

23. JOINT EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF THE SPANISH STRATEGY FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

SYNTHESIS REPORT



Edition: January 2018

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Secretary of State for International Cooperation and for Iberoamerica and
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General Directorate of Sustainable Development Policies

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NIPO on-line: 502-18-006-5
NIPO paper: 502-18-004-4
Legal deposit: M-4568-2018

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This document is the Summary Report for the Evaluation carried out by NODUS Consultores SL (NODUS) on the Strategy for Humanitarian Action pursued by Spanish development aid organisations (hereinafter, "Spanish Cooperation") in 2007.

The report discusses the Purpose and the Objectives of the Evaluation. It provides an overview of the methodology used, a summary of the Conclusions, and, lastly, the Recommendations centred on a new Strategy as proposed by NODUS.

I. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

I.1 PURPOSE

The evaluation has as its goal the fulfilment of the specific objectives contained in the Strategy in question, as listed below.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Specific Objective 1:

Improve the capability and effectiveness of humanitarian action by Spanish Cooperation by increasing the quantity and quality of the assistance provided.

Specific Objective 2:

Improve the relationships and coordination mechanisms among all the involved stakeholders, fostering greater participation by civil society.

Specific Objective 3:

Increase the support of Spanish Cooperation for other international initiatives in the field.

Specific Objective 4:

Contribute to the risk reduction and the fight against extreme vulnerability, articulating short-term responses with medium- and long-term measures.

Specific Objective 5:

Foster the inclusion of Humanitarian Action among all Spanish Cooperation organisations as a whole, in a manner that respects its specific nature, yet boosting synergies with similar instruments.

Specific Objective 6:

Contribute to a greater national and international awareness of the need to prevent and respond to disasters of all kinds more effectively.

1.2 OBJETIVES

The objectives for the evaluation were the following:

1. Provide an independent assessment of the level of attainment of the specific objectives, as well as of the use of the normative framework provided in the Strategy.
2. Identify lessons learned, and make strategic and operational recommendations that provide useful, diligent, and evidence-based information for the development of a new Strategy for Humanitarian Action.

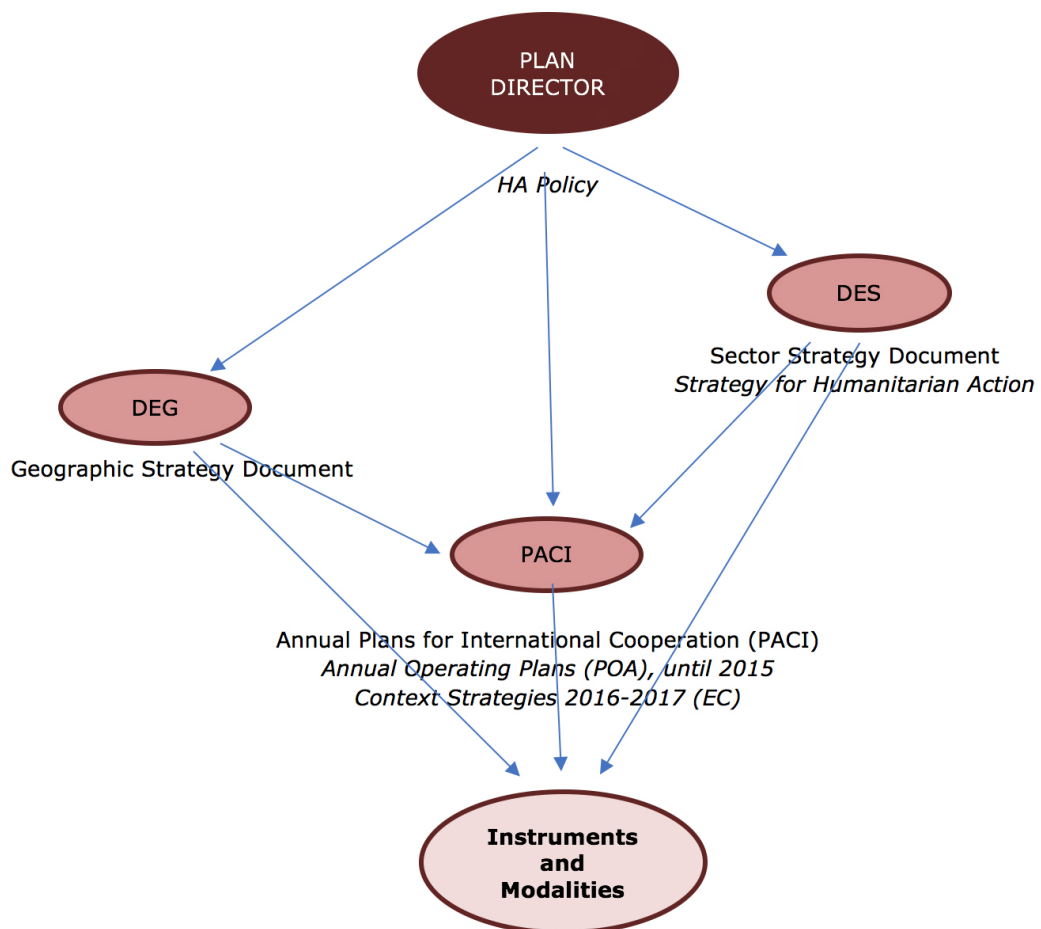
Additionally, the level of compliance during the period of the fundamental guidelines of the Grand Bargain (GB), signed by Spain in 2016, was considered.

