

AMID MAGAZINE

By & for the AMID Community
Powered by Educators for Social Change



Radboud University



**THINK
YOURSELF
ACROSS
BORDERS**

25 YEARS OF THINKING OURSELVES ACROSS BORDERS

It is with great pleasure that we write this foreword to commemorate the 25th anniversary of AMID Young Professional and the AMID community. It is an extraordinary milestone and a time to reflect on our journey and what we have achieved.

When this programme was established 25 years ago, then called the 'Postdoctorale opleiding ontwikkelingsstudies', we aimed to create a programme that bridged the gap between academia and practice in international development. Over the years, AMID Young Professional has changed from a small programme with just a few Dutch participants into a programme offered largely online to students and their organisations all over the world. AMID Young Professional has been a frontrunner in embedding personal development and skills-based training in academic education. This has turned AMID Young Professional into the odd one out in an educational landscape where systems tend to say 'no' to the unknown.

Our ambition to contribute to positive change in the 'real world' through higher education motivated us to grow and develop new educational programmes targeting professionals at different phases in their careers.

AMID Masterclasses and AMID Leadership are the most recent offshoots from the AMID tree of Educators for Social Change.

Although phrased differently at that time, from the beginning, we were determined to provide an environment that challenged, stimulated and supported students in reaching their full potential as change agents: those that question the ordinary and embrace the extraordinary.

This magazine is a testimony to our journey, the milestones we have achieved and the challenges we have overcome. It is a celebration of our history, our alumni and students, the relations that have been forged and the transformative ideals that drive us. It is also an inspiration for our future because we are excited to continue growing and developing.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals and organisations who have contributed to the success of AMID over the years. We would like to dedicate this magazine to the next 25 years and beyond, as we continue to empower the minds of future generations of agents for change.

We are looking forward to building the future, together with you.

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BUILDING BRIDGES IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT: 25 YEARS OF AMID YOUNG PROFESSIONAL

BY Caspar van Vark PHOTOGRAPHY Duncan de Fey

When talking to AMID Young Professional's current Programme Director, Dr Sara Kinsbergen, it is difficult not to get swept off your feet by her passionate belief that you can contribute to a more fair, inclusive and green world through professional academic education. Under her leadership, the programme has modelled itself as an 'online international classroom'. She is convinced that transforming the way we provide education is a condition to sustainable development goals. In an inspiring way Dr Kinsbergen reflects on 25 years of AMID Young Professional and shares her vision for its future.

How did AMID originally come about?

AMID was born from an observation that there was a gap between what we provided in regular education programmes in the field of international development and what organisations were actually looking for. AMID was formed to bridge that gap between academia and practice. We have undergone a lot of changes since then, but the basic idea is still to better prepare professionals early in their careers to enter the broad field of international development.

Our philosophy is one of double-loop learning. Participants in our Young Professionals programme attend classes where we provide them with the latest academic insights, and they take that knowledge to work and apply it. Based on their experiences, they reflect critically on what we provide in terms of academic knowledge. This interplay has always been there, but now we make it very explicit.

How has international development education evolved over the past 25 years?

The changes our programme has undergone over the years reflect real world changes. For example, the actors involved in sustainable development now are not just NGOs, but a variety of knowledge institutions, semi-profit organisations, companies, and consultancies. This diversity has to be represented in our classrooms.

These organisations are no longer just looking for project officers either, but for policy officers, for knowledge brokers, for community builders: lots of different types of professionals. This means our students come from a wide range of educational backgrounds, as do our lecturers. We have to provide the content and skills that we feel our students need to kickstart their professional careers.

How has that changed how you actually deliver the AMID programme?

The most important change is that we have started offering our programme online. COVID-19 was a real game changer here. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, people were pushing us to start offering our programme internationally. The question was: where could we offer a relevant educational programme with AMID Young professional without competing with any local educational institutions or programmes?

We did a market study in Kenya, and in 2020, we started a partnership with the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. In the first year, we had five trainees based in Kenya; in the second year, we were present in five different countries outside the Netherlands: Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, and India.

Our ambition is to act as an online international classroom. This is not always easy. Online education requires a different approach to teaching and learning. In addition,

internationalising as a non-funded educational programme in a non-profit landscape is a challenge at times: the programme comes at a price. However, based on meetings with many organisations in various countries in the Global South, we do not doubt the added value of our programme.

Despite the challenges, our current class is bearing fruits that never grew in our previous set-up. Our internationalisation is the most important change we have undergone. I see it as our duty to challenge the way we go about education in international development, to better prepare young professionals to address challenges in today's ever-changing world.

The paradigm has also shifted in the sense that we no longer think of the Global North as being there to provide solutions to the Global South's problems. The world is confronted with problems that affect all of us, and it is everyone's responsibility to find solutions. This is reflected in the content and design of our programme now.

AMID aims to produce 'change agents'. How would you define a change agent?

For us, a change agent is someone who questions the ordinary and embraces the extraordinary. It really comes down to someone who challenges the way things are done – not just for the sake of it, but so we don't take things for granted and continue to ask questions. If you are early on in

“Internationalisation is the most important change we have undergone. I see it as our duty to challenge the way we go about education in the field of international development.”

– Dr Sara Kinsbergen



your career, you might think who am I to question senior management? Well, we feel you should be able to do that. It is our responsibility to provide you with knowledge and skills so you can analyse what is currently happening and ask the right questions.

Some might say you can only become a change agent later on in your professional career. But why wait until you have been in an organisation for 10 or 15 years before you start questioning existing structures and modus operandi? What a waste of talent. Every position has its limits and boundaries. But each and every one of us, in every organisation and position, can play the part of a change agent.

Can you give an example of the type of impact AMID has had?

One of the topics we have started discussing in the programme is the issue of decolonisation. Recently, I met with someone in management at one of the organisations we work with. We talked about decolonisation in global development. He told me they had started working on it already because, two years ago, they had had an AMID trainee who had presented a paper on this. I thought 'Wow!'

It is so great to see how our students can really make an impact, and it's not always in the short term. Sometimes it takes a while. It all started with that one junior professional and then it ended up with an organisation really transforming the way they work and how they approach their partnerships.

In 2022, AMID won the Radboud Internationalisation Award. What did that mean to you, and how are you using the prize money?

Getting that kind of recognition from the university was the most important thing we could have asked for. The recognition that what we are doing is not just interesting but worthy of applause. It really boosted the entire team.

As for the money, we want to use it to invest in the technical facilities we use to provide our education, and to invest in further training ourselves as a team so we can provide high-quality, online education to an international classroom. After all, we do not just teach online: we also teach to a very diverse group of people, and we now have the opportunity to further invest in this.

What's your vision for the future of AMID?

I would like to see our programme grow, but not for the sake of numbers. We need growth in numbers in order for us to grow in terms of diversity, because we are convinced that this deepens the learning experience of all involved. This is what we are really aiming for.

We want our classroom to reflect the real world of people out there, working towards a better world. To do that, we need to expand and reach out to young professionals and their organisations in countries all over the world. We are aiming for a classroom where we will have at least a 50/50 balance of students based in the Netherlands and overseas. It will take time, but we will get there.

“We need growth in numbers in order for us to grow in terms of diversity, because we are convinced that this deepens the learning experience of all involved.”

– Dr Sara Kinsbergen



Dr Sara Kinsbergen is an Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology and Development studies (CAOS) at Radboud University and has been the Programme Director at AMID Young Professional since 2019. Her research interests include the role of small-scale voluntary development

organisations, known as Private Development Initiatives (PDIs), and how they operate in various European countries and in the Global South. She was awarded a PhD in 2014 for her thesis *Behind the Pictures: Understanding Private Development Initiatives*.



AMID Young Professional and the AMID Community have evolved since the programme was founded in 1998, in line with how the paradigm of 'development' itself has changed. Historically, 'international development' has been framed as a project in which the Global North helps to solve the Global South's problems through aid flows such as Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The content and design of today's AMID Young Professional programme is fully aligned with this perspective: it already applies a global lens in its approach to development. The diversity of its students, lecturers and partner organisations reflect the diversity of the actors that participate in global development as well as the complexity of the involved networks.

AMID Young Professional programme will become part of the Educators for Social Change. The Educators for Social Change retains its predecessor's core elements: 1) the AMID Young Professional programme, 2) the Masterclasses International Development, for more seasoned professionals, and 3) the Leadership Programme, for senior professionals and policy makers. The name for the group communicates that development is a shared challenge and that it must be addressed from a global perspective.

