

FINAL REPORT

MASTER IN FOOD TECHNOLOGY, SAFETY AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Managerial response
PFS 2013-2018 (Vietnam)
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SOMMAIRE

01.	MANAGERIAL(S) RESPONSE(S).....	3
01.1 /	Managerial response from ARES.....	3
01.2 /	Specific response to recommendations.....	3

01. MANAGERIAL(S) RESPONSE(S)

01.1 / MANAGERIAL RESPONSE FROM ARES

ARES appreciates the quality of the evaluation led by Mr. Moriceau.

ARES is pleased with the validation provided by the evaluation of the confirmed added value of the PFS.

ARES is pleased with the fact that ULiège and UCLouvain have developed fruitful relationships with VNUA. Indeed, Vietnamese academic institutions have become stronger and could become true strategic research partners for Belgian universities, especially in the field of natural sciences and agriculture.

ARES stresses that the findings have not been clearly distinguished from the recommendations and wishes to further qualify a number of conclusions and recommendations.

01.2 / SPECIFIC RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 Addressed to ARES

It is strongly recommended to continue this partnership, with the development of a country-specific and regularly updated approach. The organizational and institutional capacities of Vietnamese Universities (i) are very different from those of most African or Haitian Universities and (ii) change very rapidly. So, it requires ARES to develop and use specific strategies and approaches for partnership with Vietnam and other Middle Income Countries (MIC), to be reviewed at least every two years. The win-win partnership concept, stated in ARES PFS evaluation grid (2014) is appropriate for and should be effectively implemented by Belgian and Vietnamese partners. As stated in a recent report from Belgian cooperation on capacity building in Vietnam "*Partnership and 'win-win' concepts in international cooperation are already a common and accepted paradigm among Vietnamese stakeholders and actors and they consider that these provide very interesting opportunities for sustainable capacity development mechanisms. The Vietnamese stakeholders consider that it is important for Belgium and other countries to focus their cooperation with Vietnam on those areas where they can provide the most added value*".(BTC, 2014) It implies clarifying and putting in practice a double objective (development of Vietnamese universities and development of Belgian universities) which is not so clear in ARES programmatic documents. An example among others: the obligation for PFS to implement most of activities in the south country might be relevant in Low Income Countries (LIC) to ensure that most of resources effectively contribute to develop local capacities. But it is recommended to be more flexible for project with MIC including Vietnam.¹

Agreement

Partially accepted

1

Comments and reasoning	<p>The programmatic framework, set by the federal government, in which the activities of ARES in the field of development co-operation are incorporated, is spread over five years. It is on the basis of this strategic plan that ARES will be called upon to report. The five-year plan drawn up by ARES for its development cooperation activities in Vietnam is based on a contextual analysis common to the various actors in Belgian cooperation active in Vietnam. This project was designed and implemented before the 2017-2021 five-year plan came into force. It therefore did not benefit from the common contextual analysis.</p>
	<p>PRDs and PFSs are developed and implemented by members of the academic community of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and their local partners. Projects are selected through a multi-stage competitive bidding process in which experts issue recommendations to project leads. At the end of this competitive process, selected projects are implemented. ARES organizes a dialogue between the project leads at ARES as well as with the other ACNGs active in Vietnam so that all have updated information and can take it into account in the context of the activities they are implementing.</p>
	<p>The preparation of the new programmatic framework 2022-2026 will be an opportunity to clarify the specificities of partnerships with ICMs. The "win-win" approach is certainly sought as part of these partnerships and ARES is aware of the added value of these projects for its own establishments.</p> <p><u>However, ARES queries the recommendation to organise more PFS activities in Belgium in the case where the partner is located in an ICM.</u> In these partnerships, the management capacity and local amenities are of a level that allows for more activities at the local level, which strengthens ownership. In addition, the Strategic Directions and Guidelines in force for PRDs and PFS stipulate that PFS aim to "strengthen the capacity and provision of training (initial or ongoing) of a partner HEI in promising areas for the development of the partner institution or organisation (at local or regional level). Finally, the administrative and financial standards to which ARES is subject as part of the implementation of its cooperation activities stipulate, among other things, that at least half of a PhD scholarship must take place locally.</p>
Recommendation 2 Addressed to ARES	<p>It is strongly recommended to translate all strategic and programmatic ARES documents into English and disseminate it widely, especially the strategic plan 2017-2026, to inform (i) national partners from non-francophone countries and (ii) the global academic community about ARES' vision, priorities, and activities.</p>
	<p>Accepted</p>
Comments and reasoning	<p>ARES recognises the relevance of this recommendation Reference documents for the PRD-PFS call (including strategic directions) are available in English. An effort remains to be made for more cross-disciplinary strategic documents, such as the 10-year strategic plan or the "business card" reflecting the ARES vision, mission and approach to development cooperation, as well as at the level of the ARES website. ARES will incorporate this recommendation while stating that its implementation will be progressive.</p>