This retrospective analysis provides valuable information for the upcoming new strategy that will be developed.

2. CONTEXT AND SCOPE

To put the purpose of the evaluation into a proper framework, it is most meaningful to view Strategy within the context of overall Spanish Cooperation planning. To that end, the planning approach and the Policy – Strategy – Planning – Instruments relationships were taken as the frame of reference, as included in the Management Review Manual used by Spanish Cooperation (2007).

The planning stages for formulating Spanish Cooperation Policy, tailored to Humanitarian Action (HA)



The time period covered by the evaluation corresponds to that between 2007 and 2016; that is, the ten years since the Strategy was approved.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach utilized for the study can be summarized briefly as consisting in:

1. Phases of the evaluation.
2. Research methods.

3.1 EVALUATION PHASES

The evaluation process was structured into three phases:

Phase I

In which a descriptive analysis of the actors, stages, and essential features of Strategy execution was carried out.

This descriptive phase enabled characterizing humanitarian action during the period under scrutiny for the evaluation, based on the information available in the Official Development Assistance (OAD) Information System of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC), Info@OD.

Phase 2

Phase 2 consisted in the analysis of the attainment of the Strategy objectives, of its priorities across domains - especially regarding gender, and of the Grand Bargain, in this case with a retrospective approach.

Its goal was to answer the five questions raised in the evaluation:

Question 1: To what extent have the specific strategy objectives been met, understood as the level of realization of the Priority Actions established for each one of them?

Question 2: Have the instruments established in the Strategy been adequate to meet its Objectives, given the normative framework, the principles and values, and the quality priorities and criteria that guide humanitarian action by Spanish Cooperation?

Question 3: To what extent do the instruments and humanitarian aid measures undertaken by Spanish Cooperation during the analysis period meet the criteria established in the Grand Bargain?

Question 4 and 5: To what extent have funds earmarked for humanitarian aid efforts been sensitive to gender inequalities in this domain? How have gender issues been handled, and how has the participation of women in humanitarian action been promoted?

An evaluation of the other three priorities mentioned; namely, human rights, respect for cultural diversity, and environmental sustainability were added to these two questions on gender.

Phase 3

In which we proceeded to formulate our conclusions, discuss the lessons learned, and make recommendations for the next Strategy for Humanitarian Action.

To that end, opinions were gathered from a selection of informants, available documentation and data was consulted, and the criteria of NODUS, as the agency charged with undertaking the evaluation, were all considered.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

The following approaches were employed:

1. Review of Documents and Data Analysis

Data and statistics.

