

## HUMAN RESOURCES

### IN SPANISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

*Human Resources for development cooperation are perhaps the most delicate subject within the debate on Spanish development cooperation. Due to a rigid and bureaucratic structure, as is the case in Spain, changing and improving the current system in terms of human resource management is a slow and problematic process.*

*The following discussion aims at analysing some of the most urgent questions regarding human resources within Spanish development cooperation. Its objective is to present a broad overview of the current system and outline some of the missing elements in the reform of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI), the 'Statute for the Development Worker', the role of the volunteer, development studies, and the training and profile of those working within Spanish development cooperation. In addition, this document also poses some questions which, through debate, may produce valuable solutions to the problems outlined.*

#### **AECI Reform**

AECI is in the midst of an internal reform to try to manage its available resources with greater 'effectiveness and transparency' in order to prepare and implement the new Spanish development cooperation policy. This reform is extremely necessary as a result of the challenges faced by AECI. Some of these include a lack of qualified technical personnel, a lack of specialised training, a high staff turnover rate, and a lack of and difficulties in planning and evaluation processes. Additionally, due to how the Spanish administration is structured, responsibility for development cooperation largely corresponds in practice to civil servants within the diplomatic corps who in rare cases have specialised knowledge in this field. How can these challenges be overcome?

According to the evaluation of Spanish development cooperation carried out in 2002 by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>1</sup> of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), managing Human Resources should become a strategic activity for AECI, an activity linked to the objectives and priorities established for Spanish development cooperation. The DAC report identified two important challenges, primarily a result of the rigid Spanish structure. The first challenge is that the positions within the Technical Cooperation Offices (OTC) located abroad are via employment contracts. As a result, civil servants within AECI do not apply for these jobs because it would imply losing their privileges and seniority. Second, there is little professional movement from the OTCs to AECI because management positions within AECI cannot be occupied by non-civil servants. As such, there is little exchange of information and personnel between the field and the central office which in turn leads to a gap between operational learning and policy development. For those working within Spanish development cooperation, does this gap really exist? How can it be reduced?

---

<sup>1</sup>DAC 2002 report

[http://www.oecd.org/document/32/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33721\\_2084320\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/32/0,2340,en_2649_33721_2084320_1_1_1_1,00.html)

In Spain, there are three levels of workers within development cooperation: civil servants, diplomats, and contracted employees. Spanish policy requires that all these work side by side. However, all three categories have distinct contracts, functions, responsibilities, professional opportunities, and salaries, thereby leading to frustration and a high staff turnover rate. This in turn leads to a lack of continuity which, in the end, has an impact on the efficacy of Spanish development cooperation. What is the existing relationship between workers in different categories? Is this structure effective?

The Law on State Agencies<sup>2</sup> was approved this past July and its aim is to improve public service by means of a 'new and general organisational formula'. How is this Law on State Agencies going to affect AECI?

Despite the already-mentioned shortcomings, AECI's institutional capacity has increased since its creation, though reform and change are always slow processes. When people become involved in this process, changes are even slower since practices have to be changed. Reform is possible and necessary, and the people working with and within AECI have to participate in making this reform effective. Are they involved in the reform and restructuring process?

### Statute for the Cooperator

The Statute for the Cooperator, approved in April, 2006, aims to add dignity to the work of those working for Spanish development cooperation abroad.<sup>3</sup> It pretends to do so by identifying the rights and obligations of cooperators. Along with these, the statute also establishes collective health insurance for these workers so their health coverage is as similar to that available in Spain as possible.

The **fundamental rights** of cooperators according to this statute are as follows:

- To receive information about any special conditions in the country of destination;
- To receive training to be able to carry out their tasks;
- Full reimbursement for certain expenses;
- Complementary remuneration to cover fixed expenses and their children's education;
- A specific insurance programme;
- Immediate attention by diplomatic personnel for their problems in the country of destination; and
- The time served as a cooperator is included in the computation for future access to jobs within the public sector.

