Enabel

Executive summary

Evaluation of the Benin-Belgium cooperation programme 2019-2023

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Executive summary

1.1 Presentation of the assessment

The **intervention logic of the 2019-2023 cooperation programme** (CP) between Belgium and Benin is based on a **general objective** that aims to contribute to (i) creating decent and sustainable jobs, (ii) increasing the income of economic players and (iii) improving Benin's macroeconomic balances.

The final evaluation of the CP aims to **assess its overall performance** by highlighting the key areas for improvement and further development that may be useful for implementing the future cooperation programme, even if this has already been formulated. To support the overall analysis of the CP's performance, it is based on **four case studies** covering a number of issues in the paraport (PASPort), agricultural (DEFIA) and health (P@SRIS) sectors, and the contribution of gender to the various interventions.

The **main users** of the evaluation are the key players involved in managing and implementing the programme, in particular the Beninese public authorities, the ministries concerned and the members of the steering committee. They are looking for lessons and recommendations to inform their future decisions and improve the governance and steering of the new 2023-2028 cooperation portfolio. Enabel Brussels and its experts use the results to identify success and failure factors, review the theory of change and improve **the performance of their cooperation actions. Secondary users include external technical and financial** partners interested in the findings to adjust their own strategies and funding decisions.

The evaluation covers the **entire period of implementation of the CP** (January 2019 - November 2023) and concerns the **areas of intervention** of the three pillars, namely: Health (Couffo, Atlantic), Agriculture (PDA 7 and PDA 3), Port (Littoral and Cotonou-Niamey corridor). The **data collection phase in Benin** took place between **26 February and 08 March 2024**, and was supplemented by bibliographical work carried out beforehand. It ended with a debriefing session for each pillar (with the exception of PASPort) and an overall feedback meeting at the Enabel office in Benin. The evaluation was carried out by **a team of five experts**, four of whom worked on each case study and the fifth on the overall analysis of the CP. The evaluation methodology was based on data collection, including document review, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, focus groups and field observations. These methods were **chosen according to the evaluation questions** and the **characteristics of the participants**. The interviews were conducted on the basis of a **matrix of evaluative questions** comprising 28 points of analysis and over 100 areas for further investigation, divided between the three pillars and questions relating to the programme's performance and gender. **In all, more than 200 people** were consulted.

1.2 Findings and conclusions

1.2.1 Findings by DAC criterion for the cooperation programme as a whole

	Pillars		
Criteria	**PASPort**	**DEFIA**	**P@SRIS**
Coherence	B	A	A
Relevance	A	A	A
Effectiveness	B	A	B
Efficiency	B	B	B
Sustainability	B	B	B
Impact	B	B	B

The relevance of the 2019-2023 FP is very satisfactory in terms of its alignment with the country's major public policies (strategic level), sectoral guidelines (agriculture, health) and the priorities of Belgian

cooperation relating to the development of entrepreneurship, capacity building, stimulating private sector growth and digitalisation.

The two objectives of the CP[1] are fully in line with the priorities of the Government Action Programme (PAG 2016-2021), which aims to accelerate growth and the balanced and sustainable transformation of the economy and human development. They are also consistent with the two other strategic orientation documents (National Development Plan 2018-2025, Growth Programme for Sustainable Development 2018-2021) which focus on the development of human capital, productivity and economic competitiveness, the environment, climate change, territorial development and governance.

The activities of the Agriculture and Port pillars are in line with what is envisaged in terms of productivity and economic competitiveness. Similarly, governance and territorial development issues are taken into account on a sectoral basis (particularly in the regional planning and development hubs in the south of the country). The health pillar responds to the desire to develop human capital in its various dimensions (population health, capturing the demographic dividend, capacity building).

Thus, it can be said that the central point of convergence between the bilateral programme, the PAG and the other national strategic orientations is the attention paid on the one hand to the productive sectors of the Beninese economy, in particular the port sector (60% of national GDP), agriculture (77% of export earnings, 15% of State revenues and around 70% of jobs) and on the other hand to the well-being of the population. Finally, the bilateral cooperation programme covers 7 of the objectives of sustainable development. However, one issue raised by the Beninese side deserves particular attention: the need for greater visibility on the totality of Belgium's action, including actions carried out within the framework of decentralised cooperation and those relating to the intervention of Non-Governmental Cooperation actors.[2]
The overall approach to the various interventions is coordinated and **the coherence of the CP can be considered satisfactory**.[3]
Within Pillar 2 (agriculture), the various interventions are developing complementarities. These synergies can also be found between the promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights and digitisation.

The complementary nature of the partnership between the Autonomous Port of Cotonou and the Port of Antwerp is an interesting and instructive experiment in North-South cooperation, based on the mutual economic interests of the parties.

