

VER


& Vrij





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Vers & Vrij



Arna and Vers & Vrij fridge

Once a day, leftover freshly prepared meals are collected from affiliated catering establishments and healthcare institutions. Sealed in special Vers & Vrij storage containers, they are then placed in the refrigerators. Anyone who needs it can take one or more containers. In this way Vers & Vrij prevents food waste and helps many people who are (temporarily) in dire straits with a free fresh meal. Arna, as will be mentioned later, is the founder of Vers & Vrij.

The founding of Vers & Vrij was inspired by one of Arna's students. This student's neighbor placed a refrigerator at the door of his house. He put bread and leftovers in the refrigerator for nearby people in need for free. Arna viewed this good gesture as a way to combat food insecurity and food waste for the community, and decided to build Vers & Vrij to spread this idea.



Vers & Vrij fridge in a second-hand store



The meals are packaged with safety seals, with a shelf life and production date stamped on it

Volunteers are the main working team in Vers & Vrij. They are responsible for collecting food from food donors, cooking meals, distributing meals to the fridges, packaging everything and recycling as well.

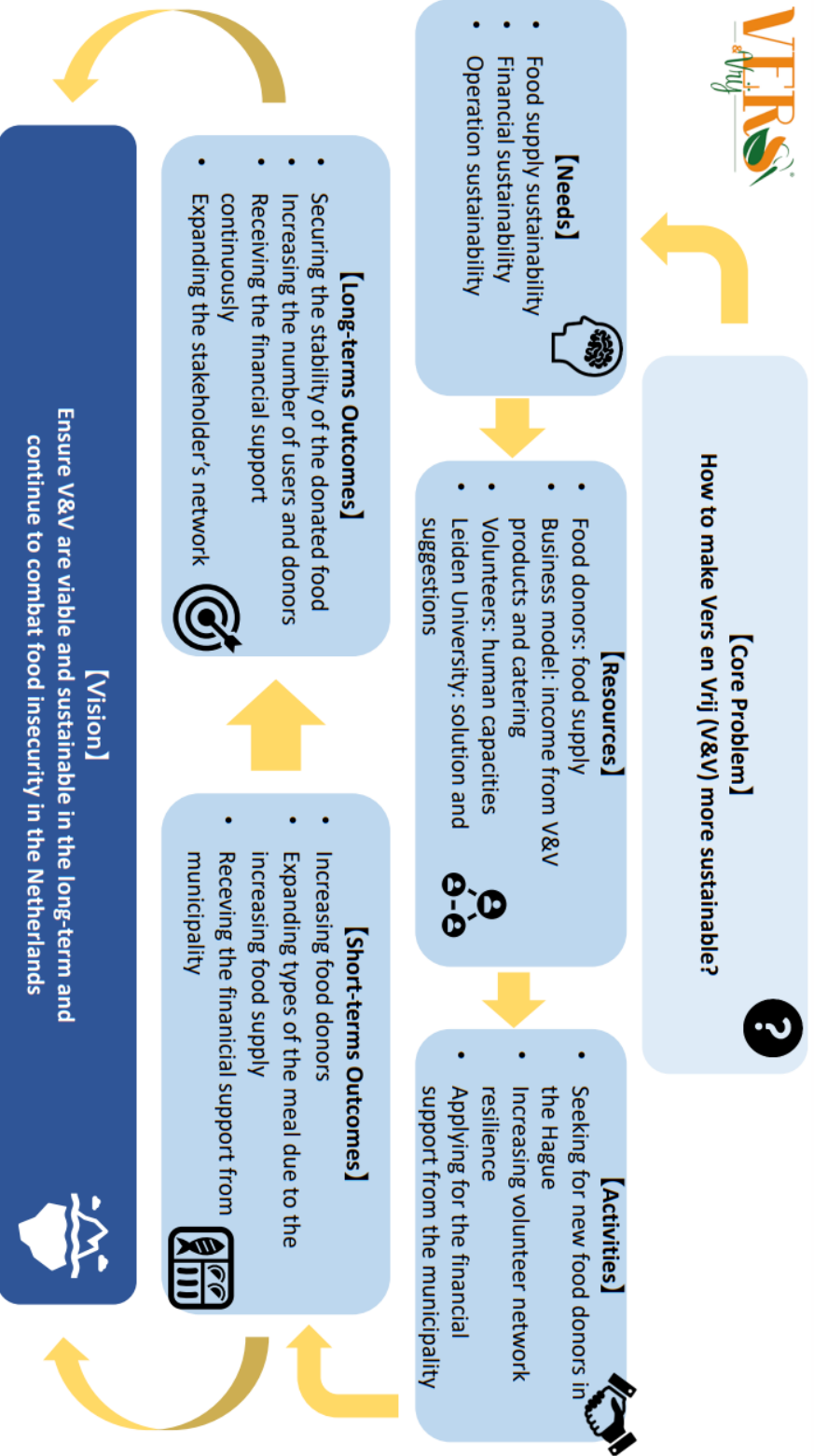
Vers & Vrij has now been active for 6 years. Apart from offering fresh and free meals to people in need, it's also started to “expand the business models”. By using the ingredients at hand, Vers & Vrij makes homemade brand food such as cheese and chocolate raisins, and you may see them at the Hague market or catering event!



