Enabel

Executive summary

Evaluation report on the Final Evaluation of the Cooperation program 2019-2024 between Rwanda and Belgium

RWANDA

Particip GmbH

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

This Final Evaluation seeks to **assess the implementation of the Belgian–Rwanda bilateral portfolio implemented by Enabel over the period 2019-2024**, and the extent to which the results (output, outcomes) of its interventions have been reached. **The analysis will cover the global portfolio level based on the performance of the 4 sectors of intervention (Health, Agriculture, Urban Development and Public Finance Management -PFM)**, **cross-cutting issues** (gender and private sector development – PSD), and **cross-cutting activities** (analytical work, policy dialogue). The additional interventions managed by Enabel in Rwanda over the 2018-2024 period[1] are not directly concerned the review but they are taken into account when assessing the global coherence of the portfolio.

The analysis focused mainly on a set of **7 evaluation questions** (EQ) dealing with: i) programme performance; ii) the Rwanda-Belgium partnership; iii) the added value of complementary funding received by Enabel; iv) the unexpected effects of the portfolio; v) the way the strengthening of value chains in agriculture and urbanization contributed to job creation and job consolidation; vi) the way action research influenced health policy; and vii) the way gender integration was operationalized within the sexual and reproductive health program.

The **users** of the evaluation include the various **project teams**, **Enabel country management and headquarters**, and the **Rwandan Authorities**.

The work was divided in 3 phases: i) preparation, ii) data collection (including a 19-day mission in Rwanda), and iii) analysis, restitution and report drafting (Figure 2). The data collection phase included visits to a wide set of project and portfolio stakeholders (Enabel staff, project actors, Rwandan authorities, development partners)[2]. The in-country data collection mission involved visits to Bugesera, Gakenke, Gicumbi, Gisagara, Karongi, Musanze, Ngoma, Nyarugenge, Rubavu, Rwamagana, along with Kigali.

Findings and conclusions

In terms of the **portfolio performance**, the **relevance of the interventions is very satisfactory**. The programs correspond to Rwanda's priorities and policies as well as to its strategic options. Furthermore, the portfolio is aligned with Belgium's current thematic priorities. The emphasis on participation has ensured interventions respond to the needs of the beneficiaries. Besides, Enabel support is valued for its flexibility and adaptability, helping to fill in thematical and geographical gaps and/or intervening where it can offer specific skills, experience and added value.

The overall approach is coherent. The interactions with other actors working on similar issues are satisfactory and no duplication of efforts is observed. At **sectoral level**, the intervention logic is coherent and integrates relevant factors of risk. Furthermore, the resources mobilised to undertake the interventions are realistic. Enabel interventions are valued for their holistic approach to issues and the fact that Enabel combines actions at national and local level. Nonetheless, there is a tendency to develop a one size fits all approach. Moreover, globally, there are few links between sectors and **almost no additional results at portfolio level**.

1 These include interventions carried over from the previous portfolio, activities related to the thematic portfolio on Social Protection in Central Africa, or projects managed for third party donors such as the European Union - EU, LuxDev. IUCN or the Swedish International Development Agency - SIDA

2 Please consult Annex 6 for a full list of stakeholders interviewed.

Effectiveness is satisfactory. The interventions have **globally achieved significant results in all sectors**. However, the **quantification of results is limited**, particularly at outcome level, and attribution of results remains an issue.

Impact is also satisfactory but the level of **attainment of higher-level impact is still uncertain** although they are expected to materialise with time. **Quantification of results is limited** (productivity, income generation, jobs created, increased Value of Assets…). **Some indicators, most notably at impact level, are not available yet**, with many projects currently undertaking impact assessments to capture missing information or expecting assessments to be undertaken in 2025/26[3].

Efficiency is satisfactory. Resources have been economically converted into results within the fixed deadline. Enabel is a pragmatic and flexible institution with good adaptation capacity and a good capacity to interact and dialogue with stakeholders at all levels whether in the field or regarding policy dialogue. **Working through local partners has proved efficient**. The mutualisation of administrative resources at the level of the representation enables a rational, cost-effective and efficient use of resources. Budget execution was 95% at the time of the ETR with all remaining funds expected to be disbursed. Despite an initial slow start and the Covid crisis, Enabel has caught up most of the initial delays. The few weaker aspects linked to efficiency regard the fact that procurement and grant preparation processes are presented as cumbersome and time consuming, the lack of coincidence between Rwandan and Enabel budget cycles, slow team set up and a high level of subsidy for some activities, which could have covered a higher number of beneficiaries.

