

## 21. JOINT EVALUATION

# COLLABORATION BETWEEN AECID AND THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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The purpose of the evaluation entitled “Collaboration between the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (hereinafter called AECID) and the Spanish Institute for Women’s Affairs (hereinafter called IMIO)” was to assess from the perspective of policy coherence, the relationship between both institutions in relation to the Programme Women and Development and its outcomes. The time period covers the years 2003-2015, although in some cases previous periods have been taken into account. To address the request, various information collection and analysis techniques were used, with extensive document analysis, a questionnaire for graduates of the training since 1999 to the present day and another for beneficiary organisations of the projects component since 2003 until its disappearance in 2010, a total of 55 interviews with key informants and two case studies in Ecuador and Nicaragua. Life stories and most significant change techniques were also applied in a small number of cases.

The **Programme Women and Development** was created on the initiative of IMIO in 1988. The general aim was to contribute to the recognition of women as national and international development agents, promote their participation in all areas of development and achieve their full integration in public and private life. It was also intended to ensure that Spanish Cooperation guaranteed women’s participation and their access to the benefits and resources of development. Although the Programme evolved over time the definition of its purpose remained stable.

The Programme had two components: a project funding component and a training of experts component. According to their logic model, both components had few integration elements. Inputs were largely overlapping, but the remaining elements did not integrate (or did so only to a certain extent) up to the level of outcomes and above all at the level of impact where the intention was to help institutionalize the Gender and Development (GAD) approach in the Spanish Cooperation and improve conditions for gender equality in the partner countries by strengthening women’s and feminist organisations. Both components are summarised below.

## TRAINING COMPONENT

Training oriented to strengthen women's capacities to help introduce the gender perspective in Spanish Cooperation and its institutionalization. This component began in 1989 as a positive action oriented towards employability in the field of development cooperation in order to help introduce the gender perspective in the Spanish Cooperation.

The course took place annually in different formats and disappeared in the 2010-2011 academic year. It re-emerged in 2013 as a master's degree disconnected from the "Women and Development Programme". Until 1996 it was co-organized and taught by Spanish specialist NGOs and from 1998 it gained university recognition, run by the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), through the Complutense Institute of International Studies (ICEI).

Training lasted approximately 11 months and an average of 25 places was offered every year. Until the 2010-2011 academic year, participation required exclusive dedication and full grants were awarded that covered enrolment, board and lodging, travel expenses and insurance.

Most editions were addressing unemployed women over the age of 25 with university qualifications, prior experience in the area of development cooperation and/or in feminist organisations and with foreign language skills. The number of graduates from 1999 to 2015 totaled 404.

The course had an initial theoretical stage taught in Madrid, followed by a practical stage which consisted in internships in organisations in partner countries (in 88% of countries in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) area) and after 1996 also in Technical Cooperation Offices (TCOs). The course ended with a final evaluation over 2 weeks, again in Madrid.

## PROJECT COMPONENT

Grants for Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) or NGO networks whose main objectives were women's participation and their access to development resources to finance projects that would contribute to empowering these organisations and women beneficiaries. In its initial stage, the projects component also supported Institute for Women's Affairs' peer organisations.

It ran from 1988 to 2010 with a roughly annual periodicity, except for the years 2003 and 2004. After 1996 grants were made available for Spanish NGOs to support local organizations. Spanish NGOs channeled funding towards these organisations, and received around 10% of the subsidy.

In the period 2005-2010, 152 interventions by 75 women's organisations in 13 Latin American countries were financed. The maximum duration of the projects was 12 months, although it was possible to bundle applications together up to a maximum of 3 years. On average around 25 projects were financed per Call with amounts that differentiated between local and regional initiatives.

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The core elements of **the training component** remained quite stable over time: feminist focus, individual and group empowerment, its link with public policy on equality and promotion of an equality body. Other aspects (contents, level of requirements, etc.) adapted over time as the environment and the international equality agenda evolved.

Traditionally, this component was in great demand, due to its international prestige and the favorable conditions for participation enabled by substantial grants which became a factor for economic fairness in access. Graduates frequently state that the training was a transformational life experience, especially in relation to the process of empowerment.

