



7 Joint evaluation

Final evaluation Ecuador-Spain Country Partnership Framework 2011-2013

Executive summary



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Acronyms

CPF – Country Partnership Framework

DAG – Autonomous Decentralised Government

DROM – Development Results Oriented Management

ESCPF – Ecuador-Spain Country Partnership Framework

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GSICD – General Secretary for International Cooperation and Development

HDI – Human Development Index

MDO – Multilateral Development Organisations

NGDO – Non-Governmental Development Organisation

NSPD – National Secretary for Planning and Development

NWBP – National Well-being Plan

ODA – Official Development Assistance

PCG – Permanent Co-ordination Group

TCO – Technical Cooperation Office

TSIC – Technical Secretary for International Cooperation

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

Executive summary

1. Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

The III Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2009-2012 initiated the process of planning with partner countries through the Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF), the aim being to define the strategy of Spanish Cooperation with its partner countries in a way that was more collaborative as well as to make progress in the application of the Effectiveness and Quality Principles¹. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the Ecuador-Spain Country Partnership Framework (ESCPF). The agreement under evaluation here established the basis for cooperation between both countries so that it coincided with the 2009-2013 Development Plan for the Ecuadorian Government, taking into account the 2009-2025 Endogenous Development Strategy and the 2009-2013 National Wellbeing Plan (NWBP)². As this is the first final evaluation of a CPF, an effort has been made to achieve the following goals: obtain the lessons learned from the application of such an instrument during its implementation period; determine its effectiveness; identify the inputs for a future phase and contribute towards a greater degree of transparency and mutual accountability.

2. The Ecuador-Spain CPF

Ecuador is a country undergoing an intense process of institutional and public policy reform. This is accompanied by significant economic growth and steady progress in the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI). As the Ecuadorian economy grows, the amount of

official development assistance (ODA) received has decreased both in absolute terms and as a fraction of its GDP.

Spain and Ecuador have historically maintained a close cooperation relationship characterised by the strong links established by the various actors, as well as by the wealth of tools, experiences and knowledge accumulated by Spanish Cooperation in the region. Spain provided EUR30.7 million in net ODA to Ecuador in 2011, EUR23.7 million fewer than in 2007³. Such a reduction is attributed to the broader restructuring of Spanish Cooperation, itself a consequence of the institutional changes occurring in Spain that very year as well as its ongoing economic crisis.

3. Main Findings

Many of the guidelines set out in the ESCPF depart from the assumption that Spanish Cooperation acts in a coordinated fashion, such that this instrument may be applied and consulted by the entirety of actors involved. However, the results of the implementation of this first phase show how this is not always the case, a consequence partly of the structural weaknesses and lack of capacities devoted to the encouragement of coordination between head offices and field offices. In addition, the ESCPF is based on the assumption that there is a direct relationship between the ideas of aid alignment and aid effectiveness. In fact, the evaluation shows that while such a relationship can have clearly positive effects when using national norms and systems, it can also pose significant risks to the execution of the projects.

1 The Principles of Effectiveness and Quality of Development Aid (Paris Declaration) are an international agreement establishing global commitments geared towards action (both by donor countries and partner countries) to improve the quality of aid and the impact it has on development; <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34580968.pdf>

2 The 2009-2011 NWBP was succeeded by the NWBP 2011-2013. Currently, the NWBP 2013-2017 is already being implemented: <http://plan.senplades.gob.ec/inicio>.

3 According to data from the PACI Follow-up Report

One of the objectives of the CPFs in general (as well as of the Ecuador-Spain CPF specifically) is to contribute towards achieving results in terms of development. This in turn requires setting in motion transformative processes that make use of any comparative advantages and capacities of the different actors, all in a manner that is coordinated and involves an adequate distribution of roles. However, it has been observed that some particular dynamics remain that perpetuate the traditional way of doing things in the country, in such a way that does not leave room for the full range of abilities and capacities accumulated by the different actors of Spanish Cooperation to be utilised. This is a significant obstacle to the enhancement of the existing actors and their capacities, making it harder for Spanish Cooperation to focus on its strengths and optimise its actions and compounding the effects of ever-decreasing levels of investment.

