

Executive Summary

The objectives of the review were to assess the performance and to appreciate the project results according to DAC criteria; relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and transversal themes. Additional questions were to assess the synergy between the project and other BTC sectoral projects and to compare this particular SDHR approach with the strategic notes from BTC regarding scholarship (2012) and competency development (2016). Lastly the review team has been requested to identify any unexpected results, both positive and negative. The review was undertaken with full support from the SDHR team and other stakeholders.

In 2010¹, the Government of Uganda (GoU) adopted a Comprehensive National Development Planning Framework for the next 30 years, called Vision 2040. The SDHR project has been developed within the general framework of the Vision 2040. The first National Development Plan (NDP), developed to operationalise the framework, makes reference to Human Resource Development. The NDP objective 3 under Public Sector Management, stresses strengthening human resource capacity of public servants by (i) the implementation of targeted capacity building in areas that support the transformation of the Public Service, (ii) undertaking performance improvement training programs, (iii) strengthening the Public Service Value system, (iv) supporting innovations and (v) establishing a Civil Servants College. BTC, upon completing an evaluation of the “Scholarship programme”, intended to move away from individual scholarships and focus on organisational capacity building and Human Resource Development instead. BTC in Uganda focuses their development support on the Health, Education and Environment sectors (Environment is being phased out in the mean time).

The Technical and Financial File (TFF) was developed supporting the NDP, specifically in the area of HRD, taking the strategic notes related to scholarships into account and concentrating on the Health, Education and Environment sectors.

The project is implemented under the Direct Management Modality (*régie*), and the project team is based in the BTC headquarters in Kampala, Uganda. A steering committee chaired by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and with participation of the Ministries of Health, Education and Sports and Water and Environment has been established. In addition Sectorial Technical Committees (STC's) were formed to guide the selection of Beneficiary Organisations (BO's) and to assess the readiness of each BO for the intervention. In order to safeguard a cross-sector flow of information and exchange a Co-Coordination Team (CCT) was formed consisting of members of three beneficiary Ministries and SDHR staff.

A total of 48 BO's were selected to participate in the project, from the three different sectors, including departments at the level of the different Ministries as well as service providing institutes like hospitals, district health organisations, health centres and teacher training colleges.

The methodology for the review consisted of a combination of several elements. A thorough review of the available documentation was made (see annex 3). In Uganda individual interviews and group (semi-structured) interviews were completed with all different stakeholders; SDHR team, Resident Representative, Steering Committee, Management and staff of BO's, team members of other BTC projects, consultants and development partners (see annex 2). A careful analysis of the findings was done, leading to conclusions and recommendations.

Main findings

Performance

A total of 48 BO's (Health, Education and Environment) were selected and adhered to an organisational self-assessment process, identifying the main gaps in relation to their HR capacity and they developed a training plan. All assessments and plans were approved. The project has just started the implementation of training activities, which constitute the main intervention of the SDHR project.

¹ TFF of the SDHR, 2013

The training portfolio is composed of long term training, short term training, exposure visits and attachments. Some of the long-term training has already started in order to increase chances of staff applying the acquired skills already during the project period while short-term training will be delivered starting in Q1 of 2017 after careful selection of training providers. At the time of the MTR 37% of the budget had been allocated.

As the project is still in the process of organising the different trainings, it was a bit early and challenging to assess potential achievements related to the defined outcome of the project.

BO's expressed positive appreciation related to the well-structured and participatory process, the provision of expert support, when needed and the excellent communication by the project team.

Critical appreciation expressed by BO's were that the budget for training was limited, that the conditions for training set by the project were questionable (few long-term trainings, age limit for long-term training <40 yrs, etc.. Some also questioned the delays before delivery of short term training activities (will start in 2017).

Appreciation

Effectiveness

The results obtained at this stage of the project are of high quality, due to the deliberate choices made in the design of the tools and the importance that has been attached to the assessment process in which participation and ownership are key elements.

The attainment of the planned outcome cannot be assessed at this point, because training has merely started. The focus on skills enhancement may not be enough to attain improved organisational performance. Instead one should focus on improved staff performance.

Efficiency

The selection and self-assessment of BO's took considerable time because of the careful process and the fact that 44 organisations were selected in one batch. The delays in the implementation of the training programmes are largely the result of procuring training in batches, aiming at harmonisation and cost reduction.

The Direct Management modality stresses the need for accountability but also takes more management time. A small project team of 4 people manages the project and spend considerable time on procurement, administrative and control tasks. The requirement to make use of the DAMINO system for registering all beneficiaries receiving training, be it very short or long term, puts pressure on the team and its limited time.

