VOICES THAT COUNT

Mid-term evaluation of the GLoBe programme

by order of VVSG

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Content

0. Introduction

The Good Local Governance (GLoBe) programme, implemented by VVSG-International and supported by the federal Belgian government through the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD), is in line with the general evolution of international cooperation: rooted in the town twinning tradition, Flemish municipalities are looking for new forms of cooperation with local governments from the Global South within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The GLoBe programme builds on the previous five-year programme and has the overall goal of contributing to good local governance through strengthening governance in partner countries and local policy coherence on the SDGs in Belgium. This is done through cooperation with 14 town twinning and 3 sister associations of VVSG.

- Benin: Roeselare - Dogbo, Zoersel - Bohicon, Hoogstraten - Za-Kpota, Merelbeke - Toucountouna, Anzegem - Pèrèrè and VVSG - ANCB

- Ecuador: Evergem - Guaranda and Bierbeek - Oña

- Nicaragua: Lommel - Ciudad Darío, Mol - Santo Tomás

- Senegal: Sint-Niklaas - Tambacounda, Deinze/Lievegem - Kemopodi and Zemst - Sokone

- South Africa: Essen - Witzenberg, Heist-op-den-Berg - Bergrivier and VVSG - SALGA

- Rwanda: VVSG - RALGA

The programme started in January 2022 and runs until the end of 2026. The mid-term evaluation proposed in this report aims to map the progress of this programme towards Good Local Governance and the local translation with regard to the SDGs in Flanders. Thereafter, its main purpose is to promote mutual learning between all partners in this programme, to adjust actions for the next 2.5 years where necessary and to inspire the formulation of the new five-year programme.

In order to make maximum use of the expertise available within VVSG itself and among all partners, VVSG decided to complete this mid-term evaluation as a guided self-evaluation. Voices That Count worked out the methodology for this interim self-evaluation, in collaboration with FocusUp who will coordinate the final evaluation (in 2026).

We would like to thank all partners who participated in this self-assessment for their commitment and involvement. We hope that the results can provide tools for VVSG, its sister organisations and local governments to further strengthen their the GLoBe programme.

1. Executive summary

Self-assessment with Outcome Harvesting as a methodological framework

In this mid-term evaluation, we wanted to explore how change in the GLoBe programme unfolds in reality: what effect have programme activities had towards Good Local Governance? We chose Outcome Harvesting as a framework to shape this self-evaluation, focusing on identifying and evaluating changes in actions, behaviours or practices among key actors contributing to governance strengthening around the programme themes.

The various partnerships in the GLoBe programme retrospectively looked for 'Outcomes', i.e. changes that demonstrably happened during or after their project activities over the past 2.5 years. In addition, they described how the activities of the GLoBe programme contributed to this change (contribution descriptions).

The self-assessment consisted of three steps: (1) Identifying and describing Outcomes per actor in the sphere of influence of the GLoBe programme; (2) Evaluating these Outcomes for their significance for good local governance and the extent to which programme activities contributed to them; (3) Reflecting on these insights to adapt future programme interventions and activities.

Data quality

A total of 153 Outcomes were collected by 16 partnerships (town twinning and partnerships with umbrella organisations) and the programme in Belgium. The quality of the Outcomes, and their critical reflection, varied, depending on the availability and involvement of key people and their experience with the programme. The analysis in this report was done on the basis of these 153 self-identified Outcomes.

Evaluation based on Good Governance Principles:

To get an insight into the extent to which the GLoBe programme contributes to Good Local Governance or increasing governance capacity in , we take the Good Governance Principles, as also put forward by the OECD, as a basis. This consists of six core principles that together form a framework for assessing and improving governance processes: Participation, Rule of Law, Transparency, Accountability, Equity and Inclusiveness, Effectiveness and Efficiency.

From an analysis of the 51 Outcomes that were "highly significant" by the partnerships themselves, we see that the GLoBe programme mainly contributes to Good Local Governance through (1) actions and changes in practices and processes leading to improved service delivery or access to services (2) changes in relationships between citizens or civil society organisations and government towards greater participation.

Outcomes that explicitly describe changes towards more transparency or accountability from governance are less common, as are changes in practices related to the rule of law. In addition, the Outcomes make little explicit mention of inclusion of vulnerable groups, but we do see this reflected in the general choice of target groups with and for which the programme works.

Look to the future and recommendations:

Adapting formulation generic theory of change: When we look at how change towards Good Local Governance unfolds and test the themes appearing in all observed Outcomes against the themes in the GLoBe programme's global Theory of Change, we find that for the 'strong local ' component, these effectively correspond in reality to one or more of the three generic change domains (*see figure on page 7*). The Outcomes effectively speak of competent civil servants and politicians, of optimal service delivery or improved internal functioning. For the 'citizens assume rights and duties' section, this is less true. We suggest adjusting the wording in the future programme to better reflect reality.

Coherence within the Programme: We see few exchange activities mentioned in the contribution descriptions that led to a particular Outcome/change. However, we think that building in exchanges around working on governance capacity can strengthen internal coherence within the programme (see also below). Specifically in Benin, we observe in the Outcomes that there is currently little coherence between the programme of umbrella organisation ANCB and that of the twinning organisations. This was explained by the fact that in the conception of the programme that these were two separate programmes.

Focus on Good Local Governance: If the next programme wants to maintain the focus on increasing administrative capacity, it seems to us necessary to consider even more critically, when formulating and implementing programme activities, how certain interventions can be designed in such a way that they simultaneously have the potential to bring about changes towards more decisive local governance. The formulated Outcomes can help to go beyond a theoretical discussion and conduct the debate from concrete experiences. Indeed, some Outcomes describe a clear impact on improving the quality of life of a particular group of residents or a change leading to stronger or better governance within civil organisations, but the impact on increasing governance capacity in local government is sometimes less clear.

Programme Belgium: We recommend that the VVSG further critically examine its role in promoting policy coherence around Agenda 2030 and SDGs through a series of questions to enable adjustments based on deeper insights.

Impact-driven work around Good Local Governance: how can VVSG move forward?

In general, the mid-term evaluation based on Outcome Harvesting was, on the one hand, perceived as useful to think more consciously about exactly which actors the programme partners want to influence and what exactly are the effects of their work. On the other hand, key people also experienced it as an intensive and complex process, especially as it was the first time they had tackled a self-evaluation in this way.

