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ORGANISATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE NGO Société Kolping du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg asbl

In 2022, the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs commissioned an organisational evaluation of 11 NGOs benefiting from public funding. Among these was Société Kolping du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg asbl. 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 NGO.

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The non-governmental organisation (NGO) Société Kolping du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg asbl was founded in 1961, as a result of an association of like-minded people forming part of an international movement. It now has about 80 members, all volunteers, divided into two local sections, the Centre section covering the centre, east and south of the country and the Feulen section covering the north.

Approved in 1986, making it one of the first NGOs to be approved by the MAEE, Kolping Luxembourg asbl has implemented some fifteen development aid projects, including nine since 2000, in Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These projects focus on access to drinking water and sanitation, livestock/agriculture and primary education. The NGO has refocused geographically since 2018 and only works in one province of the DRC, with a local partner. Its core business remains the collection of used clothing in Luxembourg for recycling (circular economy). This collection is the NGO's main source of funding (own funds).

As the NGO has not been evaluated before and the MAEE only has a partial view of the NGO's structure and its key people, the MAEE wanted it to be included in the group of 11 NGOs benefiting from an organisational evaluation in 2022 -2023. This evaluation was conducted by Artemis, which engaged a team of five experts.

The evaluation took place in good conditions and in full transparency. The NGO was very open and available.

These are the results of the evaluation:

The NGO's organisational capacity & project implementation performance

Governance and leadership: The NGO's Board of Directors had 10 members in 2022, all volunteers. Gender representation is balanced and the average age of the Board is almost 67 years old. While all members contribute to the organisation of the collection of old clothes, only seven members play specific roles and/or regularly attend Board meetings. All of them attend the General Meeting, on the other hand. In recent years, the NGO has found it hard to get young volunteers involved, apart from occasional events for the collection of old clothes. Due to the average age of the Board and the foreseeable shortage of successors, the NGO is pondering an "exit strategy" for the coming years. All decisions are taken democratically by the Board, by a majority vote, and the NGO demonstrates great transparency on its internal management and activities with its members. Following discussions with the team of evaluators, the NGO asked a service provider to help it set up an electronic document management system on a shared space, in order to make its documents more accessible and to automate backups.

The proper functioning of the NGO heavily depends on one person, its Chairwoman, a veritable powerhouse who organises, coordinates and performs numerous operational roles. She holds a lot of information and the institutional memory of the NGO, and knows all its inner workings. She is constantly wondering who is going to succeed her within the next ten years, without ever coming up with a solution.

Strategy: The NGO currently states its mission as "fighting for progress, the right to training and work, in order to: guarantee people a better quality of life, the chance to develop an economy and their social position, and the setting up of vocational training centres." It defines itself as a "democratic, catholic community" and upholds the values of social justice, the enhancement of family, profession, religion and society. Kolping Luxembourg asbl has not explicitly formulated its general strategy, but has initiated a programme of reflection and internal discussion on the use of its funds, its future relationship with its long-standing partner in the North, the CIRP, and its vision for 2035, before proposing a merger with the latter.

As regards its international activities, the NGO has been focusing on the Lualaba Province in the DRC, due to limited monitoring capabilities. The idea is also to increase its local impact by concentrating its efforts on a particularly remote and disadvantaged region. As a result, the NGO can also more easily ensure the follow-up monitoring of completed projects. When meeting its beneficiaries' needs, the NGO tries to systematically ensure that: (i) its capabilities remain on site (avoiding the relocation of trained personnel to Europe), (ii) any newly expressed need is relevant for the entire community and (iii) the previously funded project was able to come to fruition (beneficiaries must "keep their promises").

Human resource management and capabilities: The proper functioning of Kolping Luxembourg asbl is based on the commitment of a few volunteer members of the Board who perform key functions, and to date no specific measures are taken internally to better ensure the separation between the executive (operational, administrative and financial) and governance, which can potentially pose a risk of conflict of interest. The NGO has chosen not to have any permanent employees thus far, but this is to be discussed as part of the strategic exercise for 2035. Kolping Luxembourg asbl makes use of the advisory services of external consultants and experts: (i) in Luxembourg to assess the quality of the garments to be sold to the German company FWS; (ii) in the DRC, for example, to carry out feasibility studies, ensure the formulation of certain projects and deal with the more technical aspects of projects. A few members have been trained in PCM/LF, as has the local partner; two have undergone training on combatting harassment and sexual exploitation.

Financial management and capabilities: The accounting system is based on simple revenue/expenditure cash accounting kept by the Treasurer. The budget is essentially controlled by the Chairwoman, who reviews every transaction and every document produced by the Treasurer. A limited audit of the accounts was not conducted in 2021 and will be done for the 2022 financial year for the renewal of the approval.