The **fundamental obligations** of cooperators according to this statute are:

- To behave adequately in the country or region of destination; and
- To notify and present themselves to the OTC in the country of destination.

The approval of this statute was problematic for a number of reasons.<sup>4</sup> First, the role of 'entities promoting development cooperation' needs to be defined in greater detail. Second, the statute does not correspond to all AECI personnel. In fact,

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.map.es/prensa/actualidad/noticias/2005/07/2005-07-18.html>

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (2006), Royal Decree 519/2006, dated 28 April, in which the Statute for the Cooperator is established.

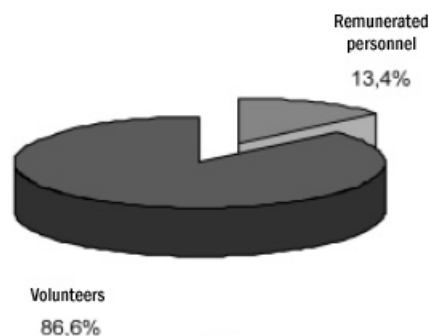
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.lukor.com/not-esp/internacional/portada/06021411.htm>

approximately 70% of the Agency's own personnel has been excluded.<sup>5</sup> And in the third place, the degree of interference by the state within non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has yet to be defined since the Spanish government will be responsible for the cooperators' health care. What solutions are available for the shortcomings found in this Statute? Should it be reconsidered?

### Role of the Volunteer

The majority of personnel within development NGOs are volunteers. They make up 86% of the total number of personnel within these organisations.<sup>6</sup> The Law approved on 15/1/1996 defines the volunteer as: *'The physical person who, altruistically and out of solidarity, freely commits himself/herself to carry out activities for the general good without any economic retribution and through private or public organisations.'*<sup>7</sup>

HUMAN RESOURCES (EXCLUDING CARITAS, RED CROSS AND LIGA ESPAÑOLA DE LA EDUCACIÓN Y LA CULTURA POPULAR). Year 2003  
% Distribution



Source: Coordinator of Spanish Development NGOs (CONGDE) 2004 Report on Development NGOs

Volunteers thus represent the core of development NGOs, sharing their time, knowledge, and tasks freely and for the organisation's benefit while working alongside the organisation's remunerated personnel. Volunteers often live in conflict situations, firstly because they carry out similar or equal tasks as others though without any economic compensation and, secondly, because oftentimes there is neither a specific plan for their activities nor is there a management plan for their tasks. Is a specific plan or management model needed?

Another issue is the ideal professional profile of these volunteers. If 86% of total development NGO personnel is made up by volunteers, their training in and knowledge of development cooperation must be adequate to ensure the effectiveness of aid. However, it seems that volunteers are not required to be

<sup>5</sup> <http://coop.bitacorras.com/archivos/2006/05/30/ser-cooperante-en-la-aeci-precariedad-sin-fronteras>

<sup>6</sup> CONGDE report on social perception of NGOs:  
<http://www.congde.org/Docinteres/Informepercepcion.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [http://juridicas.com/base\\_datos/CCAA/ar-19-1992.html](http://juridicas.com/base_datos/CCAA/ar-19-1992.html)

highly knowledgeable or have adequate training. Should volunteers have a specific technical profile? What is this profile? Should development NGOs depend so heavily on volunteers? Does the high number of volunteers affect aid quality?

Volunteers are not remunerated for their work. For many, however, this does not imply that they do not carry out their tasks with 'professionalism'. However, when people within development cooperation speak in favour of hiring personnel, they generally refer to the need to professionalise development NGOs by incorporating personnel dedicated exclusively to managerial and administrative functions. Does 'professionalising' development NGOs mean hiring people to carry out administrative and managerial tasks?