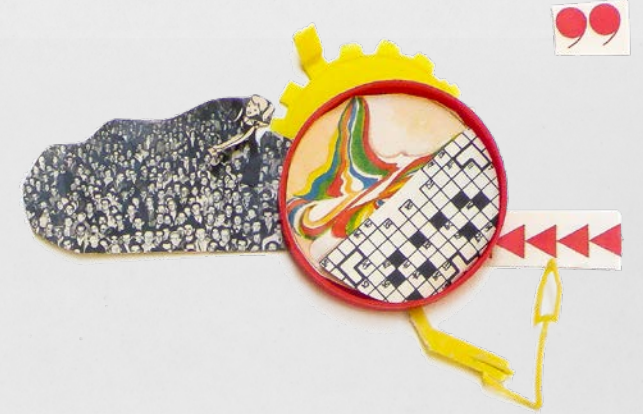
Since 1998, AMID has aimed to bridge the gap between academia and practice. It aims to do this by empowering passionate graduates from multidisciplinary backgrounds to become change agents. Change agents taught in the AMID programme have the ability to formulate innovative answers and ground-breaking solutions in response to today's and future challenges.

The programme is for professionals within and beyond the Netherlands who want to work on creating a positive impact on the sustainable development agenda. By becoming part of the AMID community, they can collectively deepen their knowledge, build on their skills and develop themselves personally and professionally. The programme aims to build a global community of expertise. www.ru.nl/amid

Artwork 'V Trames' by Elza Zijlstra for Trashworks. TrashWorks makes art of vintage magazines and plastic litter found at beaches, riverbanks and streets worldwide: from the island of Texel in the Netherlands to Kenya, from the campus of Radboud University to the beaches of Cornwall and from the Alps to West Papua. www.trashworks.nl. Want to know more about plastic soup? www.plasticsoupfoundation.org

FROM SINGLE ROADS TO CROSSROADS – ADOPTING AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

BY Emma Zieck & Marcello Siboni **ILLUSTRATION** TrashWorks by Elza Zijlstra
Parts of this article previously appeared on www.rcsw.nl/blogs/amid/



From the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Black Lives Matter movement and international protests against racism and discrimination, recent events have shown that we are still far from achieving equality around the world. Addressing inequality and ensuring that no one is left behind are at the forefront of the policy debate in international development. However, global attentiveness and formal commitments are only the first steps. Translating these goals into concrete actions is an entirely different challenge, wrote AMID Young Professional trainees Emma Zieck and Marcello Siboni – now alumni – in their blog post in 2021.

As AMID young professionals, we are educated as ‘change agents’ who can tackle complex global challenges. Yet, trying to grapple injustice and inequality can, at times, feel overwhelming. How do we start to take on these issues? How can we stand in solidarity with one another? What is the role of INGOs based in the Global North in these fights?

Reflecting on root causes

Inspired by a lecture given by Tine Davids on gender and intersectionality in international development, we argue that an intersectional lens is useful when striving for a more just world. It helps us to understand how various forms of inequality interact and exacerbate each other.

More generally, understanding international development from an intersectional perspective provokes development practitioners to critically reflect on their own positions and privilege. This means their social assumptions, resources and connections, and how these might shape the perspectives they bring to their work.

As a new generation of development professionals, we believe it is crucial to reflect on the root causes of marginalisation, and how we build and reproduce socially oppressive structures. Reflecting helps us to be honest about our historical responsibilities and move away from the dangerous narrative of us ‘saving’

the marginalised ‘Other’. Moreover, it opens up a space for minoritised groups to exercise their social and political agency, putting them at the centre of development programming and action.

An intersectional approach to international development can help us build more equal societies. How then, you may ask, do we put this approach into practice? This was the question several AMID students raised during our lecture. As rightfully pointed out by Tine Davids: “There is a danger of relying too much on tools, as it becomes a ticking box exercise without reflection. A lot is about awareness”.

While Prof. Davids’ remark is correct, in this blog we would like to give you a nudge in the right direction, by providing you with some practical recommendations and tips that could help you apply an intersectional lens to your daily work.

This blog starts by defining intersectionality as a concept. We then expand on the value of working with an intersectional lens and how it can be applied to international development. Finally, we give several recommendations that can be helpful for organisations seeking to use an intersectional approach themselves.

On Intersectionality

Intersectionality is rooted in the US of the 1970s. Black American feminist scholars and activists found themselves at a crossroads between two struggles: between women and Black liberation. This intersection meant – they lamented – that neither of the two movements were able to fully capture their experiences of oppression as black women.

Popularised by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality sprung from the idea that different aspects of people’s social identity – like age, class and ethnicity – are always intertwined and intersecting, rather than being separate from each other. Social identities and the ways in which they overlap, according to intersectional theorists, can either afford privileges and power or burden with oppression. Consider, for instance, the life of Maria, a divorced woman with a disability.

Here, Maria’s gender, marital status and disability together – that is, her social identity – produce a unique experience of oppression. Had she been married and able-bodied, her experience of power and privilege would have been different. At its very core, intersectionality can be used as a theoretical lens to better grasp how the different aspects of our social identities intersect and the role these intersections play in reproducing structural inequalities.

Intersectionality’s Added Value

But why, you may be wondering, do we need intersectionality as change agents? As you probably know by now (probably painfully so), change is not an easy task. Inequality is often structural. Its roots are often complex and difficult to change. Intersectionality – that is, the lens to analyse the significance of social identities for political relationships – presents important advantages when applied to development work.

First, you can only change something you know needs changing. Marginalisation strikes people in ways that are far from simple. It follows that understanding its roots and the context in which they grow will likely require a deeply transformative approach. Here, intersectionality is exactly what we need. Using an intersectional lens forces you to understand how inequality comes to be and is perpetuated by digging deeper into social structures and their practical effects.

Second, superficial change is not guaranteed to last. The current momentum around equality suggests that organisations need to ensure their programmes are sustainable and that change is long-lasting. This aspiration, however, must be grounded in more than ‘tackling the obvious’. Without an explicitly intersectional lens, your work will likely fail to grasp the complex and overlapping layers of oppression that lead to inequality. You may fix them partly or temporarily, but you will not do so in a holistic and permanent way.

Third, change only matters if people really benefit from it. Programmes are often designed with the best intentions. Sometimes, however,

they fail to reach those who need change the most. The beauty of the intersectional lens is that it forces you to dig deeper, but it also requires you to take the experiences of the most marginalised very seriously. If living at a specific intersection influences social standing in a unique way, then only those positioned in that specific intersection know what is necessary for effective change. Their lived experience must be central to your programme.

How should it be done?

Slowly but gradually, international development actors are starting to pick up intersectionality as a framework to guide their organisations and programmes. However, more still needs to be done to make sure that we are ready to create change from an intersectional perspective. Below, you can find some principles to help you and your organisation turn a deeply theoretical concept into practice¹.

Knowledge

Owning the right interpretative tools allows you to understand the significance of social identities when it comes to inequality. You, your colleagues and other stakeholders must discuss and conceptually absorb intersectionality, by taking relevant courses and having inclusive discussions. Moreover, data disaggregation based on the relevant social identities must adequately inform your programmes’ scope.

Reflexivity

As a concept, intersectionality teaches us that any intersection between different social identities is

bound to affect the socio-political agency of individuals. It reminds us that power differences are systemic and often difficult to notice due to our own social standing. The first thing to do is to make sure that you are constantly aware (as best as you can be) of your biases and your awareness keeps informing the analyses at the core of your programmes. Exercises on value clarifications among key stakeholders, such as the VCAT², can be really useful tools.

Representation

Intersectionality suggests that individual people’s socio-political lives are determined by whether they are part of particular social groups. Recognising this, due to their identity, different people experience oppression differently. This means being aware that those living at the margins are best placed to speak about their struggles and how change should be enforced.

Representation of marginalised groups, both within your organisation as well as in your programme’s phases, is paramount to effective transformation. Here, holistic and participatory PMEL approaches, such

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“The beauty of the intersectional lens is that it forces you to dig deeper, but it also requires you to take the experiences of the most marginalised very seriously.”



as VSO's MILE (Measuring Impact for Learning & Empowerment)³, can help promote wider ownership among the marginalised groups that your programme is targeting.

Flexibility

In order to recognise how complex global issues are connected, it is important to initiate collaborations across disciplines and thematic areas of work. When unlikely allies like development practitioners, researchers, lawyers, activists and artists are brought together to work alongside those who are most impacted, opportunities for transformative change arise.

