



2018:7

Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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Evaluation of the Sida supported programmes “CLACSO Knowledge for a Sustainable World 2013– 2016” and “South-South Tricontinental 2013–2015”

Final Report



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26 February 2018

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

Sida Decentralised Evaluation 2018:7

Commissioned by Sida

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Date of final report: 26 February 2018

Published by Nordic Morning 2018

Art. no. Sida62135en

urn:nbn:se:sida-62135en

This publication can be downloaded from: <http://www.sida.se/publications>

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CLACSO	Latin American Council of Social Sciences
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
ET	Evaluation Team
IDEAs	International Development Economics Associates
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SILEU	Latin American University Assessment System
ToR	Terms of Reference
USD	United States Dollars
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Preface

This evaluation was commissioned by the Research Division of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and undertaken by a team of evaluators from NIRAS consisting of Ian Christoplos, Francisco Sagasti and Mario Bazan. Ted Kliest provided quality assurance. The evaluation has focused broadly on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the work of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO). It was undertaken during the period of September 2017 through February 2018. The evaluation has benefited from the very high level of frank and reflective discussions with the staff and members of CLACSO and its broader network.

Executive Summary

The Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) is the largest social science research network in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 624 member research institutions in 48 countries. Since its founding in 1967, CLACSO has played a strategically important role in applied social science research in the region.

CLACSO has received support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) since 1998. This evaluation has been commissioned by Sida to better understand the relevance of CLACSO's work, together with its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, so as to inform the future partnership between CLACSO and Sida.

The evaluation has found that CLACSO's evolution has followed social, political and economic developments in the region. Its leadership and its membership have responded to the changing social science research and policy space since its creation fifty years ago. CLACSO's role in the region is directly related to current political and economic changes which present new opportunities and constraints. Over the past decade it is possible to discern a certain shift in CLACSO's statements of objectives from an almost singular focus on enhancing research capacity to explicitly including emphasis on capacities to influence policy.

During this period CLACSO has also undertaken an effective geographical shift to focus on the poorer countries (with weaker research capacities) in Central America and the Caribbean. In the past CLACSO had very little presence in Central America and the Caribbean. In recent years an increasing (but still small) proportion of CLACSO activities have taken place in these regions, with a strong emphasis on Cuba. Sida support has been important in this effort. The sustainability of this shift remains uncertain, but CLACSO has overcome its past bias towards better-off countries in South America. Interviews revealed unanimous support for giving priority to using CLACSO resources to address the imbalances that have prevented their equal participation in the past.

Social justice and critical thought are at the core of efforts to ensure that the research that CLACSO supports is of relevance to low-income countries and regions. Poverty and inequality are at the forefront, as are efforts to use research to question prevailing narratives about e.g., trickle-down economics. CLACSO's research looks at the need for innovative policies that can overcome the profound structural factors –including power, violence and gender/ethnic exclusion– that prevent poor and marginalised populations from reaping the benefits from their products and services. The evaluation has found how CLACSO has linked with social movements, policy makers, journalists and other actors in 'innovation systems' that reflect overall objectives of Swedish development cooperation related to human rights, discrimination and addressing the root causes of conflict. CLACSO focuses on these Swedish priorities in a manner

that reflects and derives from the ethical commitments and priorities of its members.

This carries with it a certain political bias. CLACSO is not considered neutral by interviewees and there is no expectation that this is an objective in practice. Many members perceive CLACSO's transparent stance to be a strength in promoting dialogue in the polarised political atmosphere, as people know CLACSO's values at the outset of their engagement. Some expressed the view that a certain political positioning is inherent in any institution devoted to policy change and the struggle against inequality and discrimination, especially given the skewed distribution of income and power in Latin America. By contrast, a few interviewees describe CLACSO as being locked into an earlier discussion on structural poverty, perhaps due to its close collaboration with social movements that are engaged in long-standing struggles. Pluralism is in many respects a key concept for understanding what CLACSO aims for. It does not take a relativist stance that 'all' social science research is to be promoted, since it is committed to clear principles of applying research for social justice, and thus a left-leaning agenda. But interviewees highlight that a strategic outcome of CLACSO's work is that it has created a pluralistic and multicultural platform for promoting social science research among those who share a commitment to using social science research to fight inequality. It is not a platform for everyone, but its scope is considerable. The Evaluation Team judges that CLACSO has found a 'reasonably happy equilibrium' between maintaining its principles of social justice and encouraging pluralism. It is acknowledged however that this is a judgement call. There is no single 'right' degree of pluralism and principles, and this is ultimately judged by those who choose to engage in CLACSO as members and in its activities.

Policy dialogues are encouraged through the working groups and through initiatives by members. Some interviewees, particularly in Central America, indicated that CLACSO helped them overcome their isolation and gain the confidence they needed to engage in policy dialogue themselves. An important feature of CLACSO's policy dialogue processes is the links to its proactive communications efforts, which, together with both large events and working group activities, results in very timely engagement in emerging issues. The *integration* of communications, with tools ranging from policy briefs to CLACSO TV, throughout CLACSO's work is striking (compared to many other research institutions where this is treated more of an afterthought). The seriousness with which CLACSO emphasises this integration is indicative of the extent to which CLACSO has reflected on the range of steps needed to achieve genuine policy dialogue.

CLACSO received Sida support for developing South-South collaboration involving a number of highly ambitious activity plans which were undertaken during the period of 2013-2015, but these efforts have proven difficult to sustain. Other South-South initiatives have continued at a more modest level after the end of Sida support. It is difficult to trace the exact reasons for the failed attempts to develop different types of collaboration platforms, but it appears that these were anchored more in intentions to link networks that are very different in their structures and intellectual histories, rather than in a frank assessment of what would be required to generate sustainable structures for institutional exchange. Overall the Evaluation Team judges that the *goals* of South-South Tricontinental were highly relevant, but not the *means*. Over time, few of the activities, such as meetings and seminars, generated sufficient en-

agement among the partners to develop into concrete research activities. Despite these problems, support for strengthening South-South efforts remains strong among the CLACSO membership.

A sentinel indicator of CLACSO's outcomes in fulfilling its overall commitments to supporting research quality and capacity development is in its success in increasing access to research across the region. This includes its specific campaigning for Open Access and its virtual library. This has been particularly important for researchers from weaker institutions and also for enhancing the awareness of researchers in better off institutions to access research (and contacts) in countries that would otherwise have been unknown to them.

The evaluation has not been able to quantitatively assess relative value for money of CLACSO's work. Even CLACSO has had difficulty in obtaining a clear overview of its members' considerable in-kind investments, e.g., when they cover plane tickets to attend activities or invest their time pro bono. However, certain structural findings are clear. Dependence on Sida and Norad funding has decreased from approximately 90% of funding to a little more than 30% since 2013, at the same time, activities and membership have expanded rapidly over the past decade with minimal growth in the size of the Executive Secretariat. Efficiency and sustainability are both supported by the ownership of the members. Interviews indicate that the working groups, for example, largely run themselves, which is a huge non-monetary resource, the importance of which should not be underestimated. The post-graduate seminars require somewhat more effort from the Executive Secretariat, but the engagement of the lecturers is exceptional and provides a basis for very efficient and effective education and, not the least, coaching and advice to young researchers.

Evaluation findings point to an overall conclusion that CLACSO has achieved a very substantial level of results by an emphasis on maintaining relevance to both its members and in relation to the social, economic and cultural challenges faced in the region. It is owned and driven by its members, who have high expectations, demands and engagement, stemming from how CLACSO enables them to strengthen their capacities for quality research, at the same time that opportunities are generated for engaging with social movements and policy discourses. This meta-conclusion, that results are driven by relevance, is central to understanding the reasons that CLACSO appears to make a significant contribution to outcomes within member institutions, among young researchers, and in policy and praxis. The evaluation judges that these qualities are well-aligned with Swedish policies for research cooperation, even if CLACSO is a somewhat unconventional network in comparison to other more purely academic networks among the programmes that Sida supports.

The evaluation thus recommends that CLACSO should 'stay the course' in its overall processes. It is both an effective and dynamic network and should not endanger this by major changes in its vision and the 'vibrant chaos' wherein the network energises its members. CLACSO should, however, urgently seek to define what 'consolidation' may entail in the coming years and use that to develop an explicit 'exit strategy' for Sida and other bilateral support. This may involve a stricter (and potentially painful) prioritisation of both the activities that need to be retained to support the vision, and also where to explore new income streams. As part of this, CLACSO should reinforce

efforts to identify realistic steps to ensure that the outcomes of the increased investment in Central America remain sustainable. CLACSO should develop an explicit resource mobilisation plan which makes its 'business model' more transparent. Given the considerable success that CLACSO has had, this could help to generate commitments from within and outside of CLACSO to build on the foundation that has been established for future sustainability.

CLACSO should focus South-South efforts on specific areas where a critical mass of joint interest of researchers for comparative research could be maintained over time. It would appear that the role of social movements and the potential for research to more effectively engage with civil society for transformative change may be one such area. There may also be themes related to conflict/violence or climate change adaptation. In order to find a basis for South-South (and even global) collaboration a clearer strategy and commitment to addressing the language barrier is needed. CLACSO should invest in either language training or including English skills as a recruitment criterion of a critical mass of key interlocutors with a strong level of English language skills. Some skills in Arabic may also be required.

The evaluation recommends that Sida should recognise CLACSO's relevance to the policy for Swedish research cooperation, albeit in a somewhat non-conventional manner. This may involve drawing lessons from the CLACSO model for research cooperation more generally regarding how an approach linked to social movements can energise and engage young researchers. This may involve reflecting on the meaning of 'innovation' to see the potential roles CLACSO has had in creating 'innovation systems' for policy change that reflect broader Swedish commitments to addressing the power dimensions of human rights, non-discrimination and the root causes of violence and conflict.

Sida should provide support for consolidation while ensuring strategic vision. A next phase of Sida support should include a specific package of strategic planning support to explore how to sustain the advances made in focusing support on Central America, including developing a strategy to build on initial progress in generating support within Meso-America for partners in the sub-region.

Sida should consider longer-term support to South-South cooperation, with less attention to large (expensive) meetings and more to smaller research groups where mutual interests drive collaboration. This may include support to more 'technical' aspects of South-South cooperation. Targeted English (and possibly Arabic) language support may also be a priority.

Related to this, Sida should proactively explore ways to collaborate with CLACSO as a partner and centre of expertise (rather than just a recipient of support) for broader research cooperation more generally. Open Access is an area where CLACSO has emerged as a centre of such expertise that Sida could partner with on global programmes. There may also be strategic themes where CLACSO's strong applied, qualitative research tradition could be leveraged for more global engagements, e.g., in relation to violence and conflict.

1 Introduction and methods

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Objectives

The Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO¹) has received support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) since 1998, and the length of this relationship is an indication of the long-standing recognition of the relevance of CLACSO's work for Swedish policy objectives. This evaluation has been commissioned by Sida to better understand the continued relevance of CLACSO's work, together with its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, so as to inform the future partnership between CLACSO and Sida.

Relevance and effectiveness have been assessed in relation to Sweden's Strategy for Research Cooperation and Research in Development Cooperation 2015-2021, which emphasises the development of research capacities that are relevant to poverty reduction and sustainable development. The Strategy also focuses on support to research at the global, regional and national levels that, through innovation, can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development by engaging with public authorities, the private sector and civil society. At the outset it is clear that CLACSO has assumed a rather unique stance in relation to contributing to these policy objectives. As such, the evaluation has found it important to 'step back' from conventional measures of research relevance, effectiveness and quality, i.e., based on peer reviewed publications and an overall role *within* academia, to better understand the CLACSO theory of change and contributions in this wider sphere. This has been deemed important, not just for informing Sida, but also as a way of supporting CLACSO to reflect on its changing role in the 'political economy of research' in Latin America. The terms of reference (ToR) for this assignment highlight that CLACSO is potentially well placed to contribute to Swedish policy goals. But in discussions with Sida it also appears that there are prevailing qualms regarding the appropriateness of its stance in politicised processes and in its search for a suitable path for strengthening its South-South and global research cooperation. Analysis of the implications of CLACSO's unique ap-

¹ In this report CLACSO is used to refer to both the overall CLACSO network and also the Executive Secretariat based in Buenos Aires. Where appropriate the role of the Executive Secretariat is specified. It is noted, however, that it is sometimes difficult to differentiate in the documentation regarding the roles of the Executive Secretariat and the very active membership. In one interview, when asked about this differentiation, the member stated that "we are all CLACSO".

proach to ‘positioning’ within the public policy discourse in the region and globally has therefore been a central focus in the evaluation.

CLACSO’s membership has grown at a rapid pace over the past decade, and it has shifted this ‘positioning’ in relation to the academic community in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and globally. Sida support has helped CLACSO to develop academic research and policy influence in geographical sub-regions where public funding has been scarce and human resources weak. CLACSO’s positioning has included engagement in the ideological debates in LAC. Currently Sida’s relationship with CLACSO differs from that of much Swedish research cooperation, which mostly emphasises higher education and university research, in that it has enabled CLACSO to combine this role with collaboration among activists, civil servants and journalists who, together with university-based researchers, not only produce research but also actively promote policy change.

1.1.2 Structure of the report

This report is structured around an exploration of the theories of change and the contextual relevance of CLACSO’s work and Sida’s contributions to the work, as described in the methodology sub-chapter below. This has involved somewhat extensive contextual analyses that are first presented in the following section on context, and expanded upon throughout the report. Findings are structured according to the evaluation questions from the terms of reference, with some small modifications suggested and approved in the inception phase. The findings begin by describing the relevance of CLACSO’s work to young researchers and weaker member institutions, in relation to the context of poverty and inequality in LAC, and with that in relation to Sida research cooperation goals. This includes a particular focus on relevance and effectiveness in addressing gender equality, conflict awareness and environmental sustainability. The report analyses the extent to which CLACSO has been able to maintain a stance that fosters pluralistic dialogue. CLACSO’s South-South engagements are then described, using the Sida supported Tricontinental programme as an example of an effort that was undertaken within a longer trajectory of such efforts. CLACSO’s contributions to research quality are analysed from the perceptions of its members and in relation to how publications are managed and access to research is fostered more generally. CLACSO’s efforts to enhance efficiency and ensure sustainability are described and implications analysed. Conclusions and lessons learnt are structured to bring the analysis to a higher level, synthesising and looking at the broader implications of the findings associated with the individual evaluation questions. This is followed by recommendations to Sida and CLACSO.

