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Lessons Learned

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1.1. CONTENT AND SCOPE OF THE EXERCISE

Evaluations are a means for continuous improvement and for contributing to the goals of Spanish development cooperation. They are a tool allowing critical reviews of past actions, learning from experience, accountability and better decisions making based on the evidence provided and the recommendations given. Therefore, evaluations must be used to promote change during the evaluation processes themselves and when using the products and knowledge derived from them.

To advance towards the goal of obtaining more influential evaluations that provide effective feedback for the Spanish system of international development cooperation, the following pages summarise the main lessons derived from the centralised evaluations completed along 2014.

This exercise is based firstly on the competence for issuing recommendations to improve the interventions allocated to the Evaluation Division of the SGCID in Article 10 of Royal Decree 342/2012, of 10 February, which develops the basic organic structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. It is based secondly on the notion of lessons learned applied by the Development Aid Committee and the United Nations Evaluation Group, for whom lessons learned should include generalisations that go beyond the immediate intervention that has been evaluated, emphasising the wider relevance that such learning could have in order to represent contributions to general knowledge.

Given the high number of evaluations produced annually by our cooperation system, lessons learned are limited to centralised evaluations, which are more strategic and involve the Evaluation Division, which is the central evaluation unit for Spanish Cooperation. Therefore this exercise excludes evaluations managed by AECID, NGOs, decentralised cooperation and universities, which will be addressed in the context of specific meta-evaluation and systematisation processes.

The reports used for this exercise correspond to the 12 centralised evaluations completed in 2014, –although two of them will be published in 2015. It should be noted that the quality of the evaluations is unequal and they address very different objects: programmes implemented by Spanish Cooperation; joint programmes with other donors and international organisations; budget support; strategic cooperation frameworks at country level; pilot projects in public-private development partnerships and triangular cooperation, etc. This diversity of approaches and experiences provides a richer analysis, but also a challenge to formulate general lessons about what works and what does not in different contexts.

We hope that these lessons will be useful for all actors involved in Spanish Cooperation, our partners and the international development community.

1.2. LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 1. EVIDENCE MUST BE USED AS A BASIS FOR MAKING STRATEGIC DECISIONS

In development cooperation, as in other forms of public policy, decisions made on the strategies to be applied or the interventions that are to be financed must be informed by evidence, i.e. on what is known to work or not work in certain areas and places. This does not mean that decisions are taken technocratically, but it does involve a rational, rigorous and systematic approach that considers all the relevant contextual factors, including the available experience and knowledge. This would allow the definition of realistic objectives and the choice of the most appropriate of the various options to achieve them.

This procedure is applied inconsistently in Spanish development cooperation. Evaluations show that use has not always been made of the available studies, risks analyses have been rare and detailed diagnoses have not always been made of the problems requiring intervention. Moreover, transversal priorities have very often been left out of these analyses.

Good analytical support improves design quality and facilitates more efficient and effective management and achievement of results.

Having sufficient evidence allows for a better understanding of the intervention context and the changes that occur over time; it also helps in anticipating the likely effects of such changes. Thus, more realistic targets can be set and better strategies chosen. Two of the evaluations analysed include education in this area.

The joint evaluation (European Commission, French Development Agency, SGCID and the Government of Morocco) of the 54 sectoral budget support operations for Morocco executed in 2005-2012 states that this support backed the Moroccan government's reform programme and contributed to the establishment of a set of public policies aimed at achieving targets for growth and reducing poverty. It also concludes that one of the reasons behind the effective performance was that the studies and diagnoses were made systematically in each sector before the budget support programmes were drawn up, which identified needs for institutional reinforcement in each area.

For its part, the evaluation of the Spanish Fund for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals states that one of the strengths of this cooperation mechanism has been that the strategic options adopted in the design took into account the knowledge, lessons and good practices of the international development community to achieve the MDGs. For example, the eight thematic windows that were chosen were well-founded strategic options. And, according to the evaluation, with the inclusion of three of them (infancy, nutrition and

food safety; youth, employment and migration; and culture and development), the Fund demonstrated foresight and the ability to make innovative proposals.

The strength of the initial diagnoses and analyses determines the quality of subsequent strategic decisions. Five of the twelve evaluations analysed found that the design of the programmes was not based on solid analyses or that existing evidence was not sufficiently taken into account.