4. Conclusions of the evaluation

The conclusions of the evaluation will be presented according to the analysis sub-sections defined for this evaluation process:

4.1. Process and result of the Ecuador-Spain CPF design

There was a lack of experience and excess of political urgency to put the CPF methodology into practice. While both of these rendered the process more complicated, the CPF nonetheless proved useful as a means to consolidating the relationship between the partners, with the aim of reaching an agreement. This agreement served as a framework for future reference and was achieved within the context and commitment to the Principles of Effectiveness and Quality.

i) The process is positively valued by the STIC and the TCO. Both institutions were given the opportunity to reflect together and define a global frame of consensus that incorporated the Principles of Effectiveness and Quality, as well as to establish a more horizontal, trust-based relationship.

ii) The process was complex and affected by the lack of experience in the application of a new and comprehensive methodology. There was a lack of past reference points and support in its application, a sense of political urgency in Spain, political and institutional changes in both sides etc., all of which conditioned the outcome of the CPF.

iii) Although it was participative, the agreement was constructed without the input of the PCG, which is the main body coordinating Spanish Cooperation in the area. This had consequences not just on the analyses carried out but also on the strategic decisions made and on the results that were obtained. Some specific processes that were affected are the definition of capacities and experiences of Spanish Cooperation in Ecuador as well as the analysis of coherence with other policies, which even if not directly related to cooperation and development nonetheless have an impact on the strategy being defined.

iv) The overall quality of the actors' participation was not always deemed adequate for an exercise such as the CPF in terms of time, content, procedure or results.

v) As a result of these circumstances and as a means to guide the agreement towards achieving development results, the partners committed to adhering to the Principles of Effectiveness and Quality. The analyses carried out, together with the agreements made and the tools designed (or not) in this respect have limited the results obtained by CPF, both in terms of their materialisation into the development goals and in the application of the Principles.

4.2. Results and progress in the application of the aid effectiveness and quality agenda

The degree of progress made regarding the application of the Principles of Effectiveness and Quality is uneven. Concentration, coordination and accountability are the areas in which shortcomings are most significant. While the partners' support for the application of such Principles – as an institutional commitment to the

objectives that each actor commits to individually – is considerable, it became evident that in practice this was a source of tension among them. Such tensions affect the level of effectiveness and the contribution towards development results.

i) The ESCPF has achieved somewhat uneven progress in the application of the Principles of Effectiveness and Quality such that there remains room for improvement in some areas for the following phases of implementation.

ii) The Ecuadorian institutions TSIC and NSPD have been empowered in their functions together with the public policies that they are responsible for. The level of ownership regarding the CPF by the TSIC and the TCO is high, although this is not the case for other both Spanish and Ecuadorian actors (Decentralised Autonomous Governments, Spanish Decentralised Cooperation, NGOs, companies, etc.). These generally perceive the relationship to be bilateral, and while they participate in the dialogue and consultation processes, do not consider themselves to have sufficient leverage in the final outcome of the agreement. Those in charge of executing the interventions, bilateral execution institutions⁴, NGOs and MDOs all exhibit a high degree of ownership and take on certain leadership roles. However, this empowerment and willingness to lead does not always coincide with the actual priority that is given to project execution.

iii) Significant progress has been made in the application of the alignment principle concerning the support for development strategies, institutions and national procedures in Ecuador. The commitments are met for the bilateral-execution projects financed by AECID, however this is not the case for projects financed and/or executed by different entities. It is possible to identify that there is a clear link between the use of national systems and units for direct implementation and the low level of project execution.

iv) The high number of sectors included in the Ecuador-Spain CPF (5 priority sectors and 4 ad-

ditional ones) has meant that only limited progress has been made in relation to the principle of concentration stipulated within the CPF Methodology. Geographic concentration of the interventions has not taken place either.

v) No progress has been made regarding the principle of coordination among Spanish Cooperation actions, a factor which is the very basis for many of the assumptions making up the agreement among the partners. None of the three instruments that were designed (the PCG, the Extended Country Team and the Sector Roundtables) were effective in coordinating the actions needed within head offices, within field offices and between these. In addition, there were no coordination strategies in any of the interventions that were analysed.

vi) The little progress made in terms of ownership, alignment, coordination and concentration among actors and financial backers under the umbrella of Spanish Cooperation (other than AECID) is associated largely with the perception by actors that the agreement – which aims to integrate actors from across the spectrum – is in fact between the governments of Ecuador and Spain.

vii) The initiatives set in motion by the TSIC have not achieved a real harmonisation among the actors in Ecuador. Nevertheless, Spanish Cooperation is still seeking for this to take place, especially with actors from other EU member countries.

viii) The agreement and its management tools do not exhibit the characteristics of a typical strategic planning instrument that is geared towards results-oriented management in development, and they do not seem to be used in such a way. Its definition and execution is based on a project logic, which is not helping to articulate Spanish Cooperation actors into the objectives of the CPF.

ix) An uneven degree of progress has been made with regards to accountability. While it has been high between the TSIC and the TCO, in the case of external accountability as well as in terms of the articulation of instruments, actors and financing, progress has been limited.

⁴ Within the context of the Ecuador – Spain CPF, the expression “bilateral execution” is used to describe those interventions funded by the Spanish Cooperation and directly executed by Ecuadorian public institutions.

