



Evaluation of the India Programme Heinrich-Böll-Foundation, Germany

Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

The HBF office in India was established in 2002. This evaluation covers the India programme during the periods 2012-2014 and 2015 – 2017 and all four programme components: climate policy and resource governance, democracy, international dialogue, and global India

Methodology

The evaluation team used a variety of methods to gather information and opinions. They reviewed documentation, circulated an online questionnaire to funded partners, staff and collaborating partners, conducted interviews and discussions with HBF staff, a partner workshop and interviews, observed a partner event, and interviewed collaborating partners. Data analysis focused on programme activities rather than on finances. HBF staff assisted in filling gaps and clarifying apparent contradictions in data. Data gathered were cross-checked and jointly analyzed by the evaluation team.

Political Framework Conditions

In the midst of rapid change, the overriding concern in India is the shrinking space for both civil society organisations and foreign donor agencies. The government's interest in particular issues (sanitation, renewable energy, gender) and in India's taking on a donor role itself may offer some opportunities. The tense atmosphere in the region is not conducive for dialogue; the relationship between India and Pakistan especially has deteriorated. There has been an increase in cultural censorship, nativism, violence against minorities, charges of sedition and intolerance of dissent and differences.

Evaluation Results

HBF has accomplished a great deal relative to the small budget she operates with, the size and complexity of India, and the several constraints under which HBF operates. She is recognised as a niche funder, especially in the thematic areas of Climate Policy and International Dialogue. She is known for her willingness to support controversial and neglected issues, her consistent application of the green lens, and attention to gender as a cross-cutting issue. HBF's policy briefs and research studies are appreciated for their sound data and rigorous analysis. HBF has built and maintains a diverse network, which she uses to respond to the requests she receives for information on a variety of green issues.

Partners characterize their relationship with HBF as a true partnership, and appreciate the substantive inputs they receive on their project ideas. They particularly value HBF's culture of dialogue and ability to see inter-relationships among development issues. Because of HBF's willingness to support processes that do not have pre-determined conclusions, partners find HBF's support attractive in spite of the small grant amounts. HBF is appreciated for her consistent efforts to address gender as a cross-cutting issue but there is considerable scope to take gender concerns beyond the practical or instrumental to the strategic and fundamental. Gender political goals should be formulated for each programme (sub) component.

HBF has a reputation for taking risks and supporting neglected topics. However, survey respondents mentioned that they have observed HBF becoming more cautious as government scrutiny of foreign donor agencies has intensified. They wondered whether HBF would be able to retain her political edge.

Though the India programme has expanded since 2012, the majority of partners are still headquartered in Delhi. This distribution requires review given the importance of state government processes in India's federal structure. The presence of more local partners in geographically specific programme areas would also make for better grounded initiatives.

Most projects supported by HBF are developed by individuals and organisations already known to HBF, either directly or indirectly. Survey respondents suggested that HBF's grant-making process could become more transparent. HBF issues one-year contracts even for projects that are multi-year initiatives. This creates an avoidable administrative burden for both HBF and her partners. In accordance with BMZ rules, HBF's financial guidelines allow partners to re-allocate budget line items (up to 30%) as long as the total approved budget amount is not exceeded. Partners think this flexibility remains on paper. Though partners (and the evaluators) agree that accountability is essential, HBF's approach to achieving it consumes considerable time and paper at both ends, partner and HBF.

HBF and her partners use a variety of methods to bring the results of their work to a wide audience. Recently, HBF has begun using social media but there is potential to do more.

HBF has developed fruitful collaboration with country offices in South Africa, Brazil, Pakistan, and USA. Partners think that HBF could further leverage its global network. They also think that HBF could facilitate cross-learning, knowledge sharing, and development of synergies among partners within and across countries.

HBF India's path in India is guided by the three very general strategies mentioned in the Asia Programme Application to BMZ. As a result, the programme is very broad and spread thin. No country strategy has been defined, and no goal has been articulated for the overall programme. Programme component and sub-component objectives are very broad and combine many ambitious goals, which the associated indicators do not speak to. This makes a robust assessment of progress at the programme level impossible.