Even given its limitations, the Info@OD database has allowed drawing up a picture of humanitarian efforts, its major changes and phases, and the relationship among agents, instruments, channels, regions, and other variables of interest.

Documents and reports.

The most relevant to the study were:

- Legal documents, international agreements, and the provisions therein.
- The Agreements signed by Spanish Cooperation with Multilateral Organizations (MM. OO.) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO).
- Documents and internal reports of a strategic or operational nature: Strategy and Master Plans, Annual Plans for International Cooperation (PACI), Annual Operating Plans (POA), as well as the Context Strategies (EC), activity reports, Associated Country Frameworks (MAP), protocols and intervention manuals, internal notes, etc.
- The evaluations of the response given by the Office of Humanitarian Action (OAH) in certain crisis and, in general terms, the Peer Reviews of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- National and international specialized literature and the conclusions from forums and congresses on humanitarian action.

2. Interviews

As a basic tool, semi-structured interviews tailored to the people interviewed were used. These interviews were performed individually and in groups, based on what was considered most pertinent to the evaluation. An attempt was made to understand the context, gather opinions and assessments, verify the data, and, above all, correctly interpret the execution of the Strategy objectives.

The people interviewed were selected from among those suggested at the beginning of the evaluation, a list to which the evaluation team added more candidates. Interview sessions were arranged with representatives of:

- The OAH, at its headquarters, involving both its current staff and those in charge since its establishment, as well as experts in the field.
- The Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), involving different areas, levels of responsibility and stages during the period under scrutiny.
- The General Directorate of Sustainable Development Policies (DGPOLDES).
- The General Directorate of the United Nations and Human Rights.
- The Ministry of Defence.
- Autonomous Communities.
- Multilateral Organizations.
- Non-Governmental Organizations.
- Research institutes.

3. Groups and Seminars

This third technique was used with the technical staff at OAH headquarters, and in the field (Technical Cooperation Offices, OTC).

4. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the main conclusions regarding the fulfilment of the objectives of the evaluation.

4.1 STRATEGY FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

The evaluation takes both specific objectives and transversal priorities into account.

4.1.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE I

Improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of humanitarian action of the Spanish Cooperation by increasing the quantity and quality of the assistance provided.

I. Trends in financial resource endowment have profoundly shaped both the attainment of Strategy objectives and the workings of Spanish humanitarian action.

Starting at 4.7% in 2007, the objective of dedicating 7% of total ODA resources to humanitarian action was reached in 2011, as established in the Strategy. Starting in 2012, the falloff was dramatic, both in monetary terms and in HA relevance within the OAD, to around 3%, the level at which it has remained since 2013.

In the first stage of rapid growth in access to funds, the system was not yet prepared, nor did it have the ability to derive the best outcomes in their use, among other things, in terms of organisational learning, focus, and the pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness, notwithstanding the efforts made by Spanish Cooperation.

The sharp reduction in effect since 2012 seriously impacted the actions and engagement in international efforts that had been carried out up to that point.

This negative impact forced a reduction in activity and narrowing in focus, from the point of view of the geographical actions, partners, and actors, while leading to renewed efforts to maintain an active profile despite the lack of funds. That is to say, the new situation translated into a reordering of actions undertaken, although still suffering under the weight of budget reductions.

2. The tools and procedures used and created during the period have improved the ability to undertake humanitarian action, as well as its efficiency, effectiveness, and predictability. In addition to the Emergency Agreements, already in place since 2006, the possibilities offered by the public funding procedures **provided under RD 794/2010 allow for a level of agility and flexibility quite suited to the characteristic of Humanitarian Action**, especially in newly emerging crises.

The usual agreements with NGOs, used in shared actions within the development field, constitute a valuable resource that is both remarkable and susceptible to greater use in the context of long-term crises, providing the desired predictability.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the call for NGOs for Humanitarian Action projects that was implemented in 2017.