For example, evaluations of the MAP with Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and El Salvador reveal the difficulties in operationalising the principles of concentration and division of the work, partly due to the weakness of the analyses regarding the comparative advantage of Spanish Cooperation. In some cases, such as Ecuador, this analysis consisted of a compilation of the past sector experience of Spanish actors, but no attention was paid to other potential capabilities that should have been developed. In another case, such as the MAP of Colombia, a generic analysis was made of the positive traits of Spanish Cooperation in the country, overlooking the actors' specific capabilities or unique knowledge. This lack of criteria and procedures for properly identifying the areas of value added by Spanish Cooperation impeded negotiations and consensus-building among the actors involved, which was the last step prior to negotiations with partner countries.

The project titled "Strengthening of management and development of individuals in the public sector to serve the citizens of Paraguay" was a pilot project in the implementation of a form of triangular cooperation in which a traditional donor (AECID) reaches an agreement with another emerging donor (the Chilean Agency for International Cooperation) on the joint implementation of a cooperation programme focused, in this case, on the institutional strengthening of the Civil Service Secretariat of Paraguay. The evaluation shows that the project was relevant in terms of the problems identified initially and provided valuable results for improving the capabilities of the Paraguayan Administration. However, the sustainability of the intervention could have been strengthened if a more rigorous analysis of the institutional context had been made in response, for example, to other public sector reform processes that were in progress or the actions of other international actors operating in this area.

LESSON 2. THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE INVESTMENT IN GOOD DESIGNS THAT SPECIFY THE DEVELOPMENT RESULTS PURSUED AND HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THEM

The design phase is key to ensuring the internal coherence and effectiveness of an intervention. This process, which is demanding in terms of time and resources, is the first step towards management focused on development results. Several of the evaluations reviewed reveal the difficulties for coming up with well-designed and internally coherent interventions. Although many evaluations have also valued the flexibility and adaptability of Spanish Cooperation as a positive feature, flexibility does not have to be at odds with better planning. Therefore, two lessons can be drawn from these experiences. The first refers to the fact that systematic design processes are necessary to identify and formulate results that specify what

strategies and actions are to be undertaken to achieve them. A results framework, a programme document or, increasingly, the mapping of the theory of change are different options for showing the thought process behind the intervention. The second lesson is that interventions should formulate realistic development results and place the focus on their achievement rather than on intermediate products.

A good design needs to explain the logic behind the programmes.

A good design should show how the intervention is expecting to achieve the planned results and what assumptions underlie the contribution to the desired change.

The evaluation of budget support to Morocco stated that there was a lack of strategic vision in the definition of the specific objectives of the budget support programmes. There was no precise conception of the sectoral priorities, partly due to institutional and political fragmentation in certain sectors. The programmes focused on specific aspects of sector strategies– (a subsector, a subprogramme, specific activities from the sectoral strategy) or on a particular region. Although budget support helped reduce this institutional fragmentation, the evaluation concludes that “a holistic view was not adopted at sectoral and national level, which would have strengthened the scope of public policies”.

The evaluation of the programme to support decentralisation in Senegal shows that alignment with national policies alone does not guarantee the coherence and consistency of programme design. This evaluation indicates that the AECID’s support for the decentralisation process through the Regional Development Agencies was relevant to the political and institutional situation in the country and the broad lines proposed were consistent and appropriate in connection with decentralisation policies in Senegal. It also stresses new and positive elements such as concerns about linking local economic development with the decentralisation process and the task of supporting local taxation.