Despite not having received State subsidies in 2021, the 2021 budget year recorded a surplus due to the actions of the Aalt Gezai collection and the Container Service. The NGO's financial situation is very good with regard to accumulated cash, which amounted to 1.45 M euros at the end of 2021. This good financial health, a result of the collection of clothing but also due to donations from individuals, contributions from members and the grants given by the MAEE in some years, allows the NGO to regularly give substantial donations to associations, schools, municipalities or foundations in Luxembourg, but also internationally, particularly to contribute to humanitarian aid operations. The NGO has not developed any specific communication strategy for collecting donations and finding new donors, because the clothing collection operations provide it with sufficient funds. The NGO is now looking for a relevant alternative to invest its unused funds and is moving towards the purchase of social housing.

Project management: Not all the projects implemented by Kolping Luxembourg asbl are co-financed by the MAEE. The NGO's own funds are relatively substantial, enabling it to respond promptly to ad hoc requests from its partners and to implement projects of various sizes. The NGO sometimes supports the implementation of a project for a year, then asks the MAEE to roll it out on a larger scale. All projects implemented in the DRC are carried out in partnership with Kinyingo-Effort a.s.b.l. (K-Fort). The NGO demonstrates good mastery of each stage of project cycle management (from identification to evaluation) and of the logical framework. The monitoring framework is based on relatively well-defined results indicators, which however do not all have a due date. In any case, they are monitored quite meticulously. Under the impetus of its Chairwoman, the NGO quickly learns from its past experiences to adjust its partnerships and projects. It also makes use of project audits and external project evaluations to drive continuous improvement. There are no refresher training courses or internal ramping up at the level of the local partner, which reports some additional needs in terms of capacity building for its team.

As far as Luxembourg is concerned, the evaluation did not identify any systematic, regular best practices for the continuous improvement of its organisation and institutional functioning, other than the evaluation systematically carried out at the end of a collection operation. Activities and key tasks are not described in procedures in anticipation of a subsequent handover, for example. However, there are detailed operational documents for the planning and organisation of the collection of old clothes.

Partnership management: In both Luxembourg and the DRC, the NGO relies on long-standing, trusted partners that are sufficiently professional to meet its requirements. It appears quite clear that Kolping and K-Fort are complementary from the point of view of expertise and experience. The two partners share the same values and their strategies and missions are consonant. For the kerbside collection of old clothes, the NGO has forged a partnership with the CIRP. In their partnership agreement, 50% of the income from the kerbside collection of clothing goes to the CIRP and 50% to the NGO Kolping. All partnerships and all agreements made with experts, companies and/or professional services firms are formalised in agreements, memoranda of understanding

(MoU) or contracts. The partners' roles and responsibilities are set out in detail in the agreements, as are the reporting methods, the financing tranches and the methods of communication. While there is no specific mention of human rights, children's rights and certain cooperation areas, gender equality seems to be a major concern, as does respect for the right to education and child nutrition. Furthermore, the partnerships are well-balanced.

The effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the NGO

Effectiveness: The overall performance of the NGO Kolping Luxembourg asbl is good, in terms of both partner satisfaction and the operational and financial results obtained. The NGO meets MAEE requirements and the needs of its local partner, even though it does not have a capacity building plan. The NGO has a good image in Luxembourg, thanks to its Chairwoman's leadership, the scope of her actions in the collection of clothing and her generosity. This notwithstanding, she is not always readily identified by name but is systematically identified by association with the "yellow and orange bags" used for the collection of clothing. She has a website but her Facebook account has been inactive since 2015. The volunteers of the association hold their Chairwoman in high regard and are aware that she has many different functions; there is very little turnover at member level.

The project goals seem to have been achieved; although a one-year extension had to be requested for one of them, this was clearly justified and documented.

Efficiency: Since it does not have its own office premises and resources, the structural and operating costs of Kolping Luxembourg asbl are very low, representing 2% of the 2021 expenditure budget. In the field, members of the NGO going on monitoring missions to the DRC pay for their own plane tickets and mission expenses. The NGO optimises the use of funds intended for projects and engages local experts at reasonable costs.

Relevance: Kolping Luxembourg asbl bases its interventions on the needs expressed by the beneficiaries in the field, as appraised by studies, surveys, questionnaires and the local partner. Highly concentrated geographically, the NGO implements cohesive, linked projects in an almost holistic approach to meet the needs of local populations.

Sustainability: The NGO is not dependent on grants from the MAEE. The main factor that may affect its organisational sustainability is the issue of succession. The NGO must also ensure that it controls all the risks related to the change in regulations regarding the collection and recycling of clothing, which could affect its funds. With regard to the sustainability of its projects, the evaluation identified the following favourable factors: the social engineering around the water access projects, the local partner's contacts with the authorities, the quality of the boreholes, the maintenance of personnel after the end of projects (remunerated by IGAs) and the medium-term wage recovery plan. As for factors that are unfavourable to project sustainability, the evaluation notes that Kolping Luxembourg asbl is K-Fort's only financial backer and pays teachers' salaries from its own funds, that the local authorities do not seem to have any capability for recovery and that the needs of the people of the province appear to be endless, with one need after another.

