

Evaluation of the Middle East and North Africa Scholarship programme (MSP)

Final report

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technopolis _{group} May 2019

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List of abbreviations

DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DAM	North Africa and Middle East Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
HOPES	Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians
ICRA	International Centre for development-oriented Research in Agriculture
IHE Delft	Delft Institute for Water Education
IOB	The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoFA	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSM	Maastricht School of Management
MSP	Middle East and North Africa Scholarship programme
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NICHE	The Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education
OKP	Orange Knowledge Programme
RNTC	Radio Netherlands Training Centre
RVO	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (Netherlands Enterprise Agency)
STP	Shiraka Training Programme
TMT	Tailor-Made Training
ToC	Theory of Change
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
ToR	Terms of Reference
UT/ITC	University of Twente Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation
WUR CDI	Wageningen University & Research Centre for Development Innovation

1 Executive summary

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the Middle East and North Africa Scholarship programme (MSP). The MSP is an initiative of the Netherlands ministry of Foreign Affairs. By granting scholarships, the MSP aims to contribute to a sustainable transition in the Arab region through capacity building of mid-career professionals who are employed in governmental organisations, knowledge institutions, NGOs or the private sector in selected countries in the MENA-region¹. In addition, the programme is intended as an instrument for public diplomacy, to be used by Netherlands' embassies in their respective MENA countries to strengthen Dutch relations with these countries. The MSP offers two kinds of training modalities: [1] short courses in the Netherlands and [2] Tailor-Made-Trainings (TMTs). Since 2016, the MSP is financed through the Shiraka programme, a Dutch bilateral effort that supports sustainable transition in the MENA region. The aim of this evaluation is to gain insights into the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the MSP and to obtain insight into the implementation of the MSP and its management by Nuffic in the period 2013 – end 2017.

The MSP includes participants from all target groups with governmental organisations taking 50% of the scholarships. Through the MSP, participants have access to a wide variety of good quality courses that provide practical applicability and support to fill a lack of training and life-long learning opportunities in organisations in the MENA countries themselves. Alumni highly value being immersed in a multidisciplinary and multicultural environment, both through their stay in the Netherlands and being part of an international classroom. However, the courses offered through the programme do not specifically address the MENA region or local demands. Participants predominantly choose technical trainings on topics related to agriculture, environment and water management.

Overall, the MSP is an effective instrument for strengthening capacities at individual level, but results for organisational capacity building are less clear, despite several measures to increase the involvement of employers in the programme. TMTs can offer a valuable complementary tool to strengthen organisations as they allow for more flexibility and better tailoring the course to the needs of the target group and their employers. There is, however, a risk of duplication between MSP and programmes that partly overlap in type of intervention and target group, like STP, which needs continuous attention.

The idea that the interventions offered through the MSP contribute to sustainable transition in the MENA region is difficult to measure. However, the majority of programme stakeholders and participants consider the MSP to be an important instrument for addressing local knowledge gaps and facilitating capacity building. Embassies state that the MSP is a relevant instrument for public diplomacy in the region, but results could be enhanced through a separate alumni policy for the programme. Moreover, they see an opportunity for stronger alignment and strategic use of the MSP to support their priorities in the countries.

Nuffic met its programme management and reporting obligations during the years under review. Coordination and communication between DAM, funder of the MSP, and programme administrator Nuffic is adequate. The Dutch training institutions and embassies also value the way Nuffic manages the programme. The introduction of the ATLAS automated system considerably reduced the time spent by the programme stakeholders involved in the application process. Nuffic has taken several additional measures to improve the functioning of the programme but has not fully addressed all recommendations from the embassy satisfaction survey yet. All embassies mention that they face a serious lack of capacity to satisfactorily fulfil other responsibilities, in particular related to promotion and alumni activities. It could be useful to provide the embassies with easy-to-read annual facts and figures per country (e.g. number of awarded scholarships, fields of study etc.) so that they can use it for promotion and public diplomacy purposes. Embassies also mention that Nuffic's promotion materials of the MSP are not always suitable in the political context of some MENA countries due to the sensitivity of concepts such as sustainable transition.

¹ Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran (since November 2017), Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Syria and Tunisia.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, the following recommendations for the MSP are formulated:

Recommendation 1

The MSP has positive effects, predominantly on individual capacity development. Continuing the scholarship programme fits the current focus of MoFA foreign policies on the MENA region and allows for visibility and impact on public diplomacy. Whether this is as a separate programme or as part of a larger global programme, should be discussed.

Responsibility: MoFA

Recommendation 2

The programme should focus its objectives on strengthening public diplomacy and (individual and organisational) capacity development in the MENA region, taking into account different target groups and country priorities. The objective to specifically contribute to sustainable transition needs to be reconsidered.

Responsibility: MoFA

Recommendation 3

In comparison to individual scholarships, Tailor-Made Trainings (TMTs) increase the contribution to organisational capacity building and will allow for adaptation to country and organisation specific needs. Currently, TMTs are only available for 3 countries. It should be considered to make TMTs available to all the MSP countries, taking into account the demands for scholarships for short courses, the available budget and avoiding duplication with other instruments that offer TMTs through the Shiraka programme, such as the Shiraka Training Programme managed by RVO.

Responsibility: MoFA & programme administrator

Recommendation 4

In order to increase the results of the programme for the employers of the participants (so not on the participants themselves), the programme should draft and implement a more (country-) tailored promotion strategy that seeks increased involvement of employers in the identification of suitable candidates.

Responsibility: Programme administrator and embassies

Recommendation 5

The programme should increase knowledge sharing between its programme administrator and the embassies to improve the visibility and use of the programme for public diplomacy.

Responsibility: Programme administrator and embassies

Recommendation 6

The programme should draft a clear alumni policy.

Responsibility: Programme administrator

Recommendation 7

The gender target of 50% at programme level has led to good involvement of women, but also to large differences in women participation between countries. It should be considered to add minimum requirements on gender equality (for both men and women) at country level.

Responsibility: Programme administrator

2 Evaluation purpose and methodology

2.1 Evaluation purpose and scope

The Middle East and North Africa Scholarship programme (MSP) is an initiative of the Netherlands ministry of Foreign Affairs. By granting scholarships, the MSP aims to contribute to a sustainable transition in the Arab region through capacity building of mid-career professionals who are employed in government, knowledge institutions, NGOs or the private sector in selected countries in the MENA-region².

As set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this assignment (Appendix B), the North Africa and Middle East Department (DAM) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) decided to undertake an evaluation of the MSP. The evaluation covers the period 2013-2017 and focusses on the entire group of eligible MENA countries. The aim of the evaluation is to gain insights into the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the MSP as an instrument to:

- (1) promote sustainable transition in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region;
- (2) contribute to capacity development in the MENA region;
- (3) strengthen Dutch relations with these countries.³

Alongside the mentioned three OECD DAC criteria for evaluations, the ToR set out evaluation questions related to policy development and coherence, and the enhancement of public relations through a programme alumni policy.

The outcomes of this evaluation will serve as input for shaping future policy after 1 July 2019.

2.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was carried out between December 2018 and April 2019. A variety of information sources and data collection methods were used to answer the evaluation questions, reach conclusions and develop recommendations. We have used the following methods in parallel (triangulation) in order to increase the reliability of the evaluation findings:

- Desk research of existing data regarding the MSP and its activities. This includes strategic documents, progress reports and internal processes and policies amongst others. A comprehensive list of the documentation consulted is displayed in Appendix C.
- Interviews: Face to face interviews with DAM, Nuffic and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO); telephone interviews with representatives of 5 Dutch training institutions directly involved in the programme. MSP alumni in 9 MENA countries, MSP employers in 3 MENA countries, and staff of Dutch embassies in 9 MENA countries were interviewed by telephone or face-to-face during field visits to Lebanon, Egypt and Algeria. The list of interviewees is provided in Appendix D.
- A focus group discussion in October with participants of an MSP tailor-made-training (TMT) from Oman in the Netherlands.
- An online survey was carried out among alumni and employers to learn about their experiences with the MSP. This survey was also used to identify respondents for subsequent in-depth -interviews. A summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix E.

Technopolis Group has carried out the evaluation with support from Nuffic for data collection and organisation of focus groups and country visits.

² Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran (since November 2017), Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Syria and Tunisia.

³ Terms of Reference, p.3.

2.3 Limitations to the evaluation

A few limitations for this evaluation are worth highlighting:

- The time and budget limitations of this concise evaluation have restricted the reviewers in their evaluation scope, allowing to focus on the results of the MSP but with limited possibilities to address relevant issues in relation to the position and alignment of the MSP with the Shiraka programme and other scholarship programmes. Notwithstanding, we consider these issues very important for the discussion on the future direction of the programme and suggest DAM to continue this debate internally or through additional research.
- The evaluation team had foreseen a challenge in contacting alumni and especially employers for this evaluation. As for alumni, the interaction with the programme was of relative short duration (from a few weeks to a maximum of three months in some cases), and in many cases the participation was already quite some time ago (a maximum of 6 years ago). The interaction with the programme amongst employers was only indirect by nominating employees for a scholarship. To mitigate this challenge, we set up a “follow-up” approach to commit respondents for individual interviews and/or focus groups. This worked out very well for the alumni, but to a lesser extent for the employers. We first launched a concise survey that targeted all alumni and employers listed in the MSP database (2013-2017). The response rate was rather positive: 42% for alumni and 10% for employers. Through the survey we identified a number of alumni that expressed interest for being interviewed as a follow-up to the survey. As a result, we were able to interview 52 alumni in 9 different MENA countries. The high number of alumni interviewed reduced the perceptive bias of individual alumni statements.

The enthusiasm amongst employers was less than amongst alumni and although a considerable amount indicated availability to be interviewed, only 8 employers in 5 different MENA countries actually participated. Besides, this small number of employers’ interviews could not be used for direct cross-validating of alumni statements as “combi-interviews” between employer and nominated employer could not always be established. Notwithstanding, the information provided by the employers did provide an anecdotal indication of the main reasons and challenges faced when nominating their employees. It also indicates that employers feel much less connected to the programme than alumni.

- The number of interviews with external stakeholders was intentionally limited, as the client had indicated that it did not expect an extensive assessment of the coherence with other Shiraka or other international programmes. We therefore limited ourselves to the most important external stakeholder: RVO, coordinator of the Shiraka Training Programme (STP).
- Focus groups with scholarship holders for short courses, present in the Netherlands at the time of the research period, turned out to be difficult to organize. There simply was a limited number of scholarship holders present and response to an invitation for a focus group was low. As a follow-up we invited the scholarship holders to individual interviews, however, this request received no response. We did manage to hold a focus group with an MSP TMT group from Oman.
- As mentioned in the ToR, due to its design and scope, this evaluation cannot not be considered as an ‘impact evaluation’ in the sense that it provides a clear impact attribution or contribution: quantitative impact data were not available to perform a counterfactual analysis. Instead the evaluation pursued a perceptive approach including participatory data collection instruments substantiated with mainly qualitative data. By combining different data collection methods and data sources, we aimed for cross-validating individual statements and transcend merely anecdotal evidence.

3 Background

3.1 Context of the MSP: Bilateral responses to the transitions

3.1.1 *Matra South and Shiraka programme*

In the Middle East and North Africa, the year 2010 marked increased popular demand for both political reform and sustainable and inclusive economic development. Since then, the international community increasingly supports transition in the region through multilateral and bilateral initiatives. In this framework, technical support and educational programmes are considered important instruments to facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building which can promote and sustain change.

In the Netherlands, MoFA initiated the Matra South programme in 2012 to support a renewed policy towards the MENA⁴. The Matra South programme differed from previous interventions in the MENA region, which were mainly related to development aid and trade & investment. The main objective of the programme was to contribute to sustainable transition (including support to democratisation, the rule of law and sustainable economic growth). Shiraka programme

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, evaluated the support for the transition in the Arab region in the period 2009-2013, including the Matra South programme, in 2015. The main finding of this evaluation was that the programme was primarily based on unsubstantiated assumptions. Therefore, it was suggested to produce a Theory of Change. The IOB also suggested adopting a country-specific approach.⁵ The MSP was not specifically assessed in the IOB evaluation and was not modified to a country-specific approach following the overall Shiraka programme.

In 2016, the MoFA renamed the programme to Shiraka (meaning ‘partnership’ in Arabic) and included a country-specific approach and a Theory of Change (see Appendix F). The country-specific approach aimed to take into consideration the cultural, historic and geographical differences in the region and to create a policy framework per country. Shiraka also opened up to Iran following the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s nuclear development programme in 2015, which offered the opportunity to pursue closer collaboration.^{6 7}

The goals of the Shiraka programme are defined as follows:

- To promote pluralism in which political cultural and religious differences are accepted and there is a degree of inclusivity;
- To promote rule of law offering protection of citizenship, human rights and minorities;
- To support favourable conditions for the creation of economic growth and employment.⁸

3.2 MENA Scholarship programme

3.2.1 *Scope of the programme*

The MSP contract period started in July 2013, running until June 2017 when it was extended with two years to 30 June 2019. The MSP is a follow-up of the MSPI (2008-2013) and was funded initially through Matra South and since 2016 through the Shiraka programme. The MSP adopted the following objectives from its predecessor programme: (1) individual and institutional capacity building and (2) the creation

⁴ In 2011, the Advisory Council on International Affairs (Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, AIV), advised amongst others that the Netherlands government should support strengthening civil society, for instance through education and exchange programmes. Ref. AIV. Reforms in the Arab region: prospects for democracy and the rule of law? p. 16

⁵ MoFA. MSP Theory of Change def. NL October 2016

⁶ Kamerbrief Shirakaprogramma 15 November 2016

⁷ Kamerbrief Matra Zuid 2 September 2015

⁸ MoFA. ToC Shiraka programme. P. 6.

and expansion of a network of alumni. In order to align with the Matra South/Shiraka objectives, the aim to contribute to sustainable transition in the Arab region, was added as a third objective to the MSP in 2014. Thus, the MSP was not specifically designed to support Dutch contribution to sustainable transition in the MENA region, but was adapted in order to be aligned with the overall Shiraka objectives for this region. Moreover, four countries were added to the eligible country list, adding up to a total of 11. See for a full overview of the differences between MSP I and MSP Table 1 below.

Table 1 Differences between MSP I (2008-2013) and MSP (2014-2019)

	MSP I	MSP (2014-2019)
Target group	Mid-career professionals	Mid-career professionals up to 45 years of age
Instrument	Scholarships for short courses	Scholarships for short courses + Tailor made trainings (TMTs)
Countries	Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, Oman, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco	Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, Oman, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco + Libya, Jordan, Egypt (2014) + Iran (2017)
Dutch Institutions	Delft IHE, Maastricht School of Management (MSM), Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WUR/CDI), University of Twente's Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (UT/ITC) and International Centre for development-oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA)	Delft IHE, MSM, WUR/CDI, UT/ITC, ICRA + open to institutions that have signed the code of conduct ⁹ and offer courses that meet the MSP requirements
Focus	Capacity building, creation and expansion of a network of alumni	Contribution to sustainable transition in the region, capacity building, creation and expansion of a network of alumni
Gender	Allocation of 50% of scholarships to female candidates	Allocation of 50% of scholarships to female candidates
Country focus		Alignment with the embassy priority themes in the participating countries
System	Paper applications submitted to the embassy	ATLAS digital application and selection process
Fields of study	-Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, -Business Administration and Management, -Geographical Information Science -Water Management	-Mathematics, natural sciences and computer science; -Agriculture and environment; -Economics, commerce, management and accounting; -Engineering; + Law, Public administration, Public order and safety; + Humanities, social sciences, communication and arts.
Deadlines	March, July	April, November, (August 2015)

The MoFA defined the following guiding principles for the MSP:

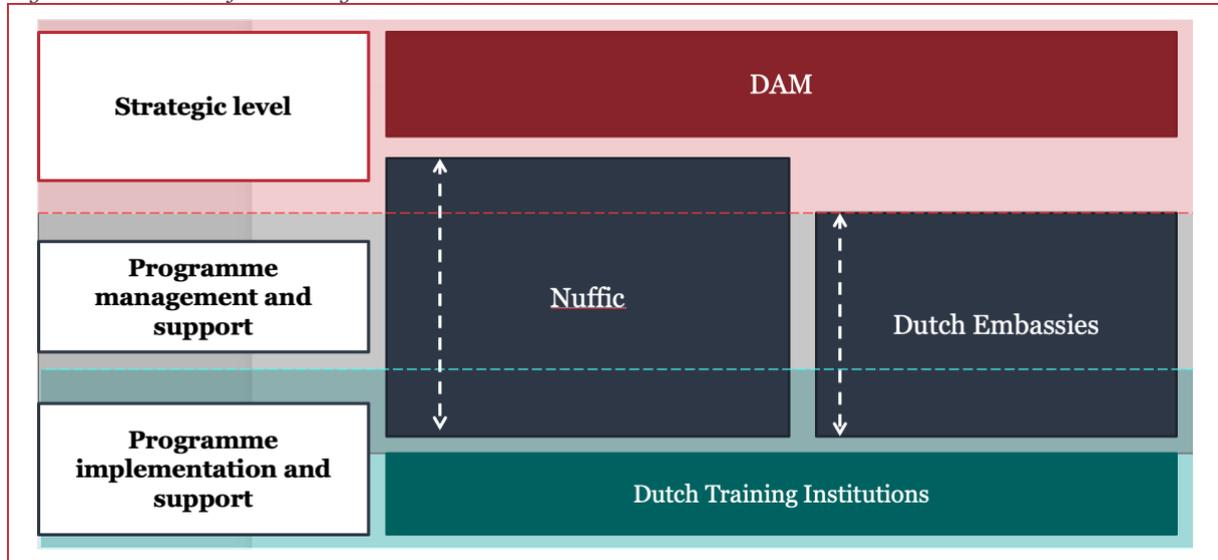
- The embassies determine the priority sectors for the MSP in their country;
- Scholarships can be awarded for short courses in the selected fields of study;

⁹ <https://www.internationalstudy.nl/>

- The MSP aims to award an even number of scholarships to each of the participating countries.

3.2.2 MSP governance structure

Figure 1 Overview of the MSP governance structure



The **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, North-Africa and Middle-East Department (DAM) finances the MSP and decides on strategic directions for the programme.

The MSP management team at **Nuffic** is responsible for programme administration and coordination. Nuffic reports directly to DAM on an annual basis, providing an overview of the outputs of the programme and feedback on its strategic orientation. Nuffic publishes all relevant information on the programme and the application process on the MSP webpage on the StudyinHolland website. Besides, Nuffic is involved in the implementation of the programme through its role in the selection of MSP candidates, its support to Dutch Embassies and coordination with Dutch training institutions involved in the programme. The organisation of alumni events is carried out in coordination with the Holland Alumni Network team at Nuffic.

Dutch Embassies are engaged in the management and implementation of the programme at country level. They promote the programme among employers and assess the eligibility of candidates. They have a limited role in the decision-making regarding the programme's strategic orientation.

Dutch Training Institutions provide trainings to selected candidates, promote each MSP deadline, (listing the courses that are eligible for the programme, together with the option for applying for an MSP scholarship) and do a first eligibility check of applicants before elaborating a shortlist of nominated candidates.

3.2.3 MSP training modalities

The MSP consists of two modalities, namely scholarships for short courses that have a duration of 12 to 90 days, and, since 2015, tailor-made-trainings (TMT). Nuffic determines the maximum number of possible nominations for each training institute; the number of nominations is not linked to the number of courses that an institution offers per deadline. The Dutch training institutions select courses from their institution's regular course offer for which they nominate potential candidates, after which Nuffic, through the ATLAS system, checks if the courses adhere to the criteria established for the MSP. The criteria for a course to be eligible for the MSP are:

- The courses are offered by recognised and reputable Dutch education institutions that signed the Code of conduct;
- The programme/course must be registered in HODEX or Studiekeuze Webformulier;
- The duration of the MSP-Short Courses must be between 12 and 90 days;
- The course must be full-time;
- The MSP courses must take place fully in the Netherlands;
- The programmes and courses must have English, French or Spanish as language of instruction;
- The MSP course must be within one of the following disciplines:
 - Mathematics, natural sciences and computer science;
 - Law, public administration, public order and safety;
 - Agriculture and environment;
 - Humanities, social sciences, communication and arts;
 - Economics, commerce, management and accounting;
 - Engineering.

There is no prerequisite for the course content to specifically address the MENA region’s context and/or challenges nor to specifically focus on topics related to sustainable transition. Thus, training institutions provide a selection from their regular training offer. See Table 2 for an overview of instruments per country.