Arriving at an overall picture of the HBF India programme is hindered by the lack of an integrated programme and finance administration system. Such a system, combined with more sharply defined programme objectives and indicators, would make it easier to assess the programme, identify trends and analyse shifts. Results assessment in partner projects often remains at the level of outputs. This makes it difficult to relate project results to the larger goals of the India programme components or to see how multi-year projects are evolving based on critical reflection on project design, strategy and implementation.

HBF reviews the progress of partner projects against the defined (output) indicators annually. The evaluation section of the Activity Documentation is largely descriptive and gender categorization is sometimes done uncritically.

HBF's monitoring and evaluation system is not geared to tracking outcomes and impact. This could be related at least partially to HBF's practice of issuing contracts with a maximum duration of one year even for multi-year projects.

Relevance

HBF is recognized for her contributions in the thematic areas of *Climate Policy* and *International Dialogue*.

In the crowded *Climate Policy* field, HBF has carved a niche for herself by focusing on largely neglected topics. HBF has contributed to the evidence base on topics like sustainable buildings and township, supported the translation of global experiences to the Indian context, and backed the India-Pakistan climate resilience dialogue. These have yielded discernible, positive results.

HBF's *Resource Governance* work comprises three broad strands that have no unifying theme. Since the current model of development relies heavily on extractive industries and large infrastructure development projects, resource governance is undoubtedly an important topic. However, at present, it is not clear exactly what HBF wishes to achieve in this thematic space. Further, since powerful vested interests are involved, it is likely that effective work on resource governance will lead to confrontations and controversies that may jeopardize HBF's legal status. This leads to the question: what can be the role of an organisation like HBF in addressing conflicts related to resource governance?

In the *Democracy* sub-component, HBF is uniquely positioned as one of the few donors and the only German foundation working in Northeast India. HBF is contributing to knowledge creation and is supporting dialogue among civil society, academia and an interested public. HBF's support to TCCR and CSSS is not *prima facie* strategic, though she may wish to continue it for other reasons. .

In the *Engendering Socio-Economic Policies* sub-component, HBF has supported research on diverse and neglected topics like participants' perspectives in clinical trials and gender dimension of the Aadhar unique identification card. While each project is relevant in its own way, it is difficult to discern why certain topics are prioritized and supported, while others with potentially higher impact on social change are not.

HBF's sustained support to India-Pakistan and India-Myanmar dialogues under the *Dialogue* component is relevant and timely. The constantly changing geo-political context throws up challenges but the need for people-to-people confidence-building measures remains unchanged.

The *Global India* component is highly relevant as the Indian government is claiming a bigger political and economic role for India in a globalizing world, and the role of civil society in this process is yet to develop. Indian civil society should have a grasp of the topics dealt with in this component – India's role as aid provider, Indian investments abroad, and India's role in South-South cooperation.

Planning and Coherence

HBF's *Climate Policy* work is generally well-planned and coherent. The *Resource Governance* sub-component, which is newer, is less so. The scoping study done did not cover the span of this sub-component. Each project supported during the review period is relevant in its own way but taken together, they do not form a coherent picture or strategy.

In the *Democracy* and *Engendering Socio-economic Policies* sub-components, a pattern in planning could not be identified, except at a very general level.

Planning and coherence of the *Dialogue* component of the programme is comprehensible.

With small resources, HBF is covering several complex issues in the *Global India* component. Focusing on one or two strategic themes may enhance the coherence of this component.

Effectivity (Goal Achievement and Impact)

It is difficult to make any definitive statements about effectiveness in the absence of baseline data, defined milestones, and parameters of “success”. Additionally, usually, the outcome(s) of policy advocacy can only be seen in the long term, often long after a project has been completed. For individual projects supported for a year or less, some “results” have been recorded in the Activity Documentation but these are usually distant from “impact”. These observations apply to the India programme as a whole as well as to its components and sub-components.