Recommendation 3 Addressed to ARES	<p>To review and adapt the condition to implement most of activities in the south country especially for win-win projects and collaboration with universities from MIC. Implementing activities in Belgium doesn't mean that the South partners do not benefit from it, especially because Universities from MIC are more attractive and stronger than Universities from LIC. For example, organizing long term or mid-term trainings in Belgium for lecturers/students from MIC countries could have a great added value for both Belgian and South universities and doesn't present major risks that it doesn't benefit the South universities (MIC countries have stronger institutions, more academic opportunities, less security issues or risks of conflicts than LIC or fragile states. So, MIC universities have individual and organizational capacities to apply, transplant or adapt knowledge and skills developed abroad and to institutionalize these knowledge in their University. In addition, the risk that trained students or lecturers, after trainings, didn't come back to their university is really low for MIC country academics, but might be high for fragile states academics).</p>
Agreement	Partially accepted
Comments and reasoning	Idem recommendation n°1.
Recommendation 4 Addressed to ARES	<p>The modality of lecturing as a pair (one lecturer from Belgium, one lecturer from the South) is proposed in several PFS. It might be useful for ARES to ask explanations on how this would be organized and ensure that enough time and resources are allocated to prepare the lectures and to provide information on its conditions of success. It may be an effective approach to implement this mechanism for one or few courses only, and allocate specific time dedicated to developing the methodology of lecturing as a pair, the development of the syllabi and training techniques, with the direct collaboration between Belgian lecturer and South lecturer.</p>
Agreement	Accepted
Comments and reasoning	For paired instruction to work properly, more preparation time would be required than what was carried out in practice in the PFS. The problem lies in the fact that the teachers' planner leaves little room for availability in both Belgium and Vietnam.
Recommendation 5 Addressed to ARES	<p>Initiate and establish a sustainable higher education program (master degree, undergraduate program) with the support of a PFS project is really ambitious and seems to be an overwhelming challenge. As most of activities of a PFS are lecturing activities in the South University. Supporting a South University to establish a new and sustainable education program requires implementing a large range of other activities: institutional and organizational development support, researcher and PhD training, language course (for Vietnam), etc.</p>
Agreement	Accepted

	<p>The cooperation activities that ARES implements in its partner countries are distinguished by two types of instruments:</p> <p>01. Institutional Support (AI: Appui institutionnel) is the instrument through which ARES intends to support the institutional development of a partner higher education institution, based on its strategic priorities, by strengthening its capacities to promote a teaching environment, research and organisational services which are relevant and of quality.</p> <p>02. PRDs and PFSs</p> <p>002.1. A Research Project for Development (PRD: Projet de recherche pour le développement) is a research and knowledge sharing project resulting from a joint North-South initiative responding to local, national and even regional development issues transcending the boundaries of the academic world.</p> <p>002.2. A South Formation Project (PFS: Projet de Formation Sud) is a project to support higher education resulting from a joint North-South initiative in response to identified training needs in the local, national or regional organisation.</p> <p>In the design of the instruments, and schematically, the AI responds mainly to a "top-down" logic while the projects respond to a "bottom-up" logic.</p> <p>ARES recognizes that the implementation of PRD and PFS requires a certain level of institutional development. At VNUA, ARES is implementing an institutional support program.</p>
<p>Comments and reasoning</p>	<p>ARES will consider how to ensure better articulation between its cooperation instruments.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 Addressed to ARES</p>	<p>The monitoring and evaluation of PFS projects is a bit specific, they somehow differ from development projects for which monitoring and evaluation tools (logical framework, activity and result quantitative indicators, etc.) have been designed and mainstreamed. For instance, the logical framework doesn't seem to be the most appropriate tool to manage and monitor a PFS project: For a PFS project, the number of 'direct beneficiaries' –students– is limited and is easily monitored, as professors have direct and daily contacts with them. However, other parts of the monitoring and evaluation of PFS projects are very challenging: for example linking project activities with the objective to contribute to the overall development (social, economic, political). Higher education implies long processes (3, 5 to 8 years) and the potential impact or social results from an improved higher education might take decades to appear. Furthermore these may be affected by many external factors. Also, evaluation of social results and impacts requires time and specific skills that academics and PFS promoters don't necessarily have. The evaluator recommends ARES (i) to develop and adapt key qualitative tools (or promote the development of such tools by evaluators) in order to evaluate the contribution of PFS to social and economic development, such as Outcome Mapping, Most Significant Change or Case Studies, (ii) to plan final/external evaluation from the beginning of the project and ask evaluators to develop a Baseline before the implementation of the project, and then to develop and endline at the end of the project.</p>
<p>Agreement</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>