Nevertheless, the preparatory work was limited. There was no detailed analysis of the problems that were to be addressed in decentralisation, while the need to set up the local dimension of the intervention with the competent national authorities in decentralisation was not anticipated. Considerations did not lead to a systematic design that clearly specified the results being pursued. Rather, a working strategy was put together as the programmes were developed and agreements were reached with the Senegalese institutions. These weaknesses in the design phase led to a number of important elements being left out of the strategic choices that were made. For example, it was decided to concentrate efforts on supporting a regional technical body, the Regional Development Agencies, but no specific diagnosis was made to assess their capacities. This subsequently meant that the programme worked well in areas where the RDAs had more capability, but not in others. The limited connection with the decentralisation processes that were decided at central level did not enable the capitalisation of the experiences and good practices collected during the implementation of the programme. Furthermore, no link was established with other Spanish or international actors working on the same theme.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the midterm evaluation of the public-private partnership to promote comprehensive development in Acobamba (Peru). Thus, the six work areas that were identified (land management, education, productive development, telecommunications, gender equality and governance) responded to the needs of a province with poverty levels above the national average and were in line with the provincial development plan; however, the design of the programme lacked a clear picture of how the partnership would contribute to the overall development of the villages involved. A global results matrix of the programme was not drawn up to prepare all the interventions to achieve aggregate results, but rather each line of intervention was designed independently by each national or local partner. This occasionally led to an overlapping of activities and a lack of knowledge by the partners of the operation and ultimate purpose of the partnership. The evaluation concludes that the design of the intervention was fragmented, which led to an agglomeration of projects rather than one comprehensive programme, as was initially intended.

Regarding the Country Association Frameworks (MAP), the four evaluations agree that the design adopted failed to position all the Spanish cooperation actors around a common idea and was not useful as a tool for strategic planning. Although there are particularities in each case that has been analysed, the four evaluations agree at least on the following:

- The methodology was complex and involved extensive consultation and the production of documents that did not always prove useful.
- The communication and coordination of the large number of Spanish actors (decentralised cooperation, NGOs, Ministries) was a demanding task and did not always involve clear and sufficient procedures for the consultations to adequately reflect the different interests and strategies. This meant that for several actors the MAP was seen primarily as an agreement by and between the AECID and the Government of the partner country rather than as a common framework for action.
- As already indicated, the weak analysis of the comparative advantage of Spanish Cooperation limited the concentration and division of labour.
- The development results matrices of the MAP that were evaluated have not been an effective tool for planning and monitoring. They directly adopted the results and indicators of partner countries, but failed to explain how Spanish Cooperation would contribute to them.

The contribution to development results needs to be defined realistically. It is important to keep track of intermediate products, but without losing sight of their relationship with expected results, which must be the roadmap for the actions.

A common assessment shared by several of the evaluations is that the focus is often geared more towards the outputs of the interventions than to the expected development results.

The evaluation of budget support to Morocco notes that in most cases the indicators incorporated in the results matrices were processes, – e.g. related to changes in the legislative framework and the capacities of the Ministries-, rather than development results obtained by the sector policy as a whole. In addition, each donor formulated specific results for their programmes, so the matrices were not actually common, but rather ‘aggregate’ matrices with multiple indicators. Consequently, although the sequence of reforms was able to be developed and supported, policy dialogue focused mainly on technical and non-strategic aspects and although the support had an important effect on institutional aspects and the management of the sectors in which the work took place, the focus on processes and not on final results limited the ability of the Moroccan Government and the donors to know to what extent the programmes were contributing to meeting citizens’ needs.

The SAVIA programme of the OAS, aimed at supporting local decentralisation of policies to reduce the demand for drugs, was based on a complete action model developed on the basis of the Spanish experience. However, the evaluation notes that the logic adopted in the identification and design of the three successive subprogrammes of SAVIA during the period 2005-2013 responded to a long-term strategic framework for action rather than a cooperation programme, which must necessarily prioritise goals based on the technical and financial resources that can be mobilised. Furthermore, the design phase did not sufficiently show the diversity of the initial conditions of each of the six countries that took part, both in relation to existing policies and practices in drug prevention and the priority and development of the decentralisation process that national political institutions were willing to award. As a result, the same “offer” was proposed for every country. Consequently, the successive programmes were geared more towards managing and monitoring the planned activities and products, in view of the unattainability of the development targets that had supposedly been set.

The midterm evaluation of the public-private partnership for development in Peru recommends reformulating the goals of the programme, which were oversized in the initial design, and focusing exclusively on those that have a real chance of being achieved and sustained. This open door to a certain amount of flexibility also frees up time for improving the necessary organisation and coordination between the different axes of the programme.

LESSON 3. MANAGEMENT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED TO CONTRIBUTE MORE EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENT RESULTS.

Moving towards results-based aid management requires not only implementing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems, but also having well-designed processes that enable organisations to be more efficient and better coordinated internally and with other external stakeholders involved. To make better decisions it is also important to make use of information about performance and results.

