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EVALUATION – Association Soleil Dans la Main

Executive summary

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The evaluation was conducted by South Research. The Ministry publishes below a summary of the main results of this exercise. Observations, assessments and recommendations expressed in this document represent the views of the evaluators and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary concerns the assessment of the organisational structure and the management of ASDM projects.

ASDM was founded in 2002. Since 2009, it has become a development NGO. From 2014 to present, ASDM has carried out, apart from other projects, five projects co-financed by the Luxembourg MAEE:

- The CNEK project 'Center Noomdo pour enfants vulnérables à Koudougou' – 2014-2017
- The PEPAB - 2 project 'Projet d'approvisionnement en eau Potable et d'assainissement dans la province du Bam 2ème Phase' - 2015-2018
- The PASP project 'Projet intégré d'amélioration et de diversification des productions agro-sylvo-pastorales dans quinze (15) villages de la commune de Kongoussi' - 2016-2019
- The BV project 'Projet d'appui à l'éducation dans la commune de Koudougou - "Bangre Veenem – La lumière du savoir' - 2018-2020
- The AM.OR.CA-EMAPE project 'Projet d'appui au Monitoring et Renforcement des Capacités des Acteurs de l'Exploitation Minière Artisanale à Petite Echelle au Burkina Faso' - 2019-2021

ASDM is operational in different regions of Burkina Faso (in the province of Boulkiemdé, the province of Bam and the province of Poni) where it works on different themes (education, agriculture, artisanal mining, etc.) and carries out several types interventions (construction, training, research, etc.).

This assessment focuses on the projects implemented in Koudougou in the province of Boulkiemdé: (1) the CNEK project which gave birth to the Noomdo Center and (2) the Bangre Veneem project which is still in progress. In these two projects, a large part of the budget is spent to the construction of a large complex and the supply of equipment for this complex.

The Findings

Organisational diagnostic findings

ASDM has a Conseil d'Administration (CA) in Luxembourg which includes volunteers who are often strongly involved in the organisation. There are also 3 employees who work within the Luxembourg section. A part-time person takes care of sensibilisation and fundraising activities in Luxembourg. An executive director, who is also one of the 3 founding members, works from home in France. He is responsible for field monitoring for all financing by the MAEE and for the capacity building component of the WAXI project. An assistant director carries out direct monitoring of all that happens in the field. He is in the field about 4 to 5 months a year. In Burkina Faso, ASDM has a national office in Ouagadougou, where the national representative, the accountant, a project manager, a project assistant, two interns (one in mapping and one in the environment) work, a liaison and household agent as well as a temporary administrative assistant. In Koudougou, at the Noomdo Center, ASDM has more than 30 operational agents in the field. In the province of Bam, ASDM has two paid local animators.

ASDM is a young dynamic organisation. Since 2002, the organisation has mainly worked *through* a project approach. It has exploited different opportunities for the implementation of different development projects. In this way, it was able to test different approaches and to grow organically as an NGO. Recently,

in the context of preparing the request for a framework agreement, the members have taken various initiatives to clarify and consolidate some of their choices. They have, for example, carried out an organisational audit and developed various management documents and tools which describe the roles and procedures to be adopted in the organisation (for example: adapted specifications, procedures manual, draft of an ethical charter , etc.).

This consolidation exercise has not yet resulted in the development of a real vision and strategy for the organisation. Even if, in general, common positions on geographic priorities, thematic priorities and the organisational approach circulate between the different levels of the organisation and seem to have been shared with a few partners, these ideas emerged, year after year and according to the needs of the moment. Thus, the organisation currently does not have a reference document, which should be the fruit of a common reflection clearly shared at all levels of the organisation and which should clearly describe the entire vision and plan of ASDM. Without a fundamental basis, with actions carried as things progress, ASDM risks being constantly tempted to adjust its strategy, its vision and its methods of intervention and working with partners according to the opportunities that occur. The organisation risks “building the projects by building the strategy” and at the same time, “building the strategy by building the projects”. In the long term, this holds a real risk that the organisation will find itself in contradictory situations or stray from its objectives. The lack of vision and a shared strategic framework also seems to influence the way of working and collaborating between the different levels in the organisation. As a result, this lack of vision and shared strategy at all levels of the organisation leads to a feeling of dependence of the lower levels in relation to the project manager to know the direction to take.

