	Did we discuss the matter with our partner-there? Could it be a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge? Should we engage an expert-there to assist? Is it a matter of financial malpractice? Do we know whether more donors have been affected? Could we join forces? Is it feasible to start a forensic investigation? How do we communicate the problem with our donors and other stakeholders? Do we look after the interests of our partner and our own interests? Do we take costs and reputation damage into account? Et cetera.
Partner-there does not wish to continue the partnership because administrative overloading stands in the ways of the real work.	Did we ask our partner-there what the problem was? Should we engage an expert-there to assist? Would the problem have been solved if we had adjusted our procedure? Do we know how other organizations hold their partner-there accountable? Et cetera.
Problematic/insufficient communication between the organization-here and the partner-there.	Did we discuss the matter with our partner-there? Could it be a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge? Should we engage an expert-there to assist? Have we explained our partner-there that without their information we cannot account to our donors for the money they consigned to us and that this hinders our fund raising? Et cetera.
High running costs/large salaries at partner-there.	Did we discuss the matter with our partner-there? Do we know about average salaries for comparable jobs with comparable organizations-there? Et cetera.
Conflict with the partner-there because of differences of opinion or personal conflicts.	Did we discuss the matter with our partner-there? Could it be a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge? Should we engage an expert-there to assist? Do we look after the interests of our partner and our own interests? Do we take costs and reputation damage into account? Et cetera.
The number of contacts-there diminishes. For example because of aging. Since most organizations-here do not have an extensive network-there it can be rather difficult to replace those contacts.	Can we find new contact persons? For example via another organization-here or an organization-there? What are the consequences of the diminishing number of contacts for our intervention and for the partnership? Et cetera.
Rules and regulations in the country of the partner-there change.	What exactly will be different? What are the consequences for the partner-there and for our intervention? How can we and the partner-there comply? Et cetera.

Research has shown that quite often there is more than one reason to wind up. Mostly the exit procedure is discussed in one or more board meetings. From decision to implementation the actual exit will take between a few months to a few years. In the course of the exit most organizations-here cut back their support step by step. During the exit procedure the remaining funds are either spent on the partner-there or on one or more other organizations-there. Quite often the 'organization-here' stays in touch with the former partner-there, either in writing, verbally or in face-to-face, but mostly in writing. An entirely cold exit, stopping purely owing to a shortage of money, does not seem to occur often.

To leave is to die a little

In development aid one strives for an ideal. This involves emotions, images and stories. Research has shown that an exit can evoke strong emotions: to leave is to die a little. Winding up can be compared with a grieving process. The psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross describes five phases in the grieving process: denial, protest (anger), negotiation and/or battle, depression and acceptance.

The *reasons* for winding up seem to play an important role in the acceptance. Winding up because it does not work out or because of personal problems, or winding up because the goal has been achieved can arouse very different emotions. Moreover emotions will differ from one person to the other. Some describe what they go through as a personal disaster or saying goodbye to *"one's baby"* or *"a part of one's life's work"*. Here feelings of passion or nostalgia seem to prevail. Others react more matter-of-factly: *"it is ok, time's up, it's all right, enough is enough, it's finished"*.

But also anger, sadness and disappointment can play a role, for example when one feels cheated by the partner-there. Or when one feels let down by colleagues, co-workers or donors.

The stronger the emotions during the partnership, the greater the chance of strong emotions when saying goodbye. This goes for both you and the partner-there. Saying goodbye takes time, so therefore do it step by step. After a partnership of many years' standing you cannot just pull the plug.

The last phase in the grieving process as described by Kübler-Ross is acceptance. In the literature (see page 21) you can find several examples that can help you to accept, specifically if feelings of failure or unfinished business prevail. Regard the interventions of the organisation-here as an experiment. No one can look into the future and predict whether interventions will work. Maybe you can compare it with the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic where interventions from country to country are as different as chalk and cheese; they're all experiments. Only when looking back it can maybe be determined what could have been done better or differently. The same goes for your own interventions. Consider it as a lesson learned, for you, the organization-here, the partner-there and mayby even third parties. Because each lesson learned can be seen as a starting point for improvement or innovation. If you look at it from the perceptive that no money was thrown away or wasted, but instead that it was an investment in cost and time of learning. Furthermore, there might be a time-lag. Maybe at the time you said goodbye you couldn't see sufficient – or any - results, but winding up, however painful, can even in itself have a positive effect. Winding up may be difficult, but it will always be one of the options you have.

Click here to read some examples (in Dutch) from development aid organizations-here that learned from their experiments and exit and shared their experiences. The lessons they learned might help you too.

7   Glossary

Capacity building >> See Ownership-there.

Context knowledge >> Knowledge and understanding of the culture, norms and values of the partner-there and its context. The more you know, the better you can understand and assist the partner-there.