To ensure that the road ahead is not lost in day-to-day reality, we recommend building on the M&E efforts that have been strengthened in recent years. A next could be an update of the existing monitoring and learning processes within the partnerships: (1) Re-examine what the purpose of monitoring & learning is, and with and for whom. And this for the different levels. (2) Starting from the existing reporting and reflection moments to ascertain which learning question is answered and when. (3) Reviewing the information needs: what exactly do we need to be able to the learning questions? (4)

Define and communicate the role of the *master of ceremony* to manage all this.

2. Process description interim evaluation

VVSG decided to frame the mid-term evaluation of the GLoBe programme as a guided self-evaluation, making maximum use of the expertise available within VVSG itself and among all partners, to promote mutual learning.

Voices That Count was responsible for the methodological guidance of the self-evaluation of all partnerships (town twinning, partnerships with umbrella organisations and the programme in Belgium) and monitoring the quality of the process. As we noted when formulating our methodological approach that the change theories of the different countries involved are predominantly actor-centred, i.e. with a focus on behavioural and practice changes of actors within governance and wider society, we decided to use Outcome Harvesting as the methodological framework to shape the self-evaluation. Outcome Harvesting[1] (OH) is a participatory monitoring and evaluation method based on the principles of Outcome Mapping. The method identifies, formulates, validates and analyses changes (outcomes) to which a given intervention or practice has contributed.

For this self-assessment, we used a *modified lighter* form of Outcome Harvesting, with the following steps (*the full roadmap can be found in the manual in Annex 1*):

1. Mapping the actors in the sphere of influence of change theory, and 'harvesting' Outcomes per actor. Central to Outcome Harvesting is the identification of 'outcomes'. These are short and very concrete descriptions of the behavioural and practice changes of social actors. These changes can be expected/intended or unexpected/unintended, and are therefore not a check of predefined programme indicators. The different partnerships in the GLoBe programme retrospectively looked for the effects of their programme, the changes that demonstrably happened during or after their project activities over the past 2.5 years. It also added how the activities of the GLoBe programme contributed to this change (contribution descriptions);

An Outcome= an observable and significant change in the behaviour, practices, relationships or actions of one or more social actors, affected by an intervention or the activities of the project team, as part of the GLoBe programme. This differs from an Outcome (formerly specific objective) as defined by DGD and used as such in the Logical Framework of the GLoBe programme.

2. Evaluate Outcomes: In a second phase, after harvesting Outcomes, the coordinating team of each partnership was asked to self-evaluate their Outcomes according to their significance for contributing to Good Local Governance. The following scale was used for this purpose: *not so significant - more or less significant - significant - highly significant*. In addition, an exercise followed to score their own contribution/contribution per Outcome on a scale from 1 (*the change happens entirely by initiative of the actor himself or mainly other organisations contributed to the change*) to 5 (*the change would not have happened without contribution of the GLoBe programme*);

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[1] https://outcomeharvesting.net/

3. Gathering insights towards action: As a final step, the partnerships were invited to bring together their insights, critically reflect on them and adjust their programme for the coming years.

The methodology was tested during the visit of a delegation from Keur-Moussa, Pout, Diender - Senegal to Deinze/Lievegem in April 2024, instead of the planned exchange of all Latin American partners in Ecuador (which was cancelled due to the security situation in March 2024). The process was subsequently fine-tuned and a manual was written.
To ensure this process qualitative, Voices That Count provided training for each language group to the coordinators (Belgian officials & the programme coordinators in their partner country), and provided time for each partnership to give feedback on the formulated Outcomes during harvesting.

The three steps described above took place between May and October 2024. In doing so, we observed the following challenges, which can also be seen as limitations of this mid-term review:

- Availability of people: In a fair number of municipalities, there was either no official or programme coordinator, or they were temporarily absent or very new, which delayed the implementation of the mid-term evaluation, made it more difficult or unilateral. This was the case in Lommel, Roeselare, Zemst, Bohicon, Heist-op-den-Berg, Mol and Guaranda. In the Za-Kpota-Hoogstraten partnership, self-assessment did not happen at all for this . In the case of Santo Tomas-Mol, the self-evaluation was facilitated by a very committed volunteer.

- Major changes in the partnership also affected the quality of the process: in 2022-2023, Bierbeek still had a partnership with Oña. Due to the changing political context in Oña, it was decided to focus on a borough of Oña, namely Susudel, from 2024 onwards. The programme in South Africa ended in December 2023. This reduced the motivation of some stakeholders to participate in the self-assessment.

- Timing: Prior to the self-evaluation, VVSG International had proposed its own tool to the partnerships to better shape and monitor their programmes (ToC tool - 'Reflecting on links of change'). We tried to integrate this mid-term evaluation into this new tool as much as possible. In some partnerships - among other factors mentioned above - this created an additional barrier to start the process, and difficult to implement without external facilitation. In addition to active involvement in the self-assessments of the partnerships with its sister organisations, VVSG subsequently took on the facilitation of Ciudad Dario - Lommel, Bergrivier - Heist-op-den-Berg, Witzenberg - Essen, Dogbo - Roeselare and partly for Zemst - Sokone & Sint Niklaas - Tambacounda. Voices That Count organised two additional online sessions for the partnerships in Benin.

- Time investment and online process: Overall, the time investment was underestimated, and it was challenging to go through this process online with sometimes poor internet connections. Some partnerships have not yet completed the final step (3. gather insights towards action) at the time we are compiling this report.

After going through the process, all the data were brought together and the initial trends per were formulated. These findings were shared with the various partnerships in 7 online feedback meetings (one per country), and salient issues were discussed. Also, during this session

captured how the partnerships had perceived the mid-term review process *(see chapter 7.1).*

3. Data quality

During the self-assessment, Outcomes and Contribution descriptions were collected by the coordinators of the different partnerships and entered into a specific online application, Tape App *(screenshots showing all fields of the Tape App form in Appendix 2).* In the process, the following data was also collected for each Outcome:

- the significance score for Good Local Governance
- the score regarding the contribution of the GLoBe project team
- name and type of actor
- type of change domain (according to global Change Theory)
- when did the change take place?
- evidence of Outcome *(no emphasis has been placed here yet; this field was provided as a function of the final evaluation)*

The online application allowed for quick feedback on the quality of the formulated Outcomes and Contribution Statements. This was a learning process. Whereas in many cases the first Outcomes were descriptions of the outputs of programme activities, we increasingly saw a shift towards describing the effects of those activities among different actors in the sphere of influence. Some partnerships limited themselves to describing the larger changes, while others also named the small but significant steps towards a larger impact.