Their assessments highlighted the practical stage in the form of internships which became a key element in reinforcing their learning and understanding of women's conditions in other environments and also helped to them to define their professional interests more clearly. From another perspective, internships helped IMIO to promote itself and influence and establish relationships and strengthen ties with, among others, women's and feminist organisations and national equality mechanisms where internships took place.

The training component had a positive impact on the employability of graduates both in the Gender and Development sector and in gender and development separately. In general, graduates from the training component have had somewhat discontinuous professional careers, frequently changing sectors (from the public to the private sector, for example), combining activities (for example, consultation or teaching and working as NGDO's staff) in job positions with different levels of responsibility and even between different countries.

Graduates have worked in a wide variety of areas and relevant organisations in the Spanish cooperation system and in international organisations, and particularly in technical posts in Spanish or local NGDOs. They have also provided technical assistance to TCOs or have acted as independent consultants. Their presence in AECID as part of its staff has been very scanty: non-existent for people who did gender work at the head office, and residual presence of those who worked as programme directors (2 out of 81) and projects managers (5 out of 162) in TCOs. In larger number although still scarce, graduates also provided support through contract services (technical assistance, consultancies, etc) to TCOs.

In terms of influence, the presence of graduates in key posts at key moments has been identified. Small number of graduates have participated in relevant strategic, technical and methodological processes; have generated or implemented equality policies in Spain's public authorities; have designed and produced gender mainstreaming tools and in training and awareness-raising actions. These contributions, differing in intensity and level, had an influence on the Spanish Cooperation system, either through SGCID (Office of the Secretary-General for Development Cooperation) and AECID or through other regional or local organisations, or through work with NGDOs. Nevertheless, it has not been possible to quantify or delimit the specific details of graduates' contributions to institutionalization.

It can, however, be said that the Programme helped to promote gender as a priority in the 2005-2010 period, providing a significant part of the critical mass of experts on gender and development in this period. Some graduates were also involved in actions directed at incorporating gender equality and women's empowerment in spaces and guidelines for well-known multilateral organisations and international financial institutions, consistent with the Second Master Plan's commitment to "active and effective multilateralism".

There is consensus over Spanish Cooperation's current need for gender and development specialists, but the key aspects to be covered by these professionals have not been specified. Specific interest in including personnel specializing in these matters on the teams has fluctuated over time and currently, the cooperation system is not absorbing these professionals. Job opportunities are mainly in the international market. This situation is reflected in the current considerable drop in demand for this training in relation to traditional levels, also influenced by the fact that the conditions for participation are now similar to those for other postgraduate courses.

**The project financing component** for organisations working on gender issues in Latin America was evaluated in 2003. The main conclusion was that while it had a positive and significant contribution in strengthening women's organisations to promote equal opportunities for men

and women , it failed to mainstream the gender approach. Consequently, among other actions, new mandatory methodological tools were developed for the applicant organisations and also for the TCOs and IMIO, to ensure the GAD approach was incorporated in these interventions. The projects component served to address women's needs and interests and fulfil their rights as identified by the organisations and support women's movement demands. Projects' duration and modest amounts for the types of change they were intended to promote suggest that these contributions were limited. However, the modus operandi of part of the approved projects, in keeping with the GAD approach, made this component a financing instrument that served to empower women and the organisations defending their rights in a "bottom up" process. This approach helped women to strengthen their capabilities and autonomy by promoting critical analysis of their situation, collective organization and mobilization in order to improve their living conditions and overcome gender inequalities.

In regards to achievements, over half the projects show outcomes that strengthen women's autonomy in decision making, promoting their presence in spaces for debate at municipal and departmental level. 43% of projects addressed women's physical autonomy with tools to assist them (rules, protocols, etc.) or by formulating national legislation and training of civil servants to deal with the issues appropriately, with a reduction in femicide and trafficking in women, and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights. A smaller number of projects, 6%, were aimed at promoting women's economic autonomy.

