



THE LEGACY OF THE

***THINK
TANK***
INITIATIVE
PROGRAM
IN LATIN AMERICA

CASE STUDIES

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Foreword

While the Think Tank Initiative was being implemented over the past decade, several important socio-economic and political changes were unfolding in Latin America. Overall, there has been a spread of democracy in the region with a few notable exceptions. Citizen's support for democracy has proved resilient in this context, although skepticism about the benefits of democracy seem to be on the rise, no doubt associated to corruption scandals, political instability and trying economic conditions. Civil societies are becoming stronger across Latin America and thus more assertive in demanding attention to their rights. Various civil rights movements are now more eager to take a stance and have been more successful at shaping public debate to better fit their demands. On the other hand, populism is also on the rise. The relatively poor quality of institutions linked to democratic rule and the rise of a new wave of populism are major challenges that threaten the region's democracy.

Worsening security challenges plague the region with increased violence related to economic inequalities, crime and drug trafficking as the most pressuring concerns. Latin American countries and cities rank amongst the most prone to violent crime in the world.

Latin America is a region that suffers from persistent inequalities. Despite progress made since early 2000s to 2015, poverty and extreme poverty elimination continues to be a core challenge; and progress has slowed down in the last few years. Children, young people, women, afro-descendants and indigenous peoples are overrepresented in poverty. Most of these groups suffer from social and labor exclusion. Gender inequalities and the intersection with age, ethnicity and race must be explicitly addressed. While access to health, education, and basic infrastructure have improved, large inequalities on quality persist. And the region still needs to accelerate its transition to an environmentally sustainable economy.

For the past 50 years, IDRC has sought to help address development challenges by working to support the generation of knowledge, innovation and solutions. As part of its efforts, it has engaged with development actors worldwide to help strengthen locally generated evidence, policy engagement and debate. Como se describe en el último capítulo del libro *The Think Tank Initiative (TTI)*, a multi donor partnership¹ since 2009, aimed to strengthen organizational capacities of a group of local, independent think tanks based in East and West Africa, South Asia and Latin America so that they could produce and communicate high quality, contextualized, objective and timely evidence that could be used to inform and influence policy and practice. TTI was designed with a 10-year horizon and provided core, flexible funding, and capacity development support to strengthen selected organisations in three areas: research quality, policy engagement and organizational performance. The program was designed on the premise that for think tanks to play this role, they require stable, flexible and predictable funding. TTI had an ambitious objective of influencing the way that donors fund development interventions and set out to use the evidence that emerged from TTI to encourage the donor community to provide more flexible, core support to local policy research organizations.

Amongst the global cohort of 43 think tanks, 11 think tanks are from Latin America, representing a diverse range of policy research organizations in terms of establishment, history, size, areas of research, capacity, outreach and

1 With generous support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), the Norwegian government's Norwegian Agency for development Cooperation (NORAD) and the International Development Research Centre.

engagement strategies. The 12 chapters of this book tell the stories of the 11 Latin American think tanks as well as the story of the network of TTI-funded think tanks, Iniciativa Latinoamericana de Investigación para las Políticas Públicas (ILAIPP) over the 10 years of TTI support. The chapters capture the changes that took place within these organizations and how they navigated the changes within their operating environments. These changes are sometimes transformational and other times incremental. Stories of change, successes, challenges, leadership transition, strengthening governance, enhancing communications and positioning for policy influence on emerging issues, all make for an interesting compilation of organizational change stories that are seldom written about.

As the chapters in this book reveal, think tanks do make a difference. They influence and shape national policy priorities and implementation, provide interdisciplinary approaches and draw on a variety of perspectives, and by doing so they put innovative ideas on the table. They convene stakeholders around public debates, support sustainable implementation measures, provide independent analysis and evaluation, and engage in policy dialogues from sub-national, to regional and even global levels. The stories in this book remind us clearly that think tanks are living proof of the power of evidence-informed policy to influence positive societal change.

Through these persuasive stories shared by these think tanks and through the rich diversity of approaches and strategies think tanks have employed to achieve change through organizational strengthening, we want to offer evidence to the donor community on the importance of core funding for think tanks from developing contexts.

The region faces entrenched development challenges which it urgently needs to address in order to be ready for the tectonic changes that the forth industrial revolution is generating. It is also a region full of opportunities that require innovative and more collaborative ecosystems to materialize and benefit all. Think tanks have a key role to play. We are proud to have worked alongside this immensely important group of Latin American organizations as they strive to improve conditions for all people in their countries and make Latin America a more equal region.

**Carolina Robino and Julie LaFrance
Think Tank Initiative Program Officers**

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The description of the program, the last chapter of the book, has also been important for contextualizing the Think Tank Initiative, for which we thank Andrew Hurst, Seema Bhatia-Panthaki and Samar Verma. Finally, we acknowledge the operational support of the collaborators of INESAD, FUSADES and Grupo FARO, who contributed to making possible the book.

By way of introduction

Purpose of the book

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) is a program that was launched in 2008 under the leadership of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), with the aim of strengthening independent think tanks in developing countries. The program was designed as core funding, with three general guidelines: improving the quality of research, strengthening organizational performance, and enhancing advocacy capacities in public policies.

The TTI began at the end of 2010 and ended in March 2019. During this period it has supported 11 think tanks in Latin America and the Iniciativa Latinoamericana de Investigación para las Políticas Públicas (Latin American Public Policy Research Initiative, ILAIPP) network.² With the completion of the program, the TTI considered it necessary not only to have the usual final evaluations of projects, but also to know the particular experiences of the beneficiary centers, including ILAIPP. This book is the result of this intention, translated from the shared and coordinated effort of all the institutions involved, under the leadership of the INESAD (Instituto de Estudios Avanzados en Desarrollo) Foundation. Complementarily, a detailed description of the program is included.

Methodological process of the case studies

The particular experiences of the beneficiary centers were captured through the qualitative method of case studies. This method was chosen because it allows understanding the phenomenon of interest, taking into account the own perspectives of the actors involved, by collecting primary information (*i.e.* semi-structured interviews). In addition, it includes “library work” on the specific cases – with qualitative and quantitative documentation – in order to give the research the needed credibility (*i.e.* objectivity and triangulation).

The researchers, authors of the case studies (Chapters 1 to 12), followed the general objective of showing the transformations of the centers being studied as a result of the intervention of the TTI program, including mini success cases on public policy impact. In addition, a series of guiding questions were established to assess the processes and results based on the specific commitments taken on by each center with the TTI.

To begin with, the researchers received a protocol and participated in a training workshop. The protocol set the guidelines for the development of the studies, defining the target audience, the principles and processes of ethics and quality to follow, and the criteria of content and format. The purpose of the workshop was to explain in detail the work expected by the researchers, the protocol and the method of the case studies.

Subsequently, the case studies had mid-term and final evaluations. The mid-term evaluation included workshops to present and discuss the drafts of the studies, with contributions from experts and the researchers themselves³, conducted through a review guide and a checklist. The final evaluations were carried out by the experts. In all cases, the project leader participated as reviewer, particularly ensuring that the protocol was complied with. Finally, all the studies had the final approval of the respective executive officers of the centers.

2 The ILAIPP network was fostered by the centers benefitting from the TTI, with the aim of generating evidence-based research to, among other things, influence regional public policies (see Chapter 12).

3 All the researchers reviewed a case of one of their colleagues.

Reflections on the results

In the opinion of the author of this section, the case studies have provided two important lessons for cooperation programs. The first is that the results of strengthening the centers must be understood in light of the external environment and the degree of internal institutional development, as well as each institution's particular way of working. The second is that think tanks are fundamental as “learned voices” of civil society to influence the public policies of their respective countries.

In relation to the first lesson, the socio-political and economic environment seems to have played a primary role in the development of the TTI beneficiary centers, but with different challenges. In this regard, the states of Peru and, to a lesser extent, Paraguay, have distinguished themselves with a greater degree of valuing think tanks and responsiveness towards them as key players in the development of their countries. However, this same process has led, as noted by IEP (Instituto de Estudios Peruanos) and CADEP (Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya), to greater competition, both in the development of research and in attracting qualified human resources. In contrast, this recognition has been regressive in other economies such as that of Honduras, Bolivia and Ecuador, with limitations on the generation of knowledge.

On the other hand, the various levels of institutional development and the ways of working of the centers have led to a series of particularities in the activities carried out, on the basis of the three general guidelines established by the TTI. For example, in some cases, such as at INESAD and Aru in Bolivia, the program has involved the construction of institutionality based on the creation of their governance systems. In the cases of centers that already had some degree of progress, such as CADEP, Grupo FARO (Fundación para el Avance para las Reformas y las Oportunidades) and FUNDAUNGO (Fundación Doctor Guillermo Manuel Ungo), the TTI meant an opportunity for growth of the organizations. In the consolidated institutions, the activities focused on fostering to a greater extent quality and relevant research, such as at IEP (Instituto de Estudios Peruanos) and GRADE (Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo), or strengthening internal human resources, such as at ASIES (Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales), among other facets.

However, in all cases, the TTI program contributed significantly to improving the image of institutions such as think tanks that create applied and quality research aimed at influencing public policies. This result is seen in the renewal (in some cases construction) of websites, increased participation in the various social networks, and the dissemination of knowledge generated across the media. In addition, all beneficiary centers are currently in the 5.1% segment of the best think tanks in Central and South America, according to the *Global Go To Think Tank Report* prepared by the University of Pennsylvania.

In relation to the second lesson, the experiences of the centers show that the impact on public policies does not, in practice, have concrete prescriptions, precisely because of the different sociopolitical and economic environments of the countries. In this context, independent think tanks are fundamental as “learned voices” of civil society in their countries: they understand their environment because they live it on a day-to-day basis; they know, analyze and evaluate the problems, bottlenecks, and plausible and necessary forms of change; and they visualize the best ways of influencing public policies according to their contexts.

Accordingly, the forms of impact on public policies have been numerous and complex, as have the instruments employed: various approaches to public policy makers and other stakeholders; different types of informed debates with civil society; observatories, laboratories, and information and dialogue networks; development of research products; dissemination of knowledge through the preparation of various less technical and more colloquial materials; and others.

In some cases, such as that of GRADE on the theme of urban development and sustainable cities, and ID (Investigación para el Desarrollo) of Paraguay in the field of education, the dissemination of the research carried out has signaled its importance for public policy-makers. In other cases, advocacy has focused on supporting the implementation, or even the cancellation, of a given measure. FUSADES (Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social), for example, along with other civil society actors, supported the government in approving a reform of the pension system. In contrast, FOSDEH (Foro Social de Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras) observed that a particular fiscal regulation, denied, in practice, the transparency and accountability of government accounts for civil society, and therefore took on lobbying actions for the government to understand the situation, which led to the abolition of the measure. Indeed, the examples contained in the chapters on the subject are diverse.

Finally, the ILAIPP case study marks the importance of the development of comparative research — beyond the usual descriptions of data for Latin America — and the rapprochement of the centers of the various countries for the exchange of knowledge and skills, as well as the realization of activities that allow for a greater impact on public policies. However, the sustainability strategy of ILAIPP remains pending as the TTI comes to an end.

To conclude, the only thing yet to be mentioned is that in the 12 chapters on case studies, the reader will find a wealth of information on the histories and experiences of the centers regarding the transformations derived from the TTI, with their successes, strengths, limitations, challenges, and lessons learned. Complementarily, the reader will be able to learn about the program in detail from reading the last chapter of the book.

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Project Leader and Executive Director of INESAD



CHAPTER ONE

CADEP and the Think Tank Initiative: Key Results and Lessons Learned

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Asuncion - Paraguay

1

Introduction

Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya (CADEP) is a non-governmental organization, founded in June 1990 by a group of Paraguayan professionals trained abroad. The purpose of the organization is to contribute to understanding the national and regional economy, in addition to producing knowledge to serve as a basis for preparing public policies aimed at sustainable growth and greater wellbeing and quality of life for the inhabitants of Paraguay.

CADEP carries out research, studies, training, and publications in the areas of the economy and public policies. Its work has enabled the institution to maintain a flowing relationship with various national and international actors. Over the course of time, CADEP has become a reference for the national governments and various sectors of civil society, such as universities, the business sector and non-governmental organizations. CADEP has developed national and international networks with academic organizations, foundations and cooperation organizations.

CADEP's vision is "knowledge for development and equity". Its mission is to work with civil society organizations and the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), for knowledge to carry weight in public policy decisions in Paraguay.

For two consecutive periods (2010-2014 and 2014-2019), CADEP has been a beneficiary of the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) program, managed by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. TTI is a program that aims to support public policy research institutions — or think tanks — in developing countries, in order to improve the quality of research, strengthen organizational performance and enhance their communication and advocacy capacity in public policy formulation.

This case study aims to describe the transformations that CADEP has gone through thanks to the intervention of the TTI program in its three components (*i.e.* improving the quality of research, strengthening organizational performance and improving the capacity to influence public policies). Firstly, reference is made to the changes that occurred in the external context of the institution, during the start of the TTI program. Secondly, the institutional situation of CADEP prior to the intervention of the TTI program is presented. Following this, the actions carried out by CADEP with the **support of the TTI are described. Thirdly, the results achieved and the factors that contributed or limited such results** are shown. Fourthly, the way in which the gender issue was addressed in CADEP's work is presented. Fifthly, lessons learned are explained. Finally: the presentation of a CADEP success story regarding its influence on public policies. The study methodology employed consisted of conducting interviews with five researcher members of CADEP and reviewing CADEP's evaluation reports submitted to IDRC.

2. External context

At the start of the TTI program, the external context was very favorable for carrying out the activities aimed at meeting the objectives and work plans established for the institution under this program.

The main aspects of the external context were:

- a** The emergence of a new government as a political alternative to 61 years of single-party rule in Paraguay
- b** The participation of a large number of young and qualified professionals in government
- c** The emergence of a government more willing to receive and use evidence-based research and knowledge generated by think tanks
- d** Greater participation of think tanks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the discussion of public policies
- e** Renewed interest on the part of international cooperation entities for working in Paraguay
- f** Strong interest on the part of major foreign companies in making investments in Paraguay
- h** The implementation of the TTI Program as a timely and necessary support program to strengthen research in the social sciences in the country

All these factors played an important role in strengthening think tanks and NGOs, as well as in expanding the scope of their activities.

3. The problems and initial status of CADEP

In 1990, CADEP began to develop its activities with a small organizational structure, made up of few researcher members and a small area of logistical and administrative support. In time, and based on the efforts of its own founding members, CADEP managed to incorporate into its structure a small team of researchers and assistants who were trained within the institution itself. CADEP also invited several individual researchers and researchers from other institutions (both academic and research, national and foreign) to participate in specific research, part-time, as associate researchers. And CADEP established various networks with academic institutions and organizations at the national and international levels. All these initiatives were aimed at increasing the wealth of knowledge possessed by the institution, as well as expanding its relationships with the small national academic community and the academic communities of other countries in the region and the world.

In this way, CADEP was able to generate considerable recognition for itself as a reference institution at the national and international levels, given its influence in the public and private spheres, its production of knowledge, and its capacity to train high-level professionals. The activities of CADEP, and its profile as a former of public opinion, made it possible for several professionals of the institution to be invited to participate in various decision-making bodies in public policies in the government administrations of Paraguay which began in 2003 and 2008, respectively. Thus, CADEP became an institution linked to the needs of national economic leadership, without losing its characteristic of an independent academic center, and without becoming linked to the interests of political and economic groups.

However, CADEP's growth had not translated into sustained improvement in internal organization, owing to a number of factors. Firstly, the lack of a research tradition in Paraguay meant that research support came from international

organizations and private efforts. Secondly, the competition, interested in the high level of capacities of the human resources of CADEP, forced the institution to have to do without several generations of professionals who had been trained at the institution, as they became part of international organizations, and public and private institutions. Thirdly, it became impossible to retain a large team of researchers within the institution, due to the strong competition for the scarce qualified human resources that existed in the country. The lack of human resources within the institution to lead to an organization with few members, who were doubly engaged in administrative and academic tasks.

“The task was exhausting. In the mornings, the founding members were devoted to solving all the administrative or organizational problems; and in the afternoons, we concentrated on reading and producing our articles and the chapters of our books. We were involved in organizing events, contacting national and international speakers, preparing summaries for journalists from different media, and ensuring the presence of various businesspersons, government technical professionals and other individuals at each of our events. Besides this, we had to make the necessary international contacts to obtain funding for research. Not everything was done in a very orderly way, but we did have achievements. (Dionisio Borda)

Thus, before the start of the TTI program, CADEP had weaknesses in administrative and operational terms. It did not have formal and systematized strategic planning, nor did it have people dedicated exclusively to seeking national and international funding for the realization of research projects (fundraising). The same occurred with other management tasks. Since CADEP’s inception, governance has been characterized by being centered on its two founding researchers; all management responsibilities were concentrated on them. “In the country, there were few researchers aged 35 to 50 years who at the same time had a managerial profile for a research center. Thus, CADEP had to face this deficit.” (Dionisio Borda)

Given this, CADEP lacked a management unit within the institution in charge of drawing up, together with the research members, plans for strategies, and dealing with the recruitment of human resources; the preparation and presentation of research projects in defined and priority areas; and communication, fundraising, and networking.

4. The process of intervention

Within the framework of the TTI program, CADEP proposed three objectives: 1) to improve organizational performance, in terms of governance and planning capacity; 2) to improve research capacities to achieve higher and sustainable levels of knowledge production, with the structuring of a solid research agenda in line with pertinent public issues; and (3) to develop a communication strategy that would contribute to the ability to influence public policies.

In terms of the first objective, TTI support allowed CADEP to review its institutional objectives through a new strategic planning exercise in a formal, systematized and participatory manner. In this way, the possible existing planning methodologies were evaluated. This involved the holding of several meetings of CADEP staff with various specialists in the field, in order to find the methodology that was most appropriate given the nature and needs of the organization.

The strategic planning methodology adopted was that of scope mapping, making use of the services of a specialized consultant. Organizational planning led CADEP members to think about the current condition of the organization and the work method that would be employed, collectively, in the medium- and long-term.

“I arrived at CADEP in 2008 with a great desire to contribute academically and attracted by CADEP’s production, especially in the field of international economics. Soon, I realized my skills were not going to be used only in preparing monographs and participating in research projects. At CADEP, researchers were also managers and had to help with

communication. When the TTI appeared on the scene, I became one of the main contributors to the changes that took place. I collaborated in the creation of the Communication Unit, in strategic planning and in the training of young researchers”. (Lucas Arce)

Within the planning framework, one of the key points that contributes to institutional strengthening was addressed: internal governance. This involved a thorough review of the organizational structure of CADEP, its areas of work, the way in which researchers would join the institution and the requirements that would be demanded to be part of the different categories of researchers. Consideration was also given to the participation of researchers in the decision-making process of the institution.

As a result, it was decided that the following actions would be carried out:

- a** Reforming the Statutes of the institution, so as to evaluate the different categories of researchers and the requirements to be part of them. New areas of work linked to existing ones were also proposed, such as the institutional development area and the consulting area. This redefined the specific roles and responsibilities for each of the areas.
- b** Incorporating the position of Research Coordinator into the organizational structure. The person in this position would be in charge of assisting researchers in project development, expanding CADEP participation in academic networks, and identifying potential researchers for specific projects.
- c** Hiring new researchers as active members of the organization. The researchers would be given the right to participate in the decision-making process, with a voice and vote in the assemblies. At the same time, the new researchers would take on new responsibilities within the institution, with the possibility of eventually becoming Executive Director and holding other positions in the Board of Directors. The aim was to foster a new generation of researchers to ensure the sustainability of CADEP.
- d** Creating a non-statutory body, based on increasing the number of active members of CADEP, which would be called the Coordinating Group (not all active members are part of the Board of Directors). This Coordinating Group would be responsible for monitoring strategic planning, as well as monitoring progress in the different areas of work of the institution. At the same time, this position would make recommendations and suggestions to the Board of Directors for the guidelines and horizons of the institution, suggesting the necessary changes.
- e** Creating an Advisory Council made up of politicians, businesspersons and academics. The Council would aim to improve the integration of CADEP in the fields of action of the different actors and agents that influence public policies and the economic and social progress of the country.

It was also sought that the Council express opinions on (i) the plans and programs of the institution for possible revisions, (ii) the validity and quality of the research products, suggesting how to improve them or make them accessible to specific audiences, as well as proposing new forms of work and products, and (iii) ways of securing funds for the operation of programs.

The main challenges in the area of organizational performance have been: 1) the governance and empowerment of new members, 2) the evaluation of CADEP objectives for the medium- and long-term, and 3) the design of a new organizational structure. (See Annex 1: Organizational and governance structure of CADEP before and after the TTI.)

“The TTI program was instrumental in making us see that CADEP, a growing institution, could no longer sustain itself based on the traditional management of its two founding members. The first and most important obstacle to overcome was the

lack of willingness to open up to new members. Once we overcame this problem, the rest came in its own.” (Fernando Masi)

Also, between 2014 and 2016, the decision was made to carry forward the design of a new strategy to obtain alternative funds for the different work areas of the institution. Also, the Board of Directors of CADEP made the decision to include the position of Project Manager within the organizational structure. Its main task would be to seek funding for developing projects.

“Something interesting is that the consultant with whom we developed the Business Plan said was that there was space to raise funds from the private sector in support of research. So, with the help of a businessperson from the Advisory Council, we started a campaign to visit different entrepreneurs with sponsorship profiles, and we managed to raise, still in an incipient way, annual funds from this sector in support of CADEP.” (Fernando Masi)

Table 1 summarizes the dates of the events described.

Table 1. Strengthening organizational performance: summary of the intervention process	
Period	Actions
01/2011 - 03/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CADEP staff met with various specialists in strategic planning methodologies. • Selection of strategic planning methodology • Contracting the specialist in the methodology of scope mapping Implementation of strategic planning, employing the methodology of scope mapping, with the participation of the research and administration staff of CADEP
07/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Directorate incorporated the position of the Research Coordinator in the organizational structure.
08/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the Area of Communication and Advocacy in Public Policies
08/2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting the Ordinary Assembly of CADEP to carry out reform of the institution’s Statutes
02/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision and modification of strategic planning, for the period from 2013 to 2018 • Creation of a non-statutory body called the Coordinating Group
03/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Coordinating Group reviewed and modified the organizational structure for a better functioning of CADEP.
10/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting the First Meeting of the Advisory Council
9/2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding the Ordinary Assembly of CADEP
2015-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CADEP researchers contact specialists in the design of business plans
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Director establishes the position of Project Manager
2016-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of the new business strategy of CADEP begins, with emphasis on the private sector
8/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding the Ordinary Assembly of CADEP

Source: own preparation, based on a documentary review of CADEP.

Within the framework of the second objective, strengthening the quality of research, CADEP proposed, throughout the period, to evaluate the research agenda of the institution, to promote the use of new methodologies for collecting data, to perform data processing and analysis work, and to explore new methods of qualitative analysis that could help the research.

For this purpose, different actions were carried out, such as: 1) recruiting new qualified researchers (especially young researchers) to be part of the staff of permanent and associate researchers, 2) involving external senior researchers in the research projects of the thematic areas defined as having priority in the research agenda, 3) continuously training young CADEP researchers on the different methodologies of quantitative and qualitative analysis, 4) increasing the practice of peer review and validation workshops on research results, 5) expanding the participation of CADEP in foreign think tank networks, with universities and with senior researchers, to improve the quality of research and develop research capabilities in new areas, and 6) initiating new internal research networking and action with NGOs and other local research centers.

“The TTI allowed us to expand our academic relations, based on the work done jointly with other beneficiary think tanks of the program in Latin America. And following this, we also expanded our links with other entities from abroad. Working jointly with other research centers made it possible to transfer capacities to CADEP in terms of the quality of research.” (Dionisio Borda)

“The work carried out by Paraguay Debate (NGO and think tank platform) in the production of policy notes, at the request of CADEP, allowed our institution to present specific projects on social policies to various international organizations, such as the European Union. In these projects, CADEP worked together with the other organizations of the platform, contributing its share of research and studies. We know that Paraguay Debate originated thanks to TTI support (with matching funds).” (Verónica Serafini)

“When I arrived at CADEP in 2013, I had just finished my studies in economics and had no previous experience in research, because this was not done at university. Little by little I learned how to handle the economic variables and data of Paraguay, thanks to the guidance of the main researchers of CADEP. I ended up publishing several articles and documents, and the skills I acquired at CADEP allowed me to be hired as a technician at the Ministry of Finance.” (Gerardo Benítez)

In the framework of the third objective, communication and links with public policies, before the TTI program, CADEP had already carried out pioneering work of this kind in the country. It was the first think tank to work with the media, to advise the National Congress on economic issues and to organize annual forums on current topics for government decision-making. Subsequently, the TTI program played an important role for CADEP to review new ways of influencing public policies.

Along these lines, CADEP decided to create the Communication Area, and designed and implemented a new communication strategy to reach new audiences and remain an independent think tank. The following activities were carried out for this purpose: 1) the design of different communication mechanisms to influence public policies, 2) the development of new instruments for the dissemination of research and to influence public opinion, and 3) the implementation of new ways of educating and training social and economic actors in understanding public policies.

“Despite the fact that one of the most important and successful assets of CADEP had been communication with public opinion, the first thing we did was to better organize this asset and strengthen it, because a new form of communication was emerging that we had limited knowledge of. We did not have a website, nor did we know what social networks and their multiplier effects were about, so we set out to create a Communication Area and have a communication plan.” (Fernando Masi)

In this context, noteworthy is the creation of two new instruments aimed at reaching the media and promoting public policy debates: the Observatory of International Economics (OBEI) and the digital magazine called *Economía y Sociedad*. The Fiscal and Budgetary Observatory (OFIP), that was created prior to the TTI program, was also strengthened.

“The creation of the OBEI occurred at a critical moment for Paraguay’s international economic relations. Paraguay’s participation in the Mercosur had been called into question by the national authorities when the country was suspended from this regional body. The OBEI publications were crucial to present the many disadvantages that Paraguay’s decision to leave Mercosur would entail.” (Fernando Masi)

“Many actors inside and outside the country made us see the importance of maintaining an opinion magazine like *Economía y Sociedad* which would deal with the situation of the day. Several economic analysts from the United States and Europe even told us that this magazine was the only one available abroad that provided them with interpretations of the economic and social reality of the country.” (Dionisio Borda)

Another mechanism incorporated into CADEP to influence public policies was the training of different actors who formed public opinion and did advocacy work. CADEP designed and organized training courses for different journalists (from newspapers, radio and television) to understand the main topics discussed in the press, for numerous business managers to understand international negotiations, and for NGOs and university students to understand various topics on the Paraguayan economic agenda.

5. Results derived from the intervention

The results of the actions carried out during the implementation of the TTI program between 2010 and 2019, in its three components, are summarized below:

Strengthening organizational performance

Table 2. Organizational performance: results obtained	
Period	Direct results
01/2011 - 03/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning 2011-2015. This exercise made it possible to reformulate the institutional vision and mission into a clearer and more precise definition of the objectives to be reached, the results to be achieved, the actors to work with, and the strategies and actions to be followed
07/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracting the Research Coordinator
08/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracting of the Communication Coordinator
08/2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform of the CADEP Statutes • Incorporation of two new active members in CADEP
02/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New 2013-2018 Strategic Plan • Coordinating Group made up of the four active members of CADEP.
03/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a new work area: the Institutional Development Area
10/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the Advisory Council, composed of three senators, three businesspersons, a Mercosur parliamentarian, and one academic • Establishment of the basic guidelines for its operation
09/2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation of two new active members in CADEP
2015–2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of the CADEP Business Plan
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracting the Project Manager
2016–2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising with the private sector
08/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of a new (woman) Executive Director of CADEP, and incorporation of a new active member of CADEP

Source: own preparation, based on the documentary review of CADEP.

Strengthening the quality of research

Table 3. Publications by period

Document type	Number	
	2001-2009	2010-2018
Books	9	18
Chapters of books / academic articles	46	65
Reports ⁽¹⁾	17	194
Policy notes	s.d.	31

Source: own preparation, based on CADEP data.

Note: (1) includes the products of the Observatory of International Economics and the publications of the *Economía y Sociedad* magazine.

Table 4. Incorporation of researchers and training carried out, 2010-2019

Item	Number
• Researchers/assistants (staff)	15
• Specific project researchers	26
• Training given to young researchers	16

Source: own preparation, based on CADEP data.

Strengthening communication and links with public policies

Presently, the Communication Area continuously contacts approximately 80 print media journalists, 75 radio journalists and 30 television journalists to maintain and increase the presentation of CADEP products in the press.

As a result of these relationships, between July 2012 and December 2018, CADEP was able to place in the media 3,901 of its publications, research works, studies, and advocacy activities (referred to or presented). In terms of appearances in different types of media, CADEP has had 3,403 news stories published in print and digital portals, 264 television appearances and 234 radio presentations.

Table 5. Media appearances

2003 - 2009		2012 - 2018	
Media	Number	Media	Number
TV	95	TV	264
Radio	152	Radio	234
Printed ⁽¹⁾	275	Printed and digital	3403
Total	522	Total	3901

Source: own preparation, based on CADEP data.

Note: (1) Digital news portals began to appear between 2010 and 2012.

CADEP has an official Facebook page⁴ where institutional information and publications are posted periodically, allowing traffic to be directed to the institutional website. For CADEP, this social network has proven to be a tool with an attractive reach that makes the institution visible, helps to show its findings to the public and contributes to public debate. Currently, 9,780 people are followers of CADEP on Facebook. Regarding the countries from which the visits come, 90% are from Paraguay (8,496 visits); followed by Brazil, with 4% (412 visits), Argentina, with 3% (255 visits) and, to a lesser extent, countries such as the United States, Spain, Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay, Bolivia, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, and Chile. Between 2017 and 2018, the official Facebook page achieved an organic reach of 54,765 people; that is, this is the number of people who saw and read CADEP publications.⁵

A Twitter account⁶, @cadep_py, was established to support news dissemination efforts. It has 2,747 followers, including journalists, political personalities and opinion generators. 1,234 tweets have been posted throughout the period.

A. External and internal characteristics that facilitated the results of CADEP

The external and internal elements that facilitated the scope of results for CADEP were the following:

- a** The absence of the founding members of CADEP at the institution (who took on positions of public office in the period from 2008 to 2012). This led to the need to establish a new model for the governance and functioning of the institution that would make it sustainable.
- b** The contracting of new researchers, who remained at CADEP for a longer time and showed more commitment to the institution. This allowed the founding members to initiate a process of delegating roles and responsibilities.
- c** The lower public visibility of founding researchers with respect to CADEP (when they held public office positions). This made other researchers be the visible faces of CADEP in public opinion.
- d** TTI support to develop new communication strategies. This increased the visibility of CADEP and of the researchers, of both the junior and intermediate levels. The new strategy allowed CADEP to remain an independent research center and strengthened its impact in the sphere of public policies.
- e** TTI work plans and evaluation reports. This exposed the need to establish a new form of institutional work at CADEP, through a more decentralized governance and management structure, in the search for sustainability of the institution.
- f** The establishment of new alliances of CADEP with other international academic institutions to develop research projects. This facilitated the transfer of skills and knowledge to young CADEP researchers, which increased the institution's networking.
- g** The provision of considerable budgetary support from the government for promoting knowledge production and the training of human resources in the fields of science and technology (with the Paraguayan Program for the Development of Science and Technology, PROCIENCIA; the National Program of Incentives for Researchers, PRONII; and the Don Carlos Antonio López Scholarships, BECAL). This led to the creation of a National Research System.
- h** In addition, the emergence of the CONACYT program, belonging to PROCIENCIA, allowed an increase in the number of research projects, facilitated the contracting of more part-time researchers and allowed initiating new fields of research.

4 Year of creation: 2010.

5 Statistics on Facebook can only be obtained up to two years before the current date.

6 Year of creation: 2013.

- i** A government more open to receiving and using evidence based on research and knowledge generated by think tanks.
- j** The government's interest in paying greater attention to social problems and policies. This encouraged think tanks like CADEP to diversify their research topics. In this regard, CADEP initiated new research topics related to the issues of poverty, employment, family agriculture, and territorial development.
- k** Greater participation of think tanks and NGOs, that did advocacy work in the public policy debate.
- l** The strong interest of international cooperation agencies (multilateral and bilateral) to work in Paraguay.

B. External and internal characteristics that limited the results in CADEP

The internal and external elements that limited the scope of the results at CADEP were the following:

- a** The difficulty faced in the search for a strategic and business planning methodology adapted to the needs and reality of think tanks in Paraguay.
- b** The lack of collaboration on the part of administrative staff to adapt to changes made in management and governance.
- c** At the human resources level, the growing demand for researchers and analysts by the government and its agencies. This factor encouraged research activities, but at the same time meant a significant migration of CADEP researchers to government.
- d** The participation of CADEP researchers in government institutions, which raised two problems; the first consisted of limited access by CADEP to competitions which took place through government institutions; the second was lower visibility in the media of the main researchers of CADEP, due to the positions they held in the government.
- e** Less willingness (or fear) of young researchers to expose themselves on radio and television media.
- f** Limited use of external peer reviews for CADEP research products.
- g** The limited use of researchers' time to transform working documents into academic articles that could be published in journals.

6. Gender

A. Organizational structure of CADEP

Since its inception, the staff of CADEP consisted mostly of women. This included member researchers, associate researchers, research assistants, and administrative staff. Presently, the positions of Executive Director and Research Coordinator, which head the institution, are held by women. As can be seen, CADEP has not ignored the matter of gender in terms of human resources. However, CADEP does not yet have an institutional gender policy.

B. Research projects

Prior to the start of the TTI program, the subject of gender had been studied by CADEP researchers in a timely manner and as an object of analysis in research projects relating to employment and poverty. To the extent possible, and in a cross-cutting manner, gender had also been considered in other thematic areas of research.

However, with the support of the TTI program and the creation of the position of Research Coordinator, a specialist in gender issues, the subject has acquired greater relevance in CADEP's research agenda. In other words, gender issues were incorporated into the priority areas of the research agenda, as well as into the thematic areas already established. Currently, CADEP has publications on issues related to women's employment, gender and social protection, and on fiscal and gender policies.

7. Lessons learned and TTI contributions to CADEP

The emergence of the TTI program, as institutional support and organizer of activities in the areas of research, organizational performance and advocacy, allowed CADEP to improve its way of working in the planning, development and reporting of its activities, in a more orderly and systematized way. The main contributions of the TTI were the following:

- Improving the way to conduct research and advocacy at CADEP. This was done through a more decentralized governance and management structure, and through a gradual process of generational changes, in the search for the sustainability of the institution.
- The development of new instruments to communicate research findings and influence public opinion, compared to the traditional tools the institution had used since its founding. Among others, these new tools consisted of the development of the website and social networks, the creation of observatories, and the training of different actors in their understanding of public policies.
- Work and relationships with new actors, such as NGOs and businesspersons. This also led to training the latter for a deeper understanding of public policies.
- More networking. This led to the establishment of new links with academic and research institutions at the international level for the development of research projects.
- Greater participation of the institution in local networks made up of NGOs that do advocacy, and with other think tanks, providing them with studies and analyses to influence public policies.
- The consolidation of a more stable work team at CADEP, by means of attracting more young researchers as employees, their continuous training, and constant support provided by senior researchers of the institution.

Mini success case of CADEP's influence on public policies

Context

Paraguay has one of the lowest levels of tax pressure in Latin America (i.e. tax revenue / gross domestic product, GDP), as well as one of the lowest tax rates in the region. Tax inequality is observed by the fact that 80% of total tax revenue corresponds to indirect taxes (charged on goods and services, rather than on income and corporate profit), one of the highest percentages in Latin America. (Borda and Caballero, 2018) The most dynamic economic sector, agribusiness, is the sector that contributes the least in taxes. Personal income tax is not progressive, as is usually the case in other countries; it is a 10% fixed tax, and all expenses are tax-deductible. Despite low tax rates, tax exemptions amount to 1.8% of GDP. (Borda and Caballero, 2016a)

What was done?

In recent years, CADEP produced policy notes and articles (Borda and Caballero, 2016b) on three of the biggest tax problems in Paraguay: 1) low tax pressure, 2) inefficiencies in tax collection, and 3) high levels of inequality in the tax system (since middle- and low-income taxpayers contribute relatively more than high-income taxpayers).

The last policy note, *Una Reforma Tributaria para Mejorar la Equidad y la Recaudación* (2018), proposed five fundamental changes as part of a new tax reform: 1) leveling the VAT (value-added tax) for the agribusiness sector, 2) making corporate income tax for agribusiness have the same treatment as other economic sectors, 3) making personal income tax progressive, and for not all expenses to be deductible, 4) adjusting the rural property tax, and 5) reducing tax exemptions.

The policy note also included considerations on strengthening tax administration and improving resource allocation (quality of expenditure). The TTI program supported CADEP in publishing policy articles on a monthly basis.

Results

These proposals were discussed at various events, with the participation of civil society organizations, journalists and policy-makers. The policy note had a major impact in the media and social networks. A major newspaper adopted the arguments on personal income tax reform from the policy note, and presented it to the government as one of the main demands for reducing tax inequality. By May 2018, the Ministry of Finance of the outgoing government created a special working group to study the tax system and make proposals for changes. Discussions were also held between CADEP researchers and members of the incoming government on tax reform. In mid-September 2018, the working group presented proposals for changes to the tax system. Most of the changes recommended to the new government coincided with CADEP's proposals on tax reform.

