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EVALUATION OF THE “PORTUGUESE COOPERATION IN
THE STATISTICAL FIELD (1998-2008)”

Executive Summary

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The focus of this evaluation report is Portuguese Cooperation programs with the PALOP (Portuguese-speaking African Countries) grouping in the field of statistics and undertaken under the auspices of the Bilateral Agreements for the period 1998-2008 and the Portuguese Complementary Project (PCP) to the II Regional Indicative Programme (RIP-PALOP) for the period 2004-2008. The core objective is to evaluate the contribution made by Portuguese Cooperation to boosting the capacities of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) of the five countries.

The carrying out of this evaluation in particular focused upon capturing the major results of the cooperation programs given these had not been appropriately established whether in terms of design, objectives and monitoring indicators, therefore limiting the scope of a more objective analysis, particularly in terms of effectiveness and impacts.

Portuguese statistics cooperation with PALOP member states

Bilateral cooperation with PALOP members in the period 1998-2008 identified the modernisation of partner state NSSs as a global objective in conjunction with bringing about capacity building at official statistics producing entities. Given the prevailing state and trends in statistical production and the existing organisational structures, cooperation in this period sought to render continuity to the programs being carried out in fields granted priority status as well as contribute towards the qualitative improvement of statistical systems.

The PCP was designed with the objective of Portuguese Cooperation autonomously financing the complementary programs proposed under II RIP-PALOP for the field of statistical cooperation. With implementation planned for the 2004-2007 period, its technical launch only took place in 2006 with completion reached in 2009 following the budgetary expenditure of around 500 thousand euros.

Financial aid within the framework of Bilateral Agreements totalled in the region of 2.5 million euros, representing around 70% of bilateral foreign aid granted to PALOP member states in the statistical field through the period under analysis and clearly representing the major intervention in financial terms in every year, with the exceptions of 2006 and 2007, when the priority attributed to PCP implementation had the consequence of reducing the relative importance of the Agreements.

In official development assistance terms, Statistical Services have experienced a downward trend over time as well as losing their level of importance within the scope of the subsector of Other Infrastructures and Social Services into which they fit. The insignificant value that Statistical Services take on within the context of Portuguese bilateral aid to PALOP member states (0.4%, on average over this period) contrasts, as we shall see later, with the prestige Portuguese Cooperation has attained in this field.

Main conclusions and results of the evaluation exercise

1. Portuguese Cooperation in the statistical field between 1998 and 2008 was relevant and contributed towards resolving major problems experienced by recipients in this field and in achieving the internationally agreed priorities.

The intervention programming and design effectively responded to the main problems of partner countries resulting from shortcomings and unmet basic needs in the statistical field, particularly during the early years after the Agreement came into effect. The actions undertaken boosted the production of the data necessary to accompanying the respective PALOP national development strategy and the programs launched by international organisations promoting the recovery of lesser developed countries.

The linguistic proximity and tradition in the field of statistics places Portugal in a privileged partnership position for cooperation programs with PALOP member states hence facilitating the development of joint statistical projects and boosting the creation of a genuinely Lusophone space of dialogue, development and innovation. Portuguese Cooperation support remains desired and critical to boosting statistical system capacity.

2. The Cooperation Model adopted significantly evolved gradually adapting to the conditions and dynamics of the respective cooperation process. However, monitoring and evaluation of cooperation results represents a significant Model weakness.

The Model underwent significant improvements between 1999 and 2005 involving greater centralisation and a greater role attributed to IPAD – the Portuguese Institute for Development Assistance, reflected in broader responsibilities in terms of supervision, management and the coordination of cooperation policies. The meetings of the Bilateral Agreement Coordination Commissions and the PALOP Statistical Conference became forums that proved fundamental to ensuring the relevance of actions and the overall improvement in cooperation. Their continuity is desired by all parties involved with this model considered as “good practice” in this field of cooperation.