The implementation of this CP has provided an opportunity to develop additional funding to that provided by Belgium for operations. In the field of health, a partnership hub is in the process of being consolidated between various donors (Enabel, AFD, EU). In terms of **internal coherence**, although limited and fragmented, initiatives are being carried out with Belgian companies and institutions. Finally, it is important to emphasise the consultations that are taking place with Belgian Non-Governmental Cooperation Actors (NGCAs), who were involved in formulating the 2019-2023 CP and benefit from subsidy agreements to carry out actions within the framework of the pillar interventions.

On the other hand, synergies between the pillars of intervention remain weak because the issue was not taken into account in the preparatory guidelines of the cooperation programme, and it was only along the way that complementarities were sought. Actions are being developed with other technical and financial partners active in Benin, particularly in the agriculture and health sectors.

[1] (i) To help create decent, sustainable jobs, increase the income of economic players and households and improve Benin's macro-economic balance.
(ii) Contribute to the effective management of the demographic dividend and the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, and improve the productivity of human capital

[2] These dimensions of cooperation do not depend on Enabel.

[3] The areas for improvement mainly concern the synergy between the different pillars of intervention and, to a lesser extent, the partnership with Belgian companies and institutions.

Overall **effectiveness** is satisfactory. Positive results have been noted in the port and agriculture sectors (improvement in the business climate and flow of goods, increase in production volumes and revenues, new markets) and in the health sector (progress in most indicators).

The introduction of alternative financing mechanisms (AFMs) to support the development of agricultural value chains (AVCs) and the professionalisation and structuring of producers and agri-entrepreneurs is a success story that is bringing about major changes in the departments of Atlantique and Couffo. At the same time as, new mechanisms are being put in place, there is a real densification and diversification of the financial ecosystem in the world of producers and agri-entrepreneurs.

Strengthening, empowering and affirming the role of women in high value-added agricultural production is one of the achievements of the DEFIA intervention that needs to be consolidated.

The **efficiency** of the CP is satisfactory, with expenditure at 94% of the budget on 31 December 2023. At the close of the FP, 97% of the budget should be achieved.

Despite severe external constraints (Covid 19, inflation partly exacerbated by the war between Russia and Ukraine), inputs are generally available within acceptable timescales (delays have been noted in the supply of IT equipment for digitisation in healthcare, the rehabilitation of health infrastructures, etc.). The fact that resources were used correctly and within reasonable timescales, in line with the expected results, is due to the fact that the Enabel teams were able to be flexible and adapt to the context and demands of the partners.

The use of third parties, through subsidy agreements, has facilitated the implementation of the actions planned in the various interventions and made it possible to reach specific targets (sex workers, vulnerable populations) at relatively low cost through local NGOs.

Sustainability is only satisfactory because, although at institutional and technical level, the conditions for continuity and replication are real (particularly in relation to the continuity of Enabel's action in all the pillars), there are real risks of losing continuity of certain activities if Enabel's support stops.
Sustainability refers to the appropriation and continuity of the benefits of the actions (achievements) obtained in the pillars of intervention.

The alignment of interventions with national policies and the commitment of the national party are factors that favour institutional sustainability. In all three pillars of intervention, the ability to "take over" and ensure the continuity of actions does not seem to pose too many problems.
This technical sustainability is facilitated by the continuity of most of the actions over time (the actions are essentially maintained in the new CP).
The main difficulty concerns the funding of the various activities (financial sustainability), which is fully covered by Enabel.

1.2.2 Findings by specific evaluation question for the programme as a whole

Q1. What assessment can be made of the overall performance of the cooperation programme (overall performance)?

Significant progress [4] has been made in terms of the two major changes targeted.
In the agricultural sector, there has been a significant increase in production volumes (particularly in the pineapple sector) and in processed products, the development of new markets (in Benin and in the sub-region), and an increase in the income of agri-entrepreneurs.
As far as employment is concerned, new jobs have been created, particularly in the marketing sector, and in the context of support for value chains, new trades have emerged in and around the sectors (pineapple, cashew nuts).

[4] (i) Creation of decent and sustainable jobs, increase in the income of economic players and improvement in macroeconomic balances; (ii) management of the demographic dividend, reduction in maternal and infant mortality, improvement in the productivity of human capital.

Alongside these achievements, the decent employment situation is evolving positively (it has risen from 11% to 20%) in Enabel's southern intervention zones. The MFAs have created new full-time jobs for 270 people in pineapple production (including 238 women).
In paraport activities (pillar 1), significant progress has been made in improving the legislative environment and the business climate, and in increasing turnover and the flow of goods through the Autonomous Port of Cotonou.
Data on the results of the health intervention show progress in most indicators (maternal deaths, maternal mortality in hospitals, etc.).
Overall, the CP is effective, although progress needs to be made in certain areas (maternal mortality, neonatal mortality, etc.) to improve performance and achieve the expected results indicators.

