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## Evaluation of 5 Luxembourg NGOs active in Burkina Faso

**Fondation Raoul Follereau Luxembourg (FFL)**

*Executive Summary*

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*Findings, judgments and recommendations expressed in this document reflect the evaluators' points of view and not necessarily the ones of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

## Executive summary

The objective of this evaluation is to check the NGO Fondation Raoul Follereau Luxembourg (FFL)'s capacity to implement the development projects efficiently and effectively, and ensure the long-term impact of these projects in terms of poverty alleviation. The evaluation was performed by analyzing the partnership between FFL and its counterparts in beneficiary countries. The analysis of the NGO was made according to the 3 circles model, which represents the entity as 3 interrelated circles: the BEING circle, the DOING circle and the RELATING circle<sup>1</sup>.

### Regarding the BEING circle

Established in 1984, the Fondation Raoul Follereau Luxembourg (FFL) started its battle against leprosy at its inception; and, among other things, also took part in the creation of the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP). Today, it is no longer a member of this association. The foundation has broadened its scope of activities to include other infectious diseases while maintaining exclusion, in all of its forms, as one of its main priorities today.

From the outset, Raoul Follereau's reputation has bestowed the NGO with recognition from both the Luxembourgish and the international community, forging its identity in the North. However, this identity could also lead to confusion with the French Raoul Follereau foundation, from which it has distanced itself.

The foundation has no strategic plan *per se*. However, the 2011-2015 framework agreement represents a first step in the formalization and operationalization of a strategy. Its strategic orientation is not currently clearly defined: to this day, a branch model coexists together with partnerships, without a fully completed governance structure of these models.

FFL is composed of several governing bodies: an executive office and a board of directors. Although the statutes mention a management committee, to which the foundation could delegate some of its every day management powers, this committee is not operational.

The board of directors is composed of 17 volunteers. They meet regularly in order to be updated on FFL's activities and to take the important decisions, such as voting and validating the budgets. Apart from 2 members, the board does not have an executive function. These two are 1) the president, who, in accordance with the statutes, holds the position of delegated administrator for current affairs, and 2) a newly appointed member.

The executive office is composed of three divisions, each supervised by one head: the finance and ICT (information and communication technology) division, the public relations division and the development assistance projects division. For the latter, FFL opted for a matrix organization due to the extent of its interventions (work on 4 topics in 9 countries). This helped open up the management and maintain a coherent global approach. The small size of the structure and the proximity of the director mean that the decisions made in the office are mostly consensual.

There are no job descriptions for the staff. In the case of the director, the absence of a clear definition of his role and the limits of his responsibilities are even more problematic in the sense that there is a delegated administrator who also has operational management functions. It seems that the function of director within FFL is considered more as a way of identifying a privileged spokesperson for all communication between the board and the executive office, rather than an actual managerial position.

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<sup>1</sup> Source : INTRAC

In practice, this problem can be seen in the power mechanisms set up within FFL. The foundation chose to cumulate the functions of Chairman of the board and delegated administrator. This is not contrary to best practices, provided that an efficient counter-power system is in place, which is not the case in FFL.

Regarding project expenses, the principles of four eyes and task segregation are applied. The director has the same authority to sign as any other employee, meaning that he is only entitled to make internal transfers from one account to another within the same bank and can thus not sign any payments. Only board members have the authority to sign.

There is no actual human resource management system other than administration management (sending of the information to the appointed trustee, vacation calculation, etc.). In addition to the absence of its employees' job descriptions, FFL does not have an appraisal system for its human resources, no specific bonus or sanction system, nor internal rules to organize the workload.

The accounting and administration services are controlled by a large number of procedures which were developed by the foundation and listed in the *Procedures manual, rules and regulations which govern the FFL's relationship with its partners in the South*. As indicated in this title, these procedures apply mainly to the partners in the South and help them to structure their activities. There are also a certain number of circulars that define the foundation's expectations towards its partners. These also contribute to the implementation of a formalized internal communication.

Over the last few years, the NGO has invested heavily in its external communication, notably with the creation of a public relations committee which takes care of the foundation's image, awareness-raising activities and fundraising. The professional use of every available media has allowed it to increase its visibility and reach a high level of fundraising.

### Regarding the BEING circle

The foundation is active in about ten countries in the South, and has projects in both rural and urban areas. Its activities concentrate on 3 sectors: health, education/ vocational training and local development via social services. These activities are in line with the sectorial priorities and strategies of the Luxembourg and the recipient country cooperation (i.e. Burkina Faso in the context of this evaluation). In the latter case, FFL seeks, in addition, to get official recognition and/or to integrate its health infrastructure and training into the national structures which are dependent on the State.

Although the environmental theme is not a priority for the FFL in the context of its health and education activities, it is nonetheless integrated into its projects through aspects linked to environmental hygiene (e.g. medical waste treatment). The situation differs for the gender dimension, which is at its level inherent to all its activities. The aspect of governance/participatory development is not neglected either, as the local populations contribute to the daily management of the health community centers set up by the foundation and integrated into the national sanitation pyramid.

Operational monitoring is based on monthly, quarterly and annual reports filed by the privileged partners. These include both a narrative and a financial section which include all the requested supporting documents. However, the amount of information which is generated and shared by the partners to meet FFL's requirements is such that, if the human resources remain at their current level, the importance of the amount of documentation to be processed will become inversely proportionate to the quality of analysis and follow-up.