For these collaborations to be successful, however, it is important that funding streams become more flexible. The siloed nature of development programmes and funding structures can be a barrier to strengthening intersectional work. More flexible and non-earmarked funding could help to address the structural causes of oppression and open up the possibility of working on more holistic interventions.

These principles are intentionally rather abstract. After all, intersectionality as an approach must be grounded in the wider social, political, cultural and economic environment in which it is used. There is no one-size-fits-all methodology here. Instead, each specific context and instance of marginalisation requires extensive, time-consuming analysis, which is a key component of the intersectional approach.

We are aware that financial resources and time are often quite limited. Nonetheless, we believe that truly implementing intersectionality could be a costly but ultimately rewarding task because it is the only way that creates changes that those who are truly marginalised want to see.

Emma and Marcello reflect on their blog in 2023:

“The siloed nature of development programmes poses a barrier to adopting an intersectional lens. As a fundraiser (Emma) and a programme officer (Marcello), we believe in this observation. Opportunities often align with organisational structures and donor preferences, neglecting the complexities of lived realities. Recognising these shortcomings is crucial for change.

NGOs have a role in fostering dialogue between grassroots organisations, donors and governments to align funding with community needs. By acting as bridges, they can expose the limitations of existing funding models and promote transparency and accountability. It is imperative that we critically assess our own roles and strive for a more inclusive and responsive development sector.”



Marcello Siboni is a PMEL officer at the Make Way programme. A passionate advocate for intersectionality, Marcello firmly believes in the transformative power of social change driven by those at the margins. In his work, Marcello aims to capture and amplify their voices, ensuring their perspectives and experiences shape impactful solutions.

Emma Zieck is a young professional who is passionate about research and policy in gender equality and reproductive health and justice. She has an academic background in Biomedical Sciences (BSc), International Public Health (Msc) and International Development (post-master). She has also completed professional training and has work experience in project management, participatory grant-making, communications and fundraising.

She believes sustainable change is only possible if those most impacted by an issue are included in identifying solutions and shaping policy. She currently works for The Hunger Project NL as fundraiser and programme manager.

1. The Make Way programme by the Intersectionality Consortium, a strategic partnership funded by Kingdom of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, plans to deliver a number of tools to operationalise intersectionality. An update will follow as soon as these are available.

2. While VCAT is explicitly focused on abortion, its framework – taken abstractly – can be useful to analyse and discuss several issues.

3. To learn more about MILE, you can get in touch with m.siboni@vso.nl.



MEET THE TEAM

Radboud University contributes to a free and healthy world with equal opportunities for all. Sustainability is one of the themes in the 'A Significant Impact' strategy, and it plays an important role in education, research and management. We make the most sustainable choices we can where we can. We recycle, provide vegetarian options as standard and are pursuing clean energy and sustainable waste management solutions. As a team, we contribute to making education more inclusive by providing international hybrid training programmes that facilitate and inspire young and seasoned professionals as change agents to have a positive impact on the world.

From left to right: Nura Rutten (Manager), Bo Polman (Coordinator), Tessa Koster (Support Staff), Alice Nieboer (Coordinator), Grace Muarya – on screen (Coordinator Kenya), Roos de Huu (Coordinator), Daphne van Cauter (Support Staff), Sophie Chang (Intern).

BY Nura Rutten PHOTOGRAPHY Suzan Zanders

AMID IN NAIROBI



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (IDS)

BY The Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi

The Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi (UoN) prides itself in being the choice for Radboud University collaboration to offer its international classes AMID Young Professional programme. Since 2021, the programme became a truly international class thanks to this collaboration.

Gains from the Collaboration

This program challenges the typical development approaches through diverse perspectives in both academia and practice. The dual nature of the program whereby the trainees work for four days a week and attend the academic program on Friday offers trainees an opportunity to combine both academia and practice hence helping in bridging this gap. The trainees bring into work meaningful conversation at the organisational level and most organisations work on adopting the new development approach challenge.

The international classroom experience gives our Kenyan and other Africa-based trainees a great networking opportunity through the interaction with trainees from various countries and diverse organisations. The program is structured in such a way that 75% of learning is conducted virtually while 25% is face-to-face. The opportunity for the trainees to meet during the face-to-face sessions has enhanced networking and enriched thinking and general approach to work, career, and personal life. The networks created are beneficial at both profession and personal levels.

We also find the design of the programme into four modules offering our trainees an all-rounded combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude. The modules cover critical topics in development that create critical thinkers in organisations. Furthermore, the programme is learner-centered, having a practical approach in the delivery of the lectures. Having the trainees at the centre of the training gives them the opportunity to mold themselves into the change agents that AMID desires to nurture. The integration of theory and practice manifests itself in written assignments which are integrated with the work that the trainees do in their organisations as well as current global development challenges.

We find the AMID learning environment very rich for our trainees who are keen on different approaches in life. A very practical personal development support structure has been integrated into the program which helps our trainees to develop personal and career goals. The peer-to-peer groups also help in the creation of a psycho-social support system for them during the AMID year and beyond.

At the end of this AMID year, IDS will be graduating its third AMID Young Professional cohort. Looking back, it has been a refreshing experience where we have expanded our network by working with an array of international as well as local organisations whom we partner with to deliver this program. Through these amazing partnerships, we are now all together part of a world-wide multi-disciplinary network of government agencies, businesses, NGO foundations, and knowledge institutes which are part of the AMID community.

IDS, AMID Young Professional, future

Participation in training at AMID Young Professional anchors well within the mission of the Institute whose focus is "To generate development knowledge, promote debate and encourage the utilization of research findings in postgraduate teaching and training and in shaping the growth of development thinking, theory, and practice with particular focus on Africa."

Our experience in this collaboration is a big stride in achieving the desired growth as well as the creation of impact for trainees working in the development space. We look forward to a future where IDS will cement its role as a center of excellence in Africa offering a rich training and practical experience for young professionals who are in the development space and change agents.



Herbert Wamalwa
Research Fellow, IDS and
Lecturer AMID Young Professional



Grace Muraya
Coordinator,
AMID Young Professional



Paul Kamau
Associate Research Professor, IDS and
Academic Director, AMID



Communities are vital: they provide a sense of belonging, support and social connections. They are also vehicles to achieve common goals and drive positive change. Students and teachers from all over the world take part in the AMID programmes of the Educators for Social Change; from Kenya to the Netherlands, from India to Zimbabwe. With different backgrounds and perspectives, they form a truly international classroom. Over the last 25 years, AMID has become a community of expertise and social change. Together we have a part to play. To think ourselves across borders. For a better future and a better world. www.ru.nl/amid



ANNEKE DONKER

LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 2001 **CURRENT POSITION:** Head of International Partnerships and Programmes at the Liliane Fonds & MIVA **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: After graduating from the University of Amsterdam (MA Cultural Anthropology in 1999) and AMID (2001), Anneke worked at several international NGOs in the Netherlands (Cordaid, VSO, ICCO), Cameroon (VSO), the DRC (Doctors without Borders) and Indonesia (ICCO). Since 2011, Anneke has worked at the Liliane Foundation and MIVA in 's-Hertogenbosch, starting as head of international partnerships and programmes in 2019.

"My interest in being engaged in the development and humanitarian aid sector was awakened when I started studying medical anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. For my Master's thesis, I studied help-seeking

behaviour in women during pregnancy and delivery in rural Nepal. This first and very intensive encounter with poverty, women and children in very vulnerable positions who were excluded from access to basic health care spurred my interest in becoming engaged in the development and humanitarian aid sector."

"The AMID training focused on the latest developments and discussions in humanitarian aid. It also gave me the opportunity to expand my network, as all trainees worked for other organisations in the sector. When I graduated, the AMID course proved to be a very good foundation for my career. Today, I'm head of programmes at the Liliane Foundation and MIVA. We've been connected to AMID since 2009 and employ an AMID trainee every year, a sign that AMID is still very relevant. Empowering the people who are most left behind is still my key motivation."

OLIVIA BWAYLA



LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 2020 **CURRENT POSITION:** PMEL Officer at CNV International **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: Before she joined the programme, she worked for the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) as a Junior Policy Officer. Now, after graduating the AMID programme, she works at the CNV International as a Project Assistant.