On the other hand, multi-year projects that have been supported in a sustained way have often yielded various significant results, ranging from a 90% decline in the number of Indian and Pakistani fishworker prisoners not released even after completion of their prison terms to inclusion of green buildings in architectural curricula.

Quite often, senior government officials and policy makers attend HBF-sponsored events. HBF does not, however, assess which policy advice is incorporated in legislation or systematically track the “ripple effects” of the work that she supports. Different type of monitoring than currently practiced would be necessary to track and identify these outcomes.

Cooperation with Partner Organizations and Sustainability

Across the programme, HBF partners characterize their cooperation with HBF as a true partnership. HBF staff members are appreciated for their professionalism, openness, commitment and substantive contribution to project idea development.

Sustainability can rarely be achieved in projects with durations of one year or even less. HBF’s core partners are very big, established organisations and, possibly, they will carry forward the work initiated with HBF’s support, and continue to build on the beginning made. There is evidence that this is already happening.

Implementation of Gender Democracy as a Cross-Cutting Task

Gender awareness is reasonably strong in the HBF team. Following HBS’s system, HBF assigns each project a gender category. A few errors in category assignment have occurred. Gender category was sometimes changed between planning and evaluation stages of projects; usually the category assigned was downgraded because the project did not devote the expected attention to gender. Projects were assigned a higher gender category if they involved women programme coordinators and women panelists, and made efforts to improve the gender balance in meetings and events.

Projects in the *Democracy* and *Dialogue* thematic areas usually had gender equality and/or gender democracy as explicit goals. In the *Climate Policy* and *Resource Governance* thematic areas, on the occasions that gender was addressed, an instrumentalist view was often taken. Women were viewed as a vulnerable group that required special attention, rather than as actors with decision-making roles. The scoping study that HBF commissioned on *Resource Governance*, which could have provided guidance on how to integrate gender in this newly developing programme area, did not have a gender policy component.

The activities supported in the *Dialogue* component have engaged various stakeholders but the gender dimension of dialogue processes has not been addressed adequately.

In the *Engendering Socio-economic Policies* sub-component, HBF supported LGBTI groups and policies but did not support any projects to raise awareness among men and mobilize them for gender equality.

Recommendations to HBF India

- Formulate a country strategy based on
 - An articulation of what HBF wishes to achieve in each programme component and sub-component;
 - Risk assessment;
 - HBF's purpose as a political foundation;
 - Partner mapping (thematic and geographic);
 - Mapping of activities of other donors;
 - Mapping of interest of other HBS country offices to collaborate.
- Focus, choosing the path that allows HBF to continue to highlight neglected issues.
- Restrict project funding to few selected topics.
- Review and focus support extended under *Resource Governance, Engendering Socio-economic Policies* and *Democracy*.
- Without increasing partner portfolio size, diversify.
- Strengthen work in Northeast India by partnering with more local organisations and focusing on selected issues.
- Support more simultaneous work at the level of state governments, since they wield power in India's federal structure.
- Since HBF's support to TCCR is not *prima facie* strategic, support could be phased out and TCCR could be recommended to Friedrich-Naumann Foundation.
- Attempt to complete the cycle of intervention (policy advocacy, policy formulation, policy implementation, policy enforcement) such that change at the level of people's lives is more likely to be achieved. This can be done either by limiting project funding to very few topics or by working collaboratively with other (German) foundations which are supporting grassroots work.
- Networking and policy monitoring could cover a wider canvas.
- Establish a platform for partner exchange (national and international).
- Enhance networking and coordination with other donors in priority areas.
- Intensify networking with other HBS offices and support South-South networking of CSOs.
- Develop a communication strategy, invest in staffing and technology to implement it.

Recommendations to HBF Germany

- Integrate systematic, periodic evaluation processes in multi-phase projects and in programme (sub) components.
- Explore planning, monitoring and evaluation methodologies like outcome mapping.
- Establish an integrated financial and programme administration software and management information system.
- Consider longer term contracts, particularly for projects employing methodologies or processes that require more than one year. Work with partners to incorporate rigorous annual reviews into contracts and project designs.
- Modify contract formats to permit early termination and amendments.