Analysis of the integration of priority cross-cutting issues for Luxembourg's cooperation programme

Human rights: The Chairwoman and the Treasurer obtained certification on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in 2020. This is not a topic that is broached with the local partner. However, the NGO says it ensures that K-Fort's employees operate in compliance with labour law and human rights. It notes that its local partner has a very low staff turnover, which it feels proves that employees are treated decently. A committee is set up to ensure the transparency, fairness and quality of recruitment for every post.

Gender equality: The composition of the Board of the NGO is balanced in terms of gender, as is the local partner's. The project currently being co-financed has a score of 2 for gender. Taking gender into account is mainly based on specific actions aimed at meeting the needs of young girls and greater involvement of women, as well as having a balanced number of girls and boys in school. There is no gender mainstreaming strategy as such that would ensure gender equality and that the needs of men and women are covered. The evaluation did not find any gender-disaggregated indicators in Kolping's project monitoring system.

Environmental sustainability: Several options are chosen by the NGO with the aim of respecting the environment, such as the clothing collection activity, circular economy approach, construction for projects using local materials, making use of renewable energies, and environmental and social impact studies for boreholes.

Conclusions, good practices and recommendations

The NGO Kolping Luxembourg asbl is firmly rooted in Luxembourg and independent of MAEE subsidies. Its management is robust and its governance participatory and transparent. The NGO enjoys a good reputation in Luxembourg and contributes to strengthening the local social fabric. Its strategic and operational choices are informed. The NGO is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. It complies with the general conditions governing its relationship with the MAEE and adequately meets the MAEE's expectations. Kolping Luxembourg asbl is familiar with Luxembourg's cooperation strategy and meets the requirements thereof.

At organisational level, the functioning of the NGO relies on a key person with strong leadership skills who concurrently holds operational, administrative and governance functions, with little delegation. The Board is aging, it is hard to get young people involved, apart from occasional actions, and there is no medium-term succession plan (as yet). Mindful of this risk, at the end of the self-diagnosis workshop, the NGO initiated a process of reflection on the future of Kolping Luxembourg asbl and its vision for 2035. Taking stock in this way should enable it to make a decision on its future, which has been questioned internally for several years without ever coming up with a solution that is satisfactory to the Board.

Its international cooperation interventions have been refocused geographically in recent years, in line with its monitoring capabilities. In the field, it deploys an almost holistic approach to responding to basic social needs, concentrated in one province of the DRC with its long-standing local partner. It ensures the proper functioning of the partner association as far as possible and is genuinely concerned with cross-cutting issues, even if it does not have a strategy as such.

Several interesting practices have been identified by the evaluation, which could be the subject of an analysis and possibly even an exchange with other NGOs: 1. Wage recovery plan for its local partner (DRC) 2. Project design based on a detailed analysis of stakeholders, feasibility studies and the use of external expertise/professional services firms for key stages of the project (preparation, technical solutions, evaluation) and 3. Drinking water supply projects integrating social engineering components, awareness and training (concomitant "soft" and "hard" parts).

Artemis has put forward **10 recommendations** for the NGO Kolping Luxembourg asbl, covering four main themes. Five recommendations are already being implemented by the NGO.

Governance, organisation and human resources	Strategy
<p>R1 - Delegate and share out the operational and administrative tasks carried out by the Chairwoman</p>	<p>R2 – Organise a strategic seminar with the available directors to make the necessary decisions on the future of the NGO (underway)</p> <p>R3 - Define a strategy for the use and investment of the NGO's own funds (underway)</p>
Project management and sustainability	Documentation management
<p>R4 - Initiate a proper K-Fort capacity building dynamic, based on a diagnosis of skills and needs.</p> <p>R5 – Sensitise the partner to the concerns of Luxembourg's cooperation programme and integrate these into the partnership agreement: general strategy and cross-cutting issues</p> <p>R6 - Ensure the separation of operational and governance functions in K-Fort</p> <p>R7 - With a view to continuing interventions in the DRC, adopt a gender mainstreaming strategy in the projects to guarantee respect for the specific needs of the men and women who benefit from the interventions implemented by the local partner.</p> <p>R8 – With a view to consolidating K-Fort's position in its environment, Kolping Luxembourg asbl could apply to the local authorities for more institutional support.</p> <p>R9 – Clarify the effects of the new regulations on the recycling of clothing and the end-of-life disposal of non-reusable/recyclable clothing (underway)</p>	<p>R10 – Set up an automatic backup and file sharing system accessible by all members concerned (underway)</p> <p>R10bis - Ensure that the signed versions of all documents such as partnership agreements and contracts are archived in the system (underway)</p>