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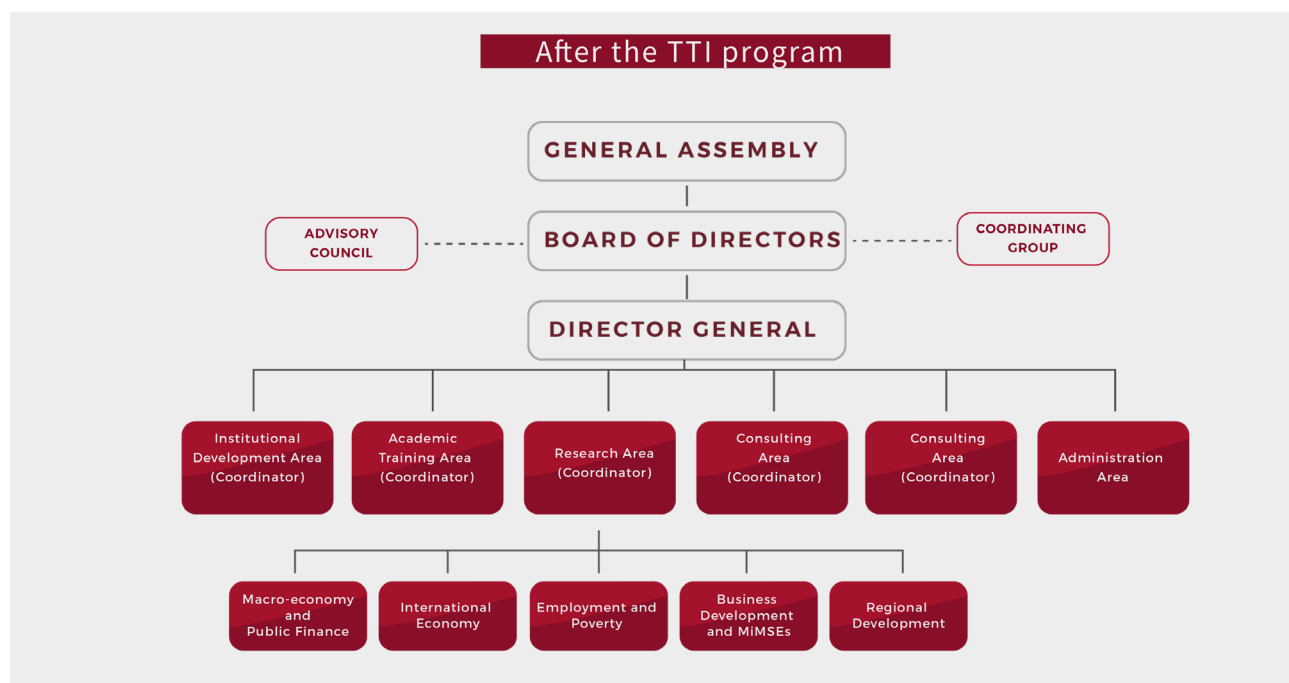
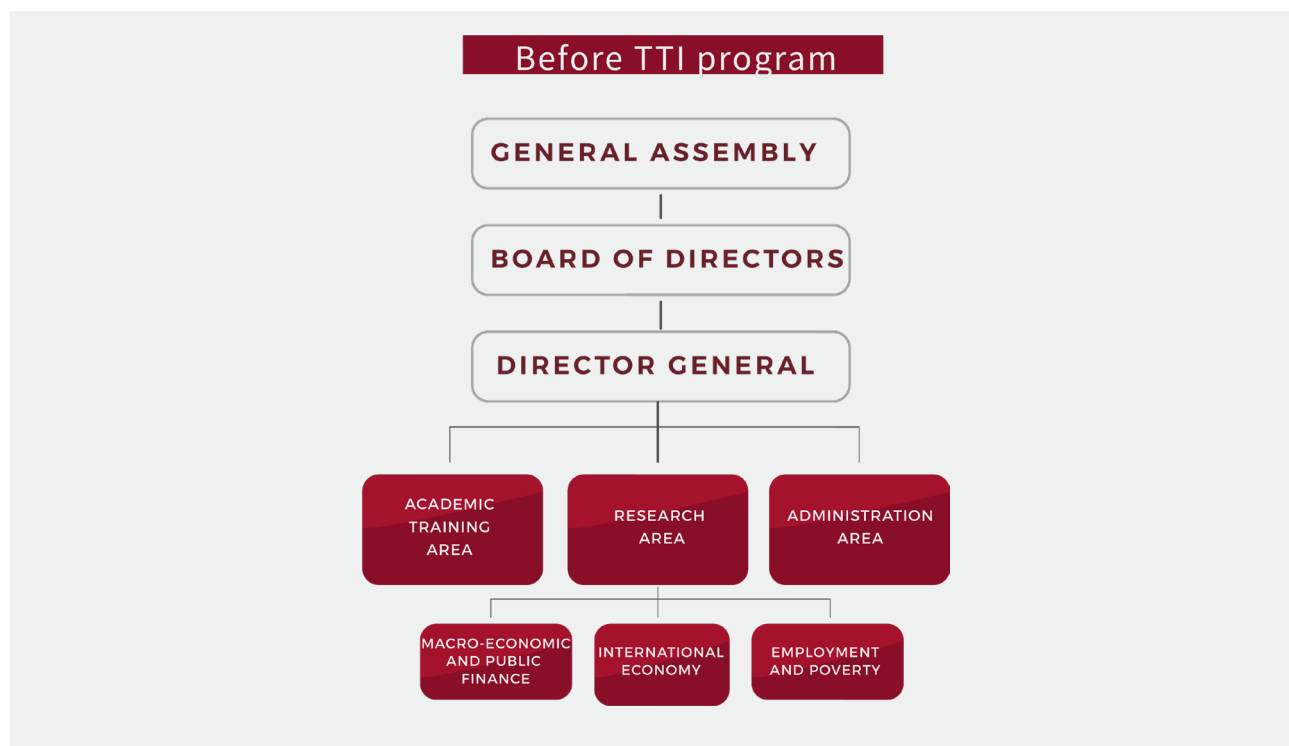
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Annexes

Annex 1. Organizational Structure and Governance of CADEP



Annex 2. Main events held

Main events held		
Date	Location	Topic of the seminar
07/06/18	Gran Hotel del Paraguay	Social protection and tax equity: How can they contribute to socio-economic development? Presentation of the study <i>A tax reform to improve equity and revenue</i> , organized by Paraguay Debate
21/03/18	Carmelita´s Center	Towards a social protection system: institutionality, learning and future challenges. Presentation of the study <i>Una reforma tributaria para mejorar la equidad y la recaudación</i> , organized by the Social Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic, with technical support from the Delegation of the European Union, through EUROSociAL
18/05/17	Hotel Crown Plaza	Social protection and tax equity: tools to reduce poverty and inequality. Presentation of the study <i>Desempeño e institucionalidad tributaria en Paraguay</i> , organized by Paraguay Debate.
04/08/16	Gran Hotel del Paraguay	Presentation of the study <i>Eficiencia y equidad: Una tarea en construcción</i> , organized by Paraguay Debate

Source: own preparation, based on CADEP data.

Annex 3.

Based CADEP’s documentary review, interviews were conducted with CADEP members. The actors interviewed were:

- Fernando Masi, Senior Researcher, Founding Partner, member of the Board of Directors
- Dionisio Borda, Senior Researcher, Founding Partner, member of the Board of Directors
- Veronica Serafini, Member Researcher, Research Coordinator
- Gerardo Benítez, Junior Researcher
- Lucas Arce, Associate Researcher

CHAPTER TWO

The Scope of a Transformative Relationship: Fundación Aru and the *Think Tank* Initiative

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1 Introduction

The case study of Fundación Aru⁷ is aimed at analyzing the transformations of the organization that were the result of its participation in the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) of Latin America. This participation was developed by International Development Research Centre (IDRC), from 2008 to 2019.

TTI was an experience in support of various independent public policy research institutions (think tanks), which focused on developing the potential of these institutions by improving the quality of their research, strengthening their organizations and stimulating their interactions with political actors, civil society and the media, all with the aim of increasing their impact on the development of the economic and social policies of their respective countries. The intervention favored two mechanisms. The first of these was flexible, non-earmarked funding, also called core funding, which, unlike funds for a research project or for commissioned research, allows organizations to decide on the use of these funds. The second mechanism was capacity development, in order to strengthen the think tanks in research, communication and organizational strengthening.⁸

In both cases, particular characteristics were adopted in accordance with the conditions of organizational development and the breadth of basic funding, which contributed towards consolidating the institutional structure and to lay the material and methodological bases for the work currently being done by the organization.

The experience of this interaction was reconstructed, in this case study, based on a documentary review and testimonials of its protagonists, which were collected through six individual interviews and one collective interview (with the researchers).⁹ These interviews concentrated on the transformations of the organizational life of Fundación Aru.

All the information presented in this document is organized through the metaphor of “a room of one’s own”, conceived by Virginia Woolf in 1928 to address the challenges of women writers who, having the talent and training needed to write, lacked workspaces, financial resources and sufficient time for independent creation, and for recreation and dissemination of thought (Uribe, 2013; quoted in Wolf, 1929). This was the situation at Aru prior to its participation in the TTI.

2. The “room of one’s own” of a small project

In this case study, the concept of “a room of one’s own” is vividly intertwined with the experience of Fundación Aru, because of the way in which TTI core funding was used to respond to the need to build a space-time that would allow the tasks of this thinking center to be carried out.

Born in 2006, Aru began its activities in a room, with ambitious aims, physically very similar to the rooms of some of Woolf’s stories¹⁰ on the domestic life of her characters, since it was established in the living room of one of its three founders, more as a discussion group or a pseudo-institution than as an institution as such (MV and WH, interview in 2019).

The year of Aru’s birth coincided with profound social and political transformations that took place in Bolivia, with the beginning of a period of 13 years of social and institutional reforms led by the Movimiento al Socialismo

7 Aymara word, meaning “word” or “voice.”

8 www.thinktankinitiative.org/es/programa/enfoque

9 Particular Fundación Aru members were interviewed: the Director, former Directors, researchers and some of the administrative staff (see Annex).

10 See, for example, *Portrait of a Londoner*, published in 1931 in the *Good Housekeeping* magazine, which describes the social life which went on in the drawing room of its main character, Mrs. Crowe.

(MAS) party, which would transform the form of the state and public institutions, characterized, in many cases, by little receptivity towards to evidence, but also by “extraordinary moments” of opening up of opportunities for the development of specific institutions within the state,¹¹ with a greater receptivity to knowledge applicable to public policies (Tanaka *et al.*, 2011).

In its early years, the production of high-quality research was one of the main motivations of the institution, seeking to “strengthen high-quality applied research.” (Aru, 2019a) It also sought to consolidate social research with an own agenda and perspective. Both guidelines would make it possible to contribute to generating evidence and to plurality in the discussion with multiple actors, including both the decision-making bodies of public policy and the international organizations that at some point requested the specialized services of the institution (e.g. the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank).

By 2009, when the Think Tank Initiative was applied, Aru had accumulated a certain level of experience and recognition in the field of socioeconomic research. This achievement is attributable to the prestige of its founders and the network of relationships and personal interactions that existed within its research “ecosystem”, in an environment with limitations of development and conflict, and in a political context that was not very receptive to some issues and evidence.

Aru’s participation in the TTI finally became effective in 2010, after two successful evaluations. The first evaluation, which was institutional and administrative, showed that Aru was not a formal organization, with its own work space, stable staff, institutional presence, and a minimal structure of administrative management. The second evaluation, more of a technical nature, recognized Aru’s ability to develop high-quality research processes and revealed similarities with the historical trajectory of many other research centers which, having begun like Aru, managed to reach a considerable level of institutionality.

Within Aru’s team, this evaluation also allowed the institution to question its proximity to the concept of a think tank, because although it had a safe house where plans and strategies could be discussed — as the concept was understood during the Second World War — and although it was an independent non-profit organization which operated outside the formal political processes to generate evidence and influence through them the formulation of public policies and political debate (Molina and Iglesias, 2005), in practice much remained to be discussed and built with respect to its identity as a think tank. This was due to the fact that any interaction between thought and political action involved reconfiguring the workings of operating, and the ideologies and mechanisms of managing power relations (Rowe, 2004; cited in Molina and Iglesias *et al.*, 2005).

11 The example, in this case, refers to Unidad de Análisis de Políticas Sociales y Económicas (UDAPE), which can be considered a state-owned think tank, which began operating before 2006.

3. The TTI at Fundación Aru

While Fundación Aru could be regarded as a think tank, at the time of initiating its interaction with IDRC, it lacked the basic conditions to ensure its continued operation. For this reason, its original request for funding was aimed at strengthening its institutionality in its basic areas, with the incorporation of accounting tools, the expansion of its administrative structure and the improvement of its website, which, from its perspective, would allow it to move, gradually, from being a group of researchers to an organization proper. However, as a result of the evaluation process and interaction with IDRC, this first requirement gradually transformed into commitments involving greater challenges for the organization, taking on the general objectives of the first and second phases of the TTI, which applied to all the think tanks involved in the initiative.¹²

Commitments specifically related to the situation of Aru were also established at each stage. These commitments are described in Table 1.

12 General objective of phase 1 (2010-2014): to achieve sustainability of research quality, links with public policy production processes and performance as an independent policy research organization (IDRC, 2010). General objective of phase 2 (2014-2019): to strengthen the role of the beneficiary as a credible public policy institution in Bolivia, through strengthening its capacity to provide high-quality, influential and politically pertinent research. (IDRC, 2014)

Table 1. Specific TTI objectives, by line of intervention

	Phase 1: August 2010 - October 2014	Phase 2: October 2014 - March 2019
Research quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a strategic research agenda, supported by hiring a full-time Executive Director • Consolidating lines of research and developing new lines in the areas of analysis of institutional reforms, evaluation of public policies, fiscal policy, and reduction of inequality • Formalizing quality assessment procedures and establishing an academic council • Building a data center on economic and social issues • Hiring high-level researchers and research assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the volume and quality of research products (to four documents per year) • Strengthening research capacities, contracting and training three senior researchers in monitoring and evaluation, macroeconomics and the political economy • Institutionalizing quality assurance processes in research • Strengthening the capacities of researchers in the management of primary data collection methods for measuring social accounting, poverty and well-being
Organizational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a new strategic plan • Strengthening management through the recruitment of high-level staff and a full-time administrative officer • Improving administrative and financial systems • Recruiting support staff and implementing a performance appraisal system • Consolidating the legal and practical establishment of the organization and having new members in the Directive Council • Renting a new office space • Developing a plan to expand the resource base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding and improving the physical, technological and information infrastructure for effective research • Seeking resources for research through strengthening partnerships and networks with research centers in other countries with contexts similar to those of Bolivia • Expanding and strengthening the make-up of the Directive Council through the addition of three new members
Communication and advocacy capacity in public policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a communication strategy • Improving the visibility of the organization, including through the design of a website, the organization of public events and the development of corporate image materials • Increasing the number of research works published in the media, as well as the presence of researchers in the media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the scope, visibility, demand, and use of Aru research by policy-makers and researchers through participation in the Applied Research Workshop (five workshops per year) and Evidence-Based Encounters (six sessions per year). • Improving dissemination and access to Aru research by increasing the number of partnerships with local and international actors

Source: IDRC grant agreements (Fundación Aru, 2010 and 2014).

4. TTI's contributions to Fundación Aru

In the style of Woolf, who raised as a desirable and even essential question having access to a “room of one’s own”; that is, enough time and money for exclusive dedication to writing (Wolf, 1929), Fundación Aru found through TTI flexible funding a considerable level of freedom and time to experiment with organizational mechanisms, deepen its research processes, achieve innovation, and transcend into other spaces.

In the analysis of TTI's contribution to organizational growth, Aru researchers recognize that the advantages attributed to core funding were put into practice in their own experience, particularly in terms of the possibility of defining flexible research agendas, expanding existing research groups, developing technical and leadership skills in new researchers that contributed to generational renewal, experimenting with alternative communication approaches and strategies, redistributing funding responsibilities across all levels of the organization (surpassing the traditional allocation model of assigning them exclusively to the leader), maintaining more horizontal relationships within the team, and redistributing priorities between research and actions aimed at organizational sustainability. (Mendizábal, 2018; ACH and PV, interviews in 2019)

Also important to mention was the “grace time” provided by the TTI, temporarily freeing the institution from the pressures of economic sustainability and allowing it to devote itself to research, the consolidation of its capabilities and its positioning in the context, which laid the foundations of its current organizational functioning and of the mechanisms and services that contributed to its sustainability. (ACH, interview in 2019)

Institutionalization of the “room of one’s own”

Regarding organizational development, Aru implemented a strategic plan that established the creation of data units, research, training, public policies, and administration. The application of accounting tools and administrative processes was also established. The original team of founders was strengthened by the appointment of an Executive Director, an Administrative-Financial Officer, one administrative support person, main researchers, assistants for each research group, a technical coordination team for the Data Unit, and a team in charge of the design and implementation of data collection. As one of the mechanisms for strengthening governance, a Directive Council composed of the Executive Director and the new institution Directive Council members who joined the organization since 2011 was also consolidated. (Aru, 2013)

The redistribution of roles within the organization contributed to decentralizing decision-making and the responsibilities of the Executive Director. Throughout the TTI implementation, the latter position was taken on by three different people,¹³ with a high level of continuity during the transitions. The new designations were made by the Directive Council, and facilitated by the persons in charge of the various research groups and the archive system that preserved the institutional memory.

Currently, the operational structure has been maintained, despite the budgetary constraints following the conclusion of IDRC funding. However, a sustainability analysis is required. So far, sustainability has been provided (as stated in its strategy) by the provision of the services of the Data Unit, consulting by the research groups, associated researchers, and training offers for civil society organizations, public servants and students (NE, interview in 2019). The sustainability analysis will also involve addressing the tension between the two management models that, while not mutually

13 The Director of Aru at the time of the application presented to the TTI was Miguel Vera (founding member). He was replaced by Werner Hernani (founding member), who took on the position of Executive Director for six years beginning in 2010. Subsequently, Paul Villarroel, formerly Head Researcher of the Monitoring and Evaluation Group, took on this responsibility for a period of three years. All three are still associate researchers at Aru.

exclusive, demand a certain degree of technical and political positioning. The first model is that of consulting, which is often more equitable in the distribution of revenue and less demanding in the development of thought, having however a greater likelihood of impact in the local environment. The other research model is more inequitable in the distribution of revenue, has a lower probability of achieving impact at the local level, but has a considerable possibility of contributing to a knowledge agenda and the generation of evidence.

Other tensions generated have been the result of the speed of growth of the institution and of the unfinished models for human resources management. This occurred because although the foundation never planned to have a permanent payroll, but rather flexible relationships and contributions that would respond to the needs of the context, it did try out the incorporation of senior/junior staff, as well as having associate researchers and seconding students, without yet finding the balance between access to researchers and the consolidation of new generations, which is likely the result of a market that is not very competitive in terms of wages. (WH, interview in 2019)

Table 2. Contributions of the TTI to organizational development

Organizational development	Institutionality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutes and organizational chart: separation of executive and deliberative levels • Legal status and operating license • Institutional Strategic Plan • Human resources manuals; and rules for budgets, administration and financial administration • Chart of accounts and accounting system • Project management system (calls for tenders management) and financial information system for projects
	Material conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical infrastructure (office) for carrying out the activities • Material and technological conditions for research (i.e. equipment, furniture, software)
	Human talent management
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recruitment and evaluation procedures • Recruitment of permanent staff for the administrative area and the Data Unit • Staff for the Research Unit • Strategy for linking with the associate researchers, research assistants and interns • Strategy for obtaining human resources
	Sustainability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing strategy (including implementation of consulting services, data collection and training) • Updating the institutional information document for new calls for tenders • Participation in different matching funds. 2013-2014: Study on multidimensional poverty in five countries. 2014-2015: Compendium of impact assessments and dissemination tools. 2015: REVELA or compendium of research documents, Explicando los cambios en la distribución del ingreso en Bolivia; capacity development contract with the ILAIPP network to lead and coordinate the Impact Assessment Module
	Governance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consejo directivo en funcionamiento. • Participación en redes y alianzas interorganizacionales que permitan compartir o acceder a distintos recursos de investigación (ILIAP, TIA, EBE, REDMEBOL y otros).

Source: Technical Progress Report (Fundación Aru, 2011 and 2012); annual reports (Fundación Aru, 2016, 2017c and 2018).

Research quality

When interaction initiated with the TTI, the three Directive Council members of Fundación Aru carried out commissioned research, concentrating on topics of the political economy, and monitoring and evaluation. Although these topics were part of their interests and specialties, it could not be considered an intentionally set agenda. Based on the commitment with IDRC, Aru established a full-time Executive Director position and formed research groups with specific work agendas through the Political Economy Group (GEP), the Monitoring and Evaluation Group (GEM),¹⁴ the Equal Opportunities Group (GIO), the Macroeconomic Modeling Group (GMM), and the Energy and Development Group (GED).¹⁵

Each of these groups committed to the generation of more research and quality assurance. In this way, the Political Economy Group (GEP) focused on measuring and monitoring institutional, economic and political changes in Bolivia, while explaining their causes and consequences, analyzing the impact that certain socioeconomic variables such as wealth, and ethnic and racial status had on institutional changes and the level of social cohesion experienced in the country. An example of the work of this group is the efforts made to measure current social cohesion, and racial and ethnic recognition and identification of the racial and ethnic identities. Work was done on the determinants of the desire for greater decentralization, as well as a study on the degree of political polarization in Bolivia and Latin America, and an analysis of the effects of conditional transfers on voting intentions and political positions. (Aru, 2011)

On its part, the Monitoring and Evaluation Group (GEM) focused on designing impact assessments for public policies carried out in areas such as employment, human capital (*i.e.* education and health), wellbeing, and equal opportunities, all with the aim of quantifying their causal effect on specific outcomes. The group addressed monitoring through the construction, comparison and analysis of changes in the temporal trajectories of social indicators, in order to find the origin of these changes and explain their behavior. Data collection processes were also designed that could capture the best and greatest amount of information possible on the contexts and topics of the research. The research papers focused on poverty and inequality, as well as an evaluation of the major social programs for education, the labor market and individual loans for production. All of this was a milestone in the process of positioning Aru as a benchmark in the topic and as the spearhead for the expansion of an agenda that considered addressing problems and multiple topics, such as time use and gender, education and democracy. (Aru, 2011)

In addition to these two groups, which can be considered the heart of Aru's action, the other two groups arose as a result of the expansion of the research agenda or the recruitment of new researchers, but they ceased to function actively when other responsibilities were taken on in other spheres. This phenomenon has been interpreted as both the result of the receptivity and flexibility of the political context to evidence, and as the result of the experience and interests of the researchers in certain subjects. In this vein, the Equal Opportunities Group (GIO) focused on measuring the degree of inequality of opportunities in Bolivia, identifying the mechanisms that perpetuate it and evaluating the contribution of past and present policies to the construction of a more equitable and cohesive society. GIO focused this research on measuring the inequality of opportunities between men and women in the labor market, and on the process of accumulation of human capital in terms of health and education. (Aru, 2011)

While active, the Macroeconomic Modeling Group (GMM) sought to examine the relevant economic policy variables for growth and development, based on a quantitative analysis of the relationships between economic theory and empirical evidence. It addressed issues such as the informal economy, the tax system, fiscal sustainability, migration, energy policy, employment, poverty, and health. On its part, the Energy and Development Group (GED) deepened the

¹⁴ Consolidated in 2010.

¹⁵ Consolidated in 2011.

relationship between generation and state appropriation of oil and gas economic rent. Also analyzed were possible uses of these resources to reduce poverty levels and improve the welfare standards of the population. (Aru, 2011)

The research groups were accompanied by the creation of a Data Unit that responded to Aru's previous experience regarding the shortcomings arising from the causal relationship between research, the researcher and quality data. Control of the entire "production process"¹⁶ of research (as a condition for ensuring its quality) resulted in improved process management within the research groups, as well as the emergence of initiatives and commissioned research, which benefited from the physical conditions (equipment and technology) and human conditions (increase in the number of researchers and their skills) established with the support of the TTI (MV, interview in 2019). The Data Unit also contributed to the creation and strengthening of other initiatives, such as Red Boliviana de Microdatos y Encuestas, the DATUM virtual platform and several projects of design and data collection, which consolidated the unit as a national reference in the field.

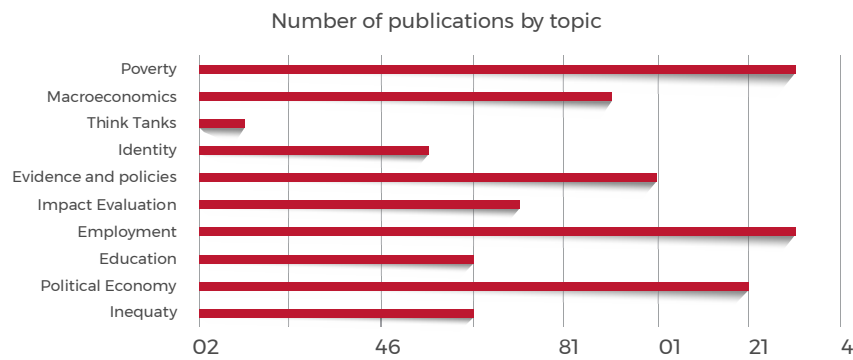
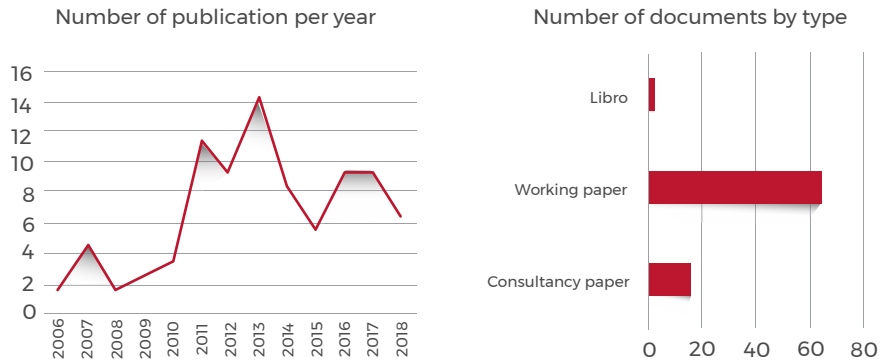
The organizational team, which was another key issue for improving research quality, was also expanded and modified on several occasions, reaching a relatively stable configuration that currently includes six senior associate researchers, eight young researchers and a variable number of interns. The researchers of this team received training processes from the TTI to prepare proposals, develop research processes, mobilize resources, and on other topics. At the same time, these researchers became facilitators of local processes of training and promotion of research and innovative training among young people who joined the organization or are in different spheres of research or development of public policies.

In order to contribute to the quality of the research products, Aru established an academic council that provided critical feedback on the relevance of the topics on which research was done, the data, the methodology used, and the conclusions or results. Between 2011 and 2012, a quality assessment procedure was institutionalized in the working papers. (Aru, 2013) In turn, Aru joined certain networks that were taken on as a quality assurance mechanism by contributing to the review, promotion and dissemination of production, and also served to share learning. Throughout the TTI intervention, and to this day, Aru organizes discussion or training events through the Taller de Investigación Aplicada (Applied Research Workshop, TIA), developed in partnership with Instituto de Investigaciones Socio-económicas (IISEC) of Universidad Católica Boliviana "San Pablo", to increase the quality of research in Bolivia through the implementation of spaces for debate and feedback. Evidence-Based Encounters (EBE) are also organized to disseminate the link between research and the development of public policies. Aru participates in the Network on Inequality and Poverty (NIP), which sets up spaces for discussion and ensures the quality of the research produced; and Aru is part of Red de Monitoreo y Evaluación de Bolivia (Monitoring and Evaluation Network of Bolivia, REDMEBOL), which focuses on improving the quality and use of monitoring and evaluation in the country. (Aru, 2016, 2017c and 2018)

As for the volume of production, it has increased, but with fluctuations over the years of TTI implementation. From the perspective of some of its Directive Council members and researchers, progress can be considered more quantitative than qualitative, because at the beginning of its relationship with the Initiative, the foundation did its own research or research for entities rigorous in the application of methods and ways of presenting results. During the second phase of the TTI, a change was made towards research commissioned by entities less demanding in relation to the products of the process (MV and WH, interviews in 2019). The research corresponds to the following:

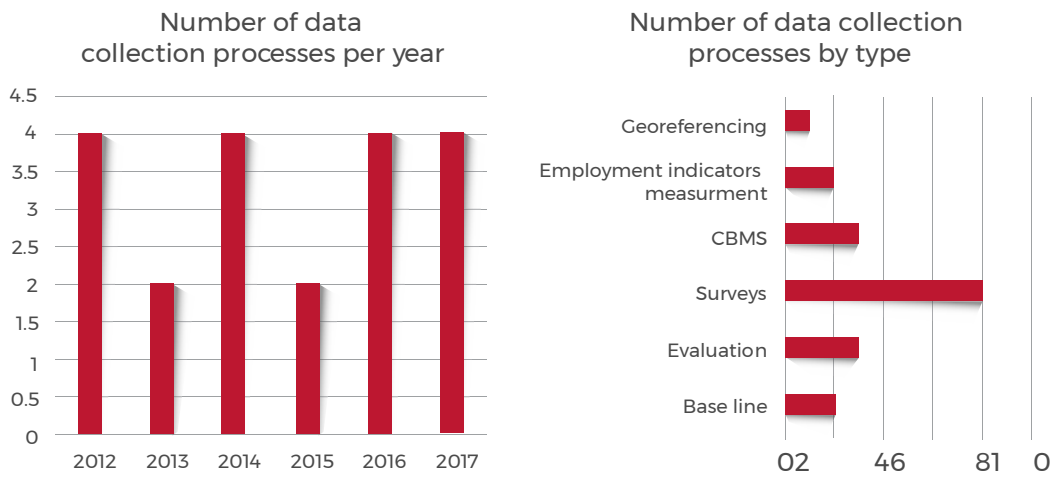
16 Data collection, analysis, reliability assessment, explanation or understanding of the phenomenon and derivation of political implications to reduce poverty or inequality.

Graph 1. Documents produced by Fundación Aru, 2006-2018



Source: Fundación Aru documentation system report (Aru, 2019b).

Graph 2. Data collection processes of the Data Unit, 2012-2017



Source: Aru (2017b),

The consolidation of the team's interests in the political economy, policy evaluation and addressing certain topics, such as poverty and inequality, made these matters become important market niches. This occurred without excluding other topics that could also be addressed, since Aru avoided thematic specialization that, in the words of the actors, is inappropriate for a think tank positioning itself as such. (MV and WH, interviews in 2019).

Table 3. Summary of the TTI's contributions to research quality

- Establishment of a new Executive Directorate to mobilize research processes
- Research groups with defined agendas
- Academic Council
- Data Unit operating with the necessary technical conditions
- Expanded and trained team of researchers
- Team organized to meet the demand for commissioned training and research
- Protocols for data generation and management (topics, sampling, field operations, systems, metadata)
- Formalized schemes for the development of research documents (justification, literature review, data review, relevant methods, results, and references)
- Protocols for the publication and reproducibility of documents (criteria for quality of research and transparency of information)
- Protocols for training (quality of training processes and use of methodologies)
- Consolidation of the www.aru-learning.com platform
- From 2012 to 2018: national training workshops on qualitative methods, software packages for data processing and systematization, use of Stata and R (or Matlab), and statistical sampling
- In 2017: Impact Assessment Module for IDRC research centers (in El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Paraguay)
- Participation in networks that contribute to quality control of research products (TIA, EBE, REDMEBOL)
- Research agendas with various cooperation agencies and civil society organizations

Source: Fundación Aru.

The challenge of advocacy in public policies

From the perspective of Aru's Directive Council members and researchers, the impact on public policies is considered a line of action the complexity and implications of which surpassed the level of organizational development in which the foundation was at the time of the start of the TTI.

Being affected by factors external to the own actions of think tanks, advocacy implies the dissemination of knowledge in spaces wider and often less specialized than those of the producers, particularly in view of the possibility of prompting changes in the direction of public policies. This being the perspective, Aru's theory of change supported the idea that the interaction between evidence, people and the right moment in time were the key to influencing the decision-making of political actors. In this case, consideration used to not be given to the possibility that decisions responded to a broader set of criteria, such as of a political, ideological or bureaucratic nature, and even to the intelligibility of evidence and the lack of its linkage to practical urgent matters—and to the actual functioning of a state with its own development route, and therefore with different priorities regarding the generation of evidence. (WH, interview in 2019)

In an analysis of the role of research in the public debate in Latin America, Tanaka and others warned that there was a high level of dependency on the institutionalization of states and civil society, and that with greater institutionalization, the likelihood of finding an environment of greater professionalization increased and there was greater receptivity on the part of policy-makers to the knowledge generated by researchers. Also, in countries with higher rates of ideological polarization of political systems, public policy discussions tended to rapidly become ideological and independent of evidence. (Tanaka *et al.*, 2011)

In the realization that this analysis also manifested itself in the reality of Bolivia, through the reduction of pluralism of sources and a political hegemony that increased consensus for the implementation of certain measures, it was assumed that low receptivity to evidence could not be dealt with through a communication strategy that implied direct and individual contact with the media. It was thus determined that the best way to share the evidence would be through personal contact with policy-makers, participation in peer networks such as Taller de Investigación Aplicada (TIA), Evidence-Based Encounters and regional comparative studies that would allow addressing the local situation in spheres such as ILAIPP, which, at least during the first phase, was one of the platforms for dialogue, collective construction and dissemination of research.

The strategy, however, also incorporated some important exceptions, such as the “Census Route” which, during 2011, 2012 and 2013, implied the public positioning of the foundation within the framework of a network of civil society actors that monitored the national operations of the 2012 Census, and proposed a new law for the functioning of the National Statistical Information System (SNIES). This proposal was submitted to the Plurinational Assembly, but has not yet been discussed. (ACH, interview in 2019).

Table 4. The TTI’s contributions to the impact on public policies

- Improved organizational visibility through social networks and a website
- Update of the Institutional Directory and mapping of key actors
- Development of a brochure and other organizational dissemination material
- Institutional bulletins
- Publication of research and training material under the criteria of use of corporate image
- Dissemination of evidence in spaces of dialogue and collective research platforms, such as TIA, EBE and other events with students, civil society organizations and political actors
- More organizational alliances and contacts with research networks and cooperation agencies

Source: *Fundación Aru*.

A successful experience

Aru’s Executive Director and researchers selected, as a successful experience of their participation in the TTI, the Data Unit and the implementation of the Community-Based Monitoring System,¹⁷ which, although not directly funded or advised by the TTI, benefitted from the technological and human conditions instated by the initiative, serving as good examples of strategic alliances and synergistic relationships that facilitated the future sustainability of the institution.¹⁸

17 Comunidad-i, in the municipality of Concepción, Bolivia, was recognized as second among 25 global projects applying for the Partnership for Economic Policy 2013-2014 “Best Practices Award”. (Aru, 2017)

18 The evaluation commissioned by Banco de Desarrollo Productivo (BDP) (2012-2013) was also recognized as a successful experience of policy advocacy by the TTI. On that occasion, research was done on how effective and efficient individual productive loans (CPI) had been in terms of achieving their social, economic and financial objectives. The evaluation concluded that smaller loans (2,000 to 23,000 bolivianos) had no impact on improving people’s living conditions and income, while given certain conditions, such as the industry and the amount of the loan (up to 80,000 bolivianos), the loans did have a positive impact on income. It was also established that by understanding these dynamics at a more

The Data Unit and Comunidad-i: Community-Based Monitoring System

Aru's Data Unit was created for the production of knowledge, through the collection and preparation of information, analysis, visualization of results, preservation of information, and participation in networks and initiatives that have the potential to strengthen the work. In the context of the democratization of access to information, work was carried out on the production of data on topics of high social interest, bridging the information gap between subnational governments and training actors to build a data culture.

The autonomy processes in Bolivia and the powers assigned to the Municipal Autonomous Governments (GAM) regarding the provision of services, the management of policies for development, participatory democracy, and effective citizenry (Chirinos, 2014), opened up the space needed to materialize the potential of the Unit in these local contexts. Thus, between 2013 and 2017, the demand of some local authorities regarding access to disaggregated information at the community level – to meet the challenges of the fight against poverty, risk management, the provision of services, and other issues that were needed in social development planning and policy monitoring – allowed the foundation to implement the Comunidad-i project, supported by the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) global initiative fostered by the Partnership for Economic Policy.

The project, which was only possible because the Data Unit had the necessary conditions installed for carrying it out, gave rise to the establishment of Community-Based Monitoring Systems to surpass, in qualitative terms, the availability of information at the municipal level, by generating data from and for the community levels. The systems, aimed at diagnosing and monitoring wellbeing indicators at local levels, were useful platforms for decision-making, generating plans and programs, and prioritized allocation of resources, and focusing on strategic interventions.

Methodologically, the process involved the development of two phases of work that included various activities of awareness-raising, coordination, capacity development and technological conditions, surveys, analysis, and return of information.

In the first phase, the actions involved:

- Motivation and articulation with local authorities to disseminate the potential of the system and the importance of having information for the management of public policy at the local level
- Capacity-building in local actors (particularly in secondary school youth, who provided voluntary collaboration to the process), based on awareness of the importance of data to make informed decisions in the community
- Development of the diagnosis and the collection of information through a tool designed based on the methodology of the de jure census, which does not substitute the national census and which is applied through mobile technology and the performance of a CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) type interview
- Generating statistical cartography with information on public and private infrastructure
- Generating databases with consistency and validation protocols

- Return of information through a web portal (www.comunidad-i.info) that allows accessing local statistics online with the support of Redatam and printed material

In the second phase, the following actions were also carried out:

- Training various authorities, students and part of the community on the tools of phase 1
- Analysis of results in participatory meetings
- Generating specialized research
- Implementation of the monitoring system in municipal plans

The municipality of Concepción, in the department of Santa Cruz, went through this experience between October 2013 and May 2014. The process consisted of three important operations: cartographic updating, registration and validation. The municipality reported 1,720 households and 7,643 people, and addressed specific issues related to multidimensional poverty, and vulnerability to poverty and risks. At the end of the process, the rate of “No global response” was less than 5%. Concepción culminated the experience with a publicly available website, which contained all the information about the Comunidad-i process (www.comunidad-i.info), statistical cartography of the location, the registration database and a friendly consultation platform (Redatam), which in turn contained visualizations of the results in thematic maps, statistical tables and graphs. (Chirinos, 2014)

The experience was disseminated in the department governments of La Paz, Chuquisaca and Santa Cruz, and was replicated in the municipalities of Vallegrande (between August and September 2016) and Pampa Grande (in 2017). To date, although several municipalities expressed their interest in this process, new replicas have not yet been produced, as a local counterpart is required for carrying out the logistics processes.

In a retrospective look of the experience, the most remarkable result was related to the development of local capacities, the transfer of knowledge and the empowerment of communities through access to information, since the return of the information and its analysis allowed presenting demand in a more qualified way and focused on priority needs. Awareness regarding the importance of data for planning and doing follow-up on policies in the community also had a significant impact on expanding decision-making power to the other public policy maker: the citizenry (www.comunidad-i.info).

5. Lessons learned and challenges

Although Aru’s management and researchers perceived that the generalization of the TTI’s lines of work to all think tanks that received core funding was a constraint that did not take into account their different stages of organizational development and the interdependence between the characteristics of the organizations, the volume of the funding, and the type of objectives envisaged by the initiative, Aru’s participation in the initiative did contribute to its growth. The TTI provided a “room of one’s own” for the organization to develop independent thinking and have the necessary time for establishing the conditions that would facilitate the development of different institutional projects separate from the demands of economic survival, which often haunt organizations in the country. (ACH, PV and WH, interviews in 2019)

Although the lines of work established by the TTI had to be dealt with as an organizational transformation package, the Fundación Aru team remained faithful to its priority of improving research processes and strengthening its

organizational structure. This allowed it to generate important lessons on the line of work, associated with the impact on public policies. The tension generated in relation to this last aspect, and the future sustainability of the institution, were part of the topics debated within the organization, given the fact that there are multiple starting conditions that limit the homogeneous development of these lines of work. (MV and WH, interviews in 2019)

Being a relatively young institution, after the TTI intervention, the foundation learned that time is fundamental to generate more natural processes of organizational maturation and to reflect on the potential and scope of an institutional intervention. In the face of organizations with more experience in the market, Aru yearned for the possibility of concentrating on solving the needs of most urgent priority (organizational structure and sustainability conditions), before taking the leap towards the implementation of processes that required a more robust organization to deal with the conditions of an environment adverse to receiving evidence.

With regards to evidence, it was also important to understand that evidence on its own is not sufficient, and that changes in public policy are more complex than the result of a fortuitous combination of the precise evidence, the appropriate actor and the right time, because in political decisions, at play are a number of factors and criteria that escape the possibilities of action and transformation of a think tank. Hence, all this must be understood as a context of a starting point and the development of organizational action with which it is often necessary to cohabitate.

