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EVALUATION – Amis du Tibet

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 presents the evaluation of Amis du Tibet, and more specifically its organizational and institutional structure and functioning.

For this evaluation, South Research assessed the strategical framework, the organizational structure, level of transparency, financial organizational capacities, project management capacities, partnership management capacities and institutional capacities. As AT has already been evaluated in 2015, we will sometimes refer to this last evaluation to indicate how the organization has evolved and how it has taken into account certain recommendations.

AT is a small organization that exists since 1995 and has been recognized as an NGO by the MAE in 1996. It organizes awareness-raising activities on the Tibetan question and supports different projects that support the Tibetan people in India and Nepal. In the field AT works with partner organizations. Its traditional partner is Tibetan Children's Villages (TCV), but in recent years AT has also collaborated with Clinique Shechen, Snow Lion Foundation and Social and Resource Development (SARD) which is a branch of the the Central Tibetan Development Administration (CTA). AT invests heavily in construction projects, but also focuses on education, sanitation and prevention. After earthquake in Nepal the 2015, AT also funded humanitarian interventions.

The evaluation of AT organizational capacities was done on the basis of a document review, individual interviews and self-assessment, exchanges during a workshop of comparison and restitution and exchanges on the basis of the draft report. Based on the data collected through these different sources of information (documents, interviews, self-assessment grid, workshop of 2 July and reactions and comments to the draft report) we have come up with the following findings and recommendations.

Findings

The goal of AT is "1. to support and to help the Tibetan people in their efforts to survive, to safeguard their national, cultural and religious identity and to assert their right to self-determination; 2. to work in a peaceful manner to achieve respect for human rights of the Tibetan people; 3. to raise public awareness about the urgent need to safeguard and restore Tibet's cultural and ecological heritage; 4. to initiate and support development cooperation projects related to this social purpose".¹ This vision is shared throughout the organization. There is a common understanding, shared between the interviewees, of the organization's current mission in AT.

At the same time, it can be observed that this vision has not yet been translated into a medium- or long-term strategy. Up until now, AT seems to have worked according to the rhythm of calls for projects. That is, AT works from year to year, from project to project. In this manner, AT has over the last years been involved in different kind of projects: construction and renovation projects, education projects, vaccination projects, sanitation and hygiene projects, a dental laboratory support project in India and Nepal, etc.

¹ Statutes AT. See: http://www.amisdutibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/statuts_AmisDuTibet.pdf.

Although the formulation of a comprehensive strategy was one of the key recommendations of the 2015 evaluation, AT has not yet succeeded in formulating and implementing such a strategy. Indeed, during the 2015 evaluation, the evaluators observed that AT was going through a process of institutional renewal (with the expansion and development of the Board, and the creation of different working groups, etc.) However, the NGDO had “not yet succeeded in formulating a comprehensive and coherent strategy that maximizes its contributions to sustainable development at the operational level. The institutional renewal process, still in the construction phase, is an opportunity to move forward in decision-making”.² At the moment, the process of formulating a global strategy therefor is still ongoing.

AT consists of 2 employees and a group of volunteers. In the organization the 2 employees and 4 volunteers, who all work in the project group, are key actors that drive the organization to adapt and to change. So there is a certain dynamism in the organization. At the same time, it is questionable whether, at the human resources level, AT has sufficient resources and capacities to deal with the challenges and challenges facing the organization today. The fact that the 4 different working groups are now limited to a single working group and that the dynamism in the organization depends on 6 people, including 4 volunteers, raises the question of whether, in the near future, it is not desirable for AT to actively invest in expanding this human carrying capacity and broadening and rejuvenating its active volunteer base.

In the past, AT has been confronted with a lack of internal transparency. This led the organization to adopt a new rule. Now in all email communications, all key stakeholders are put in copy so that information is shared in real time and between different people and different levels. This new rule of total transparency seems to have facilitated internal communication between the volunteers, employees and partners. In terms of transparency towards partners, we observed that the recommendation of the 2015 evaluation, i.e. to always provide relevant documents to partners in English and to make restitutions during monitoring missions, was not always followed. Not all monitoring mission reports of follow-up missions are nowadays written in English and the quality of these reports differs greatly.