1.2 CONTEXT

1.2.1 Social science research trajectories in LAC over the past fifty years

CLACSO’s current rethink of its role in the region is directly related to ongoing political and economic changes which present new opportunities and constraints. Perhaps most immediate is that institutions such as CLACSO are being confronted by the rapid decline in access to traditional development cooperation financing, partly related to the transitions in much of LAC to middle income status. The location of the CLACSO Executive Secretariat in Buenos Aires may discourage some support from

donors more focused on the remaining lower middle income and least developed countries in LAC. There is also an apparent hesitancy among most governments in LAC to fill the resulting gap by financially support to regional (rather than national) institutions.

The role of social science research in LAC has long been framed by political polarisation and shifting levels of openness towards the space for frank and evidence-based public discourse. As will be discussed below, this is central to understanding CLACSO's space for contributing to research in the region. Support for applied social science research has contributed to define the issues, create spaces for dialogue and debate, and explore consensual development options,² but the space for bringing together alternative policy viewpoints, and contributing to public policy debates has varied over time and in different countries.

Social sciences have expanded and changed in Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century. Stimulated by researchers who returned to the region after pursuing graduate studies in Europe and the United States, the practice of the social sciences evolved through several stages. Methodological and ideological issues have figured prominently in these debates, as has the relation between social science practitioners and the exercise of political power. A pioneering work by Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova³ set the early stage for examining how the interaction between values, evidence, indicators, ideology and data helped to understand—from different perspectives—the functioning of Latin American societies. Two different epistemological approaches to social science research were contrasted: one derived largely from the North American sociological tradition, which emphasised quantitative data, analytic frameworks and functional explanations; and another that privileged qualitative appreciations, overall narratives, synthesis efforts and power relations. Without rejecting quantification, starting in the 1960s critical social science researchers in Latin America argued for more comprehensive narratives, using mixed methods that explained social processes in historical and structural terms. As will be described below, this contrast between quantitative methods (often most appreciated with more right-wing or technocratic regimes) and qualitative analysis (often more associated with the left) continues to frame perceptions of the 'right' approach to research quality and with that the role of CLACSO. A review of González Casanova's text highlights this clearly, suggesting that the objective of this current of thought was

² For example, the Agenda: PERÚ programme carried out in the 1990s succeeded in bringing different political, social and economic views together to design a long-term development strategy that overcame the political polarisation of the late 1980s and the 1990s in Perú. See: Francisco Sagasti (coordinator) *PERÚ: Agenda y Estrategia para el Siglo 21* (second edition), Lima FORO Nacional Internacional, 2014.

³ Pablo González Casanova, *Las categorías del desarrollo económico y la investigación en ciencias sociales*, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1967.

“to reconstitute qualitative analysis the rank it rightfully deserves, placing a barrier against the quantification tide that threatens to drown every possibility of creative reflection and interpretation, and to demonstrate not only the compatibility, but also the need to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in sociological research.” (Marini, 1968)

Subsequent contributions, often against the background of major political and ideological shifts that reverberated through the whole region, aimed at changing the socioeconomic and political structures of Latin American countries. Roughly speaking, the dominant framework for the evolution of social sciences in the region went through three stages: developmentalism (*desarrollismo*) in the late 1950s and 1960s; dependentism (*dependentismo*) during the 1970s and 1980s; and neoliberal economicism (*neoliberalismo economicista*) from the 1990s onwards, even though countries deviated from this general pattern according to their specific political conditions (Yocolevzky, 2015). Throughout this evolution research approaches and methodologies changed according to various factors, including ideological considerations, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, availability of information and data processing tools, attempts at influencing policy making, among others. But a key feature of the evolution of social sciences has been the persistence of a contesting streak that has challenged, in various forms at different times, the dominant way of viewing the social sciences, particularly economics, and its role in Latin American development.⁴

1.2.2 Sida support and CLACSO’s changing role

CLACSO’s evolution has followed social, political and economic developments in the region; its leadership and its membership have responded to the changing social science research and policy space since its creation fifty years ago. This evaluation coincided with the reflections that have been underway during 2017 as part of this fifty year milestone.

Sida support has been important to CLACSO for many years. During the period under review in this evaluation support has been provided through two programmes. First has been to use “Knowledge for Sustainable World 2013-2016” as a vehicle to find ways to overcome sub-regional inequalities, both with regard to better balancing network support and engagements to focus on poorer and institutionally weaker countries, primarily in Central America. There have also been efforts to build on a long-standing focus on social science research *for and with* marginalised populations.

At the other end of the spectrum have been efforts to globalise. The Sida financed programme “South-South Tricontinental 2013-2015” was part of these efforts. This programme brought together CLACSO, the Council for the Development of Social

⁴ Fernando Cortés, “Desarrollo de la metodología en ciencias sociales en América Latina: posiciones teóricas y proyectos de sociedad,” *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*, Vol 23, No. 45 (2015), pp. 181-202

Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the International Development Economics Associates (IDEAs) to “promote a global approach to knowledge production”. Although a number of problems were encountered, this experience was part of a continuing –and still highly problematic– set of efforts to establish CLACSO within a global discourse.

1.3 METHODS

1.3.1 Theory-based evaluation

The need to understand how CLACSO has used Sida support to adapt to changing roles and relationships led to a decision to apply a theory-based approach, with a strong emphasis on how CLACSO ‘theory of change’ has evolved over time. Throughout the evaluation process, this history (and differing perceptions of its implications) have been at the forefront of discussions with different stakeholders about what CLACSO’s theory of change was in the past, and what it is striving to be in the future. Tensions between sometimes contentious views about these historical trajectories have been highlighted throughout the evaluation process and have provided an entry point to understanding changes in relevance (to the opportunities for innovation and the needs of social scientists and social movements), effectiveness (in finding space for enhancing capacity and research quality among especially young researchers and those in poorer countries) and sustainability (in ensuring continued ownership and financial flows in the future).

CLACSO’s theory about its role in LAC development has gone through several partially overlapping phases, largely responding to changes in the political, social and economic context. An initial phase during the late 1960s to mid-1970s focused on *understanding the changes Latin American societies were undergoing* through social science research; a second phase that coincided with the spread of military dictatorships during the 1970s and the political repression that accompanied it, saw CLACSO evolving towards the *protection of social scientists* who were frequently persecuted and imprisoned by authoritarian regimes; and by the mid- to late 1980s through the end of the twentieth century the focus of CLACSO’s activities shifted towards supporting *research that questioned standard economic and social policies, largely represented by the ‘Washington Consensus’*, to suggest alternative approaches anchored in domestic analyses.

A more recent shift took place during the past decade and a half, during which — without abandoning an underlying critical research stance— CLACSO’s theory of change came to emphasise: (i) the development of strong research networks together with an expansion in their reach and scope, and with the continuing training of high-level researchers; (ii) facilitating access to social science research publications, particularly for researchers and institutions that did not have the resources to do this on their own; (iii) linking social science research more closely with policy formulation, in order to provide a solid base of evidence for public policies; (iv) somewhat more of an impartial stance as a convenor of debates among a range of policy actors; and (v) expanding the reach of social science knowledge produced and accumulated in the region, so as to influence global agendas from a Latin American perspective.

1.3.2 Inception phase

The evaluation began with initial literature review and interviews at the CLACSO Executive Secretariat to obtain an overview of the current theory of change and to assess what would be an appropriate sampling strategy to focus the evaluation on salient features in CLACSO's work.

1.3.3 Data collection phase

Data collection has consisted of an e-survey and semi-structured interviews with the following sets of stakeholders.

Stakeholder category
Leadership and governance
Executive Secretariat staff
Participants in thematic working groups
Scholarship recipients
Outside observers with knowledge of CLACSO's role
Members of CLACSO outside of LAC

The interviews with scholarship recipients and participants in thematic working groups and with members of the CLACSO Executive Directorate were conducted during visits to conferences and by skype. Conference visits also provided opportunities for observation of the engagements and dynamics of CLACSO internal meetings, conference panels and plenary events. Interviews with scholarship recipients and participants in thematic working groups have to some extent applied an adapted Most Significant Change methodology⁵. A limited number of interviews (three) were undertaken with selected outside observers.

Central American stakeholder interviews and interviews with the Executive Secretariat and the Directors of member centres were undertaken by Ian Christoplos in conjunction with the CLACSO International Conference, Social Science's Challenges in Crisis Time: A Mesoamerican Sigh on the 50th Anniversary of CLACSO, in October 2017 in Guatemala City. South American stakeholder interviews and interviews with the Executive Secretariat and the Directors of member centres undertaken in conjunction with the Latin American Association of Sociology Annual Conference, The Open Interlinkages of Sociology in Latin America, Sociology in Times of Change, in Montevideo in December 2017. During both conferences interviews were conducted either as focus groups or individually. Members of CLACSO outside of LAC were interviewed by skype.

⁵ A methodology that elicits interviewees' views about what aspects of their engagements with an organisation or intervention that led to major changes in their perspectives, knowledge, careers, etc., see http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change

An e-survey was conducted with members of all the thematic working groups. These interviews were used to triangulate with the findings from the interviews on CLACSO's role and influence. The response rate to the e-survey was 44.9% percent out of 229 people contacted, which the Evaluation Team judges to be good.

In conjunction with the Montevideo conference Ian Christoplos visited the Executive Secretariat and at that time held discussions with Sida and CLACSO leadership to verify emerging findings.

1.3.4 Sample activities

Sida funds a broad range of CLACSO activities and CLACSO activities include many activities that are not Sida funded. Also, the activities funded by Sida have changed over time. Therefore interviews focused on selected activities that were judged to be likely to generate findings of particularly salience to respond to the evaluation questions. Particularly in light of the limited number of days available to the evaluation and the need to manage demands on the time of the CLACSO members, the ET gave priority to depth of analysis of the thematic working groups, research quality efforts, post-graduate seminars and Open Access related efforts, rather than looking at the entire portfolio of Sida funded activities. Furthermore, the South-South Tricontinental Programme was assessed as part of CLACSO's overall process of striving towards more global and South-South engagement.

1.3.5 Timeframe

The ToR for this evaluation propose a focus on Sida support during the period 2013-2016. The ET found that an emphasis on this period could make it difficult to ensure concentration of evaluation efforts on the forward-looking findings that are expected from the evaluation. Also, initial interviews with CLACSO and the document review indicated that the organisation is rapidly adapting to its changing context and that analysis of past activities and outcomes may be misleading. Therefore the ET has considered the historical trajectories of CLACSO with a focus on the intended outcomes from Knowledge for a Sustainable World 2013-2016 and South-South Tricontinental. This was combined with a major empirical focus on the activities underway during the current extension period (May 2017-June 2018) as stakeholders were more engaged and interested in current activities than what happened in the past.

The ET began the evaluation process by actively engaging with CLACSO to understand better how the evaluation could be a tool for formative reflection on future cooperation with Sida. This utilisation-focused methodology was designed to support a process whereby Sida support can be best focused to assist CLACSO during what the ET has been informed will likely be the final phases of support in the coming years. The ET recognises that an underlying purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that Sida has a more profound understanding of CLACSO's new emergent niche in policy research in the region and also how the changes in the overall landscape of policy research in Latin America have shifted the priorities for what may constitute a relevant role for development cooperation. It is also recognised that this may involve exploration of how CLACSO's approach reflects priorities within Swedish policies within and beyond research cooperation per se.

1.3.6 Limitations

The number of days available for the evaluation was very limited in relation to understanding the large scope of CLACSO's work. As such, the sampling methods described above were intended to provide a basis for focusing available resources on issues of strategic concern. Findings are assumed to have implications for other areas of CLACSO's work receiving Sida support, where the team did not have an opportunity to undertake more explicit analysis.

In order to concentrate available resources on collecting data that would contribute most to the formative aims of the evaluation, in agreement with Sida the ET concentrated on more recent activities since these were more indicative of CLACSO's future trajectory, even though this may reduce ability to assess outcomes of past activities. In some respects, this involved a 'real-time evaluation' of activities underway in the current extension period. This meant that the evaluation was not able to provide a comprehensive analysis of the full current period of Sida support.

As noted above, given that the South-South Tricontinental programme ended in 2015, which had implications for the extent to which informants who were involved in the programme recalled the processes and outcomes at this stage.

A major challenge has been to undertake the intended skype interviews. Two obstacles were encountered. First was that the response from working group members willing to be interviewed was very limited (six skype interviews conducted). It appears that this was largely due to these being arranged in late November and December, towards the end of the year. Regarding outside observers, the sensitivity of CLACSO's political position seems to have also affected willingness to respond. Some potential interviewees stated that they were involved in collaboration with CLACSO and therefore found it inappropriate as they did not see themselves to be objective observers. Others pointed out political debates (mostly in the past) that made them uncomfortable, and indicated they were largely unaware of recent developments in CLACSO. Ultimately only three outside observer interviews were conducted.

Finally, although the ET has received a considerable amount of reporting, it has been noted that within the documentation it proved challenging to trace the outputs and outcomes given changes that have occurred in the results frameworks and the tendency to focus on activity indicators rather than outputs and outcomes.

2 Findings

2.1 RELEVANCE

2.1.1 Are the components of the Sida funded programmes compatible with Sida's Strategy for Research Cooperation?

Sweden's Strategy for Research Cooperation and Research in Development Cooperation is built upon three objectives of strengthened research of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development:

1. Capacity-building for research, primarily in low-income countries and regions
2. Global, regional and national research of relevance to low-income countries and regions
3. Promotion of research that, through innovation, can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development

This evaluation has focused on understanding the relevance of CLACSO's policies, approaches and activities towards these objectives through two lenses: (a) The extent to which the network shares and pursues these aims in the research (and research capacities) being developed with Sida support; and (b) The extent to which their policy activism and engagements with social movements are being pursued in harmony with these foci.

CLACSO's overall objectives are described somewhat differently in different policy statements over time, but overall there is clear and explicit alignment with Swedish policy objectives one and two. Alignment with objective three is subject to interpretation. Innovation, as discussed further below, can be seen as being central if the 'innovations' are perceived as including the outcomes of engagements with social movements to generate more evidence-based policy discussions and policies contributing to poverty reduction and equitable sustainable development.