3. The reform and strengthening of the AECID in the areas relating to humanitarian action has proceeded apace, and it is in this area that there are some **relevant points**, among which the following can be cited:

a. **The development of the OAH and its presence on the ground** in the form of experts working on the crises considered as meriting special attention by Spanish Cooperation, located in the Technical Coordination Office (OTC), where they can be **easily integrated into the general context of external action** by the MAEC, and contribute to **coordination with other actors**, both those from Spanish Cooperation as a whole, and those of international scope.

This development took place based on planning and strategies tailored to the new realities and possibilities, especially with the approaches set in motion in 2012 regarding crisis areas prioritized by Spanish Cooperation, incorporating strategic objectives, expected results, actions to be carried out, selected actors, and measurable indicators, and using a biennial horizon in the 2016-2017 Context Strategies.

b. **Technical skills and training in humanitarian action of the OAH is valued**, according to all the people interviewed, among whom it enjoys professional prestige, **although both areas are considered to be susceptible to improvement in other areas of Spanish Cooperation**, both at the AECID and the DGPOLDES.

In this last area, the need for specifically assigned responsibilities in humanitarian action is considered critical, in line with the importance given to humanitarian actions, and taking into account the role that DGPOLDES plays as a body for establishing policy and strategy and, additionally, evaluating Spanish Cooperation, among whose remit lies humanitarian action.

An increase in training in the AECID could contribute to the much-needed dialog regarding the relationship between development and humanitarian actions, which came up on several occasions during the evaluation, and which includes international standards and guidelines, in addition to the Strategy itself.

4. The operational and strategic planning mentioned, as well as the definition of policies, require a **monitoring system** that supports them, not currently the case. The people interviewed stated that **improvement of the current system is an organisational priority**, not just in the case of humanitarian action.

The initiative of the OAH, in collaboration with the Planning, Efficiency and Quality Unit (PEQU), to work on the development of a technical monitoring system for projects and programmes focused on deliverables is an indication of the concern for planning, knowledge of results, and accountability that is considered crucial, although it does not replace or interfere with a general supervisory approach.

5. Around 2012, **evaluations** of the response to humanitarian crises by the Spanish Cooperation and resilience were made. The time elapsed since then, as well as the absence of an evaluation methodology tailored to the specific nature of humanitarian action, lead to the perception that **opportunities for continuous improvement and the formulation of proper considerations for policy and strategic development of Spanish humanitarian action are being lost**.

6. The **earmarking of funds**, which **was substantial during the period**, has begun to **decrease in recent years**, along the lines proposed by the Strategy and on which the Grand Bargain has insisted.

7. **The support to local structures** has not followed the intended upward trend. This is an issue involving multiple considerations. Among others, because it can compromise the effectiveness of aid itself, when these structures are not consolidated which in turn concerns the relationship between development and humanitarian actions.

8. The results found indicate that the ESFERA and COMPAS quality criteria **are indeed being taken into account**.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2

Improve the relationships and coordination mechanisms among all the involved parties, fostering greater participation by civil society.

In general, there is a suitable level of relationship and coordination, although in large part this is not institutionalized. The conclusions presented address the specific agencies and actors involved.

9. In the context of **the relationship among the General Public Administration (hereinafter, “AGE”) institutions, coordination and relationship mechanisms are operative, although most of them are informal**, with frequent use of *ad hoc* commissions in the face of crises and emergency situations. Areas for improvement in its institutionalization were highlighted, whose modification would have a positive impact on the effectiveness in the articulation of the Spanish response, independently of the people who occupy the different roles and responsibilities at any given moment. The main actors in this area would be the MAEC, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Defense.

10. **A similar conclusion about this relationship** emerges in the context of the MAEC, although in this area, the areas for improvement found include the aforementioned formal **assignment of responsibility** for humanitarian action to an individual within **DGPOLDES**.

11. With regard to the **AECID**, there is potential for improvement referred to **formalized development-humanitarian coordination** within the institution, which should provide a **positive impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of aid as a whole**.