"In my current position, I support the development of new, creative ways to conduct our PMEL processes so they are more efficient and transparent. Personally, I try to live up to the role of change agent by raising awareness on topics that I am passionate about in my immediate community, such as racial issues and sustainability practices. I'm amazed by all the things AMID has brought me. My biggest personal eye-opener was learning to trust myself more in relation to my career journey, and being aware that being from a multidisciplinary background is a true asset."

DAPHNE HEIJDELBERG

LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 2016 **CURRENT POSITION:** Policy & Liaison at IOM Raginonal Office for the EEA/EU/NATO **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** Belgium

CAREER: Worked at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the European Commission in Brussels on policy files on labour migration, migrant and refugee inclusion and intra-EU labour mobility for four years. Currently works at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Regional Office in Brussels, focusing on migration, environment and climate change, and liaising with the EU.

"I chose to do my AMID year at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as I wanted to be close to where international development policies and agenda were shaped. Working at the Foreign Ministry when the approach to development cooperation was shifting to a greater focus on trade and entrepreneurship was interesting and challenged my convictions. The most interesting moments at the Ministry were when external researchers, who were often critical of the Dutch development cooperation and migration policies, were invited to come and speak."

"The AMID Fridays were the highlight of my week. I would get together for classes with my fellow trainees from the Ministry, NGOs and the private sector. The interesting conversations would start on the train to Nijmegen or wherever else we were expected for a lecture that day and continue far into the night over drinks. Besides learning a lot from the different perspectives that the AMID group brought, we were a source of support for one another, and this is true to this day."

DIRK-JAN KOCH

LINK TO AMID: Lecturer AMID Young Professional and AMID Leadership Programme **CURRENT POSITION:** Chief Science Officer of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Professor by Special Appointment International Trade & Development Cooperation **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: Serves as the Chief Science Officer at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is Special Professor of International Trade & Development Cooperation. Dirk-Jan finished his PhD (cum laude) at the Radboud University in 2009 and focused on geographic choices of international development NGOs. He was based in the DRC for five years and in Kenya for two, where he worked as a regional director at Search for Common Ground, as a professor at the Catholic University of Kinshasa and as a diplomat.

"We work in a small group to strengthen the knowledge, skills and personal development of executives to increase the impact of their organisations."

"When I was growing up in Achterveld, a small village in the centre of the Netherlands, there was a small fair trade shop. We also had two Foster Parents Kids, with whom we exchanged letters. Ever since, I have tried to contribute to reducing poverty and inequality, or at least tried to understand how we could achieve this. What works? What doesn't work? And what is counterproductive?"

"While we at Radboud don't have all the answers, we know which questions to ask so participants learn, especially from each other."



RUERD RUBEN

LINK TO AMID: Lecturer AMID Young Professional
CURRENT POSITION: Professor of Impact Analysis in Food systems at Wageningen University **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

"Since my appointment as professor and chair of the Development Studies group at Radboud University Nijmegen in 2006, it has been part of my responsibilities to deliver the introductory lecture of the AMID course, which was called PDOO back when I started."

"In line with my own career, this lecture on 'scenarios

for the future' has a forward-looking focus and asks the question: what challenges will the world face over the next 25 years, and what can we do to contribute to reducing poverty, and improving nutrition and inclusiveness of poor people in developing countries?"

"Learning takes place during interactive discussions alongside the lecture. Usually, students are more confused at the end of the lecture than they were before. This is the point: there are no simple recipes, and you can only reach understanding through communication."



LAILA BOUALLOUCH

LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 2018
CURRENT POSITION: First Secretary Development Cooperation, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in South Sudan **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** South Sudan

"One thing I'll never forget is that I was called an activist during my AMID graduation ceremony. This is a title I take great pride in. At the NL MFA, I work on topics related to young people in Africa and the Middle East. It was important for me to make sure that the voices of the youth were heard in my work as, back in 2018, programmes were designed without youth participating in a meaningful way. I pushed for the partnership between my department and One Young World to be signed as a first step into providing a platform for young people in Africa and the Middle East. Fast forward to today, I am proud to say we now have a Youth At Heart strategy, supported by a lot of people. We are also organising the first NL MFA virtual conference, and we have arranged a toolkit and a youth advisory committee. More specifically at my department, we are drafting more ways to meaningfully incorporate youth participation in programmes and decision-making. Our current AMID-trainee is leading one of the processes."

LINK TO AMID: AMID Masterclasses International Development 2020 **CURRENT POSITION:** Head of Philanthropy Advice at ABN AMRO MeesPierson **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: He has worked for The Rainbow Group and Doctors Without Borders. He is also author of the Big Gifts Guide.

"I have seen first-hand how the AMID Masterclasses International Development have enabled collective learning and exchange processes in my team. This has resulted in a valuable critical look at our role and the roles played by others."



PATRICK LODIERS

LINK TO AMID: AMID Masterclasses International Development 2020 **CURRENT POSITION:** Television presenter **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

"The best insight from the masterclasses is that we are also a developing country, which I thought was really good. We also have to develop ourselves in order to achieve a more equal world."

FRANK AALDERINKS



AURELIA MUNENE



LINK TO AMID: AMID coach for Professional Development **CURRENT POSITION:** i.a. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Advisor **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** Kenya

CAREER: At the core of my work is a deep commitment to social justice, contextualised practice and inclusive policy. For the last 15 years, I've dedicated my career to addressing gender inequality and social inclusion (GESI) and marginalisation issues in Africa. I am also keen to develop transformative learning and teaching approaches in higher education.

"My approach to GESI mainly focuses on analysing how intersections of gender, social exclusion, poverty, context, law, policy, institutions, age and other identities create and reproduce inequality for women, girls and other marginalised populations, and how countries and organisations can design and deliver meaningful actions that promote long lasting inclusion for communities."

"I was excited that our organisation, Eider Africa, was selected to carry out the study because of our experience in working with universities, faculties and postgraduate students. It was interesting to investigate the viability of AMID's study and work programme strategy there. I led the team, and we were able to establish that the AMID programme could begin operations in Kenya."

"The programme blends personal and professional development to nurture holistic, responsive, self-aware, globally informed and intentional change agents in the development space. This is a unique approach not applied in many institutions. Thinking of myself across borders has helped me facilitate coaching sessions with different trainees and effectively navigate and support trainees across diverse cultural and geographical borders."

"I am proud to contribute to AMID's ecosystem, which supports trainees to lead with both their hearts and minds while staying true to the values that promote meaningful development wherever they go. Indeed, personal growth is just as important as professional growth."



MARLEEN DEUSS

applied for the programme. It was our job to select the ones that fitted best. Most of them were very motivated to play a part in the world of development. This motivation touched me and helped me decide to take on the position of programme director. Helping young people to realise their dreams, make the most of their opportunities and discover their talents was and still is important to me."

"In 2009, I took this experience from AMID and my ambition to create opportunities for young people to a different educational setting. I started a job as a team manager in Built Environment at ROC Nijmegen, a vocational (MBO) school. A school with students with very diverse backgrounds, and students with talents that are often less appreciated and rewarded in our society. In small and diverse groups, they had to design and build a sustainable tiny house. This process needed and helped them develop all kinds of competencies, in which cooperation and communication were indispensable, and students grew. It was a real-life environment, and it resulted in meaningful learning situations and fantastic results."

LINK TO AMID: Former programme manager of AMID **CURRENT POSITION:** Project Manager of Sustainability and Vitality at ROC Nijmegen **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: Marleen was employed at Cidin as a junior researcher, junior lecturer, study advisor and programme director of the PDOO (now AMID). She worked at #ROC Nijmegen as a team manager for several educational teams in Built Environment and Health Care. She currently works as a project manager of Sustainability and Vitality.

"I had already been involved in the programme for a couple of years as part of the selection committee. Every year, between 100 and 200 very eager, talented and recently graduated young academics

DAAN VERBAAN

LINK TO AMID: Supervisor AMID Young Professional **CURRENT POSITION:** Programme Officer Disaster Management/Ukraine and South-East Europe at *Kerk in Actie* **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: Daan was responsible for the coordination of an international youth exchange programme to support volunteers and young professionals in their engagement with international development. Now a programme officer for Disaster Management at Kerk in Actie, responsible for the Humanitarian Response activities from Kerk in Actie partner organisations in Ukraine, Moldova and Poland.

"Offering AMID trainees an opportunity to work within Kerk in Actie means to engage them in a commitment to fostering partnerships with different countries. Through collaborating with diverse international partners, we offer trainees the experience to appreciate the power of flexibility and the richness of cultural diversity. This can create the transformative potential that emerges when we think ourselves across borders, which I also experienced in working in a team for programmes of international youth exchange."