Capacity development

Over the past decade it is possible to discern a certain shift in CLACSO's statements of objectives from an almost singular focus on enhancing research capacity towards more explicit emphasis on capacities to influence policy. For example, in 2009 objectives were stated as: a) strengthen the network of member centres and their institutional development; b) promote regional and comparative research in the different disciplines and on priority topics for the region and the development of social sciences, as well as national and / or sectoral research carried out by the member centres; and c) promote the training and permanent updating of Latin American social scientists (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO), 2009, p. 3).

Whereas in 2017 CLACSO's main objective was stated as: "CLACSO is a research network that has been pioneer in the development of programmes and actions that seek to provide synergy between social research and public policies, to respond to some of the main demands and challenges that Latin American societies have." (Insti-

tutional Presentation of CLACSO, 2017, p. 3)

Nonetheless, interviews, survey results and analysis of the structure of CLACSO demonstrate that capacity development remains a clear focus, due primarily to CLACSO's ability to engage and then actively support young researchers and activists. The scale of engagement is judged by the ET to be extraordinary and the enthusiasm observed is also impressive. Last year CLACSO carried out 28 virtual seminars, each with 12 classes with between 60 and 100 students. Five summer schools are undertaken per year, which are largely self-financing.

It has not been possible to obtain an overview of the scope of limits to participation (i.e., the young researchers who either were unable to participate or chose not to), but the ET was struck by how young researchers interviewed from the weaker institutions in Central America stressed that CLACSO offered them a unique opportunity to broaden and deepen their research skills as they were otherwise isolated from the regional discourse. Several informants mentioned the extremely active and vocal youth engagement in CLACSO's Medellin Conference in 2015 as a striking example of how CLACSO enables young researchers to participate in a proactive manner.

Interview data indicates that the link to activism appears to have been important for attracting and thereby enhancing the capacity of young researchers who may have been less interested in purely academic pursuits. Observations at events and interviews, and the vast scale of engagements with young researchers through almost all activities being undertaken leave a strong impression that CLACSO is able to connect with young researchers due to its link with activism. This implies that the support to their capacity development is based on the demands of the young researchers themselves. However, here again, there may be a significant number of young researchers who are not interested in engagements outside of academia that the ET did not come into contact with, and who may have decided to shun cooperation with CLACSO. A major aspect of CLACSO's structure that has ensured relevance for developing the capacities of young researchers is a consistent focus on access, inclusion and openness. Interview and survey results highlighted the following factors behind this:

- Conferences are designed to engage young researchers, not just through attendance but also through active participation in panels, etc.
- Financial support is provided for researchers to engage in working groups and conferences
- Topics are generated in a participatory manner that engages young researchers, and pedagogic methods used in seminars and the Summer Schools are also highly participatory
- Post-graduate seminars, Summer Schools, etc. are particularly important for researchers from weaker institutions⁶

⁶ Member organisations and researchers consider CLACSO's capacity-creation activities, such as

- Opportunities to publish and share research through social media with other young researchers with related interests, often in conjunction with working group participation, which also creates an incentive to do better (i.e., publishable) research
- Access to the vast body of literature in the virtual library is repeatedly mentioned as extremely important, especially for those from weaker institutions

In conjunction with this, in addition to the focus on youth, over the past decade CLACSO has undertaken an effective shift of engagements to focus on the poorer countries (with weaker research capacities) in Central America. Sida support has been central to this effort. Some of the measures taken include:

- Funding scholarships conference and working group participation
- Enabling the Executive Secretariat to engage more proactively
- Allowing for discounts or waiver of fees for different activities
- Providing more flexibility in publication standards to include more Central American authors

Another factor was the decision to split Central America and the Caribbean into separate regions, which some interviewees noted was important to enable a focus on issues that were particularly salient to Central America. This has led to an increase in membership and also (as observed in meetings and interviews in Guatemala) very strong ownership. As will be discussed below, the sustainability of this shift remains uncertain, but interviews and observations of CLACSO member discussions in Central America have clearly demonstrated that CLACSO has overcome its past bias towards better-off countries in South America. Interviews with members, staff and the Executive Directorate revealed unanimous support for giving priority to using CLACSO resources to address the economic imbalances that have prevented full participation from the Central American members in the past.

Interviews and documentation overwhelmingly highlight that the main ‘capacity’ that CLACSO is seen to contribute to is that of ‘critical thought’ (*pensamiento crítico*). This aspect arose repeatedly in interviews and in the e-survey 83.5% of respondents reported that their participation in working groups considerably or very considerably contributed to critical thinking and more open public policy debates (which also relates to contributions to innovation, discussed below).

Focus on relevance to low-income countries

The social justice focus of CLACSO is at the core of efforts to ensure that the research that CLACSO supports is of relevance to low-income countries and regions. Poverty and inequality are at the forefront, as are efforts to use research to question

scholarships, virtual seminars, and post-graduate seminars, as overwhelmingly positive, according to their 2015 evaluation – the overall average score of these evaluated activities was 8.62 out of 10 (Serendipia Consultores, 2015, p. 14). In addition, these members also report a high level of awareness of these capacity-building activities, with most of these – bar CLACSO TV, the South-South Programme, and the Virtual Library – being recognised by 78% of the members (Serendipia Consultores, 2015, p. 13).

prevailing (and resurgent) narratives about e.g., trickle-down economics.

Furthermore, the focus on Central America has also contributed to ensuring that research supported is relevant to poorer countries. The starting point for CLACSO's pivot to Central America was partly related to economics and partly to intellectual aspects. There was a perceived dominance by a South American discourse that reflected the positioning of better-off institutions (and geographical location of the Executive Secretariat) and also a tendency to apply concepts that were ill-suited to Central American realities. Interviews suggest that this has changed in recent years and that, although an imbalance still exists, 'the glass is now half full'.

Among a survey commissioned by CLACSO found that among members there is an overwhelming view that research and publications are relevant to their needs (Serenipia Consultores, 2015, pp. 12-13). As elsewhere in this evaluation, there is undoubtedly a degree of bias in this finding, as those who do not see CLACSO as being relevant presumably do not engage with CLACSO.

Relevance is also ensured by a very strong focus on in-depth analysis of gender, which includes a range of publications that either partially or largely focus on gender issues, mostly from a feminist perspective. Violence, conflict and social exclusion are also very strongly emphasised. Environmental issues are addressed, but in a somewhat less mainstreamed manner, i.e., through specific research but not as an issue impinging on a broad range of research topics. In all of these areas the interviews and rapid review of activities indicate that analyses are deep and transcend shallow or tokenistic attention to these issues.

Relevance to addressing the drivers of poverty and inequality within CLACSO is underpinned by the speed and flexibility that the working groups and the communications functions have in responding to emergent issues in the region. Systems are in place for mobilising policy discussions among academic researchers and other actors in an expeditious manner. As examples below illustrate, this is central to what energises 'innovation' within CLACSO.

Innovation for poverty reduction and sustainable development

The extent to which CLACSO research is truly 'innovative' depends on the way that innovation is perceived. The ET's analysis can be seen as building additional social impact factors beyond the roles envisaged by Sida for research in a recent position paper.⁷ CLACSO's approach to innovation explicitly breaks down the dichotomy between civil society as 'problem identifiers' and academic institutions as 'problem-solvers'. CLACSO's research is built on joint identification –by researchers, civil society activists, journalists and politicians– of innovative policies that can overcome the profound structural factors, including power, violence and gender/ethnic exclu-

⁷ Innovation Working Group (2015) Support to Innovation and Innovation Systems: Within the Framework of Swedish Research Cooperation. Position Paper. Sida.

sion that prevent poor and marginalised populations from reaping the benefits from their products and services. CLACSO's approach to innovation is thus akin to that presented in UNRISD's 2016 flagship report that describes innovation as consisting of policy, institutional, social, conceptual and technological dimensions, which require power re-configurations, changes in social and economic structures and sustainable production and consumption to result in transformative change⁸. The ET notes that this experience sheds light on how very different forms of 'innovation systems' may suggest linkages to overall objectives of Swedish development cooperation related to human rights, discrimination and addressing the root causes of conflict.

The respondents to the e-survey emphasised the role of the working groups in bringing together a range of actors in 'innovation systems' (though they would not use this terminology). Aspects mentioned include in-depth dialogue among people experiencing different realities, which has contributed to create networks, mutual and collaborative learning, access to new ideas from intellectuals and civil society activists and access to new literature. Results include shedding light on 'invisible' debates, establishing interdisciplinary research, and elaboration of a new (i.e., innovative) regional agenda. The working groups achieve this through joint publications of books, research, dossiers, policy briefs, articles, as well as events with a wide range of events such as lectures, conferences, seminars, and roundtables. Most members thus see CLACSO's focus on the real world concerns of social activists as a way to bring together researchers and practitioners in what could be perceived to be 'innovation systems'. This is exemplified by CLACSO's strategy statement from 2017 that states its intention to "Build bridges and promote discussion and exchange between social researchers, policy related public policies and social organizations." 90% of surveyed members felt that "CLACSO should be more than an exclusively academic institution", i.e., CLACSO has to transcend academia and make an impact on policymaking, innovation, citizen activism, and promotion of social justice and human rights. (Serendipia Consultores, 2015, p. 25). 68% of CLACSO members report having activities associated with public policies and 61% with social organisations (Serendipia Consultores, 2015, p. 27). 92% of members believe that CLACSO should strive to directly influence policies and activism (Serendipia Consultores, 2016, p. 60). So by these measures, CLACSO is clearly engaged in 'innovation systems' through what might otherwise be referred to as 'action research'.

This leads to the question of whether this multi-stakeholder engagement in innovation systems means that CLACSO is a 'think tank'.⁹ Most members interviewed were un-

⁸ UNRISD (2016) Policy Innovations for Transformative Change: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNRISD.

⁹ According to Enrique Mendizábal, the director of the "On Think Tanks" organisation, think tanks can fulfil at least six roles (or services) in their political context: (1) provide legitimacy to policies (whether it is ex-ante or ex-post); (2) act as spaces for debate and deliberation –even as a sounding board for policymakers and opinion leaders. In some context they provide a safe house for intellectuals and their

comfortable with this terminology, associating it with what they perceive as a dominance of LAC think tanks by right-wing or technocratic perspectives that produce research reflecting the views of their financiers and which lack a social justice ethos. The ET notes that CLACSO does undertake activities that reflect the definition of a think tank, but also acknowledges that the semantics surrounding the term are problematic.

Communicating the vision

In all three of these areas of Sweden's Strategy for Research Cooperation and Research in Development Cooperation, the ET has found that CLACSO has a very strong implicit strategy. Virtually all of those stakeholders directly involved in CLACSO activities and governance were strikingly well informed about what CLACSO is and what it wants to do. Greater questions exist surrounding the CLACSO image among those who are not stakeholders and with regard to how CLACSO intends to work towards its vision.

Regarding the CLACSO image among 'non-stakeholders', the ET had difficulty engaging senior social science researchers outside of the CLACSO sphere for interviews. They explained hesitancy as they knew CLACSO by reputation or by engagements in the past, but felt unable to express views about where CLACSO stands today. This suggests possible weaknesses in CLACSO's messaging to those 'who are not converted' and in having its messages reach out beyond members of its own networks.¹⁰

Regarding the ways that CLACSO intends to implement its vision, the ET has observed a sharp dichotomy between, on the one hand, an active and in-depth debate in the Executive Directorate and other central stakeholders on how to confront the challenges ahead, and the rather activity-focused weakly structured results frameworks and reporting presented to Sida. Furthermore, CLACSO has a management structure that is obviously designed to balance strategic vision with flexibility and readiness to address emerging issues. The resulting 'vibrant chaos' has strongly positive characteristics for energising staff, but a couple of interviewees made comments suggesting that greater clarity on roles and steps in the action plan were desired. The ET sees this as an area where the gap between the in-depth debates on the path forward and the weak results frameworks is apparent and problematic.

2.1.2 Other policies related to Sida's priorities such as gender, environmental sustainability and conflict sensitivity: Is there a gender policy and is it operational-

ideas; (3) provide a financing channel for political parties and other policy interest groups; (4) attempt to influence the policy process; (5) provide cadres of experts and policymakers for political parties and governments; and (6) perform an auditing function. See: <https://onthinktanks.org/articles/on-the-definition-of-think-tanks-towards-a-more-useful-discussion/>

¹⁰ Out of sixteen potential outside observers contacted, six responded through e-mail exchanges and two senior social scientist were interviewed at length, one in person and another through skype.

ized to adequately address eventual insufficiencies? Are policies and procedures in place to ensure that reflection on e.g., environmental risks, gender discrimination and conflict sensitivity is encouraged in a mainstreamed manner?

Ethical commitments and a human rights based approach

Findings suggest that CLACSO focuses on these Swedish priorities based on ethical commitments and the priorities of its members. There is no evidence that this is codified in explicit policies and procedures, and interviewees felt that this was not necessary. The ET interprets this to imply that CLACSO has a strong commitment that brings together gender, violence and environment from what could be described as a human rights perspective, anchored strongly in concerns about power and inequality. This came out in a particularly striking manner in interviews in Central America.

Gender

Interviews, documentation review and survey results indicate that in addition to the research with an explicit gender focus, mainstreaming is widespread as well. A considerable proportion of research takes an explicitly feminist and transformative stance. 90% of e-survey respondents report that their working groups are very considerably or considerably gender inclusive. The call for applications for new working groups for 2016-2019 states that gender equality is a criteria, but apart from “equal representation” it does not specify what that implies¹¹, and as such states a commitment without providing guidance. The themes for the competitive scholarships in 2017 almost all either directly or indirectly touched on gender issues. 58% of applicants and 44% of the winners of these scholarships were female. A majority of the participants in CLACSO research activities are female. Interviews generally showed both strong commitments to integration of gender perspectives, and also a range of efforts to bring this to bear on research design. For example, the research strategy being developed among the Central American members directly integrates analyses of power, gender and violence.