The organisation has invested heavily in the drafting and formalisation of certain roles and procedures. Different documents exist which describe the different roles and relationships between bodies (conventions, organisation chart, manual of procedures, etc.). When comparing documents with practice, however, the organisation appears to face some confusion and overlapping roles, which can create potential conflicts of interest.

The organisation shows great internal transparency. Following each meeting within ASDM, the different bodies receive the conclusions of the meeting in real time, that is to say through the report of the meeting which is broadcasted on the server and to which the various stakeholders of the organisation have access. Decisions are generally made between representatives of the different levels and transferred to the others within each level. This is very effective in the short term, but at the same time seems to imply a certain fragmentation in the consultation and decision-making within the organisation since there is little debate and little reflection in groups involving all stakeholders (including staff, beneficiaries, etc.) and collective organisational learning processes are rare.

ASDM also shows great external transparency. The organisation works with Orientation and Monitoring Committees (COS). There are various external actors (town halls, technical services, village development committees, etc.). These stakeholders think that ASDM is open, that the information on the basis of which decisions are made is transparent and that decisions are taken by consensus.

As far as project management capacities are concerned, ASDM has a systematic and elaborate system for identifying and designing projects. This system includes different phases : the idea of the project, the drafting of a concept note around the idea of the project, its validation by the different actors concerned and its construction / formulation within the different bodies of ASDM. Often, projects are developed by or in consultation with partners and based on diagnostic studies. In the funding request documents, the logical frameworks are too frequently limited to the description of the activities and often include very

little information on the results / changes that the organisation has set to achieve. Monitoring is mainly limited to monitoring the implementation of planned activities. Even if this monitoring is very effective, with regular reporting and a picture-reporting system, there is nevertheless little monitoring on the results and effects of the activities.

ASDM has a financial management manual which has been drawn up with the support of a research department. The procedures are rigorously applied. An ASDM general account and accounts opened by project are foreseen. All accounts have a double signature. Project managers draw up financial plans quarterly and make requests for funds. Then the resources are transferred to them. According to a partner organisation, funds for projects are transferred within a reasonable time; the transfer of funds has never blocked the implementation of activities. An internal monitoring and control system based on rigorous monitoring of account transactions exists. ASDM is also subject to external audits. The financial management system therefore seems reliable.

Fieldwork findings

Findings on the Noomdo Center

The Noomdo Center is a reception center for vulnerable children in Koudougou. The Center exists since 2009. At the beginning, it was in the center of the city but, thanks to the funding of the CNEK 2014-2017 project by the MAEE of Luxembourg, ASDM was able to build a brand new center in Peyiri, the Noomdo Center . It was inaugurated in February 2017.

At the moment, the Noomdo Center takes in 80 vulnerable children. These children are accompanied and supervised by thirty-six (36) agents, including twenty (20) permanent and sixteen (16) temporary workers. The permanent positions are occupied by one (1) director, two (2) educators, one (1) driver, one (1) accounting secretary, one (1) cook, three (3) caretakers, one (1) gardener and ten (10) nannies. The center has as temporary staff: one (1) sports coach, one (1) psychologist, two (2) nurses, one (1) theater / slam coach, two (2) primary school teachers, three (3) Math PC supervisors, two (2) French-English supervisors and two (2) STV-History-Geography supervisors.

The Noomdo Center is appreciated by the beneficiary children and their "parents". Not only does the center house these children, but it also supports them on several levels: education in general, schooling, food, medical care, various sports activities, as well as psychological and social well-being. At the same time, these parents and children share certain concerns. They hope that the Center will also take care of the socio-economic well-being of their families and improve the living conditions of their families. In relation to these concerns, the Noomdo Center is currently faced with some challenges and questions such as: How to reintegrate children into their respective families or, in the event that they cannot be reintegrated into their own families, with other people from the community or society? How to support the family taking over the child? On these current challenges of the Noomdo Center, some small reflections and experiments have started.

