

ADDED VALUE OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (PDC) FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS (PO)

Mutual enrichment through creative strangeness



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SUMMARY

The present study arose from the need to demonstrate the "added value" of Personnel Development Cooperation (PDC)¹ in relation to other forms of International Cooperation and thus to emphasize not only the legitimacy but also the attractiveness and efficiency of PDC to strategic partners such as the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) as well as to donors and people with whom COMUNDO has solidarity ties.

Technically speaking, it was initially a question of making visible the *Attribution Gap*, i.e. the "gap" in the corresponding allocation of the impact achieved (among the target population and within the partner organisation) to the respective actors. In the course of the study, however, this aspect has increasingly receded into the background, simply because it plays only a very subordinate role from a "southern perspective". In contrast, the dimension of mutual critical enrichment has come to the fore.

To this end, other aspects could be better and more clearly illuminated, such as the motivation of a Partner Organisation (PO) to contact COMUNDO and request the assistance of a co-worker (CW), the orientation towards the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)² or the distribution of the impact between the two spheres of impact, partner organisation (sphere of impact 1) on the one hand and beneficiary target population (sphere of impact 2) on the other.

The study interviewed 13 COMUNDO partner organisations (POs) in all seven countries of COMUNDO's missions, using a semi-structured interview via Skype (in two cases live) on a total of nine topics, and is thus representative of an organisation such as COMUNDO. In addition, by selecting the POs, an attempt was made to include as many partners as possible in the study with regard to size, age, target population, working methods and thematic fields.

The **objectives of the study** were:

General objective:

The **added value of PDC** compared to other forms of Development Cooperation and International Cooperation has been demonstrated.

Specific objectives:

- a) COMUNDO has a **(more objective) basis for the evidence that the PDC method is effective** with regard to the SDGs and the development objective of COMUNDO (Programme 17-20: "The living conditions of disadvantaged and excluded population groups in the sphere of impact of our partner organisations in the South are improved") and has a legitimate standing in the pluralism of Development Cooperation.
- b) The most important dimensions and elements for a **uniform and coherent understanding of the PDC approach and PDC method** between POs and COMUNDO have been identified, which increases the impact at the levels of POs (sphere of impact 1) and beneficiary population (sphere of impact 2).
- c) The **motives** for COMUNDO's POs to request foreign co-workers **have been clarified**.

¹ In German: PEZA (*Personelle Entwicklungszusammenarbeit*).

² The SDGs were established by the UN in 2015 and form the so called "Agenda 2030".

The **most important results** are the following:

- (1) The motives of the POs for applying for the cooperation of a foreign CW are manifold; the **importance of the (mutual) "learning gain"** is conspicuous, which apart from rather pragmatic reasons speaks for the element of "worldwide learning" central for COMUNDO.
- (2) The characteristics of a CW that make it stand out in the eyes of the PO and in comparison to local professionals are not cultural differences or professionalism, but **human qualities such as work ethic, patience and commitment.**
- (3) For all POs, the impact of an CW can also be determined for the beneficiary target population (sphere of impact 2), but without being able to make an exact allocation of the overall impact to particular actors. However, **this Attribution Gap is neither a problem nor an important issue for the POs.**
- (4) Conventional instruments for measuring impact (LogFrame, growth indicators, etc.), as specified by the sending organisations, are increasingly being suspected of being **Eurocentric and neo-colonial**; there are also major differences in the technical handling of these instruments.
- (5) Between PDC and mere project financing there is no either/or, but **a complementary both/as.** Both are interdependent and mutually reinforcing in the sense of synergies. PDC complements and enriches the indispensable project financing with professional, human and intercultural factors.
- (6) For most POs, the foreign CW makes its specific contribution not in the sense of a selective improvement or solution strategy, but **in the sense of comprehensive learning and awareness processes**, which also include the dimensions of "worldwide learning" and global interdependence.
- (7) The coherence between the work of the POs and the SDGs is hardly explicitly reflected, unless in a more critical sense to the prevailing conception of development. **An evaluation of the work of the PO in their assignment to the SDGs is only rudimentary.**
- (8) For practically all POs, **a critical and creative "outside view"** is indispensable when it comes to implementing strategies and achieving goals. This protects against "business blindness" and cultural centrisms (monoculturality), or against isolation from geopolitical problem areas. In this sense, "glocalisation" is the program: thinking globally (i.e. intercultural exchange and "creative foreignness") and acting locally (i.e. concrete solutions to concrete problems).

Target achievement:

As expected, specific objective (a) could only be partially achieved and needs to be supplemented by many other factors and projects. From the point of view of the Partner Organisations, the study certainly contributes important arguments to the discussion about the legitimacy and desirability of PDC and thus of COMUNDO. In particular, the **holistic nature of the PDC approach and the strengthening of civil society** as a central subject of political and social change compared to the (often weak) State and transnational companies was underlined by practically all POs.

The study did not show the coherence of the two levels of impact between COMUNDO and the POs (specific objective (b)), but rather a **relatively high incoherence**: While COMUNDO focuses primarily on Capacity and Institution Building (i.e. sphere of impact 1), the POs see their actual

impact - including that of the foreign CWs - on the target beneficiary population. However, this is not a contradiction, but rather a strategic weighting: both COMUNDO and the POs are concerned with improving the situation of the target beneficiary population, but the setting of priorities (field of intervention) is different from the point of view of the target beneficiary population. The PO acts directly, the CW indirectly on the target beneficiary population. The **coherence in the understanding of the PDC approach and PDC method** between COMUNDO and the PO is much higher in Latin America than in Africa.

The **motives of the POs** to apply for an CW have been clarified (specific objective c)). However, they are quite diverse and no single motive is really a priority.

The general objective ("The **added value of PDC** compared to other forms of Development Cooperation and International Cooperation has been demonstrated") can be regarded as achieved. The "added value" of PDC is not simply a "more" than other forms of Development Cooperation and International Cooperation, but above all a specific "different" in the sense of a Unique Selling Proposition (USP). This "added value" essentially includes: mutual enrichment, worldwide learning, a creative external perspective, awareness processes, empowerment and *Capacity Building*.

Recommendations:

From the survey and the results obtained, some **recommendations** for the strategic and operational work of COMUNDO (and other PDC organisations) are finally derived:

- (1) There is a need **for a more coherent understanding between COMUNDO and POs of the primary impact** of the foreign CW in the two spheres of impact.
- (2) A **comprehensive and holistic impact assessment of the PDC approach** is needed, which can only be mastered in a joint effort of PO and COMUNDO.
- (3) COMUNDO needs **strategic cooperation with organisations in the field of project financing**, both in the North and in the South (e.g. CW missions within the framework of a project by Helvetas, Swiss Lenten Fund etc., and/or joint sensitisation efforts in the North).
- (4) The **term "expert"** (*Fachperson*) is to be questioned above all in German; in contrast to *cooperante* (Spanish) and *co-worker* (English)³, it does not express the meaning of "cooperation", but only "professionalism", which is no longer a distinguishing feature from local actors.
- (5) The **productive "outside perspective" and the "creative strangeness"** should be better managed in the sense of a UAP (Unique Advertising Proposition).
- (6) COMUNDO must continue the debate on the concept of development, **focusing on the SDGs and their "Eurocentric" and "neo-colonial" aspects**.
- (7) **"Worldwide learning"** must be spelled out more consistently on the basis of **focus topics** such as commodity trade, health, education and agriculture.

³ In Latin America the neologism *cooperator* is partly used, and in Africa the term *development worker* is common.