Q2. What assessment can be made of the quality of the partnership relationship, mutual responsibility, dialogue and the dynamics of the partnership within the framework of the cooperation programme's governance bodies, as well as the integration of the system for monitoring and measuring the development results proposed by the partner within the framework of the cooperation programme? (Effectiveness of the partnership)

In its relations with the Beninese public authorities and the players it supports, Enabel is seen as a reliable partner committed to respectful development, which implements actions devised and produced collectively. Involved in the technical steering and monitoring of the actions, the national public authorities are fully involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the interventions and the cooperation programme. The CP is reviewed twice a year by a high-level joint committee. The public authorities particularly appreciate the alignment of Belgian cooperation objectives with Benin's orientations and priorities and the fact that development indicators contained in national policies are taken into account (4 major indicators in the economic dimension of the CP and 4 in health). This approach and the actions of the CP contribute to Benin's development.

Enabel has a high-performance monitoring and evaluation system capable of generating data and analyses that provide a clear understanding of what has been done and enable better management of activities.

One of the difficulties, however, relates to the ability to monitor development objectives defined by a government and which are taken on board as an impact to be achieved.

As formulated by the Government, the integration of the monitoring and measurement system that serves as a compass for the implementation of interventions is something of a challenge: the national development objectives are defined at national level, whereas Enabel intervenes in relatively limited territories, there is the question of the representativeness of the samples with which Enabel works (geographical areas, number of populations, scales of intervention, etc.) and of being able to extrapolate to national level.

For Enabel, this remains difficult because the system and its information do not fall within its sphere of control. A telling example is the unavailability of health data for 2023 from the District Health Information Software Version 2 (DHIS2) in the third month of 2024 because the Ministry of Health was checking the validity of the data.

Finally, despite efforts at collaboration between the people in charge of monitoring and evaluation at Enabel (creation of a WhatsApp group for possible exchanges), the pooling of resources (intellectual, data, analyses) with a view to developing transversal and cross-sectoral initiatives remains very weak.

Q3. To what extent has the complementary nature of the funding received from donors other than the Belgian government added value in terms of achieving Benin's and Belgium's development objectives?

What benefits have resulted from the effects of this complementary funding? Have the synergies identified, and the complementarities developed in the thematic areas targeted by the cooperation programme with other interventions and partners served as strategic levers influencing Benin's development? (Coherence and effectiveness)

Enabel has developed partnerships and benefited from financial support from the EU, in particular with the DigBoost project (2019-2023), which aims to boost the performance of digital entrepreneurs by strengthening the ecosystem through diversified support and improving the business environment for the development of the digital economy.

Other projects have been developed in the agricultural sector with the EU (institutional support for agricultural development players, agro-ecological transition).
Enabel is proactive in sectoral dialogue, participating in the various consultation initiatives of technical and financial partners, and has developed a partnership with AFD to act simultaneously on the provision of integrated care for Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care and Non-Communicable Diseases. A strategic partnership is gradually being established between the EU, AFD and Enabel.

Other operational partnerships have been developed with United Nations agencies and civil society organisations. The latter may be Beninese structures or ACNGs, and they benefit from subsidy agreements to carry out actions in the pillar sub-projects. All these partnerships have made it possible to broaden the audiences reached and the areas of intervention, and to affirm Enabel's expertise in particular areas (capacity to support producers in targeted sectors, wider dissemination of its priority themes, etc.).
Collaboration with Belgian private and public companies has remained relatively weak and scattered.

Q4. What positive or negative unintended effects have been observed as a result of the three components implemented as a whole that have affected or contributed positively to the performance and success of the programme, and how have they contributed to the achievement of the expected results and general objectives?

In the port sector, the implementation of the Port Environmental Monitoring Platform (PMMP) has had an impact beyond the objective of monitoring and managing invasive alien species. In fact, it has given credibility to the ecological architecture plan and made it easier to obtain the ECOPORT label.
The PMMP has led to an organisational change in the PAC, which has become a support and advisory structure.

Other positive effects have been seen in the health sector with the acquisition of morphine, which has helped to develop favourable behaviour in the fight against the suffering of patients, and this experience is now recognised at sub-regional level as a model for palliative care. Still in health, free family planning (FP) is a step forward in removing financial barriers for women of childbearing age.

But this comes at a cost to the health centres, as part of the costs previously paid by patients are now covered by the cost recovery system at community level, without any compensation from the State. This places a heavy burden on the system, which is vital to the survival of the health centres.

In the agricultural sector, one of the effects of improved access to financing mechanisms has been to create a sort of "attractive public" for microfinance institutions (MFIs) made up of cluster member producers. Small producers who are not cluster members are being marginalised.