The lack of medium and long term action plans for bilateral cooperation in the statistical field, along with annual plans and implementation reports, represent restrictions on strategic and operational planning, the overall evaluation of actions carried out and, consequently, the systematic and structured introduction of readjustments able to guarantee rising levels of efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation and the maximisation of results and impacts.

3. The global cooperation objective was achieved with the actions contributing towards strengthening the capacity to organise, produce and publish National Statistical Institute data in the five countries. A high level of efficiency was found in the allocation of financial resources but less so in the allocation of human resources.

Portuguese Cooperation supported NSS modernisation processes thus contributing towards improving the quality and diversity of official statistics across the various fields of intervention and strengthening the capacity of institute human resources. The program beneficiaries considered the results achieved to be highly positive and the Statistics

Portugal (INE-P) is acknowledged as technically competent, also gaining the recognition of other donors.

The level of efficiency was not, however, uniform over the entire period (higher between 1998 and 2003, a fundamental period for NSS consolidation processes and when most actions took place) nor between domains (greatest in those with the highest level of intervention and almost exclusively carried out by Portuguese Cooperation).

The interventions displayed a high degree of efficiency in terms of their allocation of financial resources but this was less the case regarding human resources. The number and availability of technical staff allocated by the INE-P for cooperation actions, particularly in recent years, proved insufficient for the implementation of actions within the deadlines established with this being the main reason identified for delays in the launch of some programs and the overrunning of the planned completion dates of some interventions.

4. The long term effects of Portuguese Cooperation intervention in the statistics field are, in general, highly positive and reflect the significant progress experienced by national statistical systems, in their productive capacity and the technical autonomy attained in some statistical areas.

Positive impacts were recorded in all fields and by all beneficiary countries particularly in terms of NSS structuring and functioning, boosting human capital and the production and publication capacities. The latter target the main users of statistics who do recognise the diversity and progressive credibility of statistical production but who also refer, particularly in countries with less mature NSSs, that they continue to make regular recourse to statistics produced by other entities due to the non-periodical and the time lag in data publication.

The impacts ran deeper in some countries to the extent that despite relatively uniform points of departure, there are now significantly different levels of statistical system development, with Mozambique and Cape Verde demonstrating greater statistic capacity across all intervention fields.

5. The model adopted promotes the transfer of technical capacity and the maintenance of action impacts after their conclusion but does not guarantee operational autonomy.

The format taken by the overwhelming majority of actions implemented by Portuguese Cooperation opted in favour of acting to create the base conditions and the training of local technicians with the purpose of promoting the sustainability of the actions and subsequent statistical production autonomy. However, the PALOP National Statistical Institutes (INE-PALOP) are not yet totally (across all phases of production) autonomous in a significant number of fields in which Portuguese Cooperation intervened, therefore requiring external support, even though differentiated across countries and statistical domains.

The factors that wield influence over the impacts and sustainability of actions and which to a large extent explain the differentiated progress across the five member states relate to the high turnover in INE-PALOP technical staff, the shortage of qualified human resources

and financial resources guaranteeing the continuity of actions in the institutes and the political instability experienced by some countries during the period under analysis.

Recommendations

The positive results of Portuguese cooperation with PALOP member states in the statistical field corresponds to a cycle of cooperation whose context, conditions and objective have now been exhausted. To bring about their consolidation and deepening, a new cycle of cooperation for the statistic field needs to be opened, renewing its objectives and organisational models and adapting to the differences in statistical levels of development in PALOP member states.

1. Strengthen the Human Capital as a fundamental factor in the development of the statistical field.

Training should be considered across different levels – basic, continued and advanced training – and should take place by bringing together local training at the INE-PALOP and the training conducted through the cooperation program with the INE-P or with the training provided through conventions agreed with local and international universities.

2. Strengthen the role of statistical cooperation within the auspices of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) and raise the international profile of the cooperation results achieved.

