

Christian Solidarity International : évaluation of the Framework Agreement 2010-2012

Final report – executive summary - English



Factsheet (English)

Context of the evaluation	Framework agreement 2010-2012 signed by and between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Christian Solidarity International (CSI): "Development is achieved through education"
Framework agreement strategy	At the end of the framework agreement, the living conditions of the beneficiary populations will be improved through access to education and training, and in particular: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development and/or construction of properly equipped preschool and school facilities 2. Preschool and school care, reinforcement and supervision 3. Extracurricular reinforcement 4. The establishment of facilities dedicated to vocational education and training 5. Adult training 6. The monitoring and evaluation of projects carried out 7. The identification of projects
Coherence of the consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education sector
Projects	Result 1: 4 projects / Result 2: 3 projects / Result 3: 2 projects / Result 4: 5 projects / Result 5: 4 projects / Result 6: 43 visits and 22 financial audits
Budget	€2,509,302 (1: 33%; 2: 8%; 3: 5%; 4: 19%; 5: 22%; 6: 9%; 7: 4%)
Realised in 2010 and 2011	2010: €661,061.19 / 2011: €712,842.95
Governance and control	The NGO deploys efficient management and control tools that enable it to reinforce the administrative and financial monitoring. The monitoring of the operations is limited owing to an excessively high number of projects.
Framework Agreement	The framework agreement is geared to the education sector but its programme is broader. Projects are formulated primarily by the partner, so very different approaches are used when there are 11 partners. A substantial part of the framework agreement is dedicated to infrastructure projects.
Contributions to the results (based on the evaluation of 3 projects: 2 in Vietnam and 1 in Burkina Faso).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The evaluations confirm the quality of the construction and an efficient monitoring of the works. 2. The evaluations in Vietnam confirmed the concern to provide quality education and supervision, but the systems are put in place in the very specific context of a congregation, so they cannot be reproduced in a normal framework, making them less pertinent. 3. No evaluated project for this result. 4. Scholarships; the impact on the final beneficiaries cannot be measured. 5. The project in Burkina Faso shows mixed and variable results depending on the section: a good outcome for awareness raising about the rights of individuals, but debatable results for the AGR section which requires technical expertise that was not available. Management weaknesses were noted in the partner.
Recommendations	<p><u>Framework agreement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce the cohesion of the next framework agreement by revising the strategy approach per country and per sector to reduce the dispersion of its activities and make them more pertinent • Reduce the number of its "infrastructure" projects drastically, especially in medium HDI countries <p><u>NGO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the ongoing development towards more professionalism, particularly as regards the reinforcement of the operations department • Increase resources whilst reducing the number of projects so as to improve their monitoring • Increase the involvement of NGOs in partnerships with NGOs in the South
Conclusions	CSI is an NGO that has achieved substantial progress in administrative and financial project management in recent years. This trend must be continued particularly through greater involvement in developing and monitoring projects defined under a more precise strategy so as to improve their pertinence. This will be achieved by increasing the allocated resources whilst reducing the number of projects to be monitored.



1 Executive summary

Since 2010, the NGO Christian Solidarity International – Luxembourg (CSI) has focused mainly on developing the theme of education, and in so doing has pursued one of the millennium development goals: “Achieving universal primary education.” This contribution is based on four pillars, namely to:

1. Address the lack of preschool and school facilities;
2. Improve the conditions of access to education by the most destitute segments of society by providing material and financial aid;
3. Enable underprivileged groups (ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, marginalised young people) to attend school,
4. Promote adult training, particularly for women.

The target populations affected by these actions may differ from one project to the next, and thus require different approaches each time. It seems self-evident that whereas the first two pillars are characterised chiefly by their material component (which is rather straightforward to manage in strategic terms), the last two pillars require knowledge of the specific context and implementation with a far more committed partner. This observation was made also within the NGO and therefore in parallel. A structural reform was initiated to bolster the support for projects through the commitment of permanent staff, and also in order to improve the decision-making process by setting up an executive committee in 2011. These changes enabled the NGO to manage an initial Framework Agreement signed in 2010 by upgrading the different management tools needed to succeed.