1.2.3 Findings by specific evaluation question and case study

1.2.3.1 Case study 1: Effectiveness of support for the port sector (PASPort pillar)

Q5. To what extent are the approaches adopted (i) to strengthen the business climate and operators' confidence, (ii) to improve the performance of the Autonomous Port of Cotonou and (iii) to implement the environmental policy, globally coherent and relevant to the specific needs of the port sector in Benin? (Relevance, coherence and effectiveness)

The approaches adopted to strengthen the business climate, improve the performance of the Autonomous Port of Cotonou and implement the environmental policy are aligned with the specific needs of the port sector in Benin, demonstrating their relevance, coherence and effectiveness.
In the context of "strengthening the business climate", Enabel's interventions are focused on modernising port infrastructures and operational processes, in response to the needs expressed by stakeholders in the sector. These actions aim to enhance the port's technical characteristics and consolidate an investment-friendly environment. The alignment of Enabel's strategies with government priorities and sectoral policies ensures a coherent and sustainable approach to supporting Benin's economic development.

Regarding the "improvement of the performance of the Port of Cotonou," the initiatives focus on two key aspects: competitiveness and governance. By addressing these major challenges, Enabel aims to strengthen the port's position in regional and international trade, while ensuring transparent and efficient management of port operations based on the professionalism of the stakeholders. Emphasising the connection between the Beninese government and sector stakeholders ensures a collaborative and coherent approach to achieving these objectives.

Regarding the "implementation of the environmental policy," Enabel's actions are part of a comprehensive approach aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the Autonomous Port of Cotonou. This includes coordinating initiatives to combat port pollution, improving the legislative and regulatory framework on environmental matters, and promoting sustainable practices. These efforts reflect a deep understanding of the environmental issues specific to the port sector and demonstrate Enabel's commitment to ensuring the sustainability of port operations.

1.2.3.2 Case Study 2: Effectiveness and Impact of Support to the Agricultural Sector (DEFIA pillar)

Q6. How have the mechanisms for accessing agricultural financing implemented under the programme proven to be efficient and effective in developing entrepreneurship and creating decent jobs for young people and women in the agricultural sector? (Effectiveness, efficiency of AFMs)

The mechanisms for accessing agricultural financing are diverse, including grants that may or may not be combined with loans, a guarantee system, and the involvement of microfinance institutions and banks. Today, their number is relatively significant in the value chains of pineapple and rice, creating real opportunities for financing agricultural activities.

External partners, whose presence is facilitated by Enabel, also contribute to the financing of activities within the DEFIA intervention pillar. The financial support system has enabled agri-entrepreneurs to raise significant funds from local banks. There has been a noticeable increase in the budgets for agri-entrepreneurs' campaigns, with amounts clearly on the rise.

The AFMs have thus facilitated smoother links between microfinance institutions (MFIs) and producers. Producers' membership in clusters eases their access to financing. The contracts that producers have established with aggregators provide them with various options for accessing financing.

Agri-entrepreneurs believe that access to financing (loans) from MFIs has become easier with DEFIA's support. This is seen as a true lever of success for DEFIA's assistance to agri-entrepreneurs across all categories and supported sectors.

The effectiveness of AFMs is reflected in a significant increase in production volumes (both fresh and processed products) in the pineapple and rice sectors. This is a combined effect of improved yields, increased planted areas, and the number of agri-entrepreneurs. The export curve for the pineapple sector in the sub-region has improved.

In terms of efficiency, in addition to obtaining financing, agri-entrepreneurs note that funds are made available within reasonable timeframes and through streamlined administrative procedures. The conditions for accessing credit from MFIs and banks are the same for men, women, and youth. However, there is a low presence of youth in the pineapple and rice sectors.

For women, project actions have facilitated obtaining identity documents for over a thousand women, enabling credit access for 715 female pineapple agri-entrepreneurs (totaling 400 million CFA francs) and 198 women in the rice sector were able to access credit.

Q7. To what extent do the AFMs used by the cooperation programme contribute to creating a conducive environment for public and private investments in the agricultural sector in Benin? (Impact of AFMs)

AFMs have facilitated attracting investors into the agricultural sector. DEFIA injected approximately 550 million CFA francs, which helped leverage additional private resources amounting to 1.5 billion CFA francs (contributions from beneficiaries, loans from MFIs). The subsidy facility entrusted to a public financial institution (National Agricultural Development Fund - FNDA) by the project has built trust between this entity and technical and financial partners (KFW, European Investment Bank - EIB).
The system's attractiveness allows Belgian groups to participate in financing and actions that enhance production capacities (group purchases, local processing, social standards, etc.).
AFMs have improved the production capacity of financing beneficiaries significantly. Both for pineapple and rice, production growth rates have increased very significantly (up to 82% for certain types of fresh pineapple and over 44% for white rice).

