Flourish partnership between Cordaid BAS and Caritas Congo in DRC with common challenges to address for the future, according to Mme Annie Lefèvre

Kinshasa, 25 February 2013 (caritasdev.cd): The partnership is shaping well with common challenges that bode well for the future between Cordaid Bas and Caritas Congo (Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC), said Annie Lefèvre in an interview (read the full story below) granted to caritasdev.cd in Kinshasa on 16 February 2013.

Mrs. Lefèvre was first Representative to take the office of Cordaid in Democratic Republic of Congo (2000-2007) and is currently Head of Mission of Cordaid Office of Health Support and country representative. These challenges are related to the fight against poverty, in search of peace, good governance, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), management of humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters or conflict and response from consortium with the national Caritas and diocesans’ Caritas as result of calls for proposals for large-scale reports caritasdev.cd

Question (Q): As Head of Mission Cordaid Bas. What is Cordaid Bas? What does it aim for?

Answer (A): Since its establishment in 2004, the mandate of Cordaid Bas (Health Support Office) has included the management and monitoring of programs funded by external backers, namely: Global Fund, World Bank, European Union and the Dutch Government in the scope of health and the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Global Fund has become the main sponsor of Cordaid Bas Kinshasa, the bulk of the Office staff works mostly for the program against HIV and AIDS. Now since 2011, and in accordance with the policy of Cordaid for fragile states as described in its Strategic Plan 2011-2017, Cordaid intervention widens the perspective of strengthening the health system. Indeed, the health financing is a strategic policy in Cordaid. And results-based financing approach is that Cordaid would use to strengthen the health system in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Q: What is your job as Head of this Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo? When did you come into office?

A: The mandate of the Head of Mission involves responsibility with regard to the achievement of goals of the Office of Cordaid Bas. He assumes the leadership of the Office and coordinates the staff safety and is committed to the development of policies and strategies of Cordaid’s headquarter seat Cordaid. Cordaid intends to contribute to the development of societies, this is all about Cordaid as a development organization operating in the world as well as in the Netherlands than in the South. The goal is to create a space where people can live in dignity, security, and have opportunity to speak their mind in order to contribute to their development by participating actively in the social, economic cultural and spiritual places where they live. Based on these communities, we believe in the dignity of the society we dream of a more just, equitable, inclusive, with all the diversity possible, a world in which we share common good.

My appointment at the position of Liaison Officer and country Representative of Cordaid - Democratic Republic covered the period from 2000 to 2007. Now, as Head of Mission of the Office Cordaid Health Support Office and this appointment dates back to 2011 so far.

Q: What are activities performed by Cordaid BAS between 2011 and 2012 in the Democratic Republic of Congo? Would specify parts of the country where these activities were performed?

A: In 2011, Cordaid / Bas assured the implementation of the community component (Principal Recipient) and the medical component (sub-recipient) of the HIV / AIDS program. This along with several partners who are part of civil society, including the Diocesan Office of Medical Works (Catholic) or BDOM. This implementation was achieved in six administrative provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo.
As regards the community, we could mention a few activities. There is nutritional support for people living with the AIDS virus. The opportunity is that Caritas Congo has a lot of experience in this area, especially in everything related to nutritional support. Another activity was the support groups and associations of people living with HIV / AIDS. This support was to develop income-generating activities. In this type of activities involved still a major constraint, namely household vulnerability, the difficulty of ensuring that micro-credit allocated to these groups and associations generate a fund development activities. In the second phase, the Global Fund, having considered these activities as being at risk did not continue to fund them.

There were other important activities as support to OVC (Orphans and Vulnerable Children). Their support consists of support for schooling. The advantage is there in DR Congo host families of these OVC. Another activity is to report Cordaid communication for behavior change of mass and proximity. Many activities in this framework have been possible to achieve by Cordaid partners through the Caritas network. Indeed, there are in the provinces of community radio channels and newspapers is also represented. There is also dominical leaflets in the Church where we were able to convey messages. Training is an activity that has also been made in the contest of 2011 specialized programs of the Ministry of Health (National Program to Fight against AIDS, blood transfusion program). These include the training of social workers in the field of monitoring of people living with the virus and monitoring of OVC. There are six administrative provinces where Cordaid takes place: the city-province of Kinshasa, Equateur, Province Orientale, Nord Kivu, Sud Kivu and Maniema. Since 2012, the same activities are ongoing. Cordaid continues with the community component, but the Catholic organization is also Principal Recipient for the medical component. In the latter, the type of activities are as follows: providing HIV prevention services to prevent new infections in targeted health zones (about 110 health zones) providing care and medical treatment to people living with HIV. It is also active in preventing the transmission of HIV from mother to child. We also have medical kits for women who have been victims of sexual violence. Thus, a study will be set soon in this regard.