The following projects were evaluated: in Vietnam, (1) the construction of a nursery school in Lac Lam, (2) the outpatient treatment of persons with disabilities in Da Nang, and (3) training for women in the different regions near Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. These projects can be part of the lines of action defined by the NGO, except for the second project, which pertained more to socio-educational (and therapeutic) support, the approach and attempting to promote access to education for the disabled is less clear. One specific feature of these projects is that the partners in Vietnam are religious congregations.

The evaluations carried out enable us to draw specific conclusions for each of the projects as well as cross-sectional conclusions for which the CSI’s commitment will be needed to continue its internal development.

Supported by a religious congregation, the Lac Lam project addresses a lack of space in nursery schools because of floods. The solution was the – extremely well planned – construction of a private school. The parents of the 450 children who attend the school are very pleased with the reception, services and education provided in that facility. The school needs have been covered better on the whole. The intervention in Lac Lam is carried out in a country whose HDI is increasing, and where quite a forceful education policy is being implemented (20% of the State budget is allocated to education, with a 95% attendance rate in primary school: by way of reminder, the millennium goals pertain to primary – not pre-primary -- education). There are still local needs that are not covered, to be sure, but we cannot say that the situation is urgent or a matter of priority in this case. Without wishing to question the merits of the congregation’s request, the project remains closely identified with the latter in the way it is run and managed. The model cannot be replicated in the public sector and its scope is consequently restricted to a specific framework.

The project in Da Nang, which is also supported by a religious congregation, is aimed at providing care for persons with disabilities who are victims of Agent Orange, a defoliant used extensively by the Americans during the Vietnam War which contains dioxin that has a “transgenerational” toxic effect. This problem of disablement persists and will continue to do so, but political action has been very diffident up to now (as the subject is still taboo). The intervention of NGOs is therefore very



pertinent. The Sisters of the congregation have concentrated their efforts mainly on a centre located in the city of Da Nang. This centre was reinforced by the construction of a building that houses rehabilitation facilities, classrooms for the staff and persons with disabilities as well as accommodations for some of them. This project has been made possible thanks also to funding by CSI.

The evaluation pertains to outpatient care activities in remote villages intended to identify -- and then define and implement local monitoring of -- children that cannot get access to the Da Nang centre. As such outpatient care activities in villages are nonetheless linked to those of the Da Nang centre to a large extent, we analysed the consistency of the two projects.

In terms of numbers, the Da Nang facility caters to 200 children, whilst the outpatient care activities target 560 families. Good socio-educational care is provided in the centre and recognised as such by the parents of the children who can appreciate the progress the latter have made on the social front as well as in aspects relating to their disability. Nevertheless, the technical aspects of this care could still be developed and improved (CSI has for that matter confirmed that it intends to plan exchanges with specialised institutions in Luxembourg). As such, in cooperation with the University of Hanoi, the centre offers training courses for its own staff as well as the staff of public centres.

Furthermore, to improve the impact of the project, we recommend to CSI and to the Congregation of St Paul of Chartres to define jointly the number of places available and occupancy rate targets for the centres as well as supervisory standards (qualification and personnel ratio).

As to outpatient care, organising screening and care activities in remote villages clearly constitutes an effort to reach families, which cannot avail themselves of the centre's services, either because they are too far away, or because they are too poor. We nonetheless note some weaknesses at present: the approach used can only deal with less serious cases because it relies on good will rather than on a solid structure. It is clear, in fact, that volunteers who are trained through ad hoc sessions and not over time, cannot be expected to have the requisite behaviour and professional approach. Moreover, the actions are carried out in family homes and not in an appropriate setting, like the Da Nang Centre. These remotely located families turn out to be extremely vulnerable, because they include the most serious cases, and they require the presence and continuous attention of one of the parents, putting all the more strain on their capacity to carry out an occupational activity. We therefore think that there is a major void here that calls for action as a matter of priority. The scope of the problem is such that the strategy must be reviewed and the response organised with other stakeholders (the health centres have already been convened) so as to professionalise it and to implement lasting solutions through consultation with the competent authorities. The establishment of a consortium initiated by CSI, could be a solution to that challenge.