"Involving several AMID trainees in the partnerships and work setting of Kerk in Actie definitely brought new insights, energy and inspiration. It enriched me to contribute better to the field of international development through coordinating impactful programmes at Kerk in Actie. I am 59, feeling very much privileged and inspired to accompany local partners and churches abroad in their work for development & humanitarian response activities in Ukraine, Moldova and Poland in order to make this world a better place."



SANNE WILLEMS

LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 1998 **CURRENT POSITION:** Team leader economy and infrastructure at EU Delegation to Ethiopia **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** Ethiopia

CAREER: Sanne Willems has spent over two decades crossing borders, both literal and metaphorical, in the field of development work. From her journey with organisations like ICCO, UN-Habitat, the Netherlands' Embassy and the European Union, Sanne has focused on diverse sectors, striving to make a positive impact in challenging environments.

"Twenty-five years ago, I embarked on a learning journey with AMID, merging theory with practical development work. I had the privilege of working with ICCO in South Asia, where two of us were chosen. AMID fostered a tight-knit community, sharing experiences and insights every Friday. Afterwards, I had been outside the Netherlands, so it was not just about "thinking yourself" across borders, but I "was" crossing borders. I needed to go beyond, at least beyond the Dutch border. From ICCO to UN-Habitat, the European Union and the Netherlands' Embassy in Kenya, I focused on diverse development sectors. Currently based in Ethiopia, I strive to rebuild lives and revive businesses amidst conflict. Reflecting on AMID, the cultural communication activity left a profound impact. It challenged assumptions, demonstrating the value of cultural sensitivity in development work. Engaging with diverse perspectives became a humbling and invaluable lesson."



MAYANKA VIJ

LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 2018 **CURRENT POSITION:** Policy Analyst at OECD **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** France

CAREER: Mayanka is an accomplished professional in development evaluation with a strong focus on gender equality. Through her work at COC Nederland and the OECD Development Cooperation Directorate, she has designed evaluation frameworks, managed evaluations and influenced norms and standards that underpin development evaluation as a practice, in the hopes of producing credible and representative evidence for better development outcomes.

"Reflecting on my academic journey with AMID in 2018, one poignant memory stands out: our entire class was standing in a circle and the premise of the exercise was to assess how different people perceived the same issues and whether others could influence their thinking. It was a thought-provoking exercise, it led to some debate and I recall a particular moment when one classmate expressed fatigue from repetitive discussions on (in my opinion) a critical issue and another emphasized the significance of continuous dialogue. Both statements elicited strong reactions from the rest of the group and though they were polarising (to a degree), the class was empathetic to both perspectives. It was that experience that really shone light on the agility of the AMID group, the careful considerations we afforded to different sides of an argument and never jumped to the most obvious conclusions."

"I have witnessed various challenges and limitations inherent to the development sector and it is what continues to reaffirm my belief in sustained multi-disciplinary collaboration and dialogue. Whether it be in a personal or professional capacity, everyone can play a role in challenging biases and antiquated notions that influence the way development cooperation is thought of and done. A career in development cooperation isn't the only way a person can have real impact!"

WALTER VAN HATTUM



LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 1998 **CURRENT POSITION:** Head of Trade and Economic at EU Office to Hong Kong and Macao **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** China

CAREER: Following his studies in political economy, development, and business administration, Walter worked on trade, industry, and development policies, among others for the International Labour Organisation in Nigeria; the Dutch Foreign Service; Oxfam Novib; and more recently the European Union. For the EU, Walter helped establish a joint undertaking in Barcelona supporting nuclear fusion development. Walter then worked on humanitarian aid and health policies and more recently on EU trade policy, leveraging EU trade for improving labor, human rights, and environmental standards.

Walter was posted in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, where he served as head of the trade section of the EU Delegation, engaging government and civil society on free trade agreements, trade and sustainability, and market access. In January 2021, he was appointed head of the trade and economic section of the EU office in Hong Kong and Macao.

"As I reflect on my career path, I am happy that I was able to follow the path that took me to many different places and fields of work. From my early days studying development studies and political economy to my current role as the Head of the Trade and Economic Section at the EU Office in Hong Kong and Macao, I have been able to benefit from my academic studies, notably critical thinking and debate, as well as the more practical elements of the advanced development studies."

"I worked with Oxfam Novib, the ILO, and the Dutch MFA ('diplomatic class') before joining the EU where I was able to work on various policies, ranging from debt policy, nuclear (fusion) energy, humanitarian aid, to health policy. For the last 15 years or so I worked on the EU's trade policy, where besides supporting our trade agenda I was also able to use the EU's economic power for promoting sustainability and values of labor and human rights in various countries in Asia. While each post is different, the experiences constantly brought me back to my early academic years of the importance of respecting, listening, and adapting oneself to the culture and people you work with."



ZUNERA RANA

LINK TO AMID AND CURRENT POSITION: Lecturer at AMID Young Professional, Masterclasses and SDGs in Higher Education **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: Originally from Pakistan, Zunera has worked as a short-term consultant for various development organisations in Pakistan including USAID, WWF-Pakistan, and the World Bank Poverty Alleviation Fund. She came to Germany in 2013 for her Masters in Economics and Finance and in 2018 embarked on a PhD journey at Radboud University. In 2021, Zunera defended her PhD focusing on the theme of aid fungibility and effectiveness of development aid. Since 2014, she has also been working as a research and teaching assistant at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in Germany, concentrating on the themes of international development, macroeconomics, and econometrics. Since

March 2022, Zunera has been part of the AMID team as a lecturer and has been responsible for teaching in the programme as well as planning and assuring quality control of the content taught in the programme.

"The most fun I have had while working at AMID is when I sit with Sara, the programme director and we brainstorm about the current topics in international development that we should include in our programme. The discussions we have during these sessions make me excited about international development and my work. I am always nervous when our "final product" is implemented – will the trainees see the vision we want to show them? Will they perceive the importance of the specific topic we have added? Will they understand the bigger story that we want to , and will it help them become the change agents we intend to produce in the programme? – these are some of the questions going through my mind throughout the module. The evaluations always help confirm that our efforts have been fruitful and then we once again stick our heads together to prepare for the next module."

LYNN VAN LEERZEM



LINK TO AMID: AMID Young Professional 2013 **CURRENT POSITION:** Programme Manager at Milieudéfensie **COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK AT THE MOMENT:** The Netherlands

CAREER: Lynn van Leerzem is a passionate professional specializing in climate justice campaigns and social movement building. With experience at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, community work in The Hague and at Milieudéfensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands), she has made impactful contributions to policy development and

to uniting diverse groups for positive change.

"We would meet on the train every Friday morning, tired but happy, exchanging jokes and complaints. It was a critical, as well as an uplifting environment."

"During my AMID traineeship in the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I went through a shift in International Development, with companies playing a more prominent role. Being rather critical of the role companies play in International Development if left to their own judgment, I started working at Milieudéfensie. I know we cannot make any climate impact if we do not hold those parties with the

highest Co2 emissions accountable. And so with Milieudéfensie we initiated a climate court case against Shell, who emits 9 times as much Co2 as all of the Netherlands combined. Our victory, which compelled Shell to reduce their CO2-emissions with 45% by 2030, motivated us to target 29 other high-emitting companies. They too need to align their policy with the 45% reduction ruling of the Shell court case."

"During my time at AMID and my other studies, I realised I could make the biggest impact in International Development by addressing the

negative impacts caused by Dutch business and policy abroad. Reflecting on my time in the AMID programme, one of my fondest memories was the camaraderie I shared with my fellow students. We bonded over exhausting schedules and challenging coursework, but we also had a lot of fun together. We would meet on the train every Friday morning, tired but happy, exchanging jokes and complaints. It was a critical, but uplifting environment. As many people held different views and work experiences than my own, it kept me perceptive and open-minded."

Pracademic Dr Willem Elbers, deputy programme director at AMID, gets entire communities to act

“WANTED: MORE PRACADEMICS. WE WON’T BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WITHOUT THEM!”