AFMs have been replicated by other stakeholders in the agricultural sector. The PACOFIDE, a significant programme funded by the World Bank focusing on pineapple, cashew, and rice sectors, among others, has capitalized on experiences and lessons learned from Enabel's interventions in certain farming practices and especially in support modalities for producers.

A number of positive effects have resulted from the actions undertaken within the intervention: a densified and diversified financial environment, increased average net incomes for agri-entrepreneurs, and dissemination and replication of the experience. However, these achievements must be consolidated in the coming years, with a particular emphasis on improving financing (both public and private) to ensure the sustainability of the exit process from the intervention.

Q8. What are the successes of the value chain approach and the challenges encountered in achieving tangible results and producing observable effects, particularly in terms of inclusivity? (Effectiveness of the value chain)

The value chain approach has brought about changes among stakeholders. Creating clusters has been instrumental in strengthening value chains. This approach has facilitated changes and led to strong participation in clusters, especially among producers (increased by 196% between 2019 and 2023) and exporters (up by 156% during the same period). This progression has also been accompanied by a significant increase in the values of processed and marketed products through the clusters. Regarding production (pineapple and rice), women's access to productive resources has improved: initially, it was projected that women would access 171 hectares (343 female producers) by the end of the project; by 2023, the same number of female producers are now cultivating 264 hectares.

This approach has resulted in an increase in export volumes to Europe and other countries in the sub-region. The organizational and functional diagnostic reveals a high level of professionalization among the clusters.

Furthermore, it has been observed that the established clusters are operational; out of the 15 pineapple clusters, only 1 has ceased to function. There is a real increase in average net incomes for a range of actors (producers, processors, collectors, wholesalers, exporters), varying from 37% to 374%, with a majority experiencing growth rates exceeding 100%.

1.2.3.3 Case Study 3: Relevance of Strategic Choices and their Replicability within the System (P@SRIS pillar)

Q9. To what extent do strategies aimed at improving the provision of reproductive health services (SONU), including family planning and combating GBV, demonstrate their effectiveness and replicability potential within the system? (Sustainability)

For indicators linked to the overall objective of the intervention, recent cross-sectional survey data on the population are not available. However, concerning outcome indicators, changes have been observed in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). Out of the four indicators used to measure SRH outcomes (contraceptive method use among women, women's satisfaction with family planning, skilled attendance at childbirth, and unintended pregnancies among schoolgirls), three have shown significant improvements. The percentage of women with unmet needs for family planning remains stable in the Atlantique department and has decreased in the Couffo department.

While it's important to exercise caution in interpreting the figures (for example, considering nurses as qualified personnel instead of midwives), this progress has been confirmed by authorities at central, decentralized, and grassroots levels. Triangulating data with information collected at the grassroots level highlights actual changes in behaviour among targeted populations in areas where community initiatives have been implemented and healthcare providers supported in healthcare facilities. This is reassuring regarding the effectiveness of the P@SRIS: the holistic approach proposed, including (i) an analysis of determinants of critical SRH issues, and (ii) the implementation of multifaceted strategies to address each identified issue, is functional and effective.

There are certain critical points where only government action can have an effect; this is the case with the issue of the availability of qualified healthcare personnel affecting most rural health centres, or the quality of road infrastructure that can hinder the achievement of certain SRH outcomes.

In combating GBV, several initiatives have been developed (establishment of "Zero GBV" Community Watch Committees in 46 villages, training on gender issues and laws related to GBV, etc.).

The model proposed by P@SRIS is an innovative approach that appears to set a precedent for improved accessibility to the management and prevention of GBV. It complements the more traditional One Stop Centre approach implemented by other development partners in Benin. One of its advantages is its lower cost.

Real progress is observed; however, the effectiveness of the results remains to be demonstrated, considering that the main focus of the project is to change attitudes and behaviours (of both targeted populations and healthcare providers), which require continuity in action. Furthermore, some initiatives are still ongoing and therefore have not yet demonstrated their full effectiveness.

Q10. What assessment can be made regarding the sustainability of changes related to the promotion of rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as digitalization within the framework of the program's interventions? (Sustainability)

Throughout its implementation, P@SRIS has ensured ongoing dialogue with Ministry of Health personnel and civil society on potential adjustments to health policy for improved effectiveness. The action research and capitalization process has significantly contributed to ensuring institutional sustainability of the initiatives by providing evidence for scaling up or discontinuing tested innovations. The informed dialogue with the Ministry of Health, endorsed at the highest levels of its hierarchy, has ensured alignment of P@SRIS

strategies with national policy (integration of impact indicators selected by the Ministry of Health into the intervention logic and P@SRIS results framework) and potential adoption of introduced innovations.

The potential for technical sustainability depends on the type of activity conducted and its perceived importance to national stakeholders: activities that respond to explicit demands from the Ministry of Health can be seen as sustainable. Additionally, activities that have historically been adopted by the government, such as support for the National Health Users' Platform (PNUSS), are part of continuity.

