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# Evaluation of 5 Luxembourg NGOs active in Burkina Faso Chrétiens pour le Sahel (CPS)

*Executive summary*

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*Findings, judgements et recommendations expressed in this document reflect the evaluators' points of view and not necessarily the ones of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

## Executive summary

The objective of this evaluation is to check the NGO Chrétiens pour le Sahel's (CPS) capacity to implement the development projects efficiently and effectively, and ensure the long-term impact of these projects in terms of poverty alleviation.

The evaluation was done by analyzing the partner relationship between CPS and its counterparts in Burkina Faso. The analysis of the NGO was made according to the 3 circles model, which represents the entity as 3 interrelated circles: the BEING circle, the DOING circle and the RELATING circle<sup>1</sup>.

### Regarding the BEING circle

The foundation, initially called "Fondation SOS Sahel", was constituted on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1984 by Father Ferdy Fischer. It took its permanent name "Chrëschte mam Sahel / Chrétiens pour le Sahel" in 1985 and received the official authorization to operate as an NGO from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE) in 1986.

The identity of Chrétiens pour le Sahel lies in its name. Despite officially<sup>2</sup> aligning itself with the Catholic Church's doctrine in terms of development, CPS does not limit the benefits of its activities solely to Catholics. Indeed, the NGO works together with the whole of the beneficiary population with no distinction based on their religion, social background, political ideologies or ethnicity. Our field mission further confirmed this.

Strictly speaking, the strategy of the foundation is not described in any specific document. However, the framework agreement proposal for the 2013-2015 period constitutes a first step in the formalization of a strategy, considering that it includes the aspects related to the "being" circle (alignment with national priorities and details of implementation).

The NGO is composed of two governing bodies: the board of directors and the organization and management committee (COG), which englobes the board of directors and two administrators. The COG is the association's executive body which meets regularly to make all the management-related decisions. Although the organization and management committee ensures that there is a smooth almost-daily and reactive governance for the foundation, its presence calls into question the necessity of maintaining a COG composed of 7 administrators, in addition to a board composed of 15 administrators, which includes the 7 previously mentioned. As a result, the issue of an effective counter-power between the governing bodies is raised, and it is advised that CPS review this set up.

At the time of the evaluation, nine people were employed by the NGO, six of whom are based in CPS's permanent office in Burkina. The permanent office allows CPS to organize a regular and detailed follow-up of the projects, which are spread over several provinces in Burkina Faso.

All of those in charge of monitoring the project have a strong background in development cooperation. With a view to assisting the staff to fulfil the NGO's mission, CPS created several working groups, directed by a member of the COG and supported by volunteers and permanent members. Besides an obvious supply of additional workforce, these working groups offer the possibility for the COG members to stay in close contact with the NGO's everyday realities. Moreover, they provide an additional platform whereupon the COG can discuss specific subjects and issues in detail.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. source Intrac

<sup>2</sup> Cf. [www.sahel.lu/valeurs](http://www.sahel.lu/valeurs)

The projects are carried out in both rural and urban areas. CPS's projects have varied areas of activity, due mostly to the *integrated* nature of these projects. In Luxembourg, the NGO leads specific projects on development education which are co-funded by the MAE.

For many years, the promotion of the association was taken care of thanks to the strong commitment of Father Fischer, his close relations and the active involvement of the volunteers. Today, its reputation is a result of this history and of the board members' proactive activities to promote it in their own circles of acquaintances. Like many NGOs in Luxembourg, the level of fundraising has decreased over recent years, which resulted in the NGO having to reduce the Integrated development programme (IDP) budget by one third. Maintaining a good level of fundraising is an everyday challenge of which the NGO is very aware. Its *Media and fundraising* working groups are active and working together on this initiative. However, we strongly recommend that CPS formalizes its fundraising and communication strategies into ad hoc plans. This exercise will also provide an opportunity for CPS to reflect on their aims, the media and to define an appropriate budget and chronogram.

## Regarding the BEING circle

Since 2004, CPS has focused principally on integrated development projects that are geographically concentrated in Burkina Faso (the 5 IDPs represent 85% of their annual budget). To this day, 9 projects have been implemented.

Their areas of intervention are water, agricultural development, the fight against desertification, the creation of literacy, education and health infrastructures, the development of income generating activities, gender equality and children's rights. These sectors are in line with the Luxembourgish government's cooperation priorities and strategy. Through its partnerships, and mainly through the OCADES, the projects which are co-funded by CPS also correspond to the national and sectorial priorities of the Burkinabe government. Several of the projects work in close collaboration with the decentralized services of the different ministries.

Transversal themes such as gender equality and environmental issues are inherent to the IDPs insofar as the projects encourage a rational usage of natural resources, the implementation of soil conservation techniques, the use of manure pits, etc. IDPs also promote female empowerment, either through specific activities or by systematically integrating groups of women into the projects. Moreover, the team members working on the projects are very diverse, and there is no distinction on the basis of their gender or religious or ethnic background. In terms of governance, the projects collaborate with many villages while always respecting the established associations and institutions, be they administrative or traditional. Institutional support has also been scheduled for several of the projects' activities at both local beneficiary and partner levels.

For the past several years, the NGO has developed a professional approach to project cycle management, which takes into account all the stages of the project cycle, including external project evaluations as well as institutional or financial audits of the partners. The identification aspect has been left to the partner who, in the case of the OCADES, carries out a documented diagnostic of needs in collaboration with the final beneficiaries and local partners. The elaboration of the project is done together with the local partners. There is still room for progress regarding the elaboration of the logic frameworks and the indicators, which are still too approximate and whose causality (between the general objective and the specific objectives and with the results) is not always obvious.

