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SECRETARÍA DE ESTADO DE COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL Y PARA IBEROAMÉRICA  
SECRETARÍA GENERAL DE COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL PARA EL DESARROLLO





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## **CONTENTS**

### **I. LESSONS LEARNED**

1. Content and coverage of the exercise
2. Main lessons learned
3. Synthesis of conclusions of the evaluations analysed



## 1. CONTENT AND COVERAGE OF THE EXERCISE

*Lessons learned have been taken from six evaluations and four MOPAN assessments performed in 2013*

Learning in the Spanish Cooperation system can be promoted through the processing of information collected during the evaluation process. Learning starts in each individual evaluative process as the evaluation is performed, with the participation of those units directly linked with the intervention targeted for analysis, such that an exchange of information and knowledge is already initiated at this stage. However, a distinct time must be also set for reflection that can feed the system as a whole, providing the knowledge collected in evaluation reports in a manner appropriate to promote learning and better decision making, while also contributing to accountability.

Furthermore, strategic learning within the bosom of complex organisations implies moving beyond the outcomes of individual analysis and reflection exercises, including evaluations, and moving on toward a more global and aggregated overview of the processes. This broader review can lead to the extraction of a small group of key lessons to be applied at various levels within the organisation, contributing to the generation of broader change in institutional dynamics and practices. In the specific context of the 2013 Annual Evaluation Report, this exercise implies an examination of the full range of evaluations performed during the year to extract substantive elements. These can then be used to feed informed strategic decision-making at institution level in combination with other parallel processes.

All of the evaluations examined here consider periods in the recent past and it is therefore possible that some of the conclusions will need reinterpretation in the light of current contexts.

This section offers a synthesis of the main conclusions of the centralised evaluations reports and some specifically significant operational evaluations completed in 2013, as well as some interesting lessons learned for the Spanish Cooperation system as a whole. For ease of reading, the main ideas have been colour coded:

**Aspects that continue to constitute a challenge for the system**

**Aspects that have seen advances but require improvement**

**Positive aspects on which to build other possible efforts**

The content of this section is organised in three sections based on the characteristics of the various objects evaluated.

## Evaluations of regional organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean where Spanish Cooperation has been supporting specific funds or programmes<sup>1</sup>:

*These evaluations mainly concentrate on multilateral cooperation and the management of AECID programmatic aid has been also considered.*

- Joint evaluation of the Spain Fund for the OAS (2006-2011)
- Evaluation of the AECID-ECLAC Technical Cooperation Programmes (2007-2009)
- Evaluation of the Spain Fund-PAHO Essential Drugs Component (2009-2011)
- Mid-term Evaluation of the Spain Fund-SICA Management Model (2010-2013)

Performance Evaluation Reviews from the MOPAN network on multilateral organisations:

- Examination of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Examination of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- Examination of the World Food Programme (WFP)
- Examination of the World Health Organisation (WHO)

## Evaluation of Spanish Cooperation for Development in the Multilateral Setting (2009-2011)

This evaluation concentrated on identifying and evaluating the fundamental strategic processes that have shaped work in the multilateral setting in 2009 to 2011 from the internal perspective of Spanish Cooperation. This document offered significant content that complemented evaluations of the funds and programmes cited above. Although the evaluation report was published in 2014, it was approved in 2013, and has thus been considered appropriate for inclusion in this document.

## Evaluation of the Management of AECID Programmatic Aid (2005-2010)

This evaluation was initiated in 2011 and largely concentrated on programme aid management processes and mechanisms. It has been included in this analysis as the issue is relevant for Spanish Cooperation in general, even though it evaluates only AECID management and the evaluation ended in the previous year. No annual evaluation reports have yet been completed in 2012, and this one was published in March 2013.

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<sup>1</sup>The evaluation of the AECID-ECLAC Technical Cooperation Programmes of (2007-2009) and the midterm evaluation of the Spain Fund-SICA (2010-2013) management model were completed at the close of operations. However, they have been included in this analysis as they provide information that is complementary to the data from the centralised evaluations.



## 2. MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

Multilateral cooperation as a whole and the various funds in international organisations must be guided by a **clear strategic vision** to establish priorities, define objectives, guide action and resource distribution, guarantee coherence and links with bilateral cooperation, and consolidate the profile of Spain as a donor country.

All initiatives on planning and improvements in management must include a **concrete and realistic definition of the expected outcomes and how to achieve these**, clearly outlining processes to promote change and the underlying chain of logic on which the interventions are based.