4.3. Contribution of Spanish Cooperation to development outcomes

There are no tools available to precisely measure the contribution of Spanish Cooperation to the achievement of the results agreed on with the partner country. This is because of the failure to fully define mid-term results and their corresponding indicators designed to capture the level of contribution at the half-way stage, which in turn provide inputs to feed into the monitoring system. The same may be said for the interventions. In terms of the DROM tools and contribution measurement, another relevant factor is the absence of connection between the interventions and the CPF as well as between the interventions themselves.

i) Regarding the prioritised development outcomes, it may be concluded that Spanish Cooperation is bringing about good contributions. However, it is difficult to determine the exact extent of these. This is mainly due to the absence within the ESCPF of planning and management tools able to encompass the totality of Spanish Cooperation and its interventions. It is also important to point out the shortcomings of the interventions in this respect.

ii) While in the general sense the intervention's objectives are aligned with the priorities set out in the agreement, the quality of the indicators used to measure the contribution to achieving results is low. There is also room for improvement in the training programmes for development actors and in the use of DROM instruments.

iii) The interventions are each at different levels of implementation, depending on the types of actors that they are executed by. While delays affect all actors, they are especially common in instances of bilateral execution. Delays and subsidy reimbursement processes are having an impact on the level of contribution that is achieved.

4.4. Capacities and structures for CPF implementation

Various technical deficiencies are identified with regards to DROM among all actors (Ecuad

orian and Spanish), both in terms of the CPF and the interventions in particular (or individual interventions). This is especially the case for programming, sector-specific indicators and the implementation of cross-cutting approaches. In relation to AECID and GSICD, there is scope for improvement in the relationship and exercising of responsibilities between head offices and field offices, in such a way that the effectiveness and coordination among actors are ensured.

i) There is a good level of coordination and dialogue between the STIC and TCO teams. The degree of ownership and positive assessment of the agreement by both parties fosters the development of the ESCPF.

ii) The capacity developed by the partners (insofar as it is stipulated in the agreement) is being negatively affected by the high staff rotation.

iii) The implementing actors – including the TCO – lacked capacities when it came to the use and development of DROM tools (programming, project design/formulation, project cycle management, monitoring, indicator design, accountability, etc) and also regarding the mainstreaming of the prioritised approaches (needs assessment and their further incorporation to the project and the development of implementation tools).

iv) The information and management systems are very weak and do not allow for adequate management of information or decision-making.

v) The coordination tools applied by the Spanish Cooperation actors could be greatly improved, in terms of head office coordination (Extended Country Team), field office coordination (PCG and Sector Roundtables) and that between them. They have not been particularly effective in seeing through their functions and responsibilities.

4.5. The CPF as a shared association strategy

The ESCPF has brought about an improvement in the relations between the institutions of the two partner countries, although it does not constitute a reference for the remaining actors under

the umbrella of Spanish Cooperation. The structure that was adopted has also made it more difficult for the CPF to function as a flexible tool to bring about change and innovation.

i) While the CPF strategy has improved the relationship between the two main partners, TSIC and TCO, it is not a tool that should serve as reference for the rest of Spanish Cooperation actors.

ii) The actors have their own legitimate strategies, reasoning and incentives, so that it is understandable that the goals achieved may not coincide with what was originally agreed; in other words, there may simply not be a wholly shared vision or strategy for development action. Furthermore, although the CPF aims to integrate all actors, it has actually been managed from the governmental level and perspective, thereby excluding other perhaps less visible actors.

iii) The agreement has not functioned as a strategy orienting any changes and/or transformations. It has also not lent itself to innovation nor to a gradual process of adaptation to changing contexts.

5. Lessons Learned

i. In order to adapt the ESCPF methodology and ensure that its application is effective and efficient, factors such as the country context, the capacities and the amount of aid expected to be disbursed in the period should all be analysed beforehand.

ii. The quality and content of the analyses carried out in the first phase of the Methodology condition the quality of strategic decisions made and of the agreement in general.

iii. If Spanish Cooperation actors are not coordinated in Spain, it will be very difficult to attain a good level of coordination on the field.

iv. There should be recognition that the various actors in development and cooperation each have different yet legitimate approaches. It is important to bear this in mind and work strategically and systematically to generate incentives for coordination and alignment.

v. In order to construct visions of development in a collaborative or shared fashion between the various partners, it is important that this instrument has the capacity to adapt and respond to new challenges.

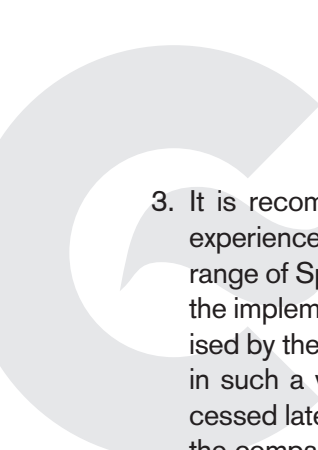
vi. Limiting Spanish Cooperation only to what has been done in the past in Ecuador constitutes an incomplete perspective of the capacities and global comparative advantages it possesses, thereby limiting the scope for innovation.