Apart from these programs financed by the Global Fund, Cordaid, within equity, supported the strengthening of the health system of the Ministry of Public Health. For instance, support to mutual health program in the province of Bas-Congo, supporting the management for health facility, support cell funding based on the result (PBF or Performance Based Financing). There were programs against HIV and AIDS with support to micro-credit groups also funded by the European Union in Province Orientale and Sud Kivu. Finally the program include the EU GMP 7 countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, to implement this funding model based on the results.
Q: What do you think of the partnership between Cordaid Bas and Caritas Congo?

A: We can say that this partnership bode well with common challenges for the future. These are for example the capacity of partners to meet the requirements of the Backers. But more broadly, it is the challenge of poverty based on local communities so that they can be agents of change for sustainable development. There are also challenges to peace, good governance and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in general. I do not forget also the management of humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters or conflict, responding to calls initiated by the SOA or national Caritas while acting in partnership with strong local Caritas. This was the case, for example, recently when Cordaid told Caritas Goma responsibility to distribute NFI kits (not eating food) for families displaced in North Kivu. I will also mention the challenge of meeting in consortium with the national Caritas calls for proposals for large scale which it is not for Cordaid to exert unfair competition, but rather to bring more value based on our strengths respective.

Q: What Cordaid BAS could actually achieve with activities such as Caritas Congo and its national network since 2011?

A: Generally, Cordaid has provided institutional support including Health Promotion Service (SPS) Caritas Congo, SPS’s role is to strengthen the capacity of provincial structures still fragile. Cordaid has also participated in discussions and meetings with Caritas (Congo) and was sustained for the participation of an agent (a woman, Programme Officer) conference on HIV in Washington.

Q: What lessons do you think Cordaid has learn from its partnership with Caritas Congo?

A: I would say that the potential of the partnership is huge, given the long history that binds us, including support for several decades structures such as the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (Kinshasa) CENCO or the Diocesan Office of Medical Works (Catholics), the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace, the diocesan Office of Development (BDD), the diocesan Caritas and the Episcopal Commission for ad hoc Natural Resources. It is therefore a partnership that is exercised at the national level but also at the provincial level in six administrative provinces already mentioned (city-province of Kinshasa, Equateur, Province Orientale, North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema) which must be added the two Kasai (Occidental and Oriental). These different structures (BDOM, BDD ...), their anchorage to the base, their presence on the ground, their proximity to communities showed their skills and professionalism to implement successful programs in various health, education, justice, food security, emergencies .... Together, this partnership has also inspired the confidence of donors and the ability to conduct advocacy at local, national and international levels.

Q: What activities are planned by Cordaid Bas in 2013?

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In February 2013, the Director of Cordaid in Hague will visit Kinshasa with a large delegation to meet with stakeholders to explain the new strategy more Cordaid and its application in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
Q: What are the relationships exist between Cordaid Bas with the whole of the Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

A: Cordaid, itself being a Catholic organization, a privileged partnership with various Episcopal Commissions of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (Kinshasa) at national, provincial and local levels. Cordaid is also a member of Caritas Internationalis network and network CISDE (International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity, an international alliance of 16 Catholic development agencies in Europe and North America, working together for global justice). Cordaid is keen to strategic partnership and that is why it is a regular ongoing dialogue not only with the Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but also with the different countries and continents where it develops programs and to Catholics across different networks.

Q: What is your wish regarding the work of the national Caritas Congo and one performed by Cordaid BAS Democratic Republic of Congo?

A: The desire is to continue to work in harmony and synergy to the well-being of populations. The vow is also really to address the major challenges in the future, adapting to changes during Cordaid and society in general.

Q: Until where the work of Cordaid in Congo (Kinshasa) may be extended?

Le budget de Cordaid en 2012 se situait autour de 15.950.000.000 euros

A: Cordaid in Democratic Republic of Congo is not limited to the Support of Health. Also, it has programs in other sectors that are monitored by the Head of Mission based in Cordaid Bukavu and the program officers based in The Hague. Cordaid during the upcoming visit of the delegation from the Netherlands, take the time to explore with its partners, the technical and financial partners and other stakeholders as new face of Cordaid, for the future. Major areas of Cordaid in the Democratic Republic of Congo are women's leadership, security, justice, extractive resources, restoration of the social contract (PBF), investment in childhood / education, strengthening systems health (with a focus on PBF) and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Cordaid's budget in 2012 was around 15.95 billion euros