

Executive Summary

Independent Process Evaluation Brooke Ethiopia Programme

2015-2019



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Evaluator: Dr Karen Iles

Evaluation manager: Cesar Urquiza, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Advisor,
Performance and Evaluation, Brooke UK

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Brooke Ethiopia

Brooke Ethiopia (BE) has worked in Ethiopia since 2011. Brooke Ethiopia's Multi-Year Plan 2017- 2021 goal is: by 2021 the welfare of 449,681 working equines, including 17,468 hard-win animals¹ sustainably changed. The programme outcomes are:

- I. By 2021, 270,070 equine owners and communities in 16 woredas in SNNPR and Oromia regions improved equine welfare practices.
- II. By 2021, 7,764 equine owners and handlers (gharry, cart, pack donkeys) in 6 urban areas (Halaba, Dodola, Addaba, Qore, Addis Ababa and Nazreth) adopt and continually practice improved welfare practices.
- III. By 2021, 82,325 Equine owners and communities in three woredas (in Amhara region) benefited from the Drug and Vaccine Revolving Fund trialled there.
- IV. By 2021, Issues of equine welfare included in government policy and legal frameworks.
- V. By 2021 Brooke Ethiopia developed appropriate capacity (manpower, systems, and procedures) to implement in compliance and be agile to demands.

The Independent Process Evaluation took place from 5th August to 12th November 2019. The objective was to capture the learning from Brooke Ethiopia's programme management structure, culture and practices, programme delivery, and collaboration between BUK and BE.

A total of 636 people participated in the evaluation, of which 29% were women. Primary data was collected from community and government stakeholders, staff from BE, BUK and ex-BUK staff. Qualitative and quantitative tools included semi-structured interviews (SSI), focus group discussions (FGD), questionnaires and observation. A three-day workshop was facilitated for BE staff. Staff used matrix-based tools to assess BE's management set-up and processes used with regards to the extent to which they are fit for purpose to enable BE to reach its objectives by 2021 and beyond.

Scope. This Independent Process Evaluation focussed on understanding BE's current situation – how well the various processes used meet BE's needs, lessons from past experiences, and the key enabling and hindering factors. The evaluation did not cover all aspects of BE's organisational processes and programming, and was not an assessment of BE's performance overall. Rather, it focussed on questions designed to identify challenges and concerns for further discussion.

Evaluation Findings: overview

BE in a change process. BE is going through a major change process as they, (a) continue to align with Brooke's new Theory of Change and Global Plan, (b) restructure the management set-up, (c) begin working with partners and move to a new organisational model, and (d) reap new opportunities opened up by the recent change in Ethiopian legislation governing NGO operations (the 20:80 rule introduced in 2019 replacing the 2009 30:70 rule)². The new Country Director (appointed in February 2019) and the BE Senior Management Team (SMT) are now providing strong, coherent strategic direction for the programme, and are starting to make good progress in key areas. BE has huge experience of working in this highly complex environment with challenging poverty issues. BE has been able to navigate this context ably to deliver activities in good collaboration with stakeholders.

Complex and diverse context. Many of the challenges that BE faces and which are highlighted in this evaluation report are due to factors outside BE's direct control, while others relate to the working context and historical factors. These factors have had an important bearing on BE's current situation and the challenges they now face. Key examples are highlighted below.

¹ Equids whose welfare improvement depends on complex conditions that are difficult to change.

²The Charities & Societies Agency (ChSA) proclamation No. 621 of 2009 stipulated a ratio of 30:70 for administration to programme costs for NGOs. However, administration activities were defined so broadly that they included costs that would usually be considered as part of programming costs, such as monitoring & evaluation costs. The law also prohibited NGOs from forming networks or consortiums. A new proclamation (Civil Society Organizations Agency Proclamation No. 1113/2019) came into force in March 2019 replacing the 30:70 rule with a 20:80 rule. At first glance, this appears to be a setback. However, the law excludes training, research, etc. costs from admin costs.

Previous government legislation for NGOs (the 30:70 rule) presented strict limitations for NGO expenditure. A high proportion of funds were required to be spent on physical tangible inputs. This presented a major constraint to BE whose approach of capacity building for equine owners and local service providers involved training and mentoring. There are indications that the 30:70 rule had some influence on the number of infrastructure projects developed (shelters, water points, health posts), but they do seem to have improved human and equine welfare according to preliminary data from this evaluation. The 30:70 rule also restricted the number of field staff that could be employed to cover BE's geographical areas. Other external factors were difficulties in covering large geographical areas with limited infrastructure, and unpredictable availability and cost of building materials.

