

DESK FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

INTRODUCTION

The Project Implementation Desk facilitates project work by member churches through accompaniment during the process of implementation. The desk does not implement projects itself. An important task for the desk is to ensure accountability in the process of multilateral cooperation. We are generally satisfied with the regularity of reporting. Well-organized projects produce timely, good quality reporting

The number of project holders that are following the reporting guidelines is increasing. In the second half of 2006, space became available for an emphasis on field visits following a period in which significant travel time was spent on AIDS training, capacity building and other consultations. The evaluation instrument has been strengthened and findings from some important evaluations will be shared here.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Meetings

Africa AIDS coordinators from member churches and DWS

This meeting is reported in the AIDS desk report. Our desk organized the training on specific requirements for globally unified AIDS monitoring. Certain monitoring techniques are still a bit “over the head” in some countries. The training definitely contributed to the fact that we have received excellent data from African churches concerning achievements in their AIDS ministries. Networking between neighboring churches and between DWS programs and church programs was strengthened.

Nairobi + 4

This meeting is also reported in the AIDS desk report. We did a trial run with the Church Leadership Survey, one of the two most important tools for monitoring the results of the LWF AIDS Campaign. We received direct witness statements from church leaders who stressed that the May 2002 Consultation had been a turning point for their church’s position on HIV and AIDS.

AIDS Coordinators in Asia

In Asia we organized an AIDS Coordinators Meeting, which was similar to the one in Africa, with coordinators from churches and from DWS programs. Only one-third of the coordinators participated, which reflects the level of organization in Asia as compared to Africa. The main problem is that the threat and challenge of AIDS is recognized in only a few churches. It appears that only *post factum* (when the AIDS death toll has become high) will churches grant sufficient priority to the threat of AIDS. Another factor is that contrary to Africa, churches are not majority organizations in Asia.

Field Visits

Ethiopia

Two major projects were visited. In Washera, at a high altitude that is exposed to major climate risks, direct results and impact of 15 years of work was clearly evident. Entering the project area, the landscape was suddenly much greener with well-protected terraces on the hills, (green horizontal lines, grasses and shrubs preventing soil erosion) and significant homestead forestry. The changes were even more profound in communities, because the most important changes take place in people’s minds, and are only reflected in material indicators such as planted trees, terraces, new crops, etc. We met people who were motivated to work in their environment to promote sustainable livelihoods. The project organization was excellent, both on site and in the

synod headquarters, where the church unit DASSC office is on top of the various activities organized in this vast and difficult area. It is likely that the project can now phase out from this particular project area. But there are many more local areas that could benefit from the accumulated expertise and capacity of EECMY. EECMY is very motivated to extend its Christian witness to other areas.

Bolivia

We visited the church in Bolivia as well as the Sartawi program that originated with the small German-speaking Lutheran church. The water supply and the greenhouse projects came across in the reporting as rather “hardware oriented” processes. The reality was fortunately very different. We were deeply impressed with the signs of hope the IELB is creating with strong involvement and participation of local communities. Some of the places we visited were at altitudes higher than 5,000 meters. It was difficult for us to imagine how people live their lives among the rocks, the stones, the strong wind and low temperatures. Winter was just ending in the Altiplano and Andean mountains. Areas with grass and herbs were still very scarce. It was incredible to open the small door to a greenhouse and change from the cold and barren landscape to green, lush vegetables and a warm atmosphere.

It was moving to experience how vital those simple and appropriate installations are, and what they mean for people’s lives. Through the greenhouses, new vegetables have been introduced to complement the main crop. Diets have improved as a result of the greenhouses. Some of the leftover crops are brought to local markets and generate small income for the families.

Water means life and water installations for the villages are in high demand. Many formal requests for cooperation were given during our visits.

India

Specific projects were selected that had not been visited before. We traveled a long distance to reach Andra Pradesh (central-west) and Jarkhand (northwest). Important information was collected, and first-hand observations were made to help us better understand the particular progress that had been achieved in the projects. We observed a significant difference in quality between the projects of the churches and those of the NGOs, not in the sense that all church projects were weak and all NGO projects were strong. Some work initiated by the churches or by active church groups has become institutionalized in so-called ‘church-related NGOs’. In reality, these NGOs sometimes do not have a strong relationship with the churches anymore. In other cases there is an insufficient mechanism of reporting and accountability to the church.

There is a governance challenge in both the NGO and church-organized project work. We were impressed with the direct results of the work even though it was not very well presented in all the project reports in India. The excellent quality of some reports shows that, in principle, India has the potential and capacity to perform better.

