



Evaluation Policy in Spanish Development Cooperation

1. Background

The development of the Spanish Development Cooperation Evaluation system began with Act 23/1998, of 7 July, on International Development Cooperation. This Act sets out, in Article 19, that “the State Secretariat for International Cooperation and for Ibero-America shall evaluate development cooperation policy, ongoing programmes and projects financed with State funds, and those that have ended, from their inception and definition to their results. This evaluation shall take into account the relevance of the objectives and the extent to which they are met, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness attained, the impact achieved and the viability proved in completed programmes and projects”.

Since then, the evaluation of Spanish Development Cooperation activities has advanced significantly, primarily thanks to the publication of a Spanish Cooperation Assessment Methodology (1998; second edition, revised and extended, 2001), based on Evaluation Principles of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and transfers to the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) the approaches and solutions offered by the main cooperation agencies and by the major doctrines in this field. A series of evaluations were planned and carried out each year (16 evaluations have been carried out between 1998 and 2004), and reports on each evaluation were published and circulated. Furthermore, an evaluation culture was being developed through exchange and training activities among all the actors in the Spanish Cooperation System.

The Spanish Cooperation Master Plan 2001-2004 envisaged evaluation as key component of the project cycle management methodology.

The approval of the Master Plan 2005-2008 entailed the commitment to increase the quality of Official Development Assistance (ODA), and to this purpose it envisaged launching mechanisms for a reinforced and results-based system of planning, management and evaluation. Thus, Chapter VIII, called “The Quality of Aid”, describes the evaluation of development cooperation policies, programmes and projects as one of the most significant activities in order to learn about the functioning, the results and the effects of Spanish Official Development Assistance, a particularly necessary instrument to improve the quality and effectiveness of Spanish Foreign Cooperation activities, and therefore, it undertakes to strengthen the assessment system.

Finally, the Millennium Development Goals and the Rome, Marrakech and Paris Declaration on ownership, alignment, harmonization, results-oriented management and accountability, signed by Spain, constitute fundamental and obligatory reference points to strengthen the evaluation system within Spanish Cooperation, with the support of the international community to promote greater aid effectiveness.

2. Evaluation responsibilities in the Spanish development cooperation system

Leadership and coordination of evaluation in the Spanish Development Cooperation System are the responsibility of the Directorate -General of Development Policy for Planning and Evaluation (DGPOLDE) -through its Evaluation Division-, which is part of the State Secretariat for International Cooperation (SECI). These responsibilities are specified in Article 16, sections g) and h) of Royal Decree 755/2005, of 24 June, as follows: developing activities for the monitoring, coordination and evaluation of Spanish ODA; and evaluate international cooperation policies, instruments, activities, programmes and projects.

In order to meet its responsibilities, the DGPOLDE Evaluation Division carries out the following functions:

- Programming the strategic evaluations to be carried out (Evaluation Plan). These evaluations, denominated strategic, are selected according to their relevance and to planning priorities. They can be thematic, geographic or sectoral, and they include the appraisal of instruments, programmes and projects.
- Coordination and follow-up of evaluations, in collaboration with the actors in the evaluated activities.
- Issuing recommendations for improving activities to those responsible for them.
- Obtaining and disseminating the results of evaluations, publishing evaluation reports and organizing seminars to share the lessons learnt.
- Creating methodological tools to evaluate Spanish Cooperation.
- Participating in the OECD DAC Evaluation Network and other international networks.
- Coordinating and sharing information on the evaluation of international cooperation with the Spanish Cooperation bodies, especially with the Autonomous Communities and Local Authorities.
- Reinforcing of the Spanish Development Cooperation evaluation system and promoting the knowledge and culture of evaluation among the Spanish Cooperation actors through courses, seminars, workshops and other training and dissemination mechanisms.
- Ensuring the quality and coherence of the monitoring and evaluation system of development cooperation activities.

This outline is not an exhaustive representation of the overall Spanish Development Cooperation evaluation system. As set out in the Master Plan 2005-2008, in order to increase the quality of development policies it is necessary to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system of Spanish Cooperation in its entirety, ensuring the systematic integration of these functions in all activities. In this respect, in addition to the strategic evaluations carried out by the DGPOLDE, the different organizations within the system, both AECI and NGOs, must programme and carry out evaluations of their activities, promoting the described evaluation principles.

3. What is evaluation? Goals and guiding principles

Evaluation is defined as *an assessment, performed as systematically and objectively as possible, of a project, programme or policy, whether ongoing or finalized, as regards its design, implementation and results, and its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and viability for development. Evaluation should provide credible, useful information enabling users to incorporate the lessons learnt in the course of the decision making process of beneficiaries and donors. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the value or meaning of an activity, policy or programme* (OECD/DAC, 1995).

Evaluations of Spanish Cooperation are based upon the analysis of the five evaluation criteria defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, and on other criteria considered significant for the analysis of each activity. The OECD criteria are:

- **Relevance:** The degree of matching between the results achieved and the stated goals of the activity, in the context in which it is performed. This analysis informs us about the quality of the judgments on which the activity was based, identifying their appropriateness with respect to the necessities observed in the beneficiary population.
- **Effectiveness:** The degree of achievement of the goals initially set out. By this criterion, we seek to judge the activity performed on the basis of its results-based approach.
- **Efficiency:** A measure of the achievement of results in relation to the resources employed for the purpose.
- **Impact:** An analysis of the effects generated by the activity, whether positive or negative, expected or unexpected, direct or indirect, collateral or delib-

erate. Impact analysis is particularly aimed at identifying the net effects attributable to the activity.