Conflict

Conflict and violence receive substantial attention in research priorities, even though there are no explicit conflict sensitivity guidelines. These two areas are seen as priorities by 40% and 50% of members respectively (Serendipia Consultores, 2015, p. 18). Interviewees suggested that mainstreaming of these perspectives was widespread in the research supported, while also noting that the drivers of conflict vary greatly across LAC. Particularly in Central America and Colombia, violence was seen as central to the social science research agenda and its link to public policy. In the CLACSO International Conference, Social Science’s Challenges in Crisis Time: A Mesoamerican Sight on the 50th Anniversary of CLACSO of October 2017, the Central American members presented a proposed research agenda for their work within

¹¹ CLACSO (2016) VII Convocatoria para la conformación de Grupos de Trabajo CLACO 2016-2019.

CLACSO that emphasised this strongly. No examples were found of approaches resembling the ‘Do No Harm’ methods for assessing the impact of the research intervention itself on the conflict dynamics. It could be assumed that the inclusion of local civil society would carry with it an awareness of the risks involved in research into sensitive topics, but this could not be confirmed by the ET.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a growing focus and is seen as a priority by most members (Serendipia Consultores, 2015, p. 20), but despite general statements of commitment, there is no clear indication that it is being consistently mainstreamed across the portfolio of activities. Overall it appears that there are just a few initiatives that address climate concerns, and the ET did not record any references to how this priority should be pursued more in the future. The main interest of the members in environmental issues appears to be related to the struggles around pollution and exploitive labour conditions in the extractive industries. Some comments were recorded suggesting that there may be diverging sub-regional dynamics that have not been fully reflected. Climate change has received relatively little direct attention, with the notable exception of attention to hurricanes in the Caribbean-related research.

Ethnic inclusion

CLACSO members express awareness and strong commitments to addressing ethnic exclusion. Some interviewees (particularly in Central America) stressed CLACSO’s ability to introduce sub-alter perspectives. But inclusion of marginalised populations in CLACSO research itself was repeatedly portrayed as ‘difficult’ in interviews due to structural exclusion which CLACSO can highlight and analyse, but not directly address. 66% of e-survey respondents report that the working groups are inclusive in relation to ethnicity and marginalised groups. Comments indicate that these challenges may be partially assuaged by engagement with indigenous people who are involved with social movements, rather than as researchers per se. At the other end of the spectrum, CLACSO is proud of its close relationship with former indigenous leader and current president of Bolivia Evo Morales, stemming from his past role as a rural indigenous leader. Also, the representation of marginal groups appears to be higher in activities focused on rural development and gender, as well as those targeting the role of specific ethnic and racial groups in the region.

2.1.3 How does CLACSO position itself, both as a regional think tank and in supporting national institutions in policy research as related to polarised political perspectives in the region? Are contributions biased towards one side of the political arena?

Is CLACSO a pluralistic, leftist institution?

CLACSO is not considered neutral and there is no expectation among interviewees that this is an objective in practice. One interviewee asked “How pluralistic can CLACSO be?” Many members perceive CLACSO’s transparent stance to be a strength in promoting dialogue in the polarised political atmosphere, as people know CLACSO’s values at the outset of their engagement. Some expressed the view that a certain political positioning is inherent in any institution devoted to policy change and the struggle against inequality and discrimination, especially in LAC given the skewed distribution of income and power.

By contrast, a few interviewees describe CLACSO as being locked into an earlier discussion on structural poverty, perhaps due to its close collaboration with social movements that are engaged in long-standing struggles. In replies to the e-survey, a few active members of the working groups made comments suggesting that the groups leaned towards endogenous discussions that failed to engage those with more distant ideological positions. This ‘group-speak’ was seen as an obstacle to a truly pluralistic and inclusive discussion. A couple of outside observers made statements indicating that they felt that CLACSO’s research did not feature in ‘cutting edge’ social science research discussions that are increasingly moving towards more quantitative methods and an emphasis on credibility through ‘objectivity’. However, no evidence was presented that this ‘cutting edge’ research was generating innovations in terms of practical solutions to poverty, as the ‘objectivity’ may distance researchers from those who would apply their research. Here again, the sample of interviewees may be biased against those with more critical perspectives.

A small minority of observers have expressed concerns that in highly contentious issues the CLACSO Executive Secretariat has ‘gone too far’ and its stance therefore alienates some stakeholders and hinders dialogue. This is disputed in interviews with the CLACSO leadership, who highlight its role in promoting dialogue. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to pass judgement on what constitutes ‘too far’ in relation to trying to encourage dialogue with problematic governments in the region or in relation to highly contested issues such as the political changes in Brazil.

Risks in political positioning

It is apparent that CLACSO has kept open a constructive dialogue with the Cuban regime, which has leveraged opportunities for enhancing access to alternative ideas there, at the same time as it has probably alienated other stakeholders. Some felt that the Cuban regime’s trust in CLACSO has enabled it to take up more controversial issues such as race and gender, thereby nudging the discourse there towards a space which better reflects the diversity of leftist critical thought. A senior outside observer stated “it is important to integrate and consider Cuban researchers and views, but also to criticise Cuban repressive excesses,” adding that CLACSO should not take an institutional political position, even though its members and even authorities could do so. 81% of e-survey respondents felt that their working groups were very considerably or considerably inclusive of participants with divergent views and ideologies. One informant noted that the leftist history and stance associated with CLACSO gave actors more confidence in engaging with an institution since their role is transparent.

When asked about perceptions of bias and the risks of being associated with one end of the political spectrum, CLACSO leadership and governance repeatedly referred to the sizeable support received from the (relatively right-wing) Mexican government for scholarships. Another interviewee noted that CLACSO had tense relations with the Colombian government during the Uribe regime, but that a more constructive relationship has emerged under Santos. The ET judges that these are notable examples which indicate the possibility of collaboration across the political spectrum, but the dearth of additional examples also illustrates how this challenge remains.

In highly polarised political situations, rife with violent conflicts, any engagement may trigger intense criticism from one or another extreme. Inevitably, ideological

biases tend to emerge. This has been the case in a recent CLACSO pronouncement. While trying to be unbiased (a debatable proposition considering that government forces and militias are responsible for most physical violence), CLACSO stated (Venezuela: Recuperar de inmediato el camino del diálogo y de la paz, 2017):

In Venezuela many mistakes have been made. The opposition and the government have made these mistakes. It will not be the aggravation of these errors that will sow the path of peace and understanding. Exalting or radicalising any of these two positions will only deepen a conflict that will most likely lead to more deaths and a civil war that dawns on the horizon of a horror that we can and should urgently avoid.

Yet their statement also used charged language to characterise the position of external actors in the Venezuelan drama:

We condemn the irresponsible attitude of some Latin American governments and multilateral organizations, such as the OAS, who, at a time of extreme tension and having hundreds of lives at stake, instead of helping to bring about agreement, common sense and reconciliation, exacerbate the tensions, feed the destabilising will or the arrogance of those who are facing today, returning to this great nation, a real battlefield... We condemn foreign interference in Venezuela, in particular, that exercised by the US government with its persistent and now renewed colonial and imperial ambitions over the region. We also condemn the attack on the country, and especially its government, on the part of media monopolies that misinform, distort and hide the complex origin of the deep crisis experienced.

Members of the CLACSO networks may agree or not with these statements on the Venezuelan situation. Nonetheless, the ET notes that such a strong institutional position of the Executive Secretariat may undermine attempts at convening social scientists and policy activists that hold different political views.

2.1.4 How are the policy dialogues encouraged and carried out? Assess strategies and outcomes of CLACSO's interaction between research and policy makers.

Working groups

Policy dialogues are encouraged through the working groups and through initiatives by members. Central American and Cuban interviewees made frequent statements indicating that CLACSO helped them overcome their isolation and gain the confidence they needed to engage in policy dialogue themselves. This policy dialogue is at the core of the discussion above on 'innovation systems'.

E-survey respondents describe how the working groups enable a significant proportion of researchers have been enabled to network with non-academic policy actors (51% reporting that this was considerable or very considerable). This is significantly lower than those who have strengthened their research networks, but in the view of the ET is still striking for what is primarily an academic network.

The working groups are also important for promoting a more gender-balanced policy discourse, with 59% of the coordinators and 55% of the members of the current working groups being female.

Communications

An important feature of CLACSO's policy dialogue processes is the link to its proac-

tive communications efforts, which together with both large events and the ongoing working group activities results in very timely engagement in emerging issues. The *integration* of communications, with tools ranging from policy briefs to CLACSO TV, throughout CLACSO's work is striking (compared to many other research institutions where this is treated more of an afterthought). The seriousness with which CLACSO emphasises this integration is indicative of the extent to which CLACSO has reflected on the range of steps needed to achieve genuine policy dialogue.

Linking researchers, activists and policy actors

The set of non-academic political actors considered include representatives of civil society, political candidates, representatives of local governments, union representatives, educational political actors, and indigenous, feminist, afro-descendant, anti-extractivism movements, among others. CLACSO reports that approximately 20% of the members of the working groups are from civil society, and a large proportion of the themes of the working groups relate to the role of social movements. The presence of these actors in the events organised by CLACSO has been frequent and (in the view of the ET) notable. The presence of these actors is described by e-survey respondents and interviewees as helping to generate a political reading of the context. Likewise, the presentation of the researchers' production to these actors broadens the impact they have beyond the academic sphere. Despite intentions to involve both academics and non-academics, the participation of some activist members of the working groups in the events is limited by access to financing.

It is notable that CLACSO members interviewed stressed that they do not see a dichotomy between being a researcher and being a policy activist. In a survey (Serenipia Consultores, 2016, p. 20) 95% of respondents defined themselves as researchers and 66% as having activities linked to social movements and public policies, suggesting a very large overlap. This data could also be interpreted as suggesting that those researchers who are not interested in activism choose not to engage with CLACSO and that there is self-selection. It can be noted that non-researcher social activist organisations are welcome to join working groups, but not become members of CLACSO, which could be interpreted to be an anomaly in light of CLACSO objectives.

2.1.5 Has CLACSO adopted a relevant approach to supporting wider and deeper South-South collaboration beyond Latin America and the Caribbean?

South-South Tricontinental

CLACSO received Sida support for developing a "South-South Programme"¹², in-

¹² The name "South-South Institute" has been used by CODESRIA to refer to their collaboration in the past. The name now appears to have been appropriated by a completely different initiative focused on sexual violence against men and boys. This is further complicated by the use of the term "South-South University" to refer to one of the post-graduate seminars, which has had very limited participation from outside of LAC and Europe.

volving a range of institutions, but primarily led by CLACSO and CODESRIA. This initiative had a number of highly ambitious activity plans which were undertaken during the period of 2013-2015, but these efforts have proven difficult to sustain. This was not the first attempt to develop relationships between CLACSO and CODESRIA, as this was pursued approximately fifteen years earlier with support from the Ford Foundation. It was also not the last, as these efforts have continued after the end of Sida support. It is difficult to trace the exact reasons for the failed attempts to develop different types of collaboration platforms, but it appears that these were anchored more in intentions to link networks that are very different in their structures and intellectual histories, rather than in a frank assessment of what would be required to generate sustainable structures for institutional exchange. Creating websites, as some of these efforts focused on, did not prove to be a sufficiently strong platform for building cooperation. Interviews also indicated a degree of scepticism regarding the extent to which short-term scholarships or joint conference panels can trigger the emergence of strong and sustainable relationships. A few interviewees criticised approaches based on brief, one-off workshops talking about research interests as being insufficient to generate momentum. One interviewee stated that “we don’t know each other well enough”. Overall the ET judges that the *goals* of South-South Tricontinental were highly relevant, but not the *design* nor the *means*.

Continuing South-South efforts

Some of CLACSO’s most clear-cut results in South-South collaboration over time¹³ relate to engagements in open access activities including:

- Provision of advisory support to CODESRIA
- Joint drafting, together with CODESRIA and UNESCO, of the *Dakar Declaration on Open Access in Africa and the Global South*¹⁴, a call for institutions and governments in the Global South to issue open access policies and provide the enabling environment, infrastructure and capacity building required to support open access
- Various joint workshops with African, Asian and Middle Eastern research networks
- Membership on the Advisory Board of Open Access India
- Engagement with a range of UNESCO and the International Social Science Council activities supporting open access

The stronger sustainability and momentum of these relatively focused and concrete activities can be interpreted as demonstrating the potential of South-South efforts where these are linked to an ongoing a clear agenda.

¹³ It is not possible to confirm the extent to which the South-South Tricontinental Programme may have fed into these trends.

¹⁴ See: EIFL (2016) “Dakar Declaration on Open Access - CODESRIA Conference delegates adopt Dakar Declaration on Open Access Publishing in Africa and the Global South”. Available at: <http://www.eifl.net/news/dakar-declaration-open-access>

Interview findings indicate that CLACSO's Executive Secretariat and its members have genuine commitments to South-South collaboration and many are actively looking for opportunities to go further in these efforts. In a 2016 survey, 22% of respondents had engaged in South-South activities (Serendipia Consultores, 2016, p. 32), which can be interpreted as a high level given the language and other obstacles to such engagements. This is strikingly corroborated by the e-survey findings wherein 23.3% of respondents stated that a major motivation for participating in their working group was to engage with researchers outside of LAC (not just South-South). Members mention some concerns regarding the extent to which CLACSO can retain its LAC identity if it 'goes global', but the ET judges that this is indicative of the lack of an explicit vision for this global role (or perhaps insecurity due to weak language skills) rather than a critique of these intentions more generally.

Interviews with researchers outside of LAC indicate that the desire to establish (or in the case of CODESRIA, resuscitate) relationships with CLACSO are strong. There appear to be active steps underway to rebuild relationships that had waned after the end of the South-South Tricontinental Programme, but it is too early to judge whether these will prove effective. The ET did not encounter a clear vision of how to surmount the earlier obstacles to building this relationship. It is noted that even where CLACSO has active members associated with African universities (Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo and the University of Cape Verde), these people participate as individuals and have not established strong cooperation between CLACSO and their home institutions.

One area that has emerged in discussions about the potential synergies and obstacles to CLACSO-CODESRIA cooperation is that both are increasingly looking to promote societal transformation through a closer relationship with civil society. This is complicated by the fact that civil society's roles in Africa and Latin America are very different, the former being anchored more in the role of NGOs, aid and sometimes co-optation into political parties. In Latin America the focus is more on social movements that are by definition critical of many political parties. Interviewees recognise that there is rich potential for comparative analyses, but also for misunderstandings if researchers are themselves emersed in their own regional discourse on 'civil society'.