Regarding the outstanding challenges, political advocacy is at the top of the list, as a considerable shortfall was observed in relation to the commitments made to IDRC. A communication strategy was not implemented, nor was emphasis placed on the mass dissemination of evidence for the formulation of public policies, both aspects being frameworks of general action considered for all the institutions of the region, regardless of their consolidation and their years of work in the local environments.

Organizational strengthening showed results that can be understood as a combination of the high and homogeneous perspectives of the TTI with respect to its recipients, and the limited organizational projection carried out based on the contributions of the initiative. Core funding, particularly during the first phase of the TTI, contributed to consolidating an organizational structure and administrative processes that fostered organizational transparency and continuity, but it was not possible to develop a financing strategy that would guarantee sustainability, this being one of the most important challenges pending. Also present are the challenge of preserving institutional memory and maintaining organizational prestige at the national and international levels, which is expressed in part in the results of the Global Go to Think Tank Report, in which the foundation has appeared from 2014 to the present.¹⁹ (University of Pennsylvania, 2018)

Core funding allowed a considerable level of flexibility for developing research, which favored delving deeper into some topics, such as poverty and evaluation methodologies. It also allowed the implementation of services such as the Data Unit. However, maintaining the processes and innovations, despite financial constraints, implies rethinking towards a lighter organizational structure that would allow flexible affiliation of researchers and sustainability of collaborative work in networks, in order to optimize institutional resources and enhance the scope of research in local and regional contexts.

Finally, with regard to the current arrangement of the foundation, a process of reflection and internal discussion is still pending. It is necessary to visualize the type of organization that will predominate in the future, since there is an important commitment to preserving the organization as a thought center, in an environment in which demand for commissioned research predominates. This is one of the most important challenges, as it is related not only to sustainability, but also to the identity sought to be conserved over time.

¹⁹ According to the University of Pennsylvania's Global Go to Think Tank Report, since 2014, Fundación Aru is among the best think tanks in Central and South America. Since 2015, it also appeared in other categories, such as the best independent think tanks and think tanks with outstanding public policy-oriented research.

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Annex

List of persons interviewed

Wegner Hernani (WH)	Founder, Directive Council member and former Director of Fundación Aru
Miguel Vera (MV)	Directive Council member and former Director of Fundación Aru
Wilson Jiménez (WJ)	Directive Council member and Executive Director of Fundación Aru
Paul Villarroel (PV)	Former Head Researcher of the Monitoring and Evaluation Group, former Director and Associate Researcher of Fundación Aru
Álvaro Chirinos (ACH)	Technical Coordinator of the Data Unit of Fundación Aru
Natalie Echenique (NE)	Researcher at Fundación Aru
Tommy Tapia (TT)	Administrative-financial Officer of Fundación Aru

Source: own preparation.

CHAPTER THREE

Taking Up the Initiative from within: The Case of GRADE and TTI

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GRADE before the *Think Tank Initiative (TTI)**

In August 1980, three Peruvian researchers founded Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (Analysis Group for Development – GRADE), with the aim of “effectively linking academic research with the formulation and implementation of development policies.” For this purpose, GRADE came into being as a plural organization, without partisan or ideological affiliation of any kind and with the guiding principle of academic excellence and independence.

In few years, and despite the deep political and economic crisis Peru was going through, GRADE managed to position itself as one of the most solid and prestigious think tanks in the country specializing in applied research. This consolidation translated into sustained growth in the human resources and infrastructure of the institution. The organization went from a dozen professionals at the beginning of the 1980s to more than 40 in the mid-1990s, and to 80 in 2010. Joining the economists and sociologists (who were there from the beginning), were a considerable number of psychologists, anthropologists, geographers, and educators, among other professionals who enriched the plurality of thought and positive synergy of the institution.

At the beginning of the second decade of this millennium, GRADE was classified internationally as the most important think tank in Peru, and also ranked 23rd among similar institutions in Central and South America.²⁰ This recognition was endorsed, at the local level, by various surveys that reported on GRADE’s status as one of the most influential NGOs in the country’s public policy debate.²¹ GRADE also legitimized its recognition through the permanent presence of its researchers in various advisory committees, expert panels, academic events, and communication media in general.

GRADE had a strong reputation as a training center for young researchers. In fact, GRADE’s institutional dynamics favored, from the outset, the recruitment — as support staff — of the most outstanding students from the country’s main universities. Many of these students developed careers within the institution, with some of them even becoming lead researchers.²²

However, despite its remarkable performance, the institutional model adopted by GRADE, since its foundation, presented certain particularities that may have limited its potential for impact on public policies in several ways.

In principle, every lead researcher (or associate researcher) has the responsibility of proposing his or her own projects, obtaining the corresponding funding, managing their execution and carrying out their dissemination and outreach with the administrative support of GRADE permanent staff. In other words, every researcher sets out and develops her or his own research agenda. The sum of these individual agendas constitutes the academic production and economic support of the institution. In this sense, the unifying principle of this “archipelago” of independent researchers is not an institutional research program, but rather the high quality standards of the studies.

* This study is based on secondary information (institutional reports), primary information processing (statistics from the communication, accounting and library areas), and interviews to GRADE’s General Manager and three principal researchers.

19 This study is based on secondary information (institutional reports), primary information processing (statistics from the researchers communication, accounting and library areas), and interviews to GRADE’s General Manager and three principal.

20 The Global Go To Think Tank Index Report 2011.

21 Encuestas del Poder (Power Surveys), 2010-2012.

22 Students usually start as practitioners and ascend in positions, according to their merits, to become research assistants, and then assistant researchers; at this point, most of the junior researchers move abroad to pursue their graduate studies. Upon arriving once again in Peru, many return to GRADE as co-researchers, associate researchers and eventually lead researchers.

This organizational system, which worked very well for 25 years, suffers from two problems inherent in the model. On the one hand, in the absence of a single institutional research program to guide the activities of researchers, the system lost the opportunity to generate synergies between the activities, and there arose the risk that GRADE's academic production not be entirely coherent²³ Also, the fact that the sustenance of the institution depended almost exclusively on the execution of studies and reports for specific clients (*i.e.* the State, international cooperation and the private sector) meant that there were neither the funds nor the time available to deepen such research and produce all the publications that could be derived from the knowledge generated, and less so to finance an institutional program which would expand the themes and topics dealt with in each field of research.

By 2010, the administrative and logistical support of this system was nearing its operational limits, with excessive dependence on the General Manager, a small management team and an inefficient IT infrastructure. This, coupled with the predominance of relatively small projects, made it difficult to expand institutional production.

The existing organizational model, despite having produced excellent results in previous years, limited GRADE's ability to propose and develop new topics relevant to the public policy debate in the country and the region. In fact, this model was, in itself, the main obstacle to breaking the institutional dynamics described, which, albeit having been successful, still suffered from inertia.

In this context, it was necessary to carry out an intervention that would break with the dynamics of dependence on individual projects and generate the necessary spaces and funding to address the structural problems mentioned. This is what the TTI program meant for GRADE.

2. GRADE and TTI

From 2011 to 2018, GRADE implemented a series of activities fostered and funded by TTI, which were aimed at strengthening three fundamental institutional aspects: a) research capacities; b) advocacy, communication and dissemination of results; and c) organizational and administrative performance. As will be seen below, this operational design allowed the TTI intervention to effectively address the various problems outlined in the previous section.²⁴

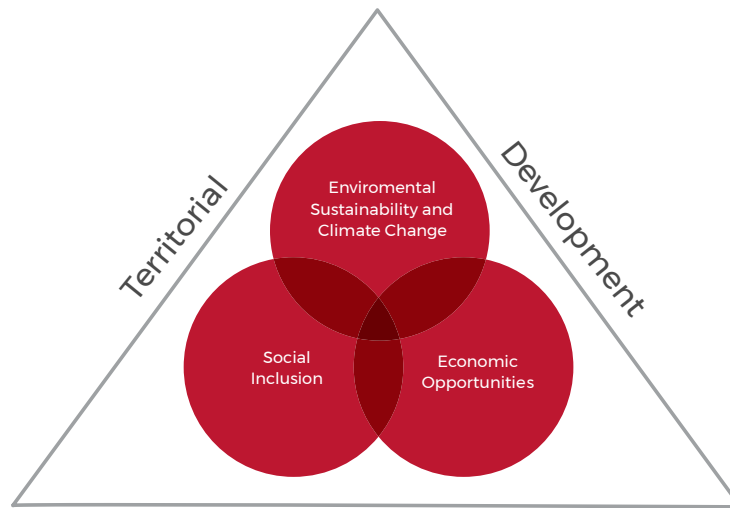
A. Research

Firstly, the TTI program encouraged GRADE to consolidate its academic production agenda under a unified conceptual framework, with three general thematic areas and a transversal approach based on territorial development (see Figure 1). This effort was not merely a theoretical exercise, but was GRADE's first attempt to generate an institutional research program.

23 GRADE has regular internal seminars of different formats, allowing the researchers to share their studies and receive feedback from peers. However, the realization of the projects is carried out independently by each researcher.

24 For the purposes of this document, only the specific activities most relevant to the TTI program's intervention shall be mentioned.

Figure 1. New conceptual framework for an institutional research agenda

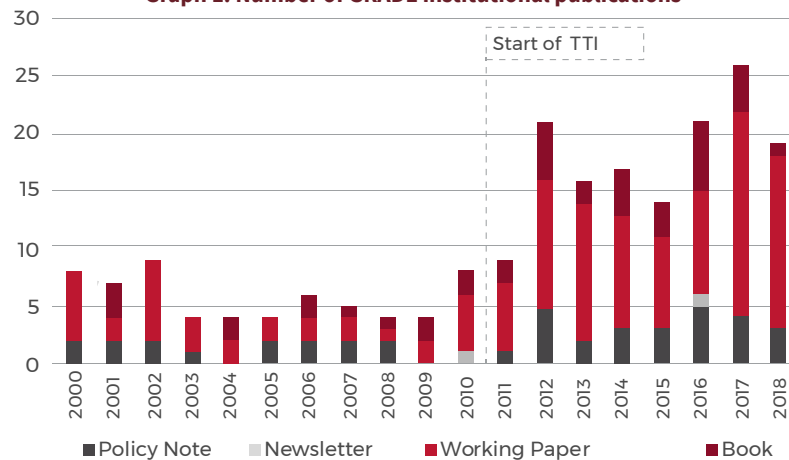


Source: GRADE.

The program was implemented immediately through a series of internal competitions for junior and senior researchers that, in addition to promoting the development of studies within the conceptual framework outlined above, prioritized interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers from different fields.

The results of this experience are noteworthy. Beyond having produced a harvest of 41 original papers — all presented,²⁵ and the vast majority published — the competitions allowed GRADE researchers to explore methodologies and topics that, although deeply relevant to development-oriented policies, often receive neither the attention nor the funds that they deserve. In this sense, much of the research carried out through these internal competitions not only served to generate new knowledge, but also allowed introducing new topics into the public policy debate, and positioning their researchers as experts in these areas.²⁶

Graph 1. Number of GRADE institutional publications



Source: Own preparation, based on GRADE data.

²⁵ The production of these competitions has been presented over 70 times at national and international conferences and seminars.

²⁶ The implementation of internal competitions had certain problems that are worth mentioning. The transversal notion of “territorial development” was perceived by several researchers as a “straitjacket” for the development of their research proposals, particularly because the concept was not entirely clear. Also, on several occasions the deadlines set for the submission of reports were not met, either because of problems of incompatibility with the time requirements of regular tasks (particularly in the case of junior researchers) or because of the absence of well-established pressure mechanisms (which are difficult to implement in a horizontal institution such as GRADE).

In other words, GRADE strengthened its capacity to take the initiative and enhance its role as a central actor in these spheres, both nationally and internationally. Graph 1, which shows the evolution of institutional publications, clearly illustrates the magnitude of the impact relating to the activities described.

In parallel to these internal processes, being part of TTI gave GRADE the possibility of initiating collaborative projects with other institutions that were part of the think tank network formed by this initiative. Access to this network allowed GRADE to increase its participation in various international forums, such as ILAIPP, having hosted its Regional Conference in 2016. GRADE was also able to implement inter-institutional collaborative projects thanks to the funding provided by the Opportunity Fund, both nationally (see Box 1) and internationally (see Section 3 of this chapter).

Box 1. The Sofía Group

Early in 2014, a group of women researchers from four Peruvian academic institutions (*i.e.* Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP), Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE), Centro de Investigación Sociológica, Económica, Política y Antropológica (CISEPA) of Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, and Centro de Investigación de la Universidad del Pacífico del Perú (CIUP), decided to establish Grupo Impulsor de las Mujeres en las Ciencias Sociales Peruanas (Peruvian Social Sciences Women's Promotion Group), a group that sought to make evident, promote and consolidate the contribution of women professionals in social sciences in the academic and media spheres.

For this purpose, Opportunity Fund start-up funds were obtained and channeled through IEP (a member of TTI), allowing the generation of the first organizational structure of the group. These funds allowed the group to define its mission and institutional objectives, and to produce the book *Bajo el Radar de Sofía. Oportunidades y Barreras de las Profesionales en el Perú*, the research of which contributed to positioning the problems of gender dynamics in the Peruvian academia and raised the need to take measures to close the opportunities gaps faced by Peruvian women professionals in the social sciences.

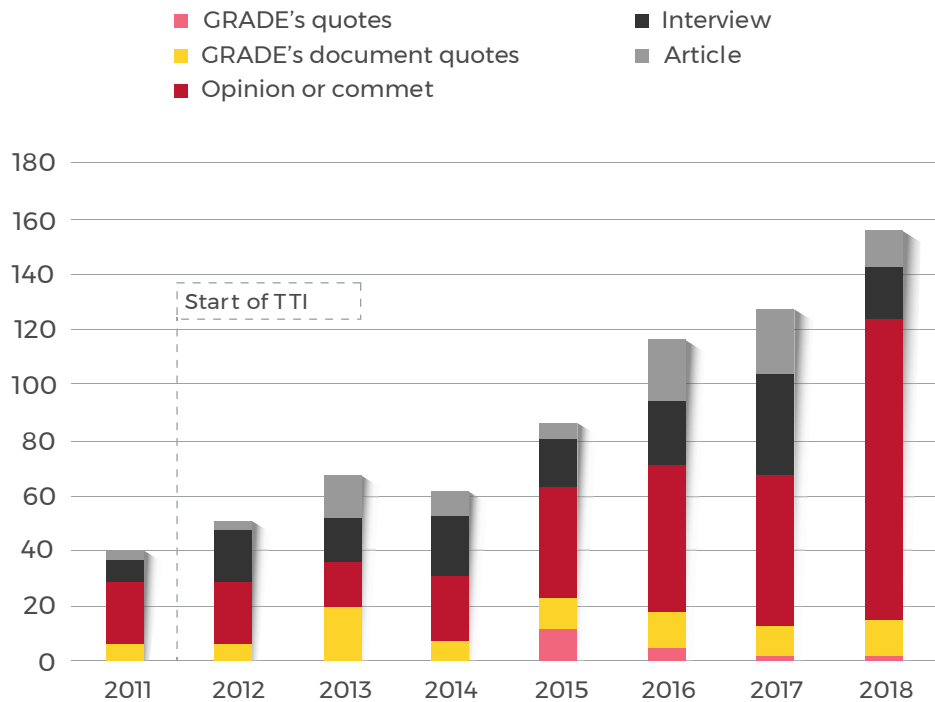
Given the good acceptance of these results, the group, now renamed Grupo Sofía, accessed a second round of funding from Opportunity Fund, this time through GRADE. In this stage, which began in 2016, Grupo Sofía strengthened its communication infrastructure (through its website and social networks), established Red Sofía – Sofía Network – (with Peruvian women researchers, Amigos de Sofía and strategic allies), diversified its research agenda (generating primary evidence) and ran a media campaign (Las mujeres saben) which had a great impact.

Currently, the results of this work — which constitutes GRADE's first effort to actively engage in gender issues — can be seen directly in changes in attitudes in relation to the issue in Peruvian academic circles and, more visibly, in the recomposing of the actors involved in public or media panels, which now tend to routinely include more women.

B. Communication

The increase in the quantity and variety of GRADE's academic production was accompanied, from the outset, by another of the key elements of TTI's intervention: the implementation of a communication area within the institution. This area was not only responsible for widely disseminating the institution's publications, but it also efficiently managed the appearance of GRADE researchers in the media, thus helping to consolidate GRADE's individual and institutional positioning on various topics (see Graph 2).

Graph 2. Number of GRADE media appearances



Source: Own preparation, based on GRADE data.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 1, GRADE’s communication unit was fundamental for boosting the institution’s presence in digital channels and social networks, allowing to significantly expand the outreach of its academic production.

Table 1. Presence of GRADE in digital channels	
Indicator	2018 (number)
www.grade.org.pe, visits	718,754 (472,140 in 2012)
www.grade.org.pe, downloads	622,047
YouTube, views	124,985 (since 09/2011)
Facebook, new “likes”	3,523 (of a total of 23,773)
Twitter, new followers	2,753 (out of 11,352)
Scopus, quotes	2,563
Web of Science, quotes	1,762

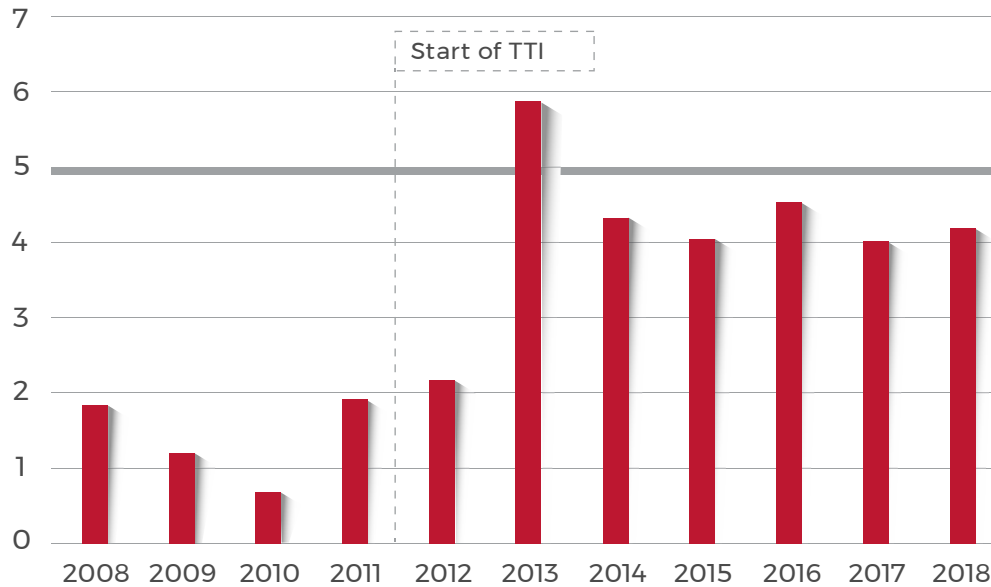
Source: Own preparation, based on GRADE data.

It is clear that these results are the product of a virtuous cycle promoted by the TTI program: the improvement of the volume and diversity of GRADE’s academic production generates a critical mass of material that can be properly disseminated by the new communication unit. This increases the interest of the general public, and development policy stakeholders in particular, creating new research opportunities. This mechanism not only consolidated GRADE’s institutional position and the professional prestige of its researchers, but also favored the impact of its research and policy recommendations.

C. Administration

From 2008 to 2011, GRADE's average annual income generated by its projects was less than US\$ 1.5 million. From 2012 to 2018, after TTI intervention, this revenue rose to over US\$ 4 million per year (see Graph 3). In the same periods, the average worth of projects obtained by GRADE went from US\$ 65,000 to US\$ 170,000.

Graph 3. Annual GRADE income from projects (in US\$ millions)



Source: Own preparation, based on GRADE data.

Note: The value of projects was apportioned evenly over the years of implementation.

Although it can be argued that the positive feedback of GRADE's new academic production and its dissemination in forums and communication channels of all kinds served as the basis for this qualitative and quantitative leap in the institution's income, it is certainly a fact that none of this would have been possible without the organizational strengthening fostered by TTI, particularly in the sphere of project administration and management.

The modernization of GRADE's management, which began in 2011, was implemented mainly through new investment, both in specialized staff (particularly in the areas of administration, accounting and IT), and in the substantive improvement of the IT infrastructure of institutional management. This strengthening of the areas of administrative support allowed a restructuring and a decentralization of responsibilities, which made it possible, on the one hand, to achieve greater efficiency in project management, and on the other hand, to free up the operational burden of the General Management — which was henceforth able to concentrate its efforts on the matters of institutional planning and prospects. Similarly, as a result of this restructuring, researchers received greater support in managing projects and preparing proposals, which created spaces to improve the management of research agendas.

The results of this restructuring are clearly visible: not only was it possible to substantially increase the number and average size of projects procured by GRADE (without this leading to a management crisis), but it was also possible to take on projects of unprecedented size (e.g. Fortalecimiento de la Gestión de la Educación en el Perú (Strengthening of Education Management in Peru – FORGE), a US\$ 15 million project funded by the Canadian government), without the need to set up an independent administrative system to manage these projects.

These achievements were achieved in a context in which international cooperation funds — which were a regular source of funding for GRADE — were drastically reduced in Peru. This is an indication of how timely and effective the TTI intervention was in strengthening GRADE’s organizational structure.

In short, it is possible to argue that the structure of the TTI intervention — strengthening institutional research, communication and administration — generated a virtuous cycle in which each component complemented the others to facilitate the organizational strengthening of GRADE.

Although there are several specific examples of this effect in the different research areas of the institution, perhaps the clearest case of success is that observed in the field of urban development and sustainable cities described below.

3. Success case: Urban development and sustainable cities

In mid-2015, as part of the second competition for senior researchers of the TTI program, an interdisciplinary group of three researchers proposed to conduct a study focused on an area that had not previously been developed by GRADE, but which fit perfectly into the conceptual framework proposed for the new institutional research program developed as part of TTI: Urban development of new informal human settlements in Peruvian cities.

In fact, despite the fact that around 90% of the country’s urban expansion was informal,²⁷ this issue had long been ignored by the national academic community, at least since the late 1980s, when Peru was one of the main cases of research on the phenomenon of urban growth in the world. Moreover, the very fact that almost all of the expansion of cities was informal illustrated the lack of attention paid to this problem by the Peruvian State.

In this context, GRADE approved the implementation of the study, which would attempt to measure the quality of public investment in the neighborhoods concerned and find the determinants of such quality. At the beginning of the research, however, the authors were forced to develop the operational definitions of “urban”, “informal settlement”, “vulnerable settlement”, and even “urban public investment”, simply because the scarce literature on the subject in Peru did not provide a frame of reference. Once these conceptual gaps were filled, *ad hoc* methodologies were created to make the relevant estimates. Finally, it was concluded that approximately 50% of public investment in the field of study corresponded to low-priority infrastructure, and that this resource allocation problem was being caused by the system of political and economic incentives that governed state interventions at the local level of Peruvian cities.

These and other results were published in mid-2017 in the book ***Inversión sin Planificación: la Calidad de la Inversión Pública en los Barrios Vulnerables de Lima***, which constituted GRADE’s presentation reference in the field of urban development. The effect of the publication, which was profusely disseminated by the communication unit, was immediate: not only the results of the research, presented on multiple occasions, were very well received by stakeholders in the field, but GRADE also began to receive requests from the public sector, international cooperation and the private sector to carry out research related to the subject.

27 Estimate made by GRADE.

Firstly, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Peru (PCM) requested that GRADE develop a national typology of districts based, to a large extent, on the definitions set out in the aforementioned book. This typology (see Figure 2), which included a series of indicators of economic opportunities and social inclusion for cities and rural areas, served as a reference framework for national policies to strengthen local governments and to focus policies promoting development.

Similarly, the Ministry of Housing of Peru, the governing body of urban development in the country, requested that GRADE adapt and automate the investment prioritization methodology developed in *Inversión sin planificación*, based on territorial analysis algorithms, in order to incorporate this tool into its official local territorial planning manuals. The software tool developed by GRADE (see Figure 3) has been approved and incorporated into the corresponding manual.

Figure 2. Typology of districts for the PCM

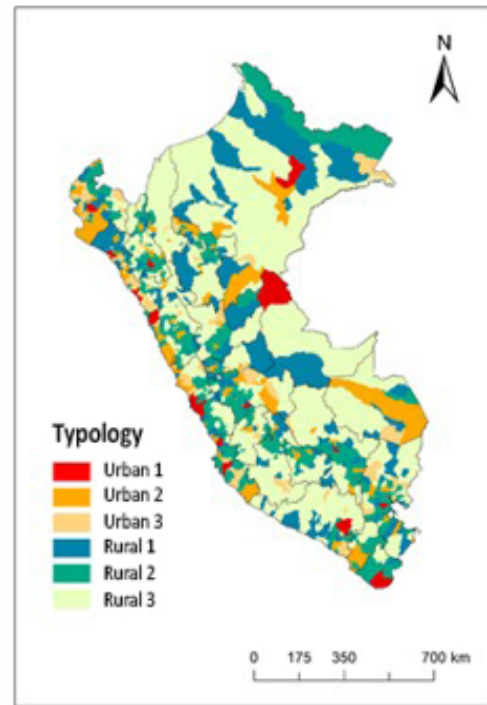


Figure 3. Investment prioritization tool (roads)



Also, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, aware of GRADE's new work, facilitated contact with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to explore the possibility of applying territorial analyses aimed at improving the low level of urban municipal property tax collection, a problem that represented a serious limitation for the management and investment capacities of local governments in the country. From this interaction emerged a project funded by the IDB that allowed developing technological and IT tools (including the collection of geographic information with drones and its processing through neural networks and deep learning techniques) to build and update high precision, low cost urban land registries in few weeks. Currently, the municipality of Huancayo, a city with a population of half a million in the Peruvian Andes, uses this tool both to improve its collection system and to optimize its urban planning systems. In addition, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance is considering carrying out, together with GRADE, a series of pilot tests in other intermediate cities of the country in order to further consolidate the described tool.

On its part, the Association of Real Estate Developers of Peru, the union group of companies that undertake the formal qualification of new developments, recently commissioned GRADE to prepare the first study, at the national level, to measure and characterize the country's urban expansion. This study, which is currently in full implementation, has quantified the creation of new urban land in 43 cities in Peru (all those with a population of more than 50,000) from 2000 to 2018. The study also identifies the different types of urbanizations or settlements (formal and informal) that make up this process, based on the analysis of satellite images and the application of focus groups and field surveys. The final product of this work — a well-defined and quantified typology of urban expansion in Peru — will allow, for the first time, to have a unified analytical framework revealing how the cities in the country grow, thus facilitating the creation of policies that respond to consistent and complete evidence.

In parallel to all of the above, at the beginning of 2016, GRADE's team responsible for implementing the initial project (Inversión sin Planificación) successfully applied to TTI's Opportunity Fund. The proposed interdisciplinary project that sought to identify, through a comparative study between Lima, Peru and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the factors that determine whether informal settlements have "rational" urban plots or not; that is, it sought to identify whether there was enough land reserved for common use, such as streets and parks. GRADE partnered with Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) of Tanzania, a member of the TTI network of institutions. As a result of this joint research, GRADE developed and applied, in both countries, a prototype of a mobile application (Lotizer) that allows generating detailed plans of lots for any specific plot before it is urbanized. According to field tests, this simple, free tool, could be key to creating local markets for "planned informal human settlements", which would reduce the multiple problems related to the urban disorder typical of these neighborhoods.

As can be seen, the intervention of the TTI program triggered an institutional process that not only allowed GRADE to expand its research agenda to a totally new area, but also positioned it as a leading institution in the field of urban development at the national level, generating new knowledge and, above all, greater awareness among relevant stakeholders on the potential of research applied in this field. Moreover, the project funded by Opportunity Fund gave GRADE international visibility and enabled it to establish relationships with like-minded entities such as, in addition to ESRF, the Marron Institute of Urban Management of New York University and the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts of the University of Chicago.

Finally, beyond the positioning and recognition achieved in such a short time, the intervention of TTI has allowed the consolidation, within GRADE, of a multidisciplinary team of professionals dedicated to urban development research, made up of economists, architects, geographers, IT engineers, and psychologists. This group, which has been actively collaborating with other researchers within GRADE, already has its own applied research agenda, focused on the development of low-cost technological tools and solutions to help address urban development problems (especially informal ones), not only in Peru, but also throughout the Global South, actively promoting South-South cooperation.

4. Challenges ahead: sustainability

As we have seen in the previous pages, the intervention of the TTI program has generated clear and significant results in the internal functioning, academic production and external advocacy of GRADE. This, however, does not mean that the institutional strengthening process described has not experienced implementation problems that, if not corrected, could compromise the sustainability of the achievements attained.

With regards to the administrative restructuring and the communication unit, described in Section 2 of this document, the risks are less, as the growth in GRADE organic production makes it possible, in principle, to ensure its continuity in the coming years. On the other hand, the promotion and funding of the institutional research program does present certain vulnerabilities.

Initially, the sustainability of the research program, developed under the auspices of the TTI program, was based on the implementation of a general coordinator and a structure made up of thematic coordinators in charge of promoting and supervising each of the three research axes proposed in the new conceptual framework (see Figure 1). This minimal structure, made up of GRADE researchers, would also have the responsibility of facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations within the institution and generating research projects of greater size and scope.

This proposed structure, however, failed to generate consensus within the institution. Hence it was only partially implemented for a limited period of time. Also, GRADE does not yet generate sufficient surplus funds that can be used to fund its own academic production, in line with the internal competitions sponsored by TTI. Therefore, the institutional research program has not achieved the continuity originally envisaged, implying that progress in this area risks being an isolated fact facilitated by a specific and isolated intervention.

This is where the new Project and Course Management Unit (UGPC) comes into play, a new area within GRADE that began operations in March 2019.²⁸ The UGPC is GRADE's response to sustain, in time, the relative "institutional independence" achieved in relation to individual projects generated by its researchers. In other words, this unit will have to generate funds equivalent to, and possibly greater than those provided by TTI in recent years, in addition to promoting the generation of projects that are substantial in terms of time and financially.

In formal terms, the aim of the UGPC is to expand GRADE's scope of action in a sustainable way, without sacrificing its technical rigor and independence. To this end, the unit will perform four complementary functions: a) to facilitate coordination among the various researchers to develop proposals and implement projects of greater magnitude and time horizons, b) to develop proposals and execute research projects and consultancies that usually escape the interest or expertise of GRADE researchers, c) to provide logistical support to researchers for the preparation of proposals, and d) to design, promote and implement a program of short and diploma courses, with the participation of permanent staff researchers, as well as external experts.

Although in recent years GRADE has made progress in points (c) and (d), it will be with the installation of this unit that the institutional strengthening process, initiated with the support of TTI eight years ago, will be completed. If the objectives are achieved, the UGPC will be able to become a model of institutional restructuring that will allow providing sustainability to the processes outlined above, without compromising academic independence and preserving the original nature and spirit of the organization.

5. Conclusions

GRADE's case clearly illustrates the profound impact that institutional core funding can have. Although prior to TTI's intervention GRADE was already a well-established and respected organization, the institutional dynamics for resource generation and academic production presented certain intrinsic design flaws, which limited its impact capacity, and created dependence on individual projects and the relative isolation of different researchers and areas.

In this context, only an intervention able to escape from these workings; that is, the logic of funding by project, could generate the necessary spaces to develop a strategy to relaunch GRADE from an institutional perspective. TTI not only allowed the creation of such spheres, but through the very design of its intervention, it helped to reconfigure and generate synergies in the three pillars of a stronger, more sustainable and independent institution, the pillars of which were research, communication and administrative organization.

28 The approved budget for the installation and operation of this unit will ensure its sustainability for the first 18 months. It is estimated that this unit will achieve self-sustainability before the end of the mentioned period.

For this reason, it is no coincidence that seven years after the start of the TTI program, GRADE has not only consolidated itself as the most influential think tank in the country,²⁹ but has also ascended in position to rank as the 17th best research center in Latin America, and 29th and 30th in terms of social policies and multidisciplinary research in the world, respectively.³⁰

29 Encuesta del Poder, 2018.

30 The Global Go To Think Tank Index Report 2017.

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CHAPTER FOUR

A Lifeline: TTI, the Opportunity for Sustainability and Growth

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1 Introduction

The objective of this research is to present, under the case studies methodology, the transformations undergone by Grupo FARO from 2010 to 2019 as a result of the institution's participation in the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) program.

The realization of the study was based on the collection of primary information through semi-structured interviews with specific key actors and through the reviewing of secondary information (institutional reports and documents, among others). Annex 1 presents these information sources in detail.

TTI is a program of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which since 2008 has been dedicated to “strengthening independent policy research institutions, or think tanks, in developing countries.” This work is carried out with the provision of core funding which is not predetermined,³¹ and capacity development, with the support of experts (Think Tank Initiative, n.d.a³²).

This support sought to promote the sustainability of institutions in the long-term, focusing on strengthening three areas: research quality, communication and advocacy capacities in public policies, and organizational performance (Think Tank Initiative, n.d.a). Grupo FARO received funding and support from TTI, in a first phase from 2010 to 2014, and in a second and final phase from 2014 to 2018.

2. About Grupo FARO and its participation in TTI

Grupo FARO came into being in Ecuador in December 2004 as a civil society organization, impelled by a group of twelve young Ecuadorians; it was created as an independent, nonpartisan, plural, and secular thinking center, which initially focused its efforts on strengthening the State.

The initial mission of Grupo FARO was:

“To support the active participation of civil society, the business sector and public institutions in the proposal, implementation and monitoring of local, national and international public policies, in order to achieve a more efficient, equitable, inclusive, and democratic Ecuadorian State, through plural dialogue, research, citizens’ action and interaction with global networks aimed at promoting the public good.” (Grupo FARO, 2010)

This mission was in response to a context of political and institutional instability in the country. From 1997 to 2006, Ecuador had seven Presidents, most of whom were ousted from office by popular demonstrations. This made impossible both long-term planning and government management focused on implementing evidence-based public policies. In turn, this context generated serious political fragmentation and left little room for public reflection on the impact of political decisions.

31 Core funding is flexible financial support which is not tied to specific projects, thus allowing organizations to determine their priorities and sustain their organizational strengthening, funding institutional processes.

32 Core funding is important for think tanks because it contributes to their ability to produce more research of better quality, while improving their advocacy capacity and strengthening their management. However, donors face increasing difficulties in offering this type of grant, due to pressure from their financiers to demonstrate direct results, in the short term, for immediate and specific problems (Think Tank Initiative, 2017). For this reason, despite recognition of the importance of core funding, “(...) relatively few entities can commit to this type of support, and not all those who do so are interested in supporting think tanks” (Lah, n.d.).

Between 2004 and 2008, before receiving TTI support, the organization maintained a clear mission, but lacked precision on the means to drive it. The youth of its founders, coupled with the fact that all of them were just beginning their careers, made it difficult to mobilize social or institutional capital (Mendizábal, 2012). To overcome these difficulties, Grupo FARO involved recognized national and international experts to form an Academic Advisory Board.

With this strategy, the organization opened up several doors and ensured the implementation of some projects, but failed to resolve sustainability issues. During its early years, the organization had no alternative but to finance itself on the basis of separate projects, mostly aligned with the organizational mission. According to Orazio Bellettini, this “hyperprojectism generated dispersed workings of teams and human talent disconnected from each other, which appeared and disappeared according to the period of implementation of each project.□ As a result of this, the organization had a short-term vision, limited to the few sectors in which projects were developed, and lacked the financial capacity to manage its processes, enhance growth and achieve consolidation. Grupo FARO also remained a personalistic organization, highly dependent on the Executive Director and founder of the organization, and failed to conceive and pursue its own agenda.

In 2007, Ecuador underwent a major change of government: the beginning of Rafael Correa’s ten-year term, and the start of major change in the institutional political context. Once the new government was instated, there was a break in the years of political instability. A different view of the State was also established. While there was a greater openness towards the use of evidence in the design of public policies, a discourse was established that positioned the State sector as self-sufficient. Under this new vision, the State would strengthen itself without the need to interact with other sectors. In a short time, the Ecuadorian State would not only turn its back on the other sectors (academia, the media, civil society, and the private sector), but would also promote sector-specific regulations, which ended up being confrontational and, in several respects, limiting.³³

This change of context coincided with the call for proposals of TTI and the application to the program by Grupo FARO. This required an initial effort to generate a first strategic plan, which took a turn and focused the efforts of Grupo FARO towards strengthening the public sphere, perceiving it as the space in which the State, civil society, the private sector, the media, academia, and the citizenry converge for debating public policies. Thus, the amended mission proposed:

“To influence public policies for building a more democratic, innovative, sustainable, and inclusive society, through research, informed dialogue and collective action” (Grupo FARO, 2014)

In this context, Grupo FARO became a beneficiary of TTI support and funding, proposing:

- In the first phase (2010-2014): “To achieve long-term sustainability of research quality, links to public policy production processes and performance as an independent policy research organization.” (IDRC, 2010)
- In the second phase (2014-2019): “To strengthen its role as a credible public policy institution in Ecuador, through the strengthening of its capacities to promote high-quality, influential and politically relevant research.” (IDRC, 2014)

33 The Higher Education Law proposed considerable reforms particularly focused on evaluating and assuring the quality of universities, making them focus inwards, leaving aside their role as a key voice in the discussion of public policies. On its part, the Communication Law proposed certain mechanisms for controlling, restricting and penalizing media entities, which ended up being managed by bodies with little independence, favoring self-censorship. Finally, the executive decrees, which created the legislation for civil society, a limited the sectors’ fields of action, explicitly restricting their participation in the spheres of public policy of a strategic nature for the State, making this participation a cause for the closure of organizations. High administrative burdens and complex legal requirements were also established (Arellano and Game, 2017).

3. Institutional transformation

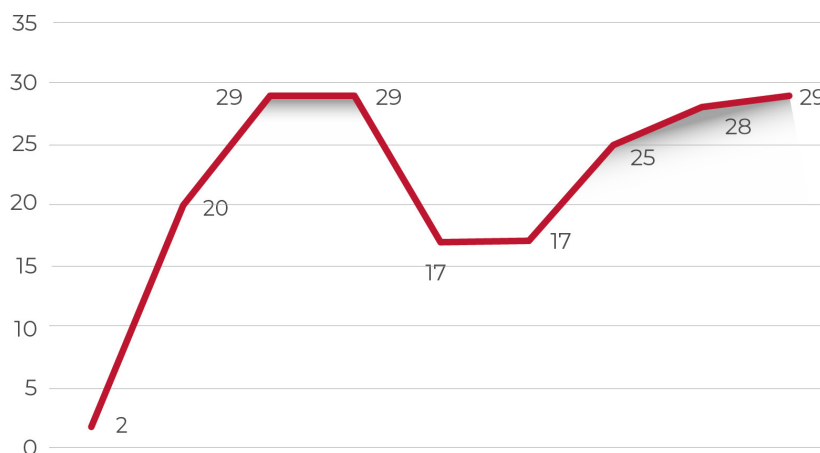
The support of the TTI program transformed Grupo FARO in several ways:

- It facilitated the construction of a long-term vision.
- It contributed to institutional professionalization.
- It contributed to strengthening governance.
- It provided support in the generation of greater capacities for advocacy and political activism.
- It increased the reputational value of Grupo FARO.
- It facilitated the development of capacities and relationships for network collaboration and work.
- It created a space for reflection on the role of civil society and think tanks in the production of knowledge and public policies.

