

Evaluation Report

for Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin

Afghanistan Program within the Asian Programs (2012-2016)

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Executive Summary Afghanistan

This evaluation is assessing the work of Heinrich Böll Foundation (hbs) in Afghanistan since 2012. It is based on a broad range of written material and on interviews with hbs staff and partners. The interviews in Kabul were conducted in October 2016.

The evaluation was negatively affected by the fragile security situation in Afghanistan. Movement outside of Kabul was impossible, and in Kabul highly restricted. Therefore field observations were impossible, which is highly regrettable. But, obviously, the difficult security situation cannot be controlled by hbs, nor by the evaluator.

The key results of the evaluation can be summarized in this way:

- (1) The practical work and the implementation of projects by hbs Kabul since 2012 was good to very good. The hbs office has selected the following areas of work: (a) environment and ecology, (b) natural resources and their distribution, (c) shared energy resources for regional stabilization, (d) women's rights and gender equality, (e) democratization, in a broad sense, including transitional justice, (f) youth politics. The clear priority is on environmental and ecological topics, and on resources and their distribution. While this at first seems somewhat surprising for a country in war, the choice of these topics utilizes comparative advantages of hbs compared to other foreign organizations and funders and fills specific needs of the Afghan society.
- (2) The strength of hbs's work also applies to the cooperation with partner organizations in Afghanistan. Generally, the partner organizations are selected very well, their activities are relevant and effective, as much as this is possible given the difficult situation in Afghanistan. The partner organizations consider hbs as a valuable partner to cooperate with, not just as a source of funding.
- (3) The planning process has definite weaknesses. Strategy development has been – and to a lesser degree still is – somewhat arbitrary and not very systematic, though some improvements have been made since 2012. The **overall objectives** (or guiding goals) are not the result of an analysis of the social and political context. The result is that overall objectives generally are appearing arbitrary, not the result of strategic thinking.

The **program goals** generally are not developed closely and plausibly from the overall objectives. The link between overall objectives and program goals often is very weak. In some cases the program goals are either somewhat vague or not very relevant to the achievement of the overall objective.

In several cases the underlying “**theory of change**” (the assumption what will actually achieve the desired change in the situation or in policies, and why) does not exist or is not explained.

Some of the “**indicators**” are extremely vague, some are no indicators at all, and sometimes they are of little use.

Generally speaking, the application of the GOPP mechanism has improved from the 2012-2014 period to 2015-2017. This is a positive step. But there still is lots of room for further improvement. It should be noted that the weaknesses in strategic planning up to now has not affected the quality of the practical work, which is good to very good.

(4) One of the key problems for hbs in Afghanistan is the fragile and deteriorating security situation. Travel outside of Kabul is difficult and becoming more difficult over time. International staff is even more effected by insecurity and can only move in very restricted ways. The hbs office in Kabul cannot solve these problems, but is trying to limit their negative effects on its work. hbs has developed contingency planning in regard to security, which is generally appropriate.