

CRDA Board and Management Reaction to INTRAC's Strategic Evaluation of programs.

The CRDA long time donors: CAFOD, Cordaid, Christian Aid, EED, ICCO, Trocaire and SCIAF had commissioned and conducted a strategic evaluation of the CRDA's three years programs. The main purposes of the evaluation was to assess the impacts of CRDA on the Ethiopian civil society, garner the views and perception of different stakeholders on the identity and performance of CRDA, and most of all measure the degree to which the CRDA's "Change Process" initiated in 2004 has taken forwards. The evaluation has further tried to shade light into what the purpose of CRDA should be, the general health of civil society organization, the operational environment and CRDA's relation with the government, membership issues, sub-granting and sustainability of current business model, regionalization of activities, any potential rivalry that the CRDA could face and alternative measures that need to be taken.

Nevertheless, as indicated in the report the prime approach of the review was collecting opinions and views. Quite a diverse range of stakeholders have been interviewed and given their opinions which formed the final shape of the evaluation report be it factual or opinionated.

The CRDA Board and the Management team have by and large accepted the comments as valuable inputs to the present and future engagements.

The report has been intensively discussed and a Road Map, which enables to redirect and reset the organization in line with those major outstanding issues have been designed. Taking some corresponding measurers have already been launched. However, should the report be considered as a common consensus equally, the CRDA Board wants to call the attention of the evaluator, the donors and stakeholders to the following specific contents of the report. To cite some examples from the first (unrevised version of the report) we can point the following:

1. According to the Report (On pages 5 paragraph 3) the CRDA's role of interface with the government was poor, sometimes construed by government bodies as "political posturing." In other places the document says such representational skill and interface with government was commented by international donor community as 'not fully developed', which is characterized by poor preparation, lack of senior managerial time and allocation of little resources devoted to it. Besides, it was said to have little research engagement, follow-up, dissemination of reports. The question we like to raise is, does it really reflect the real problem here?
2. The CRDA internal revenue from sub contracted training and rent of facilities is presented as less clear, on Page 6 paragraph 2. however, the accounting records show something very clear evidences.
3. On page 11 paragraph 2 of the report mentions about lack of dynamic readjustment of plans in light of shrinking resource base. It also discusses weaknesses to adequately assess assumptions and risks, lack of collective responsibility and selecting strategic priority. Overall efficiency is the issue here. Therefore, was it the center of the problem?
4. The comments on, 'on-granting' and fund administration mentioned on Page 12 paragraph 4, has over sighted the importance of the fund administration to members and the general civil society organizations.
5. The comment on the CSO membership mentioned on page 13 paragraph 5 doesn't appreciate the legal difficulty and limitation of the legal framework. The inevitable problem of bigger consortium of NGOs/ CSOs and the options presented on page 14 paragraph 4 needs rethinking.
6. Implementing of the change process, its slowness, signs of indifference on CRDA side, the poor management process was mentioned on page 15 paragraph 4, and Page 17 paragraph 2. Is change that comes in short span and all up on the willingness and endeavor of CRDA?
7. Comments on page 16 paragraph 2 shows absence of strategic plan. Isn't there any?
8. The question of budgeting prioritization is mentioned on Page 18 paragraph six. Aren't CRDA's program plan and implementations done in prioritization?

The CRDA Management has also critically examined the evaluation report and tried to incorporate most of them to the possible extent. The management considered six major issues from the evaluation report and decided to work on accordingly. E.g.

1. Membership: A two track approach in which CRDA focuses on existing member NGOs and in a mid to long term lobby the supervisory body of the government to allow the inclusion of small civil society organizations (CSO) of grass root level, who don't sign operational agreement with it to be members.
2. Representational skill: Depending on the nature of the issues, CRDA will enhance its representation in regional states, Federal and international level by mobilizing every stakeholder.
3. Forums: forums remain to be the operational arms of the CRDA. Revitalizing their activities is already given priority and launched.
4. Capacity Building: CRDA's capacity building shall continue only in sustainable business model. This would include cost sharing in training, limited number of NGOs, with identified gaps to get organizational strengthening support and start seconding etc.
5. Information Hub: CRDA will intensify its role as information gateway and a clearing house for CSO/NGO related news, information.
6. Fund Raising and Access Facilitation: CRDA has already made paradigm shift from fundraising to access facilitation. The future direction will focus on moving from donor base project to programmatic approach and setting independent body for transparent selection and ministrations.

Other issues at the organizational and management level are discussed and various measures have been devised to make them efficient, transparent, participatory, etc. overall implementation strategy, assumptions and risks, environmental scanning, the budget requirement etc. have been dealt with in the Road map.