12. **In the case of Autonomous Communities, various means have been put in place to coordinate and take advantage of available capabilities, despite the political and institutional complexity** that the relationship entails, and is still a work in progress.

13. The coordination and relationship with **humanitarian NGOs, as it is being managed, is seen to contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness** of Spanish humanitarian action.

14. **The relationship with international organisations and institutions** is considered to be **positive by both parties**, with the process of prioritizing a group of these actors acting as an influence on the ordering of this relationship.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3

Increase the support of Spanish Cooperation for other international initiatives in the field.

15. The total amount of ODA allocated to multilateral organizations **has trended in in the same direction as that of the entire HA field; respecting prior commitments**, adjusting amounts when needed, and following Strategy recommendations regarding the organisations to be prioritized.

16. Spanish influence on multilateral organizations could be improved. The fluctuation in the availability of resources has affected their perception as going from being among the top donors to being very marginal. This perception extends to the overall international political positioning of Spain. The budget reduction is still in place. At the OAH level, including presence in the field, a significant level of relationship and influence is recognized, especially taking into account the decrease in financial resources.

17. The role played by Spain in humanitarian diplomacy is recognized internationally.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4

Contribute to the reduction of risk and the fight against extreme vulnerability, articulating short-term responses with medium- and long-term measures.

18. The actions included in this objective concerning the risk reduction and strengthening of local structures do not stand out among the priorities of Spanish Cooperation in humanitarian action in terms of the resources dedicated.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5

To frame the role of HA in Spanish Cooperation as a whole in an appropriate way, maintaining its specific focus, while promoting synergies with the rest of the initiatives.

19. The incorporation and training of experts in humanitarian action in the field, integrated into the field offices and respective Embassies, is a remarkable achievement.

20. During the AECID geographic planning process, the interaction humanitarian-development can be appreciated. The OAH and the Geographical Directorates participate both in the design of the Partner Country Frameworks and in OAH Context Strategies, which is the appropriate procedure for this. However, the final result does not reflect the full use of the possibilities for synergy between both sides of the cooperation, so this institutionalized mechanism may not be sufficient.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 6

Contribute to a greater national and international awareness of the need to prevent and respond more effectively to disasters of all kinds.

21. The existence in Spanish Cooperation of a **communication strategy aimed at general public awareness of humanitarian action**, including the objectives to be achieved, the target population, the means and their associated costs, including opportunity cost, has not been established. A good deal of information is provided for Parliament, and the seminars and meetings are encouraged, although they are mainly attended by a specialized audience. On the other hand, the statements received indicate that it is not evident that the general public demands such communication.

4.1.2 TRANSVERSAL PRIORITIES

22. Transversal priorities **have been gradually incorporated into the formulation and execution of humanitarian actions**. The opinions of the people interviewed, and the continuity in international commitments show a clear will to institutionalize a focus on gender as a prevalent feature of Spanish humanitarian action. The data, in turn, confirm the increasing presence of the "significant" and "principal" values associated with gender, reaching 50% of funding in 2014. Therefore, the focus on a gender-aware approach in needs analysis and design of response objectives is increasing, but there is no information to assess how this approach is being integrated into the execution of humanitarian action, nor what changes it produces.

23. **The introduction of environmental sustainability objectives** can also be observed, **especially with respect to the disaster prevention and preparedness phase**. There is no data related to funding or monitoring related to human rights nor to cultural diversity in humanitarian action, although field work indicates that these are aspects to which the humanitarian aid sector is sensitive, and they are taken into account in the interventions.

4.2 THE GRAND BARGAIN

24. Considering the objective sought through a retrospective analysis of compliance, it can be said that the **objectives laid down in the Grand Bargain exist in Spanish Cooperation in seminal form or as an emerging trend**.

