

# Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration

## Country Evaluation

### COLOMBIA

## Executive Summary

### Purpose of the evaluation

An interdisciplinary team carried out the evaluation of the Paris Declaration in Colombia, employing a national approach and territorial perspective to its methodological work. The International Strategic Thinking Center, in its capacity as General Coordinator, put together the National Evaluation Team. The National Evaluation Team, in turn, worked with four renowned academic institutions (Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar and Universidad ICESI) and with the support of the Colombian Association of Universities, to conduct more than 90 interviews with various key international cooperation stakeholders, including government officials, international community officials, and members of civil society organisations (CSOs), in six geographic areas of the country.

The National Evaluation Team checked and analyzed the data that was gathered using an Operative Matrix provided by the International Evaluation Team according to three central evaluation questions<sup>1</sup>. Also, the information contained in this report was carefully reviewed and commented on by national and international experts and officials from public institutions, organised civil society, academia, and international organisations. Each of these external reviewers not only facilitated

<sup>1</sup> The three central questions outlined in the Operative Matrix are: 1. What major factors affected the relevance and application of the Paris Declaration and its potential effects on aid effectiveness and development results?; 2. Did application of the Paris Declaration improve the effectiveness of the provision, management, and use of aid and create stronger links between the country and donors? How?; 3. Did application of the Paris Declaration increase the contribution of aid to sustainable development results? How?

access to information, but also contributed to the independence, integrity and quality of the evaluation.

We thank all those who gave us their time, opinions, comments and information through the interviews conducted during this evaluation.

### Main findings and conclusions

#### Background

Over the past decade, Colombia has been experiencing positive economic growth, positioning it among middle to high income countries. Despite the fact that the percentage of income from international cooperation (IC) has traditionally been low (0.42% of GDP in 2008), Colombia receives the most official development aid of any Latin American or Caribbean country.

International cooperation in Colombia has played a major role in complementing national efforts. Focusing aid in areas such as the environment, institutional strengthening, and productive system support, as well as on problems related to the struggle against inequality, internal displacement, and human rights violations, was a determining factor in achieving better development results. Those factors led to a considerable influx of cooperation agencies and international civil society organisations working in various areas of development in the country. For example, Colombia has the greatest number of United Nations agencies in Latin America.

Because of this, IC in Colombia is seen as a basic mechanism between international relations and the national agenda.

That being so, the National Government has begun to work on IC management and coordination by developing International Cooperation Strategies as well as opportunities and mechanisms for political dialogs among stakeholders. In this way, Colombia is unique within Latin America and the Caribbean. Colombia has worked to articulate the interests of international stakeholders, civil society, and state institutions to make to improve aid coordination and effectiveness.

The effectiveness principles proposed by the Paris Declaration have contributed to strengthening government leadership in coordinating cooperation efforts. Likewise, the Paris Agenda has enabled the government and CSOs to expect greater commitment from the donor community in areas related to aid coordination. The National Government's active engagement in discussions on the new structure for international cooperation represents a notable improvement, especially in terms of increasing representation of intermediately developed countries in development-related talks.

The Effectiveness Agenda has been important in international cooperation decisions for the parties concerned. It allowed the government to promote and legitimize the coordination processes already in place in the country, as well as to address various concerns regarding the effectiveness of international development cooperation.

For its part, civil society held a series of consultations within the country and considers that the Paris Declaration is an appropriate framework for managing aid. However, they point out that this framework focuses mainly on resources, which limits debate and action in areas they want to be involved in. For that reason, they strongly suggest that the Effectiveness Agenda not focus exclusively on aid management, but also on development effectiveness. For donors, the Paris and Accra approaches have been transformed into governance frameworks that allow them to synchronize efforts that improve aid coordination. Although progress towards harmonisation has been slow, the donor community is better organised and prepared to improve their cooperation instruments to provide higher quality aid.

Effectiveness principles have been applied at different speeds. At the national level, Paris Declaration implementation has concentrated on the principles of democratic appropriation, alignment and harmonisation and, to a lesser degree, on the crosscutting principles of results-oriented management and mutual accountability. At the sub-national level, attention is focused on the principle of results-oriented management, followed by mutual accountability and alignment.

Specialized officials are responsible for having a detailed understanding of the principles and indicators of the Paris Declaration. At the sub-national level, stakeholders are more familiar with the Paris Declaration concepts as a function of their practical application, rather than by their official names.

The coordination forums created in local environments do not necessarily relate to the Paris and Accra commitments.

### **Intermediate processes and effects**

Today, IC coordination is not an isolated initiative put forward by government institutions. Rather, it is a commitment, of international scope, that empowers all development stakeholders to demand greater accountability of aid effectiveness.

The Paris and Accra Effectiveness Agenda not only renewed the debate on how to improve and better coordinate aid, but it also called attention to the responsibilities of the Colombian State and Government, donors, and CSOs in developing and implementing an aid effectiveness agenda. In fact, many stakeholders commented that the requirements established within the Paris Declaration were relatively weak compared to the level of debate and practice already taking place in the country.

National institutions have also shown strong leadership in developing and executing stronger national strategies and operating frameworks for coordinating IC. Regulatory and institutional improvements reflect a greater ability to respond to the growing supply of resources and requests for international aid. In contrast, there is a clear need for a greater commitment to applying the Democratic Appropriation principle proposed in the Accra Action Agenda.