The partners are in charge of executing the project under the active supervision of the CPS and its permanent representative, and with the participation of the beneficiaries. The permanent representative pays regular visits to the OCADES. These visits focus in particular on aspects such as financial management and compliance with procedures. The permanent representative also checks the effective implementation of the activities. Building the capacity of the permanent representative would bring added value to CPS's field work.

## Regarding the analysis of the partner relationships (RELATING circle)

For many years, CPS's choice of partners was mainly sentimental, which led to a large dispersal of the projects and partners. Since 2003, CPS has refocused its activities around a limited amount of projects and partners.

In compliance with the Terms of Reference of this evaluation, we focused on two of CPS's partners: the OCADES and the Taab Yinga (ATY) association.

The OCADES are sustainable structures that are completely rooted in Burkinabe culture. Indeed, they base themselves within the structure of the Church at every level (country, diocese, parish, basic Christian community). Despite the religious nature of the organization, there are no conflicts on any level between the different actors (i.e. the institution and its beneficiaries). For example, during the selection process, no distinction is made based on the faith of the project's ultimate beneficiaries. This is in line with CPS's universal non-discriminative approach to development.

CPS and OCADES are in line with their objective to promote human dignity and social justice, to fight poverty in all its forms through sharing and solidarity, values which are innate to Christian charity.

The relationship with ATY is historical. The first contract was signed in 2002 and has been renewed every year since. The association is currently going through a major institutional crisis which could, in the short term, question its sustainability.

The partnership between the MAEE and the NGO is organized and formalized through different documents and procedures. Beyond the formal exchanges, the NGO entertains a good, yet infrequent (or occasional when a partner is visiting), working relationship with the MAEE;

When questions about the projects arise, the MAEE has proved to be an open, pertinent and available partner. It has also provided support for administrative issues and has been a good source of information regarding political aspects in the countries of intervention.

On the other hand, the turnover at the NGO desk of the MAEE is seen as a loss of opportunity to strengthen its partner relationship and to develop their NGO "expertise".

Generally, CPS does not have any specific sectorial technical expertise. Its collaboration is mostly financial with limited support in terms of management consultancy and project monitoring. The partner is thus self-sufficient in the implementation of the projects. CPS's level of involvement in the project cycles also depends on the nature and skills of its partners.

There are four main phases in the timeline of the partnership: negotiation, programming, relationship and evolution.

Logic would have it that during the negotiation phase of a possible collaboration between the NGO and the local actor, the former would evaluate the relevance of such a partnership. However, in the past, several of CPS's partnerships with local actors were based more on the administrators' sentimental choices during their field visits, rather than on an in-depth and researched analysis of the potential partner's entrepreneurial capacity. Nonetheless, there has been a notable evolution in this area, as the foundation now avoids carrying out proposals which are based on ad hoc requests from partners for projects requiring very small amounts of funding. The choice of OCADES marked a turning point as the final selection of the partner diocese was the result of an identification study. On the other hand, the partnership with the ATY is the result of a sentimental choice.

The relationship between CPS and its partners is formalized in a *realization contract*. The evaluation brought out several comments:

- The period covered in the contracts is systematically one year, even though the framework agreement between CPS and the MAEE provides for a pluri-annual programme. Should the contract be aligned with the period covered by the framework agreement, it would provide a larger perspective for the partners who could then commit on the long-term.
- The contract mentions very little about the obligations of the parties and there is a real difference between what is stated in the contract and the reality on the field, notably in terms of roles and responsibilities. We recommend that the convention, which is simply a legally binding contract, formalizes the partnership in the most exhaustive and complete way, in particular regarding the roles, responsibilities, rights and obligations of both parties. This suggestion would allow for CPS's actual decision-making power to be matched with the pertaining formalized responsibilities.

The current partnership is the result of the historical relationship between CPS and Burkina which was built through the Church. When the OCADES was created, CPS had identified this valuable partner (by virtue of its structure and coverage) as having a strong potential of impact in terms of development. At this stage, nothing is preventing the partnership from being extended as it is based on two strong and experienced parties.

The situation with its other partner, ATY, is more complex as the partner is currently going through a serious institutional crisis which questions its very existence in the short term. However, the need to support street children is still a reality, and so ATY's mission should not be questioned.

Should CPS choose to pursue this partnership, it will be necessary to widen its scope of response, which, at the moment, is one-dimensional – financial transparency – whereas the actual issue is multidimensional.

Otherwise, the importance of CPS's financial input into ATY's annual budget would not permit the NGO to quit its collaboration without prior warning. This would result in leaving several young people, including ATY's staff, with no means to live. One year of transition would then be necessary to organize the closing of the association.

In conclusion, *Chrétien pour le Sahel* is a committed and experienced NGO which has succeeded in evolving from a cooperation founded initially on sentimental values to a concentrated and integrated cooperation thanks to the IDPs. It also managed to avoid pitfalls when transiting from a volunteer system to a salary based NGO.

Of course, many challenges must first be tackled, including CPS's positioning as regards other Luxembourgish NGOs in the current competitive fundraising environment. Another internal challenge is finding the correct distribution of roles and level of autonomy amongst its permanent representation in Burkina Faso.

However, the evaluation is positive that the association will be able to handle these difficulties with all the intelligence and professionalism it has proven to have to date.