Triangular cooperation support of Costa Rica in Central America

Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica
Costa Rica is a Central American country, where due to efforts made since the twentieth century in public investment and social responsibility, has achieved statistics in many areas comparable to developed countries.

After the emergence of the concept of developing countries and the classification implemented by the World Bank, Costa Rica is considered upper middle income country, which is why, since the 1980’s international cooperation support has gradually decreased.

For this reason Costa Rica has raised the urgent need to promote legal changes and mechanisms that seek international participation of the country in a new role, that of technical bidder/ offerer.

Changes were made since 2007 in national laws to create the structures necessary for a program of triangulation.

The first phase of the program took place between the years 2010-2012 and the country is currently negotiating a second phase.
Due to the previous reasons presented, it has been necessary to create norms and structures to face the new Costa Rican reality in order to implement mechanisms that promote international cooperation playing a new role.

The current financial crisis challenges us to be more creative and efficient in the initiatives we form part of, so they encourage trust relationships.

These changes are important so we continue working in international cooperation, but also because it is necessary to establish a new culture in our institutions and national work force to maintain a durable role of offerer.

The diagnosis of the situation originates in the internal control done by the Ministry of Planning and Political Economy and the statistics found in the information provided by national institutions and our Missions accredited abroad.
Legal Framework

- Basic General Agreement of Scientific-Technical Cooperation, signed on October 25, 1990 (approved by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica by Act No. 7822 on 29 September 1998)
- Cultural Cooperation Agreement approved by Law No. 5290 on August 22, 1973
- Article 11 of Planning Law № 5525-PLAN of May 4, 1974
- Decree 35056-PLAN-RE of February 18 2009, reformed by Decree 35777-PLAN-RE of January 8 2010

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to Article 4 of Decree 35777-RE-PLAN, assumes the rectory of International Cooperation abroad, in addition to acting as a beneficiary of the subsidy contract.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>RESPONSABILITY WITH RESPECT TO THE PROJECT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF COSTA RICA</td>
<td>BENEFICIARY</td>
<td>• To manage the funds according to the Annual Operating Plan (POA)</td>
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<td>• Provide AECID the technical and economic monitoring every six months</td>
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<td>• Highlight the contribution of the AECID through their logo</td>
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<td>• Notify AECID in case of obtaining other grants for the same purpose</td>
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<td>• Submit to the actions of testing, monitoring and control from AECID</td>
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<td>• Participate in the Project Steering Committee to carry out the functions assigned to this body</td>
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<td>• Provide the supporting documentation of the Grant to AECID, in time and form</td>
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<tr>
<td>AECID</td>
<td>SUBSIDIZER</td>
<td>• Participate in the Steering Committee for the performance of the functions of this body</td>
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<td>• Authorize payment documents</td>
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<td>• Monitor the project</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUNDEVI</td>
<td>COLLABORATING ENTITY</td>
<td>• Receive and manage project funds according to the Annual Operating Plan</td>
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<td>• Provide the required financial information to the beneficiary</td>
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<td>• Ensure compliance with administrative procedures</td>
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<td>• Undergo testing actions that AECID can ask for</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reinstate the funds that were not used</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIDEPLAN</td>
<td>STRATEGIC PARTNER</td>
<td>• Participate in the implementation of the project as set out in these regulations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Participate in the Steering Committee for the performance of the functions of this body</td>
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</table>
Made up by the Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Cooperation Department MIDEPLAN.

Its functions, set out in Article 40 of the section II of Executive Order 35056-RE-PLAN, were:

- Defining and putting in place possible financial and technical mechanisms to support the supply of technical cooperation for developing countries and triangulation, and making them sustainable.
- Analyze the National Technical Team recommendations and decide on requests and offers of technical cooperation to and from Costa Rica.
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring and tracking actions that are implemented for technical cooperation and triangulation.
- Document and systematize the experiences of technical cooperation.
- Arrange meetings for the joint evaluation of applications recommended by the National Executing Team.
Committee between the government of Costa Rica and the Government of Spain. Costa Rica is represented by the Directors of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MIDEPLAN, and Spain by the representatives of the Technical Cooperation Office (OTC) of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). Its functions are:

- Evaluate the applications submitted by the National Technical Team of Costa Rica, with the recommendations of the National Task Force.
- Approve, reject or return with the respective comments, applications submitted for possible funding.
- Define and establish guidelines, procedures and basic requirements for analyzing applications submitted for approval and funding.
Managed by the person in the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who also serves as Director of the project. The Director receives technical support from a representative of MIDEPLAN for the implementation of activities under the authority conferred by law. AECID, through the figure of its project manager, can provide technical advice whenever required to do so. Its functions are:

- Assist in the preparation of the Annual Operational Plan, the Terms of Reference and the national technical offer.
- Analyze project requests and recommend them to the Bipartisan Committee.
Steering Committee

- Composed by the representatives of the Technical Cooperation Office (OTC) of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and by a representative of the Beneficiary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The functions of the Steering Committee are:
  - Approve the Operating Regulation, and any amendments needed afterwards.
  - Monitor the implementation of actions.
  - Instruct FUNDEVI to provide funds in accordance with the Work Plan.
  - Follow up on reports and recommendations necessary for the timely execution of the grant.
Having selected a Triangulation Fund on the one hand is unprecedented for Costa Rica and also presents a number of challenges, as it positions Costa Rica in a dual role of supplier and beneficiary, as cooperation is received directly from Spain as the country with technical capabilities in the region, because this has the benefit of internal motivation and reinforcement of capacities from interregional feedback.

The other and more direct beneficiary is undoubtedly other Central American countries receiving technical cooperation.
Large capacities developed in Costa Rica in various fields allow the country to be a good supplier of cooperation for Central American countries.

A focus was established in areas of greatest need for societies of Central America.

The interest of Costa Rican institutions to provide technical cooperation to the Central American counterpart institutions.

The model optimizes resources, establishes relationships between partners linked to the same areas and set goals which were specialized and strategic.

The interaction of different actors and sectors of particular countries and prospects provides similar problems, in this way promotes an exchange of experience and the creation of opportunities for joint reflection and knowledge model that results in the generation of synergies for each areas of cooperation.

This cooperation model favors the replication of models in different themes, so you can incorporate lessons learned from other experiences already developed in similar contexts. From the perspective of the facility providing the offer of cooperation, it benefits from various perspectives and processes generated feedback, reflection and empowerment.

Learning processes will eventually rebound to the target population of the respective institutions and institutions in other countries that will benefit from a partnership with a high degree of involvement and technical quality.
To avoid rejection of proposals, submission forms should be improved so the projects presented by the Central American countries have clear, rationale objectives. For this it is essential to have sufficient clarity about the issues, application processes, and the offer of cooperation by the Costa Rican institutions.

To ensure the effectiveness of the proposals and avoid delays, it is necessary to identify properly the Costa Rican counterpart.

The deadline for completion of the observations and recommendations of proposals, budgets and schedules must be more agile.

There were delays in the development of some projects due to factors such as changes in personnel.

Regarding the financial management of the activities, they should be more expedite in order to avoid delays and reduce costs, always in compliance with budget regulations.

Management and coordination:
- Avoid duplication.
- Improve accountability.
- Processes for making the projects official should be more flexible.

It is necessary to raise awareness among the national cooperation counterparts in the different institutions, about the change in the paradigms of international cooperation for the country, which should be perceived as a provider of technical assistance.

The most successful projects are the ones with a horizontal process, since the parties are motivated and involved in the processes. Second, it generates synergies through the exchange of experiences and the construction of knowledge.

Communication at the national domestic level should improve.

There was an unequal access to information and this led to an uneven number of proposals submitted by the different countries.
Lessons Learned

- Include specific mechanisms in the resolution document that would grant flexibility and alignment for functional and operational arrangements of this type of cooperation.
- Improve coverage to reach more stakeholders.
- Build a database to collect the information on best practices of Costa Rican institutions.
- Build a database of good practices from other countries.
- Promote the participation of several stakeholders and countries in the same project.
- Allow civil society organizations (not only public institutions) to submit proposals.
- Ensure coordination and flow between the OTC- AECID of Costa Rica with that of other countries.

- Facilitate direct communication between the participants of the project to improve negotiation processes and activities.
- Expedite the review process and approval of the proposals.
- Projects must include agreements between the parties for subsequent monitoring and support.