Spanish Cooperation has made significant efforts to improve some of its strategic processes – such as country level planning through the MAP, the implementation operational

programming, or the improvement of administrative management within the AECID. However, various evaluations indicate that there is still room for further progress.

The implementation of efficient business and support processes for the implementation of programmes is key to achieving results and to getting reliable information about what has been carried out.

Implementing efficient processes involves at least planning information flows; identifying and preparing operative documents, guidelines or protocols that support the implementation of the interventions; continuously documenting and systematising experience; and establishing clear lines of responsibility, allocating adequate human resources with profiles tailored to actual needs.

The evaluation of the programme to support the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) of Senegal reveals several management problems due to the lack of tools, such as operational manuals; a lack of clarity in the distribution of the roles and responsibilities of each party – (AECID headquarters, country office (OTC) and Regional Development Agencies); and the high level of staff rotation in the OTC. In particular, the evaluation refers to the lack of financial control and technical monitoring procedures for programme execution. Management was entrusted to the RDA, which, for lack of tools and clear guidance by the AECID, launched various management systems and tools and took autonomous decisions on certain aspects (e.g. on financial actions related to local economic development). AECID's financial disbursements were also not conditioned by results as set out in a previously agreed work plan. All this resulted in a relative loss of information and knowledge on the development and progress of the programmes; however, in last phase of implementation was partially redirected through certain strategic reflection processes, a clearer division of responsibilities within the OTC and external audits.

MAP evaluations argue that the weaknesses of certain support processes, such as the lack of a comprehensive information system or the low-level systematisation of the experience of Spanish Cooperation, resulted in an informal and therefore fragile institutional memory, with consequent transaction costs related to changes in the teams' composition.

Improving internal communication and greater coordination with other international actors facilitates informed decision-making and reduces transaction costs.

Certain well-established information channels help in the organisation of actions, the coordination of all the parties involved in the management of an intervention and, above all, better decision-making. However, the achievement of well-defined information flows or the ability to coordinate efforts both within the organisation and with partners and other actors does not arise spontaneously. The appropriate conditions must be created and the right decisions must be taken. Distortions in the information flow sometimes have to do with the lack of clarity about who does or should do what, as discussed in the previous section.

The review of the technical cooperation programme with ECLAC states that the high-level dedication of the programme management unit increased implementation efficiency, contributing to the success of the programme. However, there was no clear coordination protocol (who to contact and when) with the AECID, which in practice prevented the establishment of synergies between regional programme activities and the bilateral Spanish cooperation programmes in the region, which often dealt with similar matters or approached the same institutions.

Another example is the triangular cooperation programme. The evaluation highlights the leadership of the OTC in Chile when coordinating and managing the Spanish contribution to the programme, developing an active role in the dialogue with the Paraguayan authorities and with the Chilean Agency for International Cooperation to identify the technical assistance given by Spain and also to monitor the programme, contributing to the overall efficiency of the intervention. However, at the same time, the evaluation indicates that there was no appropriate sharing of roles and coordination between this OTC and the OTC in Paraguay, which did not play a very active role, carrying out residual work in the dialogue with the Paraguayan government. This limited participation may have influenced the fact that later, the negotiation of AECID's bilateral programme with Paraguay did not reach an agreement on continuing the direction that had been taken in the triangular cooperation programme.

MAP evaluations show that the working structures established in the countries, such as stable coordination groups or sectoral boards, improved coordination between Spanish and local actors; however, they also point out that a better definition is needed of their roles and responsibilities, as well as further strengthening of the communication flows with headquarters in Spain for better decision-making. A simplification of the methodological guidelines and greater precision of the expected products could also help improve process efficiency.

Monitoring and evaluation systems will be weakened, underused and eventually become an additional burden if the different levels of responsibility fail to assume and foster them as a tool for learning and decision-making, and if time and resources are not invested to improve their quality.

An integrated results management system makes it possible not only to ensure efficient implementation of the programmes, but also acts as a guide for decision-making based on what has been achieved (results and changes) rather than simply what has been done (inputs and activities). It is also a means for learning and knowledge generation, although this is only possible when the organisations' senior management demands and gives priority to reports and documents on results.