When evaluating each Outcome in terms of their significance for Good Local Governance and how strongly the programme contributed to a particular change, we noticed in some partnerships a lesser capacity to reflect thoroughly and critically and to hold up an evaluative mirror to themselves, while in others this was very . This is related to the extent to which those involved in the self-evaluation are familiar with the programme 'on the ', but also the composition of the team of participants in the self-evaluation. In some cases the Outcomes were mainly 'harvested' and formulated by the project coordinators, in other cases a wider team was involved. This may or may not have allowed critical questioning of each other regarding the formulated Outcomes and their significance.

As mentioned above, not all partnerships made it through the process in full. Six partnerships wrote down their findings in a reflection report. Others elaborated their insights on a Miro board. These insights were also included in the of this report.

4. General trends

A total of 153 Outcomes were 'harvested' from all partnerships and for the Belgium programme The full list can be found in Annex 3. Only from the Za Kpota-Hoogstraten partnership are Outcomes missing, due to the staffing challenges mentioned above.

GOED LOKAAL BESTUUR

Bestuurskrachtige lokale overheden

Sterke lokale besturen

10

Optimale condities voor lokale overheden

15

53
Competente ambtenaren en politici

37
Optimale dienstverlening

46
Optimale interne werking

13
Performante koepel-organisaties

Burgers nemen rechten en plichten op

41
Burgers geïnformeerd

35
Burgers hebben toegang tot lokale dienstverlening

30
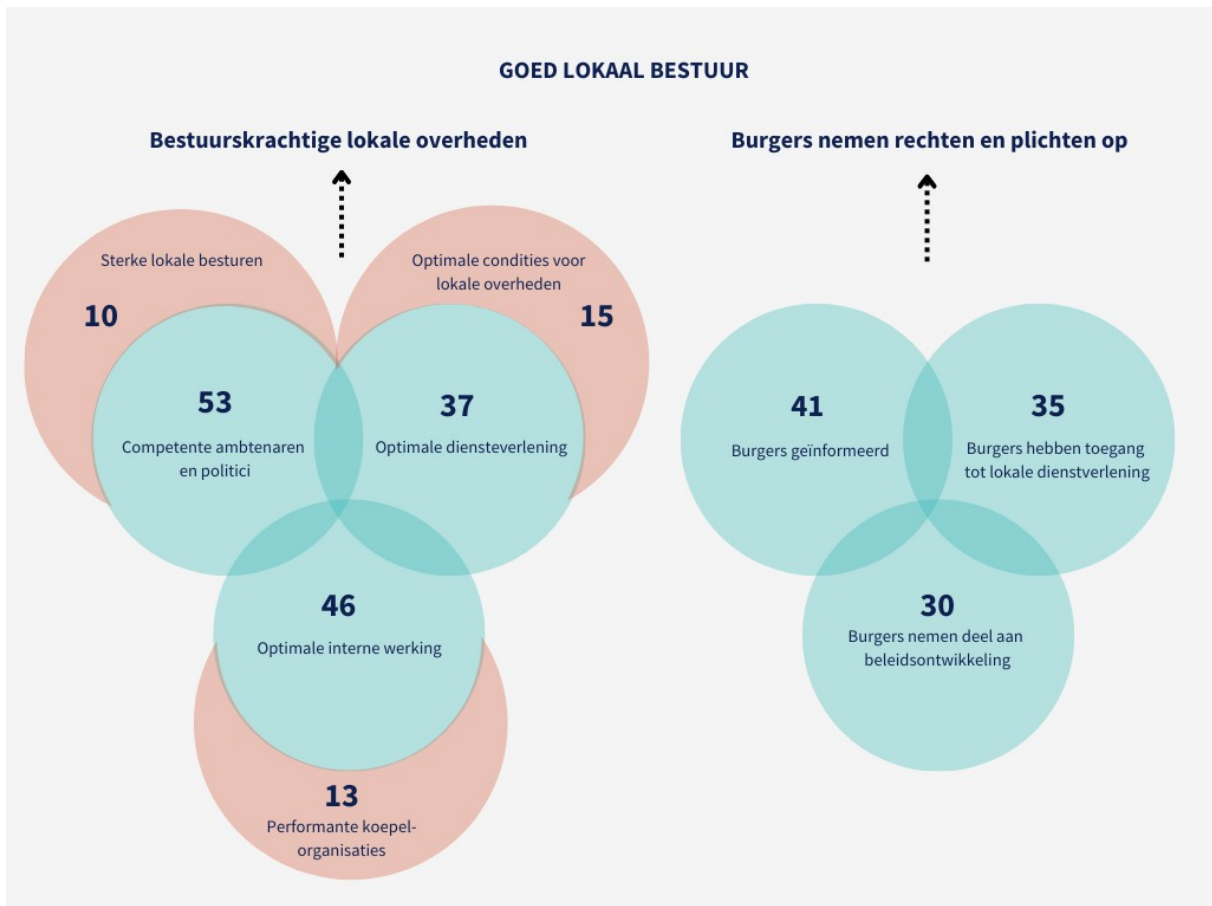Burgers nemen deel aan beleidsontwikkeling

Figure 1: Number of Outcomes per change domain in the generic change theory of the GLoBe programme. Blue: town twinning, pink: umbrella organisations

Most Outcomes describe changes within governance. 53 out of 153 Outcomes are labelled as behavioural changes among officials or politicians. In second place (46) come changes in the internal functioning of governance.

Overall, we note that very few negative Outcomes were formulated. We also saw very few unexpected or unintended Outcomes. Especially the latter may have to do with the fact that it was challenging for the project teams to look retrospectively at changes in the *real* behaviour of the actors in the programme sphere of influence, without putting the programme indicators first. Looking at behavioural change while briefly those indicators is a muscle that needs further development.

> Example of a negative Outcome: "No support: Within the programme, several actions were organised to the different 12 Wards (neighbourhoods) where mostly informal housing exists. At the end of the project, we have to conclude that these efforts came to nothing. The

'ward councillors' indicated that they had other priorities than waste, namely food, housing, work, etc. Waste is an afterthought. "

5.1 Thematic observations related to Outcomes

STRONG LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

When examining the effects related to governance-powerful local governments (see Figure 1), we especially notice many Outcomes related to a change in relations between the administration and civil society actors towards more synergy. In addition, we also see that practices related to decision making change: decisions are taken less unilaterally and with more involvement of certain groups, or an evolution towards policies conducted more on the basis of studies or concrete figures.