As a start-up NGO, Vers & Vrij has managed to keep 26 fridges running, mostly based in Southwest in the Hague. Meanwhile, 12 food donors have been working with Vers & Vrij to face the challenge of food insecurity and food waste together.



Theory of Change



Theory of Change

Core Problem and Needs

Vers & Vrij, as a start-up NGO, is struggling with

- 1) The sustainability of their food supply due to reduced waste from food donors,
- 2) Financial dependence on personal investment, sales of recycled food products and catering, and
- 3) Heavy operational reliance on its founder, Arna.

We are going to zoom into the food supply sustainability problem with the **Problem Tree Analysis** (p.9) tool, to see the root causes and consequences to this problem.

Resources

Vers & Vrij secures food donations from various sources and boosts income by selling homemade food and catering services. The volunteer team, and collaborations with Leiden University and Leiden University College, aim to tackle the organization's core challenges.

We going to figure out the key stakeholders involved in the food supply sustainability problem using **Stakeholder Mapping** (p.12).

Activities

Vers & Vrij needs to

- 1) Expand food donation sources, by reaching out to more potential food donors
- 2) Strengthen its volunteer base and resilience, by hiring more volunteers and setting up volunteer management plan
- 3) Seek financial support from the municipality to enhance its financial sustainability

Short-term Outcomes

Vers & Vrij aims to increase food donations by collaborating with more suppliers, addressing the challenge of inconsistently stocked fridges. This strategy not only ensures regular supply but also diversifies food options, catering to the varied dietary preferences of clients, particularly those from low-income and migrant communities in The Hague. To support these efforts, Vers & Vrij is applying for financial assistance from The Hague municipality. This funding is expected to significantly enhance their operational capabilities, including advertising, volunteer recruitment, awareness campaigns, social media marketing, and reinforcing their business model, thereby ensuring more effective and efficient service delivery in the short term.

Long-term Outcomes

Vers & Vrij's long-term goal is to establish a sustainable business model, ensuring a stable supply chain, volunteer base, and a flexible role for founder Arna. Their focus is on developing a more reliable supply chain with suppliers, as current uncertainties in food waste and fridge stocking persist. Implementing a monitoring system will address these supply gaps. V&V also plans to expand its stakeholder network, enhancing food diversity and availability. Securing additional funding from the municipality of Den Haag is crucial, offering financial stability and reducing the burden on Arna. This funding over 1-5 years will provide financial security and enable Arna to adapt her involvement with Vers & Vrij more sustainably.

Vision

Vers & Vrij's long-term vision is to maintain sustainability in terms of operation, finance and food supply, in order to tackle food insecurity in The Hague, and spread the idea throughout the Netherlands.

Active Listening: Conversations with Food Donors



We love cooperating with Arna! We had previously wondered about donating leftovers, but initially, it seemed unfeasible due to regulations from the food administration. Arna invested considerable effort into the organization to make this possible in accordance with food regulations. Therefore, when Arna approached us with this initiative, it was a blessing. We are extremely pleased with the collaboration

—Woonzorgcentrum Moerwijk (HWWZorg)

The collaboration with Vers & Vrij is wonderful! People can choose from a broad menu. If food does not get ordered, the leftovers go to Vers & Vrij. This helps alleviate food insecurity in the neighborhood and allows us to offer a broad menu to our customers.

—Cardia Tabitha

We are extremely happy with our collaboration with Vers & Vrij. Thanks to this partnership, we can keep our food waste close to zero and help combat food insecurity in the municipality.