Procedures are developed according to a top-down approach. However, this process presents several flaws. In addition to the absence of a finalized participatory approach, it further includes the risk of having to follow procedures which are not aligned with the

realities on the field. Finally, the ex-post changes made to the procedures result in confusion for all the operators in charge of implementing them.

Regarding budget monitoring, FFL has set up a system to reassign remaining balances on a quarterly basis (internally to one project or between projects). This system helps to reach a global execution rate of 100%, but does not allow to keep track the original planned budget.

The NGO has developed a professional approach to project cycle management which takes into account the different stages of the project cycle, including the use of external evaluations and financial audits. The identification stage is left to the partners who carry out a documented diagnosis of the existing needs together with the final beneficiaries and local actors. During this phase, the partners are also included in the development of the logic framework, and do not hesitate to carry out feasibility studies to support the project. The preparation of the latter is very professional: the logic frameworks are well formulated. The partners are in charge of ensuring the execution and the management of the projects, whereas FFL monitors their progress. In addition to the annual monitoring field visits, FFL evaluates between 3 and 4 projects per year, with the support of external consultants.

Up to now, FFL's operational strategy consists in a project by project approach which, grouped together according to topic, are then called programs. However, FFL has all the necessary resources to develop its cooperation towards an actual program approach. Indeed, this could be done either through a horizontal integration (processing one topic, and addressing it via projects in complementary sectors) or through a vertical integration (processing one topic by implementing projects which apply to different steps of the value chain for a same sector).

## Regarding the partnership-relationship

FFL seeks to have a privileged partner in every country. This partner can either be a project leader or an intermediary for other local organizations. In this respect, the foundation has favored the implementation of an "ownership" system, promoting "branch" systems at the local level. The long-term objective of this is to maintain a direct relationship exclusively with these branches, with a view for them to execute their projects directly or through a local partner. In compliance with the terms of reference of this evaluation, we focused on the relationship with the FFL branch in Burkina Faso (i.e. AAB-FFL), with FFL on the one hand and the local partners, including the Religieux St-Vincent de Paul (RSVP), on the other.

AAB-FFL is a legally independent structure which was created in 2013. Considering its youth, it benefits from the support of FFL's formal representative in West Africa to help in the application of its institutional relations with FFL. At a local level, AAB-FFL is in contact with both private and public actors. However, on an international level, AAB-FFL is limited to its relationship with FFL.

The local partnerships are only formalized following thorough assessment by FFL of the potential partner. These include a field visit, a documentary analysis of reports, legal documents, an assessment of the financial situation, interviews, etc.

FFL acts as a financing NGO towards its branch, and does not provide any sectorial technical advice (health, education, etc). AAB-FFL's position is different. Its staff, in particular its director, have field experience which they make available to their local partners through discussions and exchanges. Regarding the other aspect of the partnership relationship, i.e. the management advice, follow-up and monitoring, both the FFL and the AAB-FFL adopt a position of technical expert and the intervention rules are quite directive. FFL makes decisions on the operational procedures and processes of its branch, without allowing any independence in terms of management, and the branch applies the headquarters' rules.

The relationship between FFL and AAB-FFL is formalized in a framework protocol for partnership. Although this document defines both parties' obligations, there is nonetheless a difference between what is written down and what is practiced in reality in terms of roles and responsibilities. We recommend that this protocol formalize the relationship, in particular both parties' roles and responsibilities, in a thorough and complete way. On the other hand, the relationships between AAB-FFL and the local partners are formalized through a partnership agreement. FFL/AAB-FFL executes its contractual commitments and the local partner executes the project under the supervision of FFL.

The main values innate to the implementation of the projects are reporting, transparency, control and the rigor with which FFL procedures are applied to all its branches. In order to ensure a high quality of work, FFL does not hesitate to increase the level of expertise of its partners or to provide them with support in order to meet the level of requirements necessary for the collaboration (reporting, etc.). This is also done in order to create a sense of belonging to the FFL network. With this in mind, the partners receive trainings on project structure, reporting, etc. but also on formalization aspects of the relationship and its daily tasks. If, in the long-term, the partners are incapable of meeting the level of requirements, FFL puts an end to the partnership relationship.

Although the principle of accountability reporting and transparency towards all donors (both public and private) is fundamental and legitimate, we notice that FFL tends to confuse this principle with its method of application. Indeed, the foundation has a tendency to demand the execution of certain methods which might be ill-adapted to local practices. This illustrates the fact that FFL overlooks certain of the development cooperation's basic principles, i.e. the aligning of its practices with the local context and the appropriation of these practices by the local actors.

## Conclusions

FFL is an NGO that executes many projects, and works in areas that are tackled only by a few NGOs. This lends great importance to the presence of the foundation on the ground. The NGO has significant means at its disposal to execute its mission and organizes itself accordingly. It is stressed that neither the validity of FFL's activities, nor the results obtained as planned<sup>2</sup> are put into question in this evaluation. However, we would like to shed light on the mindset, which prevails within the foundation in its partnership relationship and governance mechanisms. It is vital that FFL choses the model it wants to develop according to the partners: branches or partnerships.

In the event of a branch model, we recommend that 1) the responsibilities be incumbent, in a judicially explicit manner, on those who hold the actual rights, whether objective or tacit. We could otherwise face the risk that the actual model be if not judicially, then ethically, incorrect and 2) that the FFL would conduct the process to its logical conclusion, meaning it would also decentralize the powers for the branches. In the event of a partnership model, the issue of the partnership relationship between FFL and its various local partners would have to be resolved.

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<sup>2</sup> In compliance with the terms of reference of this evaluation, no project evaluation was done.