2015 ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LESSONS LEARNED

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The 2015 Annual Evaluation Report includes, in addition to the section on lessons learned contained in this document, the following points:

1.1   FOLLOW-UP OF EVALUATIVE ACTIVITY

146 evaluations were completed during 2015. Of these, 8 were centralised evaluations, 16 were operational evaluations, 27 were evaluations of NGO agreements and projects financed by the AECID, one evaluation was part of the Biennial Plan of Evaluations of Interventions of NGOs approved by the AECID in 2014, 10 were evaluations of the Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation and 84 were financed by the Decentralised Cooperation (9 autonomous communities and one municipality).

The estimated total cost of this evaluative activity amounts to about **1.7 million €**, which represents 0.29% of Spanish gross bilateral ODA in 2015 (preliminary figure). **The average cost of the evaluations increased** both in the case of centralised evaluations and in that of operational ones while, globally, it declined in Decentralised Cooperation-funded evaluations.

Almost half of the budget dedicated to evaluations in Spanish Cooperation comes from the AECID, one-third is contributed by Decentralised Cooperation, mainly the Andalusia and the Basque Country Autonomous Communities, while the SGCID provides 7.8%.

The majority of evaluations managed by the AECID and the Evaluation Division of the SGCID have been **joint evaluations**. This explains why the Division manages approximately a quarter of the resources dedicated to evaluation. More than half of our system evaluations continue to be evaluations of interventions financed through NGOs (57% of the total).

The region comprising Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean has the largest number of evaluations (33.6%), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (26%) and the Andean Countries and Southern Cone (19.9%).

In 2015 centralised evaluations linked to strategic planning have gained relative weight. The sectors and areas assessed by all the stakeholders in the system have been very diverse, with an emphasis on education; water and sanitation; government, civil society and human rights; and food security.

The global implementation of the Biennial Plan 2015-2016 stands at 64.4%, which includes both completed evaluations and those that are currently under way. The evaluations of projects and agreements of NGO this year and the centralised evaluations have the greatest percentage of implementation.

The analysis of the performance of the Evaluation Division of SGCID shows an overall satisfactory performance. As announced in the Annual Communication in 2015, the number of centralised evaluations has been reduced to be able to focus on other studies related to the knowledge management. 90% of the planned evaluations have been completed or are under way; progress has been made in the dissemination of evaluations; tools have been developed to promote a higher quality of evaluations; and active participation has continued in international evaluation networks, particularly, in the network evaluation of the CAD and in MOPAN. Strengthening of the capacities of evaluation efforts has focused on supporting the institutionalisation of evaluation in Latin American countries.

The AECID has improved its levels of implementation of evaluations as against 2014 and the operational evaluations of the FCAS are increasing. It has supported the strengthening of evaluation capacities in partner countries and has launched ambitious initiatives for the management of knowledge, such as "Intercoonecta". There has also been progress in training on the management of knowledge and the establishment of communities of communities in practice through the "sharepoint" platform.

At the level of the General Administration of the State, the FIIAPP has promoted the strengthening of the evaluation capacities in Latin America within the framework of the EUROsocial programme. Regarding Decentralised Cooperation, **Andalusia stands out for its relative weight in the funding of evaluations**, managed mainly by NGOs. The Basque Country leads in managing instrument evaluations and Galicia and Extremadura carried out evaluations of NGO projects funded at the country level in Cape Verde and Nicaragua, respectively.

1.2 FOLLOW-UP TO MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

There has been a management response to 54% of the centralised evaluations completed between 2013 and 2016. Including the responses already existing in draft, the percentage rises to 69%.

The management response system needs to see some improvements, but is beginning to consolidate and is contributing to greater accountability on the use of evaluations. The drafting of the answers had been delayed more than expected, which has affected their follow-up.

10 reports of follow-up to management responses, involving all of the answers after more than one year and 71.5% of the total of the management responses, have been drafted.

The follow-up to the first responses shows that **the evaluations have been considered useful by various units and implementation of the recommendations is occurring**. 61% of the recommendations were accepted wholly or in part. Of them, we have implemented 35.3%, 46% are running and 18.7% are pending.

