

REPORT

**FIELD MONITORING AND EVALUATION
OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FUNDED
BY THE GENERALITAT VALENCIANA
IN THE CENTRAL AMERICA REGION.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presentado por:

I.C.G. INTERNACIONAL DE COOPERACIÓN Y GESTIÓN S.L.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the framework of the IV Master Plan for Valencian cooperation, it is established that the Generalitat Valenciana will promote the culture of evaluation, with the aim of facilitating decision-making, learning and accountability, and improving the impact of its actions. Central America represents the geographical region with the largest volume of funds allocated by the Generalitat to official development aid, with 32% of the total.

The relevance of Central America as a priority geographical area of action for Valencian cooperation, as well as the volume of co-financed projects in the region, has justified the need to carry out a joint evaluation, revisiting objectives and facilitating the verification of the effective execution of ongoing projects, covering both process and result aspects; that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention of the Valencian cooperation, the links and synergies generated by the projects, sustainability perspectives and the challenges of development at the sectoral level and which, finally, characterizes and delimits the areas of strategic action of the Valencian cooperation in the region

This document responds to the request, from the General Directorate of Cooperation and Solidarity of the Generalitat Valenciana, to carry out said evaluation and monitoring of the projects and programs co-financed in the period 2017-2020 in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. From a total of 50 national projects and programs and 1 multinational program developed in the three countries between 2017 and 2020, a sample of 29 projects was selected, belonging to the 2017, 2018 and 2019 calls, under criteria based on representativeness in terms of Valencian organizations and local partners, sectoral scope and geographical coverage.

The methodology applied was qualitative in nature and based on the quality standards of the evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee, DAC, for which the consulting team had three professionals, one in each country.

The first level of analysis addressed aspects of the process and results of each project and program; a second level provided information on the capacities generated by the Valencian cooperation in the different sectors of intervention in which the projects were developed and the third level of analysis characterizes and delimits the areas of strategic action of the Valencian cooperation, identifying priority lines and objectives and of a scope that facilitates decision-making, both by the General Directorate of International Development Cooperation and by the agents responsible for the formulation and execution of the projects.

The main conclusions obtained from the study, as well as the corresponding recommendations, are presented below:

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding field work:

1. The partner organizations have a long history of work, they have experienced personnel, a great deal of knowledge of the territories where they carry out their actions and good linkage with grassroots organizations.
2. The strength of the relationships established between the NGOs and the local organizations constitutes an opportunity to deepen the vision of process. There are previous foundations of topics already worked on in the corresponding territories and perspectives of project sustainability strongly linked to the installed capacities.
3. All projects present an adequate level of relevance; revalidated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in the socio-political context.
4. The projects and programs respond to the priorities of the rights holder population and are aligned with the respective national legal framework and international agreements.
5. The synergies and complementarities established in the same sector of intervention by the action of the consortiums have facilitated the internal and external coherence of the interventions.
6. The projects refer to the three transversal approaches: a gender approach in development based on human rights, a democratic governance approach and an environmental sustainability approach; although the mainstreaming of the approaches with their representation in each axis, objectives and results has not been achieved.
7. The gender approach in development based on human rights is evident in the design and implementation of affirmative actions that favour the promotion of leadership and empowerment of women, as well as their participation in decision-making spaces, although more intentional strategies are required to contribute to changes in the subordinate position of women, for example in terms of care tasks and triple or more shifts.

Together with the environmental sustainability approach, the gender approach has achieved the highest level of progress in the implementation of projects; the latter is represented both in specific projects of the sector, as well as in specific actions of projects in other sectors and in good resource management practices of partner organizations.

The cultural diversity approach is presented as a potential not yet sufficiently exploited for the consolidation of an endogenous development proposal. The democratic governance approach contributes to the fulfilment of human rights according to the scope of the intervention, although it does not generate, in a broad way, contributions to the enjoyment of the political rights of the population entitled to rights. The challenge of strengthening the rights approach and leaving behind the paradigm of needs persists.

8. The trend is identified in some rights holders of a welfare vision of cooperation and the expectation of financial or material resources from the projects, which suggests that there is no assimilation of the purpose of capacity building.
9. There are good practices of coordination and cooperation of some projects with TTOO, which have generated synergies and contributed to the efficiency in the execution of the projects, being at the same time a key element for the monitoring and sustainability of the development achieved.
10. The projects have shown great potential for adaptability and innovation, which is a favourable element for their sustainability.

11. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of a comprehensive view of health. The psychosocial approach has shown its effectiveness; Psychosocial intervention contributes to local human development by placing the human being in its entirety at the center of the work.
12. Good practices are identified to achieve the technological inclusion of rights holders, give continuity to interventions during the pandemic, and avoid desertion of processes.
13. In Guatemala, the vision of endogenous development from the Mayan cosmovision, contrasts and challenges the predominant development model, i.e. extractivist, exclusive and predatory.
14. There have been important advances in project information management through the use of Valencian cooperation tools.
15. Some municipalities face economic difficulties that do not allow them to have monetary municipal counterparts.
16. The current socio-political context in the region makes it more urgent to guarantee the right to information and freedom of expression.
17. The opportunity for realisation of the “demographic dividend” is being wasted.
18. Good cooperation practices between projects and duty bearers show that it is beneficial for them to recognize and take advantage of the contributions generated by cooperation with projects and partner organizations for the fulfilment of their own mission.

Regarding Valencian cooperation:

1. Some relevant sectors of intervention are underrepresented among the projects financed.
2. In order to generate synergies from joint work between NGOs, it is necessary to overcome fears related to the complexity of: shared administrative-financial management, the establishment of agreements jointly and the co-responsible fulfilment of implementation commitments.
3. The need to generate strategic visions for a more transformative cooperation is identified, which defines in each geographical area the priorities that should be influenced.
4. The reference persons of the Valencian organizations in the field play a supporting role: they provide guidance to the processes and facilitate the work of coordination and dialogue that is carried out with public institutions.
5. Accountability of the Valencian cooperation in Spain has not been sufficiently visible.
6. The economic volume of Generalitat Valenciana cooperation has increased constantly in recent years without having an internally proportional growth of human talent to manage it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and conclusions of the projects evaluated, recommendations are derived at three levels: for the General Directorate of Cooperation and Solidarity of the Generalitat Valenciana, for the Spanish NGOs that coordinate and accompany the projects, and for local partners.

Recommendations to the General Directorate of Cooperation and Solidarity of the Generalitat Valenciana:

1. The updating of regional strategies according to priorities in the current context must be a priority for the Valencian cooperation. It will be important to consolidate interventions with a vision of processes that can better ensure the time required for the necessary changes with a view to the development of the region. The Valencian cooperation must give a collective response to common problems of NGOs and local partners.
2. It will be important to promote the complementarity of interventions from the formulation of projects between organizations that operate in the same territories. The recognition of other organizations present in the territories with which coordination can take place must be a guideline that is promoted at the time of project calls being made.
3. The geographical location of the three countries in the dry corridor of Central America and the deepening of climate change, raise the urgency of further strengthening the integration of the climate change adaptation approach and not just mitigation measures. It will be pertinent in the portfolio of projects to prioritize the sectors that work on issues of water resources and disaster risk management.
4. It will be opportune to review the cross-cutting approaches proposed in the Master Plan of the Generalitat Valenciana due to their level of strategic priority, considering options for other cross-cutting approaches such as cultural relevance or functional diversity. In particular, a review of the Democratic Governance approach is required with the determination of human rights hierarchies according to the current political situation of the region and each country.
5. Given the current situation in the region, it is key to continue supporting the strengthening of the independent media and all community initiatives for the generation, production and dissemination of information, which give a voice to the most vulnerable communities and groups; similarly, accompany the organizations that defend rights by providing them with tools that allow them to face this new context so that they can continue with the development of their work under better security conditions.
6. It will be beneficial to promote spaces at the country and regional level for the exchange of experiences between partner organizations of the Valencian, Spanish and local cooperation, in order to promote complementarities and learning, culminating in knowledge management tools, which can allow for the achievement of greater coherence in cooperation and add value.
7. The current context in the entire Central American region merits the design of instruments by the Generalitat Valenciana that allow for focusing of the work carried out in each country according to the new context and determining sectoral priorities in each geographical area or country.
8. The *raison d'être* of the management, monitoring and evaluation instruments must go beyond the collection of information and stop being understood as an administrative requirement, but rather as a contribution to knowledge management.
9. The need to direct funds for the institutional strengthening of the Spanish partner organizations is identified, with the aim that they strengthen their internal procedures.