As well as improving planning, the model adopted for management for development outcomes must be accompanied by **rigorous but simple monitoring and evaluation systems** that clearly show the progress and contribution to outcomes.

**Accountability on outcomes** needs a solid management system capable of providing detailed monitoring information on interventions from the outset until completion, not restricted to financial execution alone.

All of the above measures must be built upon an **adequate and well-defined institutional structure, duly coordinated and provided with the capacities required**, both at headquarters and in the field.

## 3. SYNTHESIS OF CONCLUSIONS ON THE EVALUATIONS ANALYSED

### 3.1. EVALUATIONS OF MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND FUNDS

***Evaluations of funds supported by Spanish Cooperation within the regional organisations of Latin America and the Caribbean have clearly shown how the initial assumption of commitments and political alliances has evolved toward a more concrete and institutionalised relationship between Spain and these organisations, although with unequal outcomes.***

There are obvious differences between individual organisations, but some degree of historical baggage can be seen in past collaboration between Spanish Cooperation and regional organisations. A group of funds have been generated in the past few years to consolidate previous relationships from a more strategic perspective, but the outcomes of this approach have been unequal. The Spain Fund-SICA evaluation shows second phase funding (2010-2013) as positive, responding well to the challenges posed and contributing to consolidation of the Central America-Spain association model. Meanwhile, the Spain Fund-OAS evaluation clearly shows the impact of the 'empty structure' of the Fund in the early days. The status of the fund is now more clearly defined on the basis of the initiatives and projects financed although there is no definite strategic framework in place yet to guide its activities.

Some of the evaluations demonstrate internal coherence between institutional mandates and programme actions, and the AECID-ECLAC Technical Cooperation Programmes and Spain Fund-SICA cooperation schemes provide good examples of this. However, the PAHO Essential Drug Fund has some limitations, and the evaluation clearly reveals that while planning for this component obeys the regional programming perspective, it does not respond to planning needs at sub-regional or country levels.

The breadth of priorities and purposes for the regional funds and programmes also limits opportunities for identifying outcomes and indicators and for assessing the project selection process. In the Spain Fund-OAS initiative in particular, the competitive logic and concentration on 'last minute' projects has had negative repercussions on quality that could be related directly to the breadth of range in lines of action.

Some limitations have been found in coordination between the various types of interventions, as is the case between the PAHO Fund essential drugs component and other drug-related activities supported by AECID.

The Spain Fund-SICA report states that this partnership has helped the institutions supported to promote harmonisation between donors and some advances have been made in coordination



with other actors. Conversely, the Spain Fund-OAS evaluation stresses the absence of harmonisation between donors, with information exchange largely dependent upon goodwill and lacking any formality or structure.

***The evaluations reviewed clearly show improvement in the management processes of multilateral organisations and supported funds.***

Progress and improvement can be seen in the management systems of several of the organisations evaluated. The WFP has implemented improvements in both budget assignation and human resource management. IDAF has started to decentralise the decision-making processes and improve human resource management. WHO has started to establish norms and to manage meetings and regulations better, while PAHO has improved on the management of planned activities and budgeting. ECLAC technical cooperation programmes show good budget implementation and efficient financial monitoring mechanisms. However, some scenarios still show limitations in financial foresight that could hamper the quality of management and interventions. While foresight has improved in the WFP, it continues to be poor in the Spain Fund-OAS.

***This review has revealed plenty of room for improvement in the coordination of regional funds and programmes financed by Spanish Cooperation, above all in technical levels linked to management.***

Coordination was clearly visible at the highest levels of the funds in several instances, but this tended to be expressed in terms of global policy coherence that did not lead to any significant functions or competences in the strategic management of processes, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, resulting in limitations on potential. For example, the Spain Fund-SICA evaluation identifies a high level of interaction between actors in the two parties, while the Monitoring Commission has provided an institutional space for policy and strategy coordination.

There are also major problems with coordination at operational levels. For instance, the Spain Fund-SICA evaluation clearly states that the entity responsible for coordination between the actors involved in Fund actions has failed to perform this role and that it did not have the necessary technical and administrative capacities. These functions have fallen onto other organisations and the coordination processes have been affected as a result. The PAHO essential drug component evaluation also identified coordination between PAHO and AECID at the sub-regional and country level as a point for improvement. Lastly, the ECLAC technical cooperation evaluation found that good coordination between AECID and ECLAC has facilitated programme management, but on the whole, instances of interprogramme cooperation with other actors are found to be weak or non-existent.