The framing is of high quality. The building and equipment are in very good condition. The Noomdo Center is well managed and organised but is not completely full since it currently houses 80 vulnerable children for around 130 places available.

The Noomdo Center has an efficient monitoring system for children's activities. The activities are carried out within the set deadlines and the monitoring of the children is well done in real time. At the same time, it should be noted that this monitoring is limited only to activities done with children and does not present

the *output* of the Noomdo Center. There is no monitoring and evaluation system for certain potential longer-term objectives yet, such as the reintegration of the child into his family and society, but the organisation has the ambition to implement such a system in the near future.

In the Center Noomdo project, we can distinguish two (2) types of partners: government partners (such as state technical services, town hall, etc.), and non-government partners. There is a big difference in the appreciation of these two (2) types of partners for ASDM. State partners appreciate the relationship with ASDM more positively than non-governmental partners.

Findings on Bangre Veneem

Bangre Veneem is a project to build a school complex. The project started in 2017 and would end in 2020. Currently it is still in progress. The school complex is in the construction phase. The assessments on this project must therefore be considered in this particular context.

It is difficult to appreciate the relevance of the entire school complex. Nevertheless, the basic study and the testimonies clearly indicate that the future high school meets a real need of the community of Peyiri / Youlou. The relevance is less obvious for other elements of the Bangre Veneem project (the Centre de Lecture et de Promotion des Activités Culturelles (CELPAC)).

All the actors interviewed by South Research believe that the future high school will be built and open its doors before the start of the next school year. For some buildings it is not very certain whether they will also be built in time. For example, for the CELPAC building, ASDM is awaiting for reimbursement of VAT, which, according to NGO officials, makes its construction uncertain¹.

As the Bangre Veneem project is ongoing, it is not possible to assess its efficiency.

With regard to the sustainability of the Bangre Veneem project, various measures have been taken to make the school complex self-sufficient and reduce dependence on the ASDM project. The Bangre Veneem project was designed in collaboration with local authorities and is monitored by them. It is planned that at the end of the project, the school complex will be handed over to the public: that is to say the State, the Comités de Gestion et de Suivi (COGES), the town hall and the Association des Mères d'Elèves (AME) and Parents d'Elèves (APE) who will take charge of the complex. Currently, the town hall says it has planned a budget for the management of the complex in 2020. However, it should be noted that one of the stakeholders, during an interview, questioned the capacity of the town hall to effectively generate or unlock the resources required for this task. It therefore remains to be seen whether the school complex will be effectively taken over by the parties identified in the project document. It is not very clear what the strategy will be to make CELPAC autonomous.

All stakeholders (Conseil Villageois de Développement, technical services of the state, staff of the Noomdo Center, children of the Noomdo Center, the town hall) believe that the school complex will have a great impact on the children of the Noomdo Center and the community of Peyiri . It is obvious that this impact can only be observed objectively a few years after the school complex and CELPAC have become 100% operational.

As part of the Bangre Veneem project, ASDM collaborates with various partners. Government partners are very positive about the collaboration with ASDM. They were involved in the formulation of the project

¹ ASDM indicates in one of the comments on the provisional report that "The schedule is clear and an amendment was signed with the architect in May 2019 to clarify the deadlines. CELPAC is awaiting VAT refunds from the state, which makes its construction potentially optional."

and are also engaged in monitoring construction and preparing the school complex for the next school year. They say they feel free to give advice to ASDM and feel heard. For the non-governmental partner, the NGO RES Publica, South Research could not collect enough information to assess the appreciation of RES Publica for its collaboration with ASDM. The manager who collaborated with ASDM was on a mission outside the country. Based on information gathered from existing staff, South Research was also unable to assess the roles that RES Publica plays or has played in the Bangre Veneem project; opinions on the collaborative relationship between ASDM and RES Publica seem to differ.