Grants also helped to strengthen beneficiary women's organisations providing them with greater autonomy to develop their own work agenda and greater capacity for political impact, improving relationships with other organisations and grassroots groups and/or networking. The resulting effects stem from direct support for their policy and programmatic agendas, the opportunity to significantly reinforce structural aspects of the organization and the profile of the beneficiary organisations, which had a solid background in working on the rights agenda and in applying a feminist approach in their institutional practices and action. These organisations had already had practice with the GAD approach and could help to integrate women's interests in broader development proposals. Strengthening these organisations therefore increased opportunities for them to play that role, making use of their "know how" and amplifying interventions' outcomes. Smaller organisations in particular, used projects as a "calling card" to initiate or consolidate dialogue with public institutions or other social organisations, improving their capacity for impact in their areas of intervention. Networking was an action strategy explicitly promoted by IMIO and was present in most of the approved projects. In this line, ties were generated with NGOs present in the management process through the horizontal relationship and in some cases alliances were forged which have continued over time.

From the institutional perspective, this component provided great visibility and recognition for the Institute for Women's Affairs and it became a fundamental reference in the fight for equality for women in Latin America. It also enabled AECID to broaden its relationships with the women's movement and its area of impact, and thereby strengthen its identification as an ally in the equality agenda.

Mentioned among the shortfalls of the projects component are its inability to address the

growing level of demand each year, the exclusion of medium-term projects, not having capitalized on products, lessons and good practices at regional level, and not having visibilized achievements and outcomes among other donors and public institutions.

In relation to **collaboration between AECID and Institute for Women's Affairs**, the Programme was created as a new channel to promote women's incorporation in development processes. Over the years the Programme has been consistent with the international framework of reference, especially with the Beijing Declaration and Platform and its subsequent development in Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and EU rules and guidelines. That coherence was possible, at least in part, because Spanish equality policy introduced the Gender and Development (GAD) approach in 1999. This approach was still in the early stages in Spanish Cooperation. After 2000, Spanish Cooperation gradually began to hire gender specialists and recognize the horizontal dimension of the GAD approach. After 2005, the gap between equality and cooperation policies disappeared with the recognition and processing of the GAD approach and so from that moment the Programme aligned with both policies. Since then, a series of important changes took place in Spanish Cooperation leading to a qualitative leap in the priority given to gender equality and a qualitative leap in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocated to gender.

In the 1988-2003 period, the relationship between IMIO and AECID started out very much in tune, but disagreements soon began to arise over the type of projects to finance and the way of channeling funds to organisations in partner countries. In 1996, AECID and IMIO reconsidered the coordination framework and from then on IMIO took responsibility for financing and managing both components. Thus since 1996 the Programme has been excluded from the institutional coordination's general frameworks. In the field, the situation was slightly different because TCOs assumed an increasingly significant role in calls for projects and since 1996 TCOs host interns as part of the training component.

In the 2004-2010 period, the Programme continues to be independent from AECID-IMIO relationships. There were, however, numerous collaborations between both organisations. The institutional umbrella offered by the last Agreement expired in 2010 and a new one has not been signed. The Cooperation Council's Working Group on Gender is currently the only formal space where AECID and IMIO meet together with the other relevant actors. Bilateral coordination is restricted to informal channels. Nevertheless, there has been an improvement in the channels of communication and exchange for defining common positions and participating in most significant international forums.

Since 2011, a gap has been detected between the strategic guidelines and the discourse on commitment to equality in Spanish Cooperation and its loss of relevance in current cooperation practices. In this period there has been a sharp fall in the volume of aid from Spanish Cooperation to gender as a sector (taking into account only CRS15170). Gender structure has weakened, losing priority in countries programme framework as a specific sector for action and gender content has disappeared from the organizational chart in both AECID and SGCID architecture. This evidences that gender has lost visibility. The actions and achievements in institutionalizing the GAD approach had made gender equality one of the internationally recognized distinguishing marks of Spanish Cooperation. However, in the light of developments in recent years, the process of institutionalization is far from being complete.

In regards to the **Programme as a whole**, its history shows that at the beginning both components had the same aim but their paths gradually diverged to become two action lines under the same name. The two components had points of convergence and feedback, especially at field level, but in general, Programme's contributions have been those of its components.