Most evaluations show there have been no results-oriented monitoring systems for the programmes. In some cases, because it was not deemed necessary (triangular cooperation project) and in others, as in the case of the ECLAC, because the planning tool used –(logical

framework) was too inflexible and did not allow the gathering of all the effects the programme was producing.

The evaluation of the public-private partnership in Peru states that the reports were not presented in a standardised way or as stated in the planning matrix; each implementing actor reported to the partner responsible for the partnership on activities and spending for the component that they were executing and under their own criteria and procedures. Thus, it was not known whether the activities were being implemented according to the plan and, in particular, whether the results were being achieved. In short, a good monitoring system can be key to successful programme management, but those systems are of little or no benefit if managers do not give them priority or if decision-makers do not demand accurate information on what has been achieved.

The evaluation of the MDG Fund welcomes the monitoring and evaluation systems installed in the programmes, but notes that their implementation was delayed and gave rise to adaptation costs. Indeed, it highlights the fact that the achievements of the Fund's joint programmes may be partially attributed to the evaluation system defined globally for the Fund and the corrective adjustments made during the implementation of the programmes on the basis of interim evaluations. The allocation of a portion of programme resources (3-5%) to midterm evaluations is shown to be a good practice that should be given serious thought.

In this regard, the recommendations made by the evaluation of budget support for Morocco considers one of the most urgent tasks the establishment of a results-monitoring system, as well as a system for evaluating Moroccan public policies.

LESSON 4. THE SELECTION OF MODALITIES AND INSTRUMENTS AND THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES SHOULD BE GUIDED BY THE EXPECTED RESULTS

Some of the initiatives evaluated are examples of the gradual progress made by Spanish Cooperation towards aid modalities more in line with partner countries' management systems, such as budget support, as well as the interest in experimenting with new approaches, such as triangular cooperation or public-private partnerships for development. Less progress has been made in the adaptation of certain financial instruments to the conditions under which Spanish cooperation operates.

The adjustment to local management systems and procedures, either through aid modalities more integrated into national management systems or by the easing of administrative conditions, facilitates the implementation of the interventions and helps reduce transaction costs for both local partners and donor agencies. Several of the evaluations recommend more decisive progress in these areas.

The choice of aid modalities must be based on their potential comparative advantage for achieving results in the given specific context.

The selection of aid modalities and instruments must be strongly influenced by the characteristics of the country and the intervention sector. It is therefore impossible to establish universal recommendations. It is important, however, to ensure that the different options are streamlined and criteria for selection are made explicit. This has not always been the case in the cases evaluated.

Two of the evaluations analysed conclude that the chosen instruments or modalities served the corresponding purposes well. For example, the evaluation of budget support in Morocco indicates that the overall implementation of this modality in the country led to progress in the coordination and harmonisation between donors and the adaptation of external aid to Moroccan management priorities and structures. This also meant political and technical support for the reforms undertaken by the Moroccan government, improving the implementation of the policies, even though the effects on the population have been more limited.

Regarding the choice of triangular cooperation, the evaluation concludes that it was well adapted to the characteristics of the host country (Paraguay) and the sector in question – (governability and capacity development in public Administration). This triangular scheme favoured certain changes, mainly in access to the civil career, and it also helped improve the capabilities of an emerging donor like Chile.

However, there is no similar certainty about the relevance of the implementation of the public-private partnership for the development of Huancavelica in Peru. As the evaluation notes: “The fact of working on a new intervention with a pilot instrument in a geographical area where there is no prior work, in a short period of 4 years and with a disjointed civil society makes it difficult to achieve targets. This is because part of the initial time is spent creating the necessary trust and knowledge of social relationships”.

Finally, MAP evaluations show that the possible complementarity between cooperation instruments is not easy to achieve. In Spanish Cooperation, the selection of the ways of delivery is sometimes determined by the existence of a budget for a particular instrument and not by a broader strategic vision. This applies, for example, to certain subsidies for NGO projects or projects financed by specific funds, such as the Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation, which define, sometimes significantly, the composition of the portfolio addressed by Spanish Cooperation.

Flexibility in financing instruments in order to suit partners’ needs can lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The period between the design and approval of work plans and the implementation of the programmes makes it very difficult to foresee the context in which the activities are to be

implemented. In this situation, flexibility is desirable to make adjustments in order to improve performance.

