Evaluation Department

Norad

Added costs. Added value?

Evaluation of Norwegian support through and to umbrella and network organisations in civil society

Report 5/2014

Annex 8: Stakeholder responses

Norad
Norwegian Agency for
Development Cooperation

Postal address
P.O. Box 8034 Dep. NO-0030 OSLO
Visiting address
Ruseløkkveien 26, Oslo, Norway

Phone: +47 23 98 00 00
Fax: +47 23 98 00 99

Photo G.M.B. Akash

ISBN: 978-82-7548-742-9

Response to the NIRAS evaluation report from NFU/Atlas Alliance

Date: 27.10.2014

It is the opinion of NFU/Atlas Alliance that the NIRAS Evaluation does not reflect the comments and inputs given by us according to the invitation from NORAD by agreed date 18.08.2014. The comments and inputs were both on the methodology, way of working and the interpretation of the results. Additionally, NFU/Atlas Alliance challenges the theory of change understanding as well as rights based approach expressed in the draft NIRAS evaluation.

When so little of our comments and corrections have been accepted, NFU/Atlas Alliance must underline that we find the report mistaken in the way it describes the our work, the cooperation with partners and our added value. The Atlas Alliance and the participating organisations are parts of the global movement of Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) that operates within a '*twin track approach*' - to both meet the immediate needs of the end-users as well as to contribute to systemic, legal and political change. NFU/Atlas Alliance cooperate much more than the NIRAS report reflects, and the value of this cooperation is well documented, as recently as the Scanteam evaluation report of June 2014, **"Nothing about us without us"** (can be found at www.atlas-alliansen.no).

The NFU/Atlas Alliance approach aims to combine sharing of experiences among DPOs on how to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities, including fighting oppression and marginalization and promoting inclusion in different contexts, sharing of experiences in meeting needs for end users and conducting advocacy, sharing of administrative competence on the use of donor funding as well as providing funds for implementing projects. All these elements are parts of our cooperation and well reflected in subsequent project- and organisational analyses. Therefore, NFU/Atlas Alliance is surprised that the NORAD funded NIRAS evaluation report failed to mention any of this.

On pages 52-53, the NIRAS evaluation report states,

'A special issue was NPN/GFPID's tackling of the Inclusive Education approach and policies. According to the 2010 MTR and the 2013 Results report from GFPID most parents found it hard to accept the inclusive education objective as viable. This was verified during the interviews with the GFPID management. Most parents continued to demand special education rather than inclusive education, for several reasons: (i) Most PWDD children have not benefited from the inclusive education enrolment due to limited resources in the schools; (ii) more harm to the many children seems to have been the case as they are exposed to an unfamiliar environment that does not facilitate learning; (iii) many children with PWDD enrolled in inclusive education classes had witnessed harassments and/or sexual abuse; and (iv) parents pointed out that time was taken away from the ordinary class and the time spent on the PWDD was unproductive.'

NFU/Atlas Alliance takes any allegation or incidence of violence against children and/or violations of their rights very serious. However, we were very surprised to see the statement above because of the way how such a serious charge of sexual abuse was included in report, that no sources were provided by the evaluator nor any explicit attempt to verify the charge either in Nepal with project partners, authorities or parents, or with NFU/Atlas Alliance in Norway. NFU/Atlas Alliance will

request additional information both from the NIRAS evaluation team and from our partners, in order to investigate the matter for further elaboration in a separate written statement as soon as possible.

In short, NFU/Atlas Alliance we will emphasize the following:

Value-added: The recent evaluation report draft includes a revised definition of value added (p. 116), interestingly in which, the evaluation team does not consider partners perspective on value added, but rather UNOs self-perception and a comparison between UNO provided support and 'other ways of supporting' within the value chain. Particularly since one of our partners, ZAPDD in Zanzibar, is supported by both the Atlas Alliance and alternatively, the local CSO Foundation for Civil Society, it seems to be a missed opportunity to not also explore the perspective on value added among our partners. Additionally, the evaluation team questions to whether NFU experiences can be transferred to Tanzania (p. 68). NFU is fully aware that experiences in Norway cannot be directly transferred to another context, however, there are some experiences and challenges that all parents of persons with developmental disabilities across the world share. Coming together as parents locally has value in itself, and learning across borders adds a different dimension. These are among the added values a consultant cannot provide.

Method: The evaluation team claims to have consulted key project stakeholders (p. 67 – 'ZAPDD management appreciates…'), p. 69 ('…based on discussions with key stakeholders …'). However, looking at the methodology and list of persons consulted (Annex 2) it is questionable on what basis conclusions are made.

- In Nepal, only three (3) individuals from partner organisation were consulted, two (2) from the board and one (1) from the secretariat. The evaluation team seems to rely heavily on an evaluation conducted in 2010, before the network became a federation, with no reference to the another recent evaluation conducted in 2014[1].
- In Zanzibar, the evaluation team consulted nine (9) parents, three (3) persons with developmental disabilities and seven (7) persons in one school. However, the team did not consult anyone from ZAPDD nor from ourother collaborating partner, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT).