Overall, this support allowed the organization to acquire the space necessary to build a strategic and long-term vision. This is what José Brunner (member of the Board of Directors of Grupo FARO for the past ten years) says: “The institutional funds [of TTI support] gave the institution a degree of flexibility in budgetary management, thus allowing a development strategy.”

The organization was not only able to grow and position itself in the long-term (working based on strategic planning, and building and pursuing its own research agenda), but was also able to conserve an inward perception and become strengthened. It was able to test and refine its procedures, techniques and policies. It was able to learn from experts and other think tanks from the region and the world in order to ultimately be able to put in place organizational public goods that would support management going forward (Orazio Bellettini). TTI gave Grupo FARO a strong boost and sustained operation, allowing it to contribute to the informed debate surrounding public policies in Ecuador. Three graphs are presented below: evolution of the number of employees, evolution of the organizational budget and evolution of the number of publications per year. These graphs allow visualizing the trajectory of the organization in the years of TTI support.

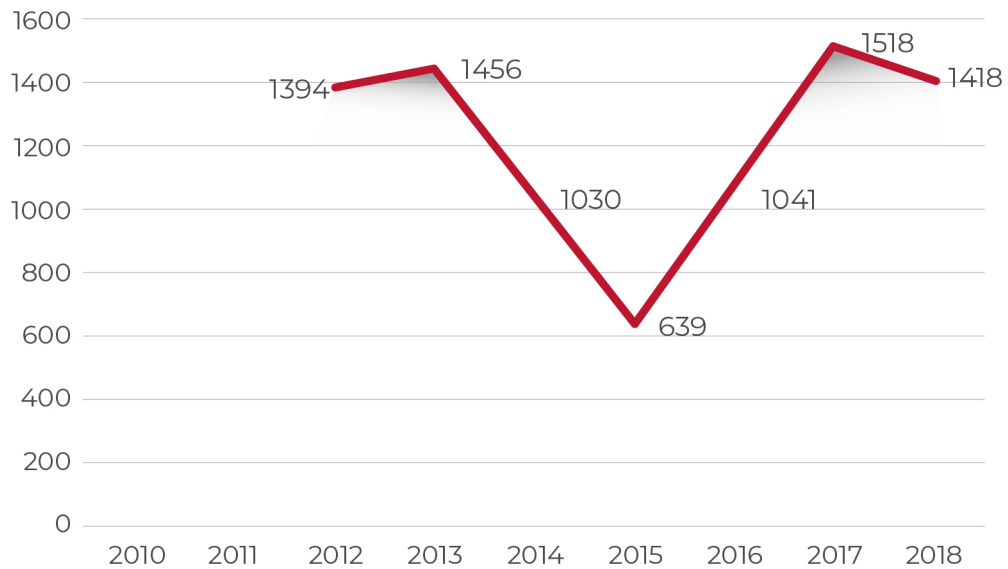
Graph 1. Evolution of the number of employees



Source: Own production, based on institutional indicators of Grupo FARO.

Note: The data correspond to information at the end of 2018, according to the records of the Ecuadorian Social Security Institute (i.e. reflect only contracts of dependent workers).

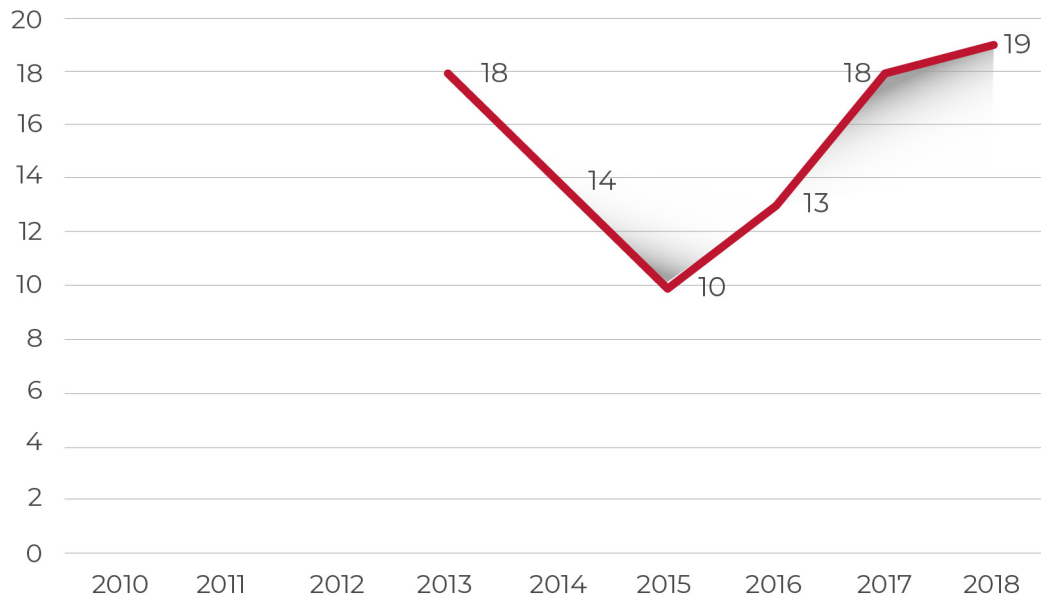
Graph 2. Evolution of the organizational budget (in thousands of US\$)



Source: Own production, based on institutional indicators of Grupo FARO.

Note: The data correspond to the annual budget, according to the audit reports. Data unavailable for 2010 and 2011.

Graph 3. Evolution of the number of publications per year



Source: Own production, based on institutional indicators of Grupo FARO.

Note: Data unavailable for 2010, 2011 and 2012.

In addition, the expansion of the priority areas for Grupo FARO allowed considering the growth of the organization in terms of its work capacity in different sectors. The organization began working with transparency and access to information, and currently focuses on education, democracy, transparency and active citizenry, impact assessment, research, and civil society.

Also, TTI's support placed the organization at the national, regional and international levels, "acting as an endorsement of sorts" (Tatiana Gudiño) that gave it visibility and recognition, helping it consolidate and allowing it to attract other funding from international cooperation. However, there are still significant challenges to the positioning of the organization. According to community surveys on public policies conducted by *Globescan* and TTI in 2013 and 2018, recognition of think tanks and the use of information produced by them in Ecuador are low compared to the other countries analyzed in the region. However, at the national level, thanks to the support of TTI, Grupo FARO managed to position itself as a civil society organization due to its proactiveness in responding to the political context, which required collective and strategic action by this type of organization. This has increased the advocacy and political activism capacities of the organization, and has allowed it to take the lead in the debate on the role and contribution of civil society to public policies and development (see box on the mini success case of public policy advocacy).

At the regional and international levels, TTI's support allowed Grupo FARO to build capacities and links for network collaboration and work, creating a brotherhood among Latin American centers supported by the Initiative (which resulted in the Latin American Initiative for Research for Public Policies, ILAIPP), and emphasizing the value of collaborative production of knowledge. During this period, the organization also achieved greater visibility in two rankings of high relevance in the world of think tanks: the *Global Go To Think Tank Report* and *Transparify* (see Annex 2).

Also, as stated by the Executive Director of Grupo FARO, from the outset, TTI made an important contribution in terms of "the priorities that guided the initiative (the three aspects on which the support focused were: organizational performance, research quality, and advocacy and communication capacities), which were established as crucial elements for the proper functioning and consolidation of the organization" (Ana Patricia Muñoz).

According to the interviewees, during the support of TTI, these three essential elements were transformed at different paces, but in accordance with the horizontal and transparent nature of the organization, through changes fostered, mostly in a participatory and informed way.

The following is a summary of the main transformations and improvements in each of these elements (see Annex 3).

Organizational performance

As mentioned above, at the start of the TTI program, Grupo FARO had limited capacity to create, sustain, manage, and improve its internal processes. TTI's support allowed the organization to "professionalize institutional management" (José Joaquín Brunner) at a key moment, not only for fomenting the maturity of the institution, but also in the face of a context that demanded it.³⁴

TTI's support facilitated the creation of a broader management and finance team. Subsequently, it also allowed institutional development (which was later transformed into monitoring and evaluation) and the development of human talent. From these areas, actions emerged to design and implement administrative and financial policies and processes: payment policies and processes, accounting system, recruitment, remuneration and incentive to human talent, improvement of the institutional environment, monitoring and evaluation, creation of contingency funds (to respond to

34 The regulations legislated for the civil society sector established strict management in the legal, labor, administrative and tax aspects, among others.

financial needs in cases of settlement of contracts with collaborators), and job stability (to support institutional processes not funded by projects), among others (Tobar, 2014). Currently, while some positions created in the two phases of TTI proved unsustainable once financial support was exhausted, the vast majority of processes, priorities and policies have been maintained, and were taken on by a structure that remains in place. However, there are certain priorities, such as knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation, on which the organization is still debating how best to continue advancing them, under the scheme of a more fine-tuned structure. (Ana Patricia Muñoz)

In parallel, TTI also allowed the strengthening and creation of collegiate spaces that helped strengthen the organization and depersonalize management, freeing the weight of the persona of the Executive Directorate and transferring key decisions to other spheres. In this way, a more empowered Board of Directors with a greater presence was created; an Executive Committee (space for deliberation and decision-making between directors and coordinators); a Project Approval Committee (sphere for the design and fine-tuning of new proposals, made up of key areas); a Crisis Committee (space for analysis and planning of actions for responding to internal and external crises, made up of areas relevant to the critical situation), and a Business Advisory Council (consultation sphere made up of entrepreneurs, which was created in order to establish a connection with the private sector and build a relationship allowing fund-raising in the future).

Also, near the end of the second phase, TTI support proved crucial to the transition of the position of Executive Director. After 14 years under the leadership of the Executive Director, TTI facilitated the empowerment of the Board of Directors, which promoted an open and transparent process, accompanied by key external advisers for the recruitment of a new Executive Director. This constitutes an important achievement considering the complexity of the transition processes that were facilitated, even more so given that the main founder of the organization left the entity. (José Joaquín Brunner)

Finally, in relation to the sustainability of the organization, in the second phase, efforts were made through the Business Advisory Council to establish relationships with the private sector, making it possible to mobilize resources from private business. This space has not yet managed to mobilize financial resources from the sector, but has allowed connecting the organization with several entrepreneurs. Consequently, one of these businesspersons joined the Board of Directors in the past year. Actions were also initiated for the establishment of an office of Grupo FARO in Panama, allowing work at the regional level in a less burdensome and less costly legal and administrative environment, for regional operations. However, given the global situation in the face of the *Panama Papers*, the organization has decided proceed without haste regarding the office in Panama. Also, at the end of TTI's support, the institution's business model was designed and sustainability alternatives were explored, such as the sale of consulting services and training.

Research quality

In order to understand the context in which these efforts are taking place, in addition to considering the youth factor of Grupo FARO as an organization, it is important to bear in mind that Ecuador has a young research “ecosystem”. Although reforms in higher education in recent years have prompted research in the country, there is still a scant culture in this field, scarce activity in the production of knowledge and insufficient financial, human and technological resources dedicated to this activity (Arellano, Castells and Bellettini, 2018). This makes it a challenge for the institution to involve and keep highly skilled researchers, because in addition to being few, Grupo FARO competes with demand for these profiles in the public sector and universities (Ordóñez, 2015).

Considering the improvement of research quality as a long-term effort, this purpose began with the creation of a position, of Research Director, focused on proposing and implementing policies and processes to improve the quality of research. This Directorate proposed transformations based on a reflection on four aspects: people, leadership, ethics, and continuous reflection on the impact of research on public policy (Ordóñez, 2015).

In this way, the advancement of the design of essential processes and guidelines was achieved for improving research quality (which were established in guides, manuals and policies, built mostly in a participative way). Incentives were also given to the development of the capacities of researchers with workshops, courses and financial support for realizing academic presentations and articles. Subsequently, this work was linked to the process of developing proposals. All this was possible thanks to the establishment of the Project Approval Committee, which functioned as a strategic space to design proposals aligned with the organization's mission and vision, and thanks to the creation of synergies and the strengthening of the institution (Arellano, 2014a). Key knowledge management processes were also carried out to build an institutional memory.

Within this element,³⁵ TTI also allowed the organization to set up its own research agenda, which although being complex at the outset, produced important initiatives, namely:

- Ecuador Será (Ecuador Will Be): It was held in 2011 to think about the future of the country around the topic of knowledge. It was repeated in 2012 with the theme of sustainability. The initiative proposed key debates and, in its second version, influenced the discussion of government public policies, positioning issues and proposals.
- Manabí Será (Manabí Will Be): initiative adapted to the methodology of Laboratories of the Future (of the Office of Foresight of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO), which proposed, in 2014, to think about the future of the province of Manabí. The initiative closed with a vision that proposed an innovative province based on its identity.
- MingaLibro (MingaBook): methodology created by Grupo FARO as an adaptation to writing retreats. Under the methodology, the co-creation of knowledge has been proposed with the participation of diverse actors. In its first version, in 2016, it had the purpose of reflecting on the challenges of education in Ecuador; in its second version, in 2018, it sought to deliberate on participation and democracy.
- Reflection on the production of knowledge, the role of think tanks, the second mode of production of knowledge,³⁶ and the contribution of civil society to development. As part of this reflection, the organization proposed the platform “Más Conocimiento” (More Knowledge), which sought to give concrete expression to the findings of the research titled “Más Saber América Latina: Vínculos Entre Think Tanks y Universidades”, uniting researchers, thinking centers and universities with each other. This research (funded by IDRC) “has meant a new line of social studies on the generation and use of knowledge and the specific role played by thought centers in each country, and it has meant an important contribution to the discussion, which has been relevant in the region” (José Joaquín Brunner). While the platform “Más Conocimiento” is no longer active, the lessons and findings of the study “Más Conocimiento” laid the foundation for the design and implementation of the project “UnOS: Vinculación de Universidades y Sociedad Civil”³⁷ (supported by the European Union), which focuses on the ecosystem of knowledge production applied to policies in Ecuador, proposing a linking platform.

Currently, while maintaining a research directorate is unsustainable, TTI support and capacity building for impact assessment at the end of the initiative created opportunities for establishing an impact assessment area, which has taken on the institutional role of ensuring research quality.

35 See www.masconocimiento.org

36 Method of production of knowledge that proposes the generation of knowledge in a way that is more horizontal, interdisciplinary, transversal, and related to the needs of the community (Gibbons et al., 1994).

37 <http://www.unos.ec/plataforma-de-vinculacion/>

Advocacy and communication capacities

The process of strengthening these capacities took place in a complex context, in which the State put forward restrictive regulations on civil society, and closed the spaces for its participation in public politics (see mini success case box). Moreover, in 2012, the organization faced a crisis when the government questioned the independence of Grupo FARO, as well as its support for civil society organizations, judging that the group sought to destabilize democracy. In this context, and in times of crisis such as the one mentioned, TTI's support allowed the organization to strengthen its capacities, obtain external advice, focus its efforts on containing the crisis, and keep everything afloat. TTI was thus a *lifeline*³⁸ or “a kind of lifesaver that the organization had.” (José Joaquín Brunner)

With the support of TTI, the organization formed an area of communication and advocacy under which internal and external communication policies were designed, as well as a communication strategy, various mechanisms (such as the Hablemos de FARO [Let's Talk about FARO] space and institutional bulletins) and certain analyses of perception of the organization, among other efforts to improve communication capacities. The organization also improved its advocacy, implementing training in spokespersons and promoting the internal use of tools such as mapping actors, analysis of the do no harm approach and the construction of message boxes.

With the end of TTI, the structures proposed in communication and advocacy were rethought to be sustained solely with project funding. At present, the area of communication remains as a cross-cutting area focused on communication and advocacy (Annex 4 presents graphically, in a timeline, the main transformations of the context and the organization).

Mini success case of advocacy in public policies: Collective action for the survival and strengthening of Ecuadorian civil society

In Ecuador, under the administration of President Rafael Correa, the political context became adverse to civil society. This sector, which, by its nature, had always encountered difficulties (owing to dependence on unsustainable sources of income, informality and scarcity of resources), faced an increasingly complex context from 2008 onward. The Presidency of the Republic issued, in 2008, an Executive Decree (No. 982), which restricted the participation of the sector in public deliberation processes that were considered strategic to the State. It also limited organizations' right to defend themselves, and furthermore imposed legal requirements that were difficult to comply with, given the informality and fragility of the sector's institutions. Years later, the Ecuadorian State, on the basis of these regulations, initiated actions to close down some civil society organizations.

In response to this situation, and under a process of shared leadership, several civil society organizations, including Grupo FARO, promoted various actions. Firstly, a legal analysis of the regulations was carried out to initiate an informed dialogue within the sector, with the aim of generating alternative proposals for the State. Collective accountability was also requested in order to make the sector more transparent and to allow the creation, in 2013, of the Ecuadorian Confederation of Civil Society Organizations (CEOSC). CEOSC is currently a collective entity with more than 100 organizations which focuses on the debate relating to the roles of civil society organizations, their contributions to the citizenry, and their strengthening (Think Tank Initiative, n.d.b).

In this process, Grupo FARO played a key role, taking on the Chairmanship of CEOSC during several periods, organizing meetings, giving follow-up to the agreements, and presenting project proposals for CEOSC to various donors. In short, Grupo FARO led and promoted the necessary conditions for the collective organization to progress in its goals and to build a shared story for civil society. Moreover, Grupo FARO was the organization

38 A lifeline is an anchorage system. In the sports field, it is the scaling up that protects athletes from falling.

that led an alternative narrative to that of the State, with the latter having established that the public sphere was of exclusive interest and participation of the State. The organization strategically disseminated the idea that the public sphere belongs to everyone, and that greater State involvement should not supersede civil society participation. In this way, the need for an active civil society for the development of democracy was made visible.

These actions of political activism and strategic advocacy arose thanks to the advocacy capacities in public policy developed within Grupo FARO, with the support of TTI. They are also due to the time proffered and the dedication of the organization's human resources to contribute to this reflection and action.

Since then, through CEOESC, and with the support of several projects that Grupo FARO worked jointly on to strengthen civil society, four processes of collective accountability have been carried out. Actions were implemented for strengthening and developing capacities of the sector, promoting associativity, generating spaces for dialogue and establishing actions for advocacy, and building an enabling environment for Ecuadorian civil society. In stages, different legislative decrees were dealt with (No. 16, No. 179, No. 193). In relation to these decrees, progressive contributions were achieved for modifying limiting elements regarding the rights and autonomy of the sector.

To date, progress has been made towards a bill for the sector that includes a model of public-social alliances (to foster collaboration between the State and civil society on the provision of public services). An advocacy process has also been requested in the National Assembly during the debate on this law. At the moment, the law – Law of Non-Profit Organizations – is pending a second and final debate; it contemplates several measures that the sector deems necessary, such as simplification of procedures and of the registration process, independence of processes and strengthening the sector.

It is hoped that during the current year this law will be passed in the plenary of the National Assembly, constituting an important victory for civil society. There is still a difficult road ahead for implementing the law in order to achieve an enabling environment in civil society. For its part, aside from the adoption of the law, CEOESC faces important challenges for a transition to new leadership, growth, sustainability, and overcoming a rationale of subsistence (Juan Redrobán).

Although the story has not concluded, the establishment of CEOESC – recently legalized – and the advanced process for the approval of a different law can be presented as a success case regarding impact on public policies for Grupo FARO. Now this organization has the leadership needed to employ evidence in promoting dialogue and designing public policies, promoting strategic and collective action to overcome critical times, and promoting the implementation of efforts to strengthen and make the sector visible.

4. Pending improvements and lessons learned

Despite the fact that TTI proposed a dynamic of organizational strengthening in various aspects, at Grupo FARO it is possible to identify at least three important areas for improvement following the closure of the program: financial sustainability, retention of developed capacities and promotion of gender equity.

Regarding financial sustainability, while TTI defined it as an explicit objective in its first phase, a combination of context factors and aspects of implementation of the initiative resulted in this issue remaining pending. From a context perspective, “the absence of a culture of philanthropy and a hyperprivate society in Ecuador, with citizens who participate and engage little, and businesses concentrated on themselves” (Orazio Bellettini) meant that efforts to raise funds from the private sector did not advance as expected.

Also, although TTI proposed spaces for reflection and capacity building related to sustainability (especially towards the end of its second phase), this may have proved insufficient, and at the eleventh hour. TTI, due to its dynamics, generated an illusion of abundance of resources, which prompted organizational growth towards expanded structures, and diverted attention from centers whose urgency made necessary the exploration and construction of workings favoring sustainability. Thus, the closure of the program involved a double challenge, given the end of financial support coupled with the need to rethink under more fine-tuned structures in such a way as to not neglect key processes. It is likely that attention to sustainability should have been considered as a fourth priority — separate from organizational performance — so that, from the outset, the centers could receive expert advice, proposing specific actions and experimenting with different sustainability models.

The second aspect, which concerns the retention of the capacities developed under TTI, is a matter that has been constantly under discussion in Grupo FARO, given the high turnover rates that the organization has always faced. This is a structural problem for civil society and the incipient Ecuadorian research ecosystem. Although efforts and mechanisms were implemented to ensure that part of the capacities would reach the teams and the institution,³⁹ much of the knowledge generated remained in the individuals and could not be fully exploited. In this sense, a lesson learned is the need to promote capacity development schemes through technical assistance and expert accompaniment processes focusing on change projects aimed at teams, rather than individual training processes.

Finally, regarding the promotion of gender equity, the organization made little progress. Although the institution does not have gender-inequitable practices, it does not have explicit gender policies. Notwithstanding the fact that TTI, particularly in its final phase, promoted a discussion on the subject, Grupo FARO did not develop capacities or propose reforms of policies, processes or procedures contemplating a gender approach. The sole exception was related to the growth of the Board of Directors, within which a gender diversity policy was actively fostered for its members. The lesson learned is therefore the urgent need for a more direct intervention of the program, with specific guidelines on the progress required in the institutions on matters of gender equity.

5. Challenges

Towards the end of phase 2 of TTI, the organization faced the challenge of reinvention, both due to the end of institutional support — which supported a broad structure, giving the organization the opportunity to think in the long-term — and because of the change of Executive Director and the shift towards a new mission: “We are a research and action center that influences public policy and promotes practices for social transformation and innovation” (Vaca and Romero, 2017a). There also exists the possibility of responding to the context of the new government, which is more open to collaborating with civil society, although it has not yet stated a clear tone for its administration.

Faced with this reality, the fundamental challenge for Grupo FARO is to grow on what has been consolidated and find the flexibility and impetus needed to work under different organizational, sustainability and functioning schemes; all this while at the same time staying the course and conserving the essence; without failing to influence key issues for the country, the region and those on which the work has been consolidate;⁴⁰ without becoming subjugated to the inertia of “projectism”, which once again lurks, given the lack of institutional support funds.

In this sense, the main challenges for Grupo FARO going forward are:

39 Among them: the signing of agreements for the transmission and conservation of knowledge within the organization after training received; the provision of short workshops with the learning obtained; and the implementation of practical projects of organizational change that applied the learning.

40 Access to information, citizen participation, transparency in public management, and democracy.

- To work on capitalizing on the reputational value built in the region and the world, in order to enable cooperation projects and realize efforts to achieve greater positioning and recognition in Ecuador. In this regard, consideration must be given to the low worth given to think tanks in the country, as observed in community surveys conducted by *Globescan* and TTI (2013, 2018). The complexity of the positioning of the organization must also be taken into account, as made evident by the latest perception study that indicates that the organization “is recognized by most audiences in three ways: as a civil society organization, a think tank, or an observatory of public policy (Vaca and Romero, 2017b).
- To test different mechanisms and schemes that allow maintaining and institutionalizing the key processes of communication, research, knowledge management, human talent, monitoring, and evaluation, under a lighter and more flexible structure (Ana Patricia Muñoz).
- To move towards a model that allows the institution to sustain itself and pursue its own research agenda, while responding to the needs of the context; This will involve combining actions to influence the legal environment, promoting philanthropy and contribution from the private sector, with tax deduction incentives (space in which CEOSC would be key to the impact of civil society). It will also be necessary to generate a portfolio of services (studies and training) that would produce income not tied to projects. Finally, this will also involve building alliances with key actors (civil society organizations, universities and local governments) to continue mobilizing non-financial resources to the organization’s actions (Orazio Bellettini).
- To not lose sight of the usefulness of collaboration and collective spaces, in order to find the mechanisms to allow us to continue investing effort and time in strengthening the networks that have been formed (ILAIPP and CEOSC) and to build new ones. There is increasing talk of the need for think tanks to transcend into think nets, becoming spaces that skillfully connect nodes and mobilize resources from different organizations (Arellano, 2014b). Although work in networks demands a lot of attention and leadership, and generally progresses slower than expected, it has high returns, as it generates fundamental spaces to sustain and give impetus to collective narratives, which are crucial in complex moments (José Joaquín Brunner).
- To find mechanisms able to contain the structural problems in the organization, such as the difficulty in incorporating senior researchers, high turnover tied to work by projects, the impact on institutional memory, and research quality.
- To not lose sight of the discussion on the political economy of the process of knowledge generation (José Joaquín Brunner); As international cooperation in the country and the region diminishes, it is essential to continue the discussion on the need for someone to generate knowledge applied to public policies, and for someone to finance this process and take it to different advocacy spheres, such as the Ecuadorian government itself or the multilateral entities.

TTI has meant for Grupo FARO an important boost for growing and thinking in the long-term, and a *lifeline* that allowed it to sustain itself in the face of a complex context. The organization’s participation in the program having concluded, there remains great progress upon which it is necessary to continue building, as well as important and difficult challenges to be overcome. While the degree of complexity in the national context seems to have decreased, the scarcity of funding to civil society and knowledge producers, in particular, requires a strategic and creative reinvention. It is an advantage that TTI left within Grupo FARO a considerable endowment of capacities in strategic planning, advocacy and adaptation to the context that will undoubtedly be useful. Only time will tell the rest of the story and reveal the impact of TTI on the path that Grupo FARO will follow.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Sources of primary and secondary information

The interviews conducted were semi-structured and focused on investigating the sources interviewed regarding:

- What have been the main challenges and learning in the last ten years?
- What was the context in which Grupo FARO operated before and after participating in TTI?
- To what extent did the context influence the actions of Grupo FARO?
- How was the institution in terms of research quality, organizational performance, and communication and advocacy before and after TTI?
- What changes occurred under TTI implementation?
- What could or should have been done differently in the implementation of TTI?
- What are the challenges for Grupo FARO going forward?
- What is the greatest endowment of TTI?

The persons interviewed were:

- Ana Patricia Muñoz, Executive Director of Grupo FARO
- Tatiana Gudiño, Administrative-Financial Director of Grupo FARO
- José Joaquín Brunner, member of the Board of Directors of Grupo FARO
- Orazio Bellettini Cedeño, former Executive Director and founder of Grupo FARO

- Andrea Zumárraga, Communication Coordinator of Grupo FARO
- Andrea Villarreal, Impact Assessment Area Coordinator of Grupo FARO
- Paula Castells, member of the Grupo FARO team
- Álvaro Andrade, member of the Grupo FARO team
- Juan Redrobán, former Executive Director of the Ecuadorian Confederation of Civil Society Organizations

Secondary sources were:

- Grant agreements
- Reports to the donor
- Organizational indicators
- Institutional documents
- Case studies, influence stories and other documents summarizing organizational transformations
- Posts in *On Think Tanks*
- Think tank rankings
- IDRC public policy community survey
- Another relevant sources

Annex 2: Rankings and ratings

University of Pennsylvania think tanks ranking, *Global Go To Think Tank Report*

The *Global Go To Think Tank Report* ranking is an initiative of the Think Tanks and Civil Society Program of the University of Pennsylvania that, based on a global database, promotes a process of nominating and rating by peers and experts in relation to various parameters, to produce a report that presents the position of think tanks in the world in different categories (Go To Think Tank, n.d.). The ranking has been done since 2008. Grupo FARO appears in it since 2010 and has positioned itself in several categories.

Table A.1 Grupo FARO in the Global Go To Think Tank Report

Year	Think tanks dedicated to promoting transparency and good governance	Think tanks in Central and South America	Better institutional collaboration between two or more organizations	Best managed think tanks	Think tanks dedicated to domestic economic policy	Think tanks recognized for their independence	Think tanks with an annual operating budget of less than US\$ 5 million
2008	GF does not appear in the ranking.						
2009	GF does not appear in the ranking. no aparece en el ranking						
2010	19 of 20	-					
2011	20 of 30	21 of 30				--	
2012	22 of 30	12 of 45					
2013	24 of 30	12 of 45	47 of 80	51 of 60			
2014	24 of 40	15 of 50	51 of 75	58 of 65			
2015	-	19 of 86	-	70 of 80	97 of 133	Among 144 (no order by rating)	
2016	-	21 of 85	-	70 of 80	100 of 135	17 of 150	48 of 48
2017	-	21 of 80	-	69 of 79	101 of 140	114 of 145	48 of 48

Source: own preparation based on *Global Go To Think Tank reports*.

Note: Segments in gray are those in which the category did not yet exist

Transparency rating of the *Transparify* initiative

The *Transparify* initiative is an endeavor funded by *Open Society Foundation* that since 2014 has produced a global rating of the financial transparency of the most important think tanks (*Transparify*, n.d.). The rating analyzes the extent to which organizations publish their funding sources, the amount of funds they have received, and the specific projects supported by this funding. Grupo FARO obtained five-star rating in all editions to date (from 2014 to 2018).

Annex 3: Institutional transformations

Table A.2. Specific transformations for each TTI target

Administration and finance:

- Development of payment policies and processes
- Improvement of accounting systems
- Development of policies and processes for additional remuneration and bonuses
- Analysis and management of the institutional climate

Human talent:

- Development of recruitment policies and processes, and legalization of contracts
- Development of a functions manual and job descriptions
- Use of psychometric studies for strategic recruitment
- Construction and implementation of an institutional salary table, according to the market
- Capacity development in conflict management and teamwork

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Design of strategic and operational planning processes
- Design and implementation of a multi-level monitoring and evaluation system (individual, project, institution, and context)
- Implementation of a performance evaluation scheme, with incentives for individual performance

Governance:

- Empowerment and strengthening of the Board of Directors (incorporation of new members, amendments of statutes)
- Creation of collegiate bodies: Executive Committee (executive decisions), Project Approval Committee (design and presentation of new proposals), Crisis Committee (response to critical situations), Business Advisory Council (advisory council with private sector representatives)
- Transition of Executive Directors

Sustainability:

- Creation of a labor contingency fund (to meet financial needs in cases of settlement of contracts with collaborators) and an institutional stability fund (to support institutional processes not funded by projects)
- Opening of a Grupo FARO office in Panama (legal establishment)
- Initial exploration of sustainability alternatives (sale of consulting and training services, and first steps to build relationships with business and establish the basis for raising funds from the private sector)
- Design of a business model

Research quality:

- Design of policies and standards for carrying out research
- Design of an editorial guide for research products
- Implementation of a research protocol, and an internal accompaniment and review process
- Design of a guide and implementation of a peer review process (external)
- Design of guides for academic writing and publishing in indexed journals
- Definition of guidelines for access to databases and bibliographies
- Design of a manual on research and ethics in research
- Establishment of an incentive scheme for researchers (for the presentation of academic papers and participation in presentations)
- Design of a *Research Quality Plus* scheme (to consider research quality indicators for the organization and to define clear standards)
- Establishment of a research agenda and a subsequent intervention agenda

Proposal development:

- Establishment of the Project Approval Committee - CAP
- Design of proposal development manual

Knowledge management

- Design of a knowledge manual
- Construction and operation of the intranet
- Implementation of a short workshop scheme for knowledge transfer
- Design and use of project record sheets and infographics with key learning

Communication:

- Design of internal and external communication policies
- Construction and implementation of a communication strategy
- Implementation of a space for internal communication, called Hablemos de FARO
- Design of external communication mechanisms through institutional bulletins
- Implementation of two perception studies
- Improvement of the website, social networks and capacity building in digital communication
- Purchase of communication equipment

Advocacy:

- Development of advocacy strategies (mapping of actors, message box, do no harm approach)
- Implementation of the Crisis Committee to respond to complex situations
- Development of political activism and advocacy capacities

CHAPTER FIVE

The Process of Reforms at “Investigación para el Desarrollo”

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Asuncion - Paraguay

1 Introduction to the case

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) program, applied by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), provided significant financial support — in the form of core funding — to 43 research centers located in 20 developing countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. It also provided various forms of technical support to enable beneficiaries of the program to:

- Improve the quality of their research
- Strengthen their organizational performance
- Enhance their ability to influence public policies

As the TTI program is in its finalization phase, it was deemed necessary to capture the stories of the beneficiary institutions, to allow knowing the changes and lessons learned, to benefit future initiatives. In addition, this will make it possible to understand the challenges faced by these institutions in producing new evidence-based public policy research and recommendations (IDRC, 2017). In particular, this case study aims to show the organizational transformations that Investigación para el Desarrollo (ID), a Paraguayan research center, experienced thanks to the TTI program.

This study is based on the qualitative methodology of case studies, seeking to present the intervention of the TTI. The questions were grouped together and organized to establish a structure that makes them easier to read. The case also includes a description of the aspects related to the historical process and the context in which the case analyzed developed.

As noted, the object of the study is Investigación para el Desarrollo, as a whole, although the emphasis is placed on analyzing the evolution of the Education Sector in the framework of the support received from the TTI program.

The global question that guides the present case study is: What impact has the TTI program had on Investigación para el Desarrollo, and in particular on its Education Unit? From this general question, two subsidiary questions arise:

- Has the TTI helped improve the quality of ID research in general, and of the Education Unit in particular?
- Have the skills of ID and of the Education Unit improved for influencing public policies?

To carry out this study, a review was done of the documentation generated during the TTI program implementation process and of the different institutional norms documents of ID relating to the process of structural changes experienced.⁴¹ In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the current board members of the institution, their predecessors and key persons of the entities benefiting from the activities carried out by ID.

The interviews with the Directors were conducted on a group basis (at meetings of the Board of Directors) and also at individual meetings. Similarly, a number of follow-up consultations were conducted with the current members of the Board of Directors.

41 The documents of Monje (2011), and Taylor and Bogdan (1994) were reviewed.

2. History

Investigación para el Desarrollo, like all the research centers of this case, seeks to coordinate its strategic objectives and research agenda around the priorities defined by the international development community and the development plans of the Paraguayan government. This alignment with international priorities and internal public policies of the country characterizes the relationship between think tanks and the main fund-providers of research agendas.

The following highlights the priority topics that defined, in recent years, the international and national agendas, with which ID has tried, as far as possible, to align its activities.

A. The international context

In 2015, the UN General Assembly, with the presence of more than 150 heads of state and government, adopted, at the Sustainable Development Summit, Resolution 70/1: “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

The new Agenda set 17 universally applicable goals that will guide countries’ efforts to achieve a sustainable world by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replace and give continuity to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were in force when the implementation of the TTI program began at ID.

The SDGs are not legally binding, but governments are expected to adopt them as their own and to establish various national frameworks for their achievement. In turn, the 2030 Agenda promotes the active participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in meeting the goals, and establishes various mechanisms for participation, both at the national and international levels.

ID distributed these 17 SDGs among the institutional priorities of its research agenda, dividing the specific topics among the five units that make up the organization. In this way, cross-cutting topics were addressed from an interdisciplinary work perspective, through works that integrated the efforts of several areas simultaneously.

Table1. Links between the SDGs and ID units

Unit	SDGs: specific areas	SDGs: cross-cutting
Climate and natural resources	7. Affordable and clean energy	5. Gender equality 6. Clean water and sanitation 8. Decent work and economic growth 10. Reduced inequalities 12. Responsible consumption and production 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions 17. Partnerships for the goals
	13. Climate action	
	15. Life on land	
Territorial development	11. Sustainable cities and communities	
	1. No poverty	
Economy	2. Zero hunger	
	9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	
Education	4. Quality education	
Health	3. Good health and well-being	

Source: own preparation, based on information provided by ID.

B. National context

Paraguay has a limited tradition of development planning. The founding partners of ID state that at the time of the start of TTI implementation, ID established its strategic priorities based on the admonition of international organizations, the availability of resources to perform research and the priorities determined by government administrations.

Faced with these circumstances, where there were multiple priorities and a variety of funding sources, ID had to possess the flexibility needed to deal with various issues, depending on the needs of the beneficiaries of the research or consultancy work that the entity could perform. In this regard, César Cabello, former President of ID, mentions that the multidimensionality of development determined that the research agenda address, simultaneously, several dimensions (*i.e.* the institutional, environmental, economic, and social dimensions), although the scarcity of resources made it difficult to achieve levels of articulation and coordination allowing the achievement of relevant and sustainable results.

It should be noted, as an important milestone, that the first phase of the TTI program, and the process of changes initiated at ID, coincided with a period of political support that fostered public funding for research, through the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT). This council had growing resources to promote science, innovation and technology for development.

With regards to development policies, it is worth noting that in 2014, for the first time in the country's history, the government adopted a plan with the characteristics of the 2030 National Development Plan (PND 2030). The plan was adapted in a participatory manner, under the leadership of the Technical Secretariat for Planning of the Presidency of the Republic (STP), the Executive Secretary of which was one of the founders of ID, José Molinas Vega, PhD, for the period from 2013 to 2018.

The goals of the PND 2030 are aligned with the goals and timelines set for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda). The matrix of the PND 2030 addresses, in all its strategic and transversal axes, aspects that have a direct and indirect relation to all the units that make up ID (see Annex 3).

Representatives of the national government (which took office in August 2018) stated that one of the priority actions would be to promote the process of updating the PND 2030 through open and participatory work which was to include leaders and actors from the public and private sectors.

Former President Rodolfo Elías said that the formalization of the National Development Plan, in 2014, allowed authorities at all levels of government to pay greater attention to the need to adopt state policies in line with the PND, which in turn increased demand for the services of ID. This scenario has been consolidated in recent years. There is now greater consensus on the part of the central government and the department and municipal governments to make public policy decisions based on evidence.

C. Main challenges

The international context, as well as the internal conditions of the country summarized in the above points, defined the country's development prospects and defined the environment in which ID began and evolved institutionally.

Economic stability and growth are necessary but not sufficient conditions for development. In this regard, Paraguay is at a critical stage in its development. It has stable macroeconomic indicators and growth levels above the regional average. By 2017, it reached a *per capita* income level of US\$5,650 per year. Even so, Paraguay continues to be one of

the poorest countries – and is among those with the highest levels of inequality – in the region.

Having achieved growth levels above that of population growth was not sufficient for reducing levels of inequality in income and wealth distribution. The poverty rate of 36.22% recorded in 2017, and the extreme poverty level of 8.97% of the same year indicate that there are still tasks pending to achieve equitable and inclusive development. This also implies that the country will have more limited access to grants and funding, on concessional terms, from the international community, and that it will have to promote a development agenda financed with its own resources.

According to the current Executive Director of ID, Víctor Vázquez Aranda, this situation forces the institution to augment its efforts to improve the quality of its research and identify new mechanisms to influence public policies more effectively. This also requires starting a search for innovative ways of contributing to the country's development, since different results cannot be achieved by doing what has always been done. This, added to the finalization of the TTI program, makes ID authorities have to face new challenges in the coming years, such as seeking new sources of funding to support their research agenda without losing independence and objectivity.

With regard to this, Mr. Vázquez said that thanks to the far-reaching support that the TTI program has provided ID with over the past eight years, the entity has gained confidence and has established stronger foundations to face the changes that will take place in the country in the short- and medium-term.