10. To maintain the quality of the work of the Generalitat Valenciana, it will be important to improve the provision of human resources in its different areas. It is relevant that the DGCID has first-hand information on the realities of each of the cooperation partner countries, thus it must identify and assess mechanisms that allow it to achieve this objective.
11. It will be opportune to strengthen accountability with Valencian citizens, taking advantage of the results of this evaluation.

Recommendations to NGOs:

1. Development NGOs have the challenge of formulating projects capable of responding to highly changing contexts, having to consider the transversal incorporation of risk management and the updating of contingency plans.
2. The contexts of the three countries, with a gradual deterioration of democratic institutions, force us to rethink the work of NGOs and cooperation, finding a way to focus the work at the community and municipal level. The strengthening of civil society from a critical perspective and from the principles of governance will be key, as well as continuing to strengthen networks and linkage spaces.
3. In order to continue the advocacy work on gender violence in Nicaragua, the NGOs (together with the Generalitat Valenciana) must, in the current context of the country, develop new models of cooperation with community groups that do not have legal standing.
4. Despite the difficulties generated by group work in terms of management, NGOs must make an effort to concur under such a body, from the logic of reinforcing capacities with the expertise of two organizations working in an articulated manner. Proposals for projects and programs with a regional vision should also be promoted.
5. In projects or programs of continuity in the same territory, cumulative evaluations should be contemplated that allow the impacts achieved by the interventions to be visualized more clearly, as well as generate learning about the strategy developed in the set of interventions implemented.
6. Projects and programs must consider, from their planning phase, the incorporation of transversal approaches. The mainstreaming of approaches should not be limited to addressing some element of the approach in the project strategy. For an approach to be transversal in a project, an analysis of each axis, objective and result is required by the representation of the approach and its incorporation with its respective actions.
7. It will be appropriate to incorporate the functional diversity approach in all projects. In countries with high rates of social violence and systematic violations of rights in all areas, it will be opportune to incorporate the psychosocial approach in development interventions.

8. Due to the current context, it will be very important to strengthen local and regional networks and platforms, incorporating specific activities in to projects.

Recommendations for local partners:

1. The partner organizations have proven to have extensive expertise in their sectors of intervention, but they must go beyond the vision of executing activities towards a broader strategic vision.
2. It will be opportune that the partner organizations, together with the NGOs, incorporate in their strategies intentional actions for the promotion of youth leadership and its integration into development processes, as well as the integration of the childhood axis in the interventions, in order to develop transforming leadership from an early age.
3. For the proper incorporation of the gender approach, it is necessary to start from the analysis of inequalities between women and men due to their condition and position, incorporate the analysis of intersectionalities and design and implement differentiated actions with the capacity to transform inequalities. In the interventions, intentional strategies must be designed to contribute to changes in the subordinate position of women and to reduce the burden on women. Gender indicators must be designed that refer not only to effects in the number of female participants, but also are aimed at verifying the reduction of inequality gaps, with concrete changes in the condition and position of women.
4. Strategies should be designed to contribute to a greater appropriation of the rights approach and the roles that correspond to each group of owners, especially TTDD and TTOO.
5. All interventions, consistent with the rights approach and in order to provide greater sustainability to the processes undertaken, must continue to seek spaces and mechanisms to articulate actions at the institutional level, previously assessing the risks that this may generate. When the socio-political context is viable, the various actors must recognize the importance of continuing to seek creative mechanisms to develop actions that contribute to the articulation of their interests, the exercise and demand of their rights and the mediation of their differences with the TTOO, through a solution-based approach.
6. Organizations must continue to strengthen their digital capabilities with innovative and attractive non-face-to-face or semi-face-to-face methodologies.
7. The best types of food security projects should be developed with a territorial vision, bringing together different municipalities that share the same conditions.
8. For better management of the emotional burden of work, it will be important to incorporate the psychosocial component in the work of organizations.
9. In Guatemala, cultural relevance must be incorporated into all interventions, even in populations that are not Mayan speakers, especially in terms of the vision of an endogenous development model, in balance and harmony, which challenges a vision of predatory development. .
10. The incorporation in El Salvador of small productive projects, such as home gardens that, in parallel with other lines of intervention of the projects, improve the food security of the families

that are part of the processes, is a way of working that should be explored, since it also allows incorporating the approach of economic autonomy of women to the projects.

11. Organizations must strengthen collective training spaces, especially for the mainstreaming of approaches; In addition to the gender approach, human rights, functional diversity, and environmental sustainability approaches, from a perspective of resilience and adaptation to climate change.