

Evaluation of the Commission's Support to the ACP Pacific Region – ref. 1093

Abstract

The European Commission's cooperation with the ACP Pacific region during the period 1997 -2007 has been generally relevant to the Pacific regional context. Given the Commission's small share of the total ODA to the region and the geographical remoteness of the latter, the regional interventions have justifiably focused on support to the regional institutions and on themes which are priorities for the Commission (fish, natural resources). However, formulated to support the priorities expressed by the regional authorities, the Commission's support was not fully in line with one of its major objectives, namely poverty reduction. The Commission did not use the full potential of the coordination and complementarities of its regional and national strategies to maximise the impact of its assistance.

Subject of the evaluation

This evaluation assesses the Commission's cooperation with the ACP countries in the Pacific region during the period 1997-2007. During the period 1997-2005 the European Commission committed 437.3 million Euros, representing 8.4% of all ODA in the region. EC funds were concentrated in the Education sector (110 Million Euro or 25% of EC aid).

Purpose

The evaluation does provide an overall independent assessment and identifies key lessons.

Methodology

The evaluation was based on 10 evaluation questions, relating to the five DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact) plus coordination, coherence and value added of the Commission. The evaluation was carried out in 3 phases: (i) desk (ii) field (Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and (iii) synthesis. The evaluators used mainly document analysis, interviews and 2 focus groups to gather data.

Main conclusions:

- 1) The evaluation noted that the selection of the Commission's intervention domains responded to the needs and priorities identified by the partners but was **not strategically directed to the overarching objectives of Commission cooperation**, as illustrated in particular by the **weak consideration of poverty reduction**.
- 2) The Commission assisted Pacific partners through encouraging them to fully participate in international commitments **addressing the global challenges, notably environment and natural resources management** and which are supported by the EU. This contributed to greater EC policy coherence.
- 3) However, the Commission, a small donor in relative terms in the Pacific Region, **did not use the full potential of the coordination and complementarities** of its regional and national strategies to maximise the impact of its assistance.

Recommendations:

- 1) Partner institutions' and authorities' awareness of the overarching objectives of Commission cooperation should be raised through **strengthened policy dialogue**. In particular awareness of poverty reduction issues and interventions should be developed to help them better identify their needs in this regard.

2) The Commission should **pursue, intensify and improve** its efforts to help the Pacific region address the **issues of environment and natural resources management** . Its approach in addressing these issues both as local priority problems and at the same time in a context of global governance of common public goods is commendable and should be pursued.

3) The Commission must **improve the linkages between regional and national strategies**, ideally prior to developing the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) and National Indicative Programmes (NIP). Regional activities in the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) that need to be taken over by individual countries to develop their full potential should be clearly identified and allocated to the country. National activities in the National Indicative Programmes (NIP) that need to be supported by the relevant regional activities should be clearly identified and the envisaged activity in the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) programmed;

4) Contribution Agreements (conventions with international organisations to (co-) finance activities) should be better linked to results and their follow-up and monitoring improved.

Transferable lessons:

1. Put Regional Cooperation on the basis of an analytical overview of the region's needs and potential as well as EU policies – The relevant Commission Services should support a strengthening of policy dialogue to raise the partner institutions' and authorities' awareness . - *In terms of economic development, the mainstreaming of poverty reduction into sectors of intervention, in particular trade, fisheries, natural resource management, human resource development and private sector development should be enhanced and the interventions in these sectors carefully intertwined.*

2. Improve the linkages between regional and national strategies, - The full potential of the coordination and complementarities of its regional and national strategies has not yet been reached. *The EC can improve its impact in regional cooperation by recognizing and optimizing the appropriate level (regional or national) on which programmes act.*

3. Contribution Agreements should be linked to results and their follow-up and monitoring improved - This implementation modality has improved efficiency – *EC services should now concentrate attention on results and monitoring of it.*

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