Outcome and Impact

Outcome-phrased as enhanced skills, and Impact- improved performance of organisations, cannot be assessed at this stage. Reason is that, except for some of the long-term courses, training hasn't started yet. The project has spelled out the way to get to the outcome and impact by incorporating an M&E plan and quality assurance guidelines in the approved HRD and training plans.

Sustainability

Whether the acquired skills will be used for the continuous performance improvement of the organisations is outside the sphere of influence of the project. Several crucial factors such as government policies and regulations influence sustainability; e.g. retention of staff, remaining skills gaps, leadership, work ethics and organisational culture.

Conclusions

1. Performance

The SDHR project has achieved its mid-term outputs and results, however a bit later than expected as a result of a well-developed, structured and high quality approach, in which participation and ownership are dominating. The fact that the initial 44 organisations were selected in one batch also led to some delays

of those who were ready already early in the process. 4 organisations were added later in the process, bringing the total number of BO's to 48.

2. Outcome and Impact

The Outcome as formulated by the project's theory of change: "increased skills of human resources in BO's" is too frail to lead to improved performance of the organisations and the risks and assumptions in the TOC with regards to the outcome and impact have not yet sufficiently been addressed by the project.

3. Effectiveness

The Mid-term results reached by the SDHR project are of a high quality and standard. The improved performance of beneficiary organisations however is not sufficiently catered for in the planning of project activities after the training has taken place.

4. Team

The staff capacity of the project is insufficient in the light of the tasks ahead. The technical team members are too overstretched with administrative, procurement and control tasks to be able to provide sufficient attention to the process of change in the BO's and supervise M&E activities.

5. Synergy

Synergy exists between BTC projects and programmes but is too limited as a result of the lack of a formal framework with clear and accepted roles and delineations and insufficient staff. The SDHR project has insufficient formal internal and external linkages to be able to effectively engage in policy dialogue with the different line ministries. Synergy between BTC projects is mainly dependent on timing of projects, geographical locations and the human factor. It is people who decide to work together.

6. Strategy in line with Policy documents

The project has interpreted the 2012 strategic document in a correct way but has given priority to address the capacity issue from the angle of the whole organisation and not from an individual level.

The project approach and the recently approved strategic note 2016 do not differ too much with the exception of the structured format for collaboration between the project and the sector projects, which is lacking at this moment in the BTC Uganda portfolio. Also the time horizon is different where the policy paper covers the longer cooperation period between Uganda and Belgium instead of the project period only.

7. Efficiency

The continuous focus on quality and comprehensiveness has made activities to go at a slightly slower pace, while cost efficient operations have been achieved through batch procurement of training and equipment. These two elements have catered for a balanced level of efficiency. However the external pressure on accountability (e.g. use of DAMINO) makes it difficult to maintain efficiency in time and money.

Recommendations

1. Recommended results chain (SC/BTC)

It is recommended that the results chain in the ToC is adapted to maintain a focus in project planning and monitoring on "improved performance" of staff and of organisations instead of improved skills only.

2. Change process (Intervention team)

It is recommended that the project adds a fourth phase which is "readiness for implementing change". It should carefully review the planned activities in relation to the follow-up on training, taking the need for a solid change process per BO into account. The working groups established at the assessment phase

should be re-activated and a team of 1 or 2 internal coaches should be trained to manage the change process at organisational level. The leadership of each BO should be formally included and guided in the preparation and implementation of the change plan. The focus on ownership should be maintained throughout.

The role of the STC's for the remainder of the project should be clarified and formalised as a support body for the organisational change processes. The STC's can/should also function as a platform for policy dialogue.

3. Team Capacity (SC/BTC-Brussels)

The size of the team and the roles and responsibilities of team members should be reviewed taking into account the provisions made in the TFF, the needs of the project, the budget and available capacity within sector programmes to provide support to the SDHR. Each regional cluster (3) of BO's should have one SDHR staff working closely together with the field coordinators of the sector projects. The technical team members based in Kampala should have more time to concentrate on the coaching of the change processes and to continue documenting the processes. The contract of the ITA should be extended to the end of the project period in order to capitalise on the rich experiences and document these for learning at the level of sector development in Uganda as well as Capacity Development in BTC projects.

4. Synergy (BTC-Kampala)

Formal linkages should be created between the Education Programme and the SDHR as Organisational Development support service. Synergy between the Health projects and the SDHR should be continuously stimulated and supported.

1. More influence at policy levels (SC/BTC Kampala)

The SDHR project should look for possibilities to increase its presence at the various platforms where HR and CD issues are discussed at policy and strategy levels. In this way the rich experiences can be shared and risks and bottlenecks addressed.