Situations of inequality between men and women persist, the objectives proposed at the Beijing Platform for Action more than 20 years ago have still not been achieved, there has been a weakening of the feminist movement and women's organisations in Spanish Cooperation's partner countries and a setback in the women's rights agenda. Thus Programme objectives would appear to remain valid as the need, that Programme was addressing, is still valid. Furthermore, the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan on Equal Opportunities between Men and Women identifies the Programme's two lines of work as needs and objectives for equality policies; the Fourth Master Plan (2013-2016) maintains the promotion of women's rights and gender equality among the distinguishing marks of Spanish Cooperation. The plan's specific actions to empower women include the strengthening of feminist associations and civil society because of their capacity to generate multiplier effects in terms of access to full citizenship and to improve the quality and effectiveness of the aid. The political context and national legislation also justify the current relevance of the Programme's two components.



Women at the fore. Kuña Ròga Association (Paraguay).



# CONCLUSIONS

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1. **The Programme Women and Development has not contributed to greater horizontal coherence between the equality and cooperation policies.** Limitations in IMIO's area of action, continuous changes in institutional affiliation and the different speeds at which AECID and IMIO assumed international gender commitments meant in practice a gradual distancing between the two institutions which hindered working arrangements between them.
2. **The two Programme components in operated separately, with scanty cross feedback between the two and without taking into account the opportunities integrated application would have provided.** In the field, however, some TCOs did make integrated use of both components, mainly through the work of their gender responsible who made the most of the presence of interns, prioritized projects which could complement bilateral programmes and had technical assistance from some of the graduates.
3. **Programme contributions to integrate gender approach are different for each of its components.** The training component generated a critical mass of highly qualified professionals who had a significant presence in the Spanish Cooperation system and in international bodies, especially from the qualitative perspective. The projects component increased and improved gender approach integration in the TCOs, although in most cases this effect was restricted to heads of gender who in practice concentrated all the activities in relation to the call for projects.
4. **The training component has had a clear impact on the people who participated,** in terms of empowering the graduates and in improving their employability after the training. The impact on the organisations these people have had been connected to is more uncertain and this evaluation has only obtained tangible evidence for a few specific aspects.
5. The training being offered currently - a UCM master's degree course - continues to be valuable but has lost many of the specific features and also the context has changed: **there is a wider choice of training courses, the gender and development sector can no longer be regarded as emerging and the demand for these profiles on the labour market has fallen. As a result, there was a significant drop in demand for the early editions of the Master's degree course, but demand is now recovering.**
6. **Projects component is considered as a unique instrument in the context of Spanish Cooperation.** It pioneered the consideration of women's organisations as political agents and reliable implementers with whom an alliance could be created to achieve shared objectives at country level and was the only initiative that permitted direct support to these organizations' own agendas. The innovative part of this component also lay in its intervention strategy based on empowerment through individual projects. For all those reasons the

instrument was highly valued by the agents who participated in it. The disappearance of the support, however, has demonstrated the fragility and reversibility of what was achieved.

7. **Application of the programmatic and operational recommendations from the mid-term evaluation of the projects component in 2003 brought greater appropriation of the projects component by the TCOs and improved application of the gender approach in the projects.** The effects were, however, influenced by the existing institutional culture and its degree of awareness and prior training in gender and development, so that on occasions the effects were limited to the person who centralized gender-related actions, and the lessons did not spread to the rest of the TCO structure. Application of the recommendations also improved management efficiency by halving total turnaround time. But there were no changes in terms of reducing the number of applications nor was there any concentration of actions.

8. Case studies in Ecuador and Nicaragua show that **projects component was an appropriate instrument for promoting women's rights**, because it strengthened organisations, with a working trajectory on women's rights, thereby increasing the projects' likelihood of success. Additional strengthening through networks of organisations somewhat improved the sustainability of the outcomes but not of the organisations.

9. **Projects component represented clear added value for the actors involved:** it helped to make IMIO a reference for promoting equality in LAC, through equality mechanisms and civil society organisations; AECID, through the TCOs, was recognized as a political ally in the equality agenda; Spanish NGOs established horizontal relations with feminist organisations in partner countries and finally, beneficiary organisations obtained an added value of prestige by being financed through a highly competitive call for projects.