Table 2 Eligible MSP countries for scholarships and TMTs per year.

Countries	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Scholars.	Scholars.	Scholars.	TMT	Scholars.	TMT	Scholars.	TMT	Scholars.	TMT
Algeria										
Egypt										
Iran										
Iraq										
Jordan										
Lebanon										
Libya										
Morocco										
Oman										
Syria ¹⁰										
Tunisia										

The MSP scholarships are available for mid-career professionals. An age limit of 45 years for participants was introduced to the programme in 2014, with the aim to specifically target mid-career professionals that can act as change agents within the organisations, and that have years ahead of them to share and implement the acquired knowledge and skills. Courses eligible for the programme must fall in a selected field of study (see table 1). Law, public administration, public order and safety; humanities, social

¹⁰ In 2014 Syria was put on hold for short courses scholarships. The limitations for Syrians were partially lifted in 2015 to allow participation of Syrians in other MSP countries (not Syria itself).

sciences, communication and arts were added to the programme in 2014 with the idea that widening the course offer could increase the contribution of the programme to the aim of sustainable transition.

Until 2013, paper applications were delivered to the embassies. In 2014 Nuffic introduced the automated application and data management system ATLAS. Since then, applications are fully processed on-line. Every year the number of nominations largely exceeds the available scholarships (see Table 4).

The TMT instrument was introduced to the MSP in 2015 as a pilot for Algeria and Oman. In subsequent years this instrument has been used to provide training opportunities for target groups from Syria¹¹ and Libya who cannot participate in the regular short courses. In most cases these restrictions are of a political nature which limit mobility.

For Oman, the instrument is used to support the Dutch embassy’s bilateral political and trade agenda. See Table 3 for an overview of the TMTs organised in the period 2015-2017.

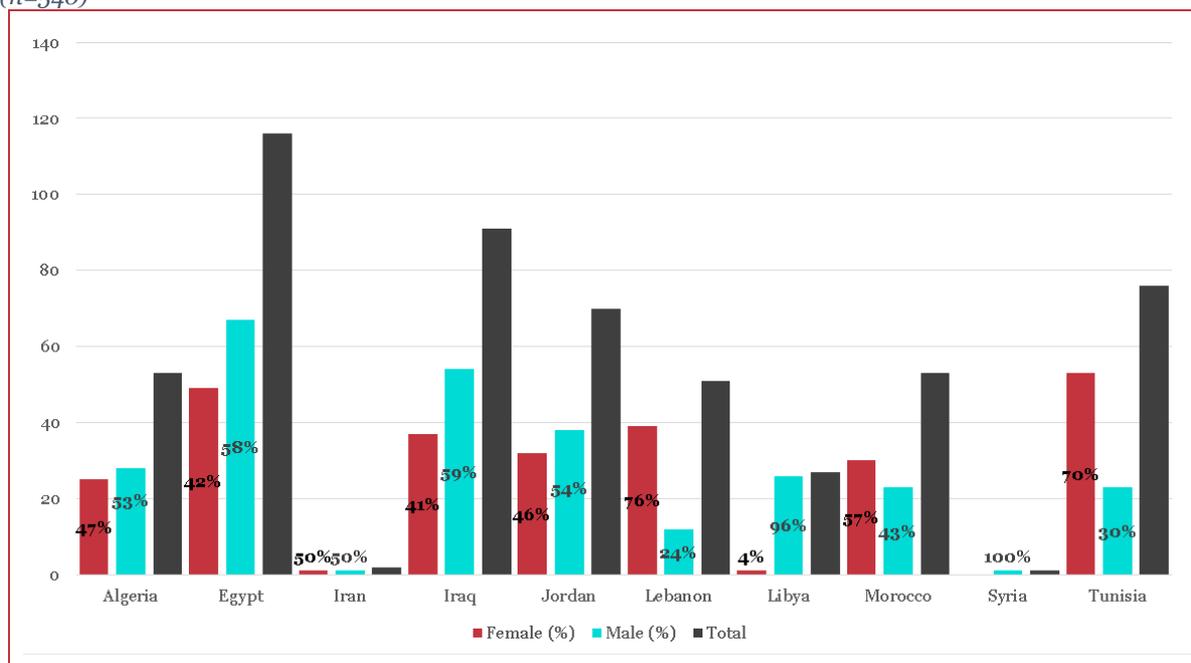
Table 3 Tailor-made trainings 2015-2017

Year/ Country	2015		2016		2017	
	Requesting organisation	Topic	Requesting organisation	Topic	Requesting organisation	Topic
Algeria	Algerian Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities	Strategic Planning and KPI Management				
Libya			Group of women with common training needs	Empowering Libyan women in diaspora	Man Made River Authority	From Water Scarcity to Water Security in Libya
Oman	Ministry of Transport and Communication	Logistics Principles, both in theory and practice	Public Authority for Electricity and Water	Non-Revenue Water training	Oman Global Logistics Group/ Asyad	Training on Logistics
Syria					Group of individuals with common training needs	Producing Media to Counter Radicalisation

The MSP manages a gender target of 50% female scholarship holders, excluding TMT participants. Since 2015 this target has been achieved, however, as can be seen in Figure 2 the proportion of female participants differs per country.

¹¹ The programme is open to applicants with the Syrian nationality who are living and working in other MSP countries (outside of Syria). Refugees often do not meet the eligibility criteria, as candidates for the MSP must be in formal employment to participate in the programme. Furthermore, due to the civil/legal status of Syrians in other MSP countries, they often cannot travel freely. The TMT instrument was therefore used to provide a training opportunity to Syrian refugees.

Figure 2 Distribution of scholarships and gender balance per country between February 2014 – November 2017 (n=540)



3.2.4 Portfolio distribution

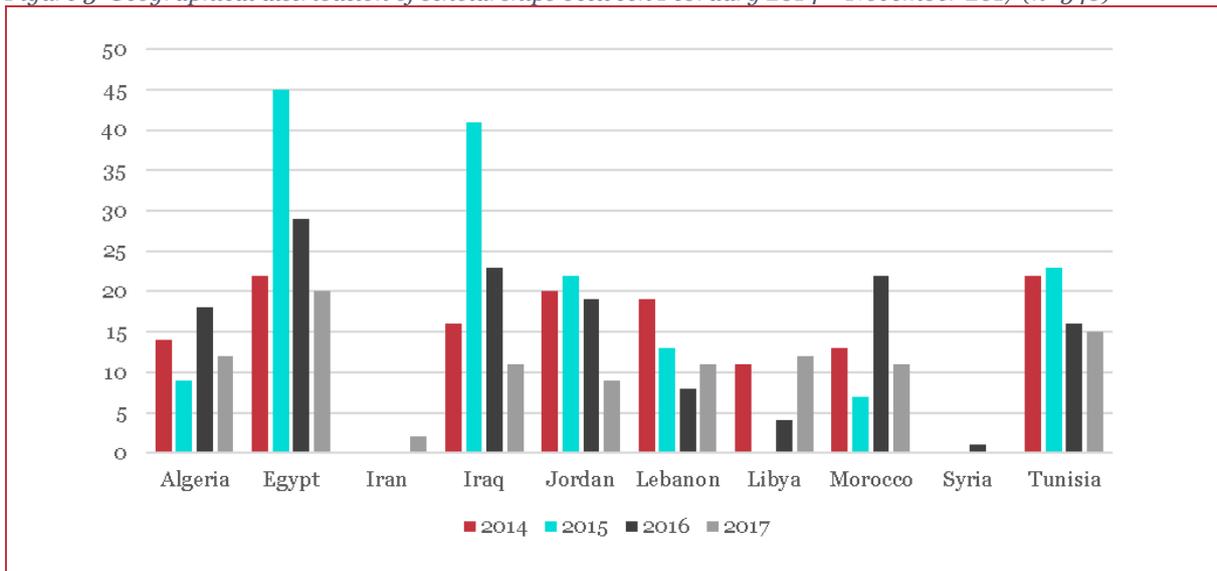
Over the evaluation period, between 108 and 172 scholarships have been awarded annually. Due to the fact that on 30 June 2017 the budget for MSP expired before extension was official, the number of scholarships in 2017 is significantly lower in comparison to previous years (see Table 4).

Table 4 Nominations (since November 2014) and awarded scholarships per year

Year	Nominations	Awarded
2013	232	161
2014	625	144
2015	528	172
2016	458	146
2017	411	108

The geographic distribution of scholarships is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Geographical distribution of scholarships between February 2014 – November 2017 (n=540)



Employers are governmental organisations (245), educational institutions (78), national NGOs (51), small business (46) and research centres (43). The composition of receiving employers is different for each country (Figure 4), as well as the distribution of scholarships over type of employers per year (Figure 5). In Egypt, Lebanon and Libya, small businesses form a substantial part of total employers (15% or higher). National NGOs have a proportion of 15% or higher only in Jordan and Lebanon. The only scholar from Syria was also employed by an NGO. Mentioned by the embassies as possibly reasons for the difference in distribution are the varying familiarity of different stakeholders with MSP or the potentially deterring label of sustainable transition. For Iran for instance, it was mentioned that NGOs are not quickly to attach a foreign programme with this objective.

Figure 4 Type of employers per country November 2014 – November 2017 (n=463)

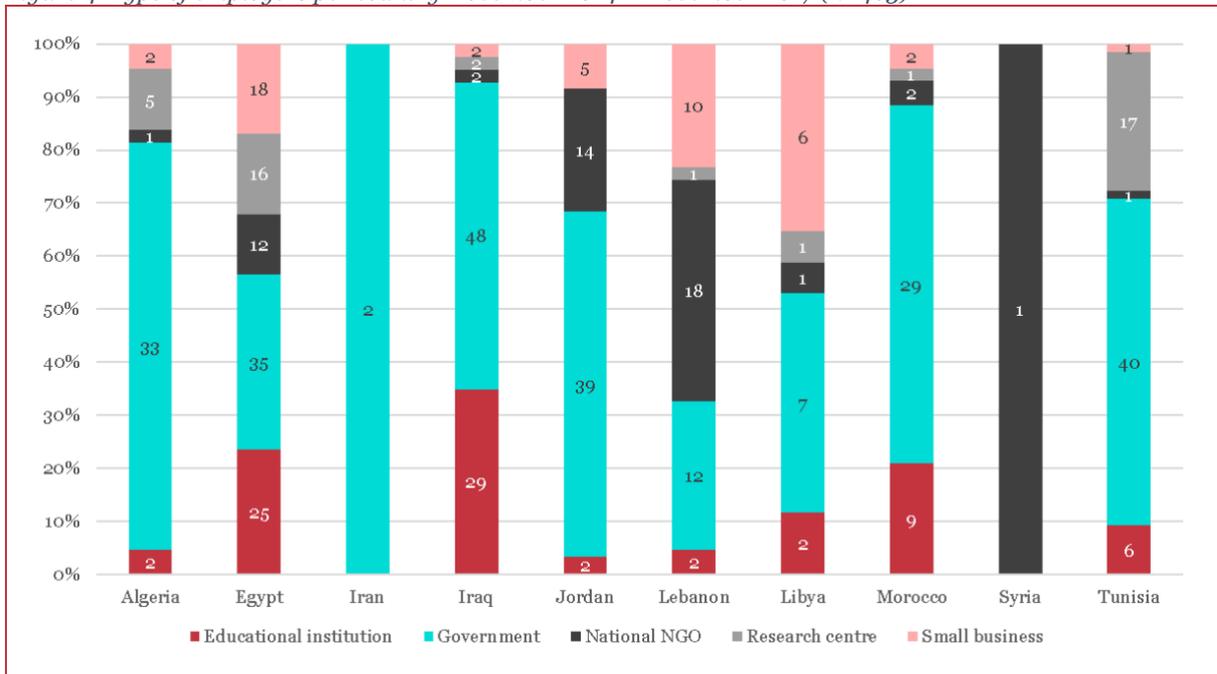
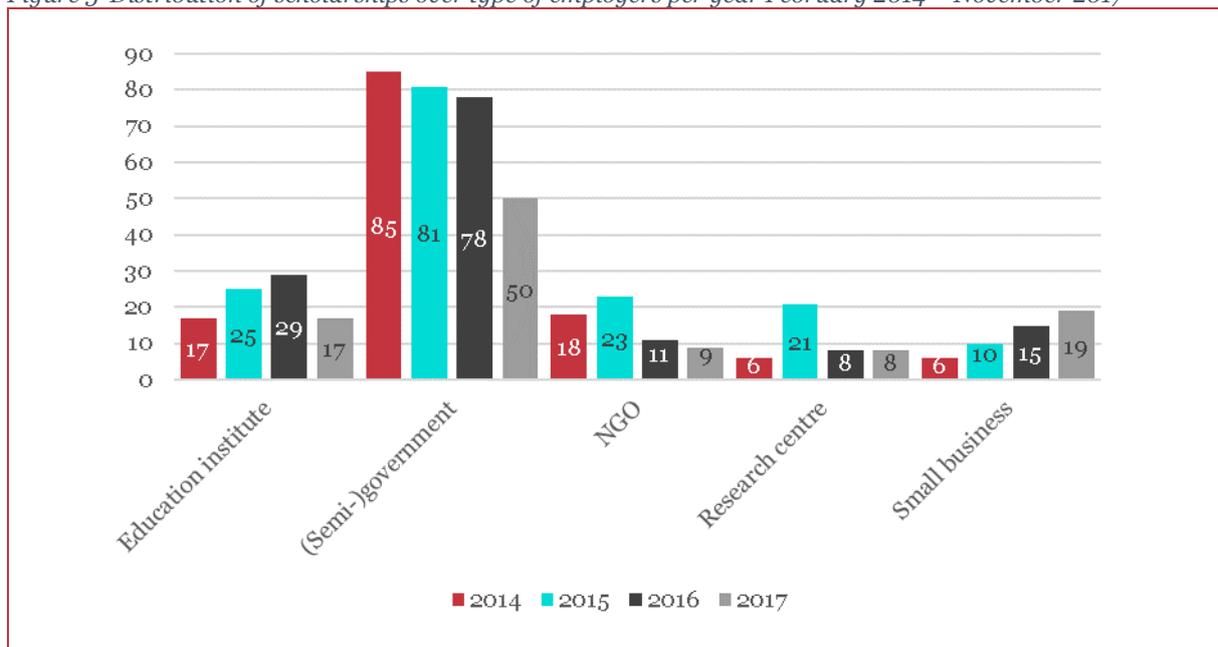
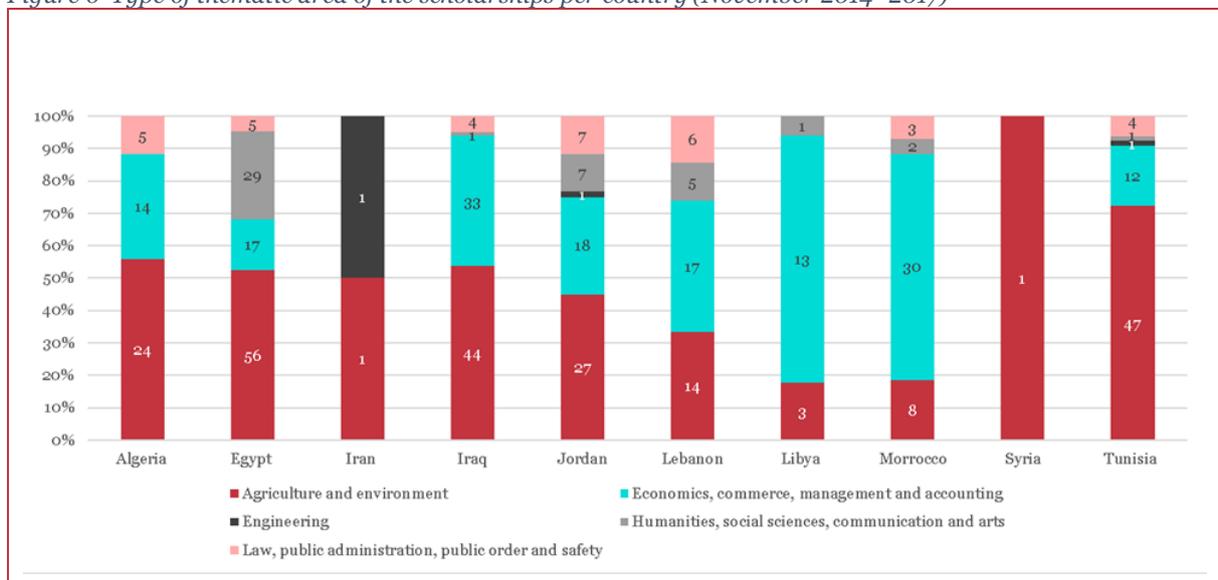


Figure 5 Distribution of scholarships over type of employers per year February 2014 – November 2017



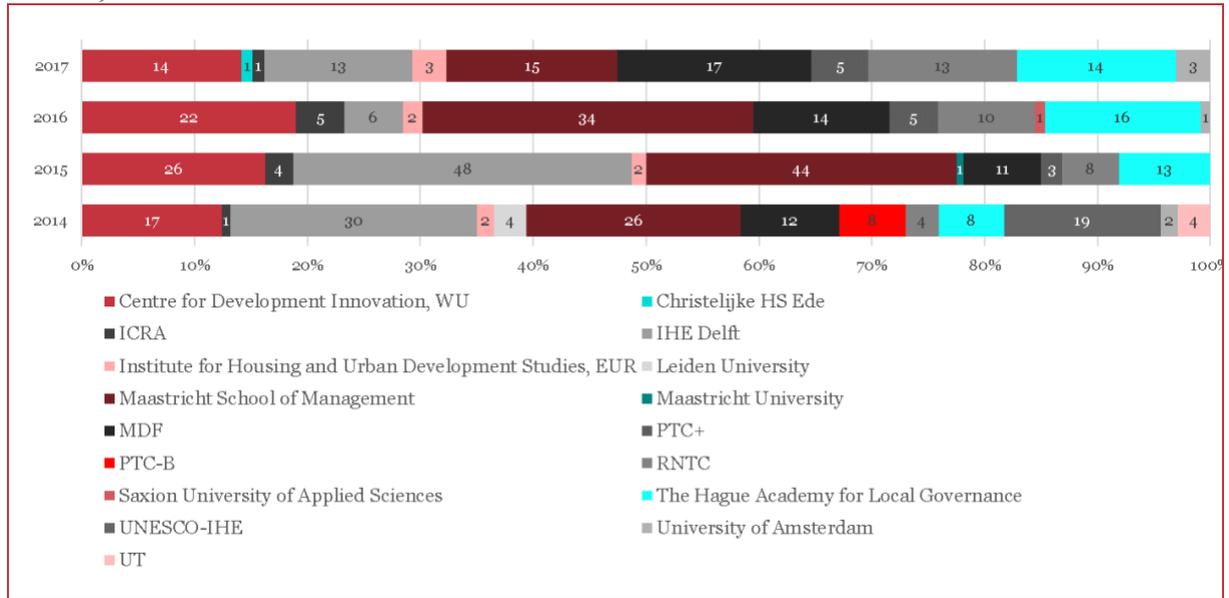
Thematically (Figure 6), agriculture was the largest area (225); followed by economics, commerce, management and accounting (154); humanities, social sciences, communication and arts (46); law public administration, public order and safety (34); and engineering (3). Per country, there are large differences however, with economics being the largest areas in Lebanon, Libya and Morocco. Over 90% of scholarships in the category of humanities, social sciences, communication and arts took place in only three countries: Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

Figure 6 Type of thematic area of the scholarships per country (November 2014–2017)



The distribution of scholarships over Dutch training institutions over the years is given in Figure 7. MSM, IHE and CDI were the largest providers in the evaluation period. RNTC, MDF and The Hague Academy of Local Governance came up in the last 2 years. This might be in part explained by the introduction and growing awareness under applications of new fields of studies offered through the programme since 2014.

Figure 7 Distribution of scholarships over Dutch training institutions per year (February 2014 – November 2017 deadline)



4 Finance and organisational management

4.1 Financial resources of the MSP

The total budget of the MSP programme 2013-2017 was €4,671mln. The available programme funds have been depleted (see Table 5).