Sustainability is satisfactory but still requires attention. Despite many positive aspects, including a high level of participation and ownership and significant capacity building, **more human resource and institutional building is required**. Issues related to organisation, infrastructure and equipment management and maintenance, financial sustainability and institutional strengthening are not addressed thoroughly enough. Various innovative infrastructure management mechanisms appear promising but need time to fully consolidate. Moreover, profitability of activities has not been sufficiently analysed to guarantee sustainability. Finally, high levels of subsidies raise questions as to the replicability of certain actions. Although many of these issues will be addressed in the next portfolio, an exit strategy based on the extension of support cannot be considered satisfactory.

In terms of **cross-cutting aspects**, although a gender specialist was contracted in 2023 to develop a more formalised transformative approach in the future, **gender was not addressed in a satisfactory way** through the 2019-2024 portfolio, which focused on quotas of beneficiaries and sensitization. **Environmental issues, as well as inclusiveness, have been the object of varied attention, but private sector development has been given substantial attention** through a dedicated Technical Assistance (TA) **and has achieved tangible results**. **Accountability was also addressed satisfactorily**.

The global evaluation of the main evaluation criteria is summarized below:

Coherence	B	Interactions with other actors are satisfactory. No duplication of efforts is observed but there are few links between sectors and almost no additional results at portfolio level.
Relevance	A	The programs correspond to Rwanda's priorities, policies and strategic options. It is aligned with Belgium's thematic priorities. It responds to the needs of beneficiaries.

[3] This issue should be taken up in the next portfolio through supporting RAB and MINAGRI in developing data management systems per value chain (to favour a direct approach and ownership of national authorities of data collection).

Efficiency	B	Resources have been economically converted into results within the fixed deadline. All funds will be disbursed. Working through local partners and the mutualisation of administrative resources at the level of the representation have proved efficient.
Effectiveness	B	Interventions have globally achieved significant results in all of the health, agriculture, urbanization and public finance management sectors.
Sustainability	B	Sustainability is supported by a high level of participation, strong ownership and capacity building. However, infrastructure and equipment management and maintenance, financial sustainability and institutional strengthening need more attention.
Impact	B	Higher-level results are in the process of materialising but the capacity to quantify them remains limited at the time of this evaluation.

The bilateral partnership in development cooperation can be considered to have promoted mutual accountability and developed a satisfactory level of policy dialogue. It is based on close collaboration and trust, participative planning, strong alignment to Rwandan policy, embedment in national structures and direct funding of Government of Rwanda entities. Beyond supporting effective cooperation, this puts Rwandan entities in the driving seat and ensures mutual accountability. **Enabel's flexibility, pragmatism and capacity of adaptation are valued by its counterparts**. They brand it as a constructive, efficient, and innovative institution. Its willingness and capacity to work at both national and local level is appreciated and allows it to acquire a comprehensive and holistic knowledge of the country's context and challenges, enhancing the performance of its action.

The **relationship between Enabel and its national partners underlies a good quality dialogue**. This contributes to Enabel's capacity to interact with stakeholders at all levels (national and local), both around practical and technical field issues and more strategic policy issues. These positive attributes have further benefited from the establishment of a structured and regular dialogue framework including the Belgian Embassy, which takes part in higher level exchanges. In particular, by co-chairing the Public Finance Management (PFM) Thematic Working Group (TWG), Enabel has strongly contributed to improving PFM sector coordination and dialogue. Nonetheless, **data is lacking to support dialogue further**. Project Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) is not geared enough towards understanding issues of concern to sectoral policy. The articulation between analytical studies and policy dialogue is weak. Studies and analytical work have mostly been limited to project identification and implementation support without a strategic ambition.