Major delays and difficulties have been observed in the case of the more strategic recommendations, which require decisions to be taken at the highest level, sometimes linked to strategic processes in the partner countries.

1.3   ANNEXES

We include, finally, lists of all the evaluations completed in 2015, broken down according to the categories of the Biennial Evaluation Plan of 2015-2016 and a tab for highlights of each of the centralised evaluations completed in that year.

2. LESSONS LEARNED
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2.1 CONTENT AND SCOPE OF THE EXERCISE

Lessons learned are generalisations based on evaluation experiences that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations, emphasising the wider relevance that such learning could have in order to represent contributions to general knowledge.

In previous annual reports, lessons learned were extracted from the set of centralised evaluations published in the corresponding year. Since the eight evaluations completed in 2015 addressed very different issues, this time the lessons learned are derived from centralised evaluations completed between 2013 and 2016 related to inclusive partnerships for development.

Thus, the lessons are grouped around two main areas: cooperation with regional organisations, and multi-stakeholder alliances implying knowledge sharing. The evaluations that have been reviewed are the following::

Evaluations of Spanish Cooperation with regional organisations in Latin America:

– Evaluation of the Spanish Fund in the Organization of American States (OAS), 2013.
– Evaluation of the Spanish Fund in the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), 2013.
– Evaluations of the Technical Cooperation Programme between the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) finished in 2013 (period 2007-2009) and 2014 (3 period 2010-2012).
– Evaluation of the results of the OAS Programme "Health and Life in the Americas" - SAVIA, 2014.
– Evaluations of the Spanish Fund with the Central American Integration System (SICA): midterm evaluation of the management model of the Fund (2013) and evaluation of the programmes financed by the Fund (2016).

Evaluations of multi-stakeholder partnerships implying knowledge-sharing:

– Midterm evaluation of the public-private partnership for development in Acobamba (Peru), 2014.
– Evaluation of the programme "Spain and its Regions exchange Knowledge with Antioquia (Colombia)"(ERICA), 2016.
– Evaluation of the support to Industrial Technology Centres (ITC) for the development of Moroccan small and medium enterprises, 2016.

We hope that these lessons will be useful for Spanish Cooperation, our partners and the broader development community.

2.2   LESSOND LEARNED

2.2.1   COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

Regional cooperation has traditionally been perceived as a useful instrument to combine skills, establish partnerships, stimulate economic exchanges and promote the mutual stability of a group of geographically contiguous countries. In some cases this cooperation has resulted in regional integration processes.

In the past, integration was often intended to expand national markets to allow a more successful process of industrialisation and growth in an environment of relative protection against third countries. From the nineties onwards a process of transformation of the international system begins, with new regionalisation phenomena around the world. This new regionalism is characterised by: a) a wider range of inter-state frameworks; b) greater ambition; c) multidimensional approaches, addressing multiple objectives, including the provision of regional public goods; d) greater complexity of structures and functions, with the participation of states but also of the private sector and civil society.

Spanish Cooperation has reaffirmed its commitment to support integration and regional cooperation in its priority areas. Thus, Spanish Cooperation IV Master Plan (2013-2016) noted that "a remarkable peculiarity of Spanish Cooperation has been its commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and integration processes in various areas of the world as a complementary way of contributing to development targets. […] Regional programs may also be considered a tool to support the aid effectiveness agenda. Regional integration processes significantly contribute to the member countries' ownership of national development strategies and policies – as they are included in regional initiatives".

On this basis, the IV Master Plan identifies two major objectives related to regional cooperation: improving the effectiveness of Spanish Cooperation through greater articulation of support to regional organisations and other initiatives implemented in the same geographical areas; and analysing the effectiveness of the regional cooperation mechanisms in place and their ability to respond to changes in regional institutions.

One of the most active areas in the process of regionalisation is Latin America, where Spanish Cooperation maintains stable relationships with various regional and sub-regional cooperation bodies. The profiles, mandates and structures of these organisations are very diverse. Some are more focused on regional integration, others on the promotion of common political or economic objectives and, finally, some have a more technical profile, in some cases affiliated to the United Nations System.

