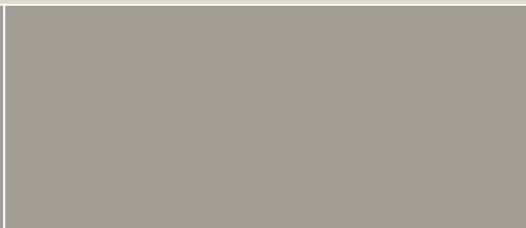




Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation through Norwegian Non-Governmental Organisations in Northern Uganda (2003–2007)

Evaluation Report 3/2009
Executive Summary



Norad

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Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation was to obtain an assessment of the Norwegian development cooperation through Norwegian Non Governmental Organisations and their Ugandan partners in Northern Uganda and thus contribute to the building of knowledge. The evaluation covered the period 2003 - 2007.

This evaluation covered six Norwegian Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with over five year's experience of implementing programme activities in Northern Uganda. These Norwegian NGOs are: Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children Norway, CARE Norway, Caritas Norway, Norwegian Red Cross, and Médecins Sans Frontières Norway. The organisations have implemented activities that cut across humanitarian assistance/emergency interventions, peace building, service delivery, rights based activities and capacity building. A total of ten types of different interventions were covered by the above NGOs, and these were spread out in the districts of: Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lira, Oyam and Pader in the North Central; Nebbi in the North West; and Moroto and Nakapiripirit in the North East.

Outcomes

Notwithstanding the rather difficult situation in which NGOs in Northern Uganda were operating, the interventions of Norwegian NGOs through their Ugandan partners brought about a number of short and medium-term changes at individual or target group (micro) level and at community (meso) level.

At micro level, interventions related to agriculture, food security and livelihoods contributed through training, provision of agricultural inputs and technical support to: enhancing the self-esteem and confidence of group members; improving food security in the households; and improving quality of livestock. The introduction of energy saving stoves contributed significantly to easing the burden of collecting firewood by women and girls in Nebbi diocese and Amuru district. However, the multiplier effects of the interventions in terms of reaching a bigger part of the population and contributing significantly to environmental protection were not documented by the evaluation team.

Through infrastructure development and training of teachers, education interventions contributed to: increasing enrolment rates, and retention of children, especially girls in schools within Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps and in return areas, and in the case of Karamoja within the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) catchments areas: creation of a child-friendly learning environ-

ment; and improved retention of teachers in schools. But it is probable that withdrawal of Norwegian development cooperation support could significantly constrain the retention of these gains.

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) programme activities in Gulu, Amuru, and Pader districts also contributed to enhancing members' self esteem and confidence. Members have also made savings, which has contributed to the ability to meet education requirements for their children, attainment of a reasonably balanced diet and accessibility to health care services, hence an improvement in their quality of life. It is however presumptive to surmise that these outcomes could outlive the current camp arrangements: the proximity and confluence of people within the camp is an opportunity which might not be replicated in the return areas, especially in people's original homes where homesteads are far from each other.

Water and sanitation activities have contributed to enhancing access to safe water and improving sanitation and hygiene in IDP camps and hence minimising disease outbreaks.

Child Protection activities contributed to increasing the levels of awareness by children in terms of demanding for their rights; increasing children's participation in decision-making and increasing children's level of confidence in terms of advocating for issues affecting their welfare. The child protection interventions have also contributed to improving the relationship between children and their parents, teachers and the general community. The potentials of these structures to remain effective beyond direct support from the Norwegian NGOs is great if local governments increase funding and supervisory support to structures such as the Child Protection Committees (CPCs).

It is also important to point out that community and organisational (meso) level outcomes have been registered by the Norwegian NGOs in Northern Uganda and include: a reduction in stigma against persons who are HIV/AIDS positive in Nebbi diocese, where, unlike before, HIV/AIDS positive persons are now increasingly accepted and supported in the communities, and they are also coming out in the open to participate in awareness raising campaigns.

The attitude of the community towards Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs) such as the very elderly and Persons With Disability (PWD) has been changed as a result of a host of interventions such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Shelter Project, with more community members now participating in ensuring the welfare of EVIs.

Change in gender relations and community attitudes towards women and girls have improved, as they are now more respected and valued in society and their rights are deemed as worth protecting, a situation very different from what existed at the height of the war five years ago.

It is however doubtful whether most of these capacity gains can be sustained beyond the support of the Norwegian NGOs, due to limited opportunities for local

resource mobilisation and an apparent inability of local governments to commit local resources to donor supported interventions.

Partnership Relations

Partnerships existed at the level of Norwegian NGOs and members of their international alliances operating in Uganda and in particular Northern Uganda, district-based Ugandan NGOs or civil society organisations and district local governments. The evaluation team established that relations between Norwegian NGOs and their Ugandan partners were generally good.

The capacities of district based partners in terms of organisational skills, human resources and procedures to manage projects efficiently have increased through training, supply of equipment and logistical support. This is also the case of local government departments that have cooperated with the NGOs.