— Den Haag Werkt



Cardia Tabitha menu



Problem Tree Analysis

Problem context

Now we're using Problem Tree Analysis as our tool to zoom into the problem of **food supply sustainability** of Vers & Vrij. This challenge arises from a dynamic environment where various factors, both internal and external, contribute to fluctuations in the availability of food for distribution. Since Vers & Vrij counts on the food supply from the donors to operate, it is crucial to face this challenge to look for a solution to it.

Cause of the problem

The issue with the food supply stems from two factors. Initially, the **decrease in food provided by suppliers** is linked to their evolving practices. Once these suppliers began donating their surplus food to Vers & Vrij and monitoring their food usage and waste, they improved their processing and distribution methods, leading to less excess food available for donation.

The second factor contributing to the unstable and inconsistent food supply for Vers & Vrij is the **limited number of food suppliers**. The absence of a strategic approach in securing suppliers by Vers & Vrij has resulted in a reliance on too few sources for food donations. This, combined with the first issue, creates the primary challenge of an unstable and discontinuous food supply for the organization.

Core problem:
Instability and discontinuity of food supply to Vers & Vrij

Root causes:
1. Less food provided by suppliers
2. Not enough suppliers

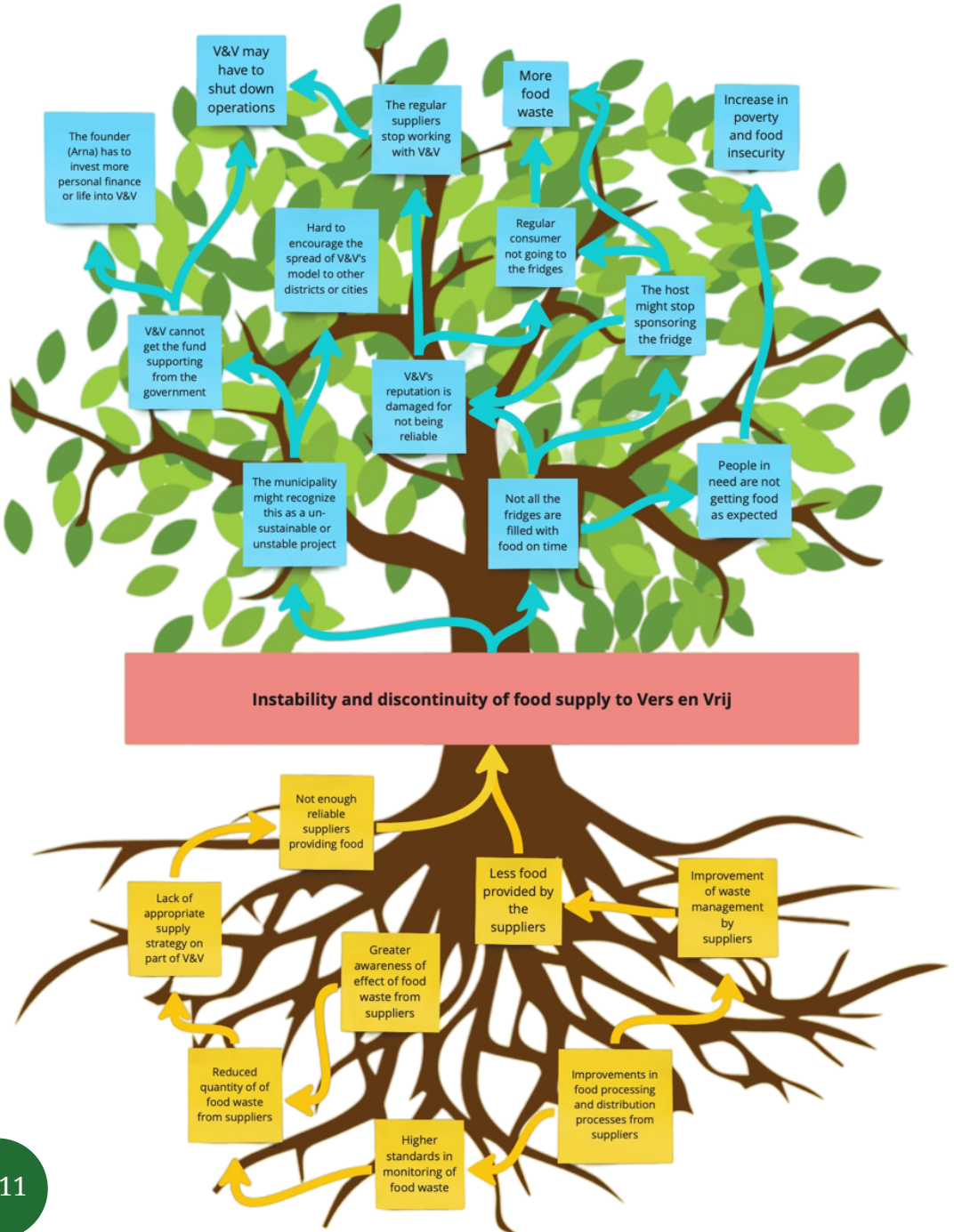
Consequences

The primary concern for Vers & Vrij is their ability to adequately stock their fridges. Failing to do so threatens their **reputation and reliability**, potentially driving those in need to alternative food sources and exacerbating food poverty issues. Following this, the instability in food supply could impact their current **funding application** with the Den Haag municipality. If perceived as unsustainable, Vers & Vrij may have to rely on internal funding sources. Lastly, the model's viability could be questioned, affecting the **adoption of Vers & Vrij's concept** by other communities and municipalities. This could limit the wider implementation of their approach to addressing food waste and insecurity, ultimately leading to a situation where food waste issues persist, negating the initial goals of Vers & Vrij.

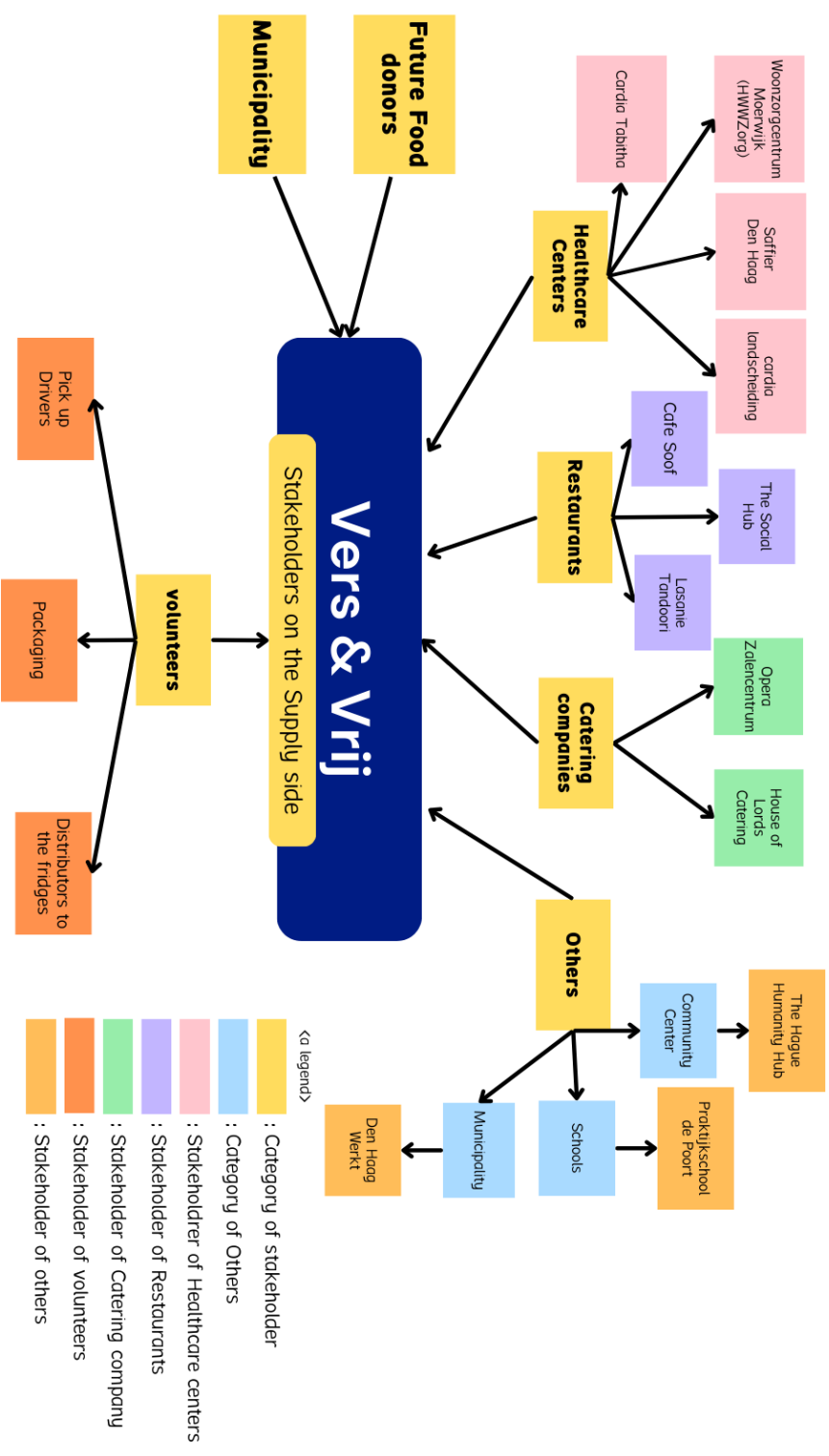
Consequences:

1. Vers & Vrij reputation damage
2. Financial unsustainability
3. Failure to spread Vers & Vrij model to other communities

Problem Tree Analysis



Stakeholder Mapping



Stakeholder Mapping

Problem context

Now we're using Stakeholder Mapping as our tool to figure out the key stakeholders for food supply sustainability problem.

Healthcare centres

The four healthcare centres (*Cardia Tabitha*, *Saffier*, *Woonzorgcentrum Moerwijk*, *Cardia Landscheiding*) cooperating with Vers & Vrij are care organizations for seniors. Each of the healthcare centres has its own restaurants for the users, from which leftover (prepared) food is donated to Vers & Vrij daily.

Restaurants

Restaurants also donate their leftover food to V&V as raw ingredients. The frequency of food donations varies. This category includes *Lasanie Tandoori*, *Café Soof*, and *The Social Hub*.

Catering companies

Catering services provide food for special occasions such as weddings. Two catering services (*House of Lords Catering*, *Opera Zalencentrum*) collaborate with Vers & Vrij as food donors.

Volunteers

The volunteer teams involved in the Vers & Vrij operation are essential. We categorize the volunteer teams by their main responsibility, such as:

- *Pickup drivers*: They are responsible for picking up foodstuffs to be donated by food donors

- *Packaging*: These volunteers package the meals made by the cooks.
- *Distributors* of the fridge. They are volunteers who distribute food to each fridge.

It should be highlighted that among the volunteers, there are individuals with disabilities. By engaging them in volunteer roles, Vers & Vrij contributes to giving back to the community.



Other Stakeholders

Other stakeholders include all the other food donors ranging from schools, community centers and the municipality. For example, The *Hague Humanity Hub* is a networking hub for the local community. It donates the leftover food from its café to Vers & Vrij, in doing so also giving back to the local community. Other examples are schools and municipality building. They provide the food from their canteen to Vers & Vrij.

The Municipality

Financial resources will be necessary for the stable operation of Vers & Vrij. Vers & Vrij now aims to obtain financial support from the municipality. The municipality might be a future stakeholder as a fund provider.

Future Food Donors

Vers & Vrij needs to increase food donors to secure the stability of the donated food. New stakeholders are expected to emerge as future food donors from restaurants, healthcare centers, and other stakeholders dealing with food.

Reflection

As discussed earlier, the core problem in the Theory of Change is how to make Vers & Vrij more sustainable. We broke down this core problem into 3 dimensions, namely food supply sustainability, financial sustainability and operation sustainability

In **Problem Tree Analysis** (p.9) and **Stakeholder Mapping** (p.12), we focused on food supply sustainability. These tools could also be used for the other two problems in the future. Furthermore, a more detailed activity plan is needed to guide Vers & Vrij into its short-term and long-term outcomes, and most importantly, the ultimate vision.

Future suggestions on the action plan would be:

- 1) Conduct internal monitoring on whether the fridges are fully stocked, in order to estimate the market needs in the nearby community
- 2) Estimate food waste needed to produce prepared meals, and reach out to new food donors
- 3) Start volunteer shifting management for better team resilience, and hire more volunteers as backups
- 4) Research for other similar cases supported by the municipality, to prepare for Vers & Vrij's funding application

We sincerely hope that Vers & Vrij would reach its vision which is to thrive sustainably in the long term and keep combating food insecurity in the Netherlands.



Acknowledgments

As we reach the conclusion of this journey, we are filled with immense gratitude for the numerous individuals who have supported, inspired, and contributed to this endeavor.

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Thank you all for being a part of this incredible adventure.

Aoife McGeough, Jingyi Ge, Nina Aalders,
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