

EVALUATION OF ENABEL'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CAPITALISATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

DECEMBER 2020



photo: Enabel

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REAL TIME EVALUATION

Enabel is the development agency of the Belgian federal government and implements Belgium's international development policy in 14 partner countries¹. Enabel also implements projects financed by other donors, including the European Commission.

COTA is a Belgian international solidarity organisation. Its mission is to support the actors of social change in their reflection and their actions for the benefit of development. COTA contributes to this by facilitating collective learning processes (collaborative work, multi-actor approach, etc.). To do so it carries out research, support, capitalisation and evaluation activities.



¹ Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and the Palestinian Territories.

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1 WHAT IS A REAL-TIME, MULTI-CASE STUDY EVALUATION?



REAL-TIME EVALUATION

It is designed in such a way that the actors implementing a project/programme receive **immediate feedback from the evaluators** with their main conclusions/recommendations, so that improvements can be made quickly. This type of exercise is particularly suitable for an evaluation focused on the **learning dimension** as is the case for the evaluation of Enabel's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is also entirely appropriate when an emergency response needs to adapt quickly to a changing context and may therefore suffer from shortcomings in its monitoring and evaluation system. **Such an evaluation can then fill these gaps** (and thus bridge the gap that may exist between monitoring and evaluation).

For real-time evaluation to be most effective, it is **important** that it is as **participatory** as possible and that it is conducted as a **joint process with implementing actors** (and partner organisations). The issue of **rapid appropriation by the teams** is crucial.



MULTIPLE CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Each case study focuses on a particular unit, here a Covid-19 response action/strategy in Country X. It often uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose of a multiple case study is to provide detailed data for several concrete cases, to **understand their complexity** and to provide **explanations of results and impacts**.

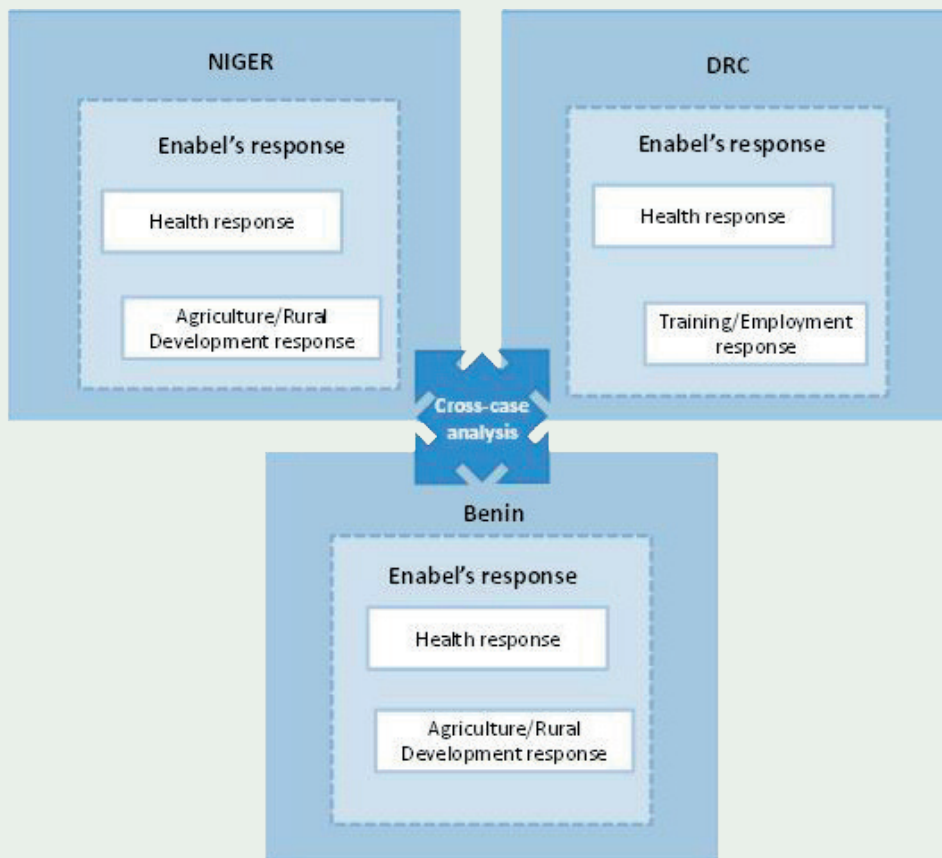
It is particularly suitable for evaluating Enabel's response to the Covid-19 pandemic as it is useful for evaluating programmes/strategies implemented in a new context (with limited knowledge), in an environment that is difficult to predict.