The Spain Fund-OAS evaluation states that the relevance of the manager role is directly related to how well their profile fits the context and the amount of support they receive. The report



therefore recommends that the position, status and location of the role form part of negotiations prior to the creation of new funds, and also when recruiting a replacement manager.

***Weakness in the underlying logic of the interventions forms a fundamental limitation that is aggravated, in some cases, by difficulties in incorporating management for development outcomes. This affects the remainder of the management process and impacts upon the monitoring processes, information on outcomes, evaluation and accountability.***

The design and specification of the underlying logic chain of the interventions is unequal, and there is generally room for improvement in all of the evaluations reviewed. We found some cases in which the establishment of objectives appears adequate and flexible (ECLAC) and where this is well evaluated, but the logical framework to guide action is either weak (WFP, WHO), not shared by all the actors (Spain Fund-SICA) or non-existent (Spain Fund-OAS). It is also worth looking at the processes of change or evolution within the organisations. For example, in the WFP, the transition from food aid toward a broader approach to the food aid system has not yet been captured in the mission statement and has not been adequately transmitted to interested parties either. Positive progress has occurred in ECLAC, where the report clearly identifies an improvement in a logical framework that was initially weak but that has seen advances made in each new phase of the programme.

The difficulties encountered in establishing logical frameworks that contribute to outcomes are far more evident when these are applied in monitoring systems. Such systems are expected to produce information on possible advances toward development outcomes, but several of the organisations evaluated (WFP, IDAF, WHO, ADB, SICA) show a preference for outcome-oriented management that fundamentally remains at the political and strategic level.

At the technical level, difficulties are found in both multilateral development organisations and Spanish-backed funds within the regional organisations, fundamentally in terms of the limited evaluability of actions and available data. Actions cannot be adequately evaluated if the intervention logic and results chains are not defined appropriately at the planning phase and if robust indicators are not available.

In some cases, the quality of planning has been improved, but the outcome chains are not well enough defined and robust indicators are not available for the expected outcomes. To be rigorous these need to allow measurement while providing benchmarks and targets as evidence of progress toward the same. There are also limitations in obtaining field data due to staff shortages, the lack of technical capacity within the organisations and their partner countries, or to insufficiently well-defined operational planning at country level. Results-oriented budgeting also operates on the assumption of there being a shared challenge between the multilateral development organisations.



Evaluation has improved in some of the organisations studied, although the situation is far from homogeneous. In some cases (IDAF, WFP) the evaluation function, the work performed by the responsible office and the independence shown are recognised and a high value is attributed to them. In other cases, as with the WHO, significant progress is seen but this is still hampered by limitations in terms of coverage and the quality of the evaluations completed by the entity. The example of the Spain Fund-OAS shows how Spanish Cooperation has contributed to reinforcing the role of the organisations responsible for planning and evaluation.

***Evaluations of regional funds and programmes have clearly shown a need to continue advancing toward greater sustainability in the interventions supported.***

Data from the SICA and ECLAC reports indicate limited sustainability linked, above all, to two factors. In the AECID-ECLAC programmes, sustainability has been facilitated by political support from national authorities and the leveraging of resources to ensure continuity. Technical assistance initiatives have been a main contributing element in deepening impact and increasing the sustainability of actions. In the same vein, the Spain Fund-SICA evaluation stresses the value placed upon capacity generation for process sustainability and the continuity of the dynamics generated. The Spain Fund-OAS report clearly shows greater limitations in this sense, with very low sustainability despite the value attributed to the actions.

### **3.2. EVALUATION OF SPANISH COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE MULTILATERAL SETTING (2009-2011)**

***Although Spanish Cooperation has gradually increased in commitment to the multilateral modality, the underlying strategy does not yet clearly determine the profile Spain wishes to assume as a donor, the objective sought and the conditions needed to achieve these.***

Almost all of the actors interviewed during the evaluation process have agreed that multilateral cooperation is a relevant part of Spanish cooperation for development that must be maintained and reinforced. It must therefore have its own objectives, clearly linked to added value and Spain's participation in governance of the multilateral system.

The evaluation has clearly shown that while Spain's role as a donor is relevant in many ways, there is no strategic outline to clearly define the profile of Spain as a donor and to underpin decision-making. The relationship with institutional architecture and competence distribution is not established either, nor are criteria in place to guide the prioritisation and concentration processes. Aspects such as the distribution between various funding modalities (regular or irregular) and promoting the access of Spanish staff to multilateral development organisations are not covered.

