

Support of capacities and effectiveness of association FoRS – Czech Forum for Development Cooperation

Summary

Description of the implementing organization: The Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FoRS) strives to increase effectiveness, quality and amount of the Czech development cooperation and humanitarian aid, strengthen positive impact of the work the Czech development and humanitarian organizations and institutions perform in under-developed countries, especially in the poor and most vulnerable communities, but it also strives to make positive impact in the Czech Republic and during the process of formulating political strategies that may have influence on the level of global poverty.

Description of the project: This project of the Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FoRS) aimed to further strengthen the capacity of the Czech non-governmental organizations as qualified partners in the development cooperation at the national and the European level, thus contributing to the overall effectiveness of the development cooperation, including the related policies, aiming to achieve positive impact in developing and transforming countries. FoRS continued strengthening its relations with key Czech (MFA, Czech Development Agency, the Council for development cooperation, the Parliament, non-state actors) as well as international partners (EU institutions).

Context of this evaluation: Evaluation of this project lasted from August to November 2013. Contracting authority for this evaluation was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic; the investigator was represented by an evaluation team consisting of a Lead Evaluator Radka Bzonková and an Expert on entrepreneurship Lucie Bučinová.

Evaluation findings and conclusions

Below is the evaluation summary according to the evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criterion	Rating
RELEVANCE	High
EFFECTIVENESS	High
EFFICIENCY	Rather high
SUSTAINABILITY	High
IMPACT	High

RELEVANCE

The platform is relevant to the member organizations in the representation and enforcement of their interests. The most successful mechanisms that actively engage small as well as big organizations are so called working groups (WG) and general meetings (GM) of FoRS. These two mechanisms enable: democratic exchange of opinions, regular meetings with other members, effective networking and cooperation on common topics. There seems to exist only one weak point in this process and that is the communication between the members and the FoRS administration board.

The platform is relevant to the international organizations too, mainly due to its active participation in an international group CONCORD (in the past, FoRS has even become a member of the board). The interconnectedness between FoRS and CONCORD is so strong, that the evaluation team could notice great mutual enrichment, exchange of know-how, and common advocacy strategies applied on the world policy level. Thanks to seminars and

workshops arranged by FoRS, the member organizations can apply various know how and information supplied by CONCORD, even without being directly aware about their original sources.

EFFICIENCY

This evaluation criterion was reviewed from a perspective of the overall financial efficiency of performed activities and also a “value for money” perspective. The evaluation team considers the personnel and travel expenses reasonable. From the Czech Development Agency budget was funded 25-30% of the all personal costs, the rest was funded from other sources. Considering the effectiveness through the perspective “value for money”, the most effective activity performed by the platform are the “working groups”, achieving the main three goals of FoRS: capacity building, policy making, and public awareness raising. The evaluation team agrees that the least efficient activity is related to the platform’s intra-web “Forum” as a majority of the member organizations has not been using it due to the web’s chaotic appearance and complex character.

EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation team perceives the platform activities toward the member organizations as well as toward the international organizations as being extraordinary effective. The member organizations view the advocacy work performed by FoRS while meeting with MFA and the Czech Development Agency and with the international organizations as very positive. Project managers from the international organizations like CONCORD or TRIALOG confirmed a highly active participation of the FoRS representatives during the processes of formulating different concepts, strategies, and recommendations. Thanks to this FoRS active presence in different working groups and in the board of CONCORD, FoRS is able to influence mightily various decision-making processes (as compared to other central-European platforms). To name other sound activities mentioned by the member organizations, these would include: organizing regular seminars about fundraising and project management, providing the members with useful contacts, and frequent posting of calls for tenders/grants. In the area of public education, the activity called “Development coffee”, arranged by a member organization “Siriri”, was mentioned many times as being highly effective.

SUSTAINABILITY

The platform is assumed to have its own long-term strategy to maintain sustainability, an act triggered by three facts: a decreasing tendency of the financial support offered from the Czech Development Agency funds (2010:45,5%; 2011:34,4%; 2012:34%, 2013: estimated 21,7%); the platform’s proved ability to raise finances from different sources; and the reform of collecting the membership fees (a step realized in 2011/2012). The economical results should be evident in the years 2013/2014, however, in case the expectations of platform are fulfilled, the platform will generate enough money to ensure its own functioning and the increase in “ownership” by the member organizations. The evaluation team noticed great involvement of the interviewed member organizations in the platform and their strong interest in keeping the FoRS platform active and running also in the future.