In Burkina Faso, the project is intended to strengthen the status and the role of women, because although they play a leading role in the economy, they are still far from emancipated. More specifically, they have very low income, little access to arable lands, technologies, inputs and financing. Health indicators, on the other hand, still show alarming levels of HIV, maternal mortality, and contraception and childbirth problems. On the social front, women are still underrepresented in and have reduced access to education and, needless to say, to political life. The project's suitability for addressing all these challenges is not in doubt, but it does entail very complex changes of habits and cultures. The different sections were broached, and the results obtained are indicative of success to a greater or lesser degree. For instance, awareness-raising efforts about human rights (rights of women and children) and health (AIDS, STD, PMTCT) appear to be implemented in a pertinent and efficacious manner, even though they must be supported if they are to be sustained. Literacy, on the other hand, is lagging behind and sensitive issues concerning land acquisition must still be tackled (with CSI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as they have an impact on the results). The "Income Generating activities" constitute a good introduction, but the approach used is not



sufficiently structured and consistent to achieve the expected results. This disparity has to do with the partner's over-ambition as well as a strategic approach that is not strong enough. It is moreover worth noting that the administrative and financial management of "Promo-Femmes" shows significant gaps that would have to be filled to provide more efficient support for actions in the field. These gaps also tend to undermine confidence between the partners, making a joint management of the project difficult, even though such joint management would be desirable given the scope of the financial investment (the biggest project of the Framework Agreement). We are therefore calling on CSI and "Promo-Femmes" to take stock of the situation promptly in order to redefine the priorities and related activities, as well as the conditions for a trustful partnership. Without such a two-pronged approach, the project will not be able to achieve the expected results.

Furthermore, these project evaluations and the organisational audit of CSI enable us to draw certain conclusions from a cross-sectional and structural perspective. The projects are particularly adapted to the requirements of the partners, so the content, scope of the response, and pertinence remain limited given the actual needs (underestimation of the response, as for Da Nang) or the country's capacities to meet those needs (over-estimation in the case of Lac Lam). The main reasons are that the context is not appropriated and the NGO do not have the capacity at this time to discuss, criticise, formulate and monitor the projects, given their number and thematic and geographic dispersion because of the limited human resources at headquarters. To counteract these difficulties, we recommend that the NGO continue with the structural reinforcement initiated in 2009 (then continued in 2011) and embark on a mainstreaming process at its different levels:

- Clarify the terms of its mission and vision to forge its identity forcefully in the field of education. Against this background, we find it is just as important to reduce material investments and concentrate more on actions that have a more promising impact on the development process (see areas 3 and 4 of its mission);
- Its strategic approach will undergo a thorough revision on this basis. This will concern the budget of the countries and the contents of the sector-based activities, then the way in which the actions will be carried out through more balanced partnerships, both those concluded in the North (for instance, a real consortium to be able to deploy the resources and have the structure needed to face large-scale projects), and in the South. The aim of this strategic review is to reduce the dispersion and number of projects in order to improve their monitoring and to guarantee the strategic coherence of the Framework Agreement;
 - ☐ At headquarters, this process will entail:
 - A pro-active communication policy to burnish the image and boost fund raising, so as to bring the resources in line with this structural development;
 - Technical ad hoc reinforcement of the "operations;"
 - ☐ Emphasis in the field will be on:
 - A stronger presence of CSI
 - Support by CSI to professionalise its key partners (overhaul of the partnership agreements, administrative and technical training schemes)
 - The repositioning of its strategic projects (entailing an update of the Logical Framework)

Coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be needed to introduce these changes gradually in the next Framework Agreement 2013-2016.

Finally, this evaluation covered also the Framework Agreement as a tool. In addition to the observations and recommendations made for the benefit of CSI, we want to capitalise on this evaluation to make the following recommendations for the Ministry:

- Having analysed the conditions of access to the Framework Agreement, and in order to ensure that such an agreement is maintained as a strategic and financial tool, the evaluation mission recommends that more detailed tendering requirements be adopted.



- We recommend a more thorough preliminary project analysis by the Ministry's teams. The evaluation of the Framework Agreement revealed in particular that some of the problems encountered in the execution of the projects could have been avoided by a more in-depth upstream analysis (i.e. when the Framework Agreement is reviewed);
 - Presentation and criticism of the political and strategic approach;
 - Presentation of a multi-year vision of the action and the financing needs;
 - Detailed formulation of the logical frameworks;
 - Technical description of the activities to be carried out.

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