Constraints facing BE also stem from BUK's own change process. BE does not yet have strategies in key areas such as MEAL, exiting and sustainability, and Gender Mainstreaming, partly due to BUK still developing the necessary strategies. Brooke's Theory of Change was also created after BE's current multi-year plan so BE's programme design and logframe are not fully aligned with the Global Plan. Brooke's internal budget codes are too complex to allow BE to update their logframe. Issues with the BrookeCheck software for SEBWAT, ABI, OBM and AHMF data also exist; this is now being addressed. This impacted on BE's MEAL system and limited obtaining disaggregated data for monitoring, lesson learning and evidence-based decision-making. The evaluation findings do not imply that BE is *not* being effective, efficient and/or having any impact. Rather, BE does not have enough results data to *know* the full extent of their effectiveness, efficiency and impact with reasonable confidence. The findings suggest that BE's work is not only improving equine welfare but also improving equine owners' livelihoods and welfare and for people beyond BE's direct target beneficiaries. This indicates good added value of BE's work, but further monitoring is needed to verify these findings.

BUK-BE relations include both positive elements, as well as factors that are hindering effective collaboration. Some of these are outside BE's control and present challenges for BE. However, the challenges that do lie within BE's control present good opportunities to build on their many strengths.

Evaluation Findings: Validity of Design, Efficiency, Effectiveness of Management Set Up

Validity of Design. The Brooke financial and planning system allows for modifications in activities and outputs thus potentially enabling RBM at output level, but BE were not able to adequately apply RBM because the BE MEAL system had not produced a full, up-to-date set of results for output, outcome and goal indicators. Neither were BE able to update logframe outcomes due to BUK's complex financial coding and decision to leave logframe changes until the 2021 planning cycle.

The *types* of interventions, including water points and health posts, are broadly appropriate, and there are indications of good and demonstrable equine and human benefits. The selection of infrastructure projects, especially shelters was based on meeting equine needs, but also influenced by the 70:30 rule, as indicated above. However, concerns on the value for money of shelters exists.

Discussion and agreements with local kebele leaders as part of BE's Community Engagement approach is appropriate. A baseline has been set for some areas (using SEBWAT/ABI and OBM tools), but there have been no participatory community needs assessments. There is little focus on gender mainstreaming in BE's programme and indicators are not gender disaggregated.

There are some partially developed exit criteria for three of BE's interventions, but no comprehensive exit and sustainability strategy. The exiting from five woredas in 2019 was not based on communities being 'ready' for exit nor on an evidence-based assessment of how sustainable BE interventions were.

Restricted funding for infrastructure and other projects has enabled BE to address some important equine welfare issues. Whether building shelters should continue given the new 2019 proclamation remains to be reviewed. As yet, BE does not have a funding strategy to support becoming 'grant ready'.

Efficiency. Activity monitoring has been carried out very well, and tools used for measuring indicators at output, outcome and goals levels have broadly been appropriate. However, the MEAL system has severe limitation. No data was available to monitor progress from the baseline figures in 2016 to 2018 using the

SEBWAT/ABI and OBM tools, and data collected in 2018 was only for cart & gharry equines in the SHGs. The rationale for this and for setting and using the results as a new baseline line is unclear. Data analysis has also been hampered by problems with BrookeCheck. The sampling framework does not adequately meet BE's needs, and the unit of analysis is unclear. The costs vs benefits of carrying out SEBWAT/ABI and OBM surveys is also unclear. These factors have seriously hindered assessing progress and results, effectiveness and efficiency of BE's programme delivery and decision making, and has prevented BE from verifying their models as good practices. No external evaluations have been carried out on BE interventions and only one internal, so limiting learning. However, BE has demonstrated very good lesson learning in some areas based on the data they do have i.e. improving the Community Engagement and AHMF mentoring approaches.

BE has satisfactory internal financial controls that are used appropriately at the national office level, and fulfils accountability requirements to government. Human resource management has improved by the opening of the Shashemene office in mid-2019, bringing coordination and support closer to field-level operations. Staff salaries have been aligned with comparable NGOs. Ceasing operations in 45% of kebeles where BE had previously worked and decreasing staff numbers by 60% in 2019 raised concerns that while workloads may have improved, they may still be too.

Timeliness of delivery of activities is satisfactory overall. Delays lie mainly in construction projects due to currency rate changes, cost and availability of materials, and building contractor issues. Communities and government reported broad satisfaction with BE's interventions. Evidence of good quality programme delivery included stakeholders applying new skills leading to improved equine and human welfare. Enabling factors were staff and commitment; BE and BUK technical support; good relations with communities and government. Internal hindering factors included insufficient visits and mentoring by BE; training not being practical enough. External hindering factors include absenteeism of health-post staff affecting mentoring; by-law enforcement being difficult; and BE being tied into plans with government so limiting uptake of *emerging* opportunities.