Table 5 MSP Budget and spending in euros

Year	Available budget	Programme commitments	Decommitments	Administration costs
2013 (1 July – 31 December)	815,000	834,425	-	79,191
2014	1,000,000	922,478	187,228	62,567
2015	1,106,697	1,156,740	91,294	98,742
2016	1,000,000	994,038	97,066	88,476
2017 (1 January – 30 June)	750,000	728,621	48,052	44,468
Total first budget period:	4,671,697	4,636,302	423,640	373,444
2017 (1 July – 31 December, new budget period)	203,500	191,998		42,890

Programme administration costs include:

- Nuffic staff costs or implementing the activities, based on the standard agreed rates with the Ministry;
- Operational costs for the implementation of the programme (e.g. non-durable equipment, office equipment, communication);
- Out of pocket expenses (e.g. national and international travel, daily allowances).

The average programme administration costs were €93k per year (8% of the total available programme budget)¹². Normal administration costs for a programme of the type and scale of the MSP are 7-10%¹³. In 2015 costs were significantly higher because the ATLAS system was implemented, increasing temporarily the operational costs of the programme. Decommitments in 2014 were very high because in that year the remaining programme budget of the MSP Syria programme was decommissioned.

4.2 Organisational management of the MSP

4.2.1 Organisational management of the MSP scholarships for short courses

Currently, there are two application deadlines each year for MSP short courses; one in April and one in November. The overall application and selection procedures for granting a scholarship, has several phases:

- The institutions register their course offer for the MSP via Hodex/ Studiekeuze123 webform. Courses are imported from Hodex/SK123 in to ATLAS two weeks before the application deadline opens to applicants. The institutions check, add and amend the course offer before the deadline opens. The course list is published on the MSP webpage for applicants.

¹² This calculation was made based on the programme commitments, decommitments and administration costs provided in each financial reporting.

¹³ Based on experience Technopolis Group

- Nuffic, determines the maximum number of possible nominations for each training institute, based on the available deadline budget, average course costs¹⁴, number of participating institutions, number of granted scholarships during the previous deadline.
- When the application deadline opens to applicants, the training institutions and the embassies promote the programme. Applicants register for courses with the training institutions, which link them to ATLAS where they fill in the online application form and upload the supporting documents.
- The training institutions nominate candidates with an adequate academic and professional background who meet the programme criteria and country.
- The embassies check the applications on eligibility and assess the eligible applications. Through this assessment, points are awarded (see Table 6). The 8 criteria, which have been defined by Nuffic, cover the motivation of the applicant and the degree to which the application aligns with the overall objectives of the MSP and the alignment with local embassy priorities. The criteria are weighted and differ according to importance for the objectives. Non-eligible applications are rejected. A reason must be provided by the embassies. When no reason for ineligibility is provided Nuffic contacts the embassy to determine the reason(s) why the nominee was considered not-eligible.
- The final selection is carried out by Nuffic for all eligible applications in ATLAS using the selection algorithm; the highest ranked applications are selected until the deadline budget has been exhausted. Where possible the scholarships are distributed proportionally across the participating countries and half of the scholarships are awarded to female candidates.
- Subsequently grants to fund the scholarships are awarded by Nuffic to the training institutions who then inform all nominated applicants on the results and on any further procedures.

Table 6 Scoring criteria eligibility check MSP

Id	Score criteria description	Weight	Max score per question
1	To what extent does the application contribute to democratic transition?	3	9
2	To what extent does the application fit into the bilateral development cooperation policy of the embassy? (according to the country focus document)	3	9
3	To what extent is the description of the problem outlined specific and relevant? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What: What do I want to accomplish. • Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal. • Who: Who is involved? • Where: Identify a location. • Which: Identify requirements and constraints. 	2	6
4	To what extent is the description of how the chosen program can contribute to solving the problem outlined specific, achievable and relevant? <p>Look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurability • Realistic timeframe of implementation • Relevance • Achievability 	2	6

¹⁴ Variable course costs: duration of course and tuition fee charged by training institution. Non-variable course costs (although based on duration of course): daily allowances, insurances etc.

Id	Score criteria description	Weight	Max score per question
5	To what extent is the motivation of the candidate in accordance with mission, activities and ambitions of the employer?	2	6
6	To what extent do the candidate and the employer have clear ideas about the period after the study?	2	6
7	Does the candidate have a position within the organization (functions, tasks, and responsibilities) from which he/she can apply and transfer the knowledge and skills as described in the plan of return?	2	6
8	To what extent is the applicant in the position to establish a sustainable relationship between businesses in his country of origin and the Netherlands?	1	3
	Maximum score per application		51

All candidates must meet the following criteria⁴⁵:

- The candidate must be a professional and a national of, and working and living in one of the countries on the MSP country list valid at the time of application;
- The candidate must not be employed by an organisation which can be expected to have its own funds for staff development, e.g. multinational corporations; large national and/or a large commercial organisation; a bi-/multilateral donor organisation or international NGO.
- The candidate must have a government statement that meets the requirements of the country in which the employer is established (if applicable);
- The age of the MSP candidate must not exceed 45 years at the time the grant request is submitted;
- The candidate must have a current employer’s statement which complies with the format Nuffic has provided. All information must be provided and all commitments, which are included in the format, must be endorsed in the statement.

In the employer’s statement, the employer pledges to continue to pay salary and guarantees that the applicant can return to a similar position after the course ends. This statement includes a plan that describes how the newly acquired knowledge will be implemented by the candidate in the organisation within six months after successful completion of the course.

With regard to the assessment of suitable candidates, stakeholders have made the following remarks:

- Several embassies have questioned whether they are in the best position to perform the eligibility check for the MSP, as, besides capacity and time constraints, they lack direct contact with applicants before and with alumni after the training.
- Lack of communication between training institutions and embassies can lead to ambiguity over why an applicant was selected or not. Some training institutions mentioned that they do not have full insight into the reasons for non-selection of nominated applicants after assessment by the embassies.
- Not all MSP scholars speak adequate English. Training institutions do not always apply criteria for language to be admitted for short courses. The online application system does not facilitate a check on language either.

Since the introduction in 2014 of ATLAS, Nuffic offers an integrated platform for the application and selection process and data management of the programme. In this system, the main responsibility for

⁴⁵ Source: Nuffic document “msp-grant-conditions-april-2018-deadline”

the recruitment of suitable candidates has been placed with the Dutch training institutions, whereas for the MSP I this responsibility was with the embassies. Dutch training institutions in general are content with the clarity and ease-of-use of ATLAS for their tasks. However, several embassies emphasize that they still experience difficulties in using the system for extracting information regarding scholars and alumni, which they use for communication on the MSP amongst their network and engage in public diplomacy. Infrequent use, only twice a year, and the system being too complicated, are mentioned as the main reasons. Facilitating ease-of-use could help the embassies to increase their use of the ATLAS system.

4.2.2 Organisational management of the MSP Tailor-Made Trainings (TMTs)

TMTs are tailor-made to the specific needs of an organisation. They can also be used to train professionals who have a common training need, but who are not staff members of the same organisation. Specific target groups, such as marginalised groups, can receive tailor-made training, in a regional setting if needed.

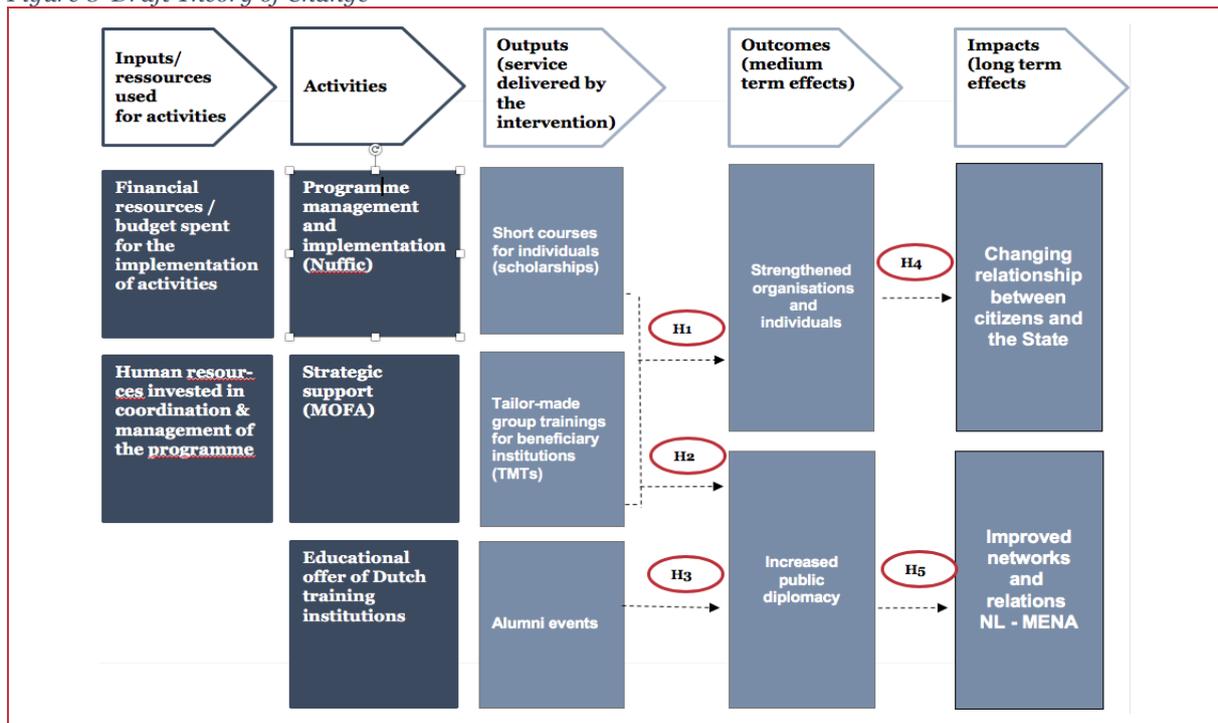
The TMT modality in the MSP is published as a subsidy tender for customised training or as an open call (joint proposal/ application), both with a maximum budget of €50.000 per call, and has to be conducted by a Dutch training provider. The Dutch providers responds to open calls in a particular field for a specified target group or a subsidy tender call for a customised training for a local organisation. The TMTs are customised to the local situation and needs. Examples include a TMT on “Empowering Libyan women in diaspora” for Libyans and on “Producing Media to Counter Radicalisation” for Syrians. In Oman, where scholarships are not awarded, the TMTs have focussed on technical topics, related to logistics and infrastructure (water) (Table 3).

5 Theory of Change, Relevance and Coherence

5.1 Theory of Change

In the scoping phase of this evaluation, a Theory of Change (ToC) for the MSP was reconstructed in a ToC workshop with members of the evaluation reference group from MoFA and Nuffic. During the ToC workshop participants focused on identifying the intended impacts and outcomes of the MSP and to explicit the causal pathways that link the outputs to outcomes and impacts (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Draft Theory of Change



The hypotheses describe the way effects of the programme are expected to unfold, linking outputs to outcomes and impacts. In 8.2, the evaluation findings are presented in relation to these hypotheses.

H1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni will be strengthened by the technical and non-technical skills and competences they will gain during the short courses (scholarships) and tailor-made trainings and this will have a positive effect on their organisations.
H2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The educational offer of NL training institutions and the cultural exchanges during the scholarships will allow alumni to better connect to and set up relations with Dutch organisations. These relations lead to increased public diplomacy.
H3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the organisation of alumni events/networks allowing for knowledge and value exchange through the build-up of relations with Dutch organisations (and between alumni) will lead to increased public diplomacy.
H4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened individuals and organisations will be able to better contribute and respond to the public debate and will have increased economic opportunities. The empowerment of these individuals and organisations will in time lead to changing relations between citizens and the State. This will contribute to the overall sustainable transition in the MENA region.
H5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased public diplomacy will support dialogue between the NL and the MENA region. In time this will lead to the establishment of stronger networks in the region for NL in general (beyond the links with beneficiary individuals and employers). This will contribute to the overall sustainable transition in the MENA region.

5.2 Relevance of the MSP to the objectives of the Shiraka programme

The overall Shiraka programme is based on the assumption that quickly and pro-actively responding to political and societal changes and situations through collaboration with governments and civil society can play a catalyst role in the region. A pivotal characteristic of this transition focuses on the changing relation between the State and its citizens. Shiraka interventions are aimed at supporting active citizenship and inclusivity, including the position of women and youth, through strengthening civil societies, the quality of central and local governance and the socio-economic situation.

The MSP adopted the objectives of contributing to capacity development in the MENA region and strengthen Dutch relations with these countries through a network of alumni from its predecessor scholarship programme MSP I. To fully align with Shiraka's main objectives, the promotion of sustainable transition in the MENA region was added as a third objective. This third MSP objective has not changed over the period of this evaluation and is still in line with the overarching Shiraka objective of supporting sustainable transition.

Interviews with MoFA, the embassies and alumni confirm that educational programmes, such as scholarships, are still considered important instruments to fulfil local knowledge gaps and enhance individual and organisational capacity building, acknowledging the serious lack of training and life-long learning opportunities in the MENA countries themselves. The country list was increased from 7 to 11 countries, widening the geographical scope of the programme interventions in the MENA region. Another issue underlining the relevance of the MSP is the acknowledged potential of alumni as future ambassadors for the Netherlands abroad. They can play a role in strengthening Dutch relations with the targeted MENA countries.

5.3 Relevance of the MSP to the Ministry's objective of strengthening Dutch relations with the MENA countries

The majority of the embassies would welcome opportunities to use the MSP in a more strategic way, as a part of their long-term strategies. During the interviews they stated that the MSP courses are not sufficiently custom-made to their priorities. The embassies acknowledge the quality and variety of courses but would like to see the course offer to be more tailored to the needs of their countries, including the possibility to address other priorities of embassies, like health, hospitality, private sector development. Furthermore, they mentioned that it could be useful to know beforehand the quota of scholarships available for a country and establish a priority list of courses based on thematic areas. This would make it easier to promote the MSP amongst identified and targeted organisations and strategic partners.

5.4 Relevance of the MSP to the needs in terms of capacity development in the MENA region

The MSP includes participants from all target groups it foresees to support. Governmental institutions take almost half of the available scholarships. Interviews with alumni confirm that the MSP offers an opportunity to improve their personal curriculum. The courses allow them to enhance specific knowledge and expertise relevant for their professional position and development and, to a lesser extent, to improve the capacities of their employing organisations.

Amongst others, the fact that every year the number of nominations largely exceeds the available scholarships indicates that there is sufficient demand and that the courses on offer cover a wide variety of national and local issues and needs. Alumni in particular highlight the quality of the courses, both in content and didactical approaches, the conformity with knowledge needs and the practical applicability. Furthermore, the acquisition of soft-skills and intercultural experience as well as the establishment of professional networks are regarded as beneficial for the participants' professional development.

5.5 Coherence

Although, at the explicit request of the client, this evaluation has not conducted an extensive assessment of other scholarship or training programmes in the context of the MSP, the MSP is not the only

scholarship programme and we received feedback on coherence and alignment during the evaluation. Other programmes funded by MoFA in the MSP countries that include short courses and TMTs are the Shiraka Training Programme (STP) administered by the Dutch Enterprise Agency (RVO), and the Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP), the successor of the former capacity building programme NICHE and Netherlands Fellowship programmes, administered by Nuffic. See Table 7 for an overview of eligible countries per programme.

Table 7 Geographical coverage of MoFA funded programmes OKP and STP in the MSP countries 2018

Countries	MSP	STP	OKP
Algeria			
Egypt			
Iran			
Iraq			
Jordan			
Lebanon			
Libya			
Morocco			
Oman			
Syria			
Tunisia			

The coherence between the MSP and other donor-funded programmes needs continuous attention, taking into account one of the conclusions of the IOB evaluation, which stressed the importance of alignment between bilateral support and interventions at diplomatic level through the embassies. As a result, MoFA defined alignment of different training instruments under Shiraka as follows:

- Support for civil society is channelled through the embassies;
- Civil servants are targeted through STP managed by RVO (TMTs);
- Mid-career professionals (citizens) are targeted through the MSP (short courses and TMTs).

The STP and MSP partly overlap in type of intervention (TMTs) and target group (civil servants) which in principle can produce a duplication of efforts. TMTs are the core of the STP, with a limitation in target groups (only civil servants), topics (only governance and rule of law), number of courses (9 per year). The number of eligible countries is much bigger than for the TMTs under MSP (19 instead of 3). On the other hand, TMTs under the MSP offer more flexibility and can, in consultation with the embassies, be adapted to specific needs of various target groups. For example, based on the advice from the Netherlands Syria team in Istanbul and in agreement with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, a TMT for Syrian refugees was coordinated in Jordan in 2017 for organisations working with Syrians in the region. In the period 2013-2017, two TMTs that were organised under MSP targeted civil servants but none of them addressed topics related to governance or rule of law.

Coordinated use of both instruments can lead to enhanced public diplomacy. After the embassy in Libya closed in July 2014, a combined use of the TMT facility available through both the STP and MSP, offered two capacity building trainings in water management. This helped the embassy to reconnect with the (government) water sector when diplomatic representation was partly re-established in Tripoli in 2017. The combined mobilisation of all these instruments helped to regain visibility and re-establish contacts in Libyan government.

While RVO and Nuffic have regular strategic meetings during which the STP and MSP are also discussed, structural collaboration and/or consultation between the coordinators of both programmes was not noted by the reviewers. Nuffic and the embassies do maintain regular contact on the MSP although the embassies mention that they lack the capacity to fully capitalise on possible cross-linkages between the MSP and other embassy activities. The contracting of two consultants in Lebanon in 2018 by Nuffic, who will specifically manage the Nuffic training programmes locally in Lebanon, is an interesting pilot. It responds to changing international policies of MoFA and might mitigate the capacity problems at the embassy in managing their training & scholarship programme portfolios.

Although an exceptional case: in Lebanon, a wide variety of training related interventions are running in parallel for different target groups. Next to the MSP, OKP and STP:

- Capacity Development Programme Lebanon (contribute to the improvement of future perspectives of host communities and refugees in Lebanon) - funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as short-term programme running until 31 December 2019
- Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians (HOPES) - funded by the European Union's Regional Trust Fund and implemented by a consortium consisting of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), British Council, Campus France and Nuffic. It aims at improving prospects for young Syrians and contributing to the preparation of the post-crisis reconstruction of Syria and phases out in 2019.

The embassy in Lebanon stressed the need for a clearer distinction between the STP and MSP. The embassy also mentioned the overlap between the MSP and OKP, offering both individual scholarships for short courses (2 to 12 weeks) for mid-career professionals in similar fields of studies. This also counts for other MSP countries that are eligible for OKP. All parties recognize that the MSP can be complementary instead of overlapping with OKP when the MSP is better tailored to individual MENA countries, for example through a better promotion strategy towards relevant target groups. On the other hand, several interviewed alumni mentioned that after their MSP course they started looking for further training opportunities in the Netherlands, via the training institutions themselves or other programmes like the OKP. In case successful, this will further strengthen their links with the Netherlands.

The majority of the Dutch embassies do not coordinate alumni efforts in the region. The contact person at the embassy in Lebanon did not, for example, participate in the Jordan alumni event in 2016 (and vice versa the Jordan contact person not in the alumni event in 2018 in Lebanon). The MSP contact person at the embassy in Iraq mentioned that she did not know about the alumni event in Lebanon but would have liked to participate to learn from the experience as she has to start developing alumni activities in Iraq. Embassies could therefore benefit from more interaction and coordination on developing and implementing alumni activities through a programme alumni policy.

Furthermore, no explicit alignment with other multi- or bilateral donor funded scholarship programmes was mentioned by any of the interviewees or stakeholders. The international field of scholarship programmes on offer in the MENA region is becoming increasingly competitive. Some embassies therefore underlined the importance for tailored and focused Dutch programmes that privilege the expertise sectors of the Netherlands and take local demands (national policies) explicitly into account.

5.6 New policy agenda: Investing in Global Prospects

In 2018 a new policy agenda for international development and trade was launched by the Dutch government¹⁶. It shows how the Dutch government intends to respond to international challenges and opportunities in its foreign policy and its shows strategic choices for the future. While outside of the scope of this evaluation and therefore not integrated in the theory of change, a brief analysis of potential coherence of the MSP with this new policy framework was carried out based on scoping and embassy interviews. The new policy agenda makes several significant shifts. First, a new regional focus on the West African Sahel, the Horn of Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, preventing conflicts and

¹⁶ 'Investing in global prospects', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18-05-2018

combating instability and insecurity in these regions. Secondly, additional focus on migration, vocational education, employment and income equality for young people and women, alongside existing efforts in the fields of water, agriculture, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), climate change, the rule of law and private sector development.