## **Development Studies, Training, and Profile of Spanish Development Cooperation Workers**

One EU initiative, embedded in the Bologna Declaration,<sup>8</sup> implies quality assessment coordination and standardisation of university-level programmes across Europe. To introduce this Declaration more easily, it is necessary to clearly understand the nature of development studies.

Specialised literature defines development studies as 'umbrella programmes' which include a range of disciplines rather than a single one.<sup>9</sup> However, there is still ongoing debate regarding to which specific discipline development studies belong and whether these studies should be interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or trans-disciplinary.

A report by the European Association of Research and Training Institutes (EADI)<sup>10</sup> describes development studies as a multi and interdisciplinary field aimed at contributing to resolve social problems and which consists of recognising social change from a historical, comparative, and global perspective, in addition to being a continuously changing and evolving field of study. EADI wants to influence standardisation and quality assessment processes of development studies at the European level in order to facilitate the implementation of the Bologna Declaration. Is Spain developing an active system to ensure that quality assessment and standardisation of university education and, in particular, development studies, take place?

In the United Kingdom and Ireland there is an organisation dedicated to connecting and promoting the community of development studies, the Development Studies Association (DSA). In Spain there is still no institutionalised cooperation between educational centres.<sup>11</sup> The responsibilities of this organisation yet to be created could include promoting the interdisciplinary nature of development studies and the integration of disciplines as diverse as economics, anthropology, political science, and regional studies. An organisation of this type could also be responsible for

---

<sup>8</sup> Bologna Declaration: Adapting the Spanish University System to its Guidelines  
<http://www.uji.es/bin/organs/vices/vqehe/bolocruue.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Tribe, M. and Andrew Summer, 'The Nature of Development Studies: An Exploration from the Standpoint of the British-Irish Development Studies Association', DSA Annual Conference, London, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Mönks, J. and Hans Opschoor, 'Accreditation and EADI's Role in Development Studies', EADI Newsletter, January 2006.

<sup>11</sup> However, in Spain, the Association for Development Assistance Quality (ACADE) exists, and includes professionals, though not necessarily academics.

achieving consensus on the syllabus and the role of universities in development cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

The Bologna Declaration affects university education, but there has been a proliferation of courses in Spain on different development topics offered by different organisations working on their own. With the application of the Bologna Declaration, it is hoped that master's and other graduate programmes will achieve an adequate level of quality in a global sense. However, other types of educational programmes may continue to go unsupervised and without a quality assessment system. Does Spain have a plan to control the quantity and quality of sporadic programmes which appear regarding development topics? Clearly these control mechanisms cannot be imposed; it has to emerge as a self-regulatory system within the sector. What would be the institutional means to ensure greater commitment to quality?

Development studies and postgraduate programmes have to prepare 'specialists' to ensure that development cooperation is effective. Do current programmes take this into account?

What qualities should a person working in development cooperation possess? According to OECD guidelines, development cooperation requires more specialised people skilled in poverty reduction.<sup>13</sup> That is why there is a demand for people with social, economic, and cultural knowledge. At the same time, they must have a deep understanding of the realities and challenges facing development cooperation in the field, so that development policies and the decisions made within central offices can be more effective.

Tres Viladomat talks about the 'ideal types' of people who should work in development cooperation. The author indicates that they should have: a background knowledge - a degree or university diploma; a postgraduate degree and continuous education with a more entrepreneurial focus; and the necessary managerial skills, for example, understanding of project cycle components, flexibility, valuing the importance of local knowledge, and training in financial management, strategic planning, and leadership.<sup>14</sup> Do development programmes in Spain create these 'ideal types'?

In addition to these characteristics, people working in development cooperation must have adequate work experience. Robert Chambers identifies an innovative way to ensure that people working in development cooperation understand what 'poverty' is.