3. Brief institutional history

Investigación para el Desarrollo was established as a research center on public policies, and its mission was “The generation and socialization of knowledge concerning development, with special emphasis on the Paraguayan reality, and the contribution, through scientific research, to the construction and evaluation of public policies for improving the living conditions of the population.”⁴²

The institutional vision projected the following institutional situation:

- “ID is committed to the transformative power of scientific research to have an impact on improving people's quality of life.”
- “ID is internationally recognized for its innovative contributions to social change.”

However, since then, the institution has undergone various changes in its make-up, indicated below. In this way, ID now has the following units:

- Economy Unit
- Education Unit
- Public Health Unit
- Territorial Development Unit
- Climate and Natural Resources Unit

Also, the organization is now is also composed of cross-sectional areas, such as the Administrative Directorate, the Research Directorate and the Communication and Advocacy Directorate. The highest authority of ID is the General Assembly, and the managerial and administrative functions are carried out by a Board of Directors, made up of the President, the Executive

42 Institutional website: http://www.desarrollo.org.py/lo_que_somos.php

Director, and the Advising Directors. The Board of Directors is responsible for strategic decisions, and the Executive Director, appointed by the Assembly, is responsible for coordinating research performed by the different units.

The ID Advisory Council is an advisory and consultative body made up of relevant national and foreign individuals with extensive experience in academic and public policy activities. Its aim is to guide the prioritization of ID actions in research and the impact on public policies, as well as to collaborate in the promotion of institutional achievements, both nationally and internationally.

A. Origin

This section is based on the opinions gathered through interviews with former Presidents, Executive Directors and Unit Directors. Use was also made of the document *Fortaleciendo la gobernanza de un think tank: desde la gestión de los pioneros a la formalización institucional*, prepared by former Executive Director Bruno Martínez, with the technical support of On Think Tanks, within the framework of the agreement with ILAIPP (see Martínez, 2012).

In 2003, the four founding partners of the institution established two entities that would operate together: the non-profit civil society organization Desarrollo, Participación y Ciudadanía (under the other name of Instituto para el Desarrollo, ID), and the organization Desarrollo. Instituto de Capacitación y Estudios (DICE). Both entities were led by their four founders, through consensus decisions.

The organization was created as an “association of professionals who formed an institution of higher education to offer postgraduate and undergraduate courses, with international standards, and whose contribution to the transformation of the country came from training in public policies to public officials and citizens in general. In these beginnings, research and action played a subsidiary role to teaching.” (Martinez, 2012)

In 2005, two of the founding members emigrated abroad, leaving the institution in charge of the remaining founding members, as well as a representative of the two persons absent. Under this scheme, the President appointed the Executive Director and decided, at the request of any member, to include new partners in the Assembly. Institutional management was exercised by the President, who was responsible for public relations and acted as a fund collector from various sources, allowing funding of projects, consultancies and research. Projects were coordinated by the Executive Director, appointed by the President. A team of professionals was established to implement every research or consultancy initiative taken on.

The growing implementation of new projects allowed the contracting of new professionals, which led, in turn, to the *de facto* establishment of the Economy and Education Units. These units were established informally (without the support of formal rules), and their actions were based on personal decisions and agreements between the professionals who were a part of them.

The increase in the number of projects and their greater complexity as a result of the demand for research projects, in addition to training courses and action lines, necessitated a review of the institutional mission and the adoption of changes in the governance structure, which had hitherto been centralized in the President and the Executive Director. The scheme could no longer satisfy the demands, given the need expressed by the new units to establish more agile and participatory decision-making mechanisms. This was the situation in which the entity was in 2010, when it joined the Think Tank Initiative.

According to what was mentioned by board members interviewed (current and retired), the start of the TTI program was fundamental for beginning the process of reforms. This process required a period of three years, which began in

2011 and was consolidated in 2014, when the new Statutes were approved and the new institutional leadership was taken on, which to date governs the institutional workings of ID. This new steering scheme consists of the Assembly, the Advisory Council, the President, the Executive Director and the Board of Directors.

B. Institutional process of change

Since its inception, the intention to introduce structural changes in institutional governance received invaluable support from the TTI program, the financial and technical resources of which made possible the structural changes adopted by the entity.

The main objectives were to strengthen research capacities, improve the capacity to influence public policies and to promote institutional strengthening. These objectives determined the route to be followed by ID for phase 1 of the TTI, and were maintained throughout phase 2. Idelín Molinas, former Education Director, said that although the activities implemented changed over the eight years, all actions remained linked to the main objectives. He also noted that, in phase 1, emphasis was placed on the capacity to conduct research, and that in phase 2, greater efforts were applied to activities allowing to improve the quality of the work carried out.

Table 2 shows a summary of the historical process of the changes which took place at ID.

Table 2. Changes in Investigación para el Desarrollo		
Year	Events	Authorities
2003-2010	August 27: founding of Desarrollo, Participación y Ciudadanía	President: César Cabello Executive Director: Idelín Molinas
2010	August 1 (until September 30, 2014): start of phase 1 of the TTI	
2011	Beginning of institutional structural reforms at ID	
2012	July-August: 2012-2018 Institutional Strategic Planning with Scope Mapping (consultant Ana Rubio)	President: Bruno Martínez Executive Director: Idelín Molinas
2013	First amendment of the Statutes	
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of authorities • Start of phase 2 of the TTI • December: adoption of the Internal Regulations • December: consultancy on management model (consultant Mario Waissbluth) 	President: Rodolfo Elías Executive Director: Bruno Martínez
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October: second reform of the Statutes and change of authorities • April: physical separation of ID with move to their new premises 	
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third reform of the Statutes and change of authorities 	President: César Cabello Executive Director: Bruno Martínez
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of authorities 	
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of authorities 	

Source: own preparation, based on information provided by ID.

As a result of the process of change brought about by the start of the TTI program, a strong need for modifying the Statutes and adopting a new institutional governance structure began in August 2010. Both initiatives gained momentum in 2011.

The reforms incorporated were based on the following factors, expressed by two organizational benchmarks within the framework of an organizational development agenda (Molinas, 2012):

- Clarity of the objectives of the organization
- Agreed and accepted standards
- Alternating leadership
- Shared achievements

The report prepared by consultant Mario Weissbluth (Weissbluth, 2014) defines the transformation of the governance structure as a “process that goes from the administration of the pioneers to institutional formalization.” On his part, Bruno Martínez points out that in this process, “the existing social capital was an important catalyst for reform,” and that the changes allowed new actors to be included in the decision-making processes, which determined the need to establish rules of interaction (formally incorporated) in the Statutes.

To give impetus to the process of change, it was agreed to carry out a strategic planning day in December 2014, which determined the actions that were followed to establish the new governance structure and to redefine the mission and vision of the institution. Strategic planning made it possible to adopt, in a participatory manner, the path that would be followed for the growth of the institution as a research center with the aim of improving Paraguay’s public policies. Also, the changes adopted made it possible to add new actors to the decision-making processes, to establish rules of interaction and to include them in the new Statutes.

Former President of ID, César Cabello, said that, from the beginning of the process of change, it was always argued that a new entity should be established “based on impersonal rules, and that would be open and participatory.”

4. The TTI program and institutional reforms

The process of change, initiated in 2010 from the very start of the TTI program, allowed identifying the complex nature of the organization, which needed to redefine its roles, “strengthen itself as an educational institution (with a parallel agenda for research and action), or to consolidate itself as a research center capable of proposing public policies, having action as a laboratory, and teaching as a form of advocacy.” (Martinez, 2012)

Addressing this situation led to the decision to separate the two functions, in order to define more precisely the nature of the two institutions that cohabitated as one: a higher education institute and a research center.

The structural reforms promoted were significant. As a result of the long process of dialogue that took place, the new Statutes incorporated fundamental changes:

- Decisions became based on impersonal rules that applied to all Directors and Unit Coordinators.
- The appointment of the Executive Director became the responsibility of the Assembly, not of the President.
- The terms of office of the President and the Executive Director were limited to two years, with both of them having the possibility of being reelected only once. The changes of the President and the Executive Director could not be simultaneous.
- The Executive Director went on to have a liaising role in the research and consultancies of the units, and a role of organizing the expenses of the institution’s projects.
- The areas of work, which until then arose through inertia, were explicitly defined. Five units were created: Climate and Natural Resources, Territorial Development, Economy, Education, and Health.
- Unit Coordinators became responsible for managing resources for their units, as well as becoming the organizers of their spending.
- The mandates of the President and Executive Director were defined more precisely.

- Rules were established for accepting new associates and for opening up new areas of research.
- While rotation was established in the positions of President and Executive Director, the same was not done with the heads of the units, since it was felt that since they were responsible for generating funds and guiding the work team, certain continuity and autonomy were necessary for their decision-making processes.

In addition, the Administration Unit and the Communication and Advocacy Unit were established. The establishment of the Research Directorate was also determined, and the position of the Fundraiser was established. A process was outlined to bring together a Board of Directors for urgent cases, so as to make strategic decisions without the need to wait for the Annual Assembly of Associates.

In addition to the changes in the Statutes, summarized above, two important milestones must be mentioned in the reform process:

- In February 2013, the Administrative Procedures Manual was adopted, allowing for the standardization and integration of administrative and accounting processes.
- In May 2014, the new governance structure was put into operation, the arrangement of which is as follows to date: Assembly, Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Coordinators of Research Units and Support Units. Also, on that date, there was a change in Executive Director and President, who had held these positions since 2005.

In addition, the process of differentiation between Instituto Desarrollo and the non-profit civil society organization was initiated. The official name chosen for the training institute was Desarrollo. Instituto de Capacitación y Estudios, and the research entity took on a new name: Investigación para el Desarrollo. This also led to a change in the institutional image, as a new logo and institutional stationery were adopted, identifying Investigación para el Desarrollo (ID) as a research center benefitting from IDRC's TTI program.

In April 2015, ID moved to its current location (7277 Tte. 1° Cayetano Rivarola, near calle Tte. López, Villa Aurelia neighborhood, Asuncion). This marked the physical separation (which followed the statutory parting) from Instituto de Desarrollo, which continues to operate, to date, at the location where the two entities originally operated.

The next institutional milestone was the change of Executive Director, which took place at the beginning of 2018, within the framework of the Annual Assembly, in compliance with the recently approved Statutes of the entity.

A. Results of the change process

The aforementioned changes would not have been possible without the fundamental support of the TTI, which allowed, successfully, to adopt new Statutes, conduct a revision of strategic planning and strengthen the Administration, and Communication and Advocacy Units.

It is worth noting that the strategic planning exercise will have a facilitator of participatory processes from Instituto Internacional de Facilitación y Cambio (IIFAC). This facilitator helped perform what is referred to as scope mapping. In the period between August and December 2014, the Technical and Financial Regulations were also developed, and they are currently applied at ID.

The process of change was not easy and led to tense discussions, stemming, on the one hand, from the commitment and identification needed in relation to the entity, and on the other, on the need for fundamental changes to reform

the nature and structure of powers within the institution. The important work done by the advisors and the facilitator of processes was fundamental to put into practice the changes adopted, which allowed strengthening the governance of the entity and consolidating it as a research center of relevance in the local environment.

The changes introduced have been positive, although Investigación para el Desarrollo has yet to make progress in its institutional strengthening and in its consolidation as a reference research center in the fields in which it operates. A pending task is to consolidate some areas which have limitations in obtaining funding for their research agendas, or which, in any case, suffer from instability in financing their initiatives.

It is also essential to achieve the general financial sustainability of the entity, in order to enable it to advance its research agenda, improve the quality of its research and strengthen its capacity to influence public policies.

B. The process of change and gender issues

The changes introduced during the reform process, described above, did not directly address gender issues. However, the new governance structure has made significant changes in terms of women's participation in institutional leadership. For the current Executive Director, Víctor Vázquez, the prevailing criterion is to recruit the best people, regardless of their gender.

Considering that three men and one woman were the founders of the entity, there has been a significant change in female participation, as presently two women and three men are the members of the Assembly. It must also be noted that currently four of the five areas are headed by women (i.e. Education, Health, Economy, and Climate and Natural Resources). The Administration Unit and the Communication Unit are also headed by women.

With regards to the research agenda, the subject of gender is not the main focus of the center, but it is taken into consideration consistently in all research carried out. In addition, a number of research works were realized in which the situation of girls and female adolescents in the country was specifically analyzed. It should be noted that most of the research commissioned requires the analysis of gender issues as a relevant cross-cutting theme.

C. The process of change and improvement in research quality

The search for improving research quality took place mainly in phase 2 of the TTI program (from 2014 to 2019). In phase 1 (2010 to 2014) work was done mainly on the capacity to generate research, seeking to increase the number of works relating to consultancies and published studies. Since 2014, quality standards and criteria were also established.

Víctor Vázquez mentions that this search for quality in research was carried out through the following actions: (a) the recruitment of a Director of Research. Since 2014, the Director has been Dr. José Carlos Rodríguez, a professional with extensive research experience and an academic doctorate; b) the establishment of a mandatory scheme which states that all ID research or studies must be submitted for peer review; and c) the adoption of a code of ethics in research.

5. Mini success case: Education Unit

The Education Unit was one of the first areas to operate independently; in a *de facto* manner before the statutory reforms were introduced. When the new Statutes were approved, the unit was officially established, becoming one of the most active areas of the organization. Under the leadership of Rodolfo Elías, the Education Unit was able to position itself as a benchmark for the national authorities, and there were thus offers for it to be part of government bodies.

Records from 2010 to 2013 show the emphasis placed on improving the capacity to produce research. The greatest emphasis placed on improving the quality of research is reflected in the list of published documents, a summary of which is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Studies and research of the Education Unit	
Year	Title
2014	Research: <i>Acumulación reciente del capital social campesino</i>
	State of the art analysis: <i>Educación, jornada extendida</i>
2015	Research: <i>Estudio de educación bajo la dictadura</i>
	Article: <i>Exclusión escolar en Irala Fernández</i>
2016	Research: <i>Estudio de sistematización de la experiencia en el distrito Teniente 1° Manuel Irala Fernández</i>
	Research: <i>Estudio y estado del arte sobre factores asociados a la educación</i>
	Article: <i>El retorno de los migrantes paraguayos: una oportunidad para el desarrollo local y nacional</i>
	Article: <i>Inclusión educativa de jóvenes</i>
	Article: <i>Jóvenes, estigmas y control del espacio público en el Distrito Nou Barris</i>
	Article: <i>Mujeres adolescentes rurales del Distrito Teniente 1° Manuel Irala Fernández</i>
	Article: <i>La exclusión de las personas trans del sistema educativo</i>
2017	Article: <i>Educación ambiental y jóvenes: influencia de las creencias y actitudes en comportamientos pro-ambientales en estudiantes de noveno grado, del departamento Central</i>
	Article: <i>Percepción de la ciencia en estudiantes paraguayos: análisis del atractivo de la profesión científica</i>
	Article: <i>¿Cárcel o centro educativo?</i>
	Article: <i>Los programas internacionales de evaluación de logros académicos y su influencia en las políticas educativas en América Latina</i>
2018	Article: <i>Inclusión educativa en Paraguay: un análisis de los programas orientados al acceso a la educación de jóvenes en situación de vulnerabilidad y exclusión social</i>
	Article: <i>Marchas y contramarchas de los Institutos de Formación Docente en Paraguay (1970-2017)</i>
	Article: <i>Teachers' Education in Paraguay</i>
	Article: <i>Estudio sobre la práctica pedagógica en la enseñanza de comunicación en la educación escolar básica: una revisión de la literatura sobre los principales debates y experiencias internacionales</i>
	Article: <i>El impacto del Proyecto Atención Oportuna en el desarrollo infantil en niños y niñas de 3 y 4 años en Paraguay</i>
	Article: <i>Abordajes en la evaluación del desarrollo en primera infancia</i>

Source: own preparation, based on information provided by ID.

All articles included in the above list had peer reviews as part of the requisites for publication in indexed journals.

Among the documents cited is research that was included in the chapters of many books. Such was the case of Retorno de los migrantes and Teachers' Education in Paraguay.

In collaboration with other areas, the Education Unit carried out a considerable amount of additional research, most of which was published, among which the following works are noteworthy:

It should be noted that only the research and studies carried out by the Education Unit are listed, but studies were conducted in all the other units as well.

Table 4. Research of the Education Unit with other areas

Year	Title
2015	<i>Educación Gobernación de Central</i>
	<i>Educación ambiental en escuelas de Central</i>
2016	<i>Experiencias innovadoras en la educación campesina</i>
2017	<i>Participación local en políticas educativas</i>
	<i>Adolescentes y medio ambiente</i>
	<i>Impacto secuencias didácticas en Villa Hayes</i>
	<i>Inclusión educativa y jóvenes</i>
2018	<i>La educación ambiental en el Paraguay y su contraste con la región</i>
	<i>Systematic review of impact: Efectividad de las intervenciones para la inclusión educativa y laboral de jóvenes en situación de vulnerabilidad y exclusión social en América Latina y el Caribe</i>

Source: own preparation, based on information provided by ID.

Also, various studies and research were commissioned in the form of consultancies, funded by international cooperation agencies such as UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), and bilateral cooperation entities, as well as international NGOs such as Plan International.

The aforementioned works have positioned ID as one of the main references of Paraguay in the subject of education. The impact of the work carried out, as well as the prestige gained by the researchers, have generated results that allowed the consolidation and sustainability of the Education Unit, despite the high turnover rate of the professionals working in this unit.

Some of the most relevant aspects indicating the relevance of the ID Education Unit are summarized below:

- Rodolfo Elías, former President of Investigación para el Desarrollo and former Director of the Education Unit, has been appointed member of the Advisory Council for Educational Reform.
 - Although this has implied the resignation of Mr. Elías as Director of the Education Unit, his nomination represents recognition of his track record as a researcher and, implicitly, recognition of ID through his extensive professional activities at the entity.
- Awarding of the Specialized, Logistic and Processing Support Consulting Service for the Application of Academic Achievement Assessments of Students of the National System for Evaluation of the Educational Process (SNEPE) and Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad Educativa (LLECE). National Public Tender No. 03/2018.
 - This award implied official recognition by the Paraguayan government of the technical and management capacities of ID.
 - The contract signed between the Ministry of Education and Sciences and ID involved the transfer of about US\$4 million to carry out two assessments of educational performance, including logistics management, testing and information processing.
 - The contract signed allowed ID to be the executor of the largest census evaluation carried out by the MEC (Ministry of Education and Sciences) in its history, and granted ID the funds needed for the continuity of research that was being carried out on the subject in education.
- Pedagogical Support Service Project.
 - This project sought to evaluate the pedagogical performance of 4,500 teachers from all over the country, through filming their classes and having peer teachers analyze them.
 - The project gained acclaim due to the decision of the government to start a process of defining salaries based on teacher performance.
 - The conclusions of the project allowed defining basic guidelines for the establishment of systems, making it possible to objectively evaluate the performance of teachers.

The topics described above strengthened the positioning of ID as a reference in the topics of education, and facilitated the continuance of the research agenda of the organization.

It is worth mentioning that the current Director of the Unit, Blanca Aquino, began her career at ID as a junior researcher, having benefited from the Junior Researchers Program sponsored by the TTI. In addition, mention should be made of the almost continuous presence of ID researchers in various interviews with the oral, print and television media.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Several Directors agree that “the positive changes do not represent a point of arrival, but rather the beginning of a phase of institutional consolidation that should feed the improvement of the quality of research.”

In this context, the salient aspects that can be observed from this report are:

- The current governance structure needs to be consolidated. While three biannual terms have elapsed and two Executive Directors have been elected, in the opinion of the Directors, the alternation of officials has been orderly and is seen as a positive development for institutional governance.
 - As mentioned above, as a justification for statutory provisions (two-year terms, a single reelection), the current structure allows more members of the organization to be able to hold managerial positions, thus promoting a long-term institutional perspective. In this way, the members have incentives to plan for the medium-term and support initiatives that promote institutional strengthening and sustainability.
 - The adoption of clear and shared rules, alternate leadership and strategic objectives, defined in a participatory manner, have been fundamental to strengthening institutional governance.
- Emphasis should be placed on continuous improvement in the quality of research products and capacity for policy advocacy should be strengthened.
 - The current situation of ID seems to support the changes made, as it can be seen that the new rules strengthen the governance structure and operational management. The basis of institutional prestige is determined by the quality of research, and the research determines ID's potential capacity to influence public policies. The successful experience of the Education Unit shows that the prestige attained by the quality and objectivity of the research generates considerable returns for the unit and for the entire institution in the medium- and long-term.
- The dependence of the Paraguayan public sector on consultancies should be reduced.
 - Many of the studies and consultancies carried out by ID are funded by the public sector (MEC, CONACYT). This can reduce the independence and objectivity of the work done, and also constitutes an element of risk with respect to sustainability, as there may be fluctuations with respect to the flow of funds destined to research.
- It is necessary to strengthen, in an equitable manner, all the units, respecting their independence and their particular operating schemes.
 - Regardless of the political situation in the country (a factor that can affect research and advocacy tasks), it is observed that the financial situation of ID is currently promising. However, the particular positions of the units requires a more strategic and long-term vision, as the level of activity of some units is relatively low, without considering the financial assistance provided by the TTI program. Therefore, the financial situation may be affected at the end of this program.
- The strengthening of all decision-making bodies in the institutional structure of ID should be continued.
 - Following the reforms, the new institutional governance has been strengthened. The managers interviewed stated that there have been no crises or conflicts that could affect the institution in the short- or medium- term. This implies that the established structure of governance (the Assembly, the Board of Directors) has functioned as it should.
- The functioning and responsibilities of the Advisory Council need to be revised:
 - A weak point in the process was the Advisory Council, which, according to what the managers interviewed stated, did not have the expected impact. Its composition and functions should be

revised. Among the comments observed, mention is made of the need to have local advisers willing to attend regular meetings before resorting to international advisers, whom it is difficult to convene, especially considering that the resources of the TTI program will no longer be available.

- The organization's capacity to mobilize resources needs to be strengthened.
 - The structure of the units requires that the Director be jointly responsible for mobilizing, as well as managing resources. Due to the finalization of the TTI, financial sustainability is emerging as a central issue. The challenge is to maintain financial strength without losing independence and without compromising objectivity with regards to the entities providing the funds.
 - A specific unit for fundraising and management can be created, so as to achieve financial diversification and sustainability.
- The horizons of institutional management need to be broadened.
 - There is a need to consolidate bilateral or multilateral networks to expand potential funding sources. It will also be of great importance to connect with the themes on the international development agenda, among which the SDGs clearly stand out.
 - It is highly important to be part of the networks of regional and international research centers. ID must support initiatives such as ILAIPP and Southern Voice, in order to connect with the international development cooperation community, and to promote the exchange of experiences with other organizations.

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Annexes

Annex 1. List of persons interviewed

Members of the Board of Directors

- Elvio Segovia, President and founding partner, former Deputy Minister of the Interior (2008-2012)
- Víctor I. Vázquez Aranda, Executive Director (2018-2020), and former Director of the Economy Unit (2014-2018)
- Blanca Aquino, Director of the Education Unit from 2014 to date. She joined ID in 2010 as a junior researcher.
- Bruno Martínez, Director of the Territorial Development Unit, former Executive Director during the periods 2014-2016 and 2016-2018, and founding partner
- Rossana Scribano, Director of the Climate and Natural Resources Unit from 2014 to date
- Laura Flores, Director of the Health Unit from May 2018 to date
- Carmen Arias, head of the Economy Unit from May 2018 to date
- Karina Godoy, Administrative Director
- Cristina Constantini, Communication Director
- Antonieta Arias de Rojas, member of the Advisory Council, President of the Scientific Society of Paraguay

Partners, managers and technical staff

- José Molinas Vega, founding partner
- César Cabello, founding partner and former President (2003-2014)

- Idelín Molinas, former Executive Director (2005-2014)
- Rodolfo Elías, former President (2014-2016) and former Director of the Education Unit (until 2014). Currently member of the Advisory Council for Educational Reform
- José Carlos Rodríguez, former Director of Research
- Edgar Giménez, former Director of the Health Unit (2014-2018), former Deputy Minister of Health (2008-2012)
- Paola Martínez, economist, associate researcher (initially junior researcher)

Beneficiary entities reference persons

- Rossana Marcoré, Director of the Evaluation of Curricular Learning Achievements of the Ministry of Education and Sciences (MEC)
- Karen Rojas, Director of the National Institute of Educational Evaluation of the MEC
- Nancy Ovelar, former Vice-Minister of Education of the Ministry of Education and Sciences and former researcher at ID
- Ruth Paniagua, current Advisor to the Vice-Minister of Education of the MEC and former Director of the laboratory in charge of the Pedagogical Support Service implemented by ID
- Any Ramos, Project Officer, UNICEF Paraguay
- Florencia Villalba, former Director General of Territorial Development of the Technical Secretariat of Planning of the Presidency of the Republic
- Rubén Rolón, former Coordinator of Rural Development Projects at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Paraguay
- Andrés Molina and Carolina Wyttenbach, former project officers at Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Paraguay

Annex 2. Paraguay: economic indicators and social indicators

Economic indicators⁴³

Paraguay is a country of nearly seven million inhabitants, without sea coasts, located in central South America, and with extensive borders with Argentina, Brazil and Bolivia. Its territory is divided into the Eastern Region, where more than 95% of the population lives, and the Western Region or Chaco, which is sparsely populated, and where the main activity is livestock-breeding.

The country's productive base is of agricultural origin, a fact that makes it an economy vulnerable to climate effects. The agricultural sector accounted for 10.6% of GDP in 2017, according to official figures, gradually decreasing in recent years compared to the other sectors. Also, the share of agricultural exports in total exports has been over 60% since 2013. Although the productive structure of the primary sector is based on agriculture and livestock-breeding, the industrial sector (largely agro-industries) has developed considerably in recent years.

Despite various adverse factors, such as the regional and international political and economic situation, Paraguay has had, for more than half a century, maintained a distinctive tradition of economic stability. In addition, it has achieved, over the past 15 years, average growth levels higher than the countries of the region.

The country maintains stability in domestic prices and in its exchange rates, which positively influences growth pros-

⁴³ This section is based on information from the Statistical Annex of the 2018 Economic Report of the Central Bank of Paraguay. Taken from: <https://www.bcp.gov.py/>

pects, as they are attractive elements for investment in the productive sector. Inflation has remained at approximately 4% annually since the beginning of the new millennium.

Social indicators

The stability and economic growth achieved will only be consolidated and have positive effects for the majority of the country's inhabitants if this growth is sustainable, equitable and inclusive. Only in this way can a reduction in the levels of poverty and extreme poverty affecting mainly the rural population and vulnerable sectors be achieved. This is the situation of indigenous communities and children at risk.

At the national level, total poverty was at 70% in 2002 and declined gradually, reaching 36.2% in 2017. On its part, extreme poverty went down from 15.62% to 8.97% in the same period.

Education in Paraguay is undergoing a process of reforms that to date have not had the expected results, since the country has obtained deficient scores in the standardized international tests (Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación, LLECE), as well as in school dropout and illiteracy rates. In addition, the TERCE Report (Third Regional Assessment of Educational Quality), presented in 2015, shows that Paraguay was in the group of countries with results below the regional average in all areas (reading, mathematics, natural sciences, and writing) in the grades evaluated (3rd and 6th).

This situation constitutes a very important opportunity for conducting sectoral research, which was seized by ID to gain visibility and position itself as a national benchmark in education issues, as stated by ID researchers (Rodolfo Elías, Blanca Aquino) as well as officials of the Ministry of Education and Sciences interviewed (Karen Rojas, Rossana Marcoré and Ruth Paniagua, among others).

Annex 3. 2030 National Development Plan

2030 National Development Plan				
Strategic axis	Equal opportunities	Efficient and transparent governance	Territorial planning	Environmental sustainability
Poverty reduction and social development	Equitable social development	Quality social services	Participatory local development	Adequate and sustainable habitat
Inclusive economic growth	Employment and social protection	Competitiveness and innovation	Regionalization and productive diversification	Valuation of environmental capital
Insertion of Paraguay in the world	Equal opportunities in a globalized world	Attracting investment, foreign trade and image of the country	Regional economic integration	Sustainability of the global habitat

Source: Technical Secretariat for Planning; PND 2030. Taken from: <http://www.stp.gov.py/pnd/>

CHAPTER SIX

Academic Center and Think Tank: The Consolidation of IEP under the TTI

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Introduction

Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (Peruvian Studies Institute, IEP) is one of the most well-known academic institutions in the Peruvian academic environment⁴⁴ and is an opinion leader in the country.⁴⁵ Its publishing label is recognized for having published books fundamental for a comprehension of contemporary Peru.⁴⁶ However, until the end of the past decade, the institution had weaknesses that impeded envisioning a competitive future, in a changing context where communication was in the process of becoming digital. In this scenario, there took place a reconstitution of the relations between the state, academia and consulting services, with the latter beginning to take on greater importance in the professional lives of the associates of the institution. Administrative shortcomings, lack of a communication office and the dispersion of researchers were some of the weaknesses observed. This piece of research asks how IEP faced these challenges through IDRC's Think Tank Initiative (TTI), of which IEP was a beneficiary for eight years (from 2011 to 2018). As will be seen, IEP benefited positively from the TTI, particularly in addressing challenges that its traditional funding — through indirect project costs — would not have allowed it to take on. However, some important challenges still remain.

This chapter is divided into the sections explained here. First, the methodology used is briefly described. Secondly, a presentation is made of the historical background of IEP to allow an understanding of the context of the application made by the institution to the TTI in 2009. Then it delves into the three main aspects of the organizational changes experienced by the institution in recent years: the strengthening of its capacities as a research center, the improvement of its internal administrative systems (coupled with the establishment of a communication office), and greater commitment to advocacy activities. Also, noteworthy is the case of the “Diálogos de Política Pública” (“Public Policy Dialogues”) as a successful example of the influence of IEP in the public sphere. The chapter finalizes with conclusions and lessons learned from the case.

2. Methodology

This research is based on the review of secondary and primary sources, and on the performance of interviews with key actors. In order to meet the objective of this study, the Director General of IEP provided the reports produced by the institution regarding its activities under the TTI program. Both the internal reports (self-evaluations, reports to IDRC, etc.) and the consultancies entrusted to external evaluators on certain specific aspects of the institution's workings were employed. General systematization documents, of the history of the institution, such as the annual reports, were also reviewed.

In addition, six former directors of Instituto de Estudios Peruanos were interviewed for this research, including all the Directors General of the period covered by the TTI. The Communication Officer (whose area was a direct beneficiary of TTI support) and the institution's General Administrator were also interviewed

44 As Sánchez mentions, “any general revision of the bibliography of the social sciences published in Peru since the 1960s would have to dedicate a special chapter to the production that Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (better known as IEP) has achieved throughout its 37 years of research, training and dissemination.” (Sánchez, 2002: 5)

45 The so-called “Encuesta de Poder” (“Power Survey”) — in its 36th version — recognizes IEP as the third most influential think tank in Peru, not far behind the first two (42% of respondents consider it one of the think tanks with the greatest influence the public policy debate). The Power Survey is organized by the *Semana Económica* magazine, and is based on the responses of different opinion leaders in Peru.

46 The list includes Cotler (1978), Matos Mar (1984) and Rostorowski (1988), among others.

3. IEP before the TTI: four elements of the past to understanding the challenges that the institution faced

An understanding of the challenges that IEP went through at the end of the 2000s requires explaining four pieces of background information of its institutional life: first there is the original nature of the organization as an academic and intellectual center; secondly is how its governance was organized; thirdly is the funding it had; and fourthly is the internal dynamics that existed among its researchers.

IEP was founded in 1964 by researchers from the social sciences who identified themselves with the progressive tendencies of Latin American intellectualism.⁴⁷ This first generation of researchers investigated the inequities that afflicted Peru, especially in rural areas and with respect to indigenous communities, in a context of extreme political tension in the face of the imminent end of the so-called “oligarchic Peru.”⁴⁸ In this context, researchers from the young IEP focused on producing holistic looks that fed on historical, sociological, cultural, and political studies.⁴⁹ To a large extent, this generation of scholars marked the way in which IEP perceived itself, and the way it was seen by Peruvian academics, foreigners, university circles, and NGOs. This perception could be summarized in that of an academic institution familiar with the rural world of Peru and the different social processes that the country had been going through since 1964. In those years, the IEP editorial fund produced a large number of books that would become “classics” of the Peruvian social sciences.

Over the years, IEP continued to be considered an academic and intellectual center notwithstanding the fact that its research agenda shifted to other topics. From 1968 to 1980, Peru went through a left-wing military dictatorship that radically changed the country’s political context: a radical agrarian reform was implemented and voting universality was applied in the 1980 elections. In later years, the academic production of IEP would attract different researchers and lines of research that would reflect on the challenges facing post-oligarchic Peru. These questions revolved around the rural origin of the political violence of the Shining Path (Degregori, 1985; Degregori, 1990) and migration from the countryside to the city of Lima (Degregori, Blondet and Lynch, 2014; Golte and Adams, 1987). Subsequently, the academic production of the institute aimed to give priority to political and institutional perspectives. In the 1990s, IEP would publish research on the political deinstitutionalization produced by the Fujimori administration (Tanaka, 1998; Cotler and Grompone, 2000), on the decentralization process and on incentives for participation after the transition to democracy (Tanaka and Trivelli, 2002; Remy, 2004). In this sense, when the time came for IEP to apply to the TTI program, it possessed a strong identity built around the prestige of its editorial fund and as a result of the need to continue to support informed and long-term academic research, which distanced the organization from the consulting firms,⁵⁰ and also dissociating it from the world of Peruvian NGOs.⁵¹

47 Among those of the founding generation of the institution were José María Arguedas, Luis Eduardo Valcárcel, Sebastián Salazar Bondy, José Matos Mar, Augusto Salazar Bondy, Jorge Bravo Bresciani, John Murra, Alberto Escobar and María Rostorowski. All of these individuals are historical references of the social sciences and literature in Peru.

48 On the definition of oligarchic power in Peru, see Bourricaud *et al.* (1969) and Pease (1980).

49 On the intellectual history of IEP, from its creation to the early 2000s, see Sánchez (2002).

50 As will be seen below, despite its nature as an academic center, since the 2000s, a growing dialogue between the Peruvian state, academia and civil society began to develop in Peru, which led IEP partners to take on public positions, and its researchers increasingly informed the policy cycle through consultancies.

51 Although formally a non-profit organization, IEP has never presented itself, strictly speaking, as a non-governmental organization. Although it has articulated its institutional mission around “contributing to equitable economic development, strengthening democratic institutions and recognizing the richness of cultural diversity” (which brings it closer, in practice, to “progressive” visions), IEP formally lacks an activist agenda, and does not pronounce itself either for or against any policy, which dissociates it from the world of NGOs. We have therefore preferred to be referred to as an “academic center”.

Secondly, with regard to its internal governance, an important milestone for the institute was its transition, in the late 1980s, towards an institution that was fundamentally cooperative and had a system of crossed responsibilities. Under the former model, IEP received donations that were managed by the Director General. Under the new model, a Board of Directors was established, with responsibilities separated into “compartments”, allowing for a system of cross-accountability among its members. Changes were also made at the level of internal funding: apart from donations, researchers had to obtain projects that assured their salaries, either through competitions, inter-institutional alliances or through personal professional services. From these revenues, a percentage would finance the operation of IEP by way of indirect costs. This new model — which has been broadly maintained up to the present — was supported by a new generation of principal researchers at the institute who seek to prioritize the transparency of the institution and co-responsibility in supporting it.⁵²

Thirdly, with regard to its funding, IEP had traditionally worked with the Ford Foundation, an institution that supported it from its inception⁵³ and supported the policy program in the 1990s and 2000s. Other sources of financing came, for example, from Consorcio de Investigación Económica⁵⁴ (which benefited the economy area), in addition to some consultancies. Since the 2000s, IEP began to position itself more explicitly as a competitive institution. It was at this stage that it began to participate in different competitions, going through difficult periods of preparation. The institutional context had changed: for example, within the framework of Consorcio de Investigación Económica (which brought together several institutions receiving IDRC funding), there was a shift from a quota allocation model among members to one of competitions. The need for potentially winning projects led to the consolidation of teams to support the formulation stage and to prioritize the public impact of research.⁵⁵

However, other areas of the institute⁵⁶ did not have similar resources to finance their research, which created an imbalance between them. In addition, IEP had scarce funds for supporting its administrative area (which included both the general administration and the general services provided by the institution to its researchers) and its library; the needs of these two sections were not met through funding “by project”. Thus, when IEP became part of the TTI, it had traditional internal systems and limited resources to support its researchers.

Fourthly and finally, as far as its internal institutional life is concerned, until the early 2000s, the interdisciplinary work of IEP was poorly consolidated, largely due to the imbalance in funding between disciplines. Interdisciplinary work focused mainly around the political area, which used to integrate researchers into “umbrella”⁵⁷ projects and the discussion tables called “green tables.”⁵⁷ At the same time, consultancies were beginning to take on a greater role in the professional dedication of the researchers.

In short, until the end of the 2000s, IEP was essentially an academic institution — with an editorial fund recognized for its publications — that had begun a process of internal modernization in the 1980s. This modernization led it to enhance the transparency of its administration, diversify its income sources and become more competitive by participating in

52 Interview with Marcos Cueto, former Director of IEP.

53 IEP’s relationship with the Ford Foundation is long-standing, having begun almost at the time of the foundation of the institution. Ford’s first endowments supported institutional strengthening, particularly the editorial fund, which assured the institute’s long-term revenues. See Sherwood (2017).

54 Known today as Consorcio de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CIES), which received funding from IDRC.

55 Interview with Carolina Trivelli, former Director of IEP.

56 The areas of work of IEP have changed over time, but have traditionally responded to a criterion of disciplines. The areas of anthropology, politics, economics, sociology, history and, more recently, education, are the current areas.

57 Interview with Patricia Zárate, Director of Economics at IEP. These projects allowed researchers from different fields to join the policy research agenda.

58 Interview with Roxana Barrantes, former Director of IEP. The “green tables” are spaces for discussion for ongoing research. All members of the institution are invited to them.

different competitions. However, the search for income did not cover all the needs of the institution through indirect costs, which also led to a greater dispersion of the research agendas of the affiliates. Under these circumstances, IEP came upon the call for proposals of the Think Tank Initiative.

4. Application to the TTI program

The TTI application was considered to be an opportunity for obtaining the core funding⁵⁹ that the institution needed. This funding would enable the strengthening and, eventually, the creation of areas that did not have permanent donations or income from the consultancies, which generated indirect costs that did not allow giving priority to the creation of other areas. It would be the way to “build a second floor”, in the words of a former Director.⁶⁰ Given this, IEP’s original proposal for the TTI program consisted of three axes:

1. To improve and strengthen the quality of research within the framework of the institutional project. This was a priority, since IEP’s prestige was mainly associated with its academic production and the publications of its editorial fund.
2. To modernize administrative and organizational management. This was an issue pending since the foundation of the institution, seeking to ensure efficiency in the use of the institution’s resources.
3. To develop a communication strategy that would improve the advocacy of research. This was one of the areas previously unexplored by IEP, which would introduce advocacy as one of the objectives of the institution.⁶¹

5. IEP and the TTI program (from 2010 to 2018)

The IEP interviewees highlight the fact that there were three key components reinforced thanks to the TTI program: academic research, the administrative and communication areas, and advocacy capacities.⁶²

A. Academic research: the heart of IEP prestige

As mentioned, much of IEP’s prestige comes from its editorial fund.⁶³ The editorial fund combines a diversity of publications of researchers from the institution with contributions from external researchers, many of whom belong to universities in the United States and Europe, and look to the institute for publishing their books in Spanish.⁶⁴ Hence the importance of strengthening internal support for research through the so-called “Institutional Programs”.