Donor-driven >> The organization-here thinks up what is needed, makes choices or sets up priorities instead of asking what the partner-there really needs or wants.

External orientation: openness and social cohesion, sense of reality. Thinking and acting from outside (the other) to inside (the self).

Philanthropic particularism >> The organization-here makes choices and sets priorities as to what is important for the partner-there.

Impact >> Impact encompasses that part of the positive and negative, intended and non-intended effects of the intervention that remains after the deduction of what would have happened anyway. Impact also relates to a higher level of results than outcome, so results not only related to the target group/local population, but also to society.

Internal orientation >> Taking the initiative, making plans and models. Thinking and acting from inside (the self) to outside (the other).

Micro management >> Strict accountability requirements: much attention is paid to detail, because verification is needed, for, inter alia, donors and sponsors: receipts, invoices and photographs.

Operational capacity >> See ownership-there.

Outcome >> Outcome results are related to the target group. What has been changed, improved, and what lessons have been learned? Outcome therefore goes a step further than output: are the school results in the new school building better than those from when the children were still reading under the tree?

Output >> Output is a question of counting: so many classrooms built, so many children going to school.

Ownership-there >> Ownership-there implies that the partner-there has sufficient *operational capacity*. This means that the organization has the know-how, the skills and the means to acquire and maintain the necessary human, material and financial resources to run an organization. Furthermore, an organization is not an island, but a part of society: it needs acceptance. That is why ownership also implies that the partner-there gets *support and legitimacy* of all relevant stakeholders. See Stakeholder.

Partner-driven >> The point of departure is: what does the partner-there want? This means that the organization-here does not offer help, but asks what is needed. In the event of several options, the partner-there is asked to choose.

Self-referential >> Considering one's own organization or own self as starting point.

Soft outcomes >> Positive change in the social well-being of disadvantaged individuals, caused by a social intervention. Soft outcomes are not measurable but demonstrable, such as increased confidence or behavioural changes.

Stakeholder >> Person or organization that has an interest in the partner-there, such as target group, beneficiaries, donors, partners, the government, the media, the general public et cetera.

Support and authorization >> See Ownership-there.

8   Exit checklist

Once the decision to wind up has been taken, a lot of affairs have to be put in order. In Table 6 you will find some points of interest concerning the exit process. For organizations-here that focus on the exit of one or

more partnerships-there, but do not intend to wind up the organization-here, only the first row in Table 6 will apply.

Two points need to be emphasized.

Firstly one should not underestimate the significance of an exit for the partner-there. Despite careful communications, that moment could still come as a shock to the partner: *"It was amazing – and emotional – for us to read the email, all about the finalization of the official relationship we had over the years. We knew it was happening, but somehow, the email just made it all seem very real and final."* This quotation underlines the importance of good communications between the organization-here and the partner-there. **Secondly**, the quality of the exit has a profound impact on future sustainability, as partners that are well prepared do not only have a greater chance of surviving, but also of thriving from it.

Research

You can help to further the knowledge of development aid. Would you please be so kind as to send **the results of Table 1, 2 and 3 on page 14 and your dominant 'A'** via email (info@spza.org) to the researcher, Martje Nooij.

The results will be used without any mention of your name or the name of your organization. Thank you so much for your co-operation!

This toolkit is based on a thesis. Should you wish to receive a **full copy** of the English edition, then send an email to info@spza.org. Please write in the subject: Request for a copy of the thesis on exit strategy.

Literature

Nooij, M.G. (2020). Is a good exit strategy half the job? Dutch Private Development Initiatives, their interventions and their exit in relation to sustainability: a matter of acting, assessing and accommodating. English translation of Thesis Utrecht University, The Netherlands.

Schulpen, L. & Kinsbergen, S. (2012). Life cycle of Private Initiatives – the reasons behind, and consequences of, ending a small development organization. Nijmegen: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, Centre for International Development Issues (CIDIN).

Table 6. Exit checklist and scenario

	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
Partner-there	Discuss: - Exit message - Wishes partner-there - Other donors / take-over, merger - Timeline exit		
Organization-here: laws and regulations, memberships, subscriptions, et cetera.	Inform or cancel/terminate: - Tax authorities - Banks and other financial institutions - Chamber of commerce / Government - Sector organization / association - Crowd funding platforms and other websites of third parties - Other		
Organization-here: social media	Cancel (or maybe wait a bit?) - Domain names - Own website - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, et cetera - Other		
Organization-here: donors and charitable organizations	Discuss - Exit organization-here/take over/merger - Wishes of donors and sponsors - Timeline exit		
Organization-here: own organization	Possible candidates for a take over or a merger? Winding up (scenario and planning). - Capital (check constitution) - Offices - Furniture and office equipment - Trustees/Volunteers/Staff - Donors/ sponsors - Activities/projects /partners - Archives (photos, documents, files) - Knowledge and experience		