

Ex Post-Evaluation Brief

Israel: International Center for Combating Desertification, Sede Boqer



Programme/Client	Center for Combating Desertification, Sede Boqer Ref. 1996 66 041	
Programme executing agency	Ben Gurion University (BGU), Beer-Sheva	
Year of sample/ex post evaluation report: 2011*/2011		
	Appraisal (planned)	Ex post-evaluation (actual)
Investment costs (total)	EUR 25.6 million	EUR 29.4 million
Counterpart contribution (company)	./.	EUR 3.8 million
Funding, of which budget funds (BMZ)	EUR 25.6 million	unchanged

* random sample

Project description: Over the course of the project, the internationally renowned *Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research* (BIDR), which was founded in 1973 and is affiliated to Ben Gurion University, was expanded to create the *International Centre for Combating Desertification* (ICCD). Funding was provided for classrooms, laboratories, offices, lecture theatres, student accommodation and modern communication systems. The intention was to attract postgraduate students from those developing countries particularly affected by desertification to the range of courses offered by the BIDR; furthermore, to promote communication and dissemination of the BIDR's experiences and research findings with view to their practical application.

Objective: The project objective (outcome) is to achieve appropriate utilisation of the expanded research and teaching capacities and accommodation facilities - giving priority to regional and global aspects of combating desertification - in order to contribute indirectly to the control of desertification internationally, including in the Middle East (the overall objective). The attainment of this objective is to be measured in terms of the utilisation of the new workspace and accommodation (a minimum of 80%), as well as the number of students coming from developing and emerging countries (a minimum of 15 per year). The achievement of the overall objective (impact) is to be measured by the number of BIDR graduates from developing and emerging countries who hold posts related to this study area, and by the number and the pertinence of relevant research findings produced by the BIDR, as well as by its international profile (e.g. organisation of conferences, technical publications).

Target group: Refer to the Project Proposal

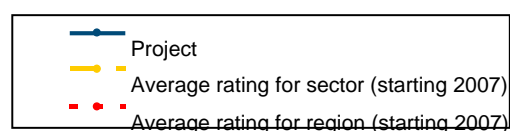
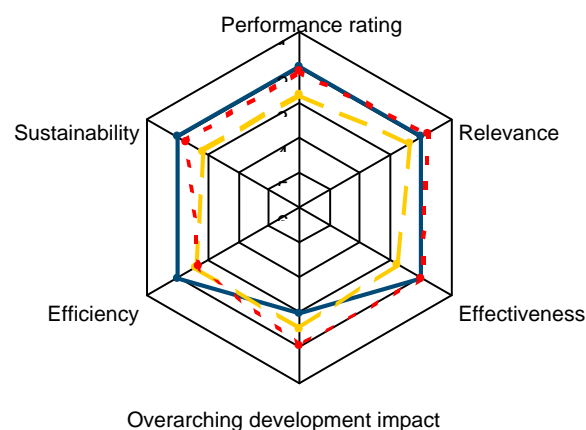
Overall rating: 2

The BIDR has strengthened its position as a centre of excellence for desert studies and research on desertification, with its work addressing issues of international relevance. This international dimension can have the potential to be expanded further, especially with view to teaching activities.

Of note:

Initially, it was hoped that the BIDR, through its work on desertification control (which is of significant importance to neighbouring Arab countries), could contribute to improved regional cooperation. Due to the subsequent escalation of the Middle East crisis, that expectation has not been met to any significant extent. This type of "overarching" cooperation effect is more likely to evolve in a post-conflict situation than during an ongoing political crisis.

Rating by DAC criteria



EVALUATION SUMMARY

Overall rating: Rating: 2

Relevance: The institution's academic standard and the benefits of its geographic location (which include an ecologically diverse variety of arid zones that are easily accessible for research purposes) provide favourable starting conditions for the BIDR to develop from a hitherto predominantly nationally focused institution into an international centre. The underlying intervention logic aimed at supporting desertification control in particularly affected (and often extremely poor) countries through a student exchange programme that is founded on well-established, high-quality teaching and research. This appears reasonable in principle, albeit based on a series of assumptions. The approach adopted in this project helped to strengthen existing efforts to turn the BIDR into an internationally relevant actor in the field of desertification; besides, it fostered the institutional restructuring of the desert research institutes in the Negev Desert, which had been under consideration since the 1980s. Donor coordination played no role in the project (Sub-rating: 2).

