



## **Matthijs van Bonzel, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Costa Rica, on the success of the project run by Partners in South-South Cooperation**

### **1. What makes the Partners for South-South Cooperation special and stand out from other programmes you have seen?**



*Traditional development cooperation is very much North-South oriented, North sending funds, experts, ideas — South receiving them. South-South as conceived by Costa Rica, Benin, Bhutan and the Netherlands wanted to break through that trend. That takes time. South-South is still innovative today. South-South Cooperation starts to pay off. Gradually. The pioneers from then can show results today. To mention a few: exchange of new agricultural methods, exchange of best practices in eco-tourism, discovery of Afro-Caribbean cultural links, music, how to promote women micro-entrepreneurship, diversification of diets of rural people, coping with climate change in developing countries. And in order to mention a special one: discovery of the happiness index as a useful tool to measure development worldwide, next to the traditional GDP-index.*

### **2. From the 36 partnership projects that were implemented, which three projects were very special for you?**

*Sustainable agriculture: Costa Rica shares 20 years of experience in integrated rural development, combining three things, win-win-win: helping farmers to reforest degrading land, diversify agricultural production, and protect water supplies. Mushrooms: Asians know how to produce, commercialise and consume them, Latin-Americans don't. So Bhutan shows how, helping women to organise and produce a new crop, selling to the better Asian-healthy cooking restaurants in San Jose. Music: I met with enthusiastic musicians from Benin, exchanging knowledge and inspiration with Costaricans, about the origin and present day development of Afro-Caribbean music in Latin-America.*

### **3. Partners for South-South Cooperation won last year the award given by the UN. Do you think they deserved this?**

*New fields of co-operation and exchange arise between developing countries, between newly arising nations. The UN recognises this as a welcome effect, moderate yet, but positive in impact, and worldwide, therefore deserving UN attention. Well observed, prize well deserved.*

### **4. What impact you have seen from the programme, makes it to a success?**

*Southern nations become both co-donor and co-recipient, advise each other, work together. We welcome such partners.  
We face rising consequences of climate change. North and South need to work on this basis.*



**5. You are ambassador in Costa Rica. What do you think has been the value of the programme for the relationship between Costa Rica and the Netherlands?**

*The programme set the tone for a balanced and mature relationship, it fits well for both our nations. Our relations evolve nowadays through promotion of international legal order and trade, not aid.*

**6. What is the future of the programme and of South-South Cooperation?**

*Publish or perish. Whence the importance of conferences and reports that evaluate the results, insights and experiences of Fundecooperacion, of the governments involved, of the women's cooperatives, of the farmers involved.*