The most delicate issue regarding sustainability concerns the financial dimension because some activities may rely entirely on Enabel's funding.

1.2.3.4 Case Study 4: Contribution of Gender Integration in the Cases of Health, Agriculture, and the Port Sector Contributions of Gender Integration in Interventions

Q11. How is gender integration operationalized within the cooperation programme?

Gender integration has been operationalized across interventions promoting gender equality and ensuring that the benefits of opportunities and initiatives impact men and women equitably. This is manifested through socio-cultural analysis of the Beninese context in general, but particularly in intervention areas, to understand the specific roles, needs, and constraints of men and women in these areas.

The objectives and specific results related to gender balance in various interventions are well defined. The predominantly action research-focused initiatives take into account sex-disaggregated data, ensuring active participation of stakeholders (both women and men) in the planning, decision-making, and implementation processes.

Q12. To what extent has the We4Her gender strategy 2019-2023 been implemented in Benin? What have been the observed effects (positive and/or negative) on the living conditions of beneficiary women, as well as in terms of access to opportunities generated and the protection and promotion of rights? What are the best practices and strategies to scale up, and which ones need improvement in the new cooperation programme?

The We4Her gender strategy 2019-2023 by Enabel has been implemented in Benin through (i) specific actions aimed at meeting the priorities and needs of women, girls, and youth; (ii) a human rights-based approach that recognizes the human rights of every individual regardless of their origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs; and (iii) effective involvement of men in promoting greater gender equality. There has been an improvement in the living conditions of beneficiary women through the development of their economic empowerment, leading to increased income.

Women benefiting from these actions have understood their right to access production and processing resources, education and training opportunities to acquire specific technical and management skills. They also have access to quality information and care in sexual and reproductive health rights. These women demonstrate responsibility and leadership.

An indirect effect observed is the reduction of stress and improvement in mental and physical well-being among beneficiary women, attributed to their improved economic situation and enhanced access to sexual, maternal, and neonatal health services.

Points for consideration in the new programme or for scaling up include the action research-based approach that promotes stakeholder participation in implementing initiatives. Through subsidy agreements, partnerships with local organizations should be widely replicated to strengthen work on gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls, and adolescents' rights. Lastly, it is essential to enhance the intervention strategy regarding the integration of youth, adolescents, and community actors (networking approach).

1.3 Conclusions

1.3.1 Overall programme

- The formulation process of the 2019-2023 cooperation programme was well-executed despite requiring necessary adjustments, resulting in a successfully realized portfolio.
- The programme's results are promising, with notable advancements across all three intervention pillars. Future programmes will focus on enhancing human capital development, particularly in education and vocational training.
- It is crucial to assess overall objectives across two programme cycles to better gauge overall impact and synchronize timelines between intervention pillars and the cooperation programme.
- While Enabel has a robust monitoring and evaluation system, enhancements are needed to enrich the system as a whole.

1.3.2 Case Study 1: Effectiveness of Support to the Port Sector (PASPort Pillar)

- PASPort has fulfilled all its commitments for updating legal and regulatory frameworks, but legislative adoption remains pending, limiting current impact on the port sector.
- It is necessary to enhance the capacities of stakeholders to improve the quality of requests and address observed gaps, particularly through training non-specialists in procurement.
- Operational staff skills need improvement to ensure safety and performance, especially through the acquisition of handling equipment and expertise in maritime law.
- Effective transfer of skills is crucial for the sustainability of actions, requiring adequate educational support and certification of training programs.

1.3.3 Case Study 2: Effectiveness and Impact of Support to the Agricultural Sector (DEFIA Pillar)

- The DEFIA pillar has overcome financing and procedural challenges to achieve its objectives, with a high level of beneficiary satisfaction regarding acquisitions and financing, despite delays in equipment implementation.
- DEFIA's support to MFIs has facilitated timely access to financing without compromising usual access conditions, although interest rates remain a concern.
- MFA has significantly improved production capacities and incomes of agri-entrepreneurs, through effective collaboration with FNDA[5] for access to bank credits.
- DEFIA has stimulated positive changes in pineapple and rice production, enhancing women's empowerment in agricultural value chains despite necessary adjustments in beneficiary selection.

1.3.4 Case Study 3: Relevance of Strategic Choices and Replicability within the System (P@SRIS Pillar)

- P@SRIS has been positively evaluated with a B rating for its effectiveness and sustainability. However, resolving the human resources deficit, particularly in midwives in rural areas, remains crucial to achieving reproductive health goals.
- While free family planning has removed financial barriers, community cost recovery without government support poses a long-term risk to care quality.
- P@SRIS and EQUITE projects have initiated actions against non-communicable diseases, strengthening reproductive health and supporting health and gender SDGs in response to Benin's epidemiological transition.
- Capitalizing on youth awareness initiatives shows the effectiveness of MAJICS compared to CAJs, recommending a focus on these specific structures.
- Additional investments are needed to improve patient reception and comfort in facilities rehabilitated by the P@SRIS project.