The new policy agenda offers various opportunities for the MSP. Specific opportunities include:

- Support employment and income equalities for women by continuous efforts to provide training opportunities for women and reach the 50% gender target for short courses. An intensified use of TMT can also increase the participation of women in the MSP, as was successfully done in the TMT “Empowering Libyan women in diaspora” in 2016. Moreover, a locally organized TMT can relieve obstacles which might hinder women from participating in training in The Netherlands.
- Target local organisations that focus on topics related to instability and insecurity to participate in the programme, and offer courses and TMTs focussing on these topics like the TMT on anti-radicalisation for Syrian refugees.

The new policy agenda also raises a number of questions for the MSP. For example, the increased focus on youth is something that does not directly link to the current target group of mid-career professionals.

Conclusions on relevance

- **The MSP is aligned with the overarching Shiraka objective of supporting sustainable transition.** The programme is seen as an important instrument to fulfil local knowledge gaps and facilitate individual and organisational capacity building. The idea that the interventions offered through the MSP can support sustainable transition in the MENA region is seen as an assumption rather than evidence based.
- **Embassies consider the MSP a relevant instrument for public diplomacy in the region,** but they see an opportunity for stronger alignment and strategic use of the programme to support their priorities in the countries.
- **The MSP includes participants from all target groups with governmental organisations taking 50% of the scholarships. The programme supports to fill a lack of training and life-long learning opportunities** in organisations in the MENA countries themselves. Through the programme, participants have access to a wide variety of courses that provide practical applicability and a multicultural experience in the Netherlands. The **courses, however, do not specifically address the MENA region or specific local needs.** There is a risk of duplication between MSP and programmes that partly overlap in type of intervention and target group, like STP and OKP.

6 Effectiveness

For this evaluation we have defined effectiveness as the extent to which the MSP has attained expected results as defined in the programme's Theory of Change. These expected results are:

- Enhanced human capital;
- Strengthened institutions;
- Exposure to diversity;
- Increased public diplomacy;
- The overall impact of sustainable transition in the MENA region.

6.1 The MSP is very effective to strengthen capacities at individual level, but results for organisational capacity building are less clear

Interviews and survey results show that alumni and employers have a very positive assessment of the quality of the trainings provided through the MSP. About 25 % of survey respondents found the quality of the training good and 74% very good. Interviewees also highlighted the quality of the professors. Many interviewees expressed that the uniqueness of the MSP trainings relies on the fact that MSP trainings offer many opportunities to link theory to practice through practical exercises and activities, role playing or field visits to farms, dairy production units, etc. This places participants in a simulated situation requiring them to function in the capacity expected of them in a real event. As a result, alumni affirm that they are more likely to be able to use their acquired knowledge and skills when they return to their countries because they have experienced using these skills under the supervision of Dutch professors and experts. Alumni also claimed that field visits allow them to understand practical application and use of theory. Although most of the courses include a related side visit, the embassies and several alumni stressed the importance of offering more field visits in Dutch companies and institutions during the training. At the moment, most training institutions do offer opportunities to link theory to practice but the MSP must encourage this as a way to promote a higher value added of Dutch scholarships in comparison to other available programmes.

For the development of technical knowledge, 52% of surveyed alumni argued that the course was useful to a large extent, whereas 34% argued it to be to a very large extent. For technical skills, 47% found the course useful to a large extent and 32% to a very large extent.

Interviewed alumni also mentioned the value added of being immersed in a multidisciplinary and multicultural environment, both through their stay in the Netherlands and being part of the international classroom of the course, that contributes to consolidate learning viewing ideas from different perspectives. Many alumni stressed that they do not have such opportunities in their countries and that the experience of discussing with people from other disciplines and countries was *enlightening*. It gives a global perspective to what they have experienced from a local and/or thematic context. Surveyed alumni were also very positive as to the added value of the course regarding intercultural competences, i.e. the ability to communicate appropriately with people from other cultures. About 42% found it useful to a large extent and 44% to a very large extent.

The English language is generally not considered as a problem by alumni. Some alumni in North Africa considered it was an opportunity for them to practice and develop their English skills. They also said it was refreshing for them to have a training out of the francophone system as the teaching methods are different. Others claimed it was difficult but that they had enough English skills to understand a large part of the training content and that professors and other trainees were available to answer their questions on parts of the training that were more challenging to understand. These statements are to be balanced with the views of Embassies and Dutch training institutions. Dutch training institutions have reported that some candidates had a level of English below that of professional use and regretted the absence of an English test for MSP applicants. It is up to the education institutions to check on English language capabilities as part of the 'Code of Conduct International Student'. A few embassies stressed

that the English language is an issue due to lack of English skills in their country. This limits the number of applications for the programme. They have also mentioned that before the introduction of ATLAS, when embassies has a stronger role in the recruitment process, they encouraged applicants to pass an English language test like TOEFL before sending their applications.

The large majority of interviewed MSP alumni completed their training according to plan and returned to their original employer and in positions in which they have been able to make use of their new knowledge and skills. Results of the alumni survey show that 84% of respondents returned to their original employers upon completion of their training and still work there, and 9% returned to their original employers and kept working there for more than 6 months after completion of their MSP training.

Upon their return many alumni declared that they prepared a PPT presentation summarising key points of their acquired knowledge and skills that could be useful to their organisations. They made presentations to their directors and relevant colleagues in their department. These presentations cannot be expected to serve as a tool for training other colleagues in the organisation as alumni were not trained as trainers. Yet they have been useful to strengthen organisations in the sense that alumni are flagged as experts by their colleagues. Many interviewed alumni declared that their colleagues regularly consult them for advice or queries relating to their training. When this happens, alumni find it extremely helpful to be able to refer to training material they have been handed in paper or electronic format. They sometimes contact professors from the training institution in the Netherlands that are generally responsive or participants to the training with whom they have kept contacts usually through WhatsApp or Facebook groups. As to whether employees had been able to make use of their new skills, survey results show that respectively 50% and 35% of alumni claim that their training was useful to a large extent or to a very large extent for their daily work. Surveyed employers were also very positive: half of respondents mentioned their employees were doing so “to a large extent” and about one third indicated they were doing so “to a very large extent”; a large part of surveyed employers mentioned that their organization had facilitated the employee in using the new knowledge and skills in their work.

Furthermore, the survey shows that 30% of alumni declare that they acquired new responsibilities and a higher-level position as a result of their participation in the MSP training. 41% claim that they had new responsibilities within the same or a similar position. Interviewed alumni were also very positive about the impact of the trainings on their careers. Reported promotions can of course not be fully attributed to the MSP course, and not all interviewed alumni could access higher level positions, yet a large majority of interviewed alumni indicated that they have used their new knowledge and skills to develop innovative projects and or acquire new responsibilities within their positions and this has sometimes led to higher level positions.

Examples of impact of the MSP on individual capacity building

- An Alumna, who took part in a 10 weeks training on GIS and remote sensing to develop applications for analysis and management of marine resources, at the ICT Faculty of Geo-information Science and Earth Observation, affirms she was able to draft policy notes in the framework of the development of a plan of action for the management of national fisheries. Upon her return she was able to attend a training on geostatistics because she had acquired the necessary basics on remote sensing data during her MSP training. The MSP training also helped her to improve her presentation skills and her English skills. She did not access a higher-level position after her training because she needs to finalise her PhD before she can be promoted. Yet she considers the MSP to have a leverage effect on her career because she has extensively used her new skills and knowledge to guide her PhD research and in the work, she carries out in her research centre.
- An Alumnus, who attended a 3 weeks training on Port planning and infrastructure/Port Masterplans at IHE Delft, affirms that his department was able to make use of his newly acquired knowledge in the conception of a new port in his country. His training was very useful to learn how to develop port extension projects and how to upgrade infrastructure. He still refers to the documentation from his training in his day-to-day

work. His colleagues consult him for advice on port planning and infrastructure. Although he did not change position since his training, he was able to contribute to significant projects and is now considered as an expert on these topics by his colleagues.

- An alumnus from Iraqi Kurdistan participated with a scholarship in courses at The Hague Academy for Local Governance in 2015 and 2018. During his first MSP course on Citizen Participation and Inclusive Governance, the alumnus was able to combine his on the ground experience with that of the other students and share best practices from around the world. This has had a major impact on the work of the Iraqi Kurd, he subsequently focused much of his work on inclusive governance. Through his course, the alumnus has gained professional contacts with The Hague Academy and other Dutch organisations. Amongst others, he did an NWO funded study on displacement and return of refugees, in which he incorporated his knowledge of inclusive governance. He also works with PAX on training young researchers in evidence-based research to counter terrorism, which creates a further, wide impact. Although he has since moved on to work for a new organisation, the Middle East Research Institute, he continues to train staff at NGOs and CSOs to disseminate his experience, including the lessons learned in his MSP courses. In his own opinion, the MSP is essential for his region because it supports the creation of space for an independent civil society, unrelated to political parties. He sees it as not only essential to train people in NGOs to foster sustainable transition, but also people in government, because these people are in the key positions that can implement the recommendations from civil society.

As to whether the organization had facilitated the dissemination of the new knowledge, the employers were a little less positive, respectively 20%, 39% and 35% found this the case to a very large extent, to a large extent and to some extent. Interviewed alumni have underlined that in some cases it was difficult to disseminate or use their new knowledge because their organisations did not provide the enabling environment for this. In some cases, the organisations did not have the technological infrastructure necessary for the application of their new skills. As such the courses might have not been fully relevant to the needs of their organisations as they relied on expensive technologies. In other cases, it was reported that the general lack of capacities within the organisation makes it difficult to effectively disseminate their new knowledge.

Although the programme focusses on capacity building of organisations and individuals, in first instance applications are motivated by individual/personal interests, even though employers express their endorsement through the employer's statement. Except for the collaboration with governmental organisations in Algeria (see box hereafter), we have not come across situations in which the employer took the initiative of arranging a scholarship for an employee, it is primarily employees-driven. On the other hand, Dutch training institutions promote their courses through alumni, not through managers of organisations. Furthermore, the reviewers have not received strong signals that the employer's statement and the action plan have led to an improved contribution to organisational capacity development of the employers that participate in the programme.

Pros and Cons of the MSP collaboration with governmental organisations in Algeria

In Algeria the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sorts the list of available MSP trainings and distributes to national Ministries a list that only includes trainings that are considered as relevant to their work. These Ministries publish their lists among all the available trainings opportunities that their staff can access and interested candidates can apply.

The advantages of such set-up are that applicants know of the available trainings in their field. Also, the coordination offered by the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs helps the embassy to communicate more efficiently with targeted employers. The embassy has for example organised a meeting gathering all employers from governmental organisations to present the MSP, how it works, and the profile of eligible candidates. As a result, some organisations have enhanced their collaboration with the programme and submit more applications, others will need further support and communication.

Interviewed Alumni also highlighted the disadvantages of this system. First because some have noted that a number of interesting MSP trainings that they consider useful for their day to day work are available on the website but are not listed by their organisations, either because they are too technical or because they

are on topics that are not specific to their fields such as project management. The system helps the employers to ensure that their staff builds capacities in fields that contribute to their organisations rather than to individual capacity building. Another disadvantage is that some employers carry out a pre-selection of candidates and only allow a limited number of staff to submit their applications. The embassy is in the process of explaining that this pre-selection should not be carried out as it is very likely to limit the number of scholarships awarded.

Embassies underlined difficulties to engage employers in the MSP and support them in ensuring that trainings fit their overall capacity building strategies, and that trainees transfer and use their new knowledge and skills. Some embassies would like to develop more formalised cooperation plans with employers to ensure that the MSP contributes to strengthen organisations rather than individuals only. This would involve assessing the organisation’s training needs and offering a mix of scholarships and TMTs that would be suited to these needs. It would also help to anticipate any necessary investments to allow alumni to fully use their newly acquired skills.

TMTs are welcomed by alumni and employers as a complementary tool to individual scholarships to strengthen capacities at organisational level. TMTs can be tailored to the needs of organisations and can be carried out in a language relevant to the country context. Moreover, they target a large group of people in an organisation and are thus more likely to introduce change in the way the organisation operates. In addition, TMTs are a tool to offer an alternative for certain target groups from countries that could not participate in the short courses.

6.2 The MSP’s contribution to a sustainable transition in the region is difficult to measure and not evidence based

The analysis of the thematic distribution of the MSP portfolio (see Figure 6 above) demonstrates that 43% of the alumni have chosen courses in the field of agriculture and environment. Interviewed alumni underlined that the Netherlands are well known for their excellence in agriculture, food and nutrition, water management and environmental sciences, a strong motivation to apply for the MSP trainings in these fields. Management and accounting is another strong thematic of the MSP (41%). Interviewed alumni explain this by the strong need to strengthen capacities in this area in public institutions in the MENA region.

Fields of study introduced to align the course offer more to the objective of contributing to sustainable transition, have a smaller number of awarded candidates (17%): humanities, social sciences, communications and arts, and law, public administration, public order and safety. In countries such as Iraq, Iran, Libya and Tunisia these topics altogether represent less than 10% of applications. Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan have the highest number of scholarships in these topics, representing between 25-32% of the total portfolio per country. This might be explained by the fact that, in these countries, employers included a higher number of national NGOs and small businesses (see Table 6, section 5.2 and Figure 4 section 3.3.2).

This demonstrates that the demand to strengthen capacities in fields that were introduced to the MSP to contribute more directly to sustainable transition in the region is low among the main target populations of the MSP, i.e. governmental institutions (53%). Embassies have stressed the need to better promote trainings in thematics that are supposed to contribute more directly to sustainable transition, as these have been introduced in recent years and are less known. They have also mentioned the need to target a higher number of beneficiaries in particular from national NGOs that are more likely to have interest in these topics. The portfolio analysis presented in chapter 3.3.3 indicates that national NGO represent only 10% of total employers and small business represent 11%. On the other hand, embassies indicated that they have limited time and capacity to actively promote the MSP outside of their “usual suspects”. They therefore focus mainly on their existing bilateral networks amongst governmental organisations.

As for the participating training institutions, Nuffic determines a maximum number of candidates that each institute can nominate, based on a query that takes into account the deadline budget, the average scholarship amount, the number of participating institutions and past performance (number of scholarships previously received). Institutions are not selected based on criteria linked to topics that are more directly related to sustainable transition. Notwithstanding, over the years of the evaluation period, a gradual shift of nominations and scholarship awards could be distinguished from the traditional institutions like Maastricht School of Management (MSM), Delft-IHE and Wageningen University/CDI (WU) to other institutions like, MDF Training and Consultancy, Radio Netherlands Training Centre (RNTC) and the Hague Academy for Local Governance.

Results of the online survey among alumni show ambiguous results of the MSP in terms of its contributions to a sustainable transition. To questions on whether the scholarship had brought new perceptions on citizen rights and duties, freedom of expression, gender-equality and the relations between citizens and the State, alumni were not clear-cut and positive.

- Respectively 36% and 20% mentioned that the MSP had to a large or very large extent an effect on new perceptions on the (democratic) relations between citizens and the State, whereas respectively 26% and 12% mentioned to some extent or not at all.
- On gender equality 28% mentioned it changed their perception to some extent and 16% not at all.
- For freedom of expression, respectively 20% and 12% mentioned only to some extent and not at all.
- On citizen rights and duties, 23% mentioned to some extent and 12% not at all.

A considerable number of interviewed alumni considered the question irrelevant as it was not the objective of their trainings to bring such new perceptions. Interviewed alumni that had received training on topics contributing more directly to sustainable transition such as law or humanities were more positive about the contributions of the MSP to their ability to take part in the public debate.

Reaching a gender balance is an important achievement for the MSP. It is however not a binding requirement for the programme. The gender balance is primarily promoted with the target of awarding 50% of scholarships to women on programme level. This objective was reached for the overall MSP portfolio. Although it is not an explicit target of the MSP, it is challenging to reach the gender balance on country level.

The majority of the embassies underlined some issues with the gender balance targets. First, the age limit of 45 years for MSP candidates is considered disadvantageous for women, as many women will have children between age 30 and 40 and are likely to have long periods of maternity leave and/or will be unlikely to travel abroad during this period. Some embassies, like Libya, also emphasized the fact that they have a lower number of female candidates for the MSP (in comparison to men). On the other hand, in other countries more scholarships are awarded to women; for example, Lebanon has 79% of female candidates and Tunisia has 69%. Algorithms in the ATLAS system compensate for countries that have a 100% of male applicants and select more females in countries with a surplus of female candidates to make sure that the 50% target is reached at programme level. To avoid this gender target compensation between countries, the programme might consider adding minimum requirements on gender equality (for both men and women) on a country level to the programme.

Gender equality can also be promoted through trainings that contribute to women empowerment on areas of gender inequalities that are country specific. The example hereafter demonstrates how trainings focused on gender equality issues can have interesting impacts.

Outcomes of a scholarship on gender mainstreaming in project cycle management

After her training on gender mainstreaming in development programmes and project cycle management, an alumna from Tunisia realised that the situation in her country was not as good as she thought, and that

women working in farming in rural areas give all the money they earn to their husbands. Men only manage the farm's budget but do not carry out any physical labour. After her training in the Netherland this alumna organised workshops in rural areas in Tunisia to convince women that they should manage the money they earn and not hand it to their husbands. She claimed that some women were convinced and had the courage to keep their wages after attending her workshops.

Interviewed alumni and embassies brought out the need for equal opportunities for beneficiaries across different regions in the country. This is important in terms of public diplomacy targets but also to contribute to the reductions of socioeconomic disparities in the country that can lead to higher instability. In Tunisia and Morocco many protests came originally from depressed areas of the country. Some embassies highlighted that before the introduction of the ATLAS system they could make sure that candidates from other areas of the countries were selected when they had strong profiles.

Nuffic, embassies and Dutch training institutions make use of general promotion means such as social media and websites. The target groups for the MSP have been defined broadly enough to include the most relevant actors in the countries, nonetheless, the programme reaches mainly governmental organisations and to a much lesser extent less actors from the other target groups. The MSP could therefore try to target more on civil organisations and private sector if it wants to enhance the participation of civil society in the programme.

It has been mentioned, amongst others by the embassy in Iran, that Nuffic's promotion materials of the MSP are not suitable in the political context due to the sensitivity of concepts such as sustainable transition. The embassy has therefore explored the possibility of tailored promotional messages with embassies in countries facing similar issues.

In Oman, the embassy underlines that although the TMT is an effective tool for promoting cooperation in the field of infrastructure, the country could also benefit from scholarships in more technical or natural sciences. There is currently however no tailoring of courses per country, while opening the entire offer of MSP courses towards Oman is politically too sensitive. In Iran, scholarships have recently been reintroduced (2017), however, students appear to be hesitant to participate in courses related to politically sensitive topics. Applying, according to the embassy, to these types of courses funded by a foreign government would pose a serious threat to individuals.

6.3 The MSP programme is a useful tool for public diplomacy, results could be enhanced through a programme specific alumni policy

Most embassies declared that the MSP is a useful instrument for public diplomacy, but that results could be enhanced through a separate alumni policy for the programme. Embassies try to keep a track of alumni that have gained interesting positions and contact them to exchange information or for support on specific issues.

The alumni network is an important part of Egypt Public Diplomacy Strategy (2018-2022). According to the embassy in Egypt, Egyptian alumni who studied in the Netherlands are key influential actors and are one of the Netherlands' most valuable resources for collaboration between the two countries. They represent a (highly educated and influential) network of professionals, who have affinity with the Netherlands. Effective alumni engagement can strengthen people-to-people linkages and support specific policy objectives that both benefits the Netherlands and Egypt. The embassy in Egypt managed to define a vision, mission, core values, resources and activities for its alumni association in 2018. The association is in the process of being established.

Other embassies do not have a formalised alumni policy and have very limited resources to organise alumni events. As a result, they do not keep close relationships with most alumni. Survey results show that about 53% of alumni (118) that have completed our survey claim they were never invited to any alumni event organised by Nuffic or the embassy, and 70% (155) that they were never invited to take part in an alumni association. This indicates that there is room for improvement in terms of outreach to

alumni, whether this be by organising such events more frequently or ensuring that alumni receive invitations to planned events.

The outreach events organised by the embassies are generally cocktail receptions that happen once or twice a year with the embassy's budget. These meetings gather alumni from the MSP and other embassy programmes. Interviews show that alumni have mixed views on the benefits of these meetings. Some alumni think they are helpful for networking and to keep good relationships with people at the embassy while others only attended once despite receiving an invitation every year. Embassies do not receive guidance from Nuffic on how to organise alumni events on country level that would look more like the Nuffic alumni events organised in Jordan (2016) and Lebanon (2018).

Embassies are interested in having a programme specific alumni policy that would make a better use of the network of alumni to:

- promote the MSP;
- disseminate information on the application process;
- facilitate alumni activities;
- disseminate success stories;
- strengthen relationships with employers.