59 Core funding is understood as a type of “flexible, non-earmarked funding, which leaves the decision on the use of the funds at the discretion of the beneficiary organization. This type of funding generally allows organizations to determine their research and advocacy agendas, to prioritize emerging development challenges and to invest in organizational strengthening, through staff training, technology, systems, administrative and financial software, policies, process and management practices, communication, and monitoring and evaluation.” (Communication of the principal team of INESAD, 07/01/19, e-mail)

60 Interview with Carolina Trivelli, former Director of IEP.

61 Presentation by former Director Marcos Cueto to IEP researchers (September 2010).

62 Public advocacy is understood as a component detached from communication: while the former is aimed at stakeholders, the latter’s objective is the general public. As can be seen from the initial objectives of the IEP proposal, the institution tended to merge the two components into one. For the purposes of this research, each of the cases will be analyzed separately.

63 Interview with Patricia Zárate, Director of Economics at IEP. For the interviewee, the editorial fund of IEP assures the long-term impact of the institute, by positioning topics and perspectives that few think tanks translate into the form of books. For example, IEP has published key literature on decentralization and participation in Peru, a literature to which researchers interested in the topic must resort.

64 Some of the most important books originally published in English are by Charles Walker (2015), Alfonso Quiroz (2018) and Paulo Drinot (2016).

IEP operates with Institutional Programs (PIs) based on thematic axes agreed on through consensus by the Board of Directors of the institution. The PIs existed since the foundation of the institution, when the study of rural society began. PIs allow counteracting the potential negative effects of the “federative” (cooperative) characteristic of the organization of its researchers: the dispersion of interests and lines of work requires establishing a common line that is reflected in the PIs.⁶⁵ PI research is continuously monitored by the Research Directorate and is presented to all researchers of the institute at the green tables. These tables present the research in its initial and final phases, so as to receive constructive comments. Then, following anonymous external refereed revision, and after being published by the editorial fund, the books are presented to the general public.

The PIs in turn allow maintaining the brand of the institute associated with its nature as an academic center with its own prestigious editorial fund. In addition, the PIs give IEP researchers the opportunity to work on research lines based on their own interests, in a context where consultancies (with objectives imposed by the contractor) usually occupy most of their time.

With the financial support of the TTI program, the PIs had two cycles of research:

1. Between consolidation of development and the deepening of inequality (2009-2013). This institutional project had already begun when IEP received the first TTI funding, and inspired many of the reflections raised in the proposal to IDRC. The rapid growth of the Peruvian economy from 2006 to 2008 led IEP to wonder about its impact on deepening the gaps between the modern urban sector and the backward rural areas of Peru (the so-called “neodualism” of the Peruvian economy).⁶⁶
2. The state and society in middle-income Peru (2014-2018). This project had three cycles of research. The research asked questions regarding Peru’s political and social challenges as a middle-income economy, after years during which the emphasis of academic research had focused rather on issues such as poverty and exclusion. This new approach made it possible to question the changes in the urban world and the challenges posed by subnational policy to move towards effective and efficient local governments.

Between 2014⁶⁷ and 2018, 16 books based on research funded by TTI were published (see Annex 2). For the first time, and as direct support from the TTI, all books went through an anonymous peer review system, through the hiring of readers outside IEP.

In addition to establishing a peer review system for all documents resulting from research undertaken within the framework of an Institutional Program, TTI allowed improving the quality of research through:

- Attracting new researchers who had recently graduated with doctorates in different fields abroad (several of whom were later incorporated into the institute’s Assembly of Associates).
- An increase in the bibliographic material available in the library, as well as the subscription to different scientific journals.
- The establishment of extraordinary calls for various thematic and interdisciplinary research programs, as well as the funding of editorial projects by several researchers.⁶⁸
- Support for different research groups (such as Grupo Memoria, which studied issues of political violence).⁶⁹

65 Interview with Ricardo Cuenca, Director General of IEP.

66 See Tanaka and Vera (2008).

67 The year 2014 is considered, as it was then that the first pieces of research funded by the TTI program were published.

68 Publishing projects promoted the publication of books by researchers affiliated to the institute, based on consultancies or research that had not been published.

69 See Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (2011, 2012 and 2013).

In addition, the TTI program initiated a system of bonuses to provide incentives for various academic activities of the institution's researchers. Thus, bonuses were established for refereed and non-refereed publications,⁷⁰ as well as bonuses for attendance at national and international congresses,⁷¹ and for providing support in proofreading and translating researchers' work. All publications and public presentations benefiting from the bonus had to highlight the researcher's affiliation to Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, which helped to propagate the name of the institution in epistemic communities in Peru and the world. From 2010 to the end of 2018, 168 bonuses were awarded for publication in magazines (of which 103 were in refereed journals), and 124 bonuses were given for attending national and international congresses.

In short, the TTI program allowed IEP to finance two institutional programs to assure high quality standards, with anonymous external peer review procedures and funding for the publication of these texts. Regarding quality, the work went through enhancement of bibliographic resources and funding of research initiatives. Finally, a bonus system was initiated for publication in academic journals (preferably in indexed publications) and attendance at international conferences. All these initiatives were novel for IEP in those years. Some of these initiatives have been continuously incorporated into the institutional practices despite the closure of the TTI.

B. Empowering the “black box” of the institute: internal management and the communication area

One of the major advances perceived by IEP directors following the implementation of the TTI, has been the strengthening of its internal mechanisms. This is perceived in two respects: the strengthening of its internal management and the establishment of a communication office.

Internal management of IEP

The Administrative Office of IEP has traditionally had few staff (*i.e.* about 20 persons between general administration and general services). The larger part of this staff has been working in the institution for more than 15 years.⁷² This closeness of staff to the institution led IEP, in terms of internal administration, to opt for the establishment of mechanisms of training, evaluation and promotion, and incentives for administrative staff, together with the provision of better equipment and software for the execution of the functions. In parallel, measures were also taken to improve the infrastructure of the institution's main premises.

Thus, the high retention rate of staff in the institution allowed the team to be trained in tax matters, human resources management and communication technologies, without fear of a possible flight of human capital. With regards to software, progress was made in the creation of the new intranet, the inauguration of which will take place in 2019, while improving the different platforms available to the institution's offices. In addition, as part of the modernization process, IEP worked on an operations manual and digitized all its documentation since 2006, having scanned other documents partially since 1993, which has significantly reduced the time spent searching for old documentation for participating in competitions and for carrying out administrative procedures before the state.

70 Annually, approximately US\$1,000 is awarded to researchers who publish in refereed journals, and US\$200 to those who publish in non-refereed journals.

71 Approximately US\$1,000 per year for each researcher with projects active at IEP.

72 According to IEP's management, 90% of the staff has been at the institution for more than 10 years and 80% more than 15 years. Interview with Juana Agapito.

TTI's support was also essential for improving the infrastructure of the institution's main premises, which are in a large house built in the first third of the 20th century. This included the realization of a number of physical improvements needed that had been postponed for a long time due to lack of funds (such as changing the electricity and water networks), as well as the establishment of wireless internet and the enhancement of the internet service.

The current administration of the institution points out that, thanks to the TTI intervention, the margin of error of the activities is around 5%, a percentage that meets the objective set in phase 2 of the initiative.⁷³

The communication area

Until the end of the 2000s, IEP did not have a communication strategy. This is to say that its incipient social networks were informally managed. At that time, it was common for researchers to sign short-term contracts with journalists or communicators to meet the dissemination requirements of specific projects. One of the components of the TTI sought to remedy this situation by setting up a communication office.

Thus, in July 2011, the implementation of the institute's communication area began. For this purpose, the recommendations made in the consultancy "Observing Communication in Instituto de Estudios Peruanos" by consultant Santiago Pedraglio were taken as reference. These recommendations considered it important to develop the institution's external communication. Hence, since 2011, the institution's official accounts were created on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and a new version of the website was launched on October 27, 2012. In parallel, there was promotion of dissemination of the institute's events, both the green tables and book presentations. Thanks to the new audiovisual material acquired (e.g. computers, a professional photo camera, a video recorder and audio recorders), these activities began to be recorded, edited and subsequently made available to the public on the IEP website and the YouTube channel. By 2013, improvements in the area resulted in a 44% increase in website visits compared to the previous year.

An important milestone for the Communication Office came between 2013 and 2014, when IEP celebrated its fifty years of institutional life. To this end, the Communication Office was key in coordinating the principal seminar "Instituto de Estudios Peruanos and the Social Sciences in Peru: a Critical Reflection", which had more than 160 attendees, 2,906 views of the videos of the seminar on the YouTube channel, and 2,638 views of the three articles on the seminar published on the website. In connection with this milestone in the history of the institution, IEP renewed, for the first time, its graphic image and logo.

In September 2016, the new institutional website was launched, as well as the online store of the editorial fund, which now allows online payment through the PayU platform. By 2017, the milestone of 100,000 followers on Facebook was exceeded; in 2018, 328,486 views were reached on YouTube, the highest number of views achieved since the creation of the channel. Thus, IEP became the most popular Peruvian think tank on Facebook and one of the most followed on Twitter.

73 Interview with Juana Agapito, IEP Administrator.

Table 1. Historical data on IEP media (at December 2018)

Media	Relevant fact
Facebook	109,127 followers 218,000 video views
Twitter	33,519 followers
YouTube	1,100,000 views
Website	1.284.699 visits ⁷⁴

Source: IEP Communication Office.

The IEP Communication Office also continuously monitored the appearance of affiliates in the media, both in the printed press (for example, through opinion columns), on television (with interviews on political and news programs) and on internet programs.⁷⁵ The social networks of the institute are in charge of presenting and disseminating these contents, following the standards of each social network, to guarantee a significant number of visits.

In short, with the implementation of the Communication Office and thanks to the TTI program, substantive improvements were made that led the institution to generate greater and better dissemination of the work of the researchers, while significantly increasing the number of visits to the website and creating “communities of followers” on the main social networks.

Despite these advances, there are still structural challenges that must be overcome. There is continuously more information, although it is not necessarily better information. Private social networks (such as WhatsApp groups) are preferred as information sources by users. Also, in the world of social media, there is little room for “deep knowledge”, which IEP has been cultivating for five decades. It is necessary for the institution’s researchers to maintain academic rigor, and to engage in information dissemination formats that are “concise, dynamic and attractive.”⁷⁶

C. Thinking about public policies to generate advocacy

The self-perception of IEP as an academic institution (midway between the world of universities and NGOs) made it not consider influencing public policies as a priority in its early years of existence, when the political context was radically different from today: after the military dictatorship of the 1970s, the 1980s were years of government of two traditional parties (Acción Popular and APRA) that had their own interlocutors in civil society. The 1990s were the years of the authoritarian government of Alberto Fujimori, who was reluctant to collaborate with academia. In this context, until the 1990s, advocacy for IEP researchers was fundamentally academic, through discussions that led to the publication of research in the Peruvian social sciences community. In general, in Peru, the gap between governments and civil society was very deep; therefore, it was not common for these two bodies to have dialogue in institutionalized spaces of deliberation of agendas and for support for the implementation of policies.⁷⁷

This situation began to change with the political transition of 2000, when the government of Alejandro Toledo showed great openness to inclusion of sectors that had opposed Alberto Fujimori’s authoritarianism in the 1990s. This is how IEP researchers took on political positions for the first time in the institution’s history: former Director Cecilia Blondet

⁷⁴ Counted since the creation of the new website in 2016.

⁷⁵ Among the international media are *Huffington Post* (United States), the BBC, *El País* (Spain), and Caracol (Colombia).

⁷⁶ “Diagnosis and Proposals for Action for the Communication Area of IEP” final report (consultancy conducted by David Rivera).

⁷⁷ On this subject, see Tanaka (2011).

was appointed Minister for Women in 2001; and among members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission — the institution charged with investigating the period of political violence unleashed by Sendero Luminoso — several IEP researchers and assistants were prominent, particularly former Director Carlos Iván Degregori. Also, the impact on policies grew thanks to the successful participation of IEP in consultancy competitions conducted by the Peruvian state. Thus, IEP performed consultancies for the Ministries of Education, Economy and Finance, Development and Social Inclusion, and Health, and for constitutionally autonomous entities.

The years of the TTI program coincided with an even greater political openness to academia and think tanks by the government of Ollanta Humala (2011-2016). Former IEP Director Carolina Trivelli was appointed Minister of the new Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, and was responsible for working on the institutional architecture of this institution. In her work, the experience gained in previous years was very important, when IEP opened a line of work around rural poverty and gender, two central themes for the new ministry.⁷⁸ In addition, for discussions on educational reform and the approval of the new university education authority, IEP researchers in education took on a lead role and were regularly summoned by various authorities and the press.⁷⁹

Among the objectives of the TTI program related to promoting advocacy during the first phase (between 2010 and 2014), it was proposed “to establish a new set of working papers and policy papers to expand the influence of IEP in political circles; to strengthen the links between policy and research through activities such as organizing debates between researchers and public officials; and to increase influence on local governments, communities and policies.”⁸⁰ During the second phase (from 2015 to 2018), this objective was confirmed through the strengthening of “academic networks and links with public policy makers and implementers, through the organization of seminars, workshops, congresses, courses, and green tables in Lima and in the provinces.”⁸¹

Firstly, with regards to the publication of working papers linking the academic production of IEP with the impact on public policies, since 2014 the publication of the virtual series called “Reflections for Management” began. These were working papers that sought to provide testimonials “in which professionals and social scientists who had the responsibility of implementing public policies discussed not only their successes but, mainly, the difficulties faced, the way they organized themselves and the decisions they made to overcome these difficulties.”⁸² Four working papers were published that fed the dialogue between academia and the state, through a new editorial series of IEP.

Secondly, IEP has fostered — throughout the period in which it was a beneficiary of the TTI — an approaching with public officials through the establishment of discussion tables, which included meetings with senior representatives of the Ministry of Education in 2011, with the Ministry of Culture in 2012⁸³ and with the Ministry of Production in 2015.⁸⁴

78 On this experience, see Trivelli and Vargas (2015). The importance of IEP in the creation of the new ministry was highlighted by TTI evaluators in 2013. See Young, Hauck and Engel (2013, p. 22).

79 It is important to note that the main occupation of most IEP researchers is their work at the institute. This is relevant, since much of the prestige of researchers is directly associated with IEP, although invitations made to them can on occasion be at the individual level. This, however, is a challenge for the institution for the coming years, as universities and their research centers have begun competing for professionals, offering them — in addition to stable positions as professors — a greater amount of research resources than the institute.

80 Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (2011).

81 Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (2015).

82 In addition to the text by Trivelli and Vargas, also published were those of Trivelli and Clausen (2015), of Glave (2016) and of Romero *et al.* (2016).

83 Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (2012).

84 Interview with Ricardo Cuenca, Director of Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. This meeting in particular was held at the request of the Ministry of Production, with the purpose of IEP researchers to comment on the project of industrial diversification, which was then fostered by this ministry.

Several IEP researchers have also participated in workshops organized by state institutions. This participation has been continuously monitored by the Board of Directors of the institution.⁸⁵

Finally, IEP has opted for the creation of dialogue spaces at the regional and provincial levels outside Lima. One example is the realization of the so-called “regional green tables” during the first phase of the TTI, in which researchers from the institute participated in dialogues with local actors in the regions of Peru.

These last two experiences (meetings with authorities and officials, and regional meetings) would serve as a basis for contributing to the realization of a mid-term meeting initiative, which began on the subject of the 2016 general elections: “Public Policy Dialogues”.

Public Policy Dialogues: an advocacy platform designing better public policies

Traditionally, the institute has had a high degree of prestige as an interlocutor between academics and various officials.⁸⁶ Thus, in 2016, the decision was made to carry out the initiative “Pensando el Perú 2016” (“Thinking Peru 2016”), which sought to contribute to the improvement of the quality and breadth of the electoral debate in the country, with a view to the 2016 presidential and congressional elections. Already since the 2011 elections, IEP had provided mechanisms for meetings and debate for policies aimed at the new administration. From this experience emerged the Public Policy Dialogues,⁸⁷ in order to make possible meetings between officials, academics and other stakeholders who could feed candidates’ proposals during the election campaign, and contribute to the design of policies during the first months of the new administration. “Dialogues” was an initiative led by IEP and supported by several partner institutions.⁸⁸ Given its duration (from 2016 to 2018), it became consolidated as the institution’s initiative of encounters with high-level policy-makers and authorities that received the most support.

A total of 29 working breakfasts were conducted with over 250 participants from all political orientations.⁸⁹ Eleven topics considered to be of national interest were addressed: health, education, decentralization, conflict prevention and management, justice, the environment, financial inclusion, fisheries, productive diversification, sustainable urban mobility, and social security modernization. In addition, meetings were held with project partners and the media.⁹⁰ The list of participants is extensive, and included some of the most influential personalities in Peruvian technocracy.

The discussions and subsequent agreements of these work groups were reflected in “public policy notes”, “summary brochures” and infographics for each topic, with specific recommendations of lines of work for the new government. This material was put online and subsequently disseminated by the communication area of the institute. To achieve greater dissemination of the initiative, the design of the communication component

85 Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (2013) The list is extensive, and includes the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Housing, among others.

86 Regarding this, see the assessments made by members of the political and academic spheres of IEP in the reports of consultant Santiago Pedraglio on the communication area of the institute.

87 Consult the website: <http://dialogosperu.pe/wp/>

88 These included the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), the Embassy of Spain in Peru, IDEA Peru, USAID (United States Agency for International Development), the ILO (International Labour Organization), the WHO (World Health Organization), and the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), among others.

89 The full list of participants (including Ministers, former Ministers and senior officials) for each topic is available on the web: <http://dialogosperu.pe/wp/category/descargas/>, in the final section of each “public policy note” or “brochure”.

90 Report of the Director General of IEP.

was very important. Thus, four of the 29 working breakfasts were held with the communicators of the initiative's partners, with owners and directors of the media, and with editors and journalists. Meetings were also held with journalists in Lima, Arequipa and several regions of the Peruvian Amazon region (*i.e.* Amazonas, Loreto, Madre de Dios, San Martín, and Ucayali). These meetings sought to establish dialogue with media journalists to invite them to address important issues during the election campaign, not to provoke a media confrontation between parties and candidates. Also, the printed material developed by the Public Policy Dialogues initiative was made available to the local media as a contribution to their communication work in the context of the 2016 general elections.

Finally, the workshop “2016 Elections Forum. The agenda of public policies for the next government” was held in the city of Arequipa, also as a way to promote debate on public policies in the 2016 election campaign. This line of work continued in 2018 with the realization of various events in relation to the regional and municipal elections of that year in Arequipa, Ayacucho and Piura.

In short, the experience of Public Policy Dialogues consolidated the institution's advocacy capacities, specifically in its ability to convene a large number of actors (many of them with dissimilar interests), and to produce policy recommendations agreed on through consensus. Although in the past IEP had organized such encounters,

they had been specific and had not been supported by the institution's Communication Office. TTI's financial support allowed IEP to allocate resources to institutionalizing and improving best practices in public advocacy.

6. Conclusions and lessons learned

In its beginnings, IEP saw itself as an academic center and (organizationally) as a federation of independent researchers. In recent years, it has taken on a think tank identity, particularly around the public policies that were at the heart of the professional life of its researchers (including rural poverty, education and information technologies, to name a few). The managers have agreed, through consensus, not to seek having a single institutional objective, or a single market niche. Along these lines, traditional academic research and work at the level of consultancies and the impact on public policies are fostered. This combination of strategies distinguishes IEP from other organizations in Peru, which, thanks to the TTI, has been able to harmoniously integrate its institutional life.

Thus, TTI's core funding allowed progress in the creation and empowerment of the institute's areas. Highlighted here are the areas of communication and research, as well as the improvement in public advocacy and administrative capacities. All interviewees pointed out that the situation of the institution, without the TTI, would have been more precarious, given the form of traditional “cooperative” funding that the institution had. In this regard, and considering the post-TTI scenario, a lesson learned has been rethinking the current funding system (through indirect costs), and the commitment to ensuring the effective involvement of researchers in the institutional life of IEP. Thus, the institute is initiating an internal self-evaluation system, which will allow identifying the contributions of researchers to IEP. The nature of these contributions will not be exclusively economic; efforts will be made for every researcher to contribute with different types of capital, for example, by being present in the media on behalf of the institution, through the sales of books, or by participating in the work tables between the state and civil society.

The academic production of IEP in the institutional programs carried out under the TTI program has led to the publication of 16 books in the period between 2014 and 2018, which has allowed the institute to maintain its brand in the Peruvian academic market. This research has been enhanced by quality control mechanisms and new research

inputs that the TTI provided over eight years. The institutional programs have in turn allowed the cohesion of researchers around cross-cutting themes (such as inequality and middle classes), something particularly valuable given the cooperative nature of the institute. As a lesson learned, IEP has reaffirmed the importance of the Institutional Programs and is about to publish a new one in 2019.

The Communication Office has been able to substantially improve the Institute's external communication capabilities. Currently, IEP has a number of tools that have allowed it to continue positioning its brand in the midst of the surge in the importance of social networks. As a lesson learned, the challenges of the institution are to be able to create products that — without losing rigor — allow translating their results to an audience that demands concise information with a strong impact.

The case of the Public Policy Dialogues demonstrated the ample breadth of convocation that Instituto de Estudios Peruanos has among authorities, policy-makers and stakeholders. As a lesson learned, for the current IEP managers, this is a path that must be continued on. To do this, the suggestion is to establish alliances with new actors. For example, there is a great potential to work with research centers and universities in the regions of Peru outside Lima, which have also begun to have processes of modernization following the new standards imposed on them by the new university law.

The next few years place the institute before the challenge of continuing to enhance its capacities for academic production, communication and advocacy, in a context where the universities of Lima — having much greater budgets than IEP — have also begun to strengthen their research, networking and communication teams. At the same time, the universities offer their researchers and professors job stability and higher salaries (although, of course, their personal research agendas may be narrower). For this reason, according to IEP Directors, the institute's strategy in the coming years must include permanent dialogue in relation to a changing context, allowing the institute to direct its brand towards high-impact communication with an effect on the public, activities in which the university competitors tend to be less proactive. In this regard, the recent decision to create a public opinion area within IEP responds precisely to this strategy of producing data that is in high demand by the media and policy-makers.

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Annexes

Annex 1. List of interviewees

Through semi-structured interviews around four axes (IEP before the TTI, the application to the initiative, the improvements witnessed during implementation, and future challenges for the institution) and following the question guide suggested by INESAD, a dialogue was held with eight persons who knew about the process and the impact of the TTI

on the institution. All of them agreed to be quoted in this document.

- Ricardo Cuenca, Director General of IEP (2015 to date)
- Carolina Trivelli, former Director General (2001-2004)
- Marcos Cueto, former Director General (2009-2010)
- Natalia González, former Director of Activities (2013-2014)
- Patricia Zárate, Director of the Economy (2015 to date)
- Roxana Barrantes, former Director General (2011-2014)
- Kathia Albuja, Communication Officer (2016 to date)
- Juana Agapito, General Administrator

Research published by IEP (2014-2018)

	Título	Autor(es)	N° de páginas
2014			
1	<i>Etnicidades en construcción: Identidad y acción social en contextos de desigualdad</i>	Ricardo Cuenca (ed.)	216
2	<i>Salud, vulnerabilidades, desigualdad</i>	Roxana Barrantes y Peter Busse (eds.)	142
3	<i>Becas, bases y votos. Clientelismo y construcción partidaria subnacional en el Perú: el caso de Alianza para el Progreso</i>	Rodrigo Barrenechea	100
2015			
4	<i>Poéticas del duelo: ensayos sobre arte, memoria y violencia política en el Perú</i>	Víctor Vich	312
5	<i>No hay mañana sin ayer: batallas por la memoria y consolidación democrática en el Perú</i>	Carlos Degregori, Tamia Portugal, Gabriel Salazar y Renzo Aroni	316
6	<i>La educación universitaria en el Perú: democracia, expansión y desigualdades</i>	Ricardo Cuenca (ed.)	160
7	<i>Políticas en justicia transicional: miradas comparativas sobre el legado de la CVR</i>	Ludwig Huber y Ponciano del Pino (comps).	264
2016			
8	<i>Sólo zapatillas de marca. Jóvenes limeños y los límites de la inclusión desde el mercado</i>	Francesca Uccelli y Mariel García	414
9	<i>Los nuevos incas: la economía política del desarrollo rural andino en Quispicanchi (2000-2010)</i>	Raúl Hernández	436

2017			
10	<i>Deconstruyendo el rombo. Consideraciones sobre la nueva clase media en el Perú</i>	Ludwig Huber y Leonor Lamas	152
11	<i>Burócratas y tecnócratas: la infructuosa búsqueda de la eficiencia empresarial en el Estado peruano del siglo XXI</i>	Alvaro Gálvez y Álvaro Grompone	234
12	<i>Acá no hay ventanillas: la burocracia de la calle en los programas sociales</i>	Diego Cerna, Luis García y Félix Puémape	226
13	<i>Atravesar el silencio: memorias sobre el conflicto armado interno y su tratamiento en la escuela</i>	Francesca Uccelli, José Carlos Agüero, María Angélica Pease y Tamia Portugal	394
2018			
14	<i>Desigualdad y pobreza en un contexto de crecimiento económico</i>	Ursula Aldana, Jhonatan Clausen y Angelo Cozzubo	308
15	<i>Señores del pasado: arqueólogos, museos y huaqueros en el Perú</i>	Raúl H. Asensio	580
16	<i>¿El mito sigue vivo? Privatización y diferenciación social en la educación peruana</i>	Andrea Román y Alejandra Ramírez	100



CHAPTER SEVEN

Promoting Quality Research in Bolivia: The Think Tank Initiative at INESAD

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1 Case summary

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) is a program launched in 2008 by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada to strengthen several research institutions in developing countries through the implementation of core funding. This program was designed to improve the quality of research, strengthen organizational performance and increase the impact on public policies of beneficiary institutions. In this context, the present document relates the experience of TTI within INESAD Foundation (Instituto de Estudios Avanzados en Desarrollo – Advanced Development Studies Institution), in the period from 2010 to 2018, using the case study methodology.

From the perspective of the beneficiaries, the TTI program accelerated the process of formalizing and strengthening INESAD, allowing it to be considered, continuously from 2012 to date, the most important think tank in Bolivia, according to the University of Pennsylvania ranking. During this period, over 90 high-quality evidence-based research works were carried out. In relation to the impact on public policies, the work of INESAD played a prominent role, as it achieved important combined advocacy, both in its research products and in dissemination activities at the national and international level, as in the discussion of technical content in Bolivia's public policies. Despite the fact that the implementation of TTI at INESAD may be considered a success case, it was not free of different implementation problems and organizational changes; however, the implementation of everything committed to was achieved in the period from 2016 to 2018. Of note is the fact that although INESAD became strengthened in its quality and impact on public policies, it failed to fully become a financially sustainable institution.

2. History of INESAD

As a starting point of this case study, this section will present the chronology of the main historical events of INESAD that occurred between 2006 and 2018, as well as the socioeconomic context in which the TTI program was developed.

INESAD milestones

2006: Instituto de Estudios Avanzados en Desarrollo (INESAD) was created in a virtual form, with the aim of seeking innovative and impartial solutions — based on theory and empirical analysis — for solving the problems of development in Bolivia and Latin America.

2007: The first publications were made in the areas of macroeconomics and environmental economics.

2008: The civil society organization named Instituto de Estudios Avanzados en Desarrollo, INESAD, was established with the aim of carrying out economic and social studies and research.

2009: The first Bolivian Conference on Economic Development, CBDE 2009 was organized jointly with the Society of Economists of Bolivia and Universidad Privada de Bolivia (UPB).

2010: INESAD was chosen among the 12 Latin American research institutes winners of the TTI program. On September 14, 2010, Grant Agreement No. 106141-010 was signed between International Development Research Center (IDRC) and INESAD with the following objectives: 1) to increase the quality of research through the establishment of a robust and multidisciplinary research team; 2) to strengthen organizational performance to achieve long-term institutional and financial sustainability; and (3) to improve the capacity to influence public policies by creating effective relationships with public bodies and achieving a clear institutional image.

2011: INESAD as a civil society entity was closed, and legal status was obtained for Fundación INESAD, making possible the beginning of activities with TTI.

2012: INESAD began to seek activities aimed at contributing to or raising the quality of public policies and human resources, through the production of research and the organization of conferences and seminars. That same year, INESAD was included in the University of Pennsylvania's *Global Go To Think Tank Report*, which evaluates 6,500 think tanks worldwide.

2013: INESAD ranked among the most influential think tanks in Central and South America. It became the most important think tank in Bolivia and the first to be among the best, worldwide, in environmental issues.

2014: From April 30 and May 8, INESAD organized, in the city of Santa Cruz, the 12th PEP (Partnership for Economic Policy) Annual Conference and General Meeting, which brought together over 200 participants from all over the world, around the theme: "Inclusive Growth and Employment in Developing Countries."

2015: Between October 15 and 17, INESAD, together with Universidad Privada de Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the Society of Economists of Bolivia and the Bolivian Academy of Economic Sciences, organized the 20th Annual Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA) in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The event brought together 785 participants from universities, research centers, central banks, multilateral agencies, and other actors from around the world. Also in attendance were two Nobel laureates: Lars Peter Hansen (University of Chicago) and Peter Diamond (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT).

2016: On July 16, INESAD celebrated its tenth anniversary. In commemoration of this, approximately 30 researchers from all over the country prepared the book titled *El ABC del desarrollo en Bolivia (The ABC of Development in Bolivia)*. The document consists of 30 chapters that systematically analyze the development of the country over the last 25 years, from different dimensions, in alphabetical order (e.g. Water, Waste, Crime, Exports, Metropolitan Areas).

2017 and 2018: INESAD updated and developed some management products that were lacking, in order to have a comprehensive framework of Strategic Policies and a Monitoring and Evaluation System. With the support of IDRC's Opportunity Fund, the following products were developed: Ethics and Quality Policy of Research Products, Organizational Structure and Functions Policy, Management and Accountability System, and Sustainability and Resource Mobilization Policy.

This work allowed us to identify 2010 as the advancement breakthrough year for INESAD, since prior to the start of TTI, INESAD was a civil society institution, and it was necessary to migrate to a foundation in order to manage its resources properly. As for the activities, before TTI, the institution was made up of professionals who shared the costs and, depending on the project, the office space of the Grupo Integral S.R.L. consulting firm were used, always carrying out high-quality research and consultancies, but under individual agendas and for various ends. As a result of the TTI program's support, the researchers agreed on a research agenda and coordinated the efforts of the entire team towards the generation of quality, evidence-based research aimed at building public policy advocacy capacities seeking a model of institutional sustainability in the long-term.

To understand the way in which TTI was developed within INESAD, an explanation is needed of the socioeconomic context (which was the framework of the intervention) and how it changed over time. The case study is filtered through the perspective of three non-exclusive analysis units: a) the outcome of the instrument, or core funding, b) the perception of beneficiaries regarding TTI transformations in INESAD, and c) the results, in terms of products, activities and impacts, on public policies. The case is presented by means of a chain of reflection questions, under the qualitative methodology of case studies, which are presented in detail in Annex 1.

3. Socioeconomic context

The Conceptual Proposal Note¹ (CPN) presented in 2010 by INESAD, to access TTI resources, stated: “(...) there is high demand for research, both nationally and internationally. It is thus feasible to assume the possibility of promoting a research agenda, and that TTI resources not be allocated to finance research, but rather only operational costs.” It follows from the same proposal that INESAD could increase its “link”⁹⁹ with key actors of public policies in Bolivia, because its “articulation” with technical levels in the various ministries was significant. In addition, the socioeconomic context of the country “(...) is very favorable to the expectations of the institution (...) because considerable social transformations were taking place.”

Table 1 gives an illustrative presentation of a structural⁹³ diagnosis of the general and specific socioeconomic context of the country at the time of presentation of the CPN.

Table 1: Analysis of the socioeconomic context

General environment	Specific environment
<p>Factors of development: The country was characterized by having introduced a new development paradigm as the organizing framework of public policies, called “Living Well”. This model of development raised the need to live in harmony with the cycles of Mother Earth, the Cosmos, Life, and History, and to reconcile this balance with all forms of existence, taking into account the cosmovision of the native peoples.</p>	<p>Level of competence: INESAD Foundation was in an advantageous competitive position because it had a team of high-level researchers. In addition there was the change of most civil servants towards considering that there was ample space for collaboration in the design of public policies</p>
<p>Economic factors: The country experienced a period of economic boom, based on a remarkable increase in the price of raw materials that, together with the cancellation of foreign debt, allowed the government to promote the National Development Plan to achieve Living Well.</p>	<p>Ability to articulate: The degree of coordination of INESAD with various public bodies was important. INESAD’s reputation allowed the opening up of various public spheres to carry out technical consultations.</p>
<p>Sociocultural factors: The country went through a significant process of social inclusion, particularly of indigenous and native groups. Firstly, some social movements played an active role in the country’s political model. Secondly, greater social mobility of the vulnerable population was observed.</p>	<p>Linkability: Linkage with senior public policy decision makers was very incipient from the outset.</p>
<p>Environmental factors: A model of respect for Mother Earth was proposed, together with incorporation of added value to raw materials, the results of which were scarcely verifiable in practice</p>	

Source: Own preparation, based on interviews.

91 IDRC made a call for proposals, in Latin America and the Caribbean, aimed at implementing TTI. This call required the submission of a Proposal Concept Note establishing the baseline of the proposing institution, as well as the central elements of the proposal.

92 The context analysis used in this document considers two categories of interaction between actors: (i) linkage, which implies a direct relationship, and (ii) articulation, which represents an indirect interaction.

93 The Factor Analysis of Socioeconomic Factors (FASF) methodology was used.

As Ximena Coronado⁹⁴ stated, “Later on, it became clear that the link with the makers of policies was not such a direct process; it had a political component that often went beyond the technical one in scope.” Public policies in the country had a pre-established pattern or design and cooperation resources began to decrease significantly. This occurred because the country had a higher income of its own and was already considered a “middle-income” country.

According to Nozick (1998), when predesigned public policies exist, that is, emerging from a political system that takes into consideration the historical circumstances of individuals as a central element, it becomes more difficult for the generation of knowledge that does not correspond to the predetermined pattern to be linked to decision-making in public policies.

In Bolivia, this context is verified by the paradigm of Living Well as the organizing framework of public policies, oriented to the demands of various social movements. Gustavo Machicado⁹⁵ stated, “During my tenure as Director it was very difficult to access policy makers, because they were not as interested in knowledge as they were in ideology (...), in development plans everything revolves around Living Well.” The idea expressed in the CPN, which sought an important space for linking with public policy actors, was weakened from this perspective

4. Development of the Think Tank Initiative at INESAD

Based on semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the INESAD team, a presentation is made of the decisions that were perceived as successful and those that were not. Three established filters are applied (*i.e.* core funding, beneficiaries, products, and activities).

A. Core funding

• What was the diagnosis of INESAD when applying to the *Think Tank Initiative*?

The CPN argued that the vast majority of development research was conducted in northern countries by researchers who, for the most part, had only a theoretical understanding of the real obstacles faced by countries such as Bolivia. Despite the fact that INESAD was “the number one institution of Bolivia according to the IDEAS ranking, of a total of 32 institutions registered in the country (...), INESAD was in a stage of growth and did not yet have an institutional structure or a concerted research agenda.”

In this framework, baseline diagnostics established the following elements:

First: At INESAD there coexisted elements typical of a growing organization, but with some embryonic lags still present. Therefore, the TTI program was to serve not to promote a research agenda, but rather to help cover the institution’s main operational expenses. With greater financial slack, INESAD would be able to develop at the organizational level and mobilize more resources for research.

Second: The CPN stressed that, at that time, INESAD depended on the work of few people, and that without them the institution would have less prospects of continuity, making it necessary to strengthen the organizational structure in order to be able to react to the possible loss of specific human capital. Only in this way could an independent research space be consolidated, generating knowledge and proposing viable solutions to public policy problems in Bolivia.

94 Ximena Coronado, current President of the Board of Directors of INESAD Foundation

95 Gustavo Machicado, former Director of INESAD and current senior researcher.

Third: The main constraint to the long-term development of INESAD was physical infrastructure. The most sustainable solution seemed to be the purchase of an own physical space.

Fourth: The main operating expenses of INESAD were those of administration (*i.e.* associated staff, support services and rent).

Based on this diagnosis, Strategic Core Funding⁹⁶ was requested from TTI, which was ideal to strengthen an institution that operated with an incipient institutional and financial structure, with few sources of funding and with a good reputation and leadership in research. According to Gustavo Machicado, “It is often the case that researchers, in the search for increased short-term income, whether personal or to cover the costs of the institution, neglect the strategic vision”; that is, financial weaknesses could have led to strategic inconsistencies at INESAD. “We have often”, he adds, “relied on a small number of sources of funding.”

Specifically, the Grant Agreement signed between the two institutions stated that Strategic Core Funding would help ensure adequate infrastructure for research, dissemination, training, and the institutional and financial sustainability of INESAD in the long-term. Apart from the funds allocated to the production of content and the impact on public policies, specific funds were set out in the budget of the Grant Agreement for the development of a fundraising strategy and related activities.

- **How did Strategic Core Funding evolve at INESAD?**

Coronado mentioned that “INESAD was basically a group of high-level researchers and consultants who were independent in their objectives, and who shared an office and rent.” The greatest virtue of core funding was flexibility, “without which, during these years, an organizational structure would not have been achieved, and less so mature know-how in administration, management, communication, and mobilization of funds. I think TTI has worked very well over the years (...) and I believe we are close to having a model of financial sustainability.”

Financial sustainability: In the short-term, INESAD’s idea was to purchase an own space in order to reduce rental costs and ensure the salaries of the team of researchers. Lykke Andersen⁹⁷ stated that “with TTI, INESAD could look to the future with more confidence, because it had secured covering its expenses every year.” Initially, INESAD prepared a basic global budget annually, but “we didn’t give much thought to how to cover costs in the long-term”; that is, the construction of long-term financial sustainability capabilities was neglected.

With TTI, INESAD funded a team of high-level researchers with whom most of the objectives of quality and advocacy in public policies were achieved. However, it was not possible to reduce dependence on TTI in relation to operational costs until the beginning of 2017, although the program’s share of research costs was moderately reduced (Annex 5).

INESAD did not see the need to develop a core funding⁹⁸ strategy until 2014. All interviewees mentioned the many ideas that were discussed in order to achieve the institutional and financial sustainability of INESAD, but which failed to establish a formal core funding strategy. Moreover, in practice, INESAD operated in a very flexible manner, based on different policies and instruments (*e.g.* overhead policy and resource mobilization strategy). TTI’s strategic funding

96 This scheme is typical of nascent and embryonic institutions, where funding provided continuity to the institution, strengthened it and activated a funding process.

