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ORGANISATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE NGO "AIDE AU VIETNAM - AAV"

In 2022, the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs commissioned an organisational evaluation of 11 NGDOs. Among these was AAV. The evaluation was carried out by "Artemis Information management s.a". A summary of the main results is given below.

The analysis made and the recommendations expressed in this document represent the views of the evaluators and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry or of the NGDO.

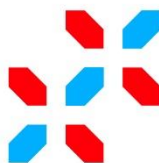
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Between November 2022 and April 2023, Artemis carried out an organisational evaluation of 11 non-governmental development organisations (NGDO) based in Luxembourg on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – Directorate for Development Cooperation (MAEE-DCD). These NGDOs included Aide au Vietnam - AAV. The MAEE and the NGDOs concerned were informed in advance of the methodology to be used in the evaluation, which built in particular on a self-diagnosis workshop as a framework for an exchange between the evaluators and the NGO on the preliminary conclusions of the evaluation, and on a meeting to present the provisional report to the MAEE. The report presents the analyses carried out by the team of evaluators, together with their conclusions and recommendations.

Created in 2000 in response to a specific need, the NGO has later developed around projects designed to support populations in precarious and/or temporarily fragile situations and to improve the living conditions of those most in need. In 2007, the NGO received its first approval as a development NGO from the MAEE; since then, in addition to its own financing activities, it has committed more than 1 million euros to projects co-financed by the MAE and the commune of Bettembourg. The last co-funded project ended in 2019, a year that saw a pause in the raising of funds from the government and the gradual disengagement of several founding members.

In mid-2022, the Board of Directors was largely renewed and a new, dynamic and motivated team took the reins. The current management team is small (3 people) and is actively seeking new members to reinforce the Board, share the workload and bring in new skills, particularly in the field of development cooperation. It can count on a base of loyal volunteers who are willing to support occasional fundraising activities or to make a technical contribution limited to the life of the NGO but, unfortunately, not really to commit themselves in a deeper way.

Since its creation, the NGO has progressed on the basis of a rather vague mission and broad objectives that have not allowed it to define priorities for the various requests it receives from its local partners. While the ad hoc responses given to these requests have certainly helped local partners to develop their activities in support of the poorest, it is still difficult today to draw up a clear picture of the impact that these contributions have had overall. The projects are highly diverse, and the fact that the NGO's resources are scattered in different directions does not contribute to creating an overall coherence of the results. Aware of the urgent need to establish priorities, the new Board has already started an internal process to reflect on the mission and the objectives of the NGO.

The NGO has made a point of ensuring the transparency of its activities and funding. All of its financial accounts and project budgets can be consulted on its website. This is undoubtedly a strong point and one likely to generate confidence among its donors and partners. Although the funding sources for the NGO's projects have always been greatly diversified, income has dropped off in recent years. In the past three years, AAV has financed its interventions by taking from its reserves, a situation that cannot be sustained in the long term. For this reason as well, the quest for funding from all current and potential donors needs to be reinvigorated.

The NGO has now entered a transitional phase which should enable the new team to position itself for the future of the structure and its operations. The evaluation was an opportunity to highlight the NGO's strengths and weaknesses and to propose guidelines for improvement and renovation that the new Board intends to deploy in the future. In December 2022, the MAEE renewed AAV's approval for two years, during which the NGO will have to complete its overhaul.

Against this backdrop, the evaluators proposed a set of 14 recommendations that target different aspects of the NGO's work, such as work organisation, strategic approach, finances, human resources and the management of the cooperation projects themselves.

Overall, the evaluators recommend that efforts be stepped up to strengthen the Board and to bring in new skills in areas such as management of the NGO and monitoring of its activities. This will enable a better distribution of the workload and lead to professionalisation of the NGO's practices.

The internal work organisation must be reviewed in order to reconstitute and centralise all the project documentation, which was lost when some of the founding members left. Special emphasis needs to be put on external communication to increase visibility of the NGO and to mobilise donors.

The NGO's missions and objectives will have to be redesigned, transforming them into a logical framework within which to manage its interventions and to select the requests that the NGO receives regularly from its local partners. This will help reduce the dispersal of activities. In this context, account will need to be taken of the priorities and cross-cutting issues on which Luxembourg's development cooperation is founded.

Regarding finance, it is recommended that balance be restored rapidly between incoming funds and commitments.

It is also recommended that efforts and investment in human resources training and capacity building be continued, particularly in the field of development cooperation and project management.

Finally, as regards projects, partnerships need to be consolidated locally, with a clear definition of each party's responsibilities and the boundaries of the NGO's interventions. On this last point, there is an urgent need to involve local partners in discussions on their own financing methods which would allow a soft exit from the NGO's support. Improvements must also be made to the reporting formats to better correspond to the quality criteria that implementation of a new MAEE co-financing would imply.