Reporting on restricted funds can lead to double-reporting, excessive time spent correcting reports, difficulties in obtaining the necessary information from BE, and BUK setting unrealistic timeframes.

Effectiveness of Management Set-up. Lessons learnt from previous BE configurations informed the decentralisation process with the opening of the Shashemene regional office. This was an effective strategic decision to improve the management set up and coordination and technical support to intervention areas. Devolution of decision-making to the regional level is in process.

The SMT has made significant improvements in making strategic decision-making more coherent, and working more effectively together. Plans to work with partners and adopt a hybrid model have begun; this supports the decision to increase BE's scale, visibility, influence and combining partners' and BE's expertise to gain synergy. An effective strategic decision was made to address the issue of donkey hide trade through advocacy and coordination with BEA. Details of the hybrid model are to be fully developed, as are strategies in *key organisational areas* (funding, exit strategies and sustainability etc.) which are currently hindering the development of such areas at an *operational* level.

BUK has effectively held BE to account for activity delivery and financial controls, but not for the programme *results* so assessment of overall effectiveness and efficiency of the programme is problematic. Causes lie with the inadequate MEAL system; BUK planning and finance processes etc. While BUK provided strategic guidance this was insufficient due partly to limited BUK staff resources and skill areas, and time to fully explore Brook's *global strategy* with strategic and operational *implications* for BE's country-level programme. The BUK and BE relationship is generally productive, but factors are undermining the effectiveness of BUK support and need to be urgently addressed.

Recommendations.

1. BE Hybrid Model and Organisation Change strategy - *urgent*

- Create an overarching "Hybrid Model and Organization Change Strategy" and operational plan to guide BE's development over the next 18 months, and beyond.
 - Explore and decide whether BE's strategy will be one of *horizontal widespread* coverage in more geographical areas, or a *vertical in-depth* coverage in fewer geographical areas.
 - Explore and decide whether BE will continue supporting infrastructure projects, especially equine shelters and water points/troughs (see recommendation 7 below).
2. Partnerships – *urgent*
 - Continue donkey and hides advocacy work working in partnership with BEA.
 - Pause and reconsider the start date for the proposed development of partnerships to develop a Hybrid Model & Organization Change Strategy and realistic timeframe that most ensure success.
 - Review draft BE Partnerships Framework; ensure alignment with Hybrid Model & Organization Change Strategy.
 3. MEAL system
 - Develop a MEAL strategy aligned with BE's Hybrid Model & Organization Change Strategy.
 - Review and modify the sampling framework and unit of analysis.
 - BUK to set in place appropriate software for analysing SEBWAT/ABI, OBM, AHMF and FQM data as a priority (currently in process).
 - Include additional indicators and means of verification beyond the logframe for learning.
 - Mainstream MEAL throughout BE so that MEAL is integrated both vertically and horizontally.
 - Engage further staff at regional and field-based level to support mainstreaming of MEAL.
 4. Measure outcome and goal indicators
 - Measure the outcomes and goal indicators against the baseline as soon as practically possible after the MEAL strategy has been developed, including modified sampling framework.
 5. Exit and sustainability strategy + Project Cycle Management (PCM) strategy
 - Visit exited woredas to assess and gather crucial lessons on the exit process and sustainability.
 - Develop a BE programme 'exit and sustainability strategy' aligned with/part of a PCM strategy. Include an agreed 'unit of analysis'.
 - Consider adjusting outcome #1 to 'diversifying livelihoods' rather than simply 'livelihoods' because all of BE's interventions are contributing to improving equine owners' livelihoods.
 6. BE and BUK collaboration
 - BE and BUK to address the challenges being faced with their collaborative work.
 - BUK to provide more strategic guidance and support to BE to ensure organisation change and development initiatives are joined-up and aligned with one another.
 - BUK to increase the extent to which BE is held accountable for programme results.
 7. Evaluate BE projects and interventions
 - Evaluate each of BE's interventions and carry out a value for money analysis on BE's interventions.
 8. Interim programme intervention plan
 - Develop an interim programme intervention plan for the next 18 months to supplement the current logframe. Align this plan with the PCM, exit and sustainability strategy.
 - Develop additional indicators for outcomes, e.g. on livelihoods, benefits to human livelihoods and welfare, gender equality.
 9. Gender mainstreaming strategy
 - Develop a gender mainstreaming strategy aligned with Hybrid & Organisation Change Strategy.
 10. Funding strategy
 - Develop a funding strategy for BE that enables BE to be 'grant ready' by 2021 and rationalizes those aspects of the BE programme most suited to restricted funding and unrestricted funding.
 11. Brooke global strategies
 - Draw on lessons from BE and integrate these into Brooke's global strategies. Emphasize that Brooke's global strategies are a guide, not a blueprint, and should be adapted to the context.