Agency For Accelerated Regional Development

Capacity Building for Sustainable Livelihoods

THE NGO
QUALITY ASSURANCE
CERTIFICATION MECHANISM
(QuAM)

AFARD
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT
REPORT

January 2008

THE QuAM INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

For the last 2 years, AFARD has been implementing a project *"Engendering Services Delivery and Accountability in Decentralized Local Governments in Nebbi District"* as a part of the diverse thematic focuses of Empowerment, Advocacy, and Services Delivery, being funded. This project was funded under the (9th EDF) GoU - European Union Civil Society Capacity Building Programme (CSCBP).

As part of strengthening the capacity of the CSCBP Grantees, the Programme Management Unit (PMU) worked together with the National NGO Forum and DENIVA to develop the National NGO Quality Assurance Mechanisms (QuAM) in 2006. The QuAM provides the Code of Honour for NGO certification.

AFARD therefore adopted all the indicators therein QuAM to undertake its own internal assessment. The objective of doing so was to assess AFARD's status with respect to the generally accepted principles of NGOs in Uganda. In this way, the debriefing staffs on the certification demands for internal ownership will be attained. Eventually, staffs would identify the gaps and possible remedial actions. This report needs to be read in that light.

METHOD USED

The assessment exercise was conducted in a participatory manner. A staff meeting was held on Monday, 14 January 2008. During this meeting, the Project Manager who engaged in the project took staffs through the origin, object, and benefits of QuAM. The staffs adopted the intentions and realised that it was time that AFARD as a whole assessed itself contrary to the practice that the project in part did the assessment before.

Each question was read (excluding that for the networks) and staff debated until an agreed position was reached. This especially happened for generic questions that had many implied answers in the different projects. Below are the findings.

FINDINGS

The table below summarises the descriptive findings on each indicator. The areas where main gaps are identified are marked in read.

Table 1:   Assessment scores.

INDICATORS	AFARD'S STATUS	REMARKS
THE NGO AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE		
Ethical governance		
1) *Is legally registered with the appropriate authorities.*	Yes. AFARD is registered with Registrar of Companies as a Company Limited by Guarantee and not Having Share Capital (Reg. No. 45170) and with the National NGO Board as an NGO (Reg. No. S.5914/3735)	The current registration with NGO in 2006 runs for 60 months.
2) *Has a constitution and demonstrate it adheres to its provisions.*	Yes. The Article and Memorandum of Association is in place and is always used.	
3) *Has written and shared vision, mission/goal, objectives and values (or equivalent).*	Yes. VMOV are in place and enshrined in all we do.	Is not visible in the offices. Is less shared with beneficiaries because they are allowed to follow theirs.
4) *Has an office and address.*	Yes. Has own built office on Butime Rd. Plot 3-5, Nebbi Town Council, with postal, telephone, e-mail and web addresses.	Currently the website is managed from Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands.
5) *Has a development-oriented, non-partisan agenda, fostering citizens rights.*	Yes. Its actions are strictly anchored on development projects.	Has taken an isolationist approach to avoid being partisan.
6) *Does not engage in any subversive action.*	Yes. Is strictly concerned with development programmes.	
7) *Has laid-down governance and reporting structures, with a governing body whose members meet regularly.*	Yes. There is a Board and Management wing with different roles. While the Board meets biannually its committees meet biannually.	The new Board was inaugurated in Nov. 2007
8) *Has a governing body whose members are regularly appointed or elected, in accordance to its constitution and generally accepted practices.*	Yes. The Board has its terms of office spelt in the Board Regulation.	The current Board is now self appointing.
9) *Actively avoids any conflict of interest among members, staff, and board members.*	Yes. The Board and Human Resource Policies spells out and discourage issues of conflict of interest.	
10) *Does not condone any misconduct by its members, staff, and/or board members.*	Yes. All policies have restrictions on misconducts.	
Effective Management of resources		
11) *Documents its financial transactions.*	Yes. Financial statements are prepared monthly, quarterly and	All statements are discussed in staff meetings.

