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Direction de la coopération  
au développement et  
de l'action humanitaire

# **Evaluation of 5 Luxembourg NGOs active in Burkina Faso**

## **Jongbaueren a Jongwënzer – Service coopération (JBJW-SC)**

*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 capacity of the NGO Jongbaueren a Jongwënzer – Service coopération's (JB JW-SC) to implement its development projects efficiently and effectively, and to ensure the long-term impact of these projects in terms of poverty alleviation.

The evaluation was conducted by analyzing the relationship between JB JW-SC and its counterparts in Burkina Faso. 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

JB JW-SC is part of the young rural Catholic movement in Luxembourg (Lëtzebuenger Landjugend Jongbaueren a Jongwënzer - LLJB JW), which constitutes the basis of its members and donors.

Despite the small size of the NGO and its interconnections with the LLJB JW, the different levels of power are well separated between the established levels of governance, and the control mechanisms are naturally applied throughout the "chain of command".

Both the board and the staff are familiar with development cooperation, and they act and make their decisions with common sense, based on the reflexes that have been gained with experience. The work is done in total transparency, in an almost family-like spirit of cohesion.

Besides the mission statement presented in the NGO's statutes, JB JW-SC's strategy is not formalized into a central document. This represents a loss of opportunity in terms of defining the long and mid-term vision, the key partnerships, the necessary human and financial resources for the execution of this mission, etc. Moreover, beyond its contribution in terms of guidance regarding the activities to undertake, the elaboration of a strategic plan constitutes an opportune moment to reflect and cast a critical eye on past elements and future challenges.

Regarding the visibility of JB JW-SC's activities, it would be interesting for the NGO to evaluate the opportunity to reinstate a volunteer system, not only with the LLJB JW members, but also with the larger public (e.g. students from the Lycée Technique Agricole – LTA – of Ettelbrück). Once they have returned from their mission, volunteers represent an additional pool for the designation of board members, and an extra means to ensure the NGO's visibility/publicity.

Apart from the celebration of the association's fiftieth anniversary, which generated exceptional enthusiasm, the NGO's fundraising is steady and its financial sustainability is not to be questioned. Moreover, the association has sufficient financial resources to ensure fulfilling its requirements in the context of its co-funding agreements. Formalizing its fundraising strategy could offer the additional advantage of establishing quantitative objectives, as well as means and channels to use according to the chosen target audience.

JB JW-SC's external communication is done through several media (publication in a monthly magazine, on the occasion of events or through participation at fairs). Along with this fundraising plan, we further recommend defining a communication plan. This would permit the adoption of a strategy for increasing the NGO's global visibility with a view to the promotion of its activities and the raising of funds. In this regard, it will be necessary to use adapted tools for fundraising (e.g. website which includes the possibility to donate online), and to be able to use this capacity to trace these donations in order to adapt the communication methods, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: INTRAC

## Regarding the DOING circle

JBJW-SC's activities in its three areas of intervention (agriculture / food security, health and vocational training) are in line with the Luxembourgish cooperation's priorities and strategies as well as with the international agreements. The transversal "environmental" theme is taken into consideration through the promotion of renewable energy, recycling and the promotion of a sustainable agriculture that respects its natural environment. The gender issue is also touched upon: when the projects being implemented are not specifically dedicated to them (e.g. construction of a maternity hospital), care is taken to systematically include women into their beneficiary groups. The governance aspect is taken into account to the extent that all JBJW-SC's projects dedicate a part of their budget to the institutional strengthening of their local partners and the core organizations that are involved in the projects.

At the basic level, project monitoring is performed by the local partners, who periodically report the budgetary execution and the development of activities. However, one can note that the quality of reporting varies according to each partner's expertise. Therefore, JBJW-SC must make sure that all its partners are at the same level in terms of management competencies. The NGO is in very regular contact with the actors on the field, organizes regular visits and resorts to regular institutional and financial audits.

There are two main periods in the history of JBJW-SC: before and after the recruitment of the salaried person, whose time is fully dedicated to project management. Beyond a distinction between volunteering and salary-based work, this transition brought a renewed dynamic, professionalism and rigor to the organization.

The NGO would gain even more in terms of professionalization, should a real risk management strategy be put into place. This analysis can be applied both to the projects during the project cycle stages and during the different phases of the partnership lifecycle.

During the reflection on the potential implementation of a new project, aspects relating to relevance, and financial and operational sustainability, are touched upon without being properly analyzed or even questioned. The evaluation of local partners' operational skills remains superficial and can be compared to a confirmation of intuitions based on empirical evidence rather than an in-depth assessment followed by a documented analysis. Besides, the partners' management capabilities have never been subjected to a specific ex-ante analysis.