Four main lessons can be drawn from the evaluations carried out in recent years about the experience of Spanish Cooperation with regional organisations in Latin America.

Since complementarity can be understood in different ways, it is necessary to be explicit about the vision adopted.

Complementarity can be understood in terms of division of labour as the support at the regional level of those issues on which, in principle, a global approach has a comparative advantage vis-à-vis bilateral programmes. However, complementarity can also be understood as greater integration, interrelation and reinforcement between regional and bilateral programmes.

According to the evaluations, a clear and shared position about how complementarity between the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels is conceived needs to be further developed.

To provide greater added value, support to regional organisations should be based on a detailed identification of the comparative advantages each of them offers with respect to bilateral cooperation: i.e. scope of action, ability to exert influence, legitimacy, capacities, role in the production and exchange of information and knowledge, working models, etc.

Generating synergies between the bilateral and regional levels requires efforts to share information, improve coordination and adequately communicate what is being done in each area, as well as making use of the respective comparative advantages of regional bodies and Spanish Cooperation for mutual benefit.

The evaluations show that support provided to regional processes has often been conceived independently of bilateral action, resulting in lost opportunities to increase the efficiency and scope of the overall cooperation effort.

Ownership at the national level and coordination between regional programmes and member States' policies strengthens the potential effects of supporting regional organisations.

Involving different institutional and government levels from the starting point contributes to greater ownership of regional initiatives. Technical assistance and partnerships with multiple stakeholders complement resources, enrich proposals and strengthen advocacy and influence.

Lesson 2. IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN THE MANDATE AND FUNCTIONS OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN A MORE COMPREHENSIVE WAY IT IS NECESSARY TO: i) CONSIDER THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF EACH ORGANISATION; AND ii) ADOPT A GLOBAL APPROACH, BEYOND FUNDING OF SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Spanish Cooperation has usually channelled its cooperation with regional organisations through funding of programmes or interventions. This formula is useful when projects are a central area of the agencies' activity, but it is rather limited when their action is deployed in the fields of agenda setting, policy dialogue and coordination at the highest political level or technical assistance. These fields of action require developing specific support mechanisms.

To provide a more strategic support to their mandate and performance, further consideration of the political dimension of most of regional agencies is required.

Changing political environments call for flexible cooperation models, including policy dialogue as well as change-responsive coordination, implementation and monitoring of programmes.

On the other hand the implementation of regional policies requires the prior development of political and institutional frameworks. For this reason, attention must be given to the degree of maturity and existing capacities of the different regional agencies, carefully analysing what can be achieved in the short term and what requires a longer-term support.

When regional organisations focus on knowledge sharing, support to South-South mechanisms is well suited to reinforce their horizontal nature.

Two experiences collected in the evaluations show good practices in this area. In the case of AECID-ECLAC programme, the Gender Affairs Division developed a strategy to encourage the active involvement of a wide range of agents politically committed to gender equality. Through formal agreements and informal alliances it worked with multiple regional stakeholders: civil society organisations, media, academia, international organisations, etc. This modus operandi contributed to amplifying the scope of ECLAC proposals and allowed to mobilise additional resources. A similar procedure was articulated by the Council of Ministers for Women in Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA) within the framework of the SICA Spanish Fund. The signature of partnership agreements with various UN agencies and with AECID increased the relational capital of SICA and the resources available.

When support provided by Spanish Cooperation was predictable and focused on strengthening the mandate and strategies of the agencies, it contributed to improving their performance. According to the ECLAC 2014 evaluation, the factors contributing to greater efficiency and sustainability of Spanish support were: i) adaptation to the agency's mandate and to the needs of the countries in the region; ii) integration of the support in the working programme of the agency and its global theory of change; and iii) sufficient flexibility in the implementation of the funds, which given the case allowed their reorientation without losing sight of the objectives pursued.

Funding to specific areas of work made it possible to expand the scope of the organisations and was a lever for institutional change towards results-based management. However, the contribution to improving the efficiency of organisations and the sustainability of changes was limited by weak programme designs that did not affect the incentive structure.