In 2018 Nuffic started monitoring scholarship holders and alumni on a regular basis through a monitoring and tracer system to gain insight into the effects of the programme on the candidates, and their employers. The tracking is expected to provide a basis for future follow-up in the form of tracer studies that can measure longer-term impact as well. The recent use of the system made it impossible for this review to assess the effectiveness of this tool for the programme.

Conclusions on effectiveness

- The **MSP's contribution to sustainable transition in the region is difficult to measure** and not evidence based.
- The MSP is **effective to strengthen capacities at individual level**, but **results for organisational capacity building are less clear**, despite several measures to increase the involvement of employers in the programme. TMTs can offer a valuable complementary tool to strengthen organisations as they allow for more flexibility and better tailoring the course to the needs of the target group and their employers.
- The **gender balance target of awarding 50% of scholarships to women was reached for the overall MSP portfolio** through gender target compensation between countries.
- Embassies consider the MSP as **a useful tool for public diplomacy**, but they agree that its results could be **enhanced through a separate alumni policy for the programme**.
- **Alumni highly value being immersed in a multidisciplinary and multicultural environment**, both through their stay in the Netherlands and being part of the international classroom of the course.
- Nuffic's promotion materials of the MSP are not suitable in the political context of some MENA countries due to the sensitivity of concepts such as sustainable transition.

7 Efficiency

7.1 Cooperation between programme stakeholders in the management and implementation of the MSP

Nuffic met with its programme management and reporting obligations during the years under review. As explained in chapter 4.1., no major financial abnormalities were noted by the evaluators. Coordination and communication between DAM, funder of the MSP, and programme administrator Nuffic is positively assessed by both parties. Embassies and training institutions were also positive on the way Nuffic manages the MSP; being easily accessible and providing clear guidelines on the division of roles and responsibilities described by Nuffic in an application and selection guide.

Nuffic undertook several measures to improve the performance of the MSP. Early 2017, it was agreed with the MoFA to carry out a needs assessment among the embassies in the MSP countries. The purpose of the assessment was to gain feedback on the MSP procedures, to identify the needs of the embassies and the target groups, and to recommend areas where the programme could be improved to further meet the objectives of the MSP. Actions to address the recommendations have been implemented mainly after the period under review. Nonetheless, the evaluators have received signals of improvement of several identified shortcomings; like clearer guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of the various programme stakeholders and the introduction of a monitoring and evaluation system to track and trace alumni. On the other hand, other shortcomings have not been fully addressed yet; for example the draw up of an MSP alumni plan and customised information for embassies and applicants at country-level.

Nuffic has also evaluated its first MSP alumni event organised in November 2016 in Jordan. This evaluation provided lessons learned and recommendations on organisation and content to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of subsequent events. The second MSP alumni event in Lebanon in 2018 included for example a session on career development which was regarded positively by alumni during interviews with the reviewers.

Embassies mentioned frequently that they suffer from a lack of capacity to satisfactorily execute their tasks for the MSP, in particular for activities relating to the eligibility check, the promotion of the programme and the development of an alumni strategy. The situation has improved since the introduction of the ATLAS automated system by Nuffic in 2014. ATLAS is largely appreciated by most of the embassies because it has allowed embassies to considerably reduce time spent on the application phase. Dutch training institutions also assessed the introduction of ATLAS as positive and did not mention particular issues in using the system for the application procedure.

For the embassies, ATLAS has also brought some frustrations among which:

- Before the introduction of ATLAS embassies could interview candidates and test their motivations. Some embassies suspect that in some governmental institutions, motivation letters were shared among colleagues and sometimes large sections were copy-pasted. The embassies don't have the opportunity to truly test candidates on their motivations.
- In Algeria the number of applications has dropped since the introduction of the online system. In the past the pre-selection of candidates was organised by the embassy and included interviews of candidates. With the new system a pre-selection is carried out at the level of employers (governmental institutions) and only a small number of applications is received: about 20 applications per year for 174 available courses.
- The system has some technical issues that have been reported to Nuffic and should be solved soon. For example, for security reasons it requires a new password every three months making the access to the system complicated.
- Interviews with embassies and alumni have demonstrated that many alumni have benefited from 2 (or more) MSP trainings in the period 2014-2017. Also, many alumni come from the same departments in their organisation because the programme was promoted by a beneficiary colleague. Embassies expressed the need to monitor this more closely and have access through ATLAS to

information on number of beneficiaries per employer and on number of alumni that were awarded several scholarships.

ATLAS is mainly a portal to review applicants (eligibility check) but embassies expressed the wish to be able to generate monitoring and evaluation data themselves with the ATLAS system, without having to ask Nuffic for access to this information. They need quick access to country facts and figures. In particular they would like to access data on:

- List of all candidates for current and past years and for all courses
- Final selection of candidates including reasons for rejections
- List of final graduates
- The follow-up of alumni

Embassies claim that this information would help them in the selection process to identify applicants to multiple courses, or candidates that were rejected in past years and the reasons for this. Embassies would like to be able to generate disaggregated annual results per country and use ATLAS as a tool that supports learning with the aim to continuously improve the MSP.

Nuffic indicated that embassies already have access to this data in ATLAS and also indicates that the regularly provide embassies with the instructions on how to access/export the information from ATLAS. This, however, seems not to be enough. A better and more frequent instruction of embassy personnel, and more user-friendly for externals might be a solution.

The embassies are ambivalent in restrictions for individuals to apply for several scholarships. Some embassies allow people to apply several times (the review revealed cases of individuals that took 3 up to 6 courses in a row), other embassies do not allow people to apply again within 3 years after completion of a course. The programme does not provide guidelines on this topic, other than that candidates may not receive a scholarship for courses that take place at the same time, therefore it would be good to clarify this in the programme guidelines in order to harmonize embassies' approaches.

Production of communication material could also be centralised; embassies would appreciate an easy-to-read yearly promotion leaflet with up to date (country) facts and figures of the programme (e.g. number of scholarships awarded, fields of study etc.). Some embassies have suggested that the wording on the communication documents should be changed as sustainable transition is a sensitive topic in many MENA countries. This communication tool is important for public diplomacy, it is used for example during visits in national ministries to demonstrate how the Netherlands is involved in the country and showcase opportunities to collaborate.

Some embassies receive queries from candidates on the application rules and deadlines and find it challenging to gather all the relevant information with their limited capacities. They would appreciate more support from Nuffic to collate a list of all eligible courses with information on application rules and deadlines for each Dutch training institution.

The MSP has set rules that efficiently limit the risks of brain drain. It targets candidates that:

- can provide an employer and a government statement
- are awarded short trainings for a maximum stay of 3 months in the Netherlands
- are in the 30-45 age group less likely to risk illegal immigration because of family obligations

One or two isolated cases of scholarships used for illegal immigration were reported to the evaluators, the MSP selection criteria are overall effective in limiting these risks.

7.2 Value for money

When comparing the results of the programme with the amounts invested, the value of the programme can be assessed high as for individual capacity building. Results on organisational capacity building are

less significant but are coherent with amounts invested. Yet, with relatively small additional efforts value on organisational capacity building might be increased. This would require:

- Making a better use of the alumni network for public diplomacy purposes but also to promote the programme and ensure it is more visible for all types of organisations that are targeted for the programme.
- Enhancing collaboration with employers to ensure that the programme also supports organisational capacity building.

The value of the programme for supporting sustainable transition in the MENA region is not demonstrable.

Conclusions on efficiency

- **Nuffic met its programme management and reporting obligations during the years under review. Coordination and communication between DAM and Nuffic are positively assessed.** The Dutch training institutions and embassies also value the way Nuffic manages the programme. The introduction of the ATLAS automated system considerably reduced their time spent on the application process. **Nuffic has taken several additional measures to improve the functioning of the programme but has not fully addressed all recommendations from the embassy satisfaction survey yet.**
- All embassies involved in the MSP mention their serious lack of capacity to satisfactorily fulfil other responsibilities, in particular for promotion and alumni activities. They would appreciate easy-to-read (country) figures on the programme's results as these would be useful for the promotion of the programme and public diplomacy purposes.
- **Value of the programme can be assessed high as for individual capacity building and public diplomacy.** The value of the programme for organisational capacity building are less significant and for support to sustainable transition not demonstrable.

8 SWOT analysis and Evaluation findings in relation to the ToC hypotheses

8.1 SWOT analysis of the MSP

Table 8 below lists the strengths and weaknesses of the MSP and opportunities and threats regarding the future as identified during the evaluation. This overview is based on analysis of documentation, the interviews conducted, the evaluation survey, the focus group discussions and reflects the interpretations by the evaluation team members.

Table 8 SWOT analysis of the MSP

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality of the courses on offer • Trainings offer an immersion in a multicultural and multidisciplinary environment • Most trainings offer practical simulations including field visits to Dutch organisations • The programme can adapt to country's situations with instruments such as TMTs • The aims to award 50% of scholarships to women was reached at programme level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objective of sustainable transition does not have specific targets and a clear action plan attached • Courses are not tailored to MENA region, context or local • Some countries have low number of applications • Embassies have low capacities for outreach activities • Promotion of the programme reaches to a much lesser extent target groups outside governmental organisations • No alumni policy • Alumni events are not organised in every country and/or on a regular basis and do not manage to mobilise alumni permanently and promote the programme • Wide variations among countries in reaching the gender balance target • ATLAS does not easily allow a detailed monitoring of past candidates and alumni • The MSP's contribution to sustainable transitions is unclear and is difficult to measure • In French-speaking North Africa language can be a barrier to applications
Opportunities	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise alumni as ambassadors of the programme to increase outreach • Increased use of the monitoring and tracer system (started 2018) will gain insight into the effects of the programme on the candidates, and their employers and will facilitate measuring longer-term impact. • Work more closely with key employers to introduce the MSP and discuss how it can support organisational capacity building • Offer specific TMTs on particular needs in the countries (for example: waste management or water management supporting organisational capacity building) • Embassies can reduce the language barrier by encouraging applicants to refresh their English • Enhanced coordinated use of the different training instruments offered by the Netherlands to add value through collaboration and strengthen public diplomacy • Improved and more tailored promotion to reach strategic partners and target groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In countries that have a low number of applications there is a risk of awarding the same people and/or of not supporting enough beneficiaries • Without a proper alumni policy and/or increased capacities in Embassies the programme will have a limited visibility and thus limited applications • Duplication with other programmes that partly overlap in type of intervention and target group. • Sensitivity of concepts such as sustainable transition in the political context of some MENA countries.

Opportunities	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with current MoFA policy agenda Investing in Global Prospects where possible and value added 	

8.2 Evaluation findings in relation the hypotheses identified in the ToC

The Table 9 hereafter presents the identified hypotheses of change and evaluation findings in relation to these hypotheses. The table aims to illustrate where the ToC causal chains were verified or not in the assessment of the MSP’s relevance and coherence (chapter 5), effectiveness (chapter 6), efficiency (chapter 7).

Table 9 Hypotheses of change linking outputs to outcomes and impacts

#	Hypotheses of changes in the ToC	Evaluation finding in relation to the hypotheses for change identified in the ToC
H1	<p>Beneficiary individuals will be strengthened by the technical and soft skills they will gain during the short courses (scholarships) and tailor-made trainings</p> <p>Employers will be strengthened thanks to the application and transfer of new skills and knowledge by trained individuals</p> <p>Individuals that cannot travel to the NL will benefit from TMTs in their countries</p>	<p>The evaluation has confirmed that the short courses offered to alumni through MSP scholarships and TMTs were relevant and effective to strengthen beneficiary individuals.</p> <p>The MSP’s contribution to strengthening employers is limited. Individual capacities strengthened by the MSP may contribute to strengthen their organisations, but knowledge transfer within the organisation after course graduation is generally limited. If the trained individual leaves the knowledge and skills are generally lost for the organisation. Besides, the application and transfer of new skills and knowledge by trained individuals is not systematic as their organisations do not always offer the necessary enabling environment. Besides the programme is steered towards alumni rather than employers. Embassies have expressed the need to work more closely with employers in order to plan a stronger use and transfer of new skills and to ensure that awarded scholarships contribute to strengthening organisations rather than individuals only. Notwithstanding, steering role of embassies cannot be overestimated because of limited capacities and resources.</p> <p>The MSP has indeed offered TMTs in countries where it was not possible to award scholarships</p>
H2	<p>The educational offer of NL training institutions and the cultural exchanges during the scholarships will contribute to increase public diplomacy</p>	<p>MSP scholarships have strengthened links between alumni and the Netherlands. Most alumni affirm that after their training their appreciation of Dutch people and culture got stronger and consider the organisation of society as a reference for their own countries. Alumni also highly appreciated the international classroom of their courses.</p>
H3	<p>Public diplomacy will be sustained through the organisation of Alumni events gathering trained Alumni to exchange ideas and values that support sustainable transition in the MENA region and the influence of the NL in the region</p>	<p>Alumni event help embassies to keep relationships with employers that participated in the programme. Embassies affirm that the MSP does help them access to information and key people through the MSP network of alumni. However, the survey conducted in the framework of the evaluation show that 54% of surveyed alumni claim they were never invited to attend an alumni activity. Embassies have very low resources for the organisation of alumni events and to develop a strategy for an efficient mobilisation of alumni</p> <p>The MSP’s results on public diplomacy can be enhanced through a better mobilisation of the alumni network. Embassies are also convinced that increasing the number of scholarships will have a greater impact on public diplomacy and organizational strengthening</p>

<p>H4</p>	<p>The relationship between citizens and the State will be changed through strengthened individuals and organisations able to use acquired skills and knowledge to support accountability of public institutions and to increase participation (of trained citizens) to the public debate.</p>	<p>The link between the impact of changing relationships between citizens and the state and the outcome of strengthening organisations and individuals is not fully verified. Several courses focus on themes that can contribute to changing the relationship between citizens and the state yet only a limited number of scholarships on these topics were awarded. These themes, as well as all courses offered through the programme, are not specifically tailored to the region or local demands. They might be most relevant to the needs of national NGOs and the private sector, but these only represent 11% and 10% of the total portfolio of awarded scholarships</p> <p>Only a limited number of interviewed alumni declared that the MSP training has given them more tools and opportunities to participate in and respond to the public debate</p>
<p>H5</p>	<p>Public diplomacy will support dialogue between the NL and the MENA region and help to establish a strong network in the region.</p>	<p>According to embassies public diplomacy is important to support dialogue between the NL and the MENA region and help to establish a strong network in the region, and the MSP does support public diplomacy to a certain extent</p>

9 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, the reviewers formulated the following recommendations for the MSP:

Recommendation 1

The MSP has positive effects, predominantly on individual capacity development. Continuing the scholarship programme fits the current focus of MoFA foreign policies on the MENA region and allows for visibility and impact on public diplomacy. Whether this is as a separate programme or as part of a larger global programme, should be discussed.

Responsibility: MoFA

Recommendation 2

The programme should focus its objectives on strengthening public diplomacy and (individual and organisational) capacity development in the MENA region, taking into account different target groups and country priorities. The objective to specifically contribute to sustainable transition needs to be reconsidered.

Responsibility: MoFA

Recommendation 3

In comparison to individual scholarships, Tailor-Made Trainings (TMTs) increase the contribution to organisational capacity building and will allow for adaptation to country and organisation specific needs. Currently, TMTs are only available for 3 countries. It should be considered to make TMTs available to all the MSP countries, taking into account the demands for scholarships for short courses, the available budget and avoiding duplication with other instruments that offer TMTs through the Shiraka programme, such as the Shiraka Training Programme managed by RVO.

Responsibility: MoFA & programme administrator

Recommendation 4

In order to increase the results of the programme for the employers of the participants (so not on the participants themselves), the programme should draft and implement a more (country-) tailored promotion strategy that seeks increased involvement of employers in the identification of suitable candidates.

Responsibility: Programme administrator and embassies

Recommendation 5

The programme should increase knowledge sharing between its programme administrator and the embassies to improve the visibility and use of the programme for public diplomacy.

Responsibility: Programme administrator and embassies

Recommendation 6

The programme should draft a clear alumni policy.

Responsibility: Programme administrator

Recommendation 7

The gender target of 50% at programme level has led to good involvement of women, but also to large differences in women participation between countries. It should be considered to add minimum requirements on gender equality (for both men and women) at country level.

Responsibility: Programme administrator

Appendix A Evaluation matrix

Evaluation matrix for questions requiring descriptive answers

#	Evaluation criteria and link to the Theory of change	Evaluation questions	Revision	Evaluation sources
1a		What has been the policy of the ministry with respect to the MSP and which have been the arguments, problems, intervention logic and assumptions on which it is based? What have been the policy changes over time and what explains these changes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sub questions: How is the rationale of the programme operationalized in/supported by consultation, coordination, focus on target group and courses, alignment with other scholarship programmes? What are possible factors explaining changes over the years? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and policy documents drafted by MOFA relating to MSP • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (MOFA and Nuffic) • Interviews with Dutch Embassies in the MENA region • Overall analysis of research data
1b		<p>What is the relationship of the MSP with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the overall Shiraka programme, - the Dutch overall foreign policy vis-à-vis the MENA region - the Netherlands Fellowship programme (NFP) and fellowship programmes of other countries that specifically target the MENA region¹⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sub question: How are these relations coordinated and sustained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and policy documents drafted by MOFA relating to the Shiraka programme and the foreign policy in the MENA region • Scoping interviews (MOFA, Nuffic and RVO)
1c		In what way has the MSP policy been translated into specific choices for eligible countries, eligibility and selection criteria for participants and the courses in which they can participate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sub questions: Which countries participated over time? What have been the reasons for the selection of these countries? What explains changes in this selection and how did it effect MSP? What are the selection criteria for eligible fields of study? How are they formulated and maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (MOFA and Nuffic) • Interviews with Dutch Embassies in the MENA region • Interviews with Dutch training institutions

¹⁷ As agreed with the client this evaluation question was not assessed.