Three evaluations illustrate this issue. For the technical cooperation programme with the ECLAC, duly justified deviations from the operational plans were accepted, which, according to the evaluation, improved the overall efficiency of the programme.

However, in the case of SAVIA, the administrative conditions applied to the aid hampered intervention management. The programme was implemented based on annual subsidies released by the AECID, sometimes in two tranches, making it impossible to anticipate resources in the medium term. In fact, the evaluation argues that the lack of multi-year funding commitments by the AECID affected the possibility of finalising the agreements pre-negotiated with two countries, i.e. Colombia and Ecuador. This led to their departure from the programme.

The implementation of the programmes through parallel management units limits the adaptation of the interventions and the transfer of knowledge and skills. However, to achieve greater efficiency, it is not sufficient to use local systems, but rather contributions must be made to their reinforcement and continuous improvement.

The support programme for decentralisation in Senegal launched parallel management units in two of the three Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) that were supported. The evaluation is conclusive when it states that these units reduced the ownership of the programme and did not allow the transfer of knowledge to the RDAs, thus conditioning the sustainability of the achievements. In the third RDA, however, a different process was applied and, at the request of the director, staff were allocated to the agency's economic development division. This helped improve the RDA's working capacity in this area and the involvement of all the agency's divisions in the management of the programme.

The SAVIA evaluation indicates that the programme worked as an autonomous entity during its implementation and neither the donor (the AECID) nor the host entity (one of the regional commissions of the OAS) took full responsibility for management. The evaluation recommends full integration of the programme within the structure and functioning of the OAS to facilitate its ownership and to improve the development of the intervention.

However, opinions on these aspects are not always clear. For example, the methodology of the MAP points to the desirability of promoting the use of national systems, since it will contribute to improving local capacities and reducing transaction costs. However, the evaluation of the MAP of Ecuador, for example, states that this option limited the efficiency of some programmes due to significant delays in their implementation, suggesting the desirability of a thorough analysis of local capacities in future interventions.

LESSON 5. SUPPORTING LOCAL CAPACITY ACCOMPANYING IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES IS KEY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Strengthening partners' capacities so that progress can continue after the withdrawal of external support is key to ensuring sustainable development. This support can focus on the development of managers' individual skills and competencies, but also on providing support for organisations to improve their institutional and technical capacities so they can perform their tasks more efficiently in the environment where they operate.

Capacity-building has received considerable attention in Spanish Cooperation, which has focused some of its interventions on this issue or has included specific components of this type in interventions aimed at other objectives. Four of the thirteen evaluations analysed include evidence of the degree of success in capacity-building activities. Their analysis produces two lessons for Spanish Cooperation: the success of capacity-building depends on local ownership of the processes and on the support offered, which must have a certain level of quality and be maintained over time and through a repertoire of methods that respond to different needs.

Local ownership is key to ensuring the success of capacity-building process and foster greater sustainability.

The principle of ownership enshrined in international commitments on aid effectiveness means that development processes are driven by the partner countries themselves and, therefore, actions are adapted to their specific priorities. If it is aligned with the partner countries' priorities and systems, development cooperation can stimulate and foster capacity-building, improve accountability and help create more sustainable institutions. Thus, whenever Spanish Cooperation has defined its action with local partners and they have had autonomy in leading the process, ownership has been greater, making interventions more effective.

The institutional capacity-building project involving Spain, Chile and Paraguay is a good example of ownership by the local partner: the Civil Service Secretariat of Paraguay. The intervention was designed as requested by the Paraguayan entity, which, from the beginning, played a leading role in every phase of the process and, in particular, in the coordination of the technical assistance processes, which were the main form of support. These were provided by Chilean and Spanish public bodies and, in general, were all adequate, especially with regard to Chile. However, the evaluation concludes that plans should have been made for a phasing out strategy, since neither Spain nor Chile had plans for continuing the support after the project. The integration of sustainability within the design of the intervention would have facilitated the consolidation of the progress made by the programme.

For ownership to occur, actions adapted to the local context are required, taking into account the institutional, social and political environment in which the intervention is taking place.