Broader global engagements

Thus far it appears that CLACSO's membership and engagement outside of LAC has primarily grown with researchers in Europe and the US (and some notable engagement from China). For apparently obvious linguistic reasons, the largest concentration of members outside of LAC is in Spain and Portugal. In Northern Europe interest in CLACSO stems from long-standing relationships between individual researchers and CLACSO, and interviewees mention possibilities for joint publications building on CLACSO's reputation as a publisher as a significant driver for these relationships. Some European interviewees mentioned that the nature of the economic crisis on some countries in Europe has raised awareness that the differences between Europe and LAC are not as great as assumed in the past. Active members from Asia and Africa remain few.

The South-South University exemplifies these problems in that there have been few participants from outside of LAC and the Iberian Peninsula, presumably due to the

courses being provided in Spanish and Portuguese. There are great concerns among some interviewees (and the ET) regarding the extent to which the current approach is relevant and effective in developing and sustaining broader relations.

One indication of the extent to which there is interest in South-South collaborations is the number of CLACSO publications on issues including non-LAC aspects. A total of 28 publications have been identified that address South-South or non-LAC issues, which the ET judges to be significant but not outstanding. It can also be noted that CLACSO's publications on Nordic research on Latin America have been very much appreciated as a way to encourage this exchange. However, here again, lack of translation is a major obstacle. For example, CLACSO's publications on issues related to Latin America and the Middle East suggest great potential, but lack of translations into Arabic, English or French limits their potential as a tool for leveraging further exchange after the outputs have been published.

Some stakeholders outside of LAC interviewed see CLACSO as a 'portal' through which they can establish bilateral relations between their own countries and potential LAC partner countries. This is particularly apparent in the growing engagements with China and to some extent with Europe. It is recognised, however, that the structures of CLACSO and its Chinese partners are fundamentally different, with the Chinese institutions acting as think tanks providing services to the government and CLACSO assuming a far more critical stance. China's growing presence in LAC is likely, in the near future, to create further opportunities for CLACSO to support linkages as Chinese institutions are investing heavily in language skills, both among Chinese researchers learning Spanish/Portuguese and among Latin Americans learning Chinese.

Overall however, language issues remain a formidable obstacle¹⁵. The ET judges that language is a factor that is beyond the scope (and comparative advantage) of a regional network like CLACSO to comprehensively resolve (as it is up to the individual members to ensure that they develop appropriate language skills), but it will have to be addressed better than it has in the past if greater outcomes are to be achieved in developing South-South relationships beyond LAC. Even within LAC, the Spanish/Portuguese language divide is sometimes an obstacle, though CLACSO is determined to pressure its members to overcome this gap. The ET did not receive clear replies regarding intentions for how to address the language question, which is cause for concern. Seemingly obvious steps, such as ensuring a higher level of (primarily English, but potentially also Arabic given the strong interest in engaging with institutions in the Middle East) language skills among Executive Secretariat staff do not appear to be under consideration.

¹⁵ This is a disputed finding as some interviewees perceive that the language issue is more of a symptom of structural fragmentation in the Global South, whereas others see it as an obstacle that must be overcome in order to better confront these structural issues.

2.2 EFFECTIVENESS

2.2.1 Is CLACSO linked to (and does it contribute to strengthened links among) relevant academic institutions, research initiatives and regional networks?¹⁶

Who is in the network?

Most CLACSO members are well established research institutions, with the average age of the member institutions being 23 years. This suggests that CLACSO is linked to relevant, i.e., well established, research institutions. As noted above, a small number of outside observers expressed concerns that the ‘elite’ of LAC social science researchers (i.e., those publishing in international peer reviewed journals) were not engaged in the CLACSO network due to its activist role, but these findings were contradicted by the central role played by CLACSO in many regional events as part of its 50 year anniversary activities during 2017. It may be that the scope of engagement in this networking varies from discipline to discipline, with less engagement from institutions with a quantitative tradition and greater engagement from those with interest in qualitative methods, but this cannot be confirmed.

CLACSO is somewhat paradoxical in that, despite its clear ideological leanings, it is seen as extremely inclusive by its members, particularly in terms of access and the democratisation of knowledge (Serendipia Consultores, 2016, p. 66). This is underlined in section 2.2.3 below which describes the role that CLACSO plays in ensuring access to research through its virtual library, publications, support for open access, etc.

In terms of the overall networking opportunities offered by CLACSO, this is stressed universally, but is particularly emphasised by Central American members who, due to lack of financial resources and as they are not among the intellectually most highly respected institutions, have felt otherwise isolated from the LAC social science discourse. CLACSO’s respect for Central America’s own regional discourse is also described as giving them an opportunity to engage based on their own values and commitments.

Working groups and networking

The working groups are the most widespread modality for networking, with 61% of respondents to a survey reporting participation (Serendipia Consultores, 2016, p. 18). During the period of 2016-2019 110 working groups were approved, reaching a projected 3430 researchers. The Executive Secretariat reports that approximately 95% of interactions are virtual. The high level of participation is corroborated by the findings of the e-survey conducted by the ET, wherein the largest reason for participating in the working groups is to expand research networks (39%). Furthermore, 80.5% of

¹⁶ This evaluation question is addressed throughout the evaluation report, and findings reported elsewhere are not repeated here.

respondents to the e-survey state that working groups have considerably or very considerably contributed to their ability to engage with networks of researchers in LAC. This can be interpreted to suggest that members see the working groups as a very useful way to leverage their membership in CLACSO to strengthen links with other academic institutions and research initiatives.

Grants and scholarships

CLACSO has long used scholarships and other grants to support young researchers, primarily to participate in working groups and other activities and undertake small research projects. These remain a relatively high profile input, even though there has been a downward trend in the size of this support. It was reported that this reduction was largely due to the increasing proportion of this support being financed from small grants from international civil society organisations, though this could not be quantifiably assessed. Competitions such as the Berta Caceres prize are actively publicised, even though the actual winning applicant team only received USD7500 for their research. References to grants and scholarships in interviews generally emphasised the importance of this support for enabling researchers from poorer countries, particularly Central America and Cuba, to travel and engage directly in CLACSO activities.

Finally, as noted in section 2.1.3 above, CLACSO has received significant levels of support from Mexico for scholarships, but this was provided without any provision of overhead to cover the costs of managing this support. The ET judges that, even though this is a promising example of CLACSO support emanating from within the region, it is a model that would be untenable to scale up due to the unfinanced demands on the Executive Secretariat.

Post-graduate seminars and networking

Overall interview findings indicate the large reach of CLACSO postgraduate seminars. In 2017, 28 virtual seminars were held, each with 12 classes and between 60 and 100 students. They enable young researchers to both enhance their research capacities and quality, and also may trigger relationships outside of home institutions. After two years all lectures are made accessible for all on CLACSO TV.

2.2.2 Does CLACSO avail of indicators to assure quality of the various research activities including publications? How are these indicators applied in practice?

Publications¹⁷

During 2016 the working groups produced 16 books and a range of other shorter publications. In interviews the frequent references to these outputs and other publications suggests that opportunities to publish through CLACSO is seen as a major incentive to engage in network activities. CLACSO has systems in place to assess the quality of

¹⁷ The ET did not have an opportunity to review a random sample of publications to undertake an independent assessment.

publications. There is a “Good Practices Manual” that considers expectations on quality of scientific content, but is judged by the ET as not providing clear guidance (Aparicio, Banzato, & Liberatore, 2016, pp. 29, 35-48). The editorial model is defined as a “Tripartite and interdisciplinary editorial management model” that emphasises team efforts across disciplines, engaging younger researchers and attention to technical aspects to ensure widespread international access (Aparicio, Banzato, & Liberatore, 2016, pp. 50-51). In addition to these formal procedures, the Executive Secretariat staff emphasise that the fact that they know the researchers/authors personally facilitates both quality and speed of interactions related to quality. There are four categories of editorial quality assurance processes:

- Traditional peer review, used mostly with periodicals and anthologies
- Selecting publications based on contests among members, using a jury
- Responding to requests from member centres for joint publications
- Special topics decided upon by the Executive Secretariat for strategic reasons

One interviewee expressed some concerns that the publication process was ‘a little too fast’ and that quality assurance was not as rigorous as it could have been. Somewhat similar views were expressed by a few other respondents who described the CLACSO role as mostly related to technical aspects rather than research quality. Respondents strongly emphasised that CLACSO’s publications department was extremely responsive, replying to emails and providing guidance in an expeditious manner. There is also a recognition that CLACSO is very efficient in getting publications by younger researchers and activists into the public domain, and that there are inevitable trade-offs between speed and inclusion on the one hand, and quality assurance on the other.

This is also related to a desire to reach beyond the academic audiences and an important finding of the e-survey has been the comments from respondents that their joint work on publications forces them to write for a larger audience, outside the scope of their own countries, and therefore derive new ways of presenting their arguments.

There is a recognition within the Executive Secretariat that there are some trade-offs between traditional academic quality measures and the need to include voices from the social movements. This is managed through a constructive and critical dialogue between different research and civil society actors. Furthermore, there is also a system to prioritise publishing research from Central America, which also involves a measure of flexibility in quality assurance procedures.

Finally, despite CLACSO’s strong emphasis on widespread, diverse and innovative outputs, there is a recognised lack of staff capacity to trace the extent to which these have actually contributed to outcomes in terms of policy influence or influence on the academic discourse. For example, CLACSO has detailed data on publication downloads, but none on citations.

Research activities

Working groups operate in a relatively autonomous manner, and quality assurance relies on the engagement of the members, rather than any centrally imposed function from the Executive Secretariat. This highlights the importance of recognising that

CLACSO's Executive Secretariat does not have a control function, but rather enables its members to pursue quality assurance through peer reflection. E-survey findings and interviews strongly corroborate that peer reflection is central to the effective enhancement of research quality. More than 83 percent of the respondents indicate that the contributions to improve the quality of their research have been "very considerable" or "considerable". Here again though, the importance of face-to-face meetings is stressed. The work in the networks has also allowed its members to be invited to lectures or conferences that they see as an opportunity for peer reflection, even though the range of researchers who can participate in face-to-face engagements varies due to financing limitations.

Interviewees mention the positive factors of CLACSO working groups in improving the quality of research as including the incorporation of new theoretical perspectives, comparative approaches between countries and regions, sharing and proposing topics of interest, deepening their understanding of research objectives and topics, and improving the analysis of the research context through the exchange of ideas from different perspectives and experiences. In general, interview findings emphasise how the *breadth* of research is considered an indication of quality, along with integrated and inter-disciplinary perspectives.

The improvement in quality is fundamentally associated with the possibility of integrating other views. This improvement is given through the discussion of draft work, collective discussions, peer review, the opportunity to present research, virtual work sessions, student exchange and joint publications. Criticism from researchers that are not directly involved in a given study can offer a detached perspective that sheds light on issues that are not obvious to the one conducting the research. This was mentioned as particularly important for researchers in countries with a very small pool of senior researchers (e.g., Guatemala), where outside perspectives are seen to be extremely beneficial.

However, one senior outside observer expressed dissatisfaction with what he perceived as the dispersed and atomised nature of much of the work promoted and supported by CLACSO, and suggested that more cross-cutting and integrative efforts would capitalise on the wealth of research findings of the various working groups. The ET judges that, given the scale and scope of CLACSO's activities, the transaction costs in terms of efforts that would be required from the Executive Secretariat would be prohibitive.

Regional quality assurance initiatives

CLACSO is involved with a number of initiatives to enhance research quality (and capacities to maintain quality) For example, this is specifically mentioned as a goal of cooperation with the University of Kassel in Germany (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO), 2016b, p. 58). The centrepiece of the CLACSO quality assurance efforts is the Latin American University Assessment System (SILEU) an initiative launched in 2013.

It grew out of discussions in which CLACSO had taken a critical stance on the ways that institutions of higher education were being assessed and certified in Latin America, and the resulting desire to create a more innovative and appropriate alternative

that reflects Latin American realities. SILEU is envisaged more as a learning than a certification function. Such regional assessment processes had existed in the natural sciences already in LAC, but SILEU is the first attempt to establish a system for the social sciences.

SILEU has begun to be field tested and adapted to reflect a range of aspects of quality with a focus on processes and also principles of equality, for which protocols are being established. Discussions are underway of how to use a peer system to ‘certify the certifiers’ that will undertake the assessments, but this is not yet in place. Interest from universities has been very high, but only a few assessments have been conducted, reflecting the fledgling and uncertain nature of the service. There are also discussions of how to find an appropriate institutional base for SILEU once its incubation phase within CLACSO has been completed, but a solution for this is not in place yet either.

SILEU remains somewhat of an odd function in relation to CLACSO’s other activities. It is a potentially huge task and interest is considerable, but there is only one staff member assigned to the work, which may endanger its sustainability and credibility if the momentum grows and expectations exceed capacity to deliver. The ET judges that it may have the potential for rethinking what ‘quality’ means in a way that reflects – not only academic norms– but also commitments to equality and human rights as cross-cutting principles.

As such it represents an effort by CLACSO to enter uncharted territory with regard to regional quality assurance, and it is too early to judge the outcomes of what remains somewhat of a pilot initiative. A driving force behind the decision to establish SILEU was a recognition that CLACSO should go beyond criticisms of the way that universities manage research in the region, to also contribute to finding solutions. SILEU exemplifies how CLACSO strives to redefine ‘quality’ to transcend traditional academic measures and instead focus on relevance (CLACSO, 2016b, p. 66).

2.2.3 To what extent has CLACSO fulfilled its commitment to serve as a regional and international platform for social sciences research and postgraduate education? Analyse and assess in what ways CLACSO contributes to research and graduate education opportunities in Latin America.