[5] National Agricultural Development Fund - FNDA

- P@SRIS has innovated in distance training for healthcare professionals, particularly in emergency obstetric care, influencing national policies towards broader adoption.
- Despite technological and regulatory challenges, the IT solutions introduced by P@SRIS, such as CAREX and ANTS, require ongoing effort to achieve their full functionality beyond the project.
- Capitalization on motorcycle ambulances in Couffo shows potential benefits, with technical and governance challenges requiring evaluation before expansion.
- P@SRIS demonstrated effective resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic by adapting its services, requiring post-crisis adjustments to optimize infrastructure use.
- Progress in digitizing health centres through P@SRIS requires attention to financial sustainability to maintain services like DHIS and e-SIGL.
- The experimentation with hospital management system in Calavi shows promising results, requiring thorough evaluation before expansion to ensure effectiveness.

1.4 Recommendations

1.4.1 Overall programme

Recommendation	Target Actor(s)	Nivel	Priority	Type
R1. Draft a guide to enhance the cooperation program development process, based on the experience and capitalization efforts of the Special Evaluation Service, to facilitate reviews and learning within Enabel teams, emphasizing the importance of national consultation.	Enabel Representation	2	CT	S
R2. Propose cross-cutting activities for the cooperation program, including capitalization, visibility, and capacity building of local partners and stakeholders, reintroducing capacity building programs to address persistent needs.	Enabel Brussels Enabel Representation	1	CT	O
R3. Include in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the final evaluation a comprehensive analysis of the programme management and leadership.	Enable Brussels Enabel Representation	2	MT	S
R4. Organize workshops to enhance the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Cooperation Program and align it with the government's framework.	Enabel Representation	1	MT	O
R5. Build a community of practice for monitoring and evaluation across the various pillars and stakeholders involved in policy monitoring on the Benin side.	Enabel Representation Ministries and relevant Beninese structures	1	CT	O

1.4.2 Case Study 1: Effectiveness of Support to the Port Sector (PASPort Pillar)

Recommendations	Target Actor(s)	Nivel	Priority	Type
R1. Supporting a training and awareness programme on major issues (blue economy, maritime code, environment, transportation) to facilitate legislation in these areas.	Enabel/PASPort et COPIL	3	CT/MT	O
R2. Enhancing stakeholders' skills in needs expression techniques on « gender » and « the environment ».	Enabel PASPORT	1	CT/MT	O
R3. Continue the capacity building program for other port stakeholders.	Enabel PASPort	1	CT	O
R4. Ensure effective transfer of skills by the experts engaged in all training sessions for personnel of the institutions, while ensuring the level of qualification, expertise, and language skills of these trainers.	Enabel PASPort management unit Subsidy entities	2	MT	O

Recommendations	Target Actor(s)	Nivel	Priority	Type
R5. Take measures to ensure the sustainability of focal points[6] within their structures.	Government Responsible Beneficiary Structures	2	CT	S
R6. To align the Government's strategic directions with those of Enabel concerning entities focusing on maritime and road transport activities to better allocate the budget towards these sectors.	COPIL	4	MT	D
R7. Enhance the sustainability of medium and long-term interventions	Resident Representative	3	LT	S
R8. Establish a backup data centre ensuring continuity of services in case of disaster	Enabel /PASPort	1	MT	S
R9. Considering the future of PPSE after the conclusion of the PASPort program by integrating it into a port budgetary direction or transforming it into an autonomous technical entity capable of invoicing its services, following an evaluation of future needs, financial viability, and environmental port security impact.	PAC and PASPort	1	LT	S
R10. Promote the establishment of a nursery for girls and young women in port-related trades by supporting the Transport and Logistics Management programs at the University of Parakou and the University of Abomey-Calavi.	PASPORT/ PAC	1	MT	S

1.4.3 Case Study 2: Effectiveness and Impact of Support to the Agricultural Sector (DEFIA Pillar)

The following recommendations are proposed to complement DEFIA's consolidation activities under PARSAD[7].

Recommendations	Target Actor(s)	Nivel	Priority	Type
R1. Strengthen synergies with FNDA and international investment funds to facilitate MFIs' access to resources (cost, duration) and impact the interest rate.	Enabel	2 and 3	MT	S
R2. Strengthen the Enabel-FNDA collaboration to develop co-investment solutions for impactful productive projects led by cluster aggregators.	Enabel	2 and 3	MT	S
R3. Conduct a study on the reduction of interest rates charged by MFIs in Benin.	MAEP, IMF, FNDA, Banks, PTF, value chain stakeholders	1	CT	S
R4. Maintain the guaranteed line put in place by Enabel during the phase of consolidation of the project's achievements for the purposes of perpetuating business relations between MFIs and agri-entrepreneurs.	Enabel, AFGC, IMF	2	CT	O
R5. Continue supporting women (producer agri-entrepreneurs) in obtaining legal documents (ID cards, land	Enabel, IMF, MAEP	1	CT	O

[6] The organizational structure being non-standard, it is challenging to define the profile of the focal point. Discussions should be held with the HR Managers.