> *" Depuis 2022, les conseillers municipaux des communes de KeMoPoDi vont vers les informations, s'impliquent dans la bonne marche du programme et jouent d'office de points focaux entre les communes, les quartiers et villages. Ils donnent leurs points de vue dans la gestion des déchets ; ils partagent l'information dans leurs villages et quartiers respectifs etparticipent aux réunions des comités de salubrité depuis février 2024. "*

In changes in internal functioning, the budgetary aspect comes strongly to the fore, especially in Nicaragua, Ecuador and Benin. In the Guaranda-Ecuador partnership, for example, the budget was reformed to better integrate programme funds. In Benin, changes regarding financial management and tax collection in several municipalities are mainly related to the trend towards centralisation of resources at the national level. All funds for implementing programme activities first pass through the national treasury, and are then allocated in detail to the municipalities. This requires tighter budget planning.

Improving ICT infrastructure also comes up a few times (Benin) or digitising processes: SALGA in South Africa, for instance, launched an app to make all communication with citizens regarding waste management smoother; 9 municipalities are now using it.

In addition, quite a lot of Outcomes are about the integration of programme activities in governance and taking ownership: integrating programme resources in the municipal budget, making services available (e.g. for distribution of trees and fertilisers in Ciudad Darío), organising events and markets, co-financing parts of the programme (e.g. processing unit in Toucountouna, outlets in Santo Tomás) or the local government starting to coordinate itself (e.g. round table around water in Ecuador), or empowering neighbourhood committees (e.g. around waste management in Mountain River).

> *"Influence of ward commi[ees: Mountain River Municipality made efficient use of the existing ward commi[ees to communicate about the pilot project on composting to the households in the predefined areas, and implemented the programme successfully. The programme as a whole aimed to involve ward councillors, who are updated during ward commi[ee meetings and are actively involved in the activities of the . All ward commi[ees (70 members) and all (7) ward councillors have been trained to communicate and co-operate with the citizens. This was very successful, local officials chose to focus on proper responsibility and ownership for the beneficiaries, who had to subscribe in order to be able to partake in the pilot project, which resulted in stronger ties between the municipality and its citizens. The ward councillors maintained very strongly involved throughout the program and have been proven a valuable asset."*

A minority of Outcomes are about a change in practices or decisions of individuals, key figures in governance, such as mayors. Although the Guaranda-Evergem partnership notes that *"impacts among politicians and civil servants are much more difficult to measure. Here, there are few incentives or pressures to sustainably empower these actors"* (from the reflection report). In a number of boards, we see in the Outcomes that the mayor expresses his support for the programme (Witzenberg) or already has a certain vision regarding participation or a substantive theme, and that the programme becomes part of the concretisation of that vision (Tambacounda, Sokone).

> *"Mayor support: The mayor (Trevor Abrahams) presents to council the positive impact of the GLoBe programme. His contribution activates capacity and roll out of the actions which ultimately leads to tangible outcomes for policy waste management objectives/policy and innovations towards change."*

In some municipalities, the context also ensures that the effects are not or less visible among politicians and officials. In the case of KeMoPoDi (Senegal), no civil servants have yet been appointed because KePoPoDi's legal recognition as an inter-communal association is pending, owing to changes in the national decree on inter-communal associations. There are also few administrative staff in Susudel (cooperation with a parish after cooperation with the municipality of Oña ceased).

If we look at Outcomes related to strong local government governance in the programme in Belgium, there are two Outcomes that bring this out most clearly. (1) local policy planners themselves start working with SDG data and SDG policy tools and (2) local triggers of the Sustainable Municipality Week increasingly make links with policy and internal operations. This pattern describes that it is possible to strengthen governance capacity. Only, we have no information on how widespread this pattern is.

There was also a second evaluation question that received less explicit attention during the self-evaluation: "to what extent do the partnerships in Flanders and the partner countries have sufficient tools and support at their disposal to monitor the effects on administrative capacity?" During feedback discussions based on the outcomes, we tried to gauge how people work with administrative capacity in practice via a provocative statement about administrative capacity: "We do not use the concept of administrative capacity in our organisation" What pattern do we get from these discussions?

1. People mostly disagree with the provocative statement. They say they do use the concept of managerial power.
2. The tools mentioned for governance capacity building are very generic: capacity building, training manuals, ... It is not possible from this self-assessment to note which tools are effective within which part of the theory of change.
3. The monitoring tools mentioned to track the effects of governance are diverse:
   a. The planning and policy cycle of a local government.
   b. In Rwanda, there is a government body that monitors this and gathers people to engage in dialogue on this.

c. In Belgium, there are SDG progress indicators, but it was also indicated that personal contact between VVSG and local governments is very important to really get a view on the effects of governance strengthening

These are rather limited and descriptive conclusions. During the evaluation process, it became clear that this question got snowed under by the somewhat more intensive follow-up of other aspects of the self-evaluation. The question in itself " to what extent do the partnerships in Flanders and the partner countries have sufficient tools and support to up the effects on governance capacity?" is also not sharp enough. From the responses to the draft of the report, people actually want to know: "What are good practices in strengthening governance capacity broken down by each component of the theory of change? And then what are good practices in following up the effects on governance strength broken down by each component of the theory change?"

CITIZENS ASSUME RIGHTS AND DUTIES

As with the effects linked to good governance, we also see changes in this second pillar (see Figure 1) that talk about improvements in communication between governance and citizens (forums regularly, charters concluded between governance and citizens), or citizens actively using opportunities to give feedback on policies.

> *" Forum communal : A partir de fin 2022, les citoyens saisissent l'opportunité de donner leur feedback sur les projets et programmes en lien avec le programme GLoBe lors du forum communal. Le forum communal a été organisé chaque année par la commission coopération, ACCD et le Bureau municipal. Le forum communal est une instance de partage et d'échange sur les réalisations de la coopération (projets et programmes dans la région) au cours de l'année écoulée. Ceci a permis l'accès facile à l'information par les citoyens sur les acquis de la coopération particulièrement par rapport à la gestion des déchets et à l'économie locale et donner son feedback. Il sera aussi saisi comme opportunité pour aborder plus largement les projets et programmes initiés au niveau communal en rapport avec ce[e thématique. Enfin, il perme[ra d'apprécier l'impact de la politique communale sur le bien-être des populations et le niveau de prise en compte des aspirations de ces dernières dans les stratégies initiées (projets et programmes) "*

> *"Radio show Karongi: In Karongi District the Vice Mayor in charge of economic development participated in a live radio programme at local radio station to exchange with community members on the adopted district master plans and on how the citizen and stakeholders can collaborate with the districts for its effective implementation especially in urban areas. The radio program was aired on 13/8/2024 evening."*

We also see how specific groups of citizens initiate activities (competitions in schools, etc.) or participate in them systematically and voluntarily. These Outcomes are mainly related to waste policy (Senegal and South Africa).