CLACSO as a platform for alternative thinking

CLACSO takes an explicitly political and principled stance on its commitments to act as a regional platform. CLACSO’s outcomes can be found in sustaining and stimulating a social science based critical perspective on the development situation and prospects of the region over time. This is summarised in its 2013 report on the state of social sciences in the region:

CLACSO is proud to have critical Latin American thinking at its foundations. Thanks to it we have been protagonists in the great debates and great interpretations of our continent, about our history, about the great agents of social transformation. We are still at this, we are a counter current opposed to a single or unique way of thinking. Thinking cannot be unique. If it is so, it is not thinking but dogma, cliché, norms imposed by international organisations that some pretend to disguise as theoretical thinking. We are against the flow because we have always a critical, plu-

realistic, combative vision, contrary to the communication media that attempt to reduce intellectual thinking and interpretation to a few slogans. (El estado de las ciencias sociales en América Latina y el Caribe (Conference paper), 2013, p. 14)¹⁸

According to this report, during the 2010s Latin America is living through a new historical period, after being subjected to military dictatorships, the debt crisis and neoliberal governments, which made the region a victim of “neoliberal globalisation,” characterised by a “shopping centre utopia” in which “everything is for sale, for purchase and has a price.” (p. 16). Its outcomes stem from a recognition that denouncing is not enough and that alternatives are needed. These alternative ideas and proposals have adopted several forms, but all share a rejection of acceptance of the extremely high levels of inequality, persistent poverty, lack of economic diversification, inadequate provision of education and health services, and lack of investment in science and technology. CLACSO has provided a forum to convene those sharing these alternative views, and a platform for joint efforts to tackle the root problems that have hampered progress in Latin America.

Pluralism is in many respects a key concept for understanding what CLACSO aims for. It does not take a relativist stance that ‘all’ social science research is to be promoted, since it is committed to clear principles of applying research for social justice. But interviewees highlight that a strategic outcome of CLACSO’s work is that it has created a pluralistic and even multicultural platform for promoting social science research among those who share a commitment to using social science research to fight inequality. It is not a platform for everyone, but its scope is considerable.

The ET judges that CLACSO has found a ‘reasonably happy medium’ between maintaining its principles of social justice and encouraging pluralism in paths to support this change. It is acknowledged however that this is a judgement call. There is no single ‘right’ degree of pluralism and principles, and this is ultimately judged by those who choose to engage in CLACSO as members and in its activities. The relatively huge scope of CLACSO activities can be interpreted as an indication that such a ‘happy medium’ has been achieved.

Open Access and the virtual library

A sentinel indicator of CLACSO’s outcomes in fulfilling its overall commitment is in

¹⁸ “CLACSO se enorgullece de fundarse en el pensamiento crítico latino-americano. Gracias al pensamiento crítico latinoamericano fuimos protagonistas de los grandes debates y las grandes interpretaciones sobre nuestro continente, sobre nuestra historia, sobre los grandes agentes sociales de transformación. Seguimos en eso, estamos a contracorriente del pensamiento único. El pensamiento no puede ser único. Si es único no es pensamiento, son dogmas, son clichés, son normas impuestas por organismos internacionales que algunos pretenden travestir de pensamiento teórico. Estamos a contramano porque tenemos siempre una visión crítica, pluralista, combativa, a contracorriente de los medios de comunicación que tratan de reducir el pensamiento intelectual y de interpretación a algunos clichés.”

its success in increasing access to research across the region. This includes its specific campaigning for Open Access and its virtual library. This has been particularly important for researchers from weaker institutions and also for enhancing the awareness of researchers in better off institutions to access research (and contacts) in countries that would otherwise have been unknown to them. Interviewees from large, relatively well-off universities generally highlight CLACSO's importance in helping them to access literature from a more representative LAC network, including countries and institutions with different intellectual traditions.

Downloads from the virtual library, which holds over 400,000 full-text publications, exceed four million per month. CLACSO staff state that half of the downloads of peer reviewed publications are made by students. Access to publications has been repeatedly described as particularly important for both researchers from countries that lack access from their own university libraries and also by researchers from better-off universities who see CLACSO as a way to obtain access to research from poorer or less connected countries in the region.

Interviews also highlight the extent to which young researchers who are adept at accessing information digitally benefit very much from CLACSO's strong focus on the virtual library and also on its other information platforms, such as the integration of the virtual courses and CLACSO TV. For countries with limited internet access, especially Cuba, CLACSO provides a regularly updated hard disk to the national academic network with the digital collections, helping to break intellectual isolation.

Finally, CLACSO is very much engaged in constructively advocating for Open Access across LAC and globally. Results include contribution to national policies on Open Access in Mexico and Argentina, promoting international standards and interoperability, and broader understanding of the concept of managing Open Access to scholarly publications as a public good.

2.3 EFFICIENCY

2.3.1 Have funds been managed with reasonable regard for efficiency? Can the cost of the programmes be justified by the results?

A growing, membership-driven network with shrinking donor support

The evaluation has not been able to identify a relevant comparator and lacks sufficient data with which to quantitatively assess relative value for money of CLACSO's work. Even CLACSO has had difficulty in obtaining a clear overview of its members' considerable in-kind investments, e.g., when they cover plane tickets to attend activities or invest their time pro bono.

However, certain structural findings are clear. Dependence on Sida and Norad funding has decreased since 2013 from approximately 90% to currently a little more than 30%. During the same period activities have expanded considerably. CLACSO's membership and scale of activities has expanded rapidly over the past decade with minimal growth in the size of the Executive Secretariat, the staffing of which currently stands at 38. There are now 624 institutional members, of which approximately 500 pay their membership fees (USD 1000 per year) regularly. Furthermore, this has included expansion to include a sizeable level of engagement in Central America,

which has represented both a logistical challenge and has required finding ways to work with and support weaker institutions. Sida support has been central to financing the operational costs (e.g., scholarships, participation in seminars and conferences, etc.) of this expansion.

Growth in activities, but not in staffing

Massive growth of activities without increased staffing bears testimony to the efficiency of their work. Starting in 2013 the Executive Secretariat began imparting a clear message to the membership that CLACSO was not a channel for them to access aid resources, and that they needed to mobilise a rapidly growing proportion of resources for their activities themselves. The importance of also sending a message to members about the real costs of activities, to encourage rational decisions about how to prioritise and support the Executive Secretariat was stressed in interviews with senior leadership. As a result of this attitudinal change, much of the shift away from the traditional reliance on Nordic donors has been towards greater reliance on member resources. Support from governments in the region remains negligible and additional resources from other donors has consisted of small grants. However, interviews revealed an emerging concern that staff capacities have been stretched to (or beyond) their limits, and there were several mentions of the need for ‘consolidation’ of activities.

Synergies with member activities

A second measure of efficiency is whether CLACSO has duplicated the work of members. Queries in interviews have yielded a unanimous response that CLACSO has complemented and not duplicated their work. Participants in activities report in interviews that they see benefits of engaging in these regional initiatives as far outweighing the transaction costs and do not perceived there to be any trade-offs between regional and national networking. Indeed, they note that synergies exist since they are able to perceive themselves as part of a national group engaged with CLACSO.

The efficiency of the virtual library, post-graduate seminars and other activities was highlighted and exemplifies high quality application of advancements in information technology that leverage the comparative advantages of a regional institution.

Ownership and decentralisation

Efficiency and sustainability are both supported by the ownership of the members. Interviews indicate that the working groups, for example, largely run themselves, which is a huge non-monetary resource, the importance of which should not be underestimated. The Executive Secretariat reports that 95% of working group resources (not including associated scholarships) are generated by the members of the respective working groups. The post-graduate seminars require somewhat more effort from the Executive Secretariat, but the engagement of the lecturers is exceptional and provides a basis for very efficient education and, not the least, coaching and advice to young researchers.

Decentralisation may or may not be seen as a measure to enhance efficiency. There is a growing desire within CLACSO to decentralise beyond the current secretariat model. Indeed, even though the Executive Secretariat is based in Buenos Aires, the active

engagement of senior researchers across the continent and beyond can be perceived as a form of decentralisation that is already in place. CLACSO has not yet ‘crunched the numbers’ on possible decentralisation of Executive Secretariat functions, so the costs and benefits are unclear.

Being closer to members in the sub-regions could reduce some transaction costs while engendering stronger local ownership. Ultimately this ownership may become more important for sustainability once the outside (mostly Sida) funds that have been used to support the pivot to Central America no longer exist.

2.4 SUSTAINABILITY

2.4.1 Assess the organisation’s fundraising strategies and long-term financial sustainability, including an assessment of CLACSO’s ability to continue its work without Sida funding.

Self-supporting activities as the key to sustainability

CLACSO indicates that it has been able to deal with reduced financing from Sida in an effective fashion so far, thanks to other strategies: “This remarkable expansion (of activities) was possible, in a context of reduced resources, thanks to the contributions made by the centres that make up the network and its researchers and the power of collective and cooperative work.”¹⁹ Most of CLACSO activities are now largely self-supporting. For example, approximately 80% of the costs of CLACSO’s regional and international engagements in Open Access activities are covered by institutions inviting CLACSO to participate. Working group members made various statements of how they had themselves taken initiatives to find ways to meet and engage, and were proud of this. The ET suspects (but cannot confirm) that this may be indicative of the vigour of the social movements being ‘transferred’ to their researcher colleagues.

The introduction of fees and a range of cost recovery efforts over the past five years have led to considerable savings and a major leap towards sustainability. Overall there is well justified pride in CLACSO’s moves towards greater sustainability and there are no fears that the continuing phase out of bilateral support will constitute a ‘disaster’ for the network. Certainly some activities will need to be curtailed though. In a memorandum in 2016 CLACSO analysed different scenarios regarding how to manage future budget reductions²⁰ A major risk is that now that these efficiency measures have been introduced, the room for further reforms is minimal and the coming reductions in remaining support from Sida and other aid agencies may prove more challenging.

However, a senior outside observer expressed concern that the CLACSO Secretariat may have been too lenient with member centres that did not fulfil their financial obli-

¹⁹ (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO), 2015)

²⁰ CLACSO Executive Secretariat 2016

gations in a timely manner, especially as the number of members has increased substantially. He suggested that a more strict and less benevolent approach to those members who are late with their annual dues payments may help to ensure financial sustainability, and that a stricter means test should be instituted to waive dues and fees for the less wealthy members.

Consolidation and results orientation

In interviews and observations the ET noted that the pressures on the secretariat, particularly the leadership, are very onerous. It may be questioned whether this is sustainable. The calls noted above for ‘consolidation’ may be interpreted as a recognition that ‘too much efficiency’ may endanger sustainability. In association with the calls for ‘consolidation’, a few interviewees from governance and staff made statements indicating a desire for ‘more planning’, which can be seen as indicating a degree of discomfort with the way growth and prioritisation have been managed in recent years. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to quantifiably assess, but it can be noted that further ‘belt tightening’ in conjunction with a phase out of Swedish financing is unlikely to be possible without a significant reduction in activities.

A particular concern is the extent to which CLACSO will be able to sustain the progress that has been made in bringing Central American members into the mainstream of the network. This process has been effective, but costly. There are no indications that institutions from poorer countries will be able to bear the full costs of active membership in CLACSO in the near future. Although CLACSO is clearly dedicated to overcoming a ‘natural tendency’ towards dominance by the sub-region where the Executive Secretariat is located, the capacity to ‘subsidise’ broader outreach without more traditional donor funding is uncertain.

Finally, an overall finding has been that CLACSO currently lacks a sufficiently clear and explicit basis for describing its intended outcomes and how it prioritises among a seemingly unlimited range of demands and expectations from its membership. Formal reporting provides a good overview of outputs, but the ‘big picture’ is blurred, and CLACSO’s important outcomes are not made clear. The ET judges that this is due to attempts to list outputs and activities, tied to rather rhetorical references to intended impacts. Stronger attention to the ‘missing middle’ of outcomes, such as how member institutions influence their national policies, and how CLACSO contributes to shifts in the regional and sub-regional discourses, would provide a better basis for then deciding how to prioritise while also providing potential financiers with a better understanding of what will emerge from their investments.

3 Conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations

3.1 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

3.1.1 Pursuing relevant results

Evaluation findings point to an overall conclusion that CLACSO has achieved a very substantial level of results by an emphasis on maintaining relevance to both its members and in relation to the social, economic and cultural challenges faced in the region. It is owned and driven by its members, who have high expectations, demands and engagement, stemming from how CLACSO enables them to strengthen their capacities for quality research, at the same time that opportunities are generated for engaging with social movements and policy discourses. This meta-conclusion, that results are driven by relevance, is central to understanding the reasons that CLACSO is making a significant contribution to outcomes within member institutions, among young researchers, and in policy and praxis. The ET judges that these qualities are well-aligned with Swedish policies for research cooperation, even if CLACSO is a somewhat unconventional network in comparison to other more purely academic networks among the programmes that Sida supports.

A predominant feature of CLACSO that relates to this is that CLACSO is not for everybody. It is pluralistic, but it is not a neutral meeting place for all social science researchers in LAC. Criticisms recorded indicate that it is likely that a significant proportion of the elite researchers in the region, particularly those who focus on quantitative research, do not share the sense of ownership of CLACSO's approach with those who choose to be members. In the polarised arena for policy research in LAC, and in light of the trade-offs that may be needed to generate the relationship that CLACSO has established with social movements, it has been unavoidable that some researchers do not feel 'at home' within CLACSO.

In recent years CLACSO has made significant progress in living up to its ideals in supporting weaker members in Central America. Assistance has proven highly relevant for breaking the isolation of institutions and researchers (particularly younger researchers) who have lacked a 'critical mass' of fellow researchers dealing with related issues in their countries. Small travel grants, access to virtual seminars and working group activities, and access to literature have come together to build their capacities by breaking their isolation. As such, the overall 'package' of support that CLACSO has provided to Central American members constitutes an effective model for using networking and innovative use of technology to provide regional support on an 'affirmative action' basis.

Results have been impressive and ownership of CLACSO has clearly been built well beyond the Southern Cone. But this too may have led to less relative attention on engagement among some elite institutions, and may have generated expectations that cannot be met in the future. These results among weaker institutions have thus far been built primarily with judicious use of Sida funding. Ownership is central to sus-

tainability, but the ET judges that there will be challenges in maintaining this momentum, and even avoiding retrenchment of these gains, if further development assistance is not forthcoming in the future.

