

# Belgian Cooperation in Rwanda Evaluation 1994-2006



Evaluation No 3/2008

## Synthesis

it would be sensible to develop a focus for indirect activities within a particular niche (for example technical and vocational training).

### Private Sector

#### A clear need to generate economic opportunities outside the field of agriculture

Land pressure and demographic growth are contributing factors to poverty in Rwanda, reducing the benefits of economic progress. The private sector could provide economic opportunities, and also contribute to the modernisation of agriculture. In that sense, a small part of Belgian aid has been addressed to strengthen the private sector.

#### Change in access to micro-credit is not clear

Belgium has invested in microfinance institutions via NGO partner, but a positive change in the access to credit has not clearly been demonstrated. Belgium hoped to participate in the creation of an investment facility for small and medium sized enterprises via funding provided to the Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO). Yet, the Rwanda Enterprise Investment Company (REIC) has been established with other investors.

This has not been clearly communicated to key stakeholders, including the Embassy, and led to loss of image.

### Recommendations

- Belgian cooperation should seek to preserve its level of responsiveness that it has gained through its experience. Thanks to a long-term country presence, diversity of executing agencies, intervention in a variety of highly relevant sectors in close cooperation with the Rwandan authorities.

- The synergies between structures and pace of implementation of Belgian assistance could be improved by reducing the numbers of channels of interventions and increasing the outcome and impact monitoring, jointly with other donors.
- The Embassy should become a locus of faster implementation, increased scope to make decisions, and stronger technical oversight. This will support the process of country harmonisation and ownership.

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### Introduction

The Special Evaluation Service of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, commissioned this evaluation to analyse and assess the way in which Belgium's development cooperation for Rwanda has developed, and the way in which it has been integrated into activities and the national development dialogue.

The evaluation period runs from 1994 but particular attention is given to the past five years (2002-2006). The evaluation was conducted by a team of eight assembled by Channel Research during the first half of 2007. A deeper analysis was carried out for a sample number of projects in each of the key sectors of interest: Health, the Rule of Law and Justice, Rural Development, Education and Private Sector Development. The term 'Belgian cooperation' encompasses the volume of public funds directed at development in Rwanda.

### Overall conclusions

The PRSP as an overall development framework is judged strongly relevant to Rwanda, and all Belgian cooperation interventions can be linked to PRSP goals and to sector strategies where these exist.

There is however greater or lesser resonance with these broad objectives depending upon the extent to which Belgium itself thinks sectorally about a particular programme. Interventions on justice link clearly to sector priorities, those in health are becoming more internally coherent, and rural development seems the least well structured as a programme of activity.

Belgian contributions have, sector by sector, been shown to have variable levels of impact. Some are effective at the level of outputs but could be improved in terms of sustainable impact. Others have been extremely successful in delivering the

outcomes predicted and in then using the experience to inform and influence policy.

Overall the volume of aid to development in Rwanda could be made more efficient by achieving greater harmonisation between the programmes of the different Belgian actors. Greater consultation would improve the efficiency and the coherence between the activities of the Belgian aid.

The sustainability of impact from Belgian contribution in Rwanda will be greatest where there is high degree of local ownership. Although the GOR has exhibited a strong degree of ownership of its PRSP, some concerns are raised (for example by NGO staff) over the articulation of priorities of the most vulnerable in Rwanda, of sustainable governance and rural development. Work to strengthen the monitoring of impact at community level is key to the success of Belgian cooperation in Rwanda.

### **Background: a clear set of frameworks for cooperation but some disconnects in implementation**

Since 1995, the focus of development aid has gradually been directed away from emergency assistance towards reconstruction and development driven by a market-centered economy. While Rwanda assembled her own frameworks for national development - especially through Vision 2020 published in 2000, and the interim poverty reduction strategy paper IPRSP, Belgian cooperation also undertook a critical review of its effectiveness and developed an overall cooperation strategy - based on a sector approach.

Programme content has largely been inspired by past project experience, and development assistance is directed at all levels, through the widest variety of channels. From 2004 a stronger element of country ownership began to predominate, in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration. Component direct bilateral cooperation projects are formulated and implemented by BTC, the technical arm of Belgian cooperation. The general form of coordination with DGDC does not allow Embassy staff to make the most efficient use of learning from projects, to inform policy

discussions with GOR, and with other donors.