IMPACT

In their everyday performance, most of the member organizations has been using the following know-how gained through the FoRS mediation: project management, fundraising, peer-review, and administration of EU grants. FoRS has a high impact on the Czech civil society due to: a high number of the member organizations, a high number of achieved

activities, and a great amount of shared experiences. FoRS activities cultivate the civil society in the Czech Republic.

The platform has achieved during the evaluated period an implementation of fundamental suggestions based on the negotiation with the MFA and Czech Development Agency and through such advocacy consolidated the position of Czech non-governmental organizations towards state institutions. The evaluation team considers as the most important achievements of the platform its participation on a preparation of a new Strategy of the Czech Development Cooperation, its regular presence at the Council for Development Cooperation, its consistent strive for transparency in decision-making processes made by the MFA and Czech Development Agency, and nowadays its effort to achieve higher performance transparency in non-governmental organizations registered in the Czech Republic (starting in 2015). The long-term impact of the FoRS activities proves the platform's well-deserved placement on the board of the international organization CONCORD.

Recommendations:

Level	Recommendation	Addressee	Importance
Sector level	Taking into consideration the indisputable impact and successful outputs of the FoRS platform, we recommend retaining the financial support from the Czech Development Agency funds - at least, for two or three more years	Czech Development Agency	1
Sector level	Issuing a new type of contract that would make possible that the platform is financed in a period of two or three consecutive years	Czech Development Agency	1
Project level	The number of activities should not increase, the platform should rather try to stimulate greater involvement of the member organizations, especially through the working groups	FoRS	1
Project level	If the number of activities stays same as it is now, November 2013, the platform's secretariat should be better staffed, with a director, police officer, capacity building officer, and media communication/PR manager	FoRS	2
Project level	The platform should share with the member organizations more openly and explicitly the influence of the CONCORD concepts	FoRS	2
Project level	The cooperation between the FoRS secretariat and the board should be communicated more effectively with the regular member organizations	FoRS	2

1. Sector level recommendations, Czech Development Agency

Taking into consideration the indisputable impact and successful outputs of the FoRS platform, we recommend retaining the financial support from the Czech Development Agency funds - at least, for two or three more years

Explanation: The platform is financed by Czech Development Agency and so to ensure the secretariat's functioning and also the co-financing of the platform's activities, the MFS financial support should not be immediately withhold. This long-term financial support from Czech Development Agency would stabilize the staff number in the secretariat and enable

better planning for fundraising activities. We recommend to finance the platform for a certain essential period, until its ability to securely generate sufficient financial income from the member fees and/or other sources. The year 2013/14 might be a financial turning point, showing if a reform in collecting the member fees is able to ensure the financial independence of the platform. In two or three years after the implementation of the reform, it should be clear if the reform made any financial difference for the platform and this could be the right moment for Czech Development Agency to rethink or regulate their future financial support of the platform.

2. Sector level recommendations, Czech Development Agency

Issuing a new type of contract that would make possible that the platform is financed in a period of two or three consecutive years

Explanation: A contracting mechanism of more-than-one-year-financing will stabilize the FoRS secretariat. The platform activities have not changed since 2010 and so the one-year-financing approach blocks and burdens the secretariat's performance with a lot of unnecessary and repetitive administrative steps. No big changes in the platform's activities are expected in the next few years and that is why we consider the solution of two/three-year-financing as reasonable.

3. Project level, FoRS

The number of activities should not increase in next few years, the platform should rather try to stimulate greater involvement of the member organizations, especially through the working groups (as a good example of a greater involvement of a member organization can be cited an activity Development Coffee, arranged by a member NGO "Siriri")

Explanation: The platform secretariat is already overloaded as of now and it likely will not be able to arrange for yet another and/or bigger platform activities.

4. Project level, FoRS

If the number of activities stays same as it is now, November 2013, the platform's secretariat should be better staffed, with a director, police officer, capacity building officer, and media communication/PR manager

Explanation: The number of current activities is so high that it seems as very useful and also reasonable to divide particular positions and revise the full/part-time job descriptions of those positions. Such employment modification could lead toward a higher performance efficiency of the platform secretariat and possibly decrease its work overload.

5. Project level, FoRS

The platform should share with the member organizations more openly and explicitly the influence of the CONCORD concepts

Explanation: Majority of the interviewed organizations had no clear picture about the positive outcomes the platform's membership in CONCORD actually have and had only a vague impression about CONCORD's influence on the performance of their organization.

6. Project level, FoRS

The cooperation between the FoRS secretariat and the board should be communicated more effectively with the regular member organizations

Explanation: The FoRS administrative board is isolated from the regular members. We recommend that the cooperation between the Board and the secretariat is communicated more effectively and periodically with the FoRS regular members.