Effectiveness: The premises (research and accommodation buildings) that were created or extended under the project are being utilised to a level of over 90%; accommodation in particular is considerably oversubscribed. The creation of some 50 further units should cover this shortfall, at least for the present. The average number of graduates from developing and emerging countries for the years 2001-10 was about 13. The relevant scholarship grants are funded from a designated BIDR / BGU budget, which currently limits the total number of foreign students. As a result of the growing demand from within Israel, the percentage of students from developing and emerging countries has fallen in recent years to below 40% (Sub-rating: 2).

Efficiency: In view of the relatively low construction costs reported at project completion, production efficiency is assessed as cost-efficient. Although no national or regional benchmark values are stipulated for the consumption of energy and water in environmental terms, the BIDR has been certified as a '*green campus*'.

With its standards and working conditions being at least comparable to similar institutions in industrialised countries, the BIDR has a particular advantage in being easier to reach – at least for students and researchers from the region. Similar institutions in emerging and developing countries either do not exist or are still in the process of being established. In this regard, the BIDR is actively supporting the creation of a network of regional 'desertification institutes' in developing and emerging countries, which should enhance the efficiency of exchanging information and experience (Sub-rating: 2).

Overarching developmental impact: To date, the BIDR has not systematically traced its graduates' careers, let alone those from developing and emerging countries; therefore no quantitatively substantiated statement can be made regarding this aspect of the project's

intended impact (i.e. the 'spread' of foreign *alumni* in developing and emerging countries). According to qualitative information (especially from classes graduated more recently), the majority of foreign graduates appear to be employed in fields of work closely related to their study, reportedly more than half of them in their home countries. Due to the ongoing Middle East crisis, the positive regional effects envisaged by the project have to be judged minor at best.

Research activities at the BIDR include both applied research and practice-oriented basic research in a broad range of subjects – predominantly water resource management/ desalination, agriculture and land use in arid zones (including aquaculture), ecology, and renewable energy sources (mainly solar). The corresponding budgets are financed largely by third-party funding. This means that the relevant donor's interests significantly influence the areas on which work is focused. This notwithstanding, the BIDR's international profile remains high, which is reflected by the large number of relevant publications in recognised journals (an average of over three per employee per year) and in its organisation of and participation in international events such as conferences, seminars etc (Sub-rating: 3).

Sustainability: The ongoing budget allocated by BGU remains steady at around USD 10 million p.a., with a maintenance budget (not including work outside buildings) of around USD 0.2 million. The condition of the buildings and equipment meets international standards. Because of its dependence on third-party funding, the research budget fluctuates more widely, but remains largely unchanged at around USD 3 million p.a. Given the excellent reputation enjoyed by both the BIDR and Ben Gurion University, this allocation of funds still appears to be well secured. Expanding research work into new spheres, in particular, would not only attract additional sources of funding but also draw a higher proportion of students from developing and emerging countries (Sub-rating: 2).

Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects (and programmes) are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and overarching developmental impact. The ratings are also used to arrive at a final assessment of a project's overall developmental efficacy. The scale is as follows:

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| 1 | Very good result that clearly exceeds expectations |
| 2 | Good result, fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings |
| 3 | Satisfactory result – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate |
| 4 | Unsatisfactory result – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results |
| 5 | Clearly inadequate result – despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate |
| 6 | The project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated |

Ratings 1-3 denote a positive or successful assessment while ratings 4-6 denote a not positive or unsuccessful assessment

Sustainability is evaluated according to the following four-point scale:

Sustainability level 1 (very good sustainability) The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to continue undiminished or even increase.

Sustainability level 2 (good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline only minimally but remain positive overall. (This is what can normally be expected).

Sustainability level 3 (satisfactory sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline significantly but remain positive overall. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability of a project is considered inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation but is very likely to evolve positively so that the project will ultimately achieve positive developmental efficacy.

Sustainability level 4 (inadequate sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project is inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation and is very unlikely to improve. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability that has been positively evaluated to date is very likely to deteriorate severely and no longer meet the level 3 criteria.

The overall rating on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all five individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Ratings 1-3 of the overall rating denote a "successful" project while ratings 4-6 denote an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally "successful" only if the achievement of the project objective ("effectiveness"), the impact on the overall objective ("overarching developmental impact") and the sustainability are rated at least "satisfactory" (rating 3).