The SAVIA programme exemplifies some of the problems resulting from insufficient knowledge of the local context when it comes to capacity-building. The programme focused initially on accompanying the development of capacities of the central national Administration. The strategy was changed midway through the implementation process and the intervention was made at municipal level by financing projects. However, this was done without having consolidated capacities at the central and regional levels of the countries, so that they could sustain the change to the local level. The support given to the municipalities did not always take into account existing local capacities, which often resulted in specific actions, decontextualised from the management of the municipalities and poorly coordinated with the countries' central authorities. However, although the programme made use of multiple methods (courses and training workshops, international seminars for the exchange of experiences between representatives of the countries, preparation of guides and manuals, and demonstration projects), the evaluation suggests they did not always respond to the practical needs of specialists involved in the subject of drugs. Therefore, it recommends better planning of actions, based on existing capacities and demand, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that reveal their relevance and results.

Quality support requires sustainability over time and a variety of methods that respond to different needs.

When capacity development is part of a strategy that assesses needs and provides support effectively, with an appropriate mix of methods, better results are achieved and a contribution is made to greater ownership.

In Morocco, technical support was one of the highlights of budget support and played a decisive role in strengthening the organisation and institutional structure of the ministries benefiting from it. The evaluation notes that the support (offered in the form of analytical work, technical assistance, long-term advisory services, information exchange and twinning projects, among others) made it possible to provide the necessary knowledge and understanding for the design and accompaniment for implementing reforms in the corresponding sectors and to facilitate the adoption of new management tools. This good result was helped along by the fact that budget support anticipated the need for technical support –(programmes of the World Bank, for example) or because separate but complementary programmes for budget support –(European Union) were developed.

The evaluation of the programme with the ECLAC notes that the continued support of the AECID –after an initial phase of collaboration- and the full integration of the programme in the ECLAC's work plans favoured its adaptation to the countries' needs and, in general, to the issues on the regional agenda at the time. Moreover, the composition of the recipients of the programme (senior civil servants of partner countries and other staff of international organisations, academia, civil society and the private sector of the region) helped the key messages reach a broad audience that represented the countries' political, institutional and social environments. Furthermore, in some cases, creating informal partnerships enhanced

the sustainability of the effort. Finally, the range of tools used (formal training, technical assistance for government entities, generation of evidence through publications and creating spaces for reflection and exchange), added to the fact that the ECLAC's technical teams were the ones providing the technical assistance, gave the actions credibility and, according to the evaluation, contributed to providing added value to the programme.

LESSON 6. PROGRESS ON CROSSCUTTING ISSUES REQUIRES THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES

For some years now, Spanish Cooperation has defined several priorities that need to be mainstreamed in its action for development: gender in development, human rights-based approach, environmental sustainability and a focus on diversity. The evaluations reviewed show that, in most cases, the incorporation of cross cutting issues in these interventions is more present in theory than in practice.

Mainstreaming needs to start before the interventions are implemented.

The process starts at the inception phase, when the issues on the agenda for the intervention or strategy are defined. At this stage, specific diagnoses and analyses must be made that include an adequate approach to crosscutting priorities, so that they can later be included in the objectives of the intervention and the monitoring and evaluation of the results that are achieved. Several evaluations have shown that it is often not clear what mainstreaming should imply compared to support to specific actions to promote greater equality between men and women or to guarantee fundamental rights, for example, all of which leads to confusion between the transversal and sectoral approaches.

The evaluation of the programme implemented in Senegal states that no specific analyses were performed on crosscutting issues, such as the organisational structures of the different ethnic groups in the intervention regions (Jola, Fula and Mandinka peoples), the possibilities of participation of women in local political authorities or addressing environmental issues in regional economic coordination processes. Consequently, these issues were not integrated into the design of the programme and they were not specifically dealt with during the implementation phase. It should be noted, however, that the evaluation indicates certain specific examples of how the programme took into account cultural diversity in the areas of intervention, concluding that although the issue was not formally specified, it may have been considered implicitly.

The MAP evaluations note that the incorporation of crosscutting priorities is uneven. Certain progress was made in the area of gender, but advances are lower in relation to the human rights-based approach or environmental sustainability. For example, the evaluation of the MAP with El Salvador points out that crosscutting issues were not incorporated into the initial diagnoses and, consequently, their transfer to the results matrix hardly affected certain indicators disaggregated by sex or specific actions to protect the environment in the water

and sanitation programmes. The evaluations recommend addressing these issues in the analysis of contexts and developing specific diagnoses to prevent the disappearance of crosscutting priorities when the objectives are defined and also to avoid that having certain specific actions for some groups is assumed as a successful way of mainstreaming.