In addition, case studies can be particularly useful for understanding how different elements (implementation, context and other factors) fit together and how these produced the observed impacts.

In the case of this evaluation, the case studies are on the one hand (1) *descriptive and exploratory*: collecting/analysing information to document the types of response initiated by Enabel across the different countries and on the other hand (2) *explanatory*: explaining on what basis and how Enabel's response to the Covid-19 pandemic was initiated and implemented. Comparison between the different cases in different contexts makes it possible to identify the factors internal and external to the organisation that contribute to implementation of Enabel's response and the bottlenecks and challenges that constrain its implementation.

One of the principles of conducting a multiple case study is to begin data analysis at the same time as data collection. Analysis begins with the first document review or interview.

The figure presented below illustrates the multiple-case study design of the evaluation of Enabel's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



2 WHICH COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS SYSTEM?



A SIMPLIFIED SYSTEM

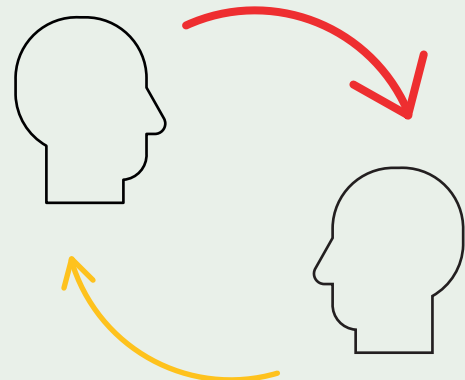
Because a real-time evaluation focuses more on immediate lessons learned (and therefore less on impact and sustainability), **data collection** methodologies need to be **simple** to allow for **rapid** analysis.

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The **information used** to develop a case study **often comes from multiple sources**, such as interviews (semi-structured/focus groups), direct observation, existing databases and desk research.

Primary **data collection** is **mainly qualitative** (with an emphasis on storytelling) but **also includes quantitative data from the field**. Although a multiple case study evaluation can be carried out without focus groups, document analysis and observations, it cannot be done without **interviews**. They are essential to understand what happened from the perspective of the people involved and how they reacted to the crisis situation

For this evaluation, taking into account the COVID context, primary data collection focused primarily on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. These were selected at different levels in order to explore diverse perspectives and obtain a comprehensive view of the response. The external evaluator and the person in charge of the evaluation within Enabel's internal evaluation unit conducted a series of interviews (via Teams) with Enabel staff members at the Brussels headquarters and in the three countries selected for the multiple case study (Niger, DRC, Benin), as well as with partner organisations (key individuals, direct actors in Enabel's response). The evaluators also interviewed staff from other countries outside the case study countries. In total, they interviewed 58 people.





«As in all its partner countries, Enabel provides support to the government's national response plan» (Resident representative of Enabel based in Niamey)

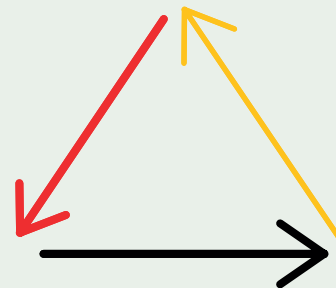


«Following the need expressed by the Technical Secretariat for the response to Covid-19 in DR Congo, Enabel provided in April 2020, four fully equipped ambulances to the Congolese partner»

These interviews were structured around **interview guides** (which drew on the **evaluation matrix**), promoting dialogue and the collection of testimonies. The interview guides and matrix cover the 3 objectives of the evaluation and are structured as follows: (1) the effects of the pandemic (on Enabel and on partner countries); (2) Enabel's response capacities (adaptations and flexibility of internal operating methods, adaptations of interventions and new interventions); (3) relevance and coherence of the response.

In a multi-case study evaluation, the **literature review** can provide additional insight compared to interviews/interviews.