	annually.	
12) *Prevents any abuse of its property, whether by Board members, staff or its membership.*	Yes. See 9 & 10 above.	
13) *Where it has staff, recruits personnel in a transparent manner.*	Yes. The Board recruits staffs in accordance with the Human Resource Policy that discourage favouritism and clientilism.	The Board directly recruits top management and the middle and lower level staffs are recruited by Top management on behalf of the Board.
14) *Produces an annual report that is publicly accessible and can fulfil the information requirements of its stakeholders.*	Yes. Reports are shared with all key stakeholders: donors, board, peers, registering authorities, local governments, staffs	Copies are also uploaded on the website. Beneficiaries receive reports verbally during review meetings.
15) *Complies with reporting and other requirements, as per Uganda`s laws statutes.*	Yes. See 14 above.	Reports are also filed together with annual plans to NGO Board and Board Resolutions to Registrar of Companies.
16) *Has a mechanism to authenticate its documents and safeguard its organizational identity.*	Yes. Logos are always used.	This has been a recent adoption. Letterhead will have to be changed.
17) *Only receives funds that are consistent with its mission or goal*	Yes. Resource mobilization is for vision-driven programmes.	Actually refused funds other uses – like girl child education promotion.
18) *Uses any surplus funds only to further its mission.*	Yes. Capital reserve is built to enhance further services delivery.	Part of capital reserve is used for organizational development.
19) *Has a properly managed bank account.*	Yes. All bank accounts are in the names of AFARD & are signed strictly by accredited positions.	
20) *Keeps a regularly updated register of fixed assets.*	Yes. An asset register is in plan.	Asset depreciation account is yet to be opened.
Standards for improvement		
21) *Maintains sound systems to ensure its resources are effectively, efficiently and transparently managed, including procedures for the acquisition, management and disposal of assets.*	Yes. Has and uses its financial and asset procurement and disposal system.	
22) *Adheres to gender and minority equity standards, e.g. in recruitment.*	Yes. Human Resource Policy promotes equal opportunity.	A gender policy is yet to be developed.
23) *Has, and follows, internal policies in place.*	Yes. All operational policies are in place and are in use.	Includes Board, Finance, Planning, Asset management policies.
24) *Adheres to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and Standards.*	Yes. All Audited accounts have proved that.	External audit is conducted annually.
25) *Has independently audited and publicly accessible annual*	Yes. All accounts Audited by externally board-appointed audit	This started in 2004.

	firm. Recommendations are taken as management remedial actions.	
accounts and acts upon any audit report recommendation.	firm. Recommendations are taken as management remedial actions.	
26) *Has mechanisms to measure the cost benefit of fundraising and running the organization.*	No.	Experience has shown that it is costly to mobilise small funds.
27) *Develops and uses management tools/practices, as per its stage of development and requirements.*	Yes. Requisite tools for reporting, mobilization and assessments are aggregated with growth.	
THE NGO PROGRAMMES/ACTIVITIES		
Minimum standards		
28) *Has written programme/activity plans that aim at achieving its objectives, mission and/or goal.*	Yes. A 5-year Strategic Plan, approved by the Board, is in place.	All projects are written in line with the Strategic Plan.
29) *Understands and is able to identify its current/actual programme outputs and/or outcomes.*	Yes. Performance measures are done quarterly for all projects	
30) *Documents its programme work.*	Yes. At the moment is using paper documentation	In the process of developing an interactive documentation – using web, video, and written texts.
31) *Has made efforts to monitor and evaluate its programme activities.*	Yes. All projects are evaluated	A strategic evaluation was done once.
32) *Has shared its objectives with its members/intended beneficiaries.*	Yes. This is done during every partnership setting.	Much has to be done with beneficiaries.
33) *Keeps appropriate government authorities informed of its plans activities and programmes.*	Yes. Always seek government approval of its projects. Provides notices for approved projects. Share plans and progress reports.	Often engage in joint monitoring. Also cross-skill with government
34) *Has made efforts to relate with others actors (beyond its membership) working in its operating environment.*	Yes. Has co-implemented programmes and project activities with peers.	Cases in point are Caritas-Nebbi & Action Aid Nebbi
Standards for improvement		
35) *Mainstreams such issues as gender, human rights, social justice, poverty focus, environmental sustainability, disability, HIV, as cross-cutting in its activities.*	Yes. Integrates all aspects in projects especially proposals and implementation.	M&E are not done from a mainstreamed perspective.
36) *Has developed, maintains and uses an appropriate M and E system.*	No. The M&E system are project specifics	Is in the process of developing the system with SNV.
37) *Is able to define and measure its programme outcomes.*	Yes. All projects have participatory and standard M&E integrated.	
38) *Has made efforts to track the impact of its programmes.*	Yes. All project impacts are tracked periodically.	
39) *Is able to analyse the cost*	No.	Considered conceptually