97 Lykke Eg Andersen, former Executive Director of INESAD and current senior researcher.

98 Such strategies constitute a long-term management plan that sets out how an institution aims to achieve its institutional and financial sustainability over a long-term horizon. This involves covering their fixed costs over time, while also consolidating and strengthening their institutional processes and their products. A core funding strategy, involving more than a fundraising strategy, is a management model with different components that contribute to an institution’s process of attaining maturity.

was combined with overhead⁹⁹ allocation, where each research project covered a part of the overall expenses, but stable criteria were not established until 2014.

Resource mobilization strategy: In this regard, Andersen states that “there were no adequate incentives” and that, although in general the targets set with TTI in the Grant Agreement were met, the internal expectations of the research team were not satisfied. “We knew that TTI funding had goals and targets, and that it would not last forever.” Hence, an “adequate” resource mobilization strategy needed to be activated.

Machicado states that “the effort to mobilize more resources was very difficult; it was very difficult to reach the policy makers and most often there were no results. A lot of human resources and time were spent.” This strategy was closely linked to projects aimed at influencing public policies. The scheme produced, on many occasions, a short circuit with a scheme of public policies that had a pre-established nature, and where “the generation of knowledge was increasingly less valued in the country.” (Beatriz Muriel)¹⁰⁰

Regarding incentives, for Machicado “The TTI program generated, to some extent, a comfort zone in INESAD.” He explains that “because there was a wage base (...), we concentrated on research products and dissemination. We had to dedicate efforts in all directions to seek to influence public policies (...) and the search for funds declined.” As a result, many management and funding activities were left in the hands of the Executive Director. For Coronado, it is worth questioning whether TTI’s objectives were not overly ambitious, that is, to seek to influence public policies and to be sustainable with a single instrument: core funding.

Management of core funding: According to the official information of INESAD, provided by Beatriz Muriel¹⁰¹, it may be observed that most of the objectives were achieved; however, many of the beneficiaries consider that they did not have the managerial skills needed to optimize core funding. Machicado reflects, “I think that what was missing was a manager within the organizational structure to lead strategic and financial planning; we, as economists, do not know everything.” As a result, on several occasions, unnecessary contracting was done, or contracting without well-defined products in its scope.

Machicado states that “at the conclusion of one project, no other one was sought. We didn’t carry out the necessary procedures that fast.” Consequently, the financial structure was not balanced with the priorities and sense of urgency required. “Sometimes we accepted projects somewhat unrelated to INESAD, just to cover expenses.”

Strategic adaptation: INESAD is currently in a strategic adaptation process. The focus of intervention has been the reduction of costs in the face of the finalization of the TTI program, and the creation of the foundations for institutional sustainability going forward. This strategy is perceived as correct by all beneficiaries and is reflected in greater institutional commitment on the part of the researchers.

- **What have been the strengths and weaknesses in the design of TTI?**

Machicado states that “the main strength in the design of TTI has been the flexibility of core funding to allocate funds within the agreed objectives (...). This feature is important, because it allows designating program funds where the institution considers they will be most beneficial.” This, assuming that the institution has a clear strategic vision and a certain degree of flexibility, allows it to adapt to a dynamic environment while respecting the objectives agreed on.

99 In this strategy, the institution divides its overhead among a number of projects. It is called a “model of action”, as it is a common formula for all projects. When there is a Strategic Fund (SF), it is viable to supplement it with a model of action that reduces the burden of the SF over time.

100 Beatriz Muriel, current Executive Director of INESAD.

101 Beatriz Muriel, current Executive Director of INESAD.

For Coronado, “linking all INESAD activities with public policies has limited the possibility of diversifying sources of income generation”, while at the same time there are good experiences with civil society, also funded by IDRC. For example, the work of the Employment, Income and Production Network, EMINPRO, promoted technical discussion and allowed INESAD to work more directly with civil society actors, making possible differentiated proposals¹⁰² for public content with regards to determining the minimum wage based on labor productivity.

B. Transformations and implementation

- **What relevant institutional changes¹⁰³ took place? How did they occur?**

For Andersen, “It could be said that TTI accelerated the process of formalizing and strengthening INESAD.” For Machicado, “TTI directed INESAD’s activities towards research and dissemination. Before, we were part of the Grupo Integral S.R.L. consulting firm, with a sphere of work that was more individual.” The production of knowledge was also directed towards combined advocacy in having an effect on public policies, focusing on activities, products and impact (the latter being understood as the change of discourse or content of a public policy).

As a result of a greater production and dissemination of knowledge, since 2012, and as mentioned above, INESAD came to be considered the most important think tank in Bolivia according to the prestigious ranking of the University of Pennsylvania, and has maintained this position continuously throughout all these years. For Machicado, “The dissemination strategy was very successful. We learned a lot about how to create networks, not only on a website or on Facebook, but also within spaces for face-to-face and virtual discussion and dissemination.”

With regards to the quality of research, as INESAD activities and outputs grew, the number of partners and consultants per output also increased. According to the diagnosis done for the preparation of the Ethics and Quality Policy for Research Products, this process expanded the network of actors of INESAD, but also increased the degree of variability in the quality of research products. Although an average level of quality was maintained, the number of products that did not reach the desired standard quality also increased.

Andersen and Machicado emphasize that INESAD Foundation developed several strategies in order to adapt to the socioeconomic changes of the country, which have been adjusted over time and have had mixed results. Among the most important ones are:

2014 Institutional Strategic Plan: This plan was designed with the purpose of improving the strategic alignment of the institution with the socioeconomic environment and INESAD governance.

2016-2020 Strategic Resource Mobilization Plan: It was formulated in detail in 2015. The strategy was partially implemented, owing to the lack of qualified staff for its development and the significant reduction of international cooperation activities in the country. The strategy was updated in 2017, based on a business model that is being applied and aims to diversify INESAD’s sources of funding.

2014 Strategic Communication Plan: This was one of the most successful strategies, because INESAD was fully trained in the subject and because it was able to develop various communication products very much in tune with the reality of the country.

What have been the main implementation difficulties?

¹⁰² The impact measure allows changing a predefined position in relation to public policies

¹⁰³ Learning process through which institutions identify changing circumstances in their environment and adapt.

Machicado indicates that “we lacked having a manager”; that is, someone who could look after timely coordination of activities, monitoring of results, strategies, and internal control of beneficiaries. “For example, we had weak financial planning; we did not make provisions for the funds to make the adjustment needed as a result of currency volatility in the program, and now we have a financial mismatch in the closing phase.”¹⁰⁴

Coronado states that “Although we did develop statutes and a monitoring and evaluation system, it was difficult for the researchers to comply with them.” Most INESAD researchers are founders of the institution and have dual roles and hierarchy, generating a weak balance between governance and internal control of results. However, the current Executive Director of INESAD has restructured, in the last two years, the entire governance system, and implemented a system for monitoring and evaluation of results.

How has the issue of gender in the workplace been addressed at the organizational level? What gender methods, policies and processes have been implemented?

For Andersen and Machicado, “INESAD, since its inception, has dealt with the matter of gender in a very balanced way. This is reflected, at all levels, in the composition of their work team.” As can be seen from the official data of the institution, the Assembly and the Board of Directors of INESAD have always shown gender parity. The position of Executive Director of the institution has also been occupied 50% each by men and women, and the team of researchers, partners, administrative staff, and interns has also been balanced; on some occasions even, more work was done with women than with men.

It is important to note that this gender parity has not been the result of a positive discrimination policy of INESAD, but rather of a natural means of meritocratic designation. The Grant Agreement signed between INESAD and IDRC in 2010, renewed in 2014, does not establish any specific gender commitment between the two institutions.

C. Activities, products and impact

For further comprehension, the results obtained by INESAD during TTI implementation will be divided into two categories: i) processes aimed at institutionalization, and ii) processes aimed at quality and impact of products and activities. Both categories have documentary and statistical support (Annexes 2, 4 and 5).

What have been the results of the institution following the TTI program?

Institutionalization process

The Grant Agreement signed by INESAD established the annual targets for mobilizing funds for research, which were met throughout the period from 2010 to 2018. Noteworthy among the funding sought, due to their scope and budget, are the projects with Danish Cooperation (DANIDA) for the period from October 2014 to December 2016, the funds from the LACEA Conference, and a thematic project with the University of Groningen (Netherlands). Excluded among the funds obtained by INESAD are the consultancies that were paid directly to the researchers. It is important to note that TTI funds diminished both for research and operational costs. Despite this, dependence on operational costs continues.

Since October 2017, INESAD received additional financial support from TTI, called the Opportunity Fund. This initiative aimed to consolidate the institutional strengthening of INESAD through the development of strategic policies, the development of a monitoring and evaluation system and the improvement of the skills of administrative staff. The

¹⁰⁴ TTI support for the second phase was reduced by about 20%, due to the devaluation of the Canadian dollar against the boliviano. However, the exchange rate adjustment was made only beginning in October 2017, with INESAD having to absorb the related losses since then.

initiative fulfilled the commitments of the Grant Agreement with the TTI¹⁰⁵ program, as presented in the Final Report to Opportunity Fund, prepared by Beatriz Muriel in October 2018.

The importance of this package of institutional reform activities is as follows:

Research Ethics and Quality of Research Products Policy: Its importance lies in the fact that, to date, the issues of ethics and quality were handled at INESAD in an informal manner by senior researchers. In this context, an expert was hired to prepare the document entitled “Guidelines for the Strategic Policy on Ethics and Quality in Research Products”, which included a diagnosis¹⁰⁶ of the quality of the various products that INESAD had developed.

Organizational Structure and Functions Policy: conceived under the need to reform and strengthen the organizational structure, where human, financial and other resources are managed optimally and effectively and, in addition, contribute to management by products and results, not by processes, since often this does not result in specific products. Based on this policy, project leaders become responsible for the entire cycle of the projects, and the manner of working is based on a matrix and minimally functional structure. To date, this form of work has made it possible to reduce administrative costs substantially, with the same administrative-financial products as in previous years.

Management and Accountability System: Since the first phase of the TTI program, INESAD worked on the basis of various strategic plans. These tools were periodically improved and updated, but there was no clear management and accountability system. For this reason, the internal regulations were redefined together with the guidelines of the system and the management and accountability tools to be developed each year.

Annual Operating Plan (AOP): Since the end of 2018, a monitoring and evaluation system has been implemented. An expert was also hired to develop a monitoring and evaluation software tailored to the specific requirements of INESAD, allowing for rapid online filling out and evaluation. In addition, indicators were designed for each activity, which made it possible not only to know progress made, but also to evaluate compliance with the goals of the Institutional Strategic Plan (PEI) and the AOP.

Sustainability and Fund Mobilization Policy: The 2016-2020 Strategic Resource Mobilization Plan was fine-tuned and financial sustainability guidelines were incorporated. The new policy will work on three fronts: a) to apply a business model allowing, in the medium term, to generate the financial sustainability of INESAD; b) to apply a management expenditure policy (overhead); and c) to acquire greater internal and managerial skills to mobilize research funds.

It is important to note that the research carried out in recent years by INESAD has had an overhead of 15%, and that since May 2018 this percentage has fallen to 9% because the researchers no longer have the fixed salaries they received with the TTI program. It is estimated that for the TTI program, there was an overhead of more than 50%. For this reason, the resource mobilization strategy cannot be based solely on research, but also on other activities which make it possible to pay operational costs.

105 In particular, the design of strategic policies responded to points A.1 (implementing and institutionalizing a quality assurance framework for research), B.1 (developing, implementing and institutionalizing a strategic results plan for the beneficiaries, developing a monitoring and evaluation system, and improving administrative and financial performance) and B.2 (developing, implementing and institutionalizing a fund mobilization strategy).

106 The importance of these new guidelines is that they seek to reduce the volatility of research products and introduce an internal culture of commitment.

Table 1: Products, 2010-2018

Products	Number
Articles in refereed journals	+15
Books	9
Working papers	90
Summary newsletters	23
Educational booklets	4
Other bulletins	720

Source: Own preparation, based on various INESAD reports.

Quality and impact¹⁰⁷

In the period from 2010 to 2018, INESAD developed a significant amount of intellectual production and dissemination activities. Table 1 presents six categories of INESAD products, highlighting the production of 90 working papers (Annex 4), several books and various refereed scientific articles. In terms of content dissemination, besides participation in seminars and work groups, INESAD's activities focused on the dissemination of evidence-based news through three blogs that are well-known in the field: i) Development Roast, with more than 460 outputs, ii) Desarrollo sobre la mesa, with 230 outputs, and iii) the EMINPRO blog, with 30 outputs.

In January 2012, INESAD began to disseminate news, mainly through Facebook. By the end of that year, it had 440 followers; by the end of 2018, it had nearly 8,800. For Machicado, "The 2014 Strategic Communication Plan has been very successful and has shown intense work on dissemination, through the website and social networks, especially Facebook."

Andersen and Machicado comment that "In the communication strategy, the media journalists were called so that they could meet us. Since then we have been interviewed continuously." The INESAD research products are referential at the national level. Coronado indicates that "The results of EMINPRO have been published often." The book *El ABC del desarrollo en Bolivia*, published in 2016, was accessed on the INESAD website more than 16,000 times.

Interactions of "relationships" with government officials and other key public policy actors also increased. Coronado mentions that "We worked at LACEA with Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS) of the office of the Vice President of the Republic and with the Vice President himself (...) We also have good relations with the National Institute of Statistics (INE), with the Economic Policy Analysis Unit (UDAPE), with various ministries, with international cooperation, with the National Chamber of Commerce (CNC), and the Confederation of Private Business of Bolivia (CEPB)."

As a result of this relationship work – indirect interaction rather than liaising (direct interaction) –, important results were achieved in the sphere of impact on public policies in three areas of action: a) activities, b) products and c) impact on the content of public policies. To evaluate these spheres of intervention, a perceptual measurement tool was developed based on the document "¿Cómo monitorear y evaluar la incidencia en políticas públicas?" of Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC).

Table 2 presents the results of the application of this instrument, which measures the intensity of an activity and the focus of impact on public policies on a Likert scale.¹⁰⁸ Then, these results were compared with various official

107 For more details, please visit our website: <https://www.inesad.edu.bo/#>

108 The scale ranges from 0 to 5, where 0 is the minimum value and 5 is the maximum.

Table 2: Intensity (0 to 5 points) of the focus of impact in activities and products

Impact focus	Activity	Intensity	Comment
	Promotion of public policy reforms	3,50	Santa Cruz Development Agenda with the Ministry of the Interior; child labor with the National Institute of Statistics (INE); climate change with the Ministry of the Environment and Water; social progress indices with the Government of Tarija, and impact assessments
Activities	Advising to public officials or political parties	3,50	On several occasions
	Technical assistance in the implementation of public policies	3,50	On several occasions
	Monitoring and evaluation of public policies	1,00	Analysis of structure and not of the situation. Data on the employment situation; periodic analysis
Products	Research papers or reports	4,50	Several done directly for the stakeholders and the public sector
	Policy briefs or public policy documents	4,00	Educational booklets and bulletins
	Blogs and websites	5,00	EMINPRO newsletters, <i>Desarrollo sobre la mesa</i> and Development Roast
	Academic publications	3,00	Several publications in refereed journals
	Seminar and events	5,00	PEP (<i>Partnership for Economic Policy</i>) Conference, LACEA (<i>Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association</i>) Conference, Bolivian Conference on <i>Economic Development</i> (CBDE), and others

The scale ranges from 0 to 5, where 0 is the minimum value and 5 is the maximum.

INESAD reports. With regard to the focus of impact on the activities, an average of 2.88 points (57.6%) was reached, due to the considerable work of advising and technical assistance done with various public policy makers, although it was not possible —due to lack of funds— to carry out periodic monitoring and evaluation of sectoral public policies. On its part, the focus of intensity in the generation of research products obtained a value of 4.30 points (86%), as a result of the production of more than 90 working papers, several books, and scientific articles. The result of these two focalization levels indicates that INESAD reached an average impact of 3.59 points (72%) in this type of intervention.

Table 3: Intensity (0 to 5 points) of the impact focus of changes in public policy

Objective	Long-term impact	Intensity	Comment
Changes in public policy	Changes in social norms	3,50	High relevance of research in the areas of macroeconomics, labor and the environment
	Changes in the importance of a topic	4,00	EMINPRO; on labor costs resulting from regulation and job insecurity
	Alignment with civil society actors	2,50	Confederation of Private Business of Bolivia and Chamber of Commerce on labor issues
	Increased knowledge of a topic	4,00	The book ABC del Desarrollo was widely socialized.
	Increased interest in a topic or proposal	4,00	Proposal for a wage policy subject to increased productivity
	Increase in the number of partners involved in a topic	1,00	Moderate
	Alignment of efforts with partners	1,00	Moderate
	Strategic and effective alliances with important partners	2,00	CIES Mori (public opinion and market research consultant); CIDES (Postgraduate Program in Development Sciences, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés)
	Participation in public policy agendas	2,00	2025 Agenda, Santa Cruz
	Increased media coverage	4,50	Radio Fides
Increased visibility in virtual media	4,50	High	

Table 3 shows the intensity of the impact focus with regards to changes in content and changes in a public policy. INESAD’s work in this area of intervention showed an average impact of three points (60%), highlighting the work of EMINPRO on the development of labor market content, the book *El ABC del Desarrollo en Bolivia* and different macroeconomic and environmental research. It is important to remember that this type of impact is very complex and difficult to achieve, but it was properly socialized through news on blogs, and media coverage.

- **What factors have helped or hindered the proper achievement of the results?**

The first factor that explains this performance has been the continuity and quality of the team of researchers, who

made it possible to complete a large number of products (*i.e.* scientific articles, refereed books, working papers, policy briefs, educational booklets, blogs, etc.). The second factor is the strong institutional commitment, which devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to activities for making visible, disseminating and changing content on various public policy issues.

However, it is also true that this hard work on the impact on public policies was carried out without a formal monitoring and evaluation instrument, which would probably have improved the directionality and intensity of the interventions. The result of INESAD's work shows that mixed impacts were achieved on various topics and levels (*i.e.* activities, products and advocacy), but all of this was the result of an enormous effort, as mentioned by Andersen.

An example of the importance in the orientation and intensity of the public policy impact approach is the EMINPRO network, which was driven by the IDRC Opportunity Fund. It was designed as a “social and virtual network with the vision of providing information and knowledge to support informed dialogue and measures to progress in the creation of decent employment in Bolivia” (<http://www.eminpro-inesad.com/>). The results show that EMINPRO is the main reference of this topic in the country. EMINPRO's data are widely quoted and the entity succeeded in influencing the change of discourse in many labor topics since 2014.

It is also true that the generation of products did not have an ethics and quality policy for the products of the research until the past two years. From the diagnosis made for preparing this instrument, it was evident that the quality of the products was very variable in terms of format and content quality, and did not comply with basic ethical protocols. These aspects undoubtedly affected the likelihood that the working papers would be published in high-ranking indexed journals.

- **What is the main result not achieved within the TTI program? Why?**

There is consensus among the beneficiaries that the main result not achieved by INESAD has been the possibility of achieving long-term financial sustainability. Andersen states this was “the initial idea of purchasing a space for INESAD to operate in.” For Machicado, on the other hand, “this was not sufficient for establishing a basis for financial sustainability, but it could have been a big first step.” The beneficiaries agree that there was a lack of consensus, and also lacking was the formalization of a core funding strategy and an overhead policy, as evidenced in interviews with Andersen, Machicado and Coronado.

5. Lessons learned

Core funding

Based on the experiences of the INESAD beneficiaries during the TTI program, it is possible to establish some critical factors and certain conditions that influenced the performance of core funding, from which the following lessons were obtained:

- From the beginning of the intervention there was the need to consider having a core funding strategy to guide the institutional and financial management model in the long-term. In the case of INESAD, this product was developed in 2014.
- It is necessary to ensure that all projects have accurate budgets and that general expenses be allocated and paid according to the core funding strategy designed.

- It is necessary to not depend excessively on development funding, and diversifying the sources of funding is required as projects diversify.

Transformations and implementation

- There is the need to periodically evaluate the degree of adequacy between the results obtained in terms of production, impact, funding, and the strategic vision generated by the activities, in order to be able to make timely operational and financial provisions.
- It is necessary to build and implement, in an effective manner, the mechanisms of planning, monitoring, evaluation, and internal control at all levels of action of the institution.
- An organizational culture should be developed to limit the introduction of individual objectives outside the institutional ones.

Activities, products and impact

- A strategy is needed for guidance relating to considering what kind of impact on public policies the institution seeks, in order to maximize its impact.
- Lacking is a monitoring and evaluation system of the activities, products and impact that the institution has.
- A quality policy must be built from the outset to guarantee the credibility, contribution, communicability, and acceptance of the products produced.¹⁰⁹

Good practice in public policy

Background: At TTI's first global conference, the Executive Director of the Center for Global Development, Nancy Birdsall, presented the Twelve-step Program for Public Policy Advocacy, which INESAD successfully applied in the case described below.

Step 1. Choosing an important problem: With nearly 50 million hectares of tropical forest, Bolivia is one of the countries with the greatest biodiversity in the world. However, it also has one of the highest levels of deforestation. Approximately 300,000 hectares of forest are lost each year, which not only affects biodiversity, but also produces approximately 150 million tons of CO₂ emissions per year, in addition to increasing the risks of floods and droughts in the country.

Step 2. Finding a good leader for the project: One of the senior researchers of INESAD did his doctoral thesis on the topic of deforestation in the Amazon region and has worked on the subject for several years.

Step 3. Seeking financing for the project: Basic TTI funding was used and significant additional funding was obtained from the ESPA (Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation) program. In addition, this was complemented by funding of different related consultancies.

Step 4. Creating a group of collaborators: We worked closely with Conservation International Bolivia and a group of researchers from the London School of Economics for several years. There were also strong links, firstly with the Bolivian government's National Climate Change Program, and then with the Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth.

Step 5. Promoting group activities: Dozens of strategic meetings were held over several years, fine-tuning the work in relation to the continuous political changes.

Step 6. Developing the work: INESAD, together with Conservation International, developed two innovative simulation tools¹⁰⁹ aimed at simulating the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of various political incentives to reduce deforestation in Bolivia. INESAD employed these tools to simulate the multidimensional impacts of different types of incentives, such as REDD+ payments for CO₂ reduction, payments for conservation and taxes on deforestation.

Together with selected researchers from the London School of Economics, INESAD developed the educational game SimPachamama, which simulates the behavior of actors in a small community on the agricultural frontier.

The player takes on the role of mayor and explores options that simultaneously reduce deforestation and poverty in a hypothetical forestry community. These tools demonstrated that the international incentive mechanism for reducing deforestation (REDD+) has many problems. An alternative mechanism was designed that is fairer and more in line with national objectives.

Step 7. Giving the solution a name: The name of the alternative mechanism was chosen by the Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth and presented internationally as the Joint Mitigation and Adaptation Mechanism.

Step 8. Building consensus and regular communication: INESAD tools were used to convince UNREDD to support Bolivia's Joint Mechanism instead of its own REDD+ mechanism, arguing that the objectives were the same, but with fairer results. Danish Cooperation was also persuaded to contribute US\$ 26 million for the development of the Joint Mechanism on the grounds that even with a small reduction in deforestation of 1%, carbon emissions of a similar value can quickly be saved.

Step 9. Developing a policy proposal and including feedback from stakeholders: The Danish Embassy hired INESAD to coordinate, with all the actors involved, the design of the program to implement the 26 million dollars over the next 5 years in strengthening the Joint Mechanism. In this process, more than 100 meetings were held with actors throughout the country.

Step 10. Working with a communication team: The present INESAD project, dealing with deforestation, was selected by TTI as a success case in influencing public policies. A team of professionals from the United States was sent to make a documentary on the Joint Mechanism for COP21 in Lima. However, in the end, the National Climate Change Negotiator decided not to use it, despite having himself been involved in the creation of the video.

Step 11. Identifying key decision makers and interacting with them throughout the process: Intensive work was done with the team of the Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth and with the financiers for more than five years in order to promote the mechanisms proposed to reduce deforestation in Bolivia. INESAD also developed the institutional framework for the Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth and drafted supreme decrees for the Plurinational Fund of Mother Earth.

Step 12. Leaving the initiative in the hands of others: After finishing the analytical work and obtaining funding for the implementation of the initiative, the project was left to the government. Unfortunately, at the same time, the key authorities in the executive power neglected the initiative and it was implemented with scarce results. The latest analysis of the data shows a dramatic increase in deforestation rates in Bolivia.

109 See the Research Ethics and Quality Policy of INESAD Foundation.

110 OSIRIS-Bolivia: Open Source Impacts of REDD Incentives Spreadsheet for Bolivia; and CISS-Bolivia: Conservation Incentives Spreadsheet for Bolivia.

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Annexes

Annex I: Design of the case study

Methodology

To begin with, a first long list of questions for reflection is prepared as a result of having reviewed the history of INE-SAD, the socioeconomic situation and institutional reports, and other reports. The questions should not depart from the working hypotheses of the Think Tank Initiative in terms of the assumptions on which the design and its subsequent implementation were based, and from which the results were obtained.²⁰

111 For example: What worked well and why? What could have worked better and why?

Secondly, question chains are built, some of which are then selected for elimination, and they are then grouped together to have consistent and manageable categories of questions in terms of their quantity. For the present case study, three categories of questions were developed: 1) design of the core funding and rules established by the donor, 2) transformations in relation to the objectives and goals of the program, and implementation in relation to organizational performance and the attitude of the beneficiaries, and 3) results obtained in terms of activities, products and the causal impact of the program on the quality and impact of public policies.

Finally, the answers obtained under these categories should make it possible to answer whether the transformations carried out and the rules of the TTI contributed to the achievement of the expected results. These categories are to serve as a guide for extracting information through a semi-structured interview and generate knowledge transformers to be reflected in lessons learned and recommendations.

Analysis units

The question categories give rise to analysis units, which allow defining where the focus of the person preparing the case should lie. The questions guide the approach towards specific processes, while the analysis units can be: the beneficiaries of an intervention or those involved in its management; the products generated (policies, publications, news); the intervention itself. The present case study, due to its breadth in terms of objectives and extension over time, has three analysis units: 1) the program as a design of a core funding situation, 2) the beneficiary with and without TTI; that is, with its transformations and implementation, and 3) the products and their advocacy (activities, products and impact).

Methods and tools for collecting information

Qualitative and quantitative methods are applied.¹¹² The process begins with a mapping of the actors, their roles and their resources. For this purpose, the following methods and instruments are used: a) semi-structured interviews with direct beneficiaries, b) a semi-structured questionnaire addressed to the Executive Director, and c) perceptual questionnaires on public policy impact.

Case narrative

Three moments exist, the first of which is the context, history and the Conceptual Note of INESAD to TTI. The second is the change of context, transformations and implementation of the TTI program. The third is the evaluation of results (activities, outputs, impact). All three moments are segmented by analysis unit.

Questions for reflection

First section: Design of the program

- How was the institution before the TTI program? (i.e. quality of research, organizational performance and mechanisms to influence public policies).
- What do you think have been the main strengths and weaknesses in the design of TTI-INESAD? Do you think the proposed design was the right one?
- Why were the initial TTI-2010 objectives changed to those of TTI-2014? Is this change linked to the areas of focus in research? (see Annex 1).

Second section: Transformations experienced by beneficiaries (i.e. quality of research, organizational performance and mechanisms to influence public policies)

- How did the context in which the organization operates change and how did this influence its actions?

112 Patterns, lessons, correlations.

- What relevant institutional changes (good/bad) occurred and are related to the implementation of the TTI program? How (why) have these changes occurred?
- How has the issue of gender in the workplace been addressed at the organizational level?

Third section: Implementation by beneficiaries

What strategies have worked well?

What have been the main problems of TTI-INESAD implementation?

Have gender methods, policies and processes been implemented over the past eight years? How and why?

Fourth section: Results in terms of outputs

- What are the results of the institution after the TTI Program? (*i.e.* quality of research, organizational performance and mechanisms to influence public policies)
- What factors have helped or made it difficult for INESAD to achieve the results set out in the framework of the TTI program? How has core funding support influenced these changes?¹¹³
- What is the main result not achieved within TTI? Why?

Fifth section: Lessons learned in general¹¹⁴

- What is the most successful case of impact on public policies?
- What have been the three main challenges faced in the past ten years?
- What have been the three main lessons learned over the past ten years?

Annex 2: Information collection tools

Structured questionnaire

Regarding the quality of INESAD research, which of the following objectives were met? Explain briefly and, to the degree possible, provide statistical information.

- a** Was a quality assurance framework for research quality implemented and institutionalized?
- b** Was the minimum number of working papers published per year or globally?
- c** Was the minimum number of articles published in refereed journals per year or globally?
- d** Was the minimum amount of funds achieved per year?

Regarding the organizational development of INESAD, which of the following objectives were achieved? Explain briefly and, to the degree possible, provide statistical information.

- e** Was a five-year strategic plan by results developed, implemented and institutionalized?
- f** Was a resource mobilization strategy developed, implemented and institutionalized?
- g** Were annual revenues increased according to what was established with TTI?
- h** Was the annual dependence on TTI reduced in accordance with what was established in the program?
- i** Were physical assets increased every year in accordance with what was established with TTI?

113 See the causality of the intervention. Core funding allowed the acquisition of assets directly.

114 It covers all units of analysis of the case study.

With regard to the links with INESAD’s public policies and communication activities, which of the following objectives were achieved? Explain briefly and, to the degree possible, provide statistical information per year.

- j** Was an effective communication strategy developed, implemented and institutionalized?
- k** Did the frequency of interactions with government officials and other key actors increase?
- l** Has the dissemination, accessibility and adoption of research products increased?

Annex 3: List of persons interviewed

Annex 3: List of persons interviewed			
	Name	Cargo actual	Type of intervention
1	Beatriz Muriel H.	Executive Director	Structured interview, primary and secondary information request
2	Ximena Coronado T.	Chairman of the Board of Directors	Semi-structured interview
3	Carlos Gustavo Machicado S.	Senior researcher, Former Executive Director	Semi-structured interview
4	Lykke E. Andersen	Senior researcher, Former Executive Director	Semi-structured interview

Source: Own preparation

Annex 4: List of INESAD documents

Working papers	
No.	
2018	
1	De las causas próximas a las causas profundas del crecimiento económico de Bolivia entre 1950 y 2015.
2	Efecto de la inversión extranjera en el dinamismo macroeconómico: un análisis empírico para Bolivia.
3	Fluctuaciones cíclicas y cambios de régimen en la economía Boliviana.
4	Descentralización en Bolivia: eficacia y externalidades.
5	Análisis de la desigualdad de largo plazo en Bolivia, 1976-2012.
6	Rent-seeking en un entorno de alta dependencia de recursos naturales: el caso de Bolivia.
7	Las características y el desarrollo de la economía popular: un modelo formal con evidencia etnográfica.
8	Fortalecimiento institucional y expansión del crédito mediante el uso de TICs en entidades financieras comunales en Bolivia.
9	Mortalidad neonatal en el estado plurinacional de Bolivia.
2017	
10	Cadenas globales de valor: el caso de Bolivia.
11	Targeting credit through community members.
12	Outliers in semi-parametric estimation of treatment effects.
13	Bolivia's green national accounts through a commodity super cycle.
14	Measuring equality of opportunity in early childhood: a methodological proposal using demographic and health surveys.
15	Cuentas ambientales del departamento de Pando en Bolivia.
16	A vulnerability research framework for the development of early warning systems for floods.
17	Dependence or constraints? Cash transfers, labor supply and the process of development.
2016	
18	An analysis of firm characteristics as earnings determinants: the urban Bolivia case.
19	Sistemas de alerta temprana para inundaciones: análisis comparativo de tres países latinoamericanos.
20	Emisiones netas de carbono provenientes de la deforestación en Bolivia durante 1990-2000 y 2000-2010.
21	Decentralization and poverty reduction in Bolivia: challenges and opportunities.
2015	
22	An experimental game on entrepreneurship and labor protection policy.
23	Un juego experimental sobre emprendedurismo y políticas de protección laboral.
24	The bounty of the sea and long-run development.
25	Pobreza, ingresos laborales y trabajo en Bolivia.
26	Cycles versus trends: the effects of economic growth on earnings in Bolivia.
27	Capacitación como componente de desarrollo productivo en las microempresas.

28 Social institutions and gender inequality in fragile states: are they relevant for the post-MDG debate?

29 Análisis del contexto de la situación productiva y laboral de Cochabamba.

30 Flujos físicos y monetarios relacionados a los recursos hídricos en las ciudades de La Paz y El Alto.

31 Formación para el trabajo en Bolivia: la paradoja de un país extractivo.

32 An agriculture-focused, regionally disaggregated SAM for Mexico 2008.

33 Regional development, income distribution and gender in Bolivia.

2014

34 Desafíos del sistema educativo boliviano.

35 Gender and climate change in Latin America.

36 Gender, ethnicity and climate change in Mexico.

37 Cuando las mujeres son las que mandan.

38 ¿Es posible construir beneficios mutuos entre comunidades y empresas mineras?: el caso San Cristóbal.

39 Globalization, peace, stability, governance, and knowledge economy.

40 Wage differentials: Trade openness and wage bargaining.

41 Information technologies and provision of national identification cards by the Bolivian police.

42 Construyendo resiliencia ante shocks adversos.

2013

43 Understanding and information failures in insurance: evidence from India.

44 Impact of natural disaster on public sector corruption.

45 The impact of formal institutions on knowledge economy.

46 A measurement of the carbon sequestration potential of Guadua Angustifolia in the Carrasco national park, Bolivia.

47 Problematizing the effect of rural-urban linkages on food security and malnutrition in Guatemala's western highlands.

48 Building resilience against adverse shocks: What are the determinants of vulnerability and resilience?

49 Global dynamic timelines for IPRS harmonization.

2012

50 Empleo y regulación laboral: análisis empírico de las firmas manufactureras bolivianas, 1988-2007.

51 Does licensing induce technological spillovers to domestic firms?

52 Peer effects in risk aversion

53 Fighting software piracy: which governance tools matter in Africa?

54 News, noise, and fluctuations: an empirical exploration.

51	Exportaciones y empleo en Bolivia
52	Employment and labor regulation: Evidence from manufacturing firms in Bolivia, 1988-2007
53	Bureaucratic delay, local-level monitoring, and delivery of small infrastructure projects
54	Impactos socio-económicos y ambientales de compensaciones por la reducción de emisiones de deforestación en Bolivia: resultados del modelo OSIRIS-Bolivia
51	Influence of age of child on differences in life satisfaction of males and females: A comparative study among East Asian countries
52	Productivity, structural change, and Latin American development
53	Environmental and socio-economic consequences of forest carbon payments in Bolivia
54	Earthquakes and economic growth
2014	
34	Espacio y desarrollo municipal en Bolivia
35	Towards universalism? The obstructed process of healthcare reform in Bolivia
36	Matriculación y trabajo infantil en Bolivia
37	Agricultura y empleo rural agropecuario en Bolivia
38	Foreign aid – a fillip for development or a fuel for corruption?
39	Costos laborales, economía informal y reformas a la legislación laboral en Bolivia
40	La quinua: Una opción para mejorar los ingresos rurales en Bolivia
41	Rethinking earnings determinants in the urban areas of Bolivia
42	Determinants of economic growth in BRIC countries
35	Bolivian sub-national revenues: A review
36	Depressive mood and children: Europe and South Korea
37	Diversificación del campo de la educación superior y las universidades
38	Convergence clubs in Latin America: A historical approach
39	Insights from Bolivia's green national accounts
40	Cuentas medioambientales para Bolivia, 1990-2008
41	Inflationary memory as restrictive factor of the impact of the public expense in the economic growth
40	Aporte de los servicios ecosistémicos silvícolas a la economía boliviana

2010	
34	The impact of internet use on individual earnings in Latin America
35	Effects of the global financial and economic crisis on the Bolivian economy: a CGE approach
36	Social impacts of climate change in Mexico
37	Social impacts of climate change in Brazil
38	Mercado laboral y reformas en Bolivia
39	Determinantes de los ingresos laborales en las zonas urbanas de Bolivia
40	The changing role of the international community in the MDG achievement in Bolivia
41	Public expenditure policy in Bolivia: Growth and welfare
42	The value of water in Bolivia: An economic resource or a human right?
37	Is corruption really bad for inequality? Evidence from Latin America
38	Trabajo no agrícola de las familias rurales en Bolivia: Un análisis de determinantes y efectos

Annex 5: List of INESAD documents

INESAD basic statistics	
2009	2018
Approximate percentages for staff working:	
Part-time: 25%	Part-time: 60%
Full-time: 75%	Full-time: 40%
Approximate percentages for staff working in:	
Research: 75%	Research: 60%
Administration: 5%	Administration: 20%
Communication and dissemination: 20%	Communication and dissemination: 20%
Approximate percentages of the budget assigned to:	
Research: 80%	Research: 50%
General expenses / administration: 10%	General expenses / administration: 25%
Communication and dissemination: 10%	Communication and dissemination: 25%
Approximate percentages of funds per source:	
Research scholarships: 50%	Research scholarships: 80%
Consultancy work: 50%	Consultancy work: 20%
Approximate percentages of funding by source:	
International donors: 80%	International donors: 70%
Domestic donors excluding government: 20%	Domestic donors excluding government: 30%

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Story of Transformations, Challenges and Learning: FUNDAUNGO's Experience in the Think Tank Initiative

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1 Introduction to the case

Fundación Doctor Guillermo Manuel Ungo is a non-profit organization founded in 1992. It operates as an independent think tank and seeks to contribute to improving the quality of life of the population through generating knowledge and its use in the management of public policies. This document presents the most strategic institutional transformations that the foundation experienced thanks to the support of core funding provided by the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) and the strategies that made them possible. It also provides an overview of the main challenges encountered and lessons learned in the transformation process.

In middle-income countries with low levels of investment in research and development, the existence of independent thought centers can often be uncertain, even though they are key players in generating evidence for achieving the various public policy objectives. Given this situation, multi-annual access to funds for the development of basic functions in a thought center can make a positive difference in its sustainability, especially if the aim is to generate, simultaneously, better capacities in research, management and communication.

This paper shows the results of predominantly qualitative research, in which two techniques were employed for collecting information: documentary review of different official bibliographic resources generated during the TTI implementation and carrying out interviews with four key informants, selected on an intentional sampling basis. The information collected was processed by means of a content analysis and was structured based on the categories related to the variables taken up in the mentioned research questions.¹¹⁵

2. Multiple challenges, multiple transformations

FUNDAUNGO is a non-governmental and non-profit organization created in 1992 as part of the adoption of the Peace Accords that ended the armed conflict that El Salvador experienced since the early 1980s. Since then, it has contributed to the development of the country by carrying out knowledge management tasks on key issues to address the transformations of Salvadoran society, such as citizen security, political culture and municipal development. In 2008, its academic program was restructured and led to the establishment of three more specialized programs: on public policies, land management and citizenry, and democratic governance. (FUNDAUNGO, 2011a)

The consolidation of its new work programs naturally required hiring additional research staff, developing a new portfolio of research projects that would bring the work agenda to life, and developing better capacities to ensure the quality of research products. In addition to all this, it was also of utmost importance to modernize the management practices of the organization, to develop more structured communication mechanisms to allow positioning the research findings generated and, above all, to mobilize the necessary funds to promote changes in the required dimension and in a timely manner.