The implementation of projects has suffered from an approximate formulation, which was sometimes lacking a causal link between the actions undertaken and the specific objectives, and between the specific objectives and the general objective. As often, the indicators lack exactitude or are impossible to measure due to their vague formulation.

JBJW-SC has integrated the resort to institutional evaluations and external financial audits into its practices. The NGO values the contribution of these analyses, which allow it to improve its practices, and, upon occasion, to open a discussion with its local partners based on a neutral and third-party vision.

## Regarding the analysis of the partnership

The NGO's activities are implemented through long-term historical partnerships. The choice of partners was the result of a sentimental choice, based on a mutual positive recognition and appreciation, rather than on an in-depth analysis of one another's capacities. This informal approach automatically entails that the quality of the partnership relationships and the commitment towards the projects varies according to the partner.

The following observations exclude the partnership with LTA for whom JBJW-SC has implemented certain projects. This situation led JBJW-SC to play a more distant role in the project, so much so that it omitted to apply common sense and good governance principles (e.g. there was no analysis of LTA's capacity to lead a technical construction project in a developing country, no convention was signed between both parties, the management of the North-South relationship was delegated to LTA, there was a late implication in the execution of the project, etc.).

To a certain extent, both parties are held responsible for the failure of the bio-latrines project at the Lycée Yadéga in Burkina Faso. However, due to the absence of a signed convention and an analysis of LTA's capacity to support a potential financial risk, JBJW-SC must take full financial responsibility for the project.

In the context of its other partnerships, JBJW-SC's position in the partnership relationship depends on its partner. Indeed, JBJW-SC mainly places itself in the position of a financial cooperation with the congregation of the Sœurs Sainte-Marie de Namur, whereas the NGO will adopt the role of facilitator in its collaboration with AMUS, to the extent that the relationship also has a technical aspect to it.

Service agreements formalize both parties' expectations, but have proven to be incomplete with regard to the actual roles and responsibilities borne by one another. It is recommended that the formal documents be aligned with the reality of the field.

The partners we were able to interview deemed the relationships as being cordial, based on mutual respect and on regular exchanges of information. Field visits are also organized every year. The management of the partnership relationship within JBJW-SC is completely assured by a volunteer. The latter has spent many years in Burkina Faso, during which he developed a strong friendship with his counterparts on the field, including the managers of AMUS. The closeness of the friendship resulted in the development of a relationship of trust. However, this caused unfortunate side effects. Indeed, it created an excess of confidence and a *politeness* between partners which prevented them from easily questioning certain postulates, from criticizing and ensuring that the partnership relationship would be carried out with the same rigor as a professional, non-sentimental relationship. The arrival of a salaried project officer somehow managed to change this equation. Many would suggest that the relationship has lost some of its warmth. However, it has also gained in professionalism, which, it should be mentioned, should constitute its primary aspect. We recommend continuing in this direction, in keeping with the mutual respect and recognition that has been established since the start.

In Burkina Faso, the CTAA project is entering a new phase, during which the quality and wealth of exchanges constitutes a key factor of its success, insofar as the expected results are based on the institutional and managerial capacity-building of both the center and of AMUS. The partnership relationship must inevitably restore the balance in terms of communication, procedures and technical assistance.

A new institutional audit of AMUS would help take into account the 5 essential capacities that are expected of a partner as well as the appropriate measures to be implemented.

## Conclusions and future leads

Taking into account its 55 years of experience, JBJW-SC is a small NGO that has matured and has known how to capitalize throughout its projects. The association also diversified its field of activities, not limiting it to fighting malnutrition through agriculture, but also by other means such as improving health care services. Other projects were also launched over time, notably in the education field.

JBJW-SC is a committed and experienced organization that still lacks formalization. It seems appropriate that the NGO gives itself the means to achieve its full potential, which

implies the definition of a vision and a mission, as well as a formalized communication and fundraising strategy.

Its will to better contribute to the sustainable development of rural populations in francophone Sub-Saharan Africa has led to its professionalization. This further resulted in the early 2000s in a co-funding agreement with the Luxembourgish Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs (and of its requirements in terms of monitoring) and by the recruitment in 2012 of a part-time project manager.

Although this helped the NGO to build its capacity in terms of operational project management, efforts remain to be made with regard to its partnerships. JBJW-SC has a respectful and cordial relationship with its partners, who are independent on both an organizational and operational level. Until recently, the partnership relationship was considered as being too subjective, resulting sometimes in difficult collaborations and failures for which the NGO was not prepared. JBJW-SC's main challenge will be to go beyond the strict necessary in terms of risk management, particularly with regard to its partners.

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