This evaluation however established that emphasis by most Norwegian NGOs and members of their international alliances was placed on delivering results of the planned interventions and as such, limited efforts were designed to strengthen the capacity of their district-based implementing and cooperating partners. Where provided, capacity building of district-based partners did not take into account their long-term institutional growth, but rather short-term needs of the implementation. Given the proximity of district-based implementing partners to the target beneficiaries, and the fact that they, unlike Norwegian NGOs, will stay behind even after Norwegian development cooperation is withdrawn, building their capacities become all the more important. A likely consequence of the weak capacities of district-based partners would be their inability to sustain benefits of the interventions after the Norwegian NGOs have left.

Conflict Sensitivity

All the interventions studied in this evaluation displayed conflict sensitivity. Conflict analysis was an integral part of most proposals. The work of the six Norwegian NGOs over the period 2003 – 2007 reflected both work *in* and *on* conflict, meaning that some programmes sought to mitigate or contribute to addressing the consequences or effects of the conflict, and some were intended to directly contribute to a resolution of the conflict. For example Norwegian Refugee Council's interventions, Norwegian Red Cross' interventions, Save the Children's education programme, CARE's Social Mobilization of Women Affected by Conflict programme and Caritas' sustainable agriculture and HIV/AIDS programmes were intended to respond to the consequences of the conflict. Save the Children's programme which involved formation of peace clubs in Lira and Oyam districts were directed at contributing to resolving the conflict. Overall, most programmes were work *in* conflict.

Best Practices from Transitions from Humanitarian to Recovery and Development

In view of the changes in the conflict context in North Central sub-region, Norwegian NGOs and their Ugandan partners have demonstrated a good degree of flexibility enabling them to reach out to target populations at return sites. In addition, with the exception of Médecins Sans Frontières whose operations came to an end

before the cessation of hostilities in North Central sub-region, all the other NGOs have made an effort to adapt their interventions to suit the changing context, by focusing on recovery activities such as food production, economic security activities, and rehabilitation of infrastructure.

Conclusion

Overall, and notwithstanding the number of organisations and agencies other than the Norwegian NGOs involved in implementing similar programmes in Northern Uganda, the evaluation team's findings suggest that Norwegian development cooperation has contributed to a realization of the intended outcomes as noted in the preceding paragraphs and in section 4 of this report. It should be noted that while it is expected that outcomes resulting from implementation of programmes over a five-year period would be readily identifiable, not all interventions included in this evaluation commenced in 2003. A significant number actually started off in 2005 and beyond. It should also be noted that most interventions implemented prior to the cessation of hostilities in the North Central sub-region were of humanitarian nature with emphasis on addressing the humanitarian needs of the populations. As a result, documentation of outcomes by Norwegian NGOs took into account short-term changes, which may not be sustained over the long-term.

Funding for planned interventions during the period 2003 – 2007 was adequate, and in spite of some reported delays, implementation and outputs generally conformed to plans. Delays were associated with the current system of funding, which is based on submission and approval of annual project proposals and annual budgets, a practice which is time consuming. Channelling of financial resources through Norwegian NGOs was the most suitable option during the period in review owing to lack of or weak capacities of district-based partners.

The design and implementation of all interventions was to a large extent participatory and therefore interventions and activities were aligned to the local needs. Gender mainstreaming was undertaken although greater emphasis was placed on the extremely vulnerable. Implementation strategies were relevant for the attainment of planned outputs, and the approach of working in partnership with local or district-based partners and through groups in the communities are particularly commended. Implementation was however constrained by a number of factors such as the movement away from IDP camps, and poor climatic conditions which constrained travel and also agriculture interventions.

Key Recommendations to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad

In response to the enormous recovery and development needs of the region that is not matched by the current funding, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Norad should consider scaling up their funding for:

- Food security and economic empowerment through sustainable agriculture, income generation, and savings mobilization.
- Access to education through infrastructure rehabilitation and construction.
- Health service delivery through infrastructure rehabilitation and construction interventions in Northern Uganda.

This would not only result in greater impact but also enhance prospects for sustaining outcomes of Norwegian development cooperation. In addition, Norad and the Norwegian MFA should also work towards engaging other development actors in a process aimed at increasing support to the recovery and development of Northern Uganda.

Notwithstanding the weakness with regard to financial capacities of local or district-based partner organisations, and also weaknesses in coordinating and monitoring of implementation by district local governments, the Norwegian MFA and Norad should actively support, through Norwegian NGOs, capacity development of local civil society organisations and district local governments in Northern Uganda. This will contribute significantly to enhancing capacities at the local level and therefore prospects for long-term sustainability of outcomes.

Key Recommendations to Norwegian NGOs

While most Norwegian NGOs have adjusted their programmes to the changed context and given that it is unlikely that the conflicts in North Central and North East sub-regions could escalate to previous levels, the evaluation team suggests that deliberate efforts should be made to integrate in the design of recovery and development programmes activities that seek to address the root causes of the conflicts. This would contribute significantly to sustainable peace in the affected communities.

Given the challenges faced during implementation which constrained the realization of outcomes, there is need for Norwegian NGOs to undertake systematic analyses of the current situation to inform the design of a comprehensive recovery and development programme. For instance, since a higher drop-out rate of girls from school compared to boys is still reported, Norwegian NGOs working in the education sector should carry out a detailed analysis of the current situation of the girl-child with a view to identifying gaps to be addressed. Some of the gaps to be addressed probably require strategies such as advocacy and other strategies geared towards changing attitudes with respect to girl-child education and increasing her enrolment and retention in school.

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