BY Hans Wanningen PHOTOGRAPHY Duncan de Fey

Dr Willem Elbers, deputy programme director at AMID, doesn’t beat around the bush: “I really want to make the world a better place. I developed that drive at a young age. It’s absolutely essential. And because it gives my life meaning. So it’s fantastic that I’m now a pracademic, fostering collaboration all over the world. Wherever I work, I try to build bridges between academic insights and issues we encounter in real life.” In this interview, Elbers sheds light on what a pracademic is and what they can do, particularly in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Being a pracademic is effectively part of Elbers’ DNA: “It’s a core part of who I am. I had a strong sense of justice even as a child. And I was eager to see the world. When I was doing my degree in Development Studies, I felt totally in my element, working at the interface between academia and practice. I became increasingly aware that there was a gap between the two domains in pretty much every country. It’s a missed opportunity for both domains. I’d like to see cross-pollination rather than a gap, with everyone reaping the rewards.”

Restrictive paradigm

Both sides have played a part in maintaining that gap thus far. “Academics spend much less time dwelling on social challenges than you might think. Under the current paradigm, professional academic life is based on conducting research. This means knowledge is pursued for its own sake. Entire generations are growing up believing that the only way to succeed in an academic career is to publish as much as possible, secure funding for research or win prizes. It’s a form of tunnel vision, with unfortunate consequences in the real world.”

Urgent global challenges

That said, Elbers is not trying to undermine the immense value of fundamental research. However, he does want to see a broader paradigm in place, so we can progress beyond a research perspective that is somewhat out of touch with the real world. “There’s no time to lose! Given all the urgent global challenges we’re facing, we can’t afford to have a narrow academic perspective. It’s an obstacle to socially relevant research and knowledge valorisation, and inclusive education.”

Poor relations

There’s a lot that needs to be done on the practical side of the gap too. In the world of international collaboration,

research plays second fiddle at best. “Within organisations operating in the field, you’ll struggle to find many dedicated research positions,” says Elbers.

“As a rule, it’s something staff members do on the side. Relationships with the academic domain, if there are any, tend to be unstable and short-term. No wonder, because there’s a strong focus within civil society on achieving management goals and on accountability. Plus, there’s the high workload. Academic insights and evidence-based practice have poor relations.”

“This is a huge loss. The fact is that academic research can be invaluable in practical settings. It can shed light on complex problems and help us measure progress or regression. It can help us come up with effective, innovative solutions. And, of course, it can be used to train people to tackle problems based on the best available knowledge and competencies.”

Bridge builders

The logical follow-up questions is: how do we bridge the gap? This is where pracademicals come in, says Elbers. Their skillset makes them perfectly equipped for this: “Pracademics straddle both research and practice. Their practical work draws on their academic experience, and vice versa. This makes them uniquely capable of building bridges. They’re skilled at arranging contacts and exchanges, bringing together different cultures and interests, and building empathy and trust. In effect, they are brokers of knowledge and experience, able to valorise knowledge and break down barriers to collaboration.”

Drivers of exchange

This means pracademicals are the drivers of close and constant exchange between academia and practice. “To come up with effective solutions, you have to start by scrutinising the problem,” says Elbers. “So, from AMID’s perspective, this means gaining a better insight into the



“Within organisations working in the field, you’ll struggle to find many dedicated research positions. As a rule, it’s something staff members do on the side. Academic insights and evidence-based practice have poor relations.”

– Dr Willem Elbers



complexity of what causes exclusion, poverty and the other problems that the SDGs want to eliminate. How do you get a better view of those problems and capture them in data and models? And what are the best proven strategies for change and improvement? Pracademics also know who the relevant actors are and have access to networks, which is important if you want to create momentum. As drivers of change, they also pave the way for new insights, innovative approaches and education, such as in our AMID programmes.”

Key role

The scale of the global challenges means we urgently need more pracademics, Elbers insists. “Radboud University’s emphasis on sustainability is a good step towards more socially relevant research. I’m also pleased with the recent recognition and appreciation of the social contribution of academics. Hopefully this will help develop the perception of pracademia as a fully-fledged and appealing education and career path and do justice to the key role that pracademics play.”

Catching up

Organisations in the field need to catch up too. “Let staff members participate in research teams and in consortiums with universities. And let them contribute to academic forums, conferences and journals. Create opportunities for sabbaticals in academic settings. These should unquestionably be considered valuable aspects of their work.”

“This is something that we at AMID want to contribute to. The AMID Masterclasses, for example, were specially developed for professionals who want an opportunity to step out of their day-to-day routine and immerse themselves in the latest academic insights in development cooperation.”

Change from within and below

Elbers is also in charge of AMID Community Building, an innovative programme that helps businesses align their operations with the SDGs. The programme is based on the same principles successfully used by social movements, such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter. The main principle is that change happens from within and below. For example, Elbers and his team are currently working with the pharmaceutical company Johnson & Johnson (J&J) to

set up an SDG community.

As a pracademic, this is exactly what he wants to see happening. “The SDGs are not something you pursue on the side. Of course, it’s great if you have a handful of enthusiastic people on your staff who will perhaps organise projects to push for wheelchair access in buildings, separate recyclable waste or introduce gender-neutral toilets. But like social movements, you only start making a real difference when there’s a proper focus, critical mass and a target. And thanks to the SDG framework, we have a neat set of targets right there.”

Greater social impact

“What we seek to achieve at J&J is to unite intrinsically motivated employees from different disciplines to create a tightly knit, SDG community with the capacity to effect change,” says Elbers. “It’s about sharing experiences, insights and expertise, and pooling everyone’s brainpower and actions around a single, integrated agenda and with a shared, inspirational goal: greater social impact around those 17 SDGs.”

Results already evident

What’s come out of this at J&J? “The newly established community has initiated a large-scale SDG awareness raising campaign, targeting all staff and management,” says Elbers. “It’s also creating an inventory of existing sustainability initiatives in the company and seeing whether the SDG banner can give them greater momentum. This could be through a shared website, a big event or something completely different. Third, the community at J&J is working to embed the SDGs in operational management and decision-making processes, from departmental plans to annual appraisal interviews.

Not too bad, I’d say!”

Dr Willem Elbers is the deputy programme director at AMID. He also supervises the AMID Masterclasses in International Development and AMID Community Building, an innovative programme that helps businesses and organisations align their work with the SDGs. Through these programmes and various other initiatives, he strives to bring academia and practice closer together.

“IT’S BEEN EYE-OPENING AS WE CAN NOW IDENTIFY GAPS IN OUR ORGANISATION AND KNOW HOW TO FIX THEM”

BY Eunice Mwaura and Cynthia Omondi PHOTOGRAPHY Cynthia Omondi ILLUSTRATION TrashWorks by Elza Zijlstra

A few weeks before the launch of AMID Magazine, we visited a non-profit organisation in Kenya called Macheo, tucked away on the outskirts of Thika town. Marnix Huis in ’t Veld, the Managing Director, and Seth Mwangi, the Service Delivery Manager, enjoyed a coffee with us as they narrated their experience with AMID programmes that enabled them become agents of change capable of developing ground-breaking responses to current and future challenges.

What attracted you to the AMID Young Professional programme?

Marnix: “We’ve known Dr Sara Kinsbergen, the Programme Director of AMID Young Professional, for a very long time. She visited us at Macheo in 2007. We’ve always kept in touch and follow up on her work. So, when the opportunity presented itself and the fees were affordable, it was a no-brainer.”

Share the results of your learning experience with the programme.

Seth: “The experience was amazing. The team that took us through it provided well-organised teachers and lecturers. Unlike other ways of learning, AMID Young Professional is more practical in that they have mentorship sessions that encourage us to ask more questions. The lecturers were not there just to teach us. They would give us information, which we could question, bringing out the excellence in us.”

Marnix: “We also met students from countries like Uganda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and India. The majority were from the Netherlands, who we also interacted and shared knowledge with. As for our organisation,

we networked and later received referrals from various people; some are doing things for Macheo that we benefit from.”

Tell us about the significant impact of AMID Young Professional.

Marnix: “The programme’s intensity has played a major role in the changes I’ve seen. Their way of teaching helps a lot. More credit is due to Seth and Julie (other staff member of Macheo taking the programme) for all their efforts; they did very well.”

Seth: “At Macheo, we’ve seen a huge boost in confidence, pure knowledge and a much broader scope of international development and international trends.”

Have you incorporated AMID into Macheo?

Marnix: “As the Managing Director at Macheo, a few things have been implemented into our programmes, and the results are fantastic and truly beneficial. It comes through in different ways: the change and what can be learned for Seth, Julie and me through the AMID Young Professional and Masterclasses.”