25. Other concerns are not yet as considered, such as those related to the use of local structures and the participation of aid beneficiaries, which would be two of the many areas that the Grand Bargain touches upon, and which are right now underdeveloped. The same can be said about the relationship between humanitarian action and development, and on resilience, where the GB places great emphasis.

26. In Spanish Cooperation, regarding transparency in the use of aid, there has been a will to promote transparency, and an important work has been done in the public presentation of data and reports. There is a way to go in terms of monitoring, the availability of useful information to make decisions, and knowledge management for organisational learning.

The Grand Bargain is a guide for the future, notwithstanding the fact that some of its objectives may be contradictory. Requiring quality and transparency in aid may not favour the use of local structures, for example; or limit the use of non earmarked funds in contexts where there is little information or ability to influence.

5. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. STRATEGY FORMULATION AND DESIGN

1. Carry out a **strategic plan**, with a determined timeline and termination date. It is suggested that its **period of validity be the same as that of the Master Plan**, on which the Strategy must be grounded; namely, four years. This period, in addition to **facilitating coherence with Policy**, is a period of time that permits an extended timeline for execution, as well as for **updating** the strategic plan according to both any new policy that is decided, and vary with the evolution in circumstances that specifically affect humanitarian action.
2. Employ measurable and sufficiently defined **compliance indicators**, concrete enough to allow for their **monitoring and evaluation**, as well as the use of **operational plans**, annual or biennial, for the organisational units in charge of execution. **These units** should, in turn, specify the indicators and increase their level of detail in planning, **allowing them to be used as a management, monitoring and accountability tool**.
3. Consider the **possibility of including** in the Strategy the humanitarian actions that fall under the responsibility of **other bodies of the AGE** different from the MAEC; for example, the Ministry of the Interior, or the Ministry of Defense. Also, realistically consider the inclusion of **Decentralized Cooperation**.

These recommendations are mainly directed to the actors responsible for the conception and elaboration of Strategy: **DGPOLDES, MAEC**.

2. COORDINATION

4. Consider the implementation of **stable bodies or operative mechanisms for coordination** in the AGE, among which the following are worthy of note:
 - a. A **Commission for Humanitarian Action** composed of the MAEC, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of the Interior, to coordinate the execution and the monitoring of overall humanitarian action of the State. This Commission would also facilitate compliance with OAH's mandate to coordinate Spanish humanitarian action, as established in the AECID Statute.

b. A specific formal and institutionalized mechanism for synergy, coordination, and complementarity between humanitarian action and development aid. Its activity would be as much at the level of the general scope of Cooperation, as well as for fleshing out the relation between humanitarian action and development by geographic area. This mechanism could also contribute to a broadening in the overall role of humanitarian action in Spanish Cooperation.

5. Continue the development of the relationship and coordination with **Decentralized Cooperation, taking advantage of the potential for existing synergies among all actors** and their **influence on the effectiveness** of Spanish humanitarian action.

These recommendations involve a large number of organisms, among which a relevant position of the **MAEC**, the **AECID** and the **OAH** is suggested.

3. INSTRUMENTS AND ACTION PROCEDURES

6. **Maintain the use of the Grant procedures** included in Royal Decree 794/2010. Inclusion of the use of these procedures in the evaluations carried out on humanitarian action would, we suggest, help to maintain transparency in its delivery.

7. **Retain the existing Emergency Agreements**, expanding them to the extent that financial resources so permit.

8. **Consider greater use of the usual agreements with NGOs** in the field of **humanitarian action**, especially for long-term crises, emergency preparedness, and in cases where the potential for a humanitarian-development and resilience approach can be observed.

9. Continue with the **calls for specific projects for humanitarian action**.

These recommendations would involve the **MAEC**, the **AECID**, and the **OAH**.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES, CAPABILITY AND RESOURCES

10. We **recommend revising the definition of what is considered humanitarian action** for the purposes of Spanish Cooperation. The objective is to reduce the grey areas between humanitarian and development efforts, as well as the problems that may arise from their interaction, and take into account the evolution that humanitarian action is undergoing at the international level.