The evaluations showed some limitations of the logic framework and results chains in planning and monitoring, especially in relation to policy dialogue. They also stated the need to take into account the different development stages of member States when designing results frameworks at the regional level. In addition, they stressed the importance of including in programme designs incentives and structures to foster cooperation between different institutional units in order to produce synergies.

Spanish Cooperation support to regional organisations has usually been based on the establishment of a fund and its management unit. Management units, formally integrated in the organisations' structure, serve at the same time as liaison with AECID.

Integration and collaboration between Spanish funds' management units and the organisations supported is more effective when: i) management units are located in structures related to strategic planning; ii) the number and profile of staff is adapted to both the characteristics of the organisation and Spanish support; iii) functions of the management unit are clearly defined for both parties; iv) fluid communication with AECID headquarters and country offices is in place.

The evaluations underline the importance of adjusting the partnership model and the workloads it implies with the organisations' capacities. Spanish support was aligned with the organisations' management systems and avoided the creation of parallel implementation structures.

Nevertheless, when internal capacities are limited, external funds can produce bottlenecks and lead to implementation delays.

On the other hand, Spanish funds' managers were responsible for supporting the organisations, but at the same time they reported to AECID on the performance of the programmes. This dual nature has some advantages: i) greater proximity to the organisations' decision-making structures which facilitated communication, dialogue and flexibility; and ii) boosting of the funds' objectives though technical assistance, contacts and networks. However it led to disadvantages when the scope of their mandate was not clear. A common understanding of responsibilities and reporting lines of funds' managers should be guaranteed in order to promote ownership and avoid misunderstandings about their loyalty.

2.2.2 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS WITH KNOWLEDGE SHARING COMPONENTS

For Spanish Cooperation PPPDs constitute an effective mechanism for providing public goods and services in a safe and accessible manner to the most disadvantaged populations, complementing public funds with private contributions. According to Spanish Cooperation IV Master Plan, "both the system's governing institutions and the rest of actors must work to overcome the traditional roles they have been assigned, notably the "donor/recipient" relationship, and strive to generate strategic partnerships where each actor can contribute its added value to help solve development challenges present in partner countries, building on clear and shared goals". This commitment has materialised, amongst other actions, in the adoption by AECID of a protocol for the management of public-private partnerships for development (PPPD) in 2013, and in the implementation of various initiatives that have led to collaborative action between the business sector and other stakeholders of the aid system. Knowledge sharing and mutual learning in the framework of these partnerships has been considered a key vector for promoting economic development and social change.

The three evaluations addressed here relate to interventions carried out in very different conditions and contexts:

The PPPD in Acobamba (Peru) was an initiative of territorial scope, whose general objective is to contribute to development and social inclusion in the province. It involved local public entities, Spanish and Peruvian NGOs, foundations linked to Spanish private companies and AECID through interventions in regional management, education, productive sectors, telecommunications services, improved governance and promotion of gender equality.

The ERICA programme, launched in 2006, was intended to contribute to greater equity in the Antioquia Department (Colombia), through the transfer of good practices in technology, business and local development between public and private stakeholders of Spain and Colombia.

The programme of support to Industrial Technology Centres (ITC) in Morocco for improving the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises was not conceived or executed as a PPPD. However, it brought together different types of Moroccan and Spanish partners and one of its main objectives was knowledge transfer.

Lesson 1. FOR THE PARTNERSHIP TO CREATE ADDED VALUE, A SHARED INITIAL DIAGNOSIS, A CONSENSUAL VISION ABOUT THE DESIRED CHANGE AND A WELL-ARTICULATED TRUST RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTIES ARE NECESSARY INGREDIENTS

The creation of added value requires going beyond sharing tasks. To enable the achievement of more ambitious results complementarity among the capacities and assets of the various stakeholders has to be promoted.