Marnix Huis in 't Veld (top) is the Managing Director at Macheo. He participates in AMID Masterclasses, a programme for more seasoned professionals.

Seth Mwangi (bottom) is the Service Delivery Manager at Macheo. Seth is among the people who have felt the impact of the AMID Programmes. He began AMID Young Professional last year and graduated in February 2023.



Do you share what you learn with Macheo staff?

Seth: “Yeah, we thought of transferring knowledge from what we learned. We agreed that we wanted to communicate what we are and what we are learning; this also makes it more practical for Julie and the rest of our colleagues.”

Marnix: “So we incorporated AMID programmes, although not fully. Currently, we have around 17 of our staff participating. We have one session every week on Thursdays, and they’ve taken it up and appreciate what we’re teaching them. It’s broadening their thinking, way of working and performance. We’ve seen remarkable change within them.”

Seth: “It’s insightful and interesting, having weekly discussions and debates. For Macheo, it’s been eye-opening as we can now identify gaps in our organisation and know how to fix them. On a personal level, we’ve learned about presentation, communication and so forth. It’s been very helpful.”

Besides Macheo, is there another organisation you shared with?

Seth: “Yes, a Ugandan student we were with. I shared what we we’re doing with Macheo with her. She was interested, especially in our work, monitoring it and the evaluation. She even travelled from Uganda to Kenya to experience Macheo. She learned a lot because we took her through most of our interventions, what we’re doing and how we monitor and evaluate things.”

“It was a game changer for her. Since then, she’s been in touch with

“It’s broadening their thinking, way of working and performance. We’ve seen remarkable change within our staff.”

– Marnix Huis in 't Veld

us to introduce it to their organisation. It was impressive that she added it to her thesis, challenging her organisation to adapt how we do it at Macheo. This is such an excellent way to network.”

Would you recommend AMID Programmes to other organisations?

Seth: “Definitely. There’s so much to learn. They’re key to making an organisation run or having an impact on the community. For instance, involving the community as stakeholders, other people and organisations. There’s more focus on what you can offer within this organisation than on competition. Reaching out to make something impactful to what you’re doing or in the community.”

Are there major organisational holes that AMID programmes would help fill?

Seth: “The major issue with most organisations is community involvement. Organisations develop their interventions without involving the community for sustainability. In most cases, community ownership has no place. So whenever you pull or move away, things collapse.”

“From what I have learned in AMID Young Professional, when you involve that community, there’s ownership. They can do anything for the organisation because it’s part of them. And with that, the impact is realised and felt. Even if you’re not there, they can talk to others and continue with the project.”

Marnix: “Adding to that, we’ve learned a lot about power. Hard sources of power in particular: who

has them and where to use them. When you enter the government, they have all the aforementioned powers, yet you want to work with them. So how do you do it? How do you get people to realise that even if there are policies, they can change them and work with you?”

How would you compare AMID programmes with others?

Seth: “We’ve had a lot of group work where we were grouped to work in Kenya and the Netherlands. We discussed and shared ideas with the whole team in both countries.”

Marnix: “Well, I feel that most programmes are theoretical, while AMID was practical. It was a step forward; how do you do what you want to do? This was the biggest change I saw in these two contexts. There were a lot of practicals, lecturer involvement and follow-ups.”

Have there been any challenges with working and studying at the same time?

Seth: “Time management. If I’d mismanaged it, everything would have fallen apart. I had to manage my work; being a family man, I needed to be there for them. I had to spend a lot of time reading and writing at night. Initially, it was exhausting. I remember the first two months were hectic, but I was able to adapt with time.”

Which aspect of AMID Young Professional would you improve if you could?

Seth: “It was an excellent experience. The lecturers being there for you and even being open to having you contact them when you need help is



a major thing. You can call and text them, and they’ll reply. Everything was well thought out. It was an opportunity like no other.”

Marnix: “I think there could have been more support to help Seth more, as he initially struggled with academic reading and writing, which wasn’t a surprise given his previous education. Looking back, I think we should have invested more time in those skills before the start of the programme. This would have meant that when it started, it was easier to things pick up.”

What are some of the takeaways from the AMID Masterclasses, a short programme for seasoned professionals, you’re taking?

Marnix: “It’s been a blast! It opens your mind to new perspectives. I’ve enjoyed meeting new people who challenge me to question things I’ve just assumed. I’ve applied to this academic programme to add value to Macheo.”

Macheo (www.macheo.ngo) is a Non-Profit Organisation in Thika, Kenya. It helps disadvantaged children and their families in urban slums and rural regions. Macheo means ‘sunrise’ in Kiswahili. ‘Sunrise’ means having as many children as possible grow up happily in a safe, caring and stimulating environment that promotes their potential.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMID

Why the PDOO was set up

The *Postdoctorale Opleidings Ontwikkelingsstudies* (PDOO) started in 1998 as part of the (the) Development Studies group at Radboud University with Fons van der Velden, Paul Hoebink and Lau Schulpen as founding fathers. The traineeship programme was a response to a call from several Dutch NGOs to strengthen the education of recently graduated Master's students and provide them with the knowledge, skills, and personal development necessary to work in the Dutch development sector. It kicked off in 1998 with nine trainees, working at four different NGOs in the Netherlands. The programme clearly hit the mark, started growing in terms of participants and managed to build a strong reputation in the following years.

AMID becoming part of the Radboud Centre for Social Sciences

From 2018 onwards, we went for the next step in innovation. In 2018 under the leadership of programme manager Bernadette van Dijck, AMID became part of Radboud Centre for Social Sciences, the institute at the Social Science faculty that hosts education to professionals. Monic Schijvenaars, the director of the institute, saw AMID's potential and enabled opportunities for innovation, both in terms of new programmes and the internationalisation of the young professional programme. From now on, it was up to Sara Kinsbergen and Willem Elbers to guide AMID into the future.



AMID becomes AMID Young Professional

We were just getting started! In 2020 we turned AMID into an umbrella name, allowing for new educational programmes to be developed each targeting professionals at different stages in their career. Our longstanding programme, now called AMID Young Professional, transformed into an online, international class. We could not have done this without the great partnership with the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi.

The AMID family started to grow! In 2020, we launched AMID Masterclasses and AMID Community Building and in late 2023, AMID expects to launch its leadership programme, which aims to empower leaders in the development sector to act as change agents.

What goals will AMID fulfil in 2030?

To live up to its mission to contribute to a more fair, just, inclusive and green society through professional academic education programmes, AMID is convinced that it is a precondition that its (blended) classrooms become increasingly diverse in terms of the background of our participants and lecturers. By doing so, AMID believes it fosters deeper learning experiences of all involved, which better enables everyone to take up their role as change agent. In the coming years, the internationalisation strategy of AMID is a key priority of the team, let's spread our wings.



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Development from PDOO to AMID

After a couple of years, we felt it was time for a change. In 2005, under the supervision of Marleen Deuss and later Jasmin Beverwijk, the PDOO programme became the AMID, changing its language from Dutch to English so it could be more accessible to a more diverse group of trainees. The increasing diversity of the programme was also reflected in the types of organisations that participated. Next to NGOs, government organisations and knowledge institutions began participating as well.

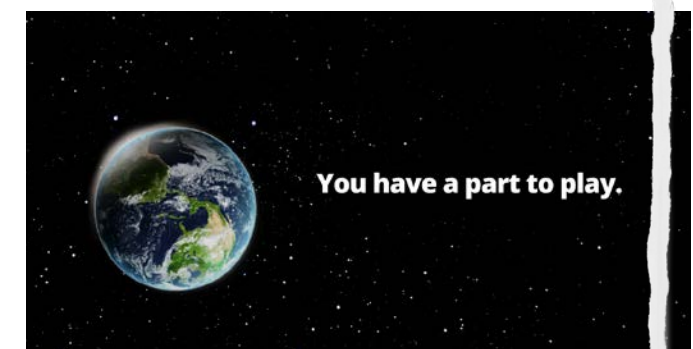


AMID Young Professional wins the Radboud Internationalisation Award

And all the hard work paid off! In recognition for its innovative approach to education, AMID Young Professional was rewarded the Radboud Internationalisation Award 2022. This award is for initiatives that contribute to the internationalisation of education at Radboud University and create a more inclusive and multilingual academic community. The AMID team received the award during the Opening of the Academic Year in the *De Vereeniging* concert hall, The Netherlands.

What is AMID's long-term vision for the world?