The ET judges that CLACSO is not entirely a think tank (though it undertakes ‘think tank-like’ activities), nor should it strive to become one. Just as CLACSO actively strives to avoid duplicating the work of its members, it should not duplicate the work of think tanks. Nonetheless, CLACSO already has (already) a strong role in bridging the work of their academic members with the ‘think tank’ activities of the other stakeholders it engages with. Given the predominance of more right-wing and technocratic think tanks in LAC, this suggests the importance of CLACSO’s role in creating alternative arenas for more left-of-centre dialogue and advice among policy actors.

Taking into consideration the historical background of CLACSO, what could and should be the role of CLACSO as we approach the third decade of the twenty-first century? A possible answer has three parts.

First, there is an urgent and continuing need to maintain a critical stance with regards to the dominant ways of thinking in Latin America, which still continue to adopt, without question, the main tenants of market-oriented, extractive industries-based and globalised development models. Issues such as inequality, poverty, gender equality, democratic governance, environmental sustainability, demographic transition, security, corruption and scientific and technological divides, among others, must continue to be brought to centre stage. CLACSO can continue to play a central role to enrich the repertoire of concepts with which to comprehend Latin American reality and contribute to programmes and policies to enhance the quality of life and social justice.

Second, in order to do so, CLACSO should maintain a focus on a sensible, pluralistic, policy-oriented, evidence-based conception of social science research grounded on values that combine individual freedom with collective action. This entails a clearer avoidance of what may be perceived of as narrow ideological stances which have discredited some social science research initiatives, not only in Latin America but in other regions as well. CLACSO should engage more actively with social science researchers with a diversity of ideological orientations, covering the broad spectrum of social views. While adhering to what may be considered a ‘centre-left’ or ‘left’ perspective on the role of the social sciences in the region, it should seek to create meeting grounds for debate and dialogue on the future of Latin America and the role that the social sciences could play in it.

Third, CLACSO should become more open, but not lose its identity. This is a difficult challenge to face. However, its track record of over half a century indicates the network is resilient and capable of adapting to changing contexts, while maintaining a critical stance, not only on social science research and its epistemological foundations, but also on policy-oriented research that guides government and civil society. While national support for social science research has increased in the region, access to support from Latin American public and private sector agencies and organisations, especially those that prioritise social justice and sustainable human development, may require a greater recognition of how certain statements may close doors rather than open broader debate on how to achieve common objectives.

3.1.2 What are the outcomes of the programmes? What are their current strengths and how could these be enhanced?

In the inception phase of this evaluation the ET proposed five key features of CLACSO's implicit theory of change, with emphasis on aspects related to Sida support. These initial hypotheses have been tested and the lessons learnt are presented below.

Sphere of control, i.e., outputs	Sphere of influence, intermediate outcomes	Sphere of influence, longer term outcomes
1. CLACSO working groups undertaking tasks as thematic sub-networks focused on exchanges of experience and on influencing national and regional policy debates (emphasising priority countries, i.e., Central America and the Caribbean)	CLACSO mobilised as a respected regional network with a broadening sphere of partners beyond academia, including greater protection of freedom of expression in countries where this is under threat	Engagement and influence in national and regional policy discourses on inequality, security and environmental change
<p>Lessons learnt: Drawing on its long history of engagement, CLACSO continues to be a respected regional network influencing both researchers and policy makers. This is strongest with regard to gender inequality and violence, and is increasing in relation to environmental sustainability. It is less clear whether its sphere of influence is expanding, given the polarisation in the region and CLACSO's 'positioning' in the discourse. It has expanded its sphere of influence geographically, by attaining a much stronger presence in Central America and the Caribbean.</p>		

Sphere of control, i.e., outputs	Sphere of influence, intermediate outcomes	Sphere of influence, longer term outcomes
2. Postgraduate scholarships, programmes and related seminars/training that expand and deepen the pool of highly trained social science, policy oriented, researchers in the region	Enhanced capacity and engagement of individual (primarily younger) researchers and other policy actors, and their institutions, in policy debates and in applying measures to ensure research quality	Enhanced research quality and inclusion of researchers from countries and institutions that have been insufficiently able to actively participate in public policy fora in the past
<p>Lessons learnt: CLACSO has been quite effective in expanding its influence on the capacity of young researchers, including formerly marginalised regions such as Central America. Collaboration with social movements and policy makers has proven to be a major driver (and certainly not a distraction) for this as it has energised the network. Researchers themselves, particularly those from more marginalised and weaker institutions, perceive their research quality to have been enhanced. It is too early to judge the outcomes of SILEU, which holds promise but may also test the limits of CLACSO's sphere of influence.</p>		

Sphere of control, i.e., outputs	Sphere of influence, intermediate outcomes	Sphere of influence, longer term outcomes
3. Enhanced open-source publishing that significantly expands access to scholarly publications America	Researchers and policy actors accessing and using research materials to enhance their capacities and use of evidence and share the results of their research	Enhanced and more equitable access to research leading to more evidence-based policy discourses and enhanced research quality among CLACSO members, i.e., "open access to knowledge is a human right"
<p>Lessons learnt: The level of access to a very large body of research is seen to be extremely important for supporting both the quantity and quality of research in the region, most notably among institutions which lack other channels of access. There is evidence of a growing discourse among researchers and institutions that are pushing back against the commercialisation of knowledge and striving to treat access to research as a public good.</p>		

Sphere of control, i.e., outputs	Sphere of influence, intermediate outcomes	Sphere of influence, longer term outcomes
4. Expansion of CLACSO networks beyond academia to include civil servants, journalists, activists and other policy actors	Dialogue established among a broadened range of public policy researchers and societal actors on policy making and implementation	More evidence-based and social justice focused political discourse
<p>Lessons learnt: This is an area where CLACSO has excelled, mostly by engaging with civil society activists. CLACSO has maintained its historical role in policy dialogue by building on this strengthened base among social movements. The outcomes have been impressive among some political spheres, but the extent to which the range of policy actors has broadened is much less. CLACSO has at times failed to demonstrate sufficient caution in ensuring that a message is communicated that a broadened dialogue is desired.</p>		

Sphere of control, i.e., outputs	Sphere of influence, intermediate outcomes	Sphere of influence, longer term outcomes
5. Building on experience from South-South Tricontinental support and engaging with the expanding non-LAC membership, CLACSO broadening efforts to position itself as a credible Latin American regional actor to influence global discourses and debates	CLACSO mobilised as a global network and becoming an 'actor' and respected interlocutor in global public policy	Engagement and influence in global and South-South policy discourses on inequality, security and environmental change
<p>Lessons learnt: The limited sustainability of activities initiated in the South-South Tricontinental Programme have injected a greater degree of realism in these considerations. CLACSO's commitments remain strong, but a clear path forward in acting on these commitments is not yet in sight. Even though there are great hopes and commitments 'in principle' to promoting South-South relations, seemingly glaring needs, such as ensuring that key interlocutors have a higher level of English language skills, have not been solved.</p>		

3.1.3 Efficiency and sustainability

Efficiency and sustainability at CLACSO will inevitably go hand-in-hand. In looking at the scale and scope of activities, outputs and outcomes of its work, in relation to the size of the Executive Secretariat, CLACSO must be deemed an efficient organisation. As CLACSO completes its transition from an organisation reliant (to a large extent) on aid financing, to being overwhelmingly supported by members, users and national/regional support, the sustainability of those efficiency efforts will be tested. A greater reliance on foundations and philanthropy may need to be part of the future funding mix.

The ET judges that further 'belt tightening' is not likely to be possible. We endorse the calls for 'consolidation' that we heard from Executive Directorate members, but also recognise that the meaning of consolidation remains to be determined. Sida should focus its next phase of support to on ensuring that CLACSO is enabled to pursue a path to consolidation that is cognisant of the centrality of maintaining the gains that have been achieved in its pivot to the weaker members. Decentralisation may be a part of this, but would require a major investment in planning and weighing the pros and cons of such a strategy.

This exemplifies how consolidation needs to be pursued in a strategic manner, and the efforts of recent years in presenting strategic visions (to Sida at least) have been insufficient. CLACSO has been quite effective in combining both flexibility and readi-

ness to respond to emergent issues and maintaining core functions, but this is not clearly articulated. Sustainability would benefit from a clearer strategic plan around how this will be pursued over time. The members deserve this. SILEU is an example of the challenge of investing over time in developing sustainable, predictable and transparent structures within an organisation that is also prepared for ‘chaos’, i.e., balancing flexibility in response with the creation of solid structures.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.1 Recommendations to CLACSO

1. CLACSO should ‘stay the course’ in its overall processes. It is both an effective and dynamic network and should not endanger this by major changes in its vision and the ‘vibrant chaos’ wherein the network energises its members.
2. CLACSO should urgently seek to define what ‘consolidation’ may entail in the coming years and use that to develop an explicit ‘exit strategy’ for what is likely to be a final phase of Sida support. This may involve a stricter (and potentially painful) prioritisation of both the activities that need to be retained to support the vision, and also where to explore new income streams.
3. As part of this, CLACSO should reinforce efforts to identify realistic steps to ensure that the outcomes of the shift to Central America remain sustainable. This is likely to involve recognition that some of the overall regional functions of CLACSO may be of increasing relative importance (e.g., Open Access, virtual platforms, online courses), whereas others may require targeted support to retain engagement (working groups).
4. ‘Decentralisation’ may require mobilising financing within countries or the Meso-American sub-region. As the Central American members have now begun to develop their own strategic plans, it may be appropriate to provide specific support for these institutions to reflect over intended results and resources and how decentralisation of CLACSO structures could be pursued in a period when central level resources may be declining.
5. CLACSO should develop an explicit resource mobilisation plan which makes transparent the (currently implicit) ‘business model’ that has emerged. Given the considerable success that CLACSO has had, this could help to generate commitments from within and outside of CLACSO to build on the foundation that has been established for future sustainability.
6. CLACSO should focus South-South efforts on specific areas where a critical mass of joint interest of researchers for comparative research could be maintained over time. It would appear that the role of social movements and the potential for research to more effectively engage with civil society for transformative change may be one such area. There may also be themes related to conflict/violence or climate change adaptation as well.
7. In order to find a basis for South-South (and even global) collaboration a clearer strategy and commitment to addressing the language barrier is needed. This may be a ‘make or break’ factor in the future. CLACSO should invest in either language training or including English skills as a recruitment criteria of a critical

mass of key interlocutors (perhaps even a network of members with direct involvement, i.e., not necessarily just at the Executive Secretariat) with a strong level of English language skills. Some skills in Arabic may also be required.

8. CLACSO should also consider rethinking South-South efforts to reflect more of a globalist research agenda, including special attention to the role of China in relation to the South (and even to South-North relations). CLACSO could have a unique niche in this regard, perhaps partnering with institutions with a related role in other regions (e.g., South African Institute of International Affairs).

3.2.2 Recommendations to Sida

1. Sida should recognise CLACSO's relevance to the policy for Swedish research cooperation, albeit in a somewhat non-conventional manner. This may involve drawing lessons from the CLACSO model for research cooperation more generally regarding:
 - a) How an approach linked to social movements can energise and engage young researchers
 - b) How parallels can be drawn in links being established between stronger and weaker institutions within a region (e.g., there may be interesting comparisons to South Africa's role in Sub-Saharan Africa)
 - c) Reflecting over the third objective regarding innovation to draw lessons for other programmes on 'innovative approaches to innovation systems' from the roles CLACSO has had in policy change that reflect broader Swedish commitments to addressing the power dimensions of human rights, non-discrimination and addressing the root causes of violence and conflict
2. Sida should provide support for strategic planning in relation to the following core challenges facing CLACSO:
 - a) Consolidation while ensuring strategic vision based on stronger anchoring of plans (and especially prioritisation) in a more explicit and structured results oriented perspective
 - b) This results oriented perspective is already apparent in much of CLACSO's work, but in an organisation and network of the size and scope of CLACSO a somewhat more formal and explicit results orientation would help to provide better guidance internally in the Executive Secretariat, in relation to governance, and in providing potential financiers a clearer indication of how they will receive 'value for money'
 - c) Rethinking how to achieve results in South-South cooperation within a very frank assessment of the opportunities (e.g., the current vacuum in cross-cultural South-driven research on conflict and violence, demands for new partnerships from Asia, growing recognition that societal issues in areas of the North undergoing crisis bear strong similarities with those in the South) and obstacles (inability to build on large international events, shrinking development cooperation financing for South-South cooperation, growing government emphases on national self-interests) that have arisen in past programming and in the changing global landscape for research cooperation

3. A next phase of Sida support should include a specific package of strategic planning support to explore how to sustain the advances made in the pivot to Central America, including:
 - a) Cost-benefit analysis of a possible decentralisation of functions to a sub-regional office of the Executive Secretariat, recognising that this may not be viable
 - b) Developing a strategy to build on initial progress in generating support within Meso-America for partners in the sub-region
4. Sida should consider longer-term support to South-South cooperation, with less attention to large (expensive) meetings and more to smaller groups. This may include support to more ‘technical’ aspects of South-South cooperation as building blocks, e.g., CLACSO cooperation with CODESRIA to strengthen their publications and Open Access efforts could be a concrete entry point to further collaboration. Targeted English (and possibly Arabic) language support may also be a priority.
5. Related to this, Sida should proactively explore ways to collaborate with CLACSO as a partner and centre of expertise (rather than just a recipient of support) for broader research cooperation more generally. Open Access is an area where CLACSO has emerged as a centre of such expertise that Sida could partner with on global programmes. There may also be strategic themes where CLACSO’s strong applied, qualitative research tradition could be leveraged for more global engagements, e.g., in relation to violence and conflict. Sida should enter into a specific dialogue with CLACSO about the future of SILEU. This is a high risk investment, but could provide significant results within LAC and even have lessons for other regions. It is likely though that a more concerted investment will be needed to establish this system

Annexes

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ANNEX TWO: PERSONS INTERVIEWED