10. **Projects component's disappearance has contributed to the precarious nature of financing for women's organisations in Latin America but its scope is difficult to value in a general context of drastic reduction in financing, not only by Spain, which is endangering their capacity for action and even their survival.** Some TCOs have perceived a certain loss of identification with gender in Spanish Cooperation, among other factors, due to a loss of proximity with women's organisations. Other TCOs, in contrast, state that other collaboration formats through indirect channels have been found or that the absence of financing for gender as sector has been mitigated by the mainstreaming exercises being carried out in the Country Partnership Frameworks.

11. **It is not possible to draw conclusions on Programme's current relevance but it can be said that its two components continue to be relevant** now, since the needs they were intended to satisfy continue to exist and continue to fit the policy-programmatic mandate. A different issue is that in prioritizing scanty resources these are not the chosen lines of work or that it is preferred to tackle them in a different way to the evaluated Programme.

# RECOMENDATIONS

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1. Given that in 2016 the strategic frameworks ended for both cooperation policy (Master Plan 2013-2016) and equality policy (Strategic Plan on Equal Opportunities 2014-2016) the recommendation is to **strengthen their horizontal coherence and reflect on the Programme continuity or its components separately**. In particular, it is recommended to **clarify the relevance Spanish Cooperation attaches to women's movement organisations in LAC as development agents** and consequently, the possible support which could be provided and which could take different forms: financing activities, establishing stable flows of dialogue or other channels. This is a political decision which must come prior to the decision on whether or not to recover the projects component.
2. **A possible working line with organisations could focus on equality issues outside governments' agendas. Some aspects to be reinforced include: outcomes' sustainability; complementarity with other bilateral actions.** If it were decided to recover the line of direct support to women's organisations in Latin America, it is also recommended that the potential for joint action with training, currently provided by ICEI, to be fully exploited.
3. In order to reinforce its current appeal, **training component should recover the past distinguishing marks**, reinforcing its focus on employability, reinforcing internships and orienting them more to institutions with the ability to absorb resources. It is also important that the Master degree takes up the link between the equality and cooperation policies. Finally, some individuals' assessments recommend reducing theoretical content, which is currently available through other channels, and increasing activities with greater capacity to reinforce the process of empowering students.
4. In relation to the Master's degree in Gender in Development, **to establish a framework for relations between IMIO, ICEI and AECID**, which would mean, based actors' competencies, rethinking relationships, meetings and coordination amongst them and the possibility of negotiating a new formal framework of relationships.
5. **IMIO and ICEI to emphasize and visibilise knowledge on the training component.** To improve knowledge management, graduates' dissertations could be published or either synthesize their contents in reports or summaries.
6. **AECID to reflect on Master's purpose and the value it can provide to AECID both at headquarters' and field level.** If the main use is to be able to finance continuous training for its own staff, it is worth considering whether a Master's degree is the most suitable option. If, however, the purpose is to promote the existence of qualified gender and development professionals, the Master's course may be the best option, given the current training supply.

7. **AECID to assess the possibility of increasing its annual contribution in order to consolidate longer internships with better conditions.** Evaluators consider preferable to have fewer long internships rather than more short-term ones with insufficient financial provision.

8. **If IMIO recovers the links with the Master's course, it is advisable to also assume the financing of a minimum number of grants,** according to budget availability, to enable some internships to take place in equality mechanisms or women's organisations in Latin America.

9. The strategy proposed by the ICEI to seek sponsorship from companies or foundations to increase the number of internships is considered appropriate. **There is room for the dual strategy of seeking financing (more unlikely) or of ensuring that these same entities take on interns, bearing in mind that should account with work programmes on gender and/or gender and development.**

10. In line with ICEI's work on building and updating a database of training graduates, it is advisable to update it on a more regular basis as well as to be used by other actors as a resource to find gender and development experts. Additionally, graduates' professional careers could be monitored systematically and an Alumni association could be created for students of all editions with a digital exchange format to promote their employability and exchanges.

Other related documents in:  
<http://www.cooperacionespanola.es/en/publications>