Within the organization, measures exist or have been taken to ensure that project management is of high quality. Nevertheless, we observe that, even if we follow the structure of the logical framework, most of the information in the logical framework is information on activities. The logic between activities, results and specific objectives is not always very clear. The focus is mainly on the implementation of activities and not on deeper results and changes in the longer term. Monitoring is often done by volunteers, but there is no common and shared approach to monitoring. In project management, AT has little exchange with other NGO donors who fund parts of the same projects.

AT has no specific financial policies or procedures. At the same time, the necessary human financial management capacity exists within the organization. To finance its operation, AT has different sources of funds. Some of these sources may come under pressure. For example, fundraising by sponsorships may suffer from changes in the Tibetan context.

The organization works organically. The division of tasks is briefly described in the internal and administrative regulations, but there are no job descriptions. A learning strategy also exists. AT suggests in the self-assessment that this is not necessary given the size of the organization. Nevertheless, if AT wishes to become a structure that works in a more systematic way, then it could be useful to clearly outline, through job descriptions or another document, the tasks and responsibilities of each person (also in the context of the formulation and implementation of a general strategy). In addition, the decision-

² See: Evaluation Report 2015.

making processes and implementation processes seem to be very organic and informal. There is no clear planning (with deadlines, goals to be achieved, clear identification of who does what, internal evaluations, etc.) for decision-making and implementation of these decisions. This is illustrated, among other things, by the lack of uniformity in missions and monitoring reports.

AT collaborates with different partners. Its traditional partner is TCV but AT also works with other partners, i.e. Clinique Shechen, SARD and Snow Lion Foundation. These partners differ. Clinique Shechen and TCV are organizations that provide basic services, such as medical care or education, while SARD is an administrative branch of CTA, the governmental body (not recognized as such) of the Tibetan diaspora. Although an NGO, SARD thus has more characteristics of a governmental administration. These different types of partner organizations also lead to different visions of development projects. There is no partnership strategy at AT that explains this choice of partners. The partners we talked to are very happy with their relationship with AT. They are very friendly and convivial.

AT has invested heavily in the capacity building of its partner organizations. In line with the recommendations of the 2015 evaluation, it invested mainly in strengthening the capacities of partners for the proper management of development projects (logical framework, reporting, project cycle). Perhaps it might be worth investing in self-assessment and organizational capacity diagnostic tools (e.g. the 5-capacity model) to identify, with partners, the capacities to be strengthened and then develop capacity building trajectories?

At the level of institutional capacities, AT certainly has potential capacities but does not always seem to use this potential. At this time, it is probably not a priority for the organization.

Strategic recommendations

If AT wants to remain a relevant organization, in Luxembourg and in Tibet, it is necessary and urgent that it makes choices on its long-term strategy. It must take advantage of the current momentum and decide, in a rather radical and rapid manner, on the question of the global strategy. On the basis of our findings, we advise AT to consider the reflection on strategy as a global reflection. The reflection should not be limited to sectoral and geographical priorities, but should also include a reflection on the fundraising model in Luxembourg, the content of awareness and education activities, and relations with public support in Luxembourg. In addition, this reflection on the long-term strategy must include a reflection on the partnership (why collaborate with a certain partner, what is the added value and specificity of AT in this collaboration, etc.) and be aligned with the development of a multi-year financial plan.

To increase its human capacity, AT is advised to actively invest in expanding and rejuvenating its active volunteer base and Board of Directors (BoD). In future volunteer recruitment processes, it is also advisable to make targeted recruitment and attract volunteers with specific profiles.

To gain efficiency in project management, it is advisable for AT to interact with other donor NGOs contributing to the same projects and to align the different reports, strategies, objectives and monitoring with those of other NGOs. In addition, AT is advised to identify, among this multitude of donor NGOs, the specificity and added value, apart from its financial support, of AT for its partners.

It is also advisable to initiate a reflection exercise on monitoring and evaluation (including the purpose of this monitoring and evaluation and the added value that this monitoring can offer to partners and projects) and to develop a uniform approach and a fixed format for the monitoring (report).