As part of this evaluation, an initial literature review of epidemiological bulletins, national response plans, situation reports, MOPAs², strategy notes, guidance notes, etc was conducted during the start-up phase. This assessed the available information and provided an overview of the effects of the pandemic on partner countries and Enabel's response, as well as an overview of Enabel's response. A second documentary analysis (technical and financial documents of the new interventions, budget tables, activity reports, etc.) carried out during the implementation phase of the evaluation, enabled the analysis to be deepened (in particular analysis of adaptations of interventions by intervention sector/management contract/donor, budget analysis, etc.).



In a real-time evaluation using the multiple case study methodology, **triangulation is paramount**, just as in a traditional evaluation. There are two types of triangulation: (1) **triangulation of the method**: interviews, documentary analysis, others (observations, workshops, photos/videos, etc.); (2) **triangulation of the categories of actors** to be met (key informants and stakeholders at country level, operational and sectoral experts and leadership at the headquarters in Brussels, and key informants from partner organisations).

² Monitoring of the Action Plan.

3 THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF THE PROCESS



A 5-STEP PROCESS



Pre-start: constitution of the steering committee and updating of TdRs

A first *pre-startup* step is often necessary. It enables the evaluation steering committee to be set up and the Terms of Reference to be refined/updated.



Start-up / scoping: definition of evaluation questions, development of collection and analysis tools, selection criteria for case studies

A second stage of *starting/framing* has several objectives: (1) definition of evaluation questions and development of an evaluation matrix; (2) development of collection and analysis tools; (3) literature review (with a parallel mapping of existing documentation); (4) definition of case study selection criteria and identification of case studies.

As part of the evaluation of Enabel's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several analytical tools were developed: (1) *a qualitative analysis tool in Excel format*, which includes, for each of the 14 countries of intervention, the key questions in the matrix with brief preliminary comments (effects on Enabel, operational adjustments, adjustments to interventions, coherence); (2) *an analysis grid for the case study selection criteria*:


this grid is based on the previous tool. It includes different elements of response for each of the 14 countries, based on the case study selection criteria (evaluability, financial volume of the response and proportion of intervention from the portfolio concerned, rehabilitations/new interventions, type of response and type of sector affected/sectoral-multisectoral approach, synergies with other players/quality of partnership/dynamic Team Europe/One Team Belgium/diversity of donors, etc.) ; (3) *a quantitative analysis tool in Excel format*, which includes all of Enabel's interventions over the period March to August 2020 (in formulation, in progress and in their final stage) while highlighting the adaptations and new interventions included as part of the COVID response (type of adaptation, COVID-19 marker³, type of financing, type of response, budget, etc.); (4) *graphs* from the previous tool and from the literature review (number and percentage of interventions that have responded or are in the phase of responding to COVID-19 by sector and by country, amount allocated to the response disaggregated by donor, etc.).

³ The evaluation chose to categorise the interventions according to a «COVID-19 marker» indicating the importance attributed to the response to COVID-19 as follows:


- Interventions entirely dedicated to the response to COVID-19 ; their specific objective is the response to COVID-19
- Interventions with a component or outcome dedicated to the response to COVID-19
- Interventions with part of their activities adapted to respond to COVID-19

The unit of analysis defined for the case studies is the country, as the most appropriate level to analyse Enabel's response to COVID-19 (and thus answer all the evaluation questions) in the most comprehensive way possible. In addition to the selection criteria mentioned above, the 3 countries (Niger, Benin, DRC) were chosen because Enabel's response to the COVID-19 crisis there can shed more light on the evaluation questions, offering contrasting results for specific reasons (context, donors, DGD management contracts, sectors of intervention, etc.). They also provide lessons that can be extrapolated to other intervention countries.

As part of this evaluation, the Global Analysis Report, which presents the main lessons learned from the evaluation of Enabel's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, covers all Enabel's countries of intervention but is based in particular on the 3 case studies. It is therefore not in itself a cross-analysis of the cases, but rather provides input and illustrations for the overall analysis.

 **Implementation of the assessment: development of collection tools, follow-up to documentary analysis, collection / interviews, cross-analysis of data**

A third stage of *implementation* includes the following actions for the case studies: (1) development of data collection tools; (2) follow-up of the literature review; (3) data collection/interviews; (4) cross-analysis of data between case studies.

 **Dissemination of the main lessons**

A fifth and final phase is *dissemination* of the main lessons of the evaluation: (1) the creation of short documents, with non-technical content and attractive visual appearance, which will summarise the evaluation methodology, results and recommendations; (2) facilitation of workshops with stakeholders.