			<p>How has the overall MSP policy/objectives been translated into selection criteria for scholars? Does it allow for targeting the right audience?</p> <p>Are the MSP policy/objectives translated into a tailored course offer?</p> <p>Are eligibility criteria supported and maintained by an adequate selection procedure? Has this procedure changed over time and what explains these changes? Have changes led to a more efficient and effective selection process?</p> <p>When and why were TMTs introduced to the programme and what are the reasons to opt for this modality instead of individual scholarships? Do specific choices for eligible countries, eligibility and selection criteria for participants and the courses differ for TMTs and why?</p>	
2a	<p>Effectiveness: To what extent have the objectives of activities and outputs of the MSP Theory of change been achieved?</p>	<p>Over the years, what has been the distribution of the scholarships by country, gender, training programme, and institutions in the Netherlands, types of employers? Has this distribution changed over time and if so, what explains this?</p>	<p>- Sub question: What are possible factors explaining changes over the years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (MOFA and Nuffic) • Overall analysis of research data
4a	<p>Effectiveness/Enhancing relations To what extent have MSP alumni activities been able to lead to increased public diplomacy?</p>	<p>Outputs: How has the MSP-alumni policy been shaped since 2013? What activities have been undertaken over the years and by whom?</p>	<p>- Sub questions: How are MSP alumni integrated/linked to the Holland Alumni Network? Are specific objectives drafted for MSP alumni? Are there alumni activities that are specifically targeted at MSP alumni? Is there a separate funding scheme for MSP alumni activities? What is the division of roles and responsibilities of actors involved in the implementation of MSP Alumni activities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (Nuffic) • Interviews with Dutch Embassies in the MENA region
5a	<p>Efficiency: How efficient were the outputs in relation to the inputs? To what extent have management, coordination and accountability agreements and tools supported the objectives of the programme?</p>	<p>What has been the division of responsibilities between ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nuffic, Dutch higher education institutions and Dutch embassies in the implementation of the programme? How is this division of responsibilities assessed between the different stakeholders?</p>	<p>- Sub questions: How have agreements been established on the distribution of roles and responsibilities (management, coordination and accountability) between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nuffic, NL training institutions and the Dutch Embassies in MENA countries. Do all parties interpret and manage these agreements in an equal way and are divergences in interpretation mitigated?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (MOFA and Nuffic) • Interviews with Dutch Embassies in MENA countries • Interviews with Dutch training institutions

			<p>Is communication between all parties fluid and effective and decision-making fast?</p> <p>Are all parties satisfied with their role?</p>	
5d		<p>What have been the costs of MSP implementation and management (at the level of both Nuffic and the Dutch higher education institutions)?</p> <p>What changes in management costs can be observed and what explains these changes?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (MOFA and Nuffic) • Interviews with Dutch training institutions

Evaluation matrix: qualitative and quantitative indicators

#	Evaluation criteria and link to the Theory of change	Evaluation questions	Qualitative indicators	Quantitative indicators	Evaluation source
1d	<p>Relevance/Policy:</p> <p>How consistent is the implementation of the MSP with the overall expected outcomes and impacts and the MSP Theory of change?</p>	<p>Does the implementation of the MSP allow for contribution to the overall Shiraka aim of sustainable transition in MENA countries?</p> <p>- Does this differ among countries, training programmes, gender?</p> <p>What is the evidence and which factors have been of influence in this respect?</p>	<p>Composition of the educational offer and participation of trainees among countries and gender</p> <p>Views of alumni and employers on the contribution of their participation in MSP to sustainable transition in MENA countries aggregated by country, training programme and gender (however not likely to get objective answers)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Interviews with alumni and employers • Interviews with Dutch Embassies in MENA countries
2b	<p>Effectiveness:</p> <p>To what extent have the objectives of activities and outputs of the MSP Theory of change been achieved?</p>	<p>Did recruitment and selection criteria, procedures, advice, etc. indeed lead to the nomination of the candidates that the MSP aspires for?</p> <p>- Did the programme succeed in the ambition to nominate 50% women? Did this differ between countries?</p> <p>- If not, what were the main reasons?</p>	<p>Views on the profile of the selected candidates given the eligibility and selection criteria.</p> <p>Views on recruitment methods used to reach targeted MSP candidates.</p>	<p># of selected scholars that meet MSP criteria. Distribution over time (2013-2017).</p> <p>% of female selected candidates per country and field of study. Distribution over time (2013-2017).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (Nuffic) • Interviews with Dutch Embassies in MENA countries • Interviews with Dutch training institutions

3a	<p>Effectiveness/ Capacity building of individuals and organisations</p> <p>To what extent were the expected outcomes in terms of individual and organisational capacity building achieved?</p>	<p>Outputs:</p> <p>Did the trainee/alumni complete their training according to plan? Which problems have occurred and how were these addressed?</p> <p>How do they assess the quality of the training?</p> <p>To what extent was the training relevant and useful for their daily work?</p>	<p>Are academic/professional background of trainees sufficient for effective participation in the trainings?</p> <p>Is the language knowledge of the trainees sufficient for effective participation in the trainings?</p> <p>Did female trainees encounter specific problems for effective participation in the trainings? What measures were taken to ensure successful attendance?</p>	<p>% of trainees/alumni that completed their training programmes broken down according to country, gender, field of study</p> <p>% of positive assessments of alumni of quality and content of trainings by alumni (scale 1-4)</p> <p>% of positive assessments of alumni of the usefulness of trainings for their daily work and professional development (scale 1-4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (Nuffic) • Interviews with alumni • Interviews with Dutch training institutions • MSP alumni survey
3b		<p>Outcomes/results:</p> <p>What influence did participation in the training have on professional and personal development?</p> <p>Upon completion of their training, did the trainee return to their original employer and in positions in which they have been able to make use of their new knowledge and skills?</p> <p>In what way was this done and are alumni satisfied about results? What is the link with the central aims of the Shiraka programme?</p> <p>Are employers of the alumni satisfied with the new knowledge and skills of their employees and the way they have made use of their knowledge and skills?</p>	<p>Views of alumni on the impact (“what did it bring you”) the programme and their visit to the Netherlands had on themselves and their surroundings</p> <p>Views of alumni on if and how they used the training content for professional and personal development</p> <p>Views of alumni on if their position allowed them to make use of their new knowledge and skills</p> <p>Views of employers on the quality of the knowledge and skills acquired by their employees and the way they made use of it in their daily work</p>	<p>% of Alumni that returned to their original employer in the same position or a position with more responsibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Interviews with alumni and employers • MSP alumni and employers survey
4b	<p>Effectiveness/Enhancing relations</p> <p>To what extent have MSP alumni activities been able to lead to increased public diplomacy?</p>	<p>Outcomes/results:</p> <p>What have been the results of MSP alumni activities so far?</p>	<p>Views of alumni on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how alumni activities facilitate relation enhancement between alumni and Dutch organisations - achieved tangible results (alumni involvement in projects, active collaboration, etc.) 	<p># of MSP alumni activities 2013-2017</p> <p># of active local MSP alumni associations.</p> <p># MSP alumni members per local alumni associations</p> <p># of parties involved in alumni activities (alumni and Dutch organisations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Interviews with alumni • MSP alumni survey

				<p># of MSP alumni that are member of Dutch institutional alumni associations</p> <p># of MSP alumni included in embassy contact database</p>	
5b	<p>Efficiency: How efficient were the outputs in relation to the inputs? To what extent have management, coordination and accountability agreements and tools supported the objectives of the programme?</p>	<p>How does embassy staff assess the time spent on the recruitment of candidates and rendering advice on these candidates?</p> <p>Has this changed since the introduction of automated systems by Nuffic?</p>		<p># of embassies that manage a time-registration system for their MSP activities</p> <p>Time (hours p/w) spent on the recruitment of candidates</p> <p>Time (hours p/w) spent on rendering advice</p> <p>Time (hours p/w) saved since the introduction of automated systems by Nuffic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Interviews with NL Embassies in MENA countries
5c		<p>How is the quality of the advice provided by the embassies and overall programme management by Nuffic assessed?</p>	<p>Views of relevant stakeholders on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advice provided by the Embassies in view of selection of trainees? - differences in advice provided among embassies? <p>Views of relevant stakeholders on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme management by Nuffic in view of the contract agreements? - changes and innovations in programme management implemented by Nuffic - compliance with reporting obligations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping interviews (MOFA and Nuffic) • Interviews with Dutch training institutions • Interviews with Dutch Embassies in MENA countries
5d		<p>Are the costs of MSP implementation and management (at the level of both Nuffic and the Dutch higher education institutions) reasonable in relation to the overall MSP budget?</p>		<p>Cost of NL training institutions for the educational offer to the MSP programme</p> <p>Overall MSP budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and M&E documents relating to MSP • Scoping interviews (MOFA and Nuffic)

Appendix B ToR Evaluation

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Middle East and North Africa Scholarship programme (MSP)

(date 13 November 2017)

• Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa Scholarship programme (MSP) is an initiative of the Netherlands ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since 2016, the MSP is financed within the framework of the so-called Shiraka-programme (Netherlands-Arabic partnership)¹⁸, that is part of the Dutch Fund for Regional Partnerships (*Nederlands Fonds voor Regionale Partnerschappen (NFRP)*). In the years 2013-2015, the MSP was funded from the predecessor of the Shiraka programme, Matra-South. Both programmes aim at supporting transition in the entire Arab region. Shiraka aims to support a sustainable transition in the Arab region that eventually leads to:

- Pluralism, whereby cultural and religious differences are accepted and there is a certain degree of inclusivity
- A rule of law that offers protection to citizens, human rights and minorities
- Favourable conditions for creating economic growth and employment opportunities.

Within the ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department for North Africa and the Middle East (DAM) is responsible for both the Shiraka and MSP programmes.

• MSP aims and characteristics

The MSP programme aims to contribute to a sustainable transition in the Arab region through capacity building of mid-career professionals who are employed in government, NGOs or the private sector in countries in the MENA-region. By granting scholarships it enables these professionals to follow short-term courses in several topics such as *Law, Public Administration, Public order and Safety, Humanities, Social sciences, Communication and Arts, Agriculture, Water management, Environment*.

As much as possible, the MSP fellows are distributed evenly among the participating countries, i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran (since November 2017), Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Syria and Tunisia.

Ideally, 50% of the fellowships is granted to women. Annually an average of 140 scholarships is granted. Exceptions are 2013 and 2015 when more funding was available. The number of fellowships granted in the period 2013-2015 was as follows: 2013: 161; 2014: 144; 2015: 172; 2016: 146; and 2017: 111 (by December 2017, the final number will be known). A total of some 570 scholarships were granted since February 2014, i.e. the start of MSP-II.

Since 2016, the programme has two modalities: short courses for individuals and tailor-made trainings (TMT) for specific target groups. Such TMTs have so far been undertaken in Algeria, Oman and Libya. The evaluation will consider the experience with this instrument.

¹⁸ Other instruments within the Shiraka programme are: (i) support for local initiatives; (ii) capacity development of political parties; (iii) government to government cooperation and (iv) training of civil servants and young diplomats.

In addition to the above, the MSP is also intended as an instrument for public diplomacy, to be used by Netherlands' embassies in their respective MENA countries to strengthen Dutch relations with these countries. The expectation is that the experience of the fellows will enhance their views on the Netherlands as knowledge economy and contribute to a positive image. Also, the alumni policy within the framework of the MSP can contribute to enhancing and maintaining such image.

For MSP-programme management in the period July 2013-December 2015 a contract was signed between the minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and Nuffic on 22 June 2013. This contract was first extended to 30 June 2017 and most recently to 1 July 2019.

- **Evaluation aims**

DAM considers that it is time for an evaluation of the MSP. It sees this evaluation as an opportunity to look back on the instrumental use of the programme, its implementation and results and on the way in which it has been managed by Nuffic. Overall aim is to obtain insight into the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the MSP as an instrument to:

- Promote sustainable transition in the MENA region
- Contribute to capacity development in the MENA region
- Strengthen Dutch relationships with these countries.

The evaluation also aims to obtain insight into the implementation of the MSP and its management by Nuffic in the period 2013 – end 2017.

On the basis of the outcomes and recommendations of the evaluation, DAM will review how to shape a future scholarship programme after 1 July 2019, the date on which the current MSP comes to an end. The evaluation is finally an instrument to account for the use of funds from the ministry's budget (approximately 1 million a year) in the period 2013 – 2017.

- **Key evaluation questions**

- **Policy**

- What has been the policy of the ministry with respect to the MSP and which have been the arguments, problems, intervention logic and assumptions on which it is based? What have been the policy changes over time and what explains these changes?
- What is the relationship of the MSP with the overall Shiraka (and MATRA South) programme and the Dutch overall foreign policy vis-à-vis the MENA region?
- In what way has the MSP policy been translated into specific choices for eligible countries, eligibility and selection criteria for participants and the courses in which they can participate?
- How does the MSP relate to the regular Netherlands Fellowship programme (NFP) and fellowship programmes of other countries that specifically target the MENA region?

- **Relevance**

- What is known of the contribution the MSP makes to the overall Shiraka aim of sustainable transition in a selection of MENA countries? Does this differ among countries, training programme, gender? What is the evidence and which factors have been of influence in this respect?

As regards possible factors, the evaluation is expected to look into the context of the different MENA countries in which the MSP operates, the choices made in the selection of candidates and their employers, the trainings in which they participated, the attention for specific Shiraka topics in these trainings (such as attention for pluralism, acceptance of cultural and religious differences, the rule of law, etc.).

- **Effectiveness**

- Over the years, what has been the distribution of the scholarships by country, gender, training programme, and institutions in the Netherlands, types of employers? Has this distribution changed

- over time and if so, what explains this?
- Did recruitment and selection criteria, procedures, advice, etc. indeed lead to the nomination of the candidates that the MSP aspires for?
- Did the programme succeed in the ambition to nominate 50% women? Did this differ between countries? If not, what were the main reasons?

Individual and institutional capacity building

- Did the fellows/alumni complete their training according to plan? Which problems have occurred and how were these addressed?
- How do they assess the quality of the training? What influence did participation in the training have on their professional and personal development? To what extent was the training relevant and useful for their daily work?
- Upon completion of their training, did the fellows return to their original employer and in positions in which they have been able to make use of their new knowledge and skills? In what way was this done and are alumni satisfied about the results? What is the link with the central aims of the Shiraka programme as outlined above?
- Are employers of the alumni satisfied with the new knowledge and skills of their employees and the way they have been made use of their knowledge and skills? What is the link with the central aims of the Shiraka programme as outlined above?

Enhancing relations

- How has the MSP-alumni policy been shaped since 2013? What activities have been undertaken over the years, by whom and what results did this produce so far?
- **Efficiency**
- What has been the division of responsibilities between ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nuffic, Dutch higher education institutions and the Netherlands embassies in the implementation of the programme? How is this division of responsibilities assessed between the different stakeholders?
- How does embassy staff assess the time spent on the recruitment of candidates and rendering advice on these candidates? Has this changed since the introduction of automated systems by Nuffic?
- How is the quality of the advice provided by the embassies and overall programme management by Nuffic assessed?
- What have been the costs of MSP implementation and management (at the level of both Nuffic and the Dutch higher education institutions)? Are these costs reasonable in relation to the overall MSP budget? What changes in management costs can be observed and what explains these changes?
- **Lessons learned**
- On the basis of the evaluation finding, what are the main lessons learned for future MSP policy and policy implementation?

- **Scope**

The evaluation covers the period 2013-2017. It covers the entire group of eligible MENA countries as mentioned above.

- **Approach and methodology**

The evaluation will use the following qualitative research instruments.

Desk study of written information and reports including in particular:

- MSP annual reports prepared by Nuffic (2013-2017); in case the 2017 annual report is not yet available, Nuffic will provide the required statistics on the programme.
- MSP data on scholarships, alumni (Nuffic database, Nuffic MSP inception report (2014) and selection reports)

- MSP related internal Nuffic reports (e.g. the internal Mid-Term Review of the MSPI and MSPII Programmes, Report Ad Boeren, Expertise Department, EP-Nuffic, December 2015)
- Recent evaluation reports on the Netherlands Fellowship Programme and, possibly, other fellowship programmes of other countries specifically aimed at the MENA region
- MSP Embassy needs assessment report (2017). In case earlier reports are available, these will be shared with the evaluators.
- Files of the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition, **semi-structured interviews** will be conducted. The interview lists developed for the most recent evaluation of the NFP will provide a basis for these interviews. Interviews will be done partly by Skype/telephone, partly face-to-face and will be conducted with:

- Staff of the ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hague (DAM, DSO)
- MSP contact persons at the Dutch embassies in the MSP MENA countries
- Staff of Nuffic and of Dutch higher education institutions that are involved in the implementation of the MSP
- A number of fellows who are in the Netherlands at the time of the evaluation (the exact number is to be determined in the inception phase (see below)). This group of interviewees will be as representative as is feasible in terms of country of origin, gender, training programme.

Short **field visits** to a selection of countries are also foreseen. This country selection is to be made in the inception phase taking into account elements such as number of alumni by country, security situation, etc. During the field visit, focus groups sessions will be held with alumni. Interviews will be conducted with their employers and representatives of the Dutch embassies.

• **Organisation**

External consultants will be contracted for undertaking the evaluation. The consultant will be required to propose a small team of experienced evaluators (2-3 persons maximum). Long-term experience in undertaking qualitative evaluations in the area of capacity development is a must; experience in conducting evaluations of fellowship programmes is an advantage. The consultant needs to make sure that the necessary Dutch language skills are present in the team.

In doing their research, the consultants will closely collaborate with both Nuffic and the ministry of Foreign Affairs, without jeopardizing their independence. Both Nuffic and the ministry will ensure that the consultants will be provided with the necessary information and contacts in a timely manner.

• **Products**

Ten days after the start of the assignment, the consultant will present an *inception report*. Based on the consultant's technical proposal, this report will provide further details and clarifications on research methodology and planning.

By the end of their research, the consultant will present a draft final report to the ministry of Foreign Affairs in which the research questions are answered. The report will be reviewed by and discussed with staff of the ministry of Foreign Affairs (DAM, IOB) and Nuffic. On the basis of this discussion, the report will be further adapted if needed and finalised. The final evaluation report will be submitted to the ministry of Foreign Affairs (DAM).

Appendix C Documents consulted

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DAM. Policy framework of the Shiraka Programme. Undated.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DAM. Background document MSP. Undated.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DAM. Theory of Change of the Shiraka Programme. Undated.
- Minister of Foreign Affairs. Letter to Parliament regarding the evaluation of Matra pre-accession and Matra for the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the new policy framework of Matra 2016-2020. 2016.
- Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken. Staatscourant (MENA Scholarship programme 2017-2019). 2017.
- Minister of Foreign Affairs. Letter to Parliament regarding the Shiraka programme in the Arab region. 2016.
- EP-Nuffic. Internal mid-term review of the NFP II and MSPII programmes. 2015.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship Programme Annual Report 2013. 2014.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship Programme Annual Report 2014. 2015.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship Programme Annual Report 2015. 2016.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship Programme Annual Report 2016. 2017.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship Programme Annual Report 2017. 2018.
- Nuffic. Financial report of MSP 2014. 2015.
- Nuffic. Financial report of MSP 2015. 2016.
- Nuffic. Financial report of MSP 2016. 2017.
- Nuffic. Financial report of MSP 2017. 2018.
- Evaluation of the MSP alumni event in Jordan. 2016.
- Nuffic. MSP Embassy needs assessment report. 2017.
- AIV. Reforms in the Arab region: prospects for democracy and the rule of law? 2011.
- Nuffic. MSP information for applicants. Undated.
- Nuffic. Grant Conditions MENA Scholarship Programme. 2018.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship programme (MSP) Assessment questions. Undated.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship programme (MSP) Country focus overview. 2019.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship programme (MSP) Obligations for MSP scholarship holders. 2018.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship programme (MSP) Procedure aanmelden opleidingen. 2018.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship programme (MSP) Short application and selection guide. 2019.
- Nuffic. MENA Scholarship programme (MSP) Financial rules and regulations for MSP-TMT grants. 2018.

Appendix D List of interviews and focus groups

D.1 MSP programme stakeholders

	Organisation	Name of Interviewee	Function	Date of interviewee
Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Dutch Embassies	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directie Noord-Afrika en Midden-Oosten)	Lidy Navis Bert Meijerman Tsjaerd Hoekstra	Senior policy officer	17 September 2018
	Dutch embassy in Algeria	Ghana Ferria Lamine Sadji Sjoerd den Ouden	Personal assistant of the ambassador in charge of MSP Economist Intern in charge of MSP follow-up	11 February 2019
	Dutch embassy in Egypt	Jeroen-Louis Martens Walaa Dahab Salma KamalEl-Fawal Marwa Hussein Sally Barsoum	Deputy Head Economic Department & First Secretary Economic Affairs Management Assistant Project Manager & Policy Officer Senior Trade Advisor Public Diplomacy & Media Affairs Officer	7 / 18 February 2019
	Dutch embassy in Iran	Naomi Yorks Angel Yazdankhah Michelle Damen	(senior) policy officers	27 February 2019
	Dutch embassy in Iraq	Afrah N. Shukur	PA/ Senior Management Assistant	12 February 2019
	Dutch embassy in Jordan	Naseem Atieh Rawan Daas Jemma Grayburn	Consular Department human rights officer education and employment officer	14 February 2019
	Dutch embassy in Lebanon	Vida Hamd	Education expert	21 February 2019
	Dutch embassy in Libya	Ahmed Shalghoum	Senior Policy Advisor	25 February 2019
	Dutch embassy in Oman	Marrieke van Oversteeg	Policy officer	26 February 2019
Dutch embassy in Tunisia	Adel Ouni	Deputy Head of Economic Department	25 February 2019	

MSP management	Nuffic	9.1.1 Charlene de Zoete	Programme manager	17 September 2019 11 March 2019
		9.1.2 Birgitte Vos		
Dutch training institutions	Maastricht School of Management	Manon Souren Dave Cass	Executive Education Officer Director Education and Executive Development	25 February 2019
	RNTC	Asmara Pelupessy	Account manager	26 February 2019
	The Hague Institute for Local Governance	Elma Jooste	Executive Education Officer	1 February 2019
	WUR CDI	Marianne van Dorp	Manager Business Development	12 February 2019
	IHE Delft	Mishka Stuip	Liaison Officer Bilateral Relations	via e-mail

D.2 Alumni and employers

In total, we have interviewed 52 alumni from all countries eligible for MSP, except for Syria. Additionally, we have conducted a focus group with 9 students from Oman during a TMT in the Netherlands on logistics. With employers we have only been able to conduct 6 interviews in 3 countries: Iraq (2), Jordan (1), and Lebanon (3). The employers do cover all categories of employer organisations. The figures below show the composition and background of the interviewees.