District level capacity of local authorities and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have been built in project management, administrative and financial management, as well as participative planning. The PFM sector has cross-cuttingly supported district capacity by simplifying administrative and financial processes, in addition to strengthening planning capacity. New management models have been promoted, as well as private sector autonomisation.

Over the second half of the period under review, **Enabel has succeeded in capturing a significant amount of complementary funding from various other donors**. The funding concerned, at over 54 Million €, represents almost half of the portfolio budget. Projects funded through complementary budgets display a certain level of complementarity and contribute to Belgium's bilateral cooperation objectives in Rwanda. A set of additional collaborations with development partners also contribute to strengthening the overall effects of Enabel's action. Such **complementary funding and development partnerships widen the scope of Enabel reflexion and outreach within its sectors of activity**. This brings greater experience and reinforces Enabel's, much appreciated,

holistic approach to development. Moreover, it generates greater clout in relation to policy dialogue.

Nonetheless, **the impact of third-party funding and development partnerships on Enabel and Belgium's objectives and Rwanda's development remains limited**. Partnerships and third-party projects are mostly established on an ad-hoc basis. Areas of potential synergies are not sufficiently defined. The absence of clearer principles, objectives and/or selection criteria underlying the implementation of third-party projects, or the development of partnerships limits their articulation with the bilateral programme. The team Europe and Team Belgium dimensions of the portfolio suffer from similar limitations.

Few unexpected effects are recorded. Most of them are positive but remain marginal with respect to the program's global objectives. They have not had a transformative effect on the program.

The strengthening of value chains in agriculture and urbanisation contributed to job creation and job consolidation. **However, non-Value Chain (VC) related activities have had equivalent job creating impact.** Less jobs appear to have been created in the agricultural sector while the urbanisation sector has created a large proportion (over half) of temporary jobs. Key aspects of a job creation strategy are Technical and Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) and the creation of a conducive environment for private sector development through infrastructure building, inter-professional organisations structuring and access to finance. Besides, the effects of job creation vary with the type of producers. In the agriculture sector, small poultry farms create 3 times more jobs than large ones.

Action research plays a crucial role in influencing policy within the healthcare sector. By providing a systematic approach to understanding and addressing challenges, action research enables health facilities to collect, analyse, and interpret data systematically. This serves as a solid foundation for evidence-based policymaking, allowing policymakers to make informed decisions that directly address the needs of the communities they serve. Sustained investment in action research is imperative to foster a culture of evidence-based decision-making within the health sector. The emphasis on localized action research ensures that policies derived from Enabel efforts were uniquely suited to the specific contexts of individual districts, acknowledging the diversity in health challenges across different regions of Rwanda. Through these initiatives, Enabel supported health facilities in enhancing health program management and effectively addressing the evolving healthcare needs of their communities.

The assessment on gender integration in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) interventions points to limited knowledge of the concept of gender integration, the lack of evidence and the situational analysis of the gender integration in the health sector. This led to the **non-strategic consideration of gender concept at the formulation stage of the Barame framework**. Additionally, the assessment found that a multisectoral approach promotes synergy among actors and allows the provision of a comprehensive package of interventions for the benefit of the community members. Finally, although the Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) was not used as an approach to address gender issues, **some gender sensitive interventions positively impacted the health outcomes of the targeted group**.

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2 Recommendations

On the basis of the previous analysis and of the main conclusions, the following 7 recommendations are made:

Recommendation	Actors targeted	Level	Priority	Type
R1: Develop a global Theory of Change (ToC), indicating the way Enabel's interventions contribute to implementing the Rwandan government's strategy, the gaps to be filled in by Rwanda and/or other development partners, and identifying areas of partnership, collaboration, and synergy between national and international development partners.	Programme Team and Enabel HQ with coordination with Enabel's representation and national institutional authorities	1 and 3	Short term	Strategic
R2: Devise sustainability mechanisms from the formulation stage and ensure they are in place a year before project closure so as to be in a position to adjust and consolidate them.	Programme Team and Enabel HQ with coordination with Enabel's representation and national institutional authorities	1 and 3	Short term	Strategic
R3: Formalise the implementation of cross-cutting approaches (gender, PSD…) through the definition of country specific contextualised framework documents and the institutionalisation of focal points	Programme Team and Enabel HQ with coordination with Enabel's representation and national institutional authorities	1 and 3	Medium term[4]	Strategic
R4: Better adapt support to diversity of producers and their access to production factors. Detailed assessments should be conducted to better characterise the diversity of producers and SMEs, their contexts and their market orientations.	Project teams/ Enabel's representation in Rwanda	1 and 2	Short term	Operational
R5: Define a global job creation strategy. PSD has been approached mainly from the point of view of the pig, poultry, clay and stone value chains when wider issues related to the conducive environment for SME development must also be taken into account (infrastructure provision, access to finance, knowledge, insurance, TVET and professional organisation support).	Project teams / Enabel's representation in Rwanda/ National authorities	1 and 2	Short term	Strategic
R6: Reinforce M&E and develop a more structured knowledge management and dissemination system. This implies strengthening the M&E system, establishing capitalisation objectives and defining technical and policy dialogue issues articulating them together and supporting them through analytical work, and technical assistance.	Programme Team and Enabel HQ with coordination with Enabel's representation and national institutional authorities	1 and 3	Short term	Strategic
R7: Strengthen policy dialogue taking it beyond the sectoral level. It is strategic for Enabel to discuss policy orientations with Rwandan authorities well beyond the sectoral level. It should feed the dialogue on the basis of its experience.	Enabel's representation in Rwanda / Embassy / National authorities	2	Medium term	Strategic

4 As formulation stage now passed.

3 Lessons learned

The following 15 lessons are drawn from Enabel's experience in the Cooperation programme:

1) A **holistic approach** to issues and combining actions at a national and local level helps acquire a comprehensive vision of development issues, their context and challenges, enhancing the performance of an action.
2) **Remaining pragmatic, flexible, and adaptable** to changing circumstances are key elements of efficient work.
3) The **mutualisation of administrative resources** at the level of the representation and direct management ("**Régie**") by Enabel supports a rational, cost-effective, and efficient use of resources, but needs to be undertaken in a spirit of joint management.
4) **Implementation through direct funding of capable local institutions** is effective and efficient since i) it empowers partner institutions, ii) it is conducive to alignment, iii) it boosts fiscal decentralisation, iv) it contributes to capacity building and ownership, v) it enables field deployment with a good knowledge of context at limited cost, and vi) it avoids micromanagement by Enabel.
5) Close collaboration, participative planning and implementation, alignment, embedment in national structures, direct funding of national entities, putting them in the driving seat, transparency and trust are major elements of **good quality partnership**.
6) There is an **added value in a development partner acquiring a global view of development** challenges at the level of a partner country by covering several sectors. This should not be counterbalanced by too light a presence in corresponding sectors.
7) **Complementary funding and development partnerships** widen outreach, increase experience and reinforce influence.
8) The **coherence of complementary funding and development partnerships** can be supported by the establishment of a global framework (ToC, principles, objectives) which acts as a reference within which the funding and partnerships can insert themselves.
9) A **job creation strategy** should go beyond agricultural value chains and encompass off-farm and non-agricultural activities, integrating a combination of activities including TVET and building a conducive business environment (infrastructure, regulations, institutions, access to finance…). It should recognise that job creation effects vary with the type of producer that one supports implying that the variety of production systems should be taken into account when defining priorities (job creation, export, resilience and food sovereignty).
10) **Self-employment** can have significant knock-on employment effects with self-employed graduates creating SMEs which subsequently hire salaried staff as they develop.
11) An understanding of value addition creation (against production factors), cost-benefit and economies of scale is needed to **target beneficiaries adequately**.
12) **Dual Training**, with a good practical-theoretical balance, maximises relevance to the job market, fostering entrepreneurship, building capacity in use of equipment, and providing hands-on experience of up-to-date industry practices.
13) **Localised action research** facilitates the development of contextually relevant policies, acknowledging the diversity in health challenges.
14) **Coupling health, sexual, and reproductive services** with other activities enables greater anonymity in attending the service and helps overcome social barriers favouring attendance.
15) The weight of **combining several donors** generates greater influence in policy dialogue and institutional reform.

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