In the framework of this evaluation, two communication documents were produced: (1) a report on the main lessons learned from the evaluation and (2) this capitalisation document on the methodology used (real-time evaluation).

 **Reporting: report for each case study and overall analysis report**

A fourth step is *reporting*: (1) the drafting of a report for each case study; (2) the drafting of an overall analysis report (which includes a cross-analysis of the cases, but focuses more comprehensively on the lessons to guide decision-making).

The preliminary results of the evaluation of Enabel's response to the COVID-19 pandemic were disseminated and discussed (via Teams) with the members of the reference group on two occasions during the evaluation so that the response could be improved during its implementation. (1) firstly, following the drafting of the inception report and (2) secondly, following the drafting of the 1st case study report (Niger) and the preliminary global analysis report.

4 MAIN LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE METHODOLOGY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AN IN-DEPTH, CROSS-CUTTING ANALYSIS THAT PROVIDES STAFF WITH RELEVANT INFORMATION IN A NEW AND CONSTANTLY EVOLVING CONTEXT.



Each of the case studies was the subject of in-depth interviews (30 minutes to 3 hours per interview) which were based on a large number of evaluative questions covering a fairly broad spectrum of Enabel's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (from the effects of the pandemic on partner countries to the visibility of Enabel and its response capacities, as well as its relevance and coherence).

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Complemented by interviews at headquarters level and some interviews in non-case study countries, the evaluation helped to understand the decision-making mechanisms during this crisis, to provide an appreciation of Enabel's agility and capacity for innovation in times of crisis, and to highlight what has worked well and why and what needs adaptation/more reflection, what has facilitated the response or, on the contrary, the constraints and challenges encountered and how these have been addressed.

This evaluation, which is rich in information and lessons learned, also strengthens the monitoring-evaluation mechanisms (particularly in terms of more qualitative information⁴) implemented by the staff, particularly those in the case study countries.

⁴ For example, staff perceptions of the relevance and coherence of the response.

Furthermore, based on discussion in the feedback session (on Teams) on the initial lessons of the evaluation, the cross-cutting nature of the evaluation⁵ should enable staff from different countries to share their experiences and thus draw useful lessons for the future (well beyond the COVID context).



« In Niger, Enabel and the European Union are coordinating a project called 'Strengthening the resilience of the public health system in the face of the Covid-19 (ECC) crisis'. »

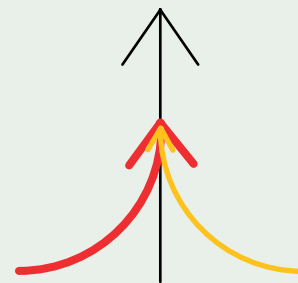
⁵ 6 October 2020 (with members of the reference group)



LIMITED INVOLVEMENT OF IMPLEMENTING ACTORS

In order to optimise effectiveness of a real-time evaluation, it is important that it is as **participatory as possible** and that it is conducted as a **joint process** with the implementing actors and partner organisations. This comprehensive approach should facilitate ownership and use of the evaluation results/recommendations. Although the members of the reference group were involved on several occasions and in particular at the beginning of the process (completion of the inception report, the first results of the overall analysis and the first case study) they and other staff were not sufficiently involved in particular during the implementation. For example, in line with the peer learning approach⁶, the evaluators had planned to conduct cross interviews where a key user linked to one case study directly addresses questions to a key user linked to another case study, and vice versa. In this method, the evaluators facilitate and reframe the discussion. This type of cross-interview was intended to help strengthen the learning process of all the teams in an action research project context (Covid-19 pandemic response strategy). In the end, these cross-interviews did not take place, firstly due to lack of time linked to a heavier than expected workload for the external evaluator and the person responsible within Enabel's internal evaluation unit for carrying out the evaluation (particularly at the level of the case studies), and secondly due to a lack of availability of Enabel staff.

Furthermore, at the end of the case studies and the overall analysis, there was no sharing workshop in the presence of the staff. This type of workshop would have been crucial. Unfavourable elements did not allow this to happen: (1) the departure of the main person responsible for the evaluation from Enabel's internal evaluation unit during the implementation of phase 4 described above; (2) the unavailability of the members of the reference group during the periods allotted to the exercise (and of Enabel staff in general).