[7] It should be noted that the recommendations put forth here have been formulated taking into account the implementation contexts of PACOFIDE and the new PARSAD project aimed at consolidating the achievements of DEFIA. The actions for consolidating DEFIA's achievements under PARSAD, aligned with those of PACOFIDE focusing on cashew, pineapple, and rice sectors, are detailed in Annex 8.

titles, land purchase agreements) to facilitate their access to credit.				
R6. Identify and map the decent and occasional jobs created during the project's implementation.	Enabel	1	CT	O
R7. Encourage and invest in the creation of women's cooperatives, not only to enhance their visibility and representation but also to facilitate greater access to opportunities such as formal markets.	Enabel	1	MT	S

1.4.4 Case Study 3: Relevance of Strategic Choices and Their Reproducibility by the System (P@SRIS Pillar)

Recommendations	Target Actor(s)	Nivel	Priority	Type
R1. Continue a constructive dialogue with the Ministry of Health for better availability of human resources in health, particularly in obstetric specialization, in the project area.	Ministry of Health ENABEL	4	MT	O
R2. Continue the discussion on the complete subsidization of family planning, including financial sustainability.	Ministry of Health ENABEL	4	MT	S
R3. Support the epidemiological transition by focusing on the management of chronic diseases related to sexual and reproductive health and on palliative care for genital cancers.	ENABEL and Ministry of Health	1 & 4	MT	S
R4. Select an option for developing structures to raise youth awareness about reproductive health (CAJ or MAJIC). Expand MAJICs beyond the current three communes in Atlantique, enhance their capacity with investments such as building a wall in Toffo, ensure the regular presence of midwives, and support Income-Generating Activities that address the limited availability of sanitary products for young girls in rural areas.	Ministry of Health Ministry of Youth and Sports	4	MT	S
R5. Complete the development of health centres already constructed or rehabilitated under the P@SRIS to improve patient friendliness and reception.	Enabel and Ministry of Health	1 & 4	MT	O
R6. Expand obstetric simulation centres in the covered health zones, provide technical and material support, and transfer capabilities to the central services of the Ministry of Health for national scaling.	Enabel	1	MT	O
R7. Support the SSR training platform, the mobile CAREX platform, and the ANTS platform for better availability of blood products, among others.	Enabel	1	CT	O
R8. Before scaling up, continue experimenting with the implementation of community motorcycle ambulances.	Enabel and Ministry of Health	1 & 4	MT	O
R9. Initiate a dialogue on the relevance of supporting the establishment of a toll-free number to manage public complaints regarding the healthcare system.	Enabel and Ministry of Health PNUSS	1 & 4	MT	O
R10. Address clearly the issue of financial sustainability for the project's investments in the digitalization of health centres, especially concerning the coverage of connection packages that enable access to DHIS2 and e-SIGL.	Enabel and Ministry of Health	1 & 4	MT	O
R11. Specifically, regarding the Health Information System (SIH) software, mobilize an evaluation team, preferably external, to assess the progress made and decide on a potential reorientation of this experimentation.	Enabel and Ministry of Health	1 & 4	MT	O

1.5 Lessons Learned

They focus on:

- The process of developing the cooperation programme, when well executed, strengthens conditions for its success and requires adequate time (approximately 6 months before the end of the fiscal year). A clearly defined construction process, outlining various stages and subsequent contents, with clear responsibilities for each party, facilitates its implementation.
- High-level political alignment and dialogue should primarily meet the needs of national partners through an inclusive approach.
- The importance of flexibility in conducting actions allows for adjustment of various activities in response to evolving contexts. This has been evidenced by adaptations made during crises (such as the COVID-19 epidemic) or political reorientations
- Reflection on flexibility should focus on synchronizing intervention timelines, which can sometimes neglect the real dynamics of project cycles
- Strengthening partnerships with the EU and member states is essential to expand the scope of Belgian cooperation in Benin, pooling resources and means.
- Partnering with NGOs and civil society organizations offers numerous advantages; it reaches vulnerable populations (including "invisible" groups such as sex workers), enhances intervention potential, and mobilizes expertise specific to civil society (local context knowledge, community and social mobilization, advocacy, etc.).
- Intra- and inter-pillar complementarity of interventions is essential for coherence in action, requiring precise operational modes, particularly through the formulation of cross-cutting activities to break down silos.