The existence of specialised units and their active collaboration with the rest of the organisation helps position crosscutting priorities at the heart of the interventions.

Both the ECLAC programmes funded by the AECID and the private-public partnership for development in Peru identified a specific component aimed at promoting gender equality. However, this goal was not considered relevant in other areas, resulting, in practice, in its exclusion from the overall design and implementation of the programmes. The evaluations agree that possible causes include the lack of specific work methodologies; the absence of adequate justification or arguments to support the incorporation of this approach in other components; and finally, insufficient coordination between the different components during programme implementation. Both evaluations recommend more intense, coordinated work between the specialised units or stakeholders (in one case, the Gender Division of the ECLAC and, in the other, the Manuela Ramos Movement of Peru) and other units to agree on how to incorporate these objectives into key policies and sectors while providing support through specific analyses, training and practical methodologies.

To put theory into practice, illustrative examples are needed to reinforce the understanding among Spanish Cooperation actors and partners of what it means to adopt a mainstreaming approach.

The evaluation of the SAVIA programme indicates that the human rights-based approach is more or less consistently included in the discourse of the programme and of local partners, but its practical effect is still limited, particularly at municipal level. With regard to gender equality, this objective was not included in the formulation of the programme and only recently have the central structures of the countries echoed this issue, for example by disaggregating data by sex or by defining specific projects. However, in local projects, the evaluation notes that this approach disappears and there is no real awareness of the issue.

The MAP evaluations agree that it is necessary to improve the capacity, expertise and knowledge of local partners and Spanish actors to design and implement interventions that incorporate crosscutting priorities and to monitor how and to what extent these priorities have been addressed and what results have been achieved. It is important to note that in country offices with skills and experience in these areas, –e.g. gender in the OTC in Colombia–, results have been more positive.

LESSON 7. PROGRESS TOWARDS MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY IMPLIES GOING BEYOND “BOTTOM-UP” INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Transparency and accountability are essential for development and results. The Busan Alliance explicitly states that achieving results requires accountability to all stakeholders in the development process and that transparent practices are based on reinforced accountability. The definition of mutual responsibility has spread from the Paris Declaration. The Busan Alliance places greater emphasis on the accountability of governments to their citizens and parliaments and includes a wider group of stakeholders involved in development cooperation, with civil society organisations and private actors involved in mutual accountability mechanisms.

In Spanish Cooperation, accountability has not always been properly understood; sometimes being reduced to a mere justification of how the funding received was spent. It has also suffered from a dominant “bottom-up” approach, which has led to reports being sent to the headquarters of donor agencies instead of a more transversal approach involving dialogue with programme partners on the required results and strategies.

One example of these limitations can be found in the evaluation of the Spain-Chile-Paraguay triangular project. It is assumed that triangular cooperation should be based on more horizontal relationships, built on mutual trust and a sense of co-responsibility among the parties in every phase of the project. In the triangular project that has been analysed, the funding scheme was initially unbalanced, with greater financial contributions from Spain. This resulted in the technical and financial monitoring being frequently unidirectional and focused on the main donor, in prejudice of mutual accountability among all three partners.

However, there has been progress on mutual accountability, as indicated by the MAP evaluations. In particular, several countries have set up joint decision bodies involving their national governments and Spanish Cooperation. This is the case of Ecuador, where a joint committee was set up, and El Salvador, where opportunities for the exchange of general information and specific programmes were established. Such formulas enabled the joint monitoring of the agreements and a more horizontal approach to accountability.

Finally, in its fullest sense, accountability means taking “top-down” responsibility towards the organisations of civil society and the general public. The recommendations of some of the evaluations focus on further progress in this area. This is the case of the private-public partnership for development in Peru, which proposes the creation of “public hearings” to inform the population of the various work areas and seek the opinion of civil society. In the same vein, the evaluation of budget support in Morocco recommends donors and government to be more transparent about the resources the former make available to the country or about how to manage the budget and what progress is being made in terms of efficiency in public spending in the case of the latter. The evaluation suggests strengthening the role of the Moroccan Parliament and civil society in the formulation of fiscal and budget policies and in monitoring the use of public resources.

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