As a result, with one exception, feedback was not received from members of the reference group on the draft reports (case studies and overall analysis).

However, it should be emphasised that during the dissemination phase, a workshop to present the main lessons of the evaluation is planned in the presence of the staff.

⁶ For example, staff perceptions of the relevance and coherence of the response.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Realistically identify the human resources and working time needed to carry out the evaluation with its objectives

In order to carry out such an evaluation, with at least 3 case studies, and with a larger number of exchange sessions with the implementing actors, it is essential to mobilise at least 2 full-time people over a relatively long period (minimum 4 to 5 months), with a clear division of labour between them.

Increase interactions (in various forms) with implementing actors in order to fully achieve the objectives of a real-time evaluation.

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As already pointed out, there was too little interaction between the evaluators and the members of the reference group. It would be judicious for such an evaluation to multiply the interactions in various forms: workshops, cross interviews (see above) or the sharing of summary notes of the main results at short intervals (about every 3 weeks).

Maintain a level of flexibility in the approach

The real-time and multiple case study evaluation method is not a rigid method. It can be adapted along the way; as the analytical work is simultaneous with data collection, evaluators may become aware of new paths that are worth pursuing. For example, in the course of the process, taking into account the initial lessons learned from the first case studies, it may be more appropriate for an evaluation of this type to either reduce the number of

case studies (possibly supplementing them with more focused interviews in other countries outside the case studies) or to reorient the unit of analysis (e.g., sector of intervention instead of country).

Formulate together the lessons learned from the evaluation, with participation of the evaluators and the implementing actors

Given the strong learning dimension of this type of evaluation, it is essential that the lessons learnt are co-determined/co-formulated with Enabel staff, or at least with the members of the reference group. During the interviews the evaluators encouraged the key interviewees to openly formulate lessons learned, but in order for them to be further refined and fully appropriated by all stakeholders, it would be advisable for them to be shared and debated during one or more stakeholder workshops.

To better prepare such a complex evaluation in advance by giving more responsibility to the focal points at country level.

It should be noted that in the framework of this evaluation, focal points were identified at the level of each country of intervention. They facilitated the collection of the documentation necessary for this evaluation. It would have been valuable to also give them responsibility for: (1) planning of interviews (and in particular those with partners, who appeared less mobilised within the framework of the present evaluation); (2) making (in their raw state) short films on one or other concrete example of adaptation to Covid-19.

IN CONCLUSION

A real-time, multi-case study evaluation is particularly well suited to provide Enabel staff with information and lessons learned (success factors and strategic and operational constraints) in a short period of time on the organisation's agility and innovation capacities in the context of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the cross-cutting nature of this type of evaluation should enable staff from different countries to capitalise on good practices, not only in the management of such a crisis but also beyond (on an organisational and strategic level).

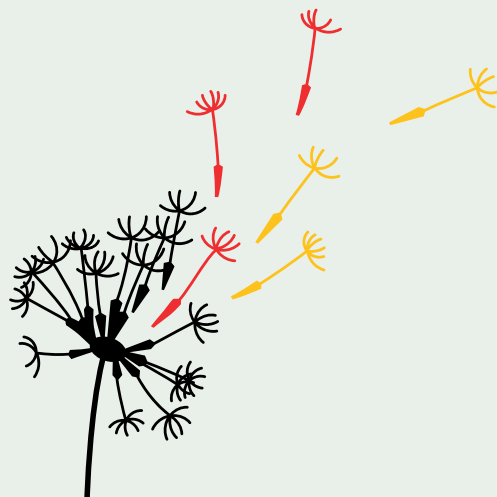
However, in order to fully achieve its objective of learning and appropriation (and therefore use) of the results, this type of evaluation requires both frequent and rapid interaction between the evaluators and the implementing partners throughout the process ; and participation of the latter in formulation of the lessons learned. The mobilisation and involvement of the staff concerned throughout the process is essential to ensure their full ownership of the results and use of the important lessons learned. The final stage of the dissemination of results should not be neglected and could help to partially fill these gaps.



« Covid-19 is disrupting education around the world. Including in Uganda, where distance education is not easy. Enabel offers its Sandbox strategy »



« Establishment of Covid-19 isolation sites in Rwanda »



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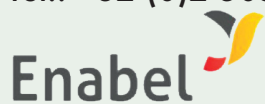
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December 2020

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