

COWI A/S
Parallelvej 2
DK-2800 Kongens
Lyngby
Denmark

Tel +45 45 97 22 11
Fax +45 45 97 22 12
www.cowi.com

The Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders
(EMHRF)

External Evaluation of EMHRF, 2005 - 2008

Final Report

December 2009

Executive Summary

This report presents the evaluation of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) in the period 2005-2008. The EMHRF is a grant giving Foundation awarding grants to human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the Middle East and North Africa. Presently, it provides grants in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. The Foundation gives urgent funding for human rights defenders and human rights organisations at risk; and it awards non-urgent funding to individuals and organisations outside the mainstream human rights setting.

Two evaluators carried out the evaluation during the period of August and November 2009. Documents were reviewed, interviews were held, a mapping of the grantees was made and a field mission to Egypt was undertaken. The evaluation was undertaken in a participatory manner, including donors, the Foundation, the grantees and other human rights partners.

The evaluation provides information on the work accomplished by the EMHRF and thereby facilitates accountability to the donors. This is undertaken by addressing the relevance, the efficiency, the effectiveness, the impact and the sustainability of the work embarked on by the Foundation.

Main conclusions

From the analysis of the human rights situation in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, it is clear that the circumstances under which human rights defenders work are risky. In many of the countries, the freedom of association is undermined and non-governmental organisations need to accomplish formal registration with the government as a means to engage in their work. In practice, many non-governmental organisations never get a reply as to whether they have a legal status under which they can operate. As such human rights defenders and human rights organisations often work in a grey legal zone, not knowing when the government will close them down. Receiving official foreign funding is often not looked upon as favourable by governments and in some countries it is illegal.

The fact that human rights defenders and human rights organisations are considered as agents of change by European Union states is a rationale for providing support. Financial support to human rights defenders and human rights organisations has become an instrument by which foreign policy is implemented in the area of human rights defenders.

The EMHRF is uniquely in place to provide grants to human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the Middle East and North Africa, because it is well informed about the human rights situation in the region and the consequences for human rights defenders.

Because of the human rights situation in the region, urgent and non-urgent funding remains very relevant for human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the region. Urgent funding is relevant because it can be provided in a quick and secure manner. Non-urgent funding is relevant because it provides funding to newly formed human rights organisations addressing human rights issues which are sensitive in the human rights context, and reaching people who otherwise would not be reached.

The analysis has shown that the Foundation provides small grants which are very labour intensive. The secretariat of the Foundation operates in a very efficient manner in processing applications, seeking information to make knowledgeable grant giving decisions and keeping in touch with grantees.

With regard to the effectiveness of grant giving, the Foundation by and large meets its short-term and long-term objectives. The EMHRF provides funding to human rights defenders or human rights organisations at risk through urgent funding. By means of long-term funding, newly formed human rights organisations or sensitive issue within the human rights context of the country are addressed. This takes place through seed funding to human rights organisations.

Grantees have responded very positively about the impact the grants have had on their work. They claim that their immediate risk has diminished in the case of urgent funding and that their visibility and activities have increased through non-urgent funding. With regard to the sustainability of the grant giving, grantees claim that they have gained organisational skills and increased capacity to engage in human rights work.

The comparative advantage of the Foundation is that it can provide quick and flexible funding which does not compromise the security of the grantees.

The evaluation has shown that the EMHRF has developed a very credible grant giving Foundation for human rights defenders in the region because of the contact it keeps with the grantees and of the non-financial support that the secretariat provides to many grantees during the application and granting procedure. The evaluators consider this contact as a type of capacity building for the grantees.

The evaluation has further shown that short-term funding in time and quantity can make a difference in alleviating risks for human rights defenders.

Recommendations

Mapping

The mapping of the grantees has been a useful, but very time consuming exercise for the evaluators. A database that includes all the grantees and all the applicants would provide the Foundation with an accurate overview of who and how it funds human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the region. In the long run, having such an overview is vital for the continuity of the Foundation. The evaluators therefore recommend that the Foundation set up a database to include a list of all the applicants and a list of all the grantees, including information on the work they accomplish through the funding.

Strategic framework and indicators

The Foundation would do well to reconsider its strategic framework, including objectives and results attached with verifiable indicators.

The evaluators recommend that the Foundation develop simple and verifiable indicators, which grantees can report on as a way of measuring their work. This is especially important for non-urgent grants and for urgent grants that are provided to human rights organisations.

For the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, the evaluators recommend that a simple reporting procedure by grantees be standardised as regards content and time.

Capacity building/non-financial support

The evaluation has shown that the non-financial support provided to the grantees by means of the EMHRF secretariat is highly valued by the grantees and is very effective. Therefore, the evaluators recommend that this type of support be provided on a regular basis to all grantees so as to allow all grantees to benefit from this form of capacity building.

Education

The Foundation has identified the need for further capacity building of young human rights defenders. The evaluators recommend that the Foundation create a funding line for human rights education, available to young human rights defenders to participate in human rights education programmes in the region on a yearly basis. This to avoid ad hoc decisions concerning education grants.

Strategy

The analysis of the work of the EMHRF and the interviews with grantees has shown that members of the board of the Foundation are very familiar with the human rights situation in each country in the region and the consequences this situation has for human rights defenders and human rights organisations. The human rights knowledge of the board allows it to make rapid and knowledgeable decisions on grant giving. However, for the purpose of continuity and transparency, the EMHRF needs to further develop a grant giving strategy based on the human rights situation in each of the countries and the effect this situation has on human rights defenders and human rights organisations.

As a means to provide added transparency to the work of the Foundation, the board of the Foundation should consider installing rotating board members - with a limited number of years on the board. This will also ensure continuity of the Foundation and establish a wider network.

Donor policy

As demonstrated above, all three donor policies call for financial support to human rights defenders and human rights organisations because they are agents of change. The evaluators, therefore, recommend that funding be further granted to the Foundation to continue the very relevant and effective work it engages in for human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the Middle East and North Africa region.