115 Further methodological details are provided in Annex 1.

In line with the institutional vision of the time,¹¹⁶ FUNDAUNGO proposed, with the support of the TTI, “to be an independent and sustainable research center providing timely quality studies and proposals for the processes of formulation and debate of public policies in El Salvador.” (Córdova, *et al.*, 2011) Throughout the two phases of TTI implementation, the organization sought to achieve objectives that would allow accumulating research capabilities, improve performance and strengthen capacities for communication and impact on public policies.

116 The institutional vision of FUNDAUNGO is to “contribute to the democratic development of the country, in order to improve the quality of life of Salvadorans in an environment of participation and expansion of economic and social opportunities, and in the policies of the population.” (FUNDAUNGO, 2011a)

Table 1. Objectives of FUNDAUNGO, in the framework of the two phases of the TTI, 2009-2019

Line of work	Phase 1	Phase 2
Strengthening research capacity	Expanding and consolidating the institutional research agenda through the hiring of researchers, and updating and reviewing the areas of the three programs	Strengthening existing research areas and developing (at least) one study in two new research areas Implementing and institutionalizing processes to ensure the quality of research in a set of research products
	Strengthening the capacities and skills of the staff of the institution through a training and skills development plan	Strengthening the capacity to attract and retain qualified researchers through the implementation of a research capacity-building program
	Reestablishing and strengthening the documentation center, including expanding access to bibliographic resources, libraries and virtual academic journals	
		Strengthening the Board of Directors with appropriate training and tools
Improving organizational performance	Strengthening the process of strategic planning of the institution	Monitoring the implementation of the institutional strategic plan
	Improving the accounting, financial and information systems, as well as the general functioning of the institution, through the improvement of salaries and facilities	Improving administrative and financial efficiency through process optimization
	Improving the staff evaluation process, and developing a performance incentive scheme	Improving staff performance assessment processes and developing an appropriate incentives scheme
	Establishing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation system for institutional projects and programs	Strengthening reflection and learning capacities through the implementation of a project monitoring and evaluation system
	Developing a resource mobilization strategy	Diversifying funding alliances, incorporating at least two new persons

Improving communication and impact on public policies	Improving the dissemination of research results through the creation of a specialized communication unit, a communication strategy and a website	Evaluating gaps in communication capabilities and addressing them with qualified staff and appropriate equipment
	Extending the network of institutions and researchers with which FUNDAUNGO works, through collaborative initiatives and strengthening existing networks and alliances	
	Strengthening institutional capacity to influence public policies through the formulation and implementation of a strategy to influence policies, and a work plan	Developing and implementing an advocacy plan for the main institutional research programs
	Contributing, in a timely manner, to the debate on public policies	Increasing the quality of production, dissemination and accessibility of research products

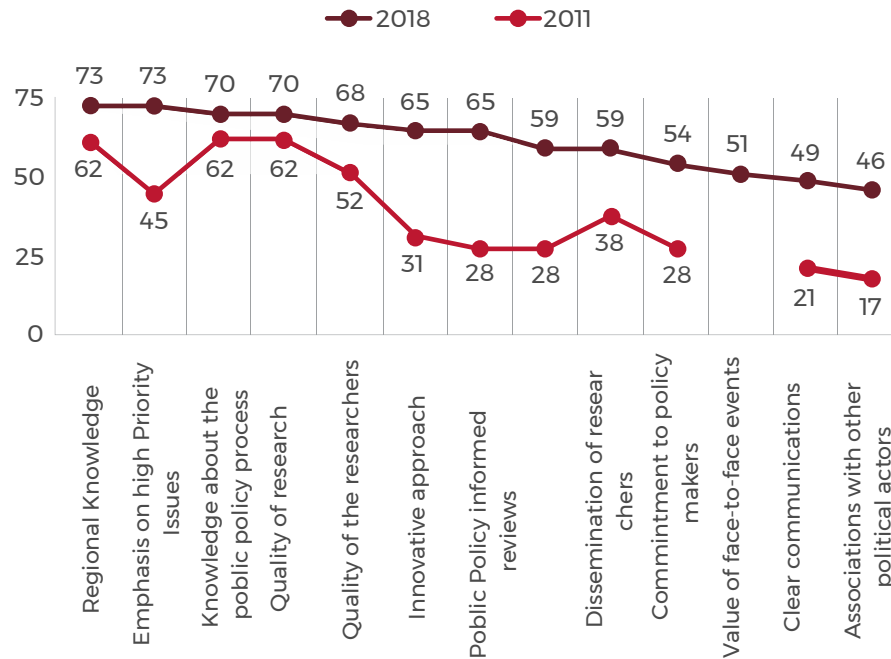
Source: Own preparation, based on FUNDAUNGO (2010; 2011b; 2012; 2014b; 2015; 2016; 2017a; and 2018a).

Note: The matrix of current annual targets for the period from 2015 to 2019 is presented.

In the sphere of achieving these objectives, different transformations were experienced in the research, organizational-management and communication areas.¹¹⁷ This contributed, among many things, to improving the perception of the foundation’s performance in many areas (Graph 1). In keeping with their strategic importance in influencing public policies, noteworthy are the changes related to the expansion of the capacity to generate, in a sustained way, information and knowledge around a more diverse set of priority issues, and to transmit this capacity to different audiences more effectively. For this reason, particular attention was paid to the transformations associated, firstly, to the consolidation of favorable research work (for a more diversified accumulation of experience in addressing strategic issues for the development of the country) and, secondly, to the implementation of an institutional communication strategy based on evidence.

117 In the area of research, noteworthy is the establishment of a working team in charge of the Studies on Public Policies Program, the consolidation of a diversified institutional research agenda, the improvement of quality assurance mechanisms, and the establishment of a favorable organizational environment for the development of human talent. In organizational and managerial matters, of note are the construction of medium-term planning and evaluation tools for the coordinated management of research tasks, resource mobilization and communication, modernization of the administrative, financial and IT apparatus, and the prompting of partnerships at the national level, with participation in international research networks. In terms of communication, there is the establishment of the institutional communication unit, the generation of evidence for a more effective communication strategy, the strengthening of both face-to-face and virtual communication channels, and the introduction of more user-friendly output formats for the public. (Velásquez, 2019)

Graph 1. FUNDAUNGO results in the Policy Community Survey in percentage of “excellent” responses (4-5), 2011 and 2018



Source: Own preparation, based on IDRC (2018).
 Note: The survey was performed at the request of the TTI.

3. The accumulation of experience in addressing key issues for present and future public policies

In the first decades of the 21st century, El Salvador’s development processes were affected by the prevalence of different social, economic, political, fiscal, and environmental imbalances, and by the emergence of multiple workings that complicated managing them. In this context, for example, the challenges related to the consolidation of democracy stand out, in an environment where different rights are violated and where institutions are mistrusted. There are also concerns about citizen insecurity, demographic transition, international migration, urbanization, the deficit in job creation in sufficient quantity and quality, the low level of coverage of social security systems, and territorial constraints on public management, among others.

Faced with the importance of contributing strategically to the management of these challenges, in 2008, FUNDAUNGO expanded the thematic scope of its agenda, having replaced its sole academic program with three specialized programs in addressing issues associated with democratic governance, territorial management and citizenry, and the realization of studies on public policies. During the TTI implementation period, this expansion was consolidated with the application of strategies that helped establish favorable work niches to accumulate technical and research expertise, and strategies that contributed to positioning the organization as a benchmark in generating useful knowledge for managing different public policies, particularly social ones.

Since it first appeared in the report in 2015, until the most recent report in 2018, FUNDAUNGO has continuously been listed as an important think tank in El Salvador among the 100 best think tanks in social policy – published as part of the annual *Global Go To Think Tank Report* of the University of Pennsylvania – and as one of the top four think tanks in Central America. (McGann, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019)

In strategic terms, an institutional profile was employed on a regular basis, defining the lines of work for the three programs. Since its adoption in 2011, different adjustments have been made focused on adding different lines of work, adopting holistic approaches and introducing new topics related to the existing ones. In this way, favorable links have been conserved for accumulating information and knowledge on certain topics throughout TTI implementation (Annex 2).

In accordance with these lines of work, the five-year research priorities for each of the programs were set, within the framework of the Institutional Research Agenda, for the period from 2014 to 2019 (Annex 2).¹¹⁸ TTI resources were used to publish, on a sustained basis, research products related mainly to the three lines of work: 1) demographic transformations and what they imply in relation to public policies, 2) social protection systems and the labor market, and 3) citizen security and prevention of violence (Annex 3).

The development of patterns of accumulation of knowledge has been possible, to a great extent, thanks to investment in the development of the research staff, particularly in the public policy program. At the beginning of TTI, this program existed in the organization chart, but did not have available staff. Thanks to TTI resources, the permanent research team was hired: a coordinator with a level of senior researcher, junior researchers and research assistants. The research work of this team was complemented by the recruitment of senior associate researchers who supported the work of the program, according to specific assignments, and by selected external reviewers who participated in different links of the research process chain, in order to contribute to the improvement of the quality of the research products. In turn, the improvement of the skills of the permanent research team has been fostered within the framework of an organizational environment favorable for the development of learning processes.¹¹⁹

4. Evidence-based communication

Prior to the TTI, the foundation did not have a communication unit or staff with the expertise needed for the media positioning of research production. Given the relevance of this area of work in the effectiveness of advocacy work in

118 This instrument is part of the medium-term institutional planning framework adopted for the 2014-2019 period, which includes four other instruments: the 2014-2018 Institutional Strategic Plan, the 2014-2018 Resource Mobilization Strategy, the Institutional Communication Strategy, and the 2014-2018 Human Resources Plan. (FUNDAUNGO, 2013) With the completion of the period of this medium-term planning framework, there emerged an organizational readiness to review and adapt the instruments that will be implemented in the coming years (2019-2024). (R. Córdova, personal communication, February 8, 2019)

119 Within the framework of the TTI, a favorable organizational climate was established for the development of human talent, based on: 1) access to national and international courses for updating knowledge on topics related to the institutional research agenda, learning new methodologies, exchanging experiences, acquiring skills for greater resource mobilization and improvement of communication practices; 2) participation in international researcher networks, which facilitated the exchange of experiences and the establishment of transnational contacts; 3) promotion of self-management of learning as an essential skill in exercising the research practice; and 4) the organizational readiness to support postgraduate training projects of staff, either through institutional support for applying for scholarships abroad, or by providing partial funding for the payment of studies; and 5) the creation of internal learning spaces, such as research seminars, which have been held since 2012, to enrich the implementation of ongoing research projects, to discuss key issues for the country's development and to integrate the work team. (Velásquez, 2019)

public policy, an institutional communication unit was established¹²⁰ and a communication strategy was adopted that evolved based on an evidence-based reform process.

Following the endowment of the Institutional Communication Unit with staff, a proposed strategy was generated that guided the organization's efforts in this field. As implementation progressed, it became increasingly necessary to update it.¹²¹ With the support of the TTI, this improvement process was carried out beginning with the generation of research inputs that allowed identifying more effective communication practices, in particular: 1) Specialized methodologies were implemented for establishing a new map of actors and objectives, 2) An image audit and a study on reading habits and sources of information were carried out, which provided the necessary evidence for the design of the intervention rationale that prompted the strategy and the selection of the means of implementation, and (3) Monitoring and evaluation tools and activities were adopted, through which feedback was obtained on user interactions with the website (e.g. visits, document downloads and online assessments) and on events carried out (with the filling out of surveys by participants and the holding of meetings to review the activity). (Rosales, 2014; FUNDAUNGO, 2014d)

As part of the improvements in communication practices implemented within the framework of this strategy, four priority themes for institutional communication were defined, focusing on the impact on public policies: pensions, violence and insecurity, political culture, and municipalism.

Support was also given, with the support of the TTI, to a greater presence of the research team in spaces where public policy debates are planned, whether through the organization of events for the presentation of the results of the studies carried out, through television or radio interview programs, through the presentation of research findings in meetings of high-level government officials,¹²² or through participation of the research team in key consultation spaces for the management of different public policies (e.g. the Technical Advisory Body on Multidimensional Poverty and the Steering Council of the 2010, 2013 and 2018 Human Development Report of El Salvador prepared by UNDP).¹²³

Also, the organization's virtual communication channels were improved. Periodic updating of the website was encouraged (approximately every three years), as a platform where information about the institution, the members of the work team and the repository of documents published by the organization can be obtained, which can be

120 With the support of the TTI, this unit has been progressively strengthened, starting with the implementation of different strategies: 1) recruitment of staff in charge of the area, 2) access to training opportunities for acquiring more effective communication skills (for example, in the development of 2.0 communication processes, the mapping of priority actors, and the conceptual and graphic design of different output formats), 3) the development of a style manual and a communication processes manual, the use of which could favor the institutionalization of different practices, 4) making a visit to Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC), for the exchange of experiences on the management of institutional communication applied to the demands of consolidation of independent think tanks, and for the exchange of ideas on the most effective strategies of public policy advocacy, and 5) holding workshops to integrate researchers in the development of more effective institutional communication. (Velásquez, 2019)

121 Including complementary resources to improve communication capabilities, obtained with Opportunity Funds resources allocated to strengthen the capacities of ILAIPP and its members.

122 Such as those convened by the Finance Commission, as part of the consultative phase on the reforms proposed to the Pension Law in 2016. (Legislative Assembly, 2016, March 14)

123 Ricardo Córdova, Executive Director of FUNDAUNGO, has been part of the Board of Directors of the Human Development Report of El Salvador for the three editions produced as part of the TTI implementation. (UNDP, 2010, 2013 and 2018) In addition, he was part of the Technical Advisory Body that accompanied the development of the first measurement of multidimensional poverty in the country. (STPP and MINEC-Digestyc, 2015)

downloaded free of charge. Also, encouragement was given progressively for the organization's participation in social networks such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.¹²⁴

Additionally, the output formats of the different research findings were renewed, given the need to meet the diversified demand for information from target audiences. Until 2011, the foundation only published books, either under the Current Topics Series, the Working Papers Series, or other *ad hoc* formats. In the same year, the first series was discontinued and a new trilogy of products was gradually launched: the series of newsletters *Aportes para el Debate* (Contributions to Debate), the series *Documentos de Trabajo* (Working Documents) in digital format and the series of books *Investigación e Incidencia en Políticas Públicas* (Research and Advocacy on Public Policies) (see Table 2).

Table 2. New series of research products by FUNDAUNGO, 2011-2015(1)

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<i>Aportes al debate sobre políticas públicas</i> newsletters	<i>Aportes para la gobernabilidad democrática</i> newsletters	Working Documents in digital format(2).	<i>Aportes al debate sobre seguridad ciudadana</i> newsletters	<i>Aportes al debate sobre transparencia municipal</i> newsletters <i>Investigación e incidencia en políticas públicas</i>

Source: Own preparation.

Notes: (1) The different products have a digital edition. (2) The series Working Documents was already being published, but only in printed format.

Lastly, two annual editions of Public Policy Week – Based on Evidence (2017 and 2018) were organized. These are spaces for reflection that seek to promote the key role of quality research as evidence in all phases of public policy.

5. The challenges encountered

The achievement of the institutional transformation objectives, prioritized within the framework of the TTI, was mainly affected by the following challenges:

- The convergence of the increasing complexity of tasks encouraged within the framework of the TTI with requests of projects managed by other partners and with the sale of services. As progress was made in fulfilling the simultaneous transformations in the areas of research, management, organization, and communicational, the demands on time were increasingly greater. It was necessary to review more studies, coordinate the work of associate researchers and external reviewers, attend to the demands of the media, follow up on the functioning of the international networks, seek to establish national associations, do research, participate in training processes and, in addition, fulfill the numerous responsibilities taken on in the projects managed with other partners and for the sale of services. Although the TTI had

124 In 2011, the Twitter account was opened; in 2012, the YouTube channel; and in 2015, the Facebook profile. News about the training activities carried out by the organization are disseminated on Twitter and Facebook; expectation campaigns are conducted on the events to be held and on the interventions of the organization's work team in television and radio programs; live broadcasts of the conferences are made; links are shared to download the new publications of the organization; infographics are published with data from published research; and calls are circulated for training offers developed within the framework of certain projects and options for volunteering in different knowledge management tasks. On the YouTube channel there is audiovisual material produced by the organization for the dissemination of different research processes, as well as material produced by different media.

contributed with a significant amount of funds for the basic functioning of the organization, additional sources of funds had to be sought and it was necessary to move towards schemes that would provide the organization with greater sustainability. Although multi-task work dynamics were developed and coordination mechanisms were strengthened at the vertical and horizontal levels (particularly in times of high demand), it was difficult to attend to all petitions.

- The transformation processes that did not progress at the same rate. This was the case of the process associated with the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system. With the support of TTI's¹²⁵ complementary funds, progress was made in building an Institutional Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. However, it was not possible to conclude or even partially implement this plan due to the absence of staff entirely dedicated to this work. Although some practices have been instated (such as those used by the communication area in tracking the web portal and events), a robust system in this area has not yet been consolidated. Human resources are needed that can devote time and effort on a sustained basis. There were also processes to which the same follow-up could not be given, as occurred with the Documentation Center. Initially, this repository managed to establish itself as a space with bibliographic resources for consultation open to the general public (M. E. Rivera, personal communication, February 11, 2019), but it is currently in the process of reorganization.
- The stability of the network of associate researchers and external reviewers. While this model of recruitment, of highly-qualified staff, on the basis of demand, has been able to operate permanently under more sustainable budgetary conditions, it has also generated high transaction costs in relation to having to apply more personalized follow-up. As these persons do not have a permanent work relationship with the organization, new commitments emerged on the agenda, not only in following up on products ordered, but also regarding recruitment.
- The handling of the temporary conflicts between production, revision and publication, and the duration of the window of opportunity for having an impact on the topics of interest in the media and political spheres. Although the organization did have well-defined mechanisms for quality assurance, the agility of execution could be improved, without reducing the existing standards (M. E. Rivera, personal communication, January 22, 2019). The search for options to ensure both quality and speediness along the chain is crucial to the development of effective advocacy strategies.
- Identification of a cadre of professionals suitable for human resources management. Although on a couple of occasions, attempts were made to hire someone in charge of this area (S. Hernández, personal communication, February 11, 2019), we have not found someone with the knowledge and experience ideal for a professional field as specific as knowledge management (R. Córdova, personal communication, February 8, 2019). In the absence of such a person in charge of this work, the tasks in this area have been distributed among different positions.
- Sustainability and the absence of staff dedicated exclusively to obtaining funds. While many important partners (such as USAID) have been maintained and new partners (such as the IDB and ECLAC) have been incorporated, the scarcity of multi-year resources that can adapt flexibly to the development of the institutional research agenda and basic operational needs increases the importance of short-term

125 As part of the implementation of Opportunity Fund support, FUNDAUNGO, together with Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES) and Foro Social de Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras (FOSDEH), carried out a project to improve M&E capacities, under the technical advising of CIPPEC.

fund management and the volume of project proposals (or service provision), as well as the factor of unpredictability with which this task must be taken on. Faced with these conditions, the current team undertakes these tasks, but the need to have more specialized and competitive capacities in attracting funding has been recognized. This situation constitutes a warning signal regarding the importance of having staff dedicated exclusively to these efforts (M. E. Rivera, personal communication, January 22, 2019 and L. Quiñónez, personal communication, February 8, 2019).

- The publication of all content in English, in order to reach the English-speaking public who seek information on these regions of the world and who specifically show interest in the work done by the
- organization. There is the need to move towards a bilingual website which produces all the output formats in English.

6. Lessons learned

In the context of the process of change experienced as part of TTI implementation, different lessons learned are identified:

- “The accumulation of knowledge is key to timely advocacy” (M. E. Rivera, personal communication, January 22, 2019). Beyond generating knowledge to respond to a particular situation, dynamics must be generated to allow producing it over time, with sufficient depth and updating, so that an opinion can be given on the situation of the issue in question and for public policy recommendations to be made at any given time. The experience in advocacy achieved through the study on nini youth in El Salvador points in this direction. Before the controversy broke out in the media and political spheres, the organization already had the necessary evidence to contribute to the topic.

Box 1. The experience of the impact achieved through the study on nini youth in El Salvador

There are different ways by which independent thought centers like FUNDAUNGO can influence public policies. The evidence generated can not only serve as a source of information for preparing a program or a regulation, but also as a resource through which the population can be informed about a problematic situation, sensitizing different actors (particularly those with veto power) on the urgency of adopting a particular public decision.

Through the study on nini youth in El Salvador, FUNDAUNGO facilitated the approval of funding for the implementation of a government program aimed at this segment of the population. This was achieved thanks to the dissemination of useful evidence to facilitate an understanding of the difficulties faced by these young people daily, suggesting the importance of investing in their development.

In the context of understanding the challenges of the demographic transition and the increasing relevance of implementing public policies in favor of the use of the demographic bonus, it was anticipated that there was a need to have evidence on the characteristics of the young population who neither study nor work in El Salvador. In addition to identifying elements such as its size within the population structure, age composition, gender imbalances, and territorial distribution, the methodology used allowed recognizing the heterogeneity of this group and the relevance

of promoting its inclusion under strategies based on these differences. Consequently, the aim was established of responding more effectively to the demands of this population. The research was conducted between 2013 and 2014 and was published in January 2016.

In February 2016, the Presidency of the Republic launched the Youth Employment and Employability Program, JóvenES con Todo) (Presidency of the Republic, February 17, 2016), with the aim of “promoting the development of capacities and skills necessary to improve access to the labor market and facilitate the productive and social integration of youth, particularly those aged 15 to 29, who are unemployed, underemployed, outside the formal education system, or in the middle of transition towards becoming part of the productive world (for employment or self-employment).” (Government of El Salvador, 2016)

In concrete terms, this intervention offers services of employment, employability, entrepreneurship, and development of capacities and skills for life and work, under different routes, according to the profile and situation of the participant (id.). In the development of these routes, a monetary transfer is made in the form of food and transport allowances, through which the aim is to ensure the effective continuance of participants in the program. (id.)

According to the program profile, this intervention would be paid for with national funds drawn from the Special Fund of Resources from the Privatization of the National Telecommunications Administration (FANTEL), as well as international funds from a grant from the European Union and from the contracting of a loan with the World Bank, subject to approval by the Legislative Assembly (id.). In the face of the decision to not take out new loans, the funding structure was changed. In June 2016, it was stated that the funds to pay for the initial implementation of the program would come from four sources: the general budget of the State, a grant from Luxembourg, the redirecting of the balance of an ongoing World Bank loan, and an allocation of funds collected through the Special Contribution for Citizen Security and Coexistence (CESC), still subject to approval by the Legislative Assembly. (Diario CoLatino, June 27, 2016)

Regarding managing the political support needed for funding the program (initially for contracting the World Bank loan and then for the allocation of CESC funds), media and parliamentary debates emerged regarding the usefulness of the intervention, including the provision of a monetary transfer (Diario de Hoy, June 22, 2016 and Agencia de Prensa Salvadoreña, June 27, 2016). Was it a necessary expense or not? Was it an expense related to the achievement of public policy objectives in the field of primary prevention of violence or not? At the same time, stigmas were evoked regarding who ninis are. (Diario Colatino, June 27, 2016)

In this context, FUNDAUNGO’s study was presented in May 2016, at an event that included the comments of officials from the National Youth Institute (INJUVE), the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency (STPP), Escuela Superior de Economía y Negocios (ESEN), and the participation of William Pleités, Executive Director of Fomilenium II. At this event, Yeymi Muñoz, Director of the National Youth Institute, highlighted the value of the study as “a working tool for those of us who are responsible for the work of public policies, to respond to the great needs of this age group, the young population of the country.” (INJUVE, May 16, 2016)

From this moment on, the work was cited by different medias to inform on who ninis are, what their number is, under what conditions they live, why they neither study or work, and other key elements to justify the need for public intervention in favor of their development (La Prensa Gráfica, May 12, 2016; El Economista, May 12, 2016; El Mundo, May 13, 2016; El Diario de Hoy, June 22, 2016; Agencia de Prensa Salvadoreña, June 27, 2016). In this way, a contribution was made to reconstructing the collective vision of public opinion regarding ninis, and their social inclusion was positioned as a problem to be addressed.

In 2016, the Legislative Assembly approved that the funds of the Special Contribution for Citizen Security and Coexistence be employed in actions aimed at benefitting the nini youth, through the Youth Employment and Employability Program JóvenES con Todo. As at February 2019, this allocation was still in force.

According to the statements of Yeymi Muñoz, Director of the National Youth Institute, “the contribution of FUNDAUNGO in the process of analyzing the reality of young people was fundamental to building a strategy that was truly fitting for what the country and the youth need.” (FUNDAUNGO, 2018c)

- “Quality translates into recognition.” (L. Quiñónez, personal communication, 2019) Since its inception, the organization has prioritized quality assurance in carrying out its research. This prestige has contributed to the efforts to generate advocacy promoted by the organization, particularly in the area of communication. Strengthening existing mechanisms through promoting peer reviews has enhanced the dimension of this asset, both nationally and internationally.
- Despite its complexity, improvements should be sought in the research sphere, in the managerial and organizational areas, and in the communicational area, all understood as part of the management of think tanks. A vision focused on building capacities for a better future needs to be established. “I am positive about the future. We have a good team of researchers who have made important contributions. We have improved procedures. In the communication sphere, we have a redesigned website and progress has been made in the use of networks.” (R. Córdoba, personal communication, 2019)
- It is extremely useful to work with multi-year planning frameworks that allow establishing a medium-term horizon, with annual planning that is adaptable not only to the reality of the organization, but also to its environment.
- The richness of peer exchange is important, not only to address methodological issues or to establish contacts for future collaboration, but also to understand the structural problems that shape, on a daily basis, the life of think tanks. This applies especially to independent centers. It also helps to understand the way in which the centers advance in the search for better managerial, organizational and communicational outcomes.
- The generation of national partners enhances the advocacy capacity of the organization, although it must be recognized that it requires more time and resources for coordination. The consolidation of these links, over time, is based on the identification of specific topics of common interest, as well as good management of collaboration that motivates working continuously.
- The effectiveness of communication in advocacy work is the result not only of the Institutional Communication Unit, but also of the collaboration provided by the other members of the organization. (Rosales, 2014) Researchers play a crucial role in translating complicated concepts into simple messages for the understanding of different audiences. At the same time, the participation of decision-makers in choosing the priority issues for media positioning is relevant.
- The shared vision of advocacy priorities has allowed many results to accumulate over time and FUNDAUNGO to progressively become a benchmark for various topics, such as culture, politics and pensions. This not only favors their participation in the media and in meetings convened by the actors of the political system, but also allows the direct contracting of consultancies. (M. E. Rivera, personal communication, 2019)

7. Conclusions

With the support of the TTI, FUNDAUNGO was transformed, both at the research level, and at the organizational, managerial and communicational levels. In particular, it increased its capacity to generate evidence on addressing key challenges for the country's development that were prioritized by public policies. In line with these developments, the *Policy Community Survey*, commissioned by the TTI for 2011 and 2018, reveals improvements in the emphasis on high priority issues, knowledge of the public policy process and the realization of informed criticism of public policies. (IDRC, 2018)

TTI resources contributed substantially to putting in place the research team of the public policy program, under schemes that not only promote budgetary sustainability, but also taking advantage of highly specialized knowledge and intergenerational growth, within a framework of teams where contributions from external reviewers, senior and junior researchers, and research assistants converge. Through support for the continuous production and publication of studies, the accumulation of knowledge on demographic transition, pensions and citizen security was facilitated. This increase in research production capacity was accompanied by improvements in quality assurance dynamics (thanks to the introduction of peer review mechanisms) and communicational improvements. Based on the generation of evidence, changes were introduced in the institutional communication strategy. As a result, the presence of the organization augmented in different in-person and virtual spaces, the offer of research products was modified to make these propositions more friendly, and highly relevant events were carried out, such as Public Policy Week, also based on evidence.

The consolidation of this progress has led the organization to consider aspects relevant to institutional growth, which so far have not provided an adequate response, such as partnerships with strategic management of human talent, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation. The implementation of the TTI has highlighted the importance of promoting a management model that not only focuses on the development of research capacities, but also deals with other managerial and communicational aspects. Operational bottlenecks have also been identified in the implementation, together with strategies through which they can be overcome. In addressing these impasses, the value of the exchange of experiences among peers stands out as a favorable practice for identifying timely responses.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Methodology

In preparing this research, which is predominantly qualitative, different official bibliographic resources generated during TTI implementation were reviewed. These were: the annual work plans, the annual implementation reports submitted by the foundation to the TTI and the annual monitoring surveys requested by the TTI and completed by the foundation; the reports of the Policy Community Survey published by the TTI for the case of the foundation, and the products generated with the support of the TTI. In addition, news published by different actors were collected, where studies or activities developed by the foundation are employed, as well as other official documents, such as the institutional profile of the organization.

Also, in-depth interviews were conducted with four officials of the organization who experienced the initiation and finalization of the TTI. Three of the latter are foundation officials who were in charge of the implementation of the two phases of the TTI, from different perspectives: Ricardo Córdova, Executive Director of FUNDAUNGO, as a reference for strategic issues; María Elena Rivera, Coordinator of the Public Policy Program, as a reference for technical and operational matters; and Santos Hernández, Coordinator of Administration and Finance, as a reference for administrative matters. Leslie Quiñónez was also interviewed as a reference for the analysis of institutional changes which occurred, given the convergence of her experience in the organization with the start and end of the TTI. She worked as FUNDAUNGO's Academic Program Manager from 2003 to 2008, and then as Deputy Director of the Foundation from 2008 to 2009. Later, she left her work in the organization and rejoined in 2018 as Assistant Director of the Project for Promoting Citizen Participation in the Electoral Process and Public Debate, executed by the foundation with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The information collected was processed by means of a content analysis, the structure of which was based on the categories related to the variables taken up in the aforementioned research questions.

Annex 2

Lines of work of the three FUNDAUNGO programs, 2011-2018

Program	Institutional profile 2011	Institutional profile 2014	Institutional profile 2017
Democratic Governance	Political electoral system	Political electoral system	Political electoral system
	Public opinion Transparency	Citizen participation, political culture and transparency	Participation, political culture and transparency
	Citizen security	Citizen security and the prevention of violence	Citizen security and the prevention of violence
Territorial Management and the Citizenry	Political, legal and institutional framework of state administration of territory	Political, legal and institutional framework for the administration and development of territory	Political, legal and institutional framework for the administration and development of territory
	Government and administration of public institutions regarding territory	Government and administration of the municipality	Government and administration of the municipality
	Citizen participation and inclusion	Social and citizen inclusion	Strategic management of territory
	Environmental and risk management	Strategic management of territory	Strategic management of territory
Public Policy Studies		Demographic transformations and their implications for public policies	Demographic transformations and their implications for public policies
	Social security and the labor market	Social protection systems and the labor market	Social protection systems and the labor market
	Public finance	Funding for development	Funding for development
	Education	Education	Education

Research lines of FUNDAUNGO programs, within the framework of the 2014-2019 Institutional Research Agenda

Democratic Governance Program	Land Management and Citizenry Program	Public Policy Studies Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political electoral system • Citizen participation, political culture and transparency • Citizen security and prevention of violence • Links between research and advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal public management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social protection systems • Labor market • Demographic transformations and their implications for public policies • Funding for subnational development • Public social spending with a fiscal approach • Evaluation of public policies

Source: Own preparation, from FUNDAUNGO (2014c).

Annex 3

FUNDAUNGO publications prepared with the support of the TTI, by topic

Tema	Año	Autoridades
Demographic transitions and their implications for public policies	2012	Study: The population of older persons in El Salvador: Socioeconomic and demographic indicators at the municipal level
	2015	Working paper: National Transfer Accounts and life cycle deficit
	2016	Working paper: Estimate of the capital stock in El Salvador
	2018	Working Paper: Funding the life cycle deficit. Practical applications in countries with estimates of National Transfer Accounts
Pensions (topic linked to the line of research on social protection systems)	2011	Book: <i>Jóvenes ninis en El Salvador</i>
	2012	Article in the Revista Notas de Población magazine, published by ECLAC: <i>Dividendo demográfico y migración en El Salvador: ¿Cuánto se ha perdido?</i>
	2014	Book: <i>Diagnóstico del sistema de pensiones en El Salvador (1998-2010)</i>
	2015	Bulletin: Profitability of the pension system funds in El Salvador, 1998-2011
	2016	Book: <i>Entre el individuo y el Estado: Condicionantes financieros del sistema de pensiones en El Salvador</i>
	2017	Bulletin: Comment by Dr. William Pleitez on the diagnostic study of the pension system in El Salvador (1998-2010)
Links between research and advocacy	2015	Executive summary of the diagnosis of the pension system in El Salvador (1998-2010)

Citizen security and prevention of violence

2010 Book: *Atlas de la violencia en El Salvador (2005-2009)*

2011 Book: *Percepciones sobre la delincuencia y la inseguridad en Centroamérica*

2012 Book: *Atlas de la violencia en El Salvador (2005- 2011)*

Working paper: Factors associated with violence and crime in El Salvador: An approach to the hypothesis of social exclusion

2013 Working paper: Factors associated with violence and crime in El Salvador: An approach to the hypothesis of demographic factors

Working paper: Factors associated with violence and crime in El Salvador: An approach to the hypothesis of economic activity factors

Book: *Atlas de la violencia en El Salvador (2009-2012)*

Book: *Atlas de la violencia en Honduras (2009-2012)*

2014 Book: *Atlas de la violencia en Guatemala (2009-2012)*

Bulletin: Evolution of homicides in El Salvador, 2009-2015

2015 Bulletin: Evolution of thefts in El Salvador, 2009-2015

Working paper: Crime and violence in Latin America: Challenges for security governance in areas of State presence

2016 Bulletin: Evolution of homicides in El Salvador, 2009 - June 2016

Political parties (topic related to the line on the political electoral system)

2012 Book: *Contribuciones para el debate sobre regulación de los partidos políticos*

Book: *Los partidos políticos en El Salvador: Una lectura desde las encuestas de opinión*

Source: Own preparation, based on the credits included in the publications listed.

Note: Only publications recognized as having been prepared with TTI support are included.

CHAPTER NINE

Research for Transformation: The Case of FUSADES

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1 Why a think tank?

Think tanks play an important role, as they contribute to and promote economic and social progress in their countries and in the regions of impact. That is why International Development Research Center (IDRC) promoted the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) program to grant funds through the core funding¹²⁶ mode to think tanks in Latin America, including FUSADES, for a period of 10 years. The areas established for the grant focused on: 1) increasing the quality of research, 2) strengthening organizational performance, and 3) improving the capacity to influence public policies.

In order to determine the transformations experienced by the beneficiary institutions, qualitative research has been carried out, through case studies, to identify the benefits, lessons learned, challenges, and impacts on public policies generated, thanks to the allocation of TTI funds. The methodology employed in this study — which corresponds to this type of research — consisted, firstly, of a bibliographic review of FUSADES documents submitted to the TTI, within the framework of the Grant Agreement signed with the program. Then, the history of FUSADES and its sphere of operation are presented, with the aim of understanding the scope and activities under the funding framework. Subsequently, individual interviews were conducted with eleven people directly involved in the development of activities related to the TTI. The Project Administrator and Executive Director were also interviewed in order to hear their points of view, involvement and experiences. Lastly, internet research was done on the experiences that the interviewees referred to and on the bibliography supporting the information provided, in order to have consistent documentation. Given that the case study is qualitative, open questions were presented to the interviewees in order for them to express their role, perception and achievements, as well as to investigate regarding the challenges, obstacles, benefits, the fulfillment or not of objectives, lessons learned, main areas of intervention, transformations of FUSADES, advantages and disadvantages of core funding in relation to project funding, and the application of the gender approach within the framework of TTI funding.

In what follows, a description is made of the main aspects developed in relation to the three general areas raised in the Grant Agreement between FUSADES and the TTI program, according to the statements of the people interviewed and information available in the institution's documents.

2. FUSADES: a *think tank*

FUSADES was born in 1983, 36 years ago, as the first organization dedicated to serving as a center of thought and development in El Salvador. The entity was created by a group of independent professionals and businesspersons, with the mission of being a highly-credible thought and research center that would promote the economic and social progress of Salvadorans. Said mission was to be accomplished under the premise of sustainable development, within a democratic system of individual freedoms to encourage dialogue as a mechanism for seeking agreements in the country.¹²⁷ The structure consisted of: a Board of Directors, an Executive Director, a Department of Economic and

126 Flexible, non-earmarked funding that leaves it to the organization to decide how the funds will be used. This type of flexible funding generally allows organizations to determine their research and advocacy agenda, prioritize emerging development challenges and invest in organizational strengthening through staff training, technology, systems, administrative and financial software, policies, processes and management practices, communication, and monitoring and evaluation.

Social Studies (DEES) and a Support Area for Small and Microenterprises. At the time, when FUSADES came into being, El Salvador was in the midst of a civil war. The institution did not have its own offices, but in 1991 it opened its own building, thus having equity of its own. Later, FUSADES came to establish an area of development and another of thought, with which the organizational structure and research areas evolved considerably; however, to achieve this, internal reflections had to be carried out, in relation to which transformations had to be made to fulfill the mission and vision. All of this was established in the strategic plans prepared every five years.

In 2010, at its 27 years of existence, FUSADES received TTI funds for phase 1 (five years); subsequently, it received funds for phase 2 (five additional years), with the latter phase being implemented over three years. These funds were designated exclusively for the Department of Economic and Social Studies (DEES) and its Center for Research and Statistics (CIE), which constituted a single department. However, during the implementation, an analysis was done on the benefits of reaching more people and optimizing the resources by achieving an effect on staff of other departments and institutions. Given this situation, when an expert trainer was brought in to provide training in specialized areas, the person was designated not only to the DEES, but also to various technicians from other areas. In some cases, resources were supplemented by other funds, to augment the benefit.

As part of the technical and strategic knowledge that FUSADES has obtained with TTI funds, a new organizational structure was established, creating through it the economic, and social and legal studies departments. The research and statistics center was also strengthened. Each of these bodies has its own technical and independent team, providing, for each area, qualified staff strategically located to work in an integrated manner.

The interviewees stated that the changes in the organizational structure were very fitting decisions, mainly because they made it possible to work through synergies, promoting a multidisciplinary approach, because training was received to work integrally and do better quality research. The staff learned to define the key topics to which resources should be assigned. The first TTI funds were allocated to training. This led to internal restructuring in infrastructure, recruitment of human resources when needed and the creation of an identity unifying the logo and graphic line.

According to MacGam (2019), in the *2018 Global Go To Think Tank Index*, prepared by the University of Pennsylvania, FUSADES ranks first among the best think tanks in Central America and 15th in Central and South America (2019). As stated in the reports prepared by the same author, since 2011 FUSADES has ranked as follows: In 2011 it was 19th in Central and South America, and second in Central America. Since 2012, it has moved from position number 27 to number 15 in Central and South America, and has remained in first place in Central America. Funding from the TTI has contributed greatly to this achievement, as a result of all the technical training received and the tools acquired, which are explained below.

3. Human-centered quality research

Putting a human face on research has been one of the elements learned thanks to the TTI. We learned to first think about who benefits from the research. This feeling was expressed with great enthusiasm by all those interviewed. We also learned that it is very important not to hasten changes and processes, but to adhere strictly to the execution timelines.

127 For more details, see FUSADES at <http://fusades.org/fusades/conocenos/historia-fusades>. Last review date: Friday, March 15, 2019.

To increase the quality of research within the framework of the TTI grant, specific objectives were