NAME		INSTITUTION
Aguilar Mendizábal	Mónica	CEMSCA, University of Chiapas
Albarado	Sara Victoria	CLACSO member
Arata	Nicolás	CLACSO Executive Secretariat
Arenas	Clara	AVANCSO
Babini	Dominique	CLACSO Executive Secretariat
Basail Rodriguez	Alain	University of Arts and Sciences Chiapas
Batthyany	Carina	University of the Republic of Uruguay
Bidaseca	Karina	CLACSO Executive Secretariat
Bull	Benedicte	University of Oslo, Centre for Development and the Environment
Cabrera	Marcela	CLACSO member, University of Buenos Aires
Cantoral	Guadalupe	CEMSCA, University of Chiapas
Gastón	Laura	CLACSO Executive Secretariat
Gentili	Pablo	CLACSO Executive Secretariat
Gómez	Juan Pablo	UCA Managua; INJU Network
Hernandez	Francisco	CLACSO Costa Rica
Hernandez	Jorge	Center of Study of the United States of America, University of Havana
Lopes Salazar	Roberto Oswaldo	UCA El Salvador
Lynch	Nicolás	Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Peru
Martin	Facundo	National University of Cuyo, Mendoza
Mazariegos	Dina	San Carlos University
Meneses	Maria Paula	Universidade de Coimbra; Universidad Eduardo Mondlane
Milena	Sergio	Social Research Institute of UCR; OISMO group about Central America
Monzon	Ana Silvia	FLACSO, Guatemala
Murunga	Godwin	CODESRIA
Pavez	Leonor	Secretariat of the Association of Private Universities, Argentina
Peres Benites	Santiago	Center for Research on Politics
Perrotta	Danielle	CLACSO Executive Secretariat

Peters	Stefan	University of Kessel
Piper	Isabelle	University of Chile
Ran Wei	Fernando	Institute for Latin American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Rebon	Julián	University of Buenos Aires
Rodas	Jonathan	CLACSO member, University of San Carlos de Guatemala
Rodriguez	Marcelo	Institute of Urban Planning of Buenos Aires
Sagot	Montserrat	University of Costa Rica
Sánchez	Mario	CLACSO member
Serna	Miguel	University of the Republic of Uruguay
Tavares	José Vicente	Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul
Teivainen	Teivo	CLACSO
Tmano	Carmen	University of Costa Rica
Toro Pérez	Catalina	CLACSO member
Tovar	Jesus	Iberoamerican University, Mexico; Mexican Political Science Association
Turkanovic	Zlata	Outside observer, CLACSO member
Ugglá	Fredrik	Institute of Latin American Studies, Stockholm University
Velasco	Guibis	CIEM
Vessuri	Hebe	Former CLACSO fellow
Villamizar	Darío	CLACSO member
Vommaro	Pablo	CLACSO Executive Secretariat

ANNEX THREE: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Please see overleaf.



Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the Sida supported programmes “CLACSO Knowledge for a Sustainable World 2013-2016 and “South-South Tricontinental 2013-2015”

Date: 2017-05-17

Case number: 2012-000157 (CLACSO) and 12/000071 (South-South)

1. Background

The **Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO)**, (www.clacso.org.ar) receives direct support from Sida in the form of core funding since 1998.¹ The current agreement period for Sidas support will be extended until mid-2018. This evaluation shall provide a basis for future directions for CLACSO and recommendations to upcoming discussion concerning possible continued funding and/or phasing out of Sida’s support. The evaluation shall focus on the CLACSO-Sida programme “Knowledge for a Sustainable World” (2013-2016) as well as the specific programme on South-South Tricontinental Programme support (2013-2015).

CLACSO is a non-governmental international organization with UNESCO associate status, established in 1967, bringing together 587 research centers and graduate schools in Latin American countries and elsewhere. CLACSO aims to contribute to the debate of poverty and inequality, the strengthening of human rights and democratic participation and the advancement of sustainable development policies. Moreover, CLACSO builds bridges and facilitates the dialogue between social research and public policy, and strengthens academic cooperation and access to knowledge. More information available at: http://www.clacso.org.ar/institucional/que_es_clacso.php?s=2&idioma=ing.

The continuity and broadening of the CLACSO institutional network has resulted in strengthening social sciences in the region, it has leverage regional cooperation and partnerships and professionalization of administrative/management tasks lead by CLACSO’s Executive Secretariat.

The Knowledge for a Sustainable World (2013–2016) is grounded on the role of social sciences in the development of methodological and analytical tools for the understanding of the complexity of society and to promote fair, egalitarian and sustainable societies. The programme builds on inter- and

¹ Core support goes to all CLACSO programmes except for CROP, the "Programme for Poverty Studies", a 2002-2012 Programme financed by Norway

<http://www.crop.org/contentpg.aspx?zone=114&MenuNode=635738618122332500>.

transdisciplinary collaboration. The overall objectives include an increased use of social sciences research by policy makers and civil society, the strengthening of research and post-graduate training, the promotion of collaboration among social science institutions and researchers and increase dissemination of academic production generated by Latin American and Caribbean entities. The programs consists of a number of sub-programmes: Regional Scholarships; Working Groups; The CLACSO Graduate Programme Network, The Network of Digital Libraries, Dissemination and Publishing, Databases; and the Web Content Department.

South-South Tricontinental Programme Support (2013-2015) had as overall goal of increasing the use of social science research with Southern perspective(s) for tackling global and regional problems. It provided training and research grants and carried out dissemination and networking activities.

The programme consisted of three phases and three parallel programmes managed by CLACSO, CODESRIA and IDEAs under the coordination of CLACSO. Although the three organisations tried to harmonize their selection methods and criteria, it is not clear to what extent this harmonization was actually put into practise, and what was the rate of success of the overall initiative. CLACSO recognises this weakness and together with CODESRIA and IDEAs have jointly developed a plan as to how to further implement a follow-up programme, if finances are secured.

2. Evaluation Purpose

The primary objective of this evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of CLACSO's "Knowledge for a Sustainable World 2013-2016" programme and the South- South program, its background and performance in relation to prior established objectives, plans, expectations or standards of performance.

The evaluation purpose is to inform future strategies in relation to, for example: fundraising, quality assurance, regional strategy and governance. The evaluation will contribute with recommendations for both Sida and CLACSO on the focus, form and direction of an eventual continued support as well as exit strategies.

3. Evaluation Questions

The CLACSO evaluation should particularly focus on the role of CLACSO for social science in the Latin American region. The aim is to inform Sida and CLACSO on relevance, achievements, efficiency and sustainability. The South-South evaluation should assess the results of the programme, but also include an analysis of possible new models and modalities for fostering South-South academic collaboration.

The consultant shall describe the institutional format and context in which the programmes operate and give an overview of the use of resources. The following questions are of particular interest. Please note that the questions are meant as guidelines for the review and not an attempt to exhaust all items that can be explored during this assignment.

Organization`s role and relevance

- What are the outcomes and impacts of the programmes? What are their current strengths and how could these be enhanced?
- To what extent has CLACSO fulfilled its commitment to serve as a regional and international platform for social sciences research and postgraduate education? Analyse and assess in what ways CLACSO contributes to research and graduate education opportunities in Latin America.
- What measures have been taken by CLACSO to link up to the international social science research (including language matters)?
- Is CLACSO linked to relevant academic institutions, research initiatives and regional networks?
- Are the components of the Sida funded programmes compatible with Sida`s Strategy for Research Cooperation?

Social-policy interactions

- Assess strategies and impacts of CLACSO`s interaction between research and policy makers.
- Assess how CLACSO places itself as a think tank related to polarized political perspectives in the region. Are their contributions strongly bounded to one side of the political arena? How is the policy dialogue carried out?

Governance and operations

- Financial sustainability: Assess the organization`s fundraising strategies and long-term financial sustainability, including an assessment of CLACSO`s ability to continue its work without Sida funding.
- Efficiency: Have funds been managed with reasonable regard for efficiency? Can the cost of the programmes be justified by the results?
- Quality: Are there available indicators? How do they work with quality assurance and assessment? In what way are the research training activities or publications quality assured?
- Other policies related Sida`s priorities such as gender and environmental mainstreaming: Is there a gender policy and is it operationalized to adequately address eventual insufficiencies?

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Recommendations and lessons learned could include, but not necessarily be restricted to, the following issues:

- Contribution of CLACSO to social sciences research and debate in the region and beyond.
- Contribution of CLACSO related to the implementation of previous recommendations from evaluations and reviews.
- Recommendations regarding expansion of the CLACSO network.
- Recommendations for institutional development.
- Recommendations for future strategies related to long term financial sustainability and analysis of progress of fundraising strategy.
- Recommendations for development of content, objectives and priorities for CLACSO
- Recommendations to Sida including suggestions on new areas of cooperation relevant to Sida`s research policy, as well as exit strategies.

4. Delimitations

This is a process evaluation, which means the evaluators shall focus the analysis on the planning and the implementation of activities as well as on the outputs. The evaluation is of a formative nature, so it aims to produce substantive ideas on how to improve as well as review activities and programmes.

The scope of the evaluation shall cover Sida-funded activities for the period 2013-2016. However, in order to allow a more comprehensive outlook, the evaluation will briefly comment on major trends for Sida's support of CLACSO since the start, as well as, in a minor degree, for the South-South programme.

The focus of the evaluation is on the outcome and - when and to the extent possible- impact levels. The analysis shall be put into a larger context, particularly taking into consideration Sida's policy on research cooperation, CLACSO's strategic direction as well as the broader context of global and regional trends in higher education, research and science-policy dialogue.

5. Approach and Method

The consultant shall provide Sida with an *inception report* with a workplan which outlines the evaluation, gives a detailed time schedule and methodology to be used. The approach adopted for the inception phase will form the basis for a continued evaluation process.

Qualitative sources such as interviews shall be made with CLACSO's management and staff, with selected members of the Administrative Board/Committees/Working Groups/ Reference Group of CLACSO, as well as relevant heads of CLACSO member institutions. A special effort should be made to contact universities, research centers and organisations that are related to CLACSO and that Sida has additional research cooperation with, such as: CODESRIA, IDEAs, Association of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean and UNESCO.

The draft of the final report will be made available for Sida and CLACSO to comment on and to allow Sida to consider if the assignment has been conducted in accordance with the ToR. Comments shall be submitted within two weeks and the final report shall be submitted to Sida within two weeks. The draft and the final report shall be written English and submitted to Sida in one digital copy. The report shall include: observations, analysis, conclusions, recommendation and any other relevant information gathered during the assessment.

Relevant documentation will be provided to the consultants by Sida and CLACSO upon request and are available at the Openaid www.openaid.se, Sida's publication database at http://www.sida.se/English/publications/Publication_database/ or other relevant sites <http://betterevaluation.org/>. Examples of documents include Sida-CLACSO agreements, CLACSO agreements with all relevant parties, annual plans and reports, postgraduate programmes, academic outputs (publications and policy briefs) and previous evaluations.

6. Stakeholder Involvement

The consultant shall visit the CLACSO Secretariat and carry out interviews with relevant stakeholders. How different stakeholders will be involved in the evaluation process shall be clarified in the tender and inception report. The inception and the draft report shall be communicated with Sida and the draft report shall also be communicated with CLACSO. Interviews with other associated membership could be conducted through telephone/Skype. Likewise, CLACSO-related gatherings should be used as an opportunity to meet as many relevant stakeholders as possible.

7. Evaluation Quality

All Sida's evaluation shall conform to OECD/DAC's "Quality Standards for Development Evaluation". These standards provide a guide to good practice in development evaluation, and identify the key pillars needed for a quality evaluation process and product. The evaluators shall furthermore use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation. The evaluator shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process.

8. Time Schedule, Reporting and Communication

The aim is that this assignment shall begin in June 2017 after signing contract.

The consultant shall deliver an *inception report* of maximum 15 pages with a brief description of methods, timeframe and delimitations. The consultant should submit a *draft report* to Sida, no later than 15 September 2017. After receiving comments from Sida and the CLACSO Secretariat, the *final report* should be submitted to Sida no later than 31 October, 2017.

The report is expected to follow the structure suggested in Sida's Evaluation Manual, Annex B. The report will not exceed 30 pages (excluding annexes) and shall include an Executive Summary and a chapter with recommendations. Language and layout of the report must be of a quality that may allow direct publication.

As a point of departure for the assignment, a face-to-face meeting shall be organized between Sida and the consultant in Stockholm in order to organise contacts with CLACSO, discuss methods and timeframe for the assignment. A draft inception report should be submitted to Sida prior to this meeting, and a final inception report should be submitted shortly after the meeting.

The consultant shall organise a presentation of the results of the assessment and shall keep Sida informed of the progress of the assignment. A timeframe for the visits and reports shall be included in the workplan above mentioned. The team shall be in contact with Sida contact person and keep Sida informed throughout the assignment.

9. Resources

The budget cannot exceed 500 000 SEK.

10. Evaluation Team Qualification

Sida envisages a team of two consultants that might be complemented with one support/project management function. The team must have the following competencies and experiences:

- Expert knowledge of and experience in conducting evaluations.
- Good knowledge of policy/science/stakeholder dialogue in developing countries.
- Strong analysis, report writing and communication skills in English.
- Knowledge of research in Social Science and Humanities with particular focus in sustainable development.
- At least one team member shall have oral and reading fluency in Spanish.
- At least one team member shall have a PhD degree in Social Sciences and experience in research and capacity building, preferably in diverse regional contexts.
- At least one team member shall have expertise in the role of social sciences in Latin America.
- At least one team member shall have significant experience and knowledge of support to higher education and working with higher education institutions, including good understanding of institution building and strengthening within higher education.
- At least one team member should have knowledge of and/or experience from working within or with international membership associations.
- At least one team member shall have knowledge of best practices of research management and capacity building.

The competencies of the individual team members can be complimentary, and can include both level 1 and level 2 consultants, according to the framework agreement. The Evaluation Team shall have a team leader who is a core team member.

For team members that are not core members, their submitted CV shall contain description of academic qualifications and professional work experience.

11. Annexes

Sida's Template for Evaluation Reports.

Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Result Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014.



Evaluation of the Sida supported programmes “CLACSO Knowledge for a Sustainable World 2013– 2016” and “South-South Tricontinental 2013–2015”

This evaluation of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) reviews the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the work of one of Sida’s longest standing partners, having received support since 1998. Findings demonstrate that CLACSO is a highly effective institution, and is very relevant to the objectives of Swedish research cooperation in terms of a poverty focus, developing the capacity of young researchers and innovation, building on close engagement with civil society. A notable shift has been made in recent years to engaging weaker institutions from Central America in the network. Significant progress has been made in enhancing sustainability.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

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