Trust, loyalty and common views are cornerstones for initiatives between various public and private stakeholders to work. To build confidence, agreements must be based on transparent relations and must be perceived as a mutual opportunity to capitalise on the advantages of each partner for the achievement of common objectives. A shared diagnosis, a holistic approach, a precise understanding of the purposes of the agreement, and careful preparatory work contribute to increasing the potential of this type of initiatives.

Lesson 2. IT IS IMPORTANT TO CARRY OUT A CAREFUL SELECTION OF PARTNERS AND TO ENSURE THE PERMANENT INVOLVEMENT OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR TO PROVIDE INCENTIVES AND GUIDELINES

For collaboration to create mutual benefits, each partner has to perceive that the others have complementary strengths that help to better achieve both its own and mutual goals. Proper and permanent involvement of the public sector either as a partner in the initiatives or as regulator is crucial to foster a climate of collaboration, to promote the adoption of best practices, to ensure alignment with inclusive policies and to foster sustainability.

Lesson 3. LIGHT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES, CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT ORGANISATIONAL PROCESSES AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ARE KEY ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

Building relationships between stakeholders who have different interests, experiences, social bases and strategic and operational visions requires identifying common goals, negotiating different expectations, accurately determining the involvement of everyone and establishing suitable working structures.

The establishment of mediation structures aimed at fostering strategic discussions and solving discrepancies contributes to the good performance of the initiatives. Internal and external communication strategies make it possible to visualise and share both learning and achievements, as well as to value the collaborative workspace.

AECID can play a facilitating role between stakeholders with different interests and visions, but it cannot be a substitute for the partners' leadership.

AECID's role as a mediator institution to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders was appreciated by the rest of the partners. Nevertheless, rendering the partnerships operational was more successful when managing structures were light, included both political and technical coordination and decision-making levels, and the commitment and efforts of all the partners were balanced.

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Lesson 4. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFERS SHOULD BE ADAPTED TO THE SPECIFIC CONTEXTS AND CAPACITIES OF THE RECIPIENTS, RELYING ON WELL ARTICULATED PROCESSES THAT ENSURE THEIR SUSTAINABILITY

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Compared to more traditional models of technical cooperation, knowledge sharing through collaborative platforms exploits the comparative advantages of each stakeholder and contributes to the establishment of more horizontal relations between partners, facilitating knowledge circulation and ensuring greater convergence of the different skills. However, for this process to be efficient and sustainable, transfers must be tailored to the capacities and features of the receiving environments.

The evaluation of the ERICA programme highlights the importance of carefully identifying local needs and potential fields of knowledge sharing, as well as proposing adjustments and considerations on the transfers presented by other partners through an assertive dialogue.

"Tropicalization" and customization of transfers through linguistic, institutional or legal adaptations allows setting up owned models. Therefore, transfers should not limit to a pilot phase, but they should expand their scope so that technical teams involving the different partners can also participate in the replication and scaling-up processes.

It is necessary to anticipate the risk of staff turnover and take steps to ensure that the acquired knowledge remains in the organisations.

High rotation of personnel trained in several of the Moroccan ITCs reduced the use of the knowledge transferred. The centres that attained greater sustainability were those that adopted mitigation strategies, involving a greater number of people in the activities of training and organising internal courses for the new employees.

In relation to the sustainability of knowledge gained through internships, the evaluation of the ERICA programme provides several guidelines:

- Internships must involve technical staff able to "absorb" learning from their previous knowledge and sectoral experience, and to develop deep and fruitful dialogue with their technical peers.

- Participants need to be committed to remaining in their organisations not just for the pilot phase, but also for a period that allows replication, customization and/or scaling up of the new competencies and activities.
- In the case of public institutions, civil servants should be given priority over senior managers and external consultants, given the greater mobility of the latter.
- The agenda has to be thoroughly set. It is not a matter of visiting an experience to get a superficial contact, but to deeply understand its context and functioning mechanisms. Identifying differences and similarities with the participants' context of origin is needed to making appropriate adjustments.
- With the aim of strengthening institutional memory and knowledge dissemination, participants in exchange programmes should be required to draft a comprehensive report on their return. Gained individual knowledge should also flow into the team through regular internal training sessions.

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