11. Based on the previous recommendation, we suggest **reviewing the roles and responsibilities, resources, and organisation charts of the organisational units most directly involved in humanitarian action, especially:**

- OAH: revise the **organisation chart and modify staffing** to meet current and future responsibilities, based on the review suggested in the previous point, and as defined in the new Master Plan and in the new Strategy. This recommendation includes humanitarian experts in the field, since they have a functional dependence on OAH.
- DGPOLDES: Consider the convenience of specifying a **role/responsibility for a specialist in humanitarian action**.
- Other Directorates or Departments of the MAEC and the AECID that are affected by any revision in the definition of humanitarian action.

12. Maintain and reinforce, depending on needs, specialized training for:

- Experts in the field, not only with respect to strictly humanitarian issues, but also in relation to the functions performed by coordinating actors and their participation in meetings or committees.
- DGPOLDES.
- Other related bodies within Spanish Cooperation, basically part of the AECID, independently of the possibility that their personnel might voluntarily have access to the AECID Training Plan.

These recommendations would involve the **MAEC**, the **DGPOLDES**, the **AECID**, and the **OAH**.

5. FOLLOW-UP

13. Consider the **advisability of improving the tracking system and the feeding of information** into the Info@OD.

If the next Strategy is carried out following the recommendations set out at the beginning of this report, it will be necessary to put in place a system of measurable indicators that allow verification of the level of compliance during execution, to assess the desirability of its updating, and to examine results, as inputs into formulating the next Strategy and Master Plan.

This recommendation is addressed in particular to **DGPOLDES**.

6. EVALUATION

14. **Increase the frequency and scope of the evaluation** of Spanish humanitarian action, considering both the **actions taken in any given crisis**, as well as its **strategic plan** and, therefore, **management** of humanitarian action in its entirety.

This recommendation is addressed especially to **DGPOLDES**.

7. COOPERATING ACTORS

Considering **NGOs** and **Multilateral Organizations**, we propose:

15. Maintaining the process carried out regarding the **selection and concentration of qualified Cooperating Actors**, nationally and internationally, whose profile is **consistent with the Policy and Strategy of Spanish Cooperation in humanitarian action**. This suggestion is **independent of the volume of financial resources that the Government allocates**.

16. Analysing and evaluating the possibility of **multi-year financing**, as well as an increase in non **earmarked grants**, consonant with **commitments of international scope and the Grand Bargain**, but always **in the context of what is established in future policies (Master Plan) and Strategy**.

The recommendations included herein are addressed to **DGPOLDES, AECID, and OAH**.

8. PROTOCOLS, GUIDELINES, AND CODES OF CONDUCT

17. Creating additional **protocols** to add to existing ones:

- Coordination of Humanitarian actors
- Security for expatriates/humanitarian workers from the public and/or private sector
- Prevention of Child Exploitation and/or Abuse (PSEA)

18. Guidelines and codes of conduct:

- Guidelines for humanitarian work in conflict zones
- OTC contingency plans
- Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Aid and Emergency Missions

These recommendations are addressed to the **MAEC** and the **AECID**.

9. DISSEMINATION AND AWARENESS

19. This recommendation is addressed at **assessing the advisability of developing a dissemination and communication strategy** aimed at the general public, in which the initial aspects to consider are the analysis of the objectives pursued by the public sector, together with the opportunity cost of the use of public cooperation resources.

This recommendation is addressed to the **AECID**.

10. TRANSVERSAL PRIORITIES

The main issue with respect to these priorities is to promote their integration at the core of humanitarian action.

20. Promote a **more strategic approach**. Humanitarian action has been very sensitive to international commitments and initiatives, but it would improve with a **prioritization that guides the projects on which to concentrate efforts**.

21. **Monitor the implemented actions aimed to institutional learning and decision-making**, thereby improving the availability of information on the efficacy of any action, which is critical to the success of all priorities.

These recommendations are addressed to **DGPOLDES, AECID** and **OAH**.

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