Madagascar

The visit to Madagascar was in the context of an internal hand-over. The atmosphere was open, welcoming and relieved. Some of the projects have been insecure for a while, as fundraising for Madagascar has been quite difficult. The island suffers from isolation as a consequence of their history.

The rural projects were quite convincing and were a strong expression of a holistic vision of being church. The two Fafafi projects were much less ‘technical’ than expected and had adopted the concept of accompaniment of peasant and community groups. The gender aspect was also quite positive. In all six locations, women participated strongly in the presentations and discussions. Although I was informed that culturally their role is ‘subservient’ to their husbands (strong

parallels with Malaysian and Indonesian patterns rather than African patterns), in this accompaniment of both a church and project context, they are encouraged and fully participate. There was relatively little hardware and very well-organized 'sustainable' software, consisting of a strong self-help concept, a clear community accompaniment concept and LEISA (low external input sustainable agriculture).



CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

Ethiopia

The Capacity Building Workshops in EECMY were started in 2002 and it was the same group that now entered the second phase. Not having to spend time on explaining the logic of financial reporting forms and other basics of practical project cooperation created more time for focus on reporting techniques and planning principles. A second round provides opportunities for discussion and testing the concepts against reality. There is a strong tradition of project planning, both within the church based on 30 years of practice, and through the influence of government requirements in Ethiopia, which is sometimes difficult to harmonize with the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development as adopted by the LWF. Participation in the planning stages remains weak and there is undue emphasis on hardware due to requirements and expectations from the government. The LWF needs to continue and probably intensify the dialogue with DASSC on these issues.

Bolivia

A Capacity Building Workshop was scheduled in Bolivia with a new team. We noticed a high need for practical information and discussions, and addressed that in both individual and project discussions.

Madagascar

In Madagascar, we had a first round Capacity Building Workshop with 25 participants. The workshop was preceded by field visits so that we could use real situations as a basis for discussion. The participants contributed with excellent questions and clarifications. It was a very fruitful dialogue. Despite the many training and introduction subjects, we were able to avoid the classroom process of central presentation and listeners. The country is witnessing some positive

developments, but is very vulnerable to climate change and erosion. Continued drought is posing a serious risk to the livelihoods of people, especially in the south and southwest where the church has its membership base.



THE DESK IN FIGURES

The reduction in the number of open files on projects has not been strong this year, with 390 open files in 2005 and 386 in 2006. There are 144 projects in Africa (37.3%), 109 in Asia (28.2%), 46 in Europe (11.9%), 78 in Latin America (20.2%) and 9 global (2.3%). The gradual reduction of new, larger projects in terms of number of projects is nullified by the *increase* of small AIDS projects in the AIDS Project Support Fund (APSF). LWF-DMD approves about 14 of these each year with an average size of USD 18,900. They require considerably less work than the larger projects.

In 2006, the desk made 339 transfers to projects amounting to USD 6,913,084 with an average amount of USD 20,390. Projects in Africa received USD 2,786,457 (40.3 %), Asia received USD 1,087,989 (15.7%), Europe received USD 592,673(8.6%), Latin America USD 2,267,681 (32.8%) and 178,282 (2.6%) to global projects. See the table below with comparative figures for previous years.

The percentages are a bit lower than last year because we now include both Europe and Global projects. The average size of project support was USD 19,350 in Africa, USD 12,884 in Europe, USD 9,982 in Asia and USD 29,073 in Latin America. The difference in average size is significant and reflects the generally lower costs in Asia. The figure for Latin America is distorted because of one single large project. Removing the large project results in an average size of USD 23,065.

In 2006, we made progress in putting available balances to use. The buffer between receipts and transfers has been further reduced. Accumulated balances have been reduced from USD 3,338,000 to USD 2,797,000. Delayed implementation has been reduced and with the supporting partners there has been more specific negotiation about possible reallocations. Net income for projects was USD 6,346,542 and net transfers to projects amounted to USD 6,913,084

The division within the continents was as follows:

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Africa							
Ethiopia	973,652 (34%)	989,506 (34%)	818,402 (26%)	1,092,236 (32%)	1,064,493 (33%)	1,082,308 (31%)	915,748 (33%)
Tanzania	492,275 (17%)	491,317 (17%)	366,246 (12%)	337,839 (10%)	292,621 (9%)	255,178 (7%)	179,024 (6%)
Cameroon	248,556 (9%)	238,615 (8%)	279,378 (9%)	236,968 (7%)	248,485 (8%)	473,144 (13%)	299,673 (11%)
Madagascar	474,737 (17 %)	489,497 (17%)	415,223 (13%)	685,472 (20%)	551,428 (17%)	357,934 (10%)	167,269 (6%)
South Africa	(included in others)	(included in others)	410,325 (13%)	267,558 (8%)	173,518 (5%)	193,709 (5%)	431,200 (15%)
Others (17)	<u>673,668</u> (23%)	<u>713,998</u> (24%)	<u>856,733</u> (27%)	<u>811,266</u> (24%)	<u>855,273</u> (27%)	<u>1,093,259</u> (33%)	793,543 (29%)
Subtotal	2,862,888	2,922,933	3,146,307	3,431,341	3,185,818	3,537,025	2,786,457
Asia							
India	738,276 (44%)	842,978 (51%)	596,084 (48%)	793,426 (50%)	823,637 (57%)	550,926 (46%)	515,728 (47%)
Indonesia	119,586 (7%)	159,110 (9%)	129,298 (10%)	150,013 (10%)	72,506 (5%)	91,543 (8%)	79,131 (7%)
Papua N.G.	326,629 (20%)	367,816 (21%)	263,613 (21%)	236,416 (15%)	248,625 (17%)	146,814 (12%)	162,981 (15%)
Holy Land	209,338 (13%)	184,300 (11%)	94,155 (8%)	222,593 (14%)	163,051 (11%)	207,326 (17%)	190,454 (18%)
Others	<u>267,052</u> (16%)	<u>134,392</u> (8%)	<u>166,051</u> (13%)	<u>180,694</u> (11%)	<u>135,085</u> (9%)	<u>203,858</u> (17%)	139,695 (13%)
Subtotal	1,660,881	1,723,596	1,249,201	1,583,142	1,442,905	1,200,466	1,087,989
Latin America							
Brazil	758,507 (31%)	641,629 (32%)	691,819 (31%)	559,518 (27%)	583,186 (26%)	696,112 (29%)	673,263 (30%)
Bolivia	433,920 (18%)	287,488 (14%)	321,784 (14%)	309,644 (15%)	340,080 (15%)	296,675 (12%)	396,783 (17%)
El Salvador	261,205 (11%)	162,049 (8%)	261,740 (12%)	265,039 (12%)	256,518 (12%)	323,184 (13%)	197,096 (9%)
Argentina	224,607 (9%)	199,757 (10%)	247,700 (11%)	295,620 (14%)	319,857 (14%)	306,736 (13%)	311,257 (14%)
Chile	138,273 (6%)	118,765 (6%)	158,408 (7%)	153,911 (7%)	139,562 (6%)	131,099 (5%)	142,438 (6%)
Colombia	99,264 (4%)	153,988 (8%)	132,450 (6%)	136,060 (6%)	135,613 (6%)	170,077 (7%)	123,581 (5%)
Others (9)	<u>536,616</u> (22%)	<u>426,936</u> (22%)	<u>435,253</u> (19%)	<u>394,863</u> (19%)	<u>450,458</u> (20%)	<u>505,526</u> (21%)	423,263 (19%)
Sub total	2,452,392	1,990,612	2,249,154	2,114,655	2,225,274	2,429,408	2,267,681
GRAND TOTAL	6,976,161	6,637,142	6,644,662	7,129,138	6,853,997	7,166,900	6,913,084

Seven years of data shows a steady pattern of distribution. The project work in Asia is declining. This is somewhat acceptable because in some countries, the national capacity for resource development initiatives is increasing. In Tanzania, DMD's involvement is decreasing. This is understandable due to the strengthened role of Lutheran Mission Cooperation (LMC) in Tanzania that coordinates multi-actor, bilateral cooperation with ELCT. An increase is noticeable in Argentina and that could be questioned. We should be aware, however that the projects of our member churches deal with clearly defined target groups. Deep poverty and lack of dignified living can occur in countries with relatively high national averages. In such countries, a member church may have developed a particular strategy to address this situation for a specific target group.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The percentage of projects that produce good and/or acceptable reports is increasing. Only occasionally do we reject a report and stipulate the necessary required quality and contents.

The number of truly analytical reports however, is not very high. In a well-understood Project Monitoring and Evaluation cycle, reports are self assessments and are written with the aim of enabling the project holder to fine tune and adjust their program. Reports must be self-critical in nature.