benefit of making an impact.		flawed.
40) It has used M and E to improve on its practice and its impact.	Yes. All M&E review findings are used for programming improvement.	
41) Engages productively with government, where appropriate, in its area of competence.	Yes. Undertakes double engagement – cross-skills use and advocacy	Currently one of the NAADS services provider
42) Has influence on other actors present in its operating environment.	Yes. Advocates for replication of tested impacting approaches.	Examples include advocacy by direct beneficiaries and group-based agro-technology multiplication
43) Contributes to cohesion within civil society in its area of operation.	Yes. Is an active member of 3 networks in Nebbi	Has also encouraged its partners to join such networks
44) Has established and uses feedback mechanisms from its beneficiaries or constituencies.	Yes. Undertakes periodic project reviews	Herein bi-directional feedback is conducted between AFARD & beneficiaries
FURTHER IMPROVING OUR PERFORMANCE		
Minimum standards		
45) Has made efforts to reflect on its past successes and challenges.	Yes. Annual reviews are conducted	It is not regularly done
46) Is able to identify and has documented how it or its membership has learnt and responded from past challenges and successes.	No.	This is only done in a snapshot way for project but not overall organization purpose. It is not effectively documented
Standards for further improvements		
47) Has made efforts to reflect on its past successes and challenges as an organization, with input from other stakeholders, including beneficiaries.	No	Such reflections are conducted in ad hoc fashion.
48) Has actively tried to learn from other (re) sources available in its operating environment.	No	The culture of cross learning is new in the area
49) Has undertaken regular events to reflect on its core business and rationale for existence.	No	
50) Has learning practices that involve its Board, members, and/or staff.	No	The practice is ad hoc for each group but not done jointly
51) Has developed a staff development system where relevant, which is in use.	No	Undertook 2008 Plan Implementation Capacity Needs Assessment & identified best-fit skills enhancements
52) Has developed and is using its own learning system.	No	
53) Has identified, documented and shared its best practices.	No	

54) Has undertaken and makes use of organizational development/review processes.	Yes	2 OCAs have so far been conducted and their findings put to use.

PLANS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

From the above findings, it is important to point that generally AFARD has made impressive scores in the different facts of the Quality Assurance Scorecard. It meets 43 of the 54 scores (a deficit of 11 scores).

Notwithstanding, critical gaps exists is building AFARD as a 'learning organization'. While in part this can be attributed to the poor focus of donor-funding for project rather than organizational growth needs, it also anchors the demand that it is about time for AFARD to set aside its time (and other resources) to medicate and document its work.

To do so requires:

- Improving AFARD documentation practices. The current reporting format that is inadequately communicated presents a weak marketing and accountability image. **Developing an interactive documentation** – web, video, audio, and the usual written formats is therefore inevitable.

- Beneficiary engagement in project identification, implementation and M&E is increased. This however will also need undertaking **staff orientation to participatory methodologies.**

- Holding **quarterly staff reflection meetings** on programme and impact strategizing in order to build the culture of 'actions-driven by lessons'.

- Improving **Board-Beneficiary contacts at least in one of its annual meetings**. In this way, AFARD's legitimacy, credibility, receptiveness, and policy-relevance will be enhanced as the policy-implementation gap will be narrowed.