With regard to service delivery, we see Outcomes that describe how citizens start to use (more) certain services. Sometimes these are services that are coordinated or driven by the government (e.g. land use/cadastre, market infrastructure, ...), but just as often citizens are making more use of services provided by other civil actors (e.g. drinking water and irrigation committees in Ecuador, the sanitary brigades in Senegal, or training in Nicaragua and in Benin...) and in which the government not necessarily involved. Finally, in a few partnerships, we see citizens starting to pay for using services (e.g. waste collection in Senegal, processing of cassava in Benin).

In line with this, many Outcomes in the second pillar reflect the creation of new structures (around the substantive theme of partnership), or the strengthening of existing structures (e.g. water committees in Ecuador) that initiate new issues or start tackling things differently. While these have a clear impact on the population that sometimes go far beyond the programme objectives and lead to stronger or better governance in civil organisations, the effect on increasing governance capacity in local government is sometimes less clear.

> " Fortalecimiento interno de la organización social : Los miembros del directorio han logrado superar divergencias entre grupos de consumidores en una reunión convocada por los coordinadores del programa el día 6 de junio 2024, para poder organizar la elección de la nueva directiva, porque están conscientes de la urgencia de organizarse mejor para poder cumplir sus funciones como Junta de Riego. "

A minority of Outcomes are about changes in systems to enable more systematic participation of certain groups of citizens in local policies.

> "Support: The relations between the municipality and economic actors have improved by animating the 'Waste forum'. These regular meeting made the local recyclers (economic actors) more willing to engage on recycling plans of the municipality during forum meetings at municipal meeting points. This contributed in a growth in mutual trust. The engagement were done quarterly and there were active discussions + interventions to equip them."

> " Renforcement de la prise de décision : Nous avons observé un changement dans la prise de décision dans le programme GLoBe: la prise de décisions est devenu plus multi-actor/multilatérale, ce qui a facilité la mobilisation des populations bénéficiaires du programme autour de certains thèmes (e.g modèle de hangar adapté aux spéculations commerciales). "

RALGA in Rwanda paid extra attention to training its staff to facilitate the preparation of citizen budgets and consultations between governments and citizens on land use. They are also recognised for this.

> "Government support : RALGA management is solicited by relevant Government institutions i.e the National Land Authority (NLA) to contribute to policy dialogues on relevant urbanisation topics such as the updating of the national guidelines for land readjustment projects"

In addition, some Outcomes linked to "the inclusion of rights and duties by citizens" are actually descriptions of the impact of the programme. For example:

- " Propreté de quartiers et villages bénéficiaires du programme : Au moins, depuis février 2024, 05 villages et quartiers de KeMoPoDi (Gollam, Santhiou Daara, Darou Salam, Ndiobèntay et Santa Yalla) sont devenus plus propres grâce au programme. "
- " #jeunes : 50 jeunes artisans, dont 25 hommes et 25 femmes de 18 à 35 ans, ont pu s'installer et sont financièrement autonome ils peuvent désormais contribuer au développement de la commune de Bohicon à partir de 30 septembre 2024 "
- "A[ention to low-income households : The municipality's infrastructure and equipment is be[er adapted to a separation at source system. This was possible because of the Focus on selected households in low-income/underprivileged communities (Noordhoek in Velddrif, Monthe Berta in Porterville and Ward 4 in Piketberg) . Engagement with communities was necessary to promote and guide the roll out of the home composting bins programme. By paying extra

a[ention to the low-income neighbourhoods, Mountain River Municipality was more successful in implementing the waste separation project. They did this by using a detailed communication strategy that has been designed by the communication department of the municipality."

The Belgium programme did not address citizens directly. That explains why Outcomes related more involved citizens were not really targeted. However, there is an Outcome in which the Sustainable Municipality Week no longer a purely Flemish event. Citizens are increasingly informed about Agenda 2030. This is seen as a precondition for citizens also to hold the administration accountable for realising Agenda 2030.

5.2 Evaluation of Outcomes towards Good Local Governance

5.2.1 What changes do key people in the programme see as highly significant evolutions towards Good Local Governance?

Overall, we note that both the significance and contribution scores of the Outcomes are generally very high (*see Figures 2 and 3 below*). This indicates that the Flemish officials and project teams in the partner countries indicate that the change they observe contributes significantly to increasing governance capacity. Certain partnerships also made an explicit choice during the exercise to focus on formulating Outcomes that they felt were very important to contribute to Good Governance (hence the high significance scores in e.g. Nicaragua) and where the change was almost solely initiated by the programme.
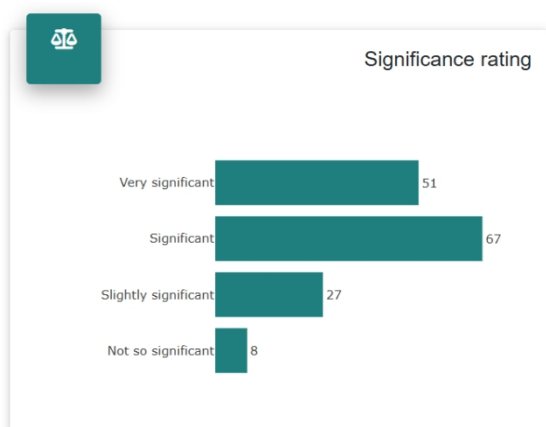

Figure 2: Assessment of the 153 Outcomes for their significance for Good Local Governance
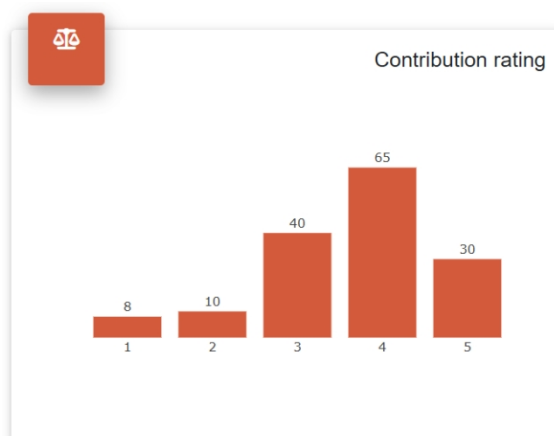

Figure 3: Assessment of the 153 Outcomes based on extent to which the programme contributed to the Outcome. Score 5 = the change would not have occurred without contribution from the GLoBe programme.

