

## Evaluation of Polish Development Aid 2016

### Summary

The objective of the evaluation research conducted by the Idea of Development Foundation in June-December 2016, was to evaluate the effectiveness, sustainability, utility, and relevance of Polish development aid provided to selected countries of East Africa and the Middle East in 2012-2015 and to make recommendations based on the results. The key element of the evaluation was field studies (individual in-depth interviews, questionnaires, ethnographic research) conducted in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Palestine. Desk research, case studies, benchmarking, panels of experts and SWOT analysis were the additional methods used.

The research has led to a **positive assessment** of Polish development aid provided to selected countries of East Africa and Palestine. In most cases, the Polish aid projects have accomplished their planned social and economic objectives in all areas of support. Low financial outlays and the annual project cycle were identified as the main obstacles to achieving a broader (going beyond local) and long-lasting aid impact.

#### **Research results – Component I** (selected countries of East Africa – Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania)

The most efficient types of support in the case of East Africa were simple and cost-efficient projects (e.g. projects realized in the field of environment) that bring about a fast and visible improvement of the beneficiaries' situation. Polish development aid is relatively well recognized, mostly locally. Underdeveloped cooperation with Polish entrepreneurs is a weakness of Polish aid. Despite the projects' complementarity in terms of their duration and geographical location no significant synergy impact of the aid was evident.

The study has led to the identification of three models of maintaining project sustainability: 1) the model of limited sustainability, 2) the self-sustaining model and 3) the preventive (co-financing) model. Both the self-sustaining and the preventive model are worth recommending because they contain mechanisms that improve the sustainability of project initiatives. The key factors that determine project sustainability are: proper identification and training of local leaders who play the role of "knowledge multipliers" and advance planning of sustainability mechanisms.

**The commonly applied principle of partnership (ownership/empowerment) and aid using the participatory model that allows to properly adjusting an intervention to the local context and needs are some of the strengths of Polish development aid.**

In comparison to other donors, the scale of Polish bilateral aid is small. Despite the professionalism of Polish institutions engaged in development aid, cooperation with other donors is impeded due to financial limitations and lack of multiannual financing development initiatives. The research results also show that the system of monitoring and evaluation of development aid needs to be developed further. The analysis of the capacity of Polish institutions engaged in development aid in East Africa reveals that they possess a lot of experience, knowledge and skills, but they are now facing a barrier to further growth and need to be supported by means of relevantly targeted public policies.

#### **Research results – Component II** (the Middle East - Palestine)

The research shows that PDA projects implemented in Palestine achieve the assumed impact. The projects and their impact are positively assessed by the beneficiaries and project participants, even though the impact is only local.

Polish development organizations/institutions are characterized by great engagement, flexibility and familiarity with the local situation. Moreover, aid initiatives implemented by the Polish diplomatic mission show that the political conditions have been properly diagnosed. Polish non-governmental organizations implementing projects in Palestine are prepared to engage in larger projects.

In principle, project sustainability is maintained, especially in infrastructural projects as a result of adjusting initiatives to the needs of the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the factor impeding both the project implementation and sustainability is the complicated political situation. In view of this, it is necessary to maintain flexibility and at the same time to prepare for crisis management.

Good cooperation with proven local partners was a key factor of successful project implementation.

However, Polish development cooperation in Palestine has faced serious problems. First of all, outlays for the cooperation are very low, particularly as compared to other donors'. Consequently, the impact scope of the aid is small. Another problem is the lack of synergy with both other PDA projects and other donors' projects. The process of monitoring and evaluating development aid in Palestine is not systemized and it lacks a comprehensive model of project impact assessment (the long-term results). Under the present institutional structure, the MFA and the diplomatic mission in Ramallah play both a strategic and an implementing role; these institutions cannot focus on strategic tasks due to their many commitments and a shortage of resources.

### **Research recommendations from the evaluation of Polish development aid in selected countries of East Africa and the Middle East**

The key **strategic** recommendations refer to systemic issues:

- increasing financial outlays for Polish development aid (PDA),
- gradual shift to a system for implementing large-budget projects,
- strengthening the PDA strategic level by delegating tasks relating to implementation to an institution outside the MFA,
- strengthening the strategic role of diplomatic missions and unburdening them of operating tasks in the context of PDA implementation,
- strengthening the PDA evaluation process, specifically in regard to project impact assessment.

The **operational** recommendations focus on those elements of the PDA system that can be changed to make the work of project promoters easier and to increase the effectiveness of project initiatives:

- developing projects that complement other donors' activity,
- introducing mechanisms of verifying the synergy impact of initiatives,
- introducing changes in organisation of follow-up visits (including strengthening reporting done by the MFA and project promoters),
- reviewing procedures with a view to earlier launching of projects during a budget year,
- greater concentration on sustainability in preparing and assessing projects,
- concentration of information and promotion initiatives in presenting the project impact by project promoters in different media.

**Specific recommendations for East Africa** concern strengthening the capacity of project promoters for diagnosis of the situation and adjusting initiatives to the local needs by using large modular projects for launching pilot versions (over the first year of the implementation of project initiatives). Other recommendations include: more frequent implementation of simple, cost-effective projects and introducing solutions that facilitate implementing projects by non-governmental organizations. In the second case the optimal solution is to introduce a lump sum option for administrative costs (up to 7%) while at the same time excluding staff costs (coordination, project management) from administrative costs.

**Specific recommendations for Palestine** concern realization of a smaller number of projects but with higher budgets and in selected specialist areas. Furthermore, support for projects in the area of entrepreneurship should be increased, including projects facilitating Polish firms to cooperate with PDA's partners. During the formulation of projects it is also essential to take into account the impact of the political conflict on the implemented projects and to design a model of risk management. The evaluator also recommends considering introducing additional incentives at the stage of submitting applications for funds with regard to such projects in which the implementer will require the ultimate beneficiaries to make their own financial contribution.