6. Recommendations

In this section the main recommendations made by the evaluation team are presented, all of which were established following on from the analyses and conclusions drawn earlier.

1. The recommendations for the STIC are as follows: to do as much as it can to strengthen the mechanisms that guarantee civil society views and opinions are taken on board as part of the agreement and its interventions; to increase capacity building of the institutions executing the bilateral projects, specifically in areas such as DROM, gender-based approaches, rights, etc.; to scale up the search for solutions associated with the use of national standards and procedures; to explore ways of mitigating the drawbacks of the high staff rotation rate and finally to make further efforts in the initiatives to harmonise the various actors involved in International Cooperation.

2. The recommendations for the GSICD are as follows: to review the CPF elaboration methodology with the aim of making it more accessible, more focused on the comparative advantages of Spanish Cooperation and able to provide better guidance when it comes to incorporating non-OAD policies into the framework agreement; to include a definition of the accountability mechanisms with a wider view as to the actors involved and to review the consultation and participation procedures for the different phases in order to ensure that the minimum standards of quality are met.

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3. It is recommended that the systematisation of experiences and knowledge provided by the full range of Spanish Cooperation actors involved in the implementation of activities should be organised by the head office (AECID and/or GSICD), in such a way that this information may be accessed later on during every exercise to analyse the comparative advantages of each CPF.
 4. It is suggested that measures be taken at the head office level to boost the coordination processes, the coherence with non-AOD policies and the whole internal coherence of the ESCPF, all the while supporting actors in field offices throughout all phases and activities of the CPF cycle (not just in the design phase). It would also be helpful to strengthen the Extended Country Team and the Sector Roundtables, ensuring that processes, procedures and guidelines are in place to guarantee their effectiveness and quality. In this respect, the presence of head-office staff in the field should be fostered, and efforts should be made to put in place adequate incentives that bring about the alignment and coordination pursued by the CPF. Similarly, and given both the current general and Ecuadorian context, the GSICD should reflect on which initiatives prove the most pertinent when it comes to the coordination of Spanish Cooperation actors.
 5. The recommendations for the (PCG) are as follows: to operationalise and systematise its activity, establishing schedules and working objectives, all aimed at reinforcing its assigned roles in the various areas of coordination; to establish procedures ensuring that progress regarding its commitments and roles may be monitored; finally, to identify and report to the TCO any potential needs regarding capacity-building/training.
 6. A further suggestion for the members of the PGC is to make their respective head offices aware of their role and the importance of participation within this coordination group. It is also important to establish the necessary decision-making and control mechanisms to ensure that PCG members can count on support from their respective head offices whenever needed, and also that their participation in such a group is representative, informed, legitimate and effective.
 7. It is recommended that the TCO designates somebody with capacity and authority the task of coordinating and following up on the CPF. The necessary resources should be made available and adequate mechanisms set up for this as well as for ultimately drawing up initiatives for improvement in this regard.
 8. GSICD and AECID are advised, insofar as their functions and responsibilities permit, to strengthen the information and filing system currently used at the TCO, in anticipation of future intervention management and of the new framework agreement to be reached in the next cycle; to set up procedures aimed at the generation of tools and capacities and at the mainstreaming of the cross cutting approaches and the results-oriented management, especially insofar as it affects the definition of indicators and the drawing up of schedules for Spanish Cooperation actors in Ecuador (specifically in the TCO).
 9. The TCO and TSIC are advised to reflect on the possibility of carrying out a substantial analysis into how the principle of alignment to national procedures and the improvements in the degree of execution of bilateral projects may be rendered compatible; it is recommended that the results matrix that is part of the partner agreement be considered and used as a management and monitoring tool. It is also useful and effective for mutual accountability tasks.
 10. It is also considered important to expand the dialogue between TSIC and the TCO regarding the criteria, terms and principles for development. This should help to identify any divergence in visions and establish subsequent solutions that avoid problems in terms of the ESCPF, such as the concept of "bilateral" interventions to be included in the CPF.
 11. It is advised that the TCO articulates the different accountability mechanisms in such a way that gives a view of the entirety of interventions encompassed by the CPF. It should also reach all actors, both internal and external.

12. It is advised that the GSICD, together with actors and financial backers from Spanish Cooperation, reflect on the pertinence and appropriateness of the CPF instrument for improving the effectiveness of Spanish Cooperation in its contribution to development.





Full report and related documents can be found at:

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