To gain an understanding of the extent to which the GLoBe programme contributes to Good Local Governance or increasing governance capacity in , we take the Good Governance Principles[2], as also put forward by the OECD, as a basis. This consists of six core principles that together form a framework for assessing and improving governance processes:

1. Participation
2. *Rule* of law
3. Transparency
4. *Accountability*
5. Equity and inclusiveness
6. Effectiveness and efficiency

For an in-depth analysis of how the partnerships see themselves contributing to Good Governance, we focus on the 51 Outcomes that were scored as "highly significant" by the partnerships themselves (i.e. 1/3 of the total Outcomes).

Effectiveness and efficiency (21 outcomes): We can categorise most of these "highly significant" Outcomes under the category of "increasing effectiveness and efficiency". They are about:

o   Better internal organisation in the , more streamlined coordination or better services to the population (e.g. waste management) or better collection of taxes (mainly in Benin)

o   Co-financing or investments (e.g. agricultural processing units or market places)

o   Optimisation of resources to improve service delivery (e.g. better ICT equipment for resource mobilisation).

o   Better availability of information leading to new or better policies

Participation (17 Outcomes): These Outcomes are mainly focused on more and structural consultation between government and civil society groups and/or direct interaction with citizens (ward committees in Bergrivier, consultation bodies between local government and private sector in Toucountouna, information sessions in Benin, waste management committees in Senegal, regular consultation with actors from local sustainable economy in Santo Tomás where mayor is also present, and general changes towards multi-stakeholder decision-making instead of unilateral decisions. Only in Rwanda (RALGA) do we see staff training being provided to structurally guide participatory processes on urbanisation and land use[3].

Equity and inclusiveness (10 Outcomes): The Outcomes that explicitly mention increased inclusion of certain groups speak almost exclusively about gender-related themes. These are mainly about changes initiated by ANCB in Benin.

" L'ANCB/ équipe GLoBe a créé une nouvelle relation avec l'INF (Institut National de la Femme) pour améliorer les résultats du plaidoyer (p.ex. pour un quota de femmes élues locales). L'INF est devenu membre et participe aux sessions de la commission Genre, affaires sociales et participation citoyenne. Pourquoi important? Le contact avec l'INF est important pour l'ANCB, les communes, les Points Focaux Genre. L'INF va participer également aux discussions avec le

focus des femmes parlementaires dans la préparation des élections locales de 2026. Le REFELA, l'INF vont faciliter les rencontres avec la Vice-Présidente de la République pour faire des plaidoyers pour la représentation des femmes sur les listes électorales (élections de 2026) "

Better inclusion of specific vulnerable groups in economic terms is also sometimes :

"Seguridad alimentaria por patios saludables: Desde 2022, la alcaldía invierte en "patios saludables" con familias vulnerables de la zona urbana, mediante los cuales empiezan a cultivar a pequeña escala "plantas verdes comestibles" en sus propios patios, aumentando así su seguridad alimentaria. "

"Femmes deviennent de plus en plus entreprenariats : En 2024 les femmes adoptent de plus en plus l'adoption des bonnes pratiques au niveau financier, commercial, administrative au niveau des jardins. Chaque femme écrit ce qu'elle produit, ce qu'elle vende et ce qu'elle consomme sur un fiche. " (Tambacounda)

Accountability and transparency (4 outcomes):

We include changes related to accountability and improved transparency together here, as these usually appear together in the Outcomes. A minority of the 51 Outcomes describe changes in that area. These are mostly about organising feedback forums or other moments through which the administration is regularly held accountable for policies or projects, fostering trust and cooperation between local governments and citizens. Building trust between government and civil society, being able to discuss issues openly and learn together, often features in the Outcomes of Latin American partnerships.

"Participación y realización del programa por comisiones mixtas : Las distintas comisiones (consumo y comercio, producción) se reúnen 12 veces al año y l alcalde va cada mes a reuniones comarcales, lo que permite al gobierno informar claramente a los grupos metas sobre sus opciones políticas, pero también obtener una buena información sobre las necesidades de los pequeños y medianos productores y comerciantes. El tema de la agroecología está ahora más presente en la agenda del alcalde. "

Rule of law (2 outcomes): There are hardly any Outcomes that talk about laws being better applied or enforced. These are about efforts to secure municipal land ownership, encourage investment and better organisation of the local market.

" #securisation de foncier: La direction des affaires domaniales de la mairie de Bohicon sécurise mieux le patrimoine foncier de la commune à partir de 2024 afin de donner confiance à ceux qui investissent dans les filières de l'économie locale. "

" Réduction des conflits sur le marché local : Depuis fin 2023 le bureau des usagers a pu diminuer les conflits autour du zonage à environ 25%. "

For most Outcomes, it is clear how they contribute to Good Local Governance according to one of the six principles above. In two partnerships (mainly in Latin America), we find that significance is understood rather as "significant impact on end beneficiaries or certain structures":

"Desde 2022, agricultores de distintas comarcas de Santo Tomás han estado implementando proyectos pilotos y compartiendo sus experiencias. Cuando tuvieron éxitos, ayudaron a difundir la experiencia práctica adquirida a otros agricultores de su comarca o durante las formaciones en la granja modelo. Por eso la comprensión sobre la eficacia de nuevos métodos de producción

innovadores, sostenibles y/o agroecológicos ha aumentado. La seguridad alimentaria de estas familias esta mejor ahora."

"Capacitación para estimular producción agroecológico: Los agricultores que recibieron formación en la granja modelo a partir de 2022 y fueron asistidos in situ por técnicos están realizando la transición a la agricultura agroecológica paso a paso y han incorporado de forma estable estos cultivos a las operaciones agrícolas después de 2 años.

Conclusion: From the self-assessment, we see that the GLoBe programme mainly contributes to Good Local Governance through (1) changes in practices and processes leading to improved service delivery or access to services related to the programme focus of the partnership (2) changes in relationships between citizens or civil society organisations and government towards greater participation (on the different steps of the participation ladder).

Regarding the inclusion of vulnerable groups, the final evaluation of the previous programme[4] states that *"... projects do not seem to develop explicit strategies in terms of inclusive policies, nor do analyse the impact of projects on vulnerable groups or existing exclusion mechanisms. Specific actions arise rather organically, during the implementation of the programme and seem strongly a|dependent on the sensitivity to the theme among the officials involved*." Even though there is little explicit mention of inclusion of vulnerable groups in the Outcomes, we find that the recommendation for more attention to vulnerable groups has been taken into account in the overall choice of target groups in the current programme.

Outcomes that explicitly describe changes towards greater transparency or accountability from governance are less, as are changes in practices related to the rule of law.