Conclusions made on NFU as an organisation: The evaluation describes NFU as an organisation that doesn't know local context, doesn't listen to partners, is unresponsive to partners needs and generally drives its own agenda (see pages. 51-54, 66-68, 68-70). NFU, like most civil society organisations, works within certain overall principles determined by it's core identity and values of the organisation as defined by the general assembly as well as it's historic role in Norwegian society. However, the partners NFU works with are always free to make their own decisions on their own priorities and goals. Additionally, partners are encouraged to develop their own identity and find their best solutions per as their context and needs.

As a rule, project plans are developed by partners and shared with NFU for mutual agreement i on how to move forward. One example illustrating this is the topic of inclusive education in Nepal, which has not been a priority in our collaboration with GFPID in the last programme period (2010 – 2014) because this relatively young organisation had not decided on how to approach the question of education. The description of NFU as using a donor driven approach particularly occurs with regards

[1] Shrestha (2014), see separate posting on the Norad web

to two topics; inclusive education and rights-based advocacy work, and these two topics will be discussed below.

Inclusive education: The evaluation report heavily criticise NFU support to inclusive education in both Nepal (p. 51-54) and Tanzania (p. 68-70). The evaluation report states several times that inclusive education should be challenged as an approach within the Atlas family (p.54 and 70). However, the report does not acknowledge that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which has been ratified by both countries, states that education should be accessed within the general education system, within the community in which the child lives, and that children with disabilities should also have access inclusive, quality and free education (article 24). The Atlas Alliance in general and NFU especially is very open for discussions and advise on how these rights should be achieved, but the evaluation seems to rather challenge "…*whether inclusive education is indeed the right solution*" (p.70).

- In Nepal, the NIRAS conclusion with regard to inclusive education is reached largely based on an evaluation conducted in 2010, which NFU responded to effectively. As discussed above, GFPID and NFU decided not to focus on inclusive education, partly because of the evaluation finding that parents were divided on the question of education. However, the 2014 evaluation painted a different picture with regards to inclusive education[2]. The National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) is actively promoting inclusive education, international development agencies are supporting this effort, and the Ministry of Education is increasingly working towards the same goal. Nepal is moving in this direction, and attitudes are also gradually changing among parents engaged in GFPID.
- In Zanzibar, the evaluation team concludes that the effectiveness of the inclusive education project is "almost nil" on the basis that it does not respond to needs of beneficiaries and inadequate resources are available (p.70). NFU would be the first to acknowledge that the project has weaknesses. However, the 2013/14 project evaluation found that a major success to be that stakeholders in inclusive schools across the board are positive towards the inclusive education programme. The main challenge identified is not the lack of resources, but rather the need to develop a deeper understanding of inclusion and how this can be done in a context of limited resources[3]. The NIRAS evaluation further concludes that without NFU support, the MoEVT would have been free to decide whether inclusive education is the right solution for persons with developmental disabilities and additionally suggests an alternative scenario of decentralised special education for this target group. This again, gives the impression that the evaluation team first and foremost wants to challenge inclusive education as an aim, rather than how to improve the work towards inclusion. The field team did not meet with nor asked for the perspective of representatives from MoEVT.

Rights-based advocacy: several times, the NIRAS evaluation repeats that there is a need to balance service delivery with advocacy work in the context of poverty (p.54), and that a focus on advocacy is not aligned with the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries (p. 67). NFU responds that improving service delivery does not contradict with advocacy. In particular, the evaluation team criticises our partner in Zanzibar, ZAPDD, for not responding to beneficiary needs. However, ZAPDD is in fact working for both better services on the ground and for policy reform as documented in the last evaluation of the project[4]. The NIRAS evaluation also recommends that ZAPDD, as a disability-specific civil society organisation, should leave advocacy to the umbrellas (p.67). Apart from the fact that an

[2] Shrestha (2014) (p. 4-5, 19-21, 36 and 41-42)
[3] Lewis (2014)
[4] Yiga (2014) (see p. 19-20 for example of services accessed due to ZAPDD advocacy)

umbrella DPO has only been established this year in Zanzibar, an umbrella is only as strong as the sum of its member organisations.

Mistakes/misrepresentations: Without repeating all misrepresentations that were listed in our previous feedback to the evaluation report, these following points are key:

- The goal of Atlas-alliance is still selectively quoted on page 70, and should be «The Atlas-Alliance goal is to promote human rights and improve living conditions for people with disabilities and fight tuberculosis in developing countries»
- On page 69, the evaluation team refers to one informant in Zanzibar who says that only 20 students with disabilities have proceeded to secondary school. More information on the source of this information needs to be provided, particularly because the list of persons consulted (Annexe 3), does not include anyone from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

The Atlas Alliance and NFU encourage readers seeking better understanding to contact us for the reviews and evaluations done in 2014, www.atlas-alliansen.no and www.nfunorge.no

Comments regarding NORAD evaluation report:
Evaluation of Norwegian support through and to umbrella and network organisations in civil society (report 5/ 2014)

Comments from Vennskap Nord/ Sør:

As agreed, please find below our comments regarding the evaluation report of Norwegian umbrella network organisations in civil society. The comments have been adapted from our original feedback made in Norwegian August 18th 2014. We have received the draft report, and we want to comment on the findings.