Comments and reasoning	ARES recognises the relevance of this recommendation.
	A series of methodological tools have been developed by ARES since 2013 with this in mind.
	More specifically, since the 2017-2021 program, a baseline has been required and indicators are monitored for each program intervention. For the formulation of projects, attention is now drawn to the expected changes, making it possible to better anticipate the expected impact of the projects.
	Nevertheless, ARES emphasizes that it does not have the resources to carry out a final evaluation for each project.
Recommendation 7 Addressed to project leads	At a sector level: In order to address the national public health and public safety issue in Vietnam, such project should better develop and explain its strategy and collaboration with other stakeholders: (i) public institutions in charge of national regulations and policy in the field of agriculture and economy/foreign investment, (ii) public institutions in charge of food and veterinary controls, (iii) private agro industrial companies, (iv) NGOs and nonprofit sector.
Agreement	Accepted
Comments and reasoning	A posteriori, it appears that it would have been useful to set up a kind of advisory council that could have regularly given its opinion on the course programme. This can still be implemented since a master's degree equivalent to that developed as part of the PFS still exists at VNUA (but taught in Vietnamese only).
	It is worth mentioning that relationships with stakeholders already exist: for example, representatives of public institutions participate in final thesis presentations as a members of the committee (or even participate in the supervision of final theses), close contacts exist between VNUA teachers and agri-food businesses or NGOs.
Recommendation 8 Addressed to project leads	At a project level, the sustainability approach of the project is questionable. The fact that many Belgian lecturers directly taught master courses, -and that the lecturing as a pair was not implemented properly- allowed to set up the master rapidly (one year) but also jeopardized the possibility to sustain a master in English at the end of the project.
Agreement	Partially accepted
Comments and reasoning	VNUA teachers are quite capable of continuing to teach in English, but it is the students who do not have the necessary level. The sustainability of the project is ensured by the fact that the master program developed thanks to the PFS continues to be taught, but only in Vietnamese. Thanks to the Belgian and Vietnamese teacher pairs, the teachers still improved their knowledge of the subjects taught.
Recommendation 9 Addressed to project leads	It is recommended for Vietnamese partners to continue to develop education and research programs in the field of food security and safety. (I) The master's in food technology in Vietnamese at VNUA currently doesn't provide practical learning (practical seminar, field visits) neither some lecturing in English. In order to continue to implement a high-quality program in this field despite the end of the PFS, it is recommended to organize practical learning and lecturing in English (specific courses in English or English-Vietnamese blending teaching). (II) Some professional training or certificate could be implemented in this field at VNUA, targeting private sector manager, public controller and public administrators.
Agreement	Accepted
Comments and reasoning	Good teaching must be accompanied by practical activities. Teaching in English is definitely a plus, as activities in the food field are often international.

Recommendation 10 Addressed to project leads for future projects	<p>It is recommended for further projects to set up a joint steering or technical group including the two promoters and a sample of South and Belgian stakeholders, twice a year and prepared by the two promoters. Even if the ownership is a key aspect of the PFS project and it is a good that the "South partner" was responsible for the management of the project. However, it remains necessary to ensure that both parties are not only informed but also involved in the decision process for key decisions of the project. Current digital communication tools allow for easy and low-cost organization of such (distant) meetings and joint decision making.</p>
Agreement	Accepted
Comments and reasoning	<p>In the "Strategic Directions and Guidelines" document, which ARES distributes to all project promotor candidates, it is in fact specified among the implementing provisions that: "Each project should constitute, in the North as in the South, a steering committee (meeting every semester) which will ensure, during the implementation phase, the follow-up of the project in accordance with the targeted results and objectives, using its logical framework and chronogram."</p>
Recommendation 11 Addressed to project leads for future projects	<p>It is recommended for further project to integrate or focus on PhD training and programs. Research opportunities and needs in the field in Vietnam are high, and both Belgian and Vietnamese partners have the capacity to manage and support PhD candidates. Supporting PhD programs would allow to strengthen a win-win approach, as both parties will benefit from researches, publications, laboratory activities, etc. Vietnam Government/VNUA also have the capacity to co-funded/co-supported PhD students. In addition, the VNUA will benefit from a high loan from the World Bank to renovate and build new infrastructure. Vietnamese PhD students could be supervised by Belgian professors and do a part of their PhD in Belgium. The opportunity for a/several Belgian PhD student/young researcher to do a part of its PhD research in Vietnam and hosted at VNUA may also be explored. It might increase research fields for Belgian universities, and also strengthen the quality of education program at VNUA (the PhD student/young researcher could also lecture in the master program in food technology, organize some English courses, etc.).</p>
Agreement	Accepted
Comments and reasoning	<p>A PFS follow-up proposal has been submitted with this in mind.</p>
Recommendation 12 Addressed to project leads for future projects	<p>If there is need expressed by VNUA, it is suggested for Belgian stakeholders to explore the possibility to continue to strengthen the master of food technology in Vietnamese at VNUA (coaching of Vietnamese lecturers, providing courses, etc.).</p>
Agreement	Accepted
Comments and reasoning	<p>A PFS follow-up proposal has been submitted with this in mind.</p>