- **Viability:** The degree of continuity in time of the positive effects generated by the activity, once the assistance ceases to be provided. In the sphere of cooperation, this concept is closely linked to the reinforcement of key factors for development and to the transfer of ownership of the process to the aid recipients. It is said to be directly related to favourable evaluations of the above criteria.

The overall aim of evaluation is to increase the quality of assistance, by appraising the design, implementation, results and effects of the Cooperation Policy. Moreover, evaluation is considered within Spanish Cooperation as an instrument that is oriented towards improving planning, reinforcing the capabilities of the agencies responsible for managing the activities, and facilitating the participation and coordination of all the actors involved.

Under this definition, evaluation is seen as a process that constitutes a fundamental part of the integrated cycle of public policy for development in which, together with monitoring, it provides feedback for the planning process, enabling the progressive, continuous increase of ODA quality. Thus, a crucial task associated with evaluation consists in the effective utilization and implementation of its conclusions and recommendations.

Guiding principles

In order to progress toward our goal of higher quality in cooperation, the evaluation of Spanish Cooperation, following the DAC evaluation guidelines, is based on the following principles: *participation, learning and benefiting from experience, utility and transparency.*

- **Participation:** Evaluation should enable channels for participation such that all the actors are able to evaluate the design, implementation and results of the Cooperation Policy (planners, administrators, political representatives, organizations, counterparts, beneficiaries, etc.). Thus, the ground will be prepared for coordinating and agreeing public decision-making processes in the field of development cooperation.
- **Learning and benefiting from experience:** The aim of evaluation is not to penalize but to promote learning, so that it is possible to incorporate into management and planning those elements that have proved to achieve more and better progress, thus concluding the cycle of the effective transfer of best practice.
- **Utility:** The process and results of evaluation should be useful to managers, planners, decision

makers and society in general. In order to ensure the utility of the evaluation, the system for the monitoring and evaluation of Spanish Cooperation must be equipped with the norms and controls necessary to promote quality and systematicity.

- **Transparency and independence:** Evaluation must guarantee the transparency of the process of planning, management and implementation of Cooperation Policy and safeguard the independence of the evaluation process itself, favouring accountability and providing responses to the information needs of all the actors involved in the actions taken. Therefore, the interested parties should have access to information on the procedures implemented, the allocation of resources and the results achieved.

In conclusion, the evaluation of Spanish Cooperation should contribute to improving the effectiveness of ODA, seeking to make it participative, impartial, transparent, learning-oriented, and capable of generating results and useful knowledge, in order to improve the management and planning of the actions undertaken as part of Spanish development policy.

4. The evaluation cycle

Spanish Cooperation evaluation constitutes a **learning cycle or process** that begins during the earliest phases of evaluation and does not end with a report on the results achieved, but with the realization of an action plan incorporating the lessons learnt in the administration and/or planning of the actions that have been evaluated. The logic underlying the evaluation cycle is the understanding that the utility of evaluation depends to a large extent on the degree to which the latter responds to the **questions and information** needs of the diverse agents related to the action to be evaluated, both that performed by the actors in Spanish ODA in our own country and their representations in the countries with which cooperation takes place, as well as in counterpart institutions and beneficiaries in these countries.

The phases of the evaluation cycle are as follows:

PHASE I: Preparation and design of the evaluation

In this phase, the evaluation to be made is prepared. To do so, the most significant aspects relevant to setting up an evaluation process are considered, so that an Evaluation Plan may be prepared and the scope of the evaluation determined. Moreover, it is important that a participation space should be enabled for the different actors (Reference Committee). In this phase, accordingly, it is necessary to identify the motivations and goals of the evaluation, the scope of the evaluation, the actors who will participate in the process and the requirements of the evaluation teams _ all this will be set out in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation for the realization of an open contest by means of which evaluation teams will be selected.

PHASE II: Carrying out the evaluation study

During the realization of the evaluation, the quality of the study will be tested, together with the instruments used for information gathering and analysis, and the meth-

odology applied. The evaluation process should be facilitated by encouraging the participation of the principal actors involved in the actions to be evaluated.

PHASE III: Communication of results and integration of lessons learnt from the experience

In this phase, the results of the evaluation are communicated and activities are carried out for the dissemination of the evaluation reports and to obtain feedback from the process. It is necessary to identify both the factors that determine the utility of the evaluations and the target audience of the evaluation, their diverse interests and the most appropriate channels and instruments by which results should be communicated to each of them. In addition, specific recommendations are made, which management agencies should respond to by means of an action plan aimed at achieving improvements. Once the improvement plan has been prepared, incorporating the recommendations of the evaluation, its fulfilment should be confirmed by means of periodic follow up.

DGPOLDE has prepared a guidancel so that the different actors in Spanish Cooperation may implement evaluations; it is intended to facilitate the realization of the above phases, in order to coordinate evaluation processes intended to improve the quality of assistance, in line with the principles and goals set out above. By means of this process, evaluation is aimed at achieving the utility and improvement of the actions undertaken by Spanish Cooperation, in order to ensure greater effectiveness of the assistance provided.

5. Supervision of the implementation of evaluation policy

The State Secretariat for International Cooperation will send an annual report on the implementation of this evaluation policy to the Development Council for its consideration.

PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III
1. Motivations	1. Start	1. Communication of results
2. Selection	2. Desk study	2. Dissemination of results
3. Delimitation of scope	3. Preliminary report	3. Drafting of recommendations
4. Elaboration of Terms of Reference	4. Field work	4. Drafting of Action Plan
5. Realization of the selection contest	5. Final report	5. Follow up of Action Plan

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