5.2.2 Programme contribution

Looking at the programme contributions (contribution descriptors) to the 51 "highly significant" Outcomes, we see that the GLoBe programme contributed as follows:

- Firstly, establishing, coordinating or facilitating structures between government and citizens
- Funding of equipment or buildings: purchase of equipment to help officials do their jobs better, funding of items linked to the thematic focus of the partnership (co-funding of processing units, rubbish bins, market stalls, agricultural kits, etc.)
- Concretise and operationalise an administrative vision towards more participation (sometimes of specific groups)
- Organising training or information sessions (e.g. on the) on various topics
- To a lesser extent: organising studies
- Specifically, for the most significant Outcomes of the Belgium programme, we mainly see a focus on networking combined with peer-to-peer exchange facilitation.

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[4] FINAL VALUATION DGD PROGRAMME 2017-2021, Geert Phlix (ACE Europe) & Jan Van Ongevalle (HIVA-KU Leuven) - May 2022

It is difficult to ascertain which actions contribute most effectively to changes towards greater governance, how and under what circumstances. It strengthens the recommendation to try to discover this from practice and exchange about it. This can contribute to the learning processes within the GLoBe programme.

6. Looking to the future

6.1 Observations on structure of generic theory of change using observed Outcomes

When we look at how change towards Good Local Governance unfolds and thus test the themes that occur in all observed changes against the themes in the GLoBe's global Theory of Change, we find that for the 'Strong Local Government' component, these effectively correspond in reality to one or more of the three formulated change domains (see Figure 1). The Outcomes effectively speak of competent civil servants and politicians, of optimal service delivery or improved internal functioning).

For the 'citizens rights and duties' component, this is less true. We found that different Outcomes were more difficult to link to certain change domains. Moreover, the wording 'citizens are informed' and 'citizens have access to local services' do not align as well with actively bringing about behavioural changes among certain actors in civil society.

For the next programme, we propose to critically re-examine the global, generic theory of change. A new format for the "citizens assume rights and duties" section could be :

1. Citizens take initiative in their communities
2. Citizen participation in policy development
   - Citizens will actively inform themselves
   - Citizens express confidence in local decision-making process
   - Citizens are at the table in concrete projects and help decide on policy implementation.
3. Citizens actively use the services that are (co-)offered from the administration

We also suggest that - to the extent this is not already done - new officials and project coordinators should be properly introduced to the general theory of change from the start of their new jobs. This will help sharpen the focus on changes towards greater governance during programme implementation (see below 6.3).

6.2 Internal coherence and possibility of exchange within the GLoBe programme

The GLoBe programme is a mosaic programme using the generic theory of change as a guide: on the one hand, there are the town twinning partnerships - each with its own tradition - which together form country programmes and work towards one specific (thematic) objective. In some countries, the partnerships flesh out this theme slightly differently (e.g. waste management and green economy in Senegal).

On the other hand, there are the umbrella organisations that sometimes have a clear thematic link with town twinning (South Africa), and others do not (yet) (Benin). Or sometimes umbrella organisations work on their own change agenda with no direct substantive link to town twinning (Rwanda and Belgium). This poses challenges regarding internal coherence and the ability to exchange in depth.

Exchanges between officials at the Belgian level are regularly facilitated by the VVSG. However, this happens less systematically in the different partner countries, or between partner countries. We therefore see few exchange activities mentioned in the contribution descriptions that have led to a particular Outcome/change. However, we think that building in exchanges around working on governance can strengthen the programme (see also below 6.3).

Specifically in Benin, we observe in the Outcomes that there is currently little coherence between the programme of umbrella organisation ANCB and that of town twinning.

A new tool developed in late 2023 to make gender much better woven into local policy plans and implementation, but currently its impact at municipal level is still limited.

> " Développement nouveau outil de suivi| L'équipe genre de l'ANCB a renforcé ses capacités ce qu'il leur a amené de développer un nouveau outil de suivi que les communes peuvent utiliser pour intégrer le genre dans des autres services et activités de leur commune.   Pourquoi important? L'équipe genre prend en main le programme et prend des initiatives pour améliorer le programme dans sa totalité. Les points focaux genre sélectionnaient les activités suivant les libellés en lien avec la femme. Avec ce nouvel outil, les points focaux devraient pouvoir intégrer l'approche genre dans n'importe quelle activité. "

We recommend that the formulation of the new programme considers how ANCB can provide impetus to strengthen dynamics at the local level and vice versa.

6.3 Understanding the concept of Good Local Governance and focus

When changes occur among social actors, we generally describe them as "significant": we notice a clear difference in our activities: local social actors are clearly strengthened, including in their organisational qualities. (from the reflection report Evergem-Guaranda)

As mentioned earlier, some Outcomes describe a clear impact on improving the quality of life of a particular group of residents (sometimes going well beyond the programme objectives) or a change leading to stronger or better governance in *civil* organisations, but the impact on increasing governance capacity in local government is sometimes less clear.

If the next programme is to maintain the focus on enhancing governance, it seems to us necessary to consider even more critically the formulation and implementation of programme activities.

look at how a particular intervention can be designed in such a way that it simultaneously has the potential to bring about changes towards more decisive local governance.

This will require speaking the same language regarding the concept of "Good Local Governance" and an exchange on good practices. As suggested by the partnerships in Ecuador, it seems important to us to further unpack the concept with the central stakeholders within the GLoBe programme and the umbrella organisations to reach a common understanding of the concept and explore how this then translates into the different municipalities.

The formulated Outcomes can certainly help to go beyond a theoretical discussion but conduct the debate from concrete experiences. For example: Does collaboration with schools contribute significantly to Good Local Governance because the focus is on the next generation? How can co-funding certain activities be set up so that it strengthens governance? Etc.

In addition, we think it would be a good idea to further explore which aspects of Good Local (*Participation - Rule of Law - Transparency - Accountability - Equity and inclusiveness - Effectiveness and efficiency*) each partnership has the opportunity and capacity to influence. This exercise is also likely to lead to sharpening the programme focus by country or partnership. Or to making certain changes more explicit in the descriptions of future Outcomes.

6.4 Programme Belgium

According to the current change theory of the Belgium programme, good local governance becomes possible when 3 conditions are met. (1) managerially strong local governments, (2) inclusive and participatory policy processes, and (3) an enabling institutional, political and governance context.