Figure 1 Gender of the interviewed alumni

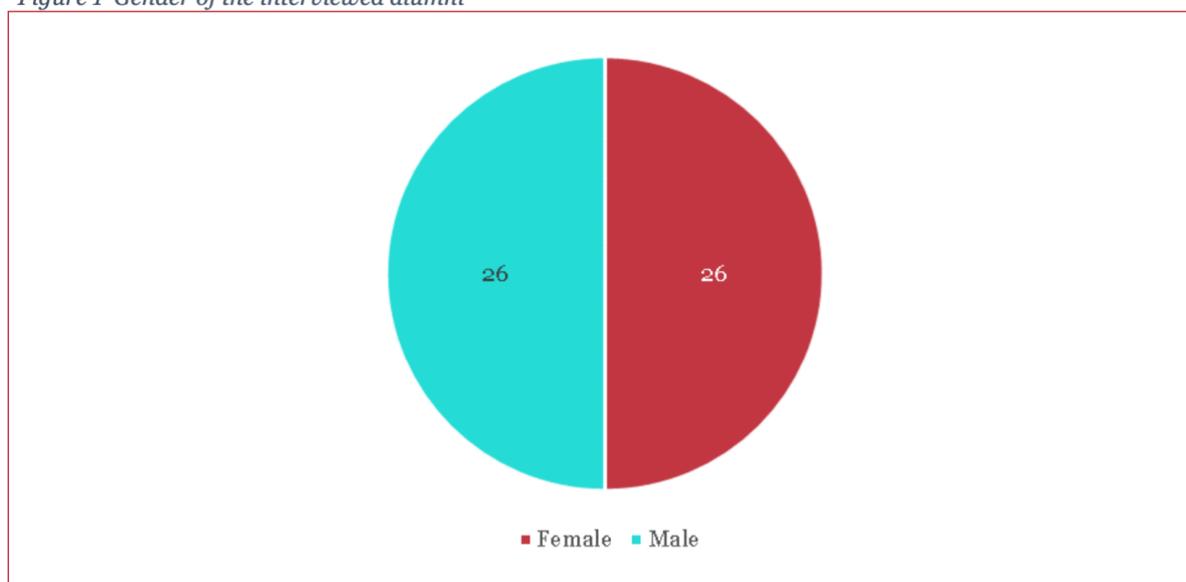


Figure 2 Type of organisations of the interviewed alumni and employers

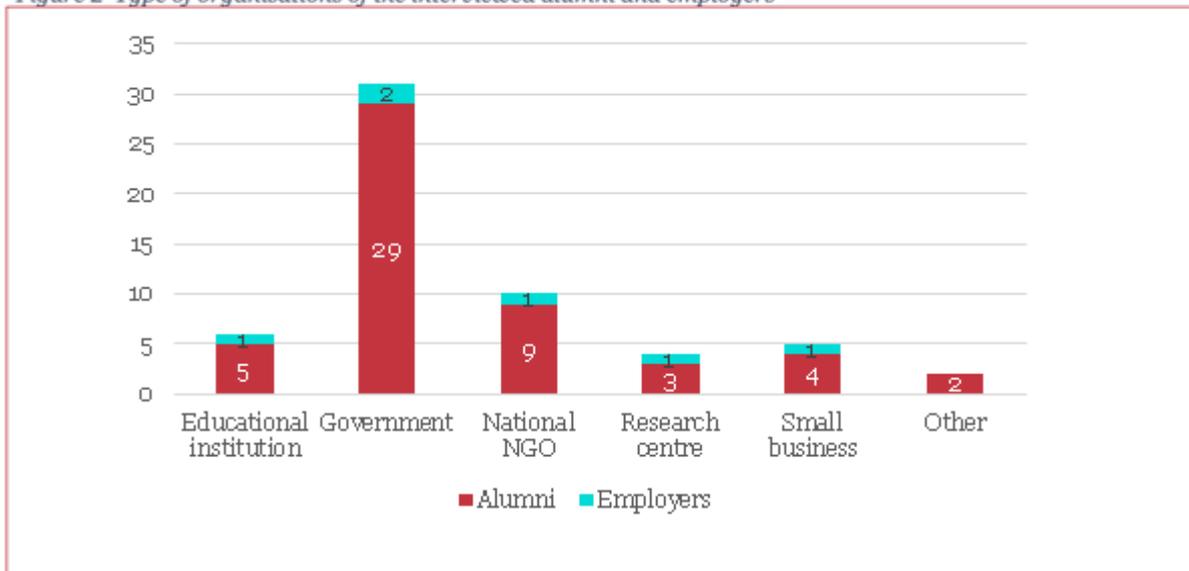


Figure 3 Thematic area of the MSP course of interviewed alumni and the employees of interviewed employers

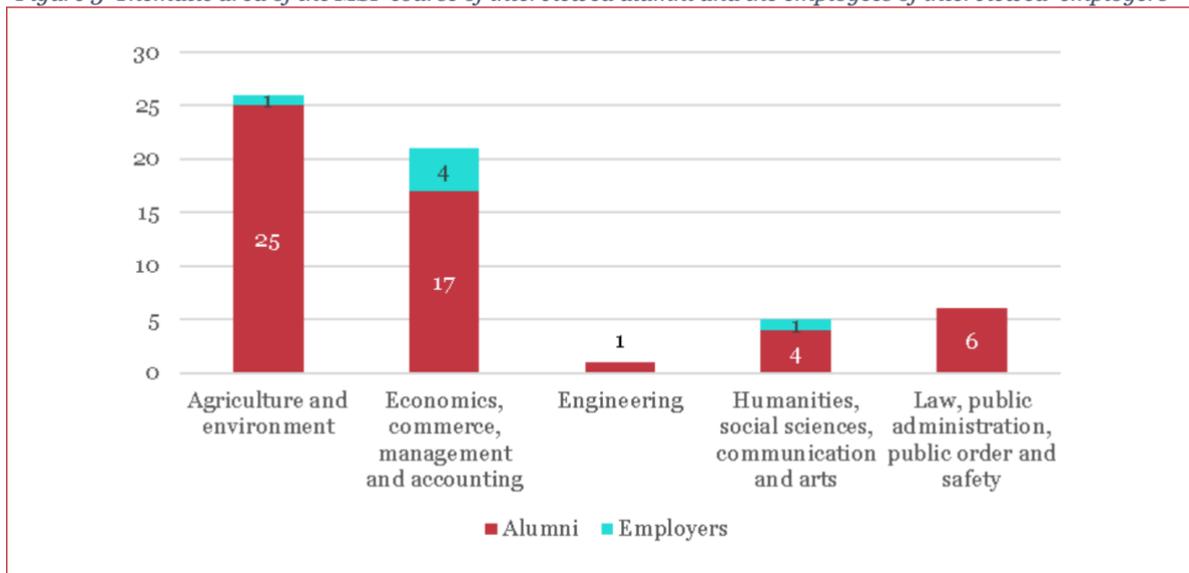
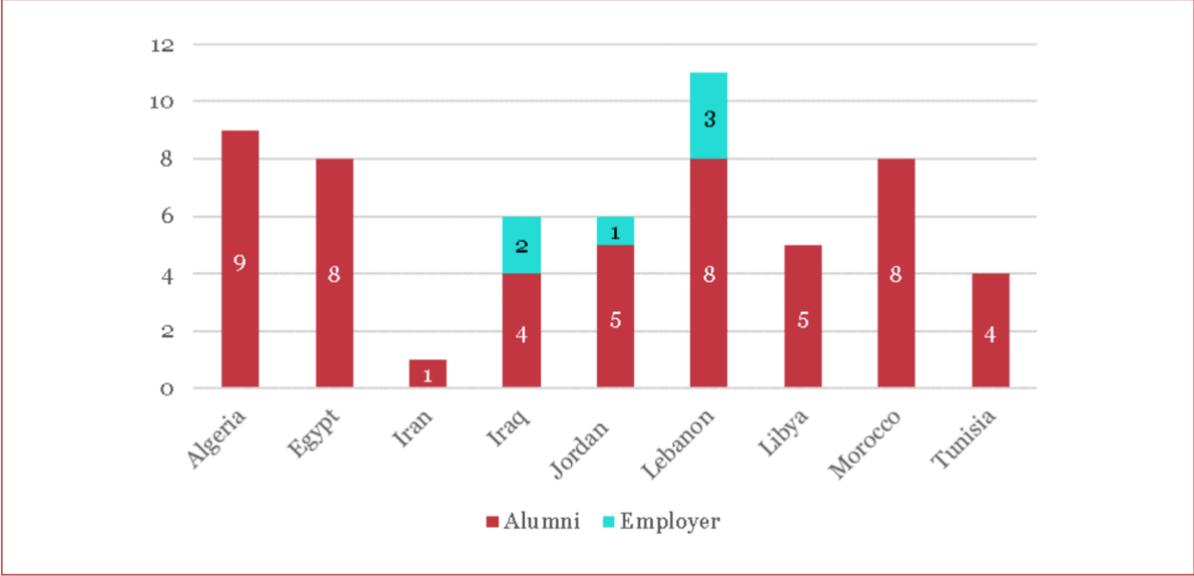


Figure 4 Country of the interviewed alumni and employers



Appendix E Summary of MSP survey results

The survey was sent out to 851 persons, 541 of which are alumni and 463 of which are their superiors who have acted as contact persons for the employing organisations (this list includes different contact persons from the same organisations). In total, we have received 225 completed responses of alumni (42%) and 46 completed responses of employers (10%). This represents a very high response rate for the alumni and a somewhat low response rate for the employers. The lower response rate for employers had been anticipated during the inception phase, in line with similar experiences in evaluations of scholarship programmes.

E.1 Selected results of the alumni survey questions

The regional distribution and gender of respondents was balanced. One of the objectives that has been met consistently since the introduction of Atlas, an even distribution of scholarships over men and women, was also achieved in the survey: 51% of alumni identified as man and 49% as woman. The alumni also had a representative regional distribution (see Figure 1). The distribution of alumni working, at the time of their nomination was most often at government (49%), followed by educational institutions (21%), NGOs (11%), research centers (10%) and small business (9%) (see Figure 2). Compared to the total population in the portfolio distribution (see 3.2.4.) this provides a representative sample.

Figure 1 In which country is the organisation located that nominated you for the scholarship? (n=225)

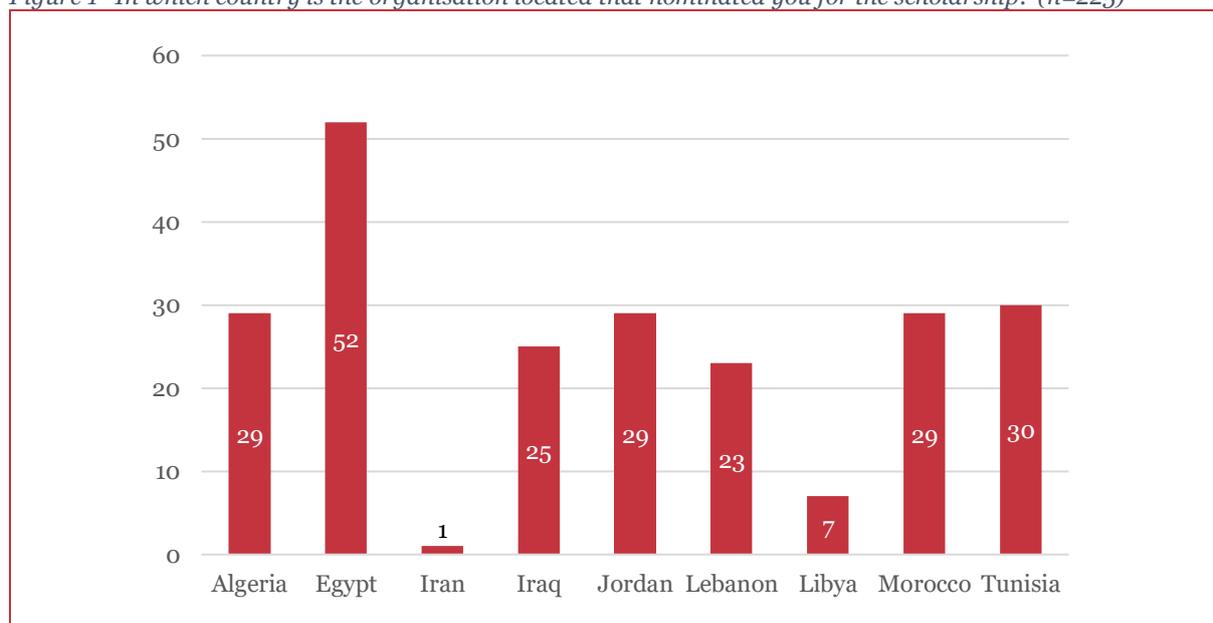
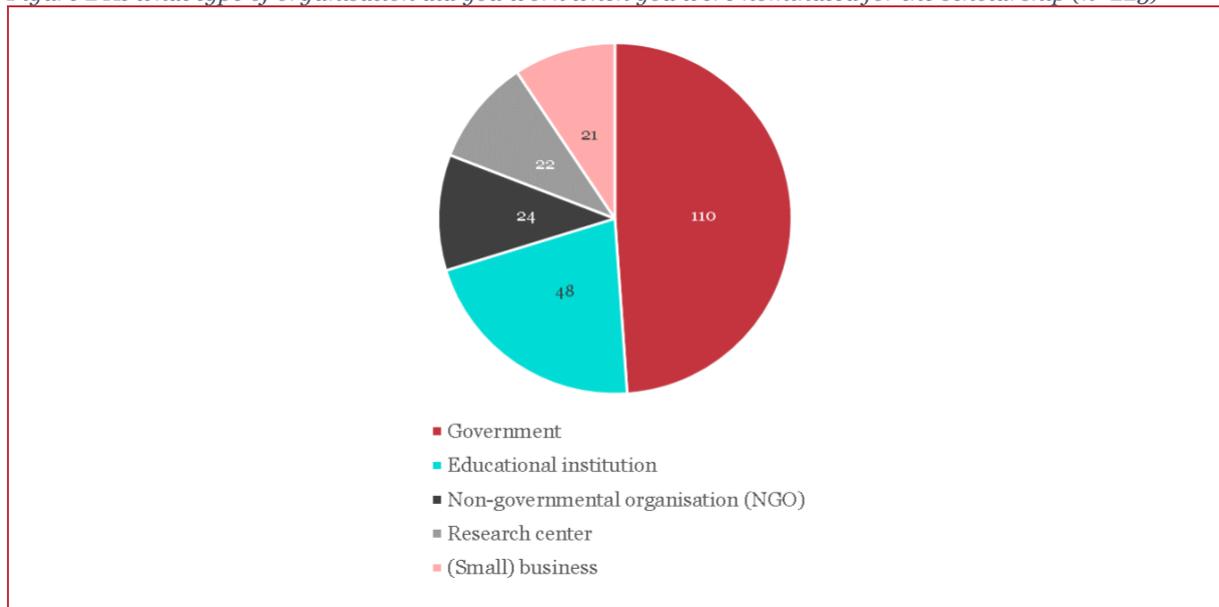


Figure 2 At what type of organisation did you work when you were nominated for the scholarship (n=225)



Assessment of the training

The experiences of the alumni with the trainings provided through the MSP were overwhelmingly positive according to this survey. Both in terms of the overall quality of the training (organisation, coordination, etc.) as on the content of the courses, alumni were very satisfied. The trainings are also regarded as useful for the daily work of the alumni.

Figure 3 How do you assess the training in terms of: (n=225)

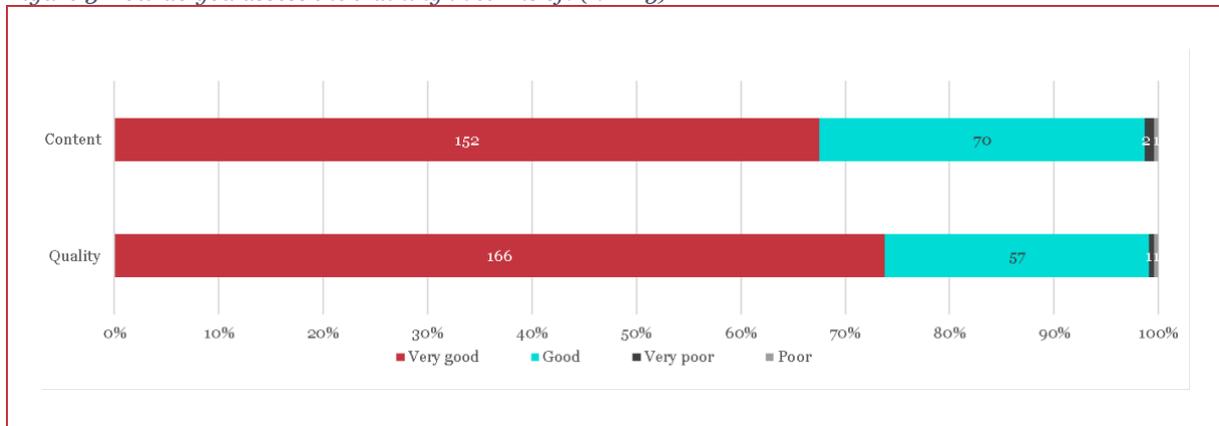
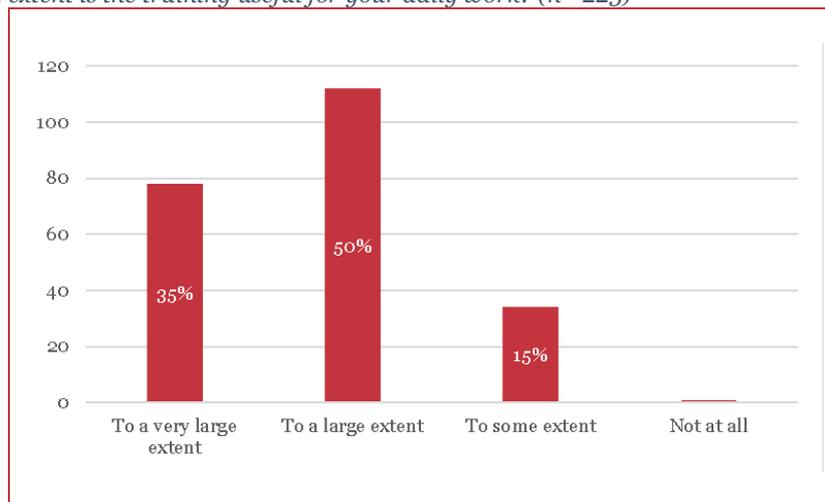


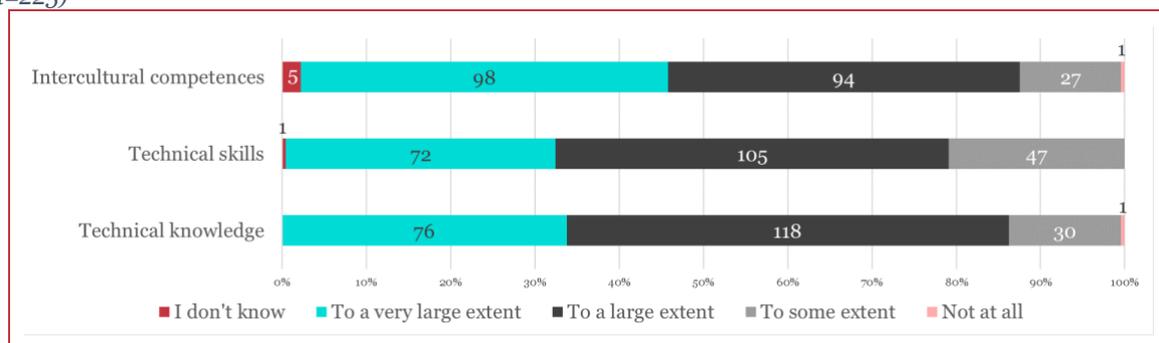
Figure 4 To what extent is the training useful for your daily work? (n= 225)



Professional development

A large majority of alumni found that the course provided a large or very large contribution to intercultural competences, technical skills and technical knowledge. The contribution to technical skills of alumni was rated slightly less favourably than the other two categories (see Figure 5).