VNS' opinion is that the evaluation of our organisation is based on partly wrong and partly outdated information, and that the evaluation is not representative of how we work. The evaluation is based on a visit to a school and a project which has not yet made any exchanges, only a partnership meeting. Some of the conclusions have been made based on wrong or misunderstood information, and some of the comments are personal interpretations from the evaluation team. An example is "that VNS chose Lulumba because it is an elite school". The fact is that VNS did not choose Lulumba, it was chosen by the Norwegian Partner School. VNS does not recruit schools based on status, we want a broad range of schools in all partnership countries, and most of the schools in the School Partnership Programme are rural schools, not elite urban schools.

VNS informed the evaluation team that the school they wanted to visit only recently started a collaboration, and has not yet had the time to conduct friendship exchanges, and as a consequence, there is not much to evaluate. We recommended that the team paid a visit to any of the mainland schools in Tanzania, which have a long ongoing collaboration with friendship linking, and which could give an accurate and extensive evaluation of the collaboration. The evaluation team still chose to go to Zanzibar, their argument being that they did not have the time to travel to any of the other schools.

We question the team's decision not to spend adequate time in Tanzania to do research in other places than in Dar Es Salaam and in Zanzibar. The field trip is an important part of the evaluation, and because of the decision not to visit a representative school, VNS is of the opinion that we have not been fairly evaluated. Had the team decided to spend an extra day in Tanzania, they could have visited one of the many ongoing partnerships in mainland Tanzania, not one collaboration in Zanzibar which has only conducted an initial partner meeting in 2013.

As for the description of the VNS School Exchange Programme on pages 59-62, some misunderstandings seem to have occured in the meeting with the school in Zanzibar, and we would like to add some clarifying information:

The school which the team chose to visit, Lulumba Secondary School, started their collaboration with Fyrstikkaleen vgs (high school) in 2013 with a compulsory partner meeting in order to establish mutual goals and plan the theme and content of the collaboration. The aim of this initial meeting is to make sure the schools have the same understanding of what the partnership should involve, and to make sure that they choose a relevant and useful theme for both schools. In 2014 they did not

apply for financial support from VNS, but they plan to start a partnership project in 2015, and as such the actual student exchanges have not yet started.

The collaboration that the Assistant Head Master of the Lumumba Secondary School has commented on from 2008 was with another Norwegian school, and this collaboration was terminated several years ago. Even if his comments were positive, they are not representative of how VNS works today.

Regarding the student counselling and conflict resolution course, this workshop is **not** part of the school partnership between Lulumba school and Fyrstikkalleen vgs, and the comments by the evaluation team are taken out of context and are misunderstood in the evaluation report. It was a workshop conducted by VNS in 2013, and the initiative came from a group of students in Uganda that had participated at the Youth Empowerment Assembly. The course was offered to the Lulumba school as part of a training session for several schools in East Africa.

The South/ South partnership between Lulumba school and Paarl in South Africa started in 2011 upon the initiative of the two schools after a meeting between teachers in Eastern and Southern Africa. VNS has provided financial support for the exchanges to take place.

Since 2011, our aim has been to strengthen the South participation in the partnerships and, as a consequence, mandatory introductory partner meetings must be held before a partnership can start. This is to ensure that the main theme and type of activities that the schools want to focus on are decided upon by both partners, and that they are relevant for both schools. During these meetings, the planning of the partnership is done, and this again forms the basis for the application for funding by VNS. By conducting these meetings, both schools take ownership of the collaboration.

Regarding efficiency, the evaluation team uses documentation from 2002! The extensive data through interviews and questionnaires provided by VNS should have given the team more relevant information than an evaluation made 12 years ago. To clarify the efficiency point, we would like to comment that normally 6-8 students and two teachers from each school participate in the exchange. In addition, the whole class or year, and sometimes the whole school works on theme based projects related to the partnership before, during and after the exchange itself. In addition, the students who travel, live with host families in Norway and in the South, extending the reach of the exchange to host families, their friends and sometimes parts of the local community.

We hope that our comments will be made available together with the report, as they contribute to understanding the factual mistakes made by the evaluation team.

Oslo, November 12th 2014 (comments originally submitted in Norwegian on August 18th, 2014)

Heidi Thon, Managing Director Vennskap Nord/ Sør

Norad
Norwegian Agency for
Development Cooperation

Postal address
P.O. Box 8034 Dep. NO-0030 OSLO
Visiting address
Ruseløkkveien 26, Oslo, Norway

Phone: +47 23 98 00 00
Fax: +47 23 98 00 99

postmottak@norad.no
www.norad.no