***Despite improvements in strategic planning, limitations can still be seen in the framework for the management of multilateral cooperation for development in terms of: the structure (institutional anchorage, distribution of functions and human resources), processes and mechanisms to achieve implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.***

The many efforts made to improve planning, monitoring and evaluation of cooperation for development in the multilateral setting have not been duly sustained within an adequate, stable and strong organic and functional structure adapted to the requirements and complexities of the multilateral modality.

These strategic partnership frameworks are the outcome of concerted effort in design and conceptualisation. They aim to achieve greater harmonisation with entity planning and to contribute to the development of a more consolidated multilateral profile in Spain. However, they have not managed to guarantee the inclusion of foresight in planning or the monitoring of outcome frameworks. The other documents foreseen for the planning process (annual international cooperation plan, multi-annual budget programming) have not sufficiently fulfilled the planning function and they have not been used for the monitoring of multilateral action.

The complimentary relationship between bilateral and multilateral aid in the field has been one of the main concerns of Spanish Cooperation throughout the period analysed, but this does not appear to have been achieved yet and there is no evidence that the country partnership frameworks (CPF) will be able to shape this.

***Spain's profile as an international donor has been reinforced as a result of the Spanish Cooperation commitment to initiatives that improve the multilateral development system. However, the outcomes of these initiatives have been limited and unequal, they have not been sufficiently capitalised upon, nor have they fed into actions on accountability as there is no underlying strategy on which to hang these.***

The multilateral development organisations generally value the participation of Spain in their management and governance decision-making processes in a reasonably positive manner. The



active role of Spanish Cooperation is valued in many settings, specifically in its role in the initiation of the MDG-F and involvement in the creation of UN Women.

However, there is still plenty of room for improvement in initiatives supported by Spanish Cooperation in the multilateral setting for system reform within in the United Nations. These include the Delivering as One initiative, the MDG-F and UN Women. Currently, the main weaknesses lie in the poor integration of lessons learned, persisting problems of verticality and unilaterality in joint programming, poor foresight and the complexities of restructuring.

Lastly, accountability has been negatively affected by limited dissemination of the characteristics, advantages and challenges of multilateral cooperation between Spanish Cooperation actors over this period, but also by the fact that this concept is still limited to the idea of financial control rather than to information on the achievement of outcomes. As a result, only limited advances have been made on this matter throughout the period evaluated.

### 3.3. EVALUATION OF THE MANAGEMENT OF AECID PROGRAMMATIC AID (2005-2010)

***Programming assistance has been gaining weight as a cooperation perspective, in line with the Directive Plans and in accordance with the international commitments assumed (the Paris, Accra and Busan declarations), even though institutional anchorage and the organisational structure could be improved in order to bring these into practice.***

Application of this perspective has advanced significantly within AECID and, although programmatic aid is not well represented within the institutional programming framework, the related operations are coherent with sector priorities indicated in the second and third Directive Plans. A significant improvement has been seen in design quality of operations, but there are still weaknesses in terms of the systemisation of processes and protocols, foresight of funding and the incorporation of cross-cutting perspectives.

Some elements would appear to suggest this work modality is to some extent anchored within the AECID mode of action, but there are some obvious uncertainties in relation to sustainability.

***This cooperation modality must continue to be reinforced in line with international commitments such as the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Alliance for Effective Development Cooperation, including the various master plans of Spanish Cooperation, as this approach has provided evidence of results linked to the application of international principles on aid effectiveness.***

AECID is the only actor within Spanish Cooperation to have clearly adopted this cooperation modality (even though it is still quite a long way from the aims outlined in the Paris Declaration and the Third Master Plan) and weaknesses still exist in relation to transparency and accountability to civil society and the Spanish parliament.

The programme-based nature of this form of aid has contributed to improved performance in Spanish ODA in terms of the Paris Declaration principles on alignment with partner countries. The effects of AECID programmatic aid in the partner countries analysed in these case studies are varied, but it can generally be inferred that programmatic aid operations have contributed positively to the promotion of leadership in the partner countries, a focus based on sector policy dialogue and the reduction of transaction costs for partner countries.



***Despite the advances achieved in the technical and management quality of programmatic aid operations, evaluation outcomes show the systematisation of information linked to this process is not sufficiently well organised.***

The technical and management quality of programmatic aid operations have clearly improved during the period covered by the evaluation, but the management processes and procedures of the programmatic aid operations are not sufficiently systematised. The information is dispersed and there is no established criteria for organising this.

Other related documents in:

[www.cooperacionespanola.es/publicaciones](http://www.cooperacionespanola.es/publicaciones)



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