AMID believes that the world out there will always need professionals that question the ordinary and embrace the extra ordinary. That is why we will continue investing in high quality academic education programmes at different stages of their professional career through our various programmes. Together with our academic and professional network, we will co-design what this requires from young and seasoned professionals and their organisations and what this implies for an education programme in terms of content and design to facilitate these professionals. Hey future, here we come!





TWO GENERATIONS CELEBRATING AMID: A CHAT WITH ADITI AND FONS

BY Sophie Chang PHOTOGRAPHY Sophie Theunissen

In the vibrant setting of Creative Valley near the Utrecht train station, the AMID team gathered to facilitate an insightful conversation between Fons van der Velden, the designer and first course director, and Aditi Singh, a young trainee. Surrounded by the comfortable and energetic vibe, they delved into the essence of AMID's mission and the transformative journey it offers to young professionals in the field of international development.

The Vision and Evolution

Aditi: "AMID Young Professional is a very dynamic programme, even in my time - now halfway through the programme, we evaluate its feedback and learn about what the trainees desire; this lies at the heart of organising AMID. It has transformed throughout the years, but I imagine the motivations of the programme remain the same. I am curious to know: In your opinion, what should a young professional gain out of the AMID you created?"

Fons: "It was Paul Hoebink (senior researcher and lecturer of the Third World Centre the predecessor of CIDIN) who initiated the idea of creating AMID. Later, he approached me to design and implement such a course. My main aim was to support young professionals with practical approaches, methods and tools that they could apply in the field of international development."

"I felt that my own academic research was not sufficient to make a tangible impact, and this appeared to be a more general phenomenon. Paul and I wanted to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Our vision was to strengthen young professionals with the competence to transfer knowledge to real-life situations. During those years, the programme focused on subjects such as organisation analysis, organisational development, communication in an intercultural setting, budget and balance sheet analysis. Overall, our goal was to enhance the capacity of well-educated and committed young professionals to make meaningful contributions in the field of international development."

Youthful inspiration

Aditi: "Why did you choose to focus on the young and not mid-career professionals looking to upskill themselves? What is it about young professionals that inspired you to start AMID?"

Fons: "Capacity strengthening can be an important part of the change process. I chose to focus on young professionals because we discovered that they often lacked practical competencies to link to the labour market. I believe that investing in their development early on can have a significant impact on their careers and the organisations they work with. Young professionals may bring a fresh perspective and are often more open to learning and adapting to new approaches. By supporting them with the necessary skills and knowledge, we can contribute to their mindset and assist them to become change-makers in their respective fields. From the start of AMID, the programme emphasised relationship management, which is essential for building networks and collaborations that can lead to lasting impact."

"We worked from the belief that to create the change we desire; we must first embody it ourselves. Mahatma Gandhi once said: 'We have to become the change we want to see'. That is why personal assessment was part of the programme. Additionally, the curriculum we developed emphasised the importance of active engagement and practical implementation - the 'Doing' aspect - including factors like project dynamics and effective stakeholder management."

"Furthermore, that curriculum had a subtle emphasis on de-schooling and de-learning. We encouraged trainees to shed any arrogance and find a balance in their approach. Such a holistic approach ensures that young professionals are equipped with the skills, mindset, and self-awareness necessary to make a meaningful impact in the dynamic field of international development."

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Collaboration and Criticality

Aditi: “How can young professionals in development make a meaningful impact in their work?”

Fons: “Making a meaningful impact in development work requires a combination of competencies, mindset, and understanding of the context in which you operate. Firstly, it is important to have a solid foundation of knowledge and practical competencies relevant to the field of international development.”

“Secondly, young professionals may need to approach their work with an open mind and a willingness to challenge existing systems and practices. Development is a complex sector, and it often involves navigating contradictions between personal values and the larger systems at play. It is crucial to remain critical and to constantly seek ways to improve and innovate within your sphere of control and influence.”

“Lastly, building strong relationships and partnerships, on the basis of mutual respect, with organisations and stakeholders is vital for creating sustainable and impactful change. By actively listening and collaborating with others, young professionals can leverage collective wisdom and resources to address pressing development challenges effectively.”

Balancing Values and Realities

Aditi: “Most importantly, international development is a very perplexing sector, where, in my limited experience, you see a contradiction between personal values and the systems within which we operate. What is your advice to young people in resolving or at least dealing with such contradictions?”

Fons: “Resolving or dealing with contradictions in international development requires a nuanced approach. Firstly, it is important to recognise that the sector is complex, and no solution is perfect. Understanding the larger systems and structures at play is crucial, but it is equally important to identify the areas where you can make a positive impact within your control or sphere of influence. It is an issue of positioning yourself strategically.”

“To navigate these contradictions, I would advise young professionals to prioritise their values and maintain integrity in their work. Seek opportunities to align personal values with the projects and organisations you choose to work with. If you encounter conflicting situations, take the time to reflect, engage in critical dialogue, and find creative solutions that align with your principles.”

“Remember that change takes time, and progress often happens incrementally. Stay committed, be adaptable, and continuously seek opportunities for personal and professional growth. It is crucial to organise support for personal growth through peer groups, mentoring and coaching. By approaching your work with an open mind and a willingness to learn, you can make a difference and contribute to positive change in the international development sector.”

Repositioning and Change-Makers

Aditi: “Lastly, what kind of change do you see AMID bringing to the world?”

Fons: “AMID aims to bring about several types of change. Firstly, on an individual level, the programme strengthens young professionals with the knowledge, skills, and mindset to make a meaningful impact in the field of international development. By nurturing their potential, AMID helps create a new generation of change-makers who can address pressing global challenges.”

“Secondly, on an organisational level, AMID encourages a repositioning of development organisations. By emphasising relationship management, stakeholder engagement, and practical competence, AMID helps organisations become more agile, adaptive, and effective in their approaches. This, in turn, contributes to positive change within the organisations themselves and the communities they serve.”

“Lastly, on a broader scale, AMID promotes a shift in the international development paradigm. By challenging existing systems and encouraging critical thinking, it contributes to a more inclusive and sustainable approach to development. The collective efforts of AMID trainees and alumni can make a humble but relevant contribution to a world where international development is driven by empathy, collaboration, and a commitment to social justice.”



Fons van der Velden, one of the AMID founders, is a seasoned social entrepreneur and development practitioner with expertise in research, training, and process facilitation. With a three-decade career, he has worked in academia, policy, practice, and co-founded Foresee Social entrepreneurs Pvt Ltd in Bengaluru.

Aditi Singh is an AMID Young Professional trainee, works with the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment. Her experience includes grassroots NGOs, universities, and the UN, specialising in science policy, gender equity, and basic income. She holds a degree in Economics and a specialisation in Governance, Development, and Public Policy.

When asked about the future, Aditi reads at the request of Fons the following quote of Noam Chomsky: “We have two choices. We can be pessimistic, give up, and help ensure that the worst will happen. Or we can be optimistic, grasp opportunities that surely exist, and maybe help make the world a better place. Not much of a choice.”



Think yourself across borders

www.ru.nl/amid

You have a part to play.

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Think yourself across borders

Educators for Social Change aims to impact the SDGs through education. By bridging the gap between academia, policy and practice, we help to enable a thorough understanding of sustainable development issues from diverse angles, using various disciplinary perspectives. We want to reflect the diversity of the actors working on creating impact on sustainable development.



Our programmes

The Educators for Social Change consists of the following core elements: 1) the AMID Young Professional programme, 2) the Masterclasses International Development, for more seasoned professionals, and 3) the Leadership Programme, for senior professionals and policy makers.

AMID Young Professional is twofold. Sustainable development organisations get access to a pool of talented graduates, who are keen to realise the SDGs. On the other side, young professionals get the chance to gain experience and acquire the knowledge and skills they need to contribute to a fair and sustainable world. www.ru.nl/amid

AMID Masterclasses International Development offers professionals the latest academic knowledge and insight into key issues in international development. Gain new knowledge, challenge yourself and expand your network. www.rcsw.nl/masterclasses

AMID Leadership Programme offers the latest research and an appropriate learning environment for senior professionals and policy makers. www.rcsw.nl/leadershipprogramme

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A world that has more questions than ever needs people who can provide solutions: critical thinkers with a desire for knowledge and a hands-on approach. People who want to explore, discover, try, fail and succeed. Each with their own role and background, looking for answers in a world in that needs them. Radboud University contributes to a healthy, free world with equal opportunities for everyone. www.ru.nl

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