Important issues of ownership and substitution to national capacities still exist, as well as a detrimental divide between policy dialogue (done by DGDC) and knowledge about programme implementation (increasingly the remit of BTC). Recently Belgium has taken steps towards more programmatic support (in education, health and justice) in order to prepare sector budget support, or contributions to basket funding.

The volume of assistance channeled via indirect mechanisms has fluctuated during the period 1994-2006. This reflects the extent of the emergency situation when greater volumes were channeled via multilateral agencies and non-state actors such as NGOs. The numbers of eligible channels have been reduced, as there have been moments when particular Belgian NGO were expelled from Rwanda. The indirect channels remain more fragile and exposed than direct bilateral assistance.

## **Overview of Sector Programmes**

### **Health**

#### **Better quality of services but key health indicators still need to improve**

Funding and technical support for the health sector has been the main component of Belgian cooperation with Rwanda. Belgian support, which has shifted to a sector mode since 1995, is highly relevant to poverty reduction. Nevertheless, in order to translate the improved quality of services into better health indicators, progress needs to be made in strengthening the monitoring system of access and actual use. So far, several key health indicators (fertility rate, maternal mortality) remain weak.

#### **Challenges of skewed sector funding**

The main focus of Belgian cooperation is to support the Ministry of Health's primary health care programme, the rest going to capacity building and the Centre Hospitalier de Kigali (CHK). The support encompasses activities directed at health structures and institutions, vertical programmes such as mental health and malaria, as well as district health authorities. While Belgium has suggested block funding for sector support since 2004,

resources were until late 2007 still directed towards projects. There are important challenges ahead in funding the Health Sector Strategic Plan in its entirety, overcoming the challenges of skewed sector funding because of the volume of targeted funds for HIV.

### **Rule of Law and Justice**

#### **Noticeable improvement in judicial work but conflict sensitivity challenges**

Alongside health, Rule of Law and Justice is a priority sector of intervention for the Belgian cooperation. Programmes and projects have been supported through direct bilateral aid and via NGOs, generating important complementarities in the sector. In spite of slow overall implementation, and despite frequent and rapid changes in the country policy environment, there has been noticeable improvement in the quality and volume of judicial work conducted, as well as in people's access to justice. Yet, the justice sector highlights important issues of conflict sensitivity. In particular, there are concerns about some of the outcomes resulting from adaptations to customary law (Gacaca) in the context of genocide, and whether justice may not generate new factors of instability.

### **Opportunities through synergies in EU member state forum**

The evaluation identified specific opportunities through synergies in the EU member state forum, through monitoring mechanisms, and the continuation of the current support given to NGO actors - especially where these establish a strong outreach to the rural populations, which have been neglected in some local components of the programme.

### **Rural Development**

**The Belgian bilateral cooperation and the Belgian Survival Fund: two different approaches**

Belgium aid for rural development in Rwanda has mainly been channelled through the Belgian Survival Fund (BSF) (largest volume of funding), the bilateral cooperation (BTC) and NGOs. Whereas the bilateral cooperation has supported the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) on technical agricultural projects, the BSF has engaged with the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MINALOC) and has worked with decentralised authorities and the most vulnerable households.

#### **Lack of harmonisation**

These potentially complementary aid instruments could have provided a useful framework

to achieve greater overall rural development in Rwanda. Yet, the evaluation shows that the Belgian Cooperation has not fully maximized the potential benefits of this opportunity. The Rwandan Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation could open a new window to develop a more deliberate vision.

### **Education**

#### **An evolving strategy with effort at CoComplementarity**

Between early post-war interventions and recent work, the strategy to support education has evolved from providing inputs (buildings and materials) to developing skills and reinforcing systems to deliver higher quality education. The evaluation shows that project level impact has been extremely variable.

#### **Loss of effectiveness due to the high diversity of projects**

The use of different mechanisms without a clear framework (such as the Cooperation Sector Strategy Note) has produced some overlaps. The added value of using these different mechanisms has not been evidenced. Overall aid in education has lost effectiveness due to the current eclectic mix of projects that is presented by the diversity of Belgian actors. In addition to sector support via bilateral cooperation,