If we look at the harvested Outcomes during this mid-term evaluation, we can see that the quite a few outcomes have to do with creating an "enabling context". The outcomes do present a double . On the one hand, the VVSG as a player (along with other CSF actors) is recognised as a relevant player to discuss themes within Agenda 2030. Given the 's role as an umbrella organisation of cities and municipalities, this could have advantages towards more coherent and aligned policies between different policy levels. But such outcomes of clearly more coherent policies have not been harvested for now. On the other hand, the VVSG team observes that local politicians are not inclined to hang local policies on Agenda 2030. This could indicate reduced support or fatigue when it comes those themes. On the other hand, softening and greening is something cities and municipalities are working on, without being explicitly framed in Agenda 2030. This invites stronger reflection on what then could be elements that could really realise an enabling context for cities and towns to get started with Agenda 2030. Does the role of the VVSG provide for more coherent policies regarding Agenda 2030? It is recommended to check this in the coming period.

The most significant outcome is that local policy planners get to work on their own with SDG data and SDG policy tools. However, the programme's contribution is put there in the middle (score 3). That is, there are certainly other actors contributing there. This was discussed in more detail during a feedback session. The fact that there are now more and more actors offering tools for cities and municipalities to get started with this seems to us rather a success that highlights the sustainability of the outcome. It no longer depends on the VVSG alone that there is support to cities and municipalities to get started with the SDGs.

For the remainder of the programme, we recommend that the VVSG seek answers to the following questions to enable adjustments based on deeper insights.

- Does the role of the VVSG provide more coherent policies regarding Agenda 2030? Which Outcomes demonstrate this? Or which Outcomes may contradict this?
- What just made the difference in those municipalities where SDG data and policy tools were actively deployed? What elements ensured that those policy officers did take it on board? Do we see outcomes there that indicate a stronger embedding of Agenda 2030?
- Under what circumstances are the 3 building blocks of the Theory of Action effective?

7. Conclusions and recommendations for more effective follow-up of the GLoBe programme

7.1 How did partnerships experience the self-assessment?

Overall, the mid-term evaluation based on Outcome Harvesting is as useful, but also as intensive and complex. We see three elements recurring in the feedback from partners and from key people at VVSG.

1. Learning process and awareness: The VVSG partners and key persons indicated that the exercise helped them to think more consciously about exactly which actors they want to influence and what exactly are the effects of their work. They have become more aware of the need to focus on outcomes rather than outputs and activities. It has also led to a better understanding of the complexity of the work and the need to reflect systematically on the impact of their efforts.

" La conclusion générale est que nous devons être davantage axés sur les résultats et ne pas nous contenter de mener des actions pour le simple plaisir d'agir. La plupart des actions sont motivées par de bonnes intentions, mais ne sont pas suffisamment suivies pour que nous puissions réellement évaluer ce que le changement implique. " (from reflection report Sokone-Zemst)

2. Challenges and simplification: VVSG partners and some key people perceive the current method of Outcome Harvesting as complex and time-consuming, even if it was a light form. Some argue for an even simplified version. Others advocate focusing on one specific outcome per project. It is estimated that this would make the exercise more feasible and improve the chances of successfully weaving in the learning insights. Still others indicate that just as one goes through the learning process (a new way of thinking in 'Outcomes'), one will get better and better at this way of thinking so that it will feel less complex and time-consuming.

3. Timing: Some partnerships also indicated that 2.5 years (mid-term) is quite a long time to look back and all the smaller but significant changes. While sometimes it is just those steps that reveal how change unfolds.

7.2 Impact-driven work around Good Local Governance: how can the VVSG move forward?

From the view of the self-assessment facilitators, we also see three elements reflected by the partners and key people of the VVSG.

1. Learning process and awareness: Based on the descriptions of the Outcomes in Tape App, we can confirm that a learning process and awareness was initiated. In harvesting and describing the Outcomes, we saw a shift where people started to think more and more in effects of the programme and describe these Outcomes according to the rules of art. This movement has started, but we sense that it still requires support and certainly repetition. It is certainly an asset that the VVSG has someone on staff who has it fully under their belt.

2. A pressure to be action-oriented: People from local boards say they often have to this in. It is not at the heart of their mission. The question "what are you going to ?" is more pressing than "why?" and "what is your change logic?". Resources for different programmes are also limited, which pushes people more quickly towards actionable conclusions rather than thinking in outcomes.

3. Institutionalisation and structure: There is a clear need for a more structural approach to integrate Outcome Harvesting into daily operations. One possibility is to schedule fixed evaluation moments ('harvesting' moments) and to actively use the insights from these evaluations to make adjustments. This is only possible if careful thought also given to who should be present at harvesting Outcomes. In any case, it should go beyond the Flemish officials and project coordinators in their partner countries.

To ensure that the road ahead is not lost in day-to-day reality, we recommend building on the M&E efforts that have been strengthened in recent years. A next step could be an update of the existing monitoring and learning processes within the partnerships (town twinning and partnerships with umbrella organisations). Monitoring and learning should be an integral part of organisational and programme thinking and practice.

During this , you can take into account the following principles:
Get started with the three foundations of a Monitoring and Learning System.
1. Revisit whether it is clear why you want to monitor & learn, and with and for whom.
    a. What is the entity? Is it only by twinning? Is it also about the partnerships between domes? Are there aggregate and nested levels?
    b. What are the learning questions at the different levels?
    c. Who is involved?
2. Identify the existing spaces & rythms where monitoring, analysis and learning take place.
    a. Start from the existing rythms & spaces, the existing reporting and reflection moments, and consider which learning question is answered when.
    b. Use triple loop learning to check if the rythms right.
        i. Learning cycle 1: Are we doing things right (quality outputs?) You could look at that monthly.
        ii. Learning cycle 2: Are we doing the right things? (Outcomes and ToC) You could look at that semi-annually.
        iii. Learning cycle 3: Are our mental models about change correct? (Are the hypotheses in change theory correct) You look at that midterm and endterm.
    c. Make sure that data collection happens at set times throughout the year. Don't do this just before you want to the analysis. You could also track this on a monthly basis.
3. Review the information needs: what exactly do we need to answer the learning questions?

Provide a master of ceremony.
1. An MC can create momentum and ensure that the agreed rythms & spaces are not pushed away by day-to-day concerns.
2. An MC can keep reflection actor-centred and outcome-centred.
3. An MC is exactly what the says a master of the agreed ceremony, someone who *invites* to dance. That is, everyone does still have to dance by themselves.

ANNEXES

1. Manual with self-assessment roadmap
2. Screenshot Tape app showing all fields completed for each Outcome
3. List of all Outcomes and contribution descriptions by country
4. Overview of self-assessed Outcomes (charts from dashboard)