Recommendations

Organisational recommendations

ASDM is a relatively young organisation, but has grown and evolved rapidly.

As part of the preparation of the request for a framework agreement, the structure has taken various initiatives to qualify or consolidate some of its choices. It has, for example, carried out an organisational audit and developed a whole range of documents and management tools which describe the roles and procedures of the organisation (for example: adapted specifications, procedures manual, draft of the ethics charter, roadmap, etc.).

As part of the consolidation process, South Research recommends that ASDM **conducts more in-depth discussions in order to develop a more suitable strategic plan**. After a course of 15 years of organisational life, it is necessary to have a vision, a mission and a long-term strategy shared at all levels of the organisation. In this reflection, several questions must be taken into account such as: How do we want to collaborate with partners? Why do we collaborate with these partners? What are the organisation's key values? What are the red lines not to cross? Where can ASDM become an expert Does ASDM want to be operational and execute the project itself or does it want to "make do" or "do with"? What is its "intervention unity"?

It would also be interesting to **link this reflection on the vision to an exercise in further clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the different levels within the organisation**. This exercise could help avoid overlapping roles and potential conflicts of interest that appear to exist in the current organisation chart.

It is also recommended that ASDM **create meeting places between all levels of the organisation**. These meeting places can stimulate exchanges on questions of common concern and develop exchanges with all stakeholders (including beneficiaries, parents, etc.) instead of limiting the decision-making process to the primary managers of ASDM who decide and verify their decisions with external people through the COS.

In addition, ASDM is advised to **invest more in the development of a monitoring and evaluation system**. If ASDM decides to invest more in a monitoring and evaluation system and in the systematic collection and analysis of data on results and effects, precise indicators of the targeted objectives should be formulated in the funding requests in order to be able to evaluate the results / changes, instead of being limited to a quantification of the activities carried out. It is also advisable to **draw up a monitoring and evaluation manual and / or to hire someone with expertise in the monitoring and evaluation field**.

Recommendations for the Noomdo Center

The Noomdo Center has formal procedures and rules on childcare. Some ideas exist on the procedures to adopt for the process of leaving children from the Noomdo Center. The Noomdo Center is also experimenting with family support and the entry of children into the Center, and also intends to carry out tests for the exit of children from the Center. At the moment, these rules and procedures and these experiments seem to facilitate case-by-case management, but do not seem to be guided by a more general strategy. South Research recommends that the Noomdo Center and ASDM **carry out a more global and deeper strategic reflection exercise on the entry of children into the Center, the support of families, the exit of children from the Center and their reintegration into families and society**. When formulating a family support strategy (long term), an exit and reintegration strategy in families and society and an entry strategy in the Noomdo Center, it would be useful that the Center and ASDM involve in this reflection process the various stakeholders (families, children, staff, etc.) and exchange views with other NGOs that have acquired experience in this field.

In the development sector, childcare in institutions is increasingly criticised for various reasons (cost-benefit, many children have at least one parent, voluntarism in orphanages, destruction of the solidarity system traditional in kinship, etc.). It would be useful for ASDM to study and situate itself in relation to these criticisms. Such an exercise could help to refine the strategies at the Noomdo Center. ASDM is also advised to **think more about other possible avenues to optimise the use of the Noomdo Center**. A profound and comparative cost-benefit study could help ASDM to develop strategies to reduce the Centre's costs and possibly identify unnecessary expenditure items. If ASDM succeeds in reducing the costs per child, then it could probably accommodate more children in the Center.

If the Center decides to invest more in the formulation of a family support strategy and a family and society reintegration strategy, it is also advisable to establish a monitoring system taking into account developments and results to reach for each child and for each family .

Recommendations for Bangre Veneem

In general, South Research recommends that ASDM reflects on a more realistic exit strategy and on an empowerment strategy for the Bangre Veneem project and more specifically for CELPAC.