

Prague, 21. 12. 2016

Statement on the evaluation report submitted by the research team of independent evaluators Evaluation4Action (E4A) titled "Evaluation of foreign development cooperation of the Czech Republic in the education sector, a teaching program of Czech teachers in developing countries - support for improving the quality of higher education in the partner developing countries" of December 2016.

This statement represents the opinion of investigators of one of two projects that were included in the evaluation and was formulated by members of the research team of the Czech University of Life Sciences (CULS). Here we express disagreement with the conclusions of the evaluation report in regards to the Cambodian project and draw attention to weaknesses of the E4A evaluation, which we have already presented in the comment procedure.

In our opinion, the evaluation report, rather than evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of two very different concepts of the project in two culturally different countries, slid into the simplistic method of choosing the solution in one country, which was seen as correct while the second solution was deemed bad. The report is, in effect, a search for reasons for a pre-planned scenario, a fact which is hidden under the technician style of the text.

We see the main weaknesses of this approach in the following:

- (i) The evaluators of E4A, as they state in their methodology, redesigned (reconstructed) the logic of the project to fit it to the „theory of change“ applied by them, and then they performed their evaluation. The reconstruction in accordance with their „theory of change“, however, was not mentioned by the E4A evaluators during the interviews with the researchers of the project and thus not approved in the context of the original logic of the Cambodian project. It should be further noted that at the time of designation, approval, and implementation of the project the "theory of change" was not implemented by the appellant nor the Czech Development Agency. This led to a paradoxical situation where the scheme of the project in Cambodia was reworked by E4A into another form and evaluated according to criteria corresponding to the newly implemented „theory of change“, applied two years after project completion.
- (ii) A major deficiency in the E4A evaluation is the amount of data obtained at the "Royal University of Agriculture," which served as a basis for the evaluation. Project activities during the implementation were attended by more than 1,900 students, but the evaluators were able to carry out interviews with only three students, which is an entirely unrepresentative sample.
- (iii) Although the text of the report sounds professional, it is primarily based on assumptions and artificially fabricated conclusions, without any understanding or implementation of local specifications and practices in the evaluation process, whether in the field of education, or science and research.

Finally, we must express our regret over the whole situation. The preparation of our comments on the report and the necessary defence of our work took a lot of time that could have been used more efficiently. The evaluation of projects is very useful, but must be pursued prudently with maximum effort made to understand the totality and complexity of the issues that are assessed. This Evaluation of E4A, instead of being an inspirational source of information, provided a tendentious text which negatively evaluated the project in Cambodia based on an unsubstantiated and often very subjective evaluation. We are sorry that instead of implementing interesting observations on the part of the evaluators, we were forced repeatedly throughout the discussion process to spend time in the defence of the achievements of the project, and to emphasise objective results, which were questioned or downplayed in the E4A evaluation report.

On behalf of the realisation team,

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