As for the donor/Colombian Government Alignment Principle, there is a discrepancy between what is proposed by the Paris and Accra Effectiveness Agenda and the reality of its implementation in Colombia. The differences are evident in the fact that the national systems do not afford local governments and organisations with real appropriation capabilities since it excludes them from IC resources and capacity building. In this regard, it is evident that local efforts to improve coordination are not always made through the Paris Effectiveness Agenda since the Declaration is rarely employed or referenced for improving development cooperation coordination in Colombia.

With regard to measurement systems, national development policy evaluations still do not include international cooperation programs or projects. This has made it hard to identify specific cooperation contributions in national policies. There are also significant discrepancies in information on the total amount of aid received in Colombia. The information provided by donors to organisations responsible for international cooperation in the country differs from that contained in the OECD's Development Aid Committee's (DAC) system.

Policies and processes are being harmonised along thematic lines, using diverse mechanisms, such as Basket Funds. However, administrative procedures still need to be further simplified. To date, the country has no process aimed at maximizing comparative advantages, both by the government and the IC community, and much less a division of labor among donors.

## Effects in terms of development

### *Environmental Sector*

By integrating the Grey and Green Agenda existing in the environment sector in the early 2000s, international cooperation helped ensure that the environmental issues continued to have financial and strategic weight within national policies.

The IC has made it possible to relate environmental, poverty and developmental issues. International aid programs have helped promote better governance within the environmental sector, with greater participation and an eye to sustainable development.

The IC also helped bring stakeholders from the environmental sector together and establish alliances in areas of common interest. For example, the IC played a critical role in pushing forward the national proposal for conservation and sustainable development in the Amazon, focused on encouraging reflection and promoting capacity-based learning.

### *Forced Displacement and Humanitarian Aid Sector*

The forced displacement and humanitarian aid sector is one of the areas receiving the most attention from international cooperation in Colombia. The significant influx of diverse cooperation resources in this sector makes it hard to assess the specific contributions of the IC to improving the conditions of displaced populations.

An analysis of this sector revealed that the principles of the Paris Declaration do not apply to all IC modalities. The effectiveness of aid of this kind depends on a rights based approach that, to some extent, goes beyond the postulates of the Declaration.

Donors have aligned themselves with non-governmental stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, implementing the Alignment Principle differently than proposed by the Paris Declaration because of the way they view the violence in the country.

At the moment, the inability to see the full extent of the problem in this sector makes it difficult to take action, particularly when the underlying causes of displacement still exist. It is also hard to assess specific international cooperation contributions to achieving higher development goals.

## Recommendations

### **Political dimension**

It is critical to recognize the central role that all development stakeholders must play in an IC Effectiveness Agenda. A fundamental part of this process is determining the roles of the various players based on a better understanding what their interests are and what they represent. The evaluation stresses the need for the government to continue working on developing policies with the private sector.

It is also important to have on-going dialog among the government, the international community, and civil society, with the possibility of articulating their roles and responsibilities, even along territorial lines. In this regard, we must establish short and medium-term agreements, while sustaining and even intensifying political commitments to improving aid effectiveness.

As for the Cooperation Agenda, we recommend prioritizing the development of a “positive” cooperation agenda focused on articulating and integrating development opportunities. This could be achieved by linking complementary programs that impact productive processes, technological innovation, research, and institutional and cultural consolidation, and the corporate social responsibility sectors, among others.

Given the great disparities in development among the diverse regions in Colombia, we conclude that focusing cooperation in impoverished areas or critical fields of action could produce more multiplicative effects than if centered and managed within the national budget.

### **Technical dimension**

Effectiveness Agenda principles must be adapted to local realities and the country’s particular development landscape. In particular, it is advisable that a specialized forum on aid effectiveness at the management level be set up dealing exclusively with the significances, processes and strategies of the players with an eye to improving IC implementation in the country.

Based on the evaluation results, it’s clear that greater efforts to educate stakeholders about the Effectiveness Agenda must be made, providing appropriate training and developing capabilities specific to the established responsibilities. Furthermore, we recommend establishing tripartite evaluation committees to monitor progress on each of the principles set out in the Paris and Accra Agenda. We also recommend distributing technical responsibilities for the Effectiveness Agenda among the different regions in Colombia.

We recommend that evaluations be integrated into the projects and programs carried out in the territories, and that these systems feed a central monitoring and evaluation system. To achieve this, participation by CSOs and particularly Academia is essential to compile information and store it in a specialized system.

Concrete Aid Effectiveness strategies and goals must be defined by the donor community in their country strategies. The donors must define their action strategies in the country, developing mechanisms and plans to monitor the progress, short-term goals, and the expected results of Effectiveness Agenda principles.

As Colombia begins to position itself as an aid donor, particularly within South-South cooperation activities, we strongly

recommend strengthening current initiatives with greater political support from the Republic's Congress.

### **Institutional dimension**

We suggest setting up learning sessions on the Effectiveness Agenda within the framework of the National System for International Cooperation. The lessons learned must be institutionalized through monographic instruments or institutional reports (donors, counterparts and the government) providing updates existing commitments. Those reports must define requirement frameworks in which specific commitments and responsibilities are defined.

As concerns the National Government's Effectiveness Agenda strategic planning, it is critical that Implementation Plan activi-

ties are focused specifically on the Accra principles and that there is effective monitoring of the Plan.

Cooperation stakeholders must give priority to impact evaluations in order to improve aid-related information mechanisms. Likewise, we recommend fostering a cooperation evaluation culture for sharing results and lessons learned.

A platform for improving working relations, particularly as concerns the division of tasks that has occurred in recent years, should be developed local, departmental, national and international entities.