---

<sup>12</sup> In the III Congress on University and Development Cooperation, universities were criticised for moving more towards the flow of money and assuming more and more implementation roles instead of analysing, criticising and looking for new solutions.  
[www.ucm.es/info/fgu/cooperacion/congresouyc/presentacion.htm](http://www.ucm.es/info/fgu/cooperacion/congresouyc/presentacion.htm)

<sup>13</sup> OECD, *Managing Aid: Practices of DAC Member Countries*, 2005, [ISBN 92-64-00761-X], Chapter 7, 'Managing Human Resources for Development Cooperation'.

<sup>14</sup> Tres Viladomat, J, 'El nuevo perfil profesional de los cooperantes y sus necesidades de formación', in *CIDOB d' Afers Internacionales*, N°72, December 2005-January 2006, pp. 1133-6595.

**Innovative Education**

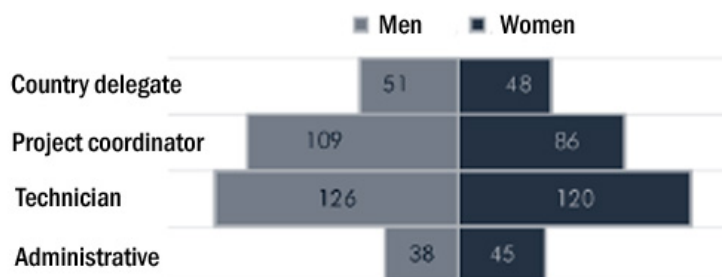
Robert Chambers has developed an innovative type of training. He suggests that personnel in political institutions and donor organisations spend a few days living and working with host families in poor communities. The idea behind these ‘immersions’ would be to encourage top-level workers in aid organisations to reflect critically through personal contact with the poor. These experiences increase their motivation and commitment and make it more possible for the opinions of the poor to be integrated into new policies and practices. (Chambers, 2004)

Source: Chambers, R., Renwick, Irving and Eyben, Rosalind, *Learning from Poor People’s Experience Immersions*, IDS, 2004. (<http://www.livelihoods.org/lessons/docs/IMMERSIONS2.pdf>)

Could the implementation of an ‘immersion’ initiative have a positive influence on the effectiveness of Spanish aid workers?

### Profile of Spanish Development Cooperation Workers by Gender

Fig.33b Men/ Women abroad by professional category



According to a study carried out by the Coordinator of Spanish Development NGOs (CONGDE),<sup>15</sup> the number of women in the sample actively collaborating in development NGOs represents 71.5%, which more than doubles that of men (28.5%). A division of the personnel into those working at the central office and those working abroad, first shows an increase in the number of women working in the central office with respect to the average (74%), while abroad, the result is almost even (49% women compared to 51% men).

More women sign up for development studies programmes. Is there a feminisation of development studies?

The charts demonstrate that there are significantly more women than men working in development NGOs, though women occupy the lowest positions within the organisations. Why do women primarily occupy positions within technical,

<sup>15</sup> 2005 CONGDE report on development NGOs:  
<http://www.congde.org/directorio2005/InformeCONGDEcompleto2005.pdf>



administrative, and auxiliary departments? Why does this sector attract more women than men? Does professional success for women in this sector only occur at certain levels?

### **Conclusions**

Nowadays, improving human resource management in development cooperation is more important for the majority of DAC member countries due to the challenges arising from a very dynamic global setting. Is Spain truly committed to this process of improvement?

## **Foroaod – Spanish Development Aid**

FRIDE organised the project “Spanish Development Aid - Mid-term Review and a Proposal for a Participative Consultation” between June 2006 and April 2007. This project aims to develop a consultation process about the current Spanish government’s development cooperation policy. We have created a forum for participation and debate, in order to assess the Spanish development cooperation reform agenda and to identify the main achievements and shortcomings in operationalising the initiatives based on the principle of “More Aid, Better Aid”. A set of recommendation guidelines were developed, through participative methods, with the objective of putting into practice the aspirations of the Spanish development cooperation policy.

[www.foroaod.org](http://www.foroaod.org)