In a new cooperation phase, the meetings of the Coordination Commissions for Statistical Agreements and the CPLP Conference should represent the favoured forums for monitoring cooperation implementation and providing support for shared decision making in relation to the programs and projects.

The international profile of cooperation results should also represent a significant priority. The interaction of progress in the field of statistical knowledge and the methods adopted by INE-PALOP with developments taking place at the international level, the introduction of new areas for advanced cooperation and the triennial staging of an international workshop bringing together National Statistical Institutes technical staff, other donors and the relevant major international organisations would all contribute towards building up this desired greater profile.

3. Specialise cooperation and diversify the financing models.

The recommendation is to proceed towards a certain degree of statistical cooperation “specialisation” without jeopardising the development of other actions whenever justified by the circumstances and prevailing conditions.

In terms of bilateral cooperation, the recommendation is to focus on areas: with greater “tradition” and in which the shared language and organisational similarities are more relevant; where cooperation may extend over the course of the project life cycle and in specific fields; where there are lesser levels of financing and allocation of human resources; where there are fewer needs to remain on site and with opportunities to render

virtual assistance; and in areas propitious to advanced cooperation in which the actions take place within a context of greater innovation.

Within the scope of multilateral cooperation, involvement in projects of greater ambition and more demanding in terms of financial and human resources should be proposed for consideration with the Portuguese participation focusing on the training and transfer of know-how in which the competence of the INE-P is recognised and the shared language plays a fundamental role. The search for alternative sources of financing provided by international programs is also essential.

4. Consolidate the Statistical Cooperation planning system and promote a results-oriented management.

The Statistical Cooperation planning system should take on a pluri-annual logic in alignment with Portuguese Cooperation programming cycles (perhaps adopting a triennial logic with the opportunity for annual review/reprogramming) with the design of cooperation programs to include the appropriate formulation of objectives and targets and establish indicators so as to provide the conditions for the analysis and monitoring of the programs as well as their subsequent evaluation.

Within a framework of mutual accountability, cooperation programs should take on a results-oriented management with the corresponding proposal of the creation of an “Effectiveness Reserve” that would represent a type of bonus for attaining good results and providing additional financing for recipients turning in the best performance levels.

5. Design and implement a Program Monitoring and Evaluation System.

The implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation System (M&ES) is essential so as to ensure the appropriate systematic accompanying and oversight of program implementation and the results achieved. This system is to include sets of indicators able to: monitor physical and financial implementation, the results and impacts at the level of program, the fields and projects, objectively award the Effectiveness Reserve and meet the specific needs of evaluation exercises. IPAD is to guarantee the implementation, management and systematic updating of the M&ES.

6. Restructure the cooperation program logic of organisation focusing on monitoring and evaluation at the project level.

The difference in PALOP statistical development levels and the lack of sustainability in the results of cooperation call for a redefinition in the logic of program organisation focused on achieving results at the project level involving a set of actions undertaken.

Each field would have one or more cooperation projects in specific fields, with variable durations, seeking to achieve certain results involving various actions types and foreseeing points in time for monitoring results. The programming of projects would be carried out in modular form, from less advanced to more advanced levels (enabling countries to participate in accordance with their respective development levels), with each module

demanding access requirements and establishing more ambitious objectives and results for the more advanced modules.

In terms of individual actors, the core recommendations are:

- ▶ IPAD: strengthen the role of monitoring and evaluation functions and finance the indirect costs;
- ▶ INE-P: strengthen the focus on cooperation as one of its core missions establishing the conditions for its technical members of staff to meet the timings set out in the cooperation actions;
- ▶ PALOP: share, in conjunction with Portuguese Cooperation, accountability for the results to be achieved and strengthen the commitment towards statistical production as a fundamental area for promoting development, establishing the framework for the allocation of the financial and technical resources necessary to carrying out the activities undertaken under the auspices of cooperation programs.