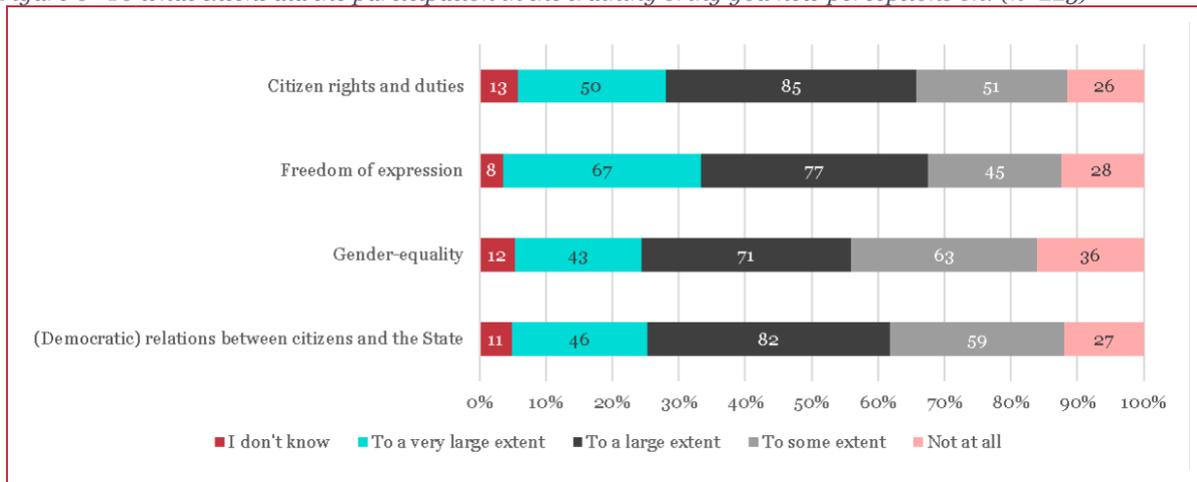
Figure 5 To what extent did the participation in the training contribute to your professional development as for: (n=225)



Personal development

To questions on whether the scholarship had brought new perceptions on citizen rights and duties, freedom of expression, gender-equality and the relations between citizens and the State, alumni responded ambiguously (see Figure 6). Between 34 and 44% of alumni responded that the training contributed to a small extent or not at all to new perceptions on these issues, with views on gender-equality changing the least through the MSP courses.

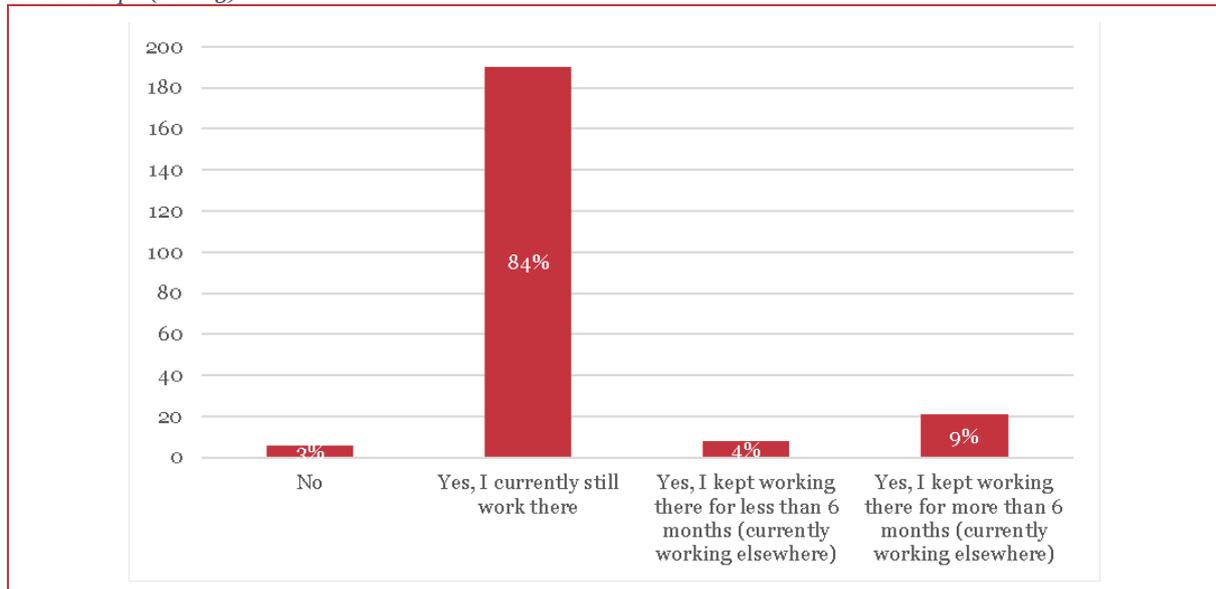
Figure 6 To what extent did the participation in the training bring you new perceptions on: (n=225)



Follow-up

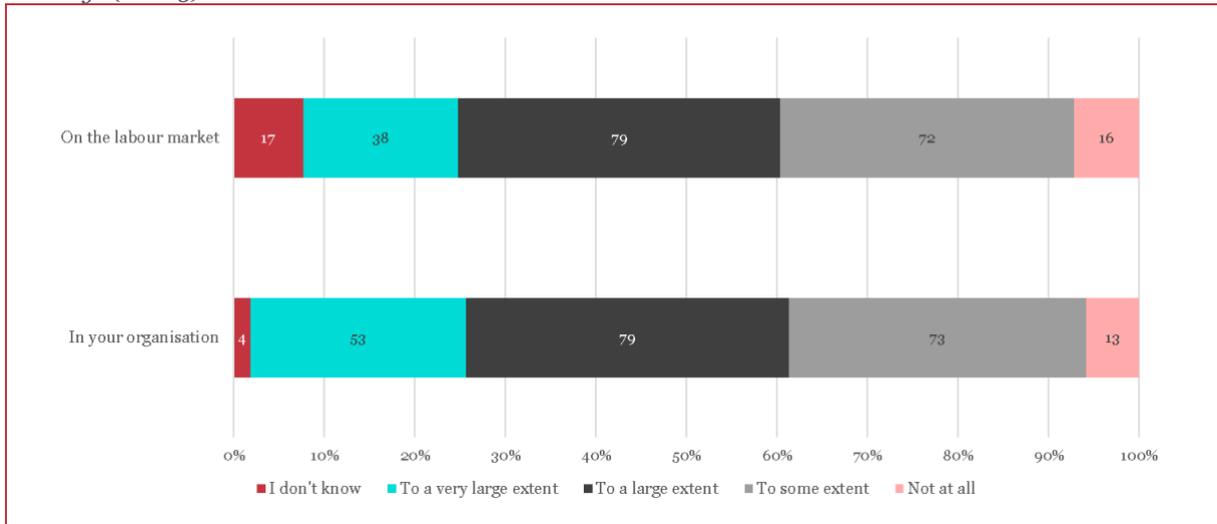
A large majority of respondents, 84% (190), still works for the same organisation that nominated him/her for an MSP course, and 9% kept working in the same organisation for at least 6 months after the MSP course. These results indicate a favourable condition for the implementation and dissemination in their organisations of the knowledge and skills gained by the alumni.

Figure 7 Upon completion of your training, did you return to your original employers that nominated you for the scholarship? (n=225)



Alumni were positive about how the MSP affected their career opportunities. A majority believes that, due to the MSP course, their career opportunities on the labour market have improved to a large or very large extent. The same counts for improved career opportunities within their own organisations.

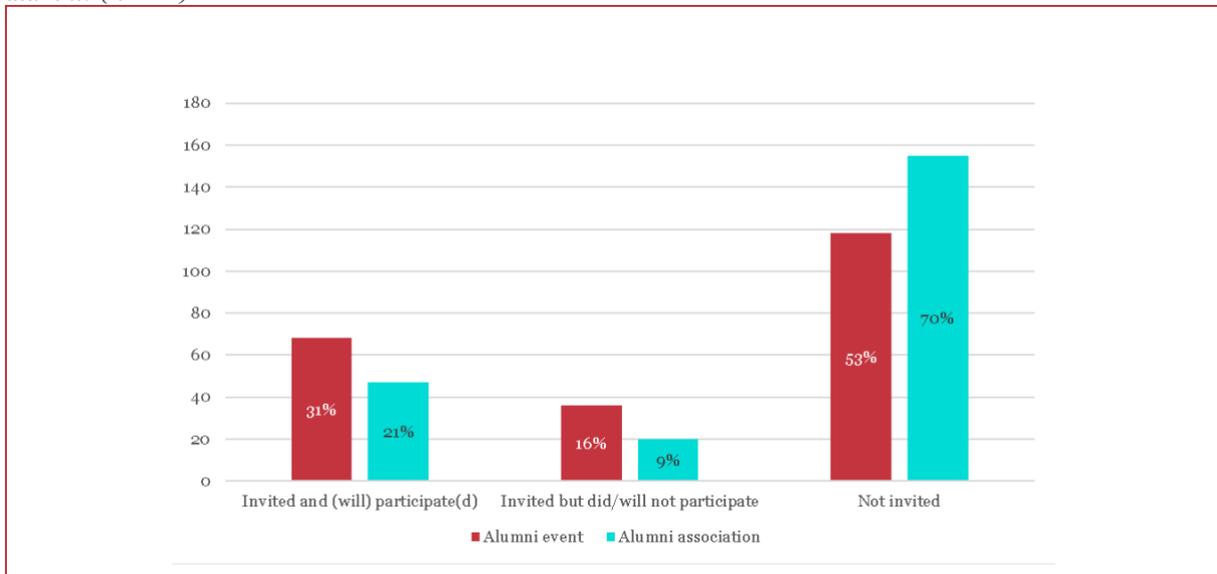
Figure 8 Do you believe that your career opportunities have improved as a result of your participation in the training? (n=225)



Alumni relations

Many alumni mention not having been invited for either a local alumni association (70%) or local alumni events (53%). 31% have been invited for alumni events and mention that they either have or will participate to the event. 16% were invited and but will not participate or have not participated. For the local alumni association, 21% mentions that they either will or have participated in the local alumni association and 9% that they do not (see Figure 9).

Figure 9 Since your training, were you invited and/or did you participate in any of the following activities for MSP alumni? (n=222)



Regarding contacts with other Dutch actors, only a small portion of respondents found that these had increased to a large extent due to the MSP course. A majority however has seen their contacts increase to some extent (see Figure 10). The alumni related the increase in contacts more to the training in the Netherlands than to the alumni events (see Figure 11).

Figure 10 Did your contacts with Dutch actors, both in your region as well as in the Netherlands, intensify after your training? (n=222)

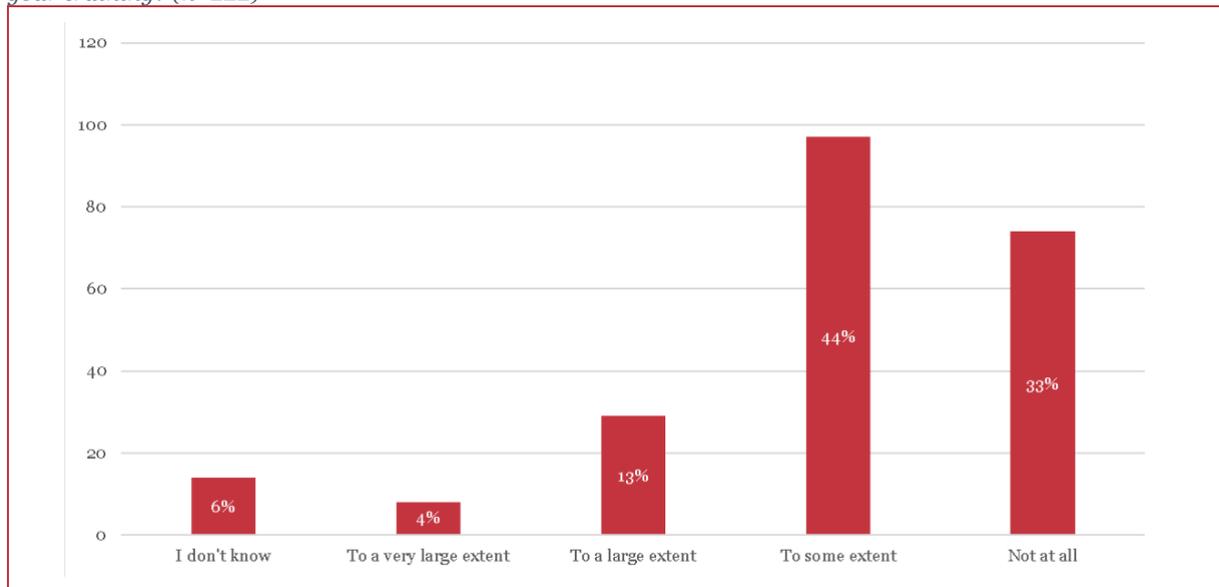
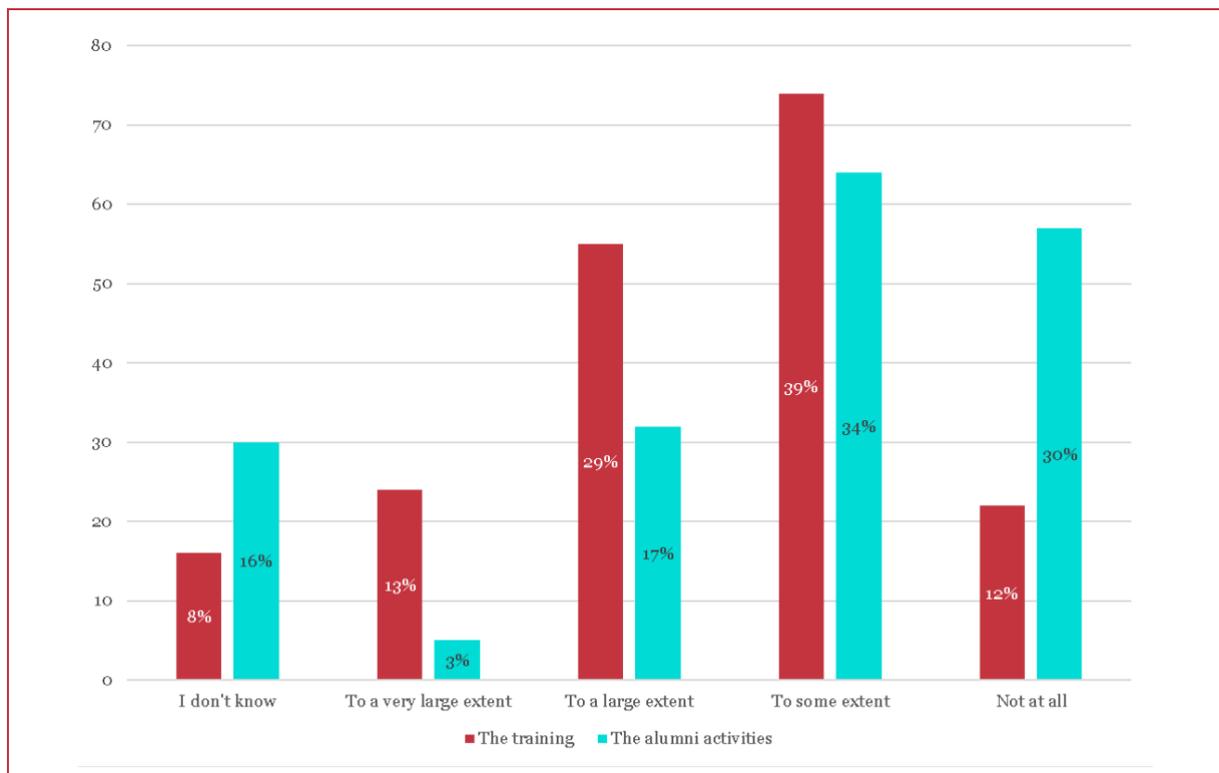


Figure 11 To what extent do you contribute the intensification of your contacts with Dutch actors following the MSP course to either the participation to the training itself (n=191) or to the subsequent MSP alumni activities (n=188).



E.2 Selected results of the employers survey questions

There was a balanced geographical representation of employers answering the survey (see Table 1). The response-rate however was low with only 10% or 46 out of 463. Therefore, not for all employer questions graphs or text has been produced.

Table 1 Country of employers

Country	Number of respondents
Algeria	10
Egypt	9
Iraq	3
Jordan	8
Lebanon	8
Morocco	3
Tunisia	5

Opinion on the added-value of MSP

A large majority of employees found that participation in the training contributed to a significant extent to technical knowledge, technical skills and intercultural competences (see Table 2).

Table 2 To what extent did the participation in the training contribute to professional development of your employee(s), as for: (n=46)

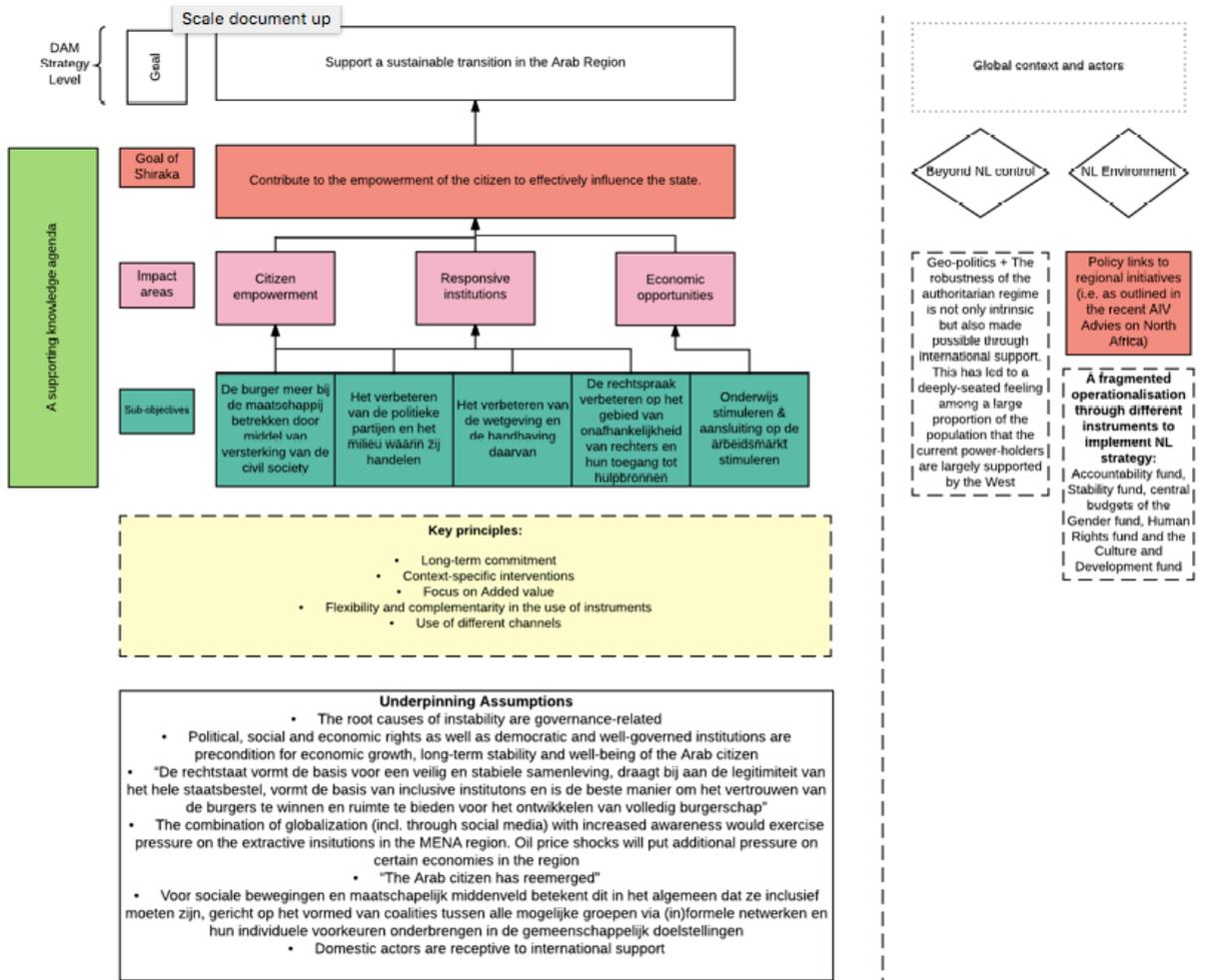
	Not at all	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	I don't know
Technical knowledge	2%	11%	61%	26%	0%
Technical skills	0%	20%	61%	15%	4%
Intercultural competences	0%	7%	41%	46%	0%

A majority of employers agreed to the statement as to whether employees had been able to make use of their new skills (see Table 3). Notwithstanding, a significant part of employers responded that employees had only been able to make use of the new skills to some extent. The employers considered their own role in facilitating the use of skills more positive. A majority found as well that they had facilitated the dissemination of skills towards other employees in their organisation.

Table 3 Application of new skills (n=46)

	Not at all	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent
Employee making use of new skills	2%	37%	37%	22%
Employer facilitating use	4%	24%	50%	22%
Employer facilitating dissemination	7%	35%	39%	20%

Appendix F Shiraka programme



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