Financial Reporting

The use of the Excel sheets is common and the project holders are accustomed to it. We continue to experience poor quality in the audit reports. In a few cases, this is not problematic, but in other cases it coincides with a general lack of controlled accountability. In those situations it is difficult to achieve substantial improvements.



Evaluations and assessments

The following evaluations were implemented:

1	Africa	Ethiopia	DASSC	2006-1	Mid term assessment
2	Asia	India	LEAD	2006-1	
3	Africa	Ethiopia	Washera IRDP	2006-3	Impact analysis
4	Africa	Ethiopia	Mejengir IRDP	2006-4	Assessment & accompaniment
5	Africa	Ethiopia	YDCS	2006-6	
6	L.America	Bolivia	SARTAWI	2006-7	
7	L.America	Brazil	Comin	2006-9	
8	Africa	Cameroon	PADI	2006-11	with McDevis & FAKT
9	L.America	Chile	Boca Sur	2006-11	
10	Africa	South Africa	Friedenskirche	2006-12	
11	Asia	Indonesia	PELPEM	2006-12	

In total, 29 evaluations have been carried out in Africa, 14 in Asia and seven in Latin America. 14 evaluations are planned for 2007. In all instances the observations and conclusions were positive. In addition, useful recommendations were formulated to assist in strengthening the program or institution. In five cases, the evaluation clearly confirmed a level of excellence which enabled the organization to strengthen its support base. In all cases the evaluation has been a concentrated learning exercise, which sometimes creates nervousness but produces constructive findings.

Monitoring and Reporting System (MaRS)

1110 project reports are now posted on the MaRS web site. 860 were posted in 2005, 500 in 2004, 300 in 2003 and 90 in 2002. A total of 1376 DMD documents are now accessible on MaRS. The LWF financial accounting software (CODA) provides useful data that is accessible on our monitors. Through MaRS, our partners have access to CODA project account data.

In 2006, the project to develop specific interrelated databases made important progress. It was confirmed that WCC and ACT would jointly develop the Contacts and Events databases with LWF. When developed, they will be maintained in each structure with possibilities of access to each other's data. Based on a DMD model for its project database needs, DWS and ACT have also specified their respective database needs. Based on good experience of the IOC with Filemaker Pro, the software has been selected for tailor-made databases that will be designed according to specific needs, but which can also be linked when needed with the Contacts and Events database. The DMD project database will be created in June 2007. Once the database is working properly we will proceed to study whether MaRS as a document database can be improved and made more user-friendly.

Gender

We are encouraging the project holders to provide more explicit gender analysis in their reporting. In the guidelines for application, gender specific information and analysis is already clearly spelled out, but we are still receiving proposals with little gender specific information. Our efforts to highlight gender analysis in the reporting may not bear fruit immediately. On the activity and progress level there is normally gender specific information, but on the results and impact level (the reporting on achievements per objective) there is still little analysis. Many project holders still unconsciously miss out on 50% of the population. When there is also little attention to youth issues and little opportunity for youth participation, the project holders are losing another 50% of their possible change-makers.

What a joy it is to read reports where the project holders have an inclusive understanding of their project planning and organization.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The recent field visits have confirmed what we all know, but need to realize again that churches have the unique capacity to create signs of hope in a very genuine and sustainable way. They also have the capacity to do this in an incredibly cost effective way.

The green hills in the barren surroundings of Washera, Northern Ethiopia, the green oasis of healthy vegetables in the ingenious greenhouses at 5,000 metres altitude in the stony desert and wind-torn Andes mountains, the basins of water to survive the dry season in the tribal areas in India, and the strong initiative and participation of illiterate male and female farmers in Madagascar prove that churches do make a difference, especially for the marginalized rural poor. It was also clear that churches have the capacity and/or the potential to mobilize the population in a profoundly more cohesive way than any NGO.

In the Capacity Building Workshops it is our challenge to make the churches focus on these very specific qualities and capacities. This is their comparative advantage, and in more economic terms, their competitive advantage. When church (strategic and project) planning is not based on such principles, it normally results in costly proposals and maintaining costly institutions. During the workshops this is normally realized, but there is hesitation to take the path of change. Some people prefer to continue to carry the pain of known suffering rather than turn toward a direction in which there are open questions and no final answers.

Sustainable development that is understood as ‘sustainable community’ will build communion on the local level, on the national level and on the global level. It is a matter of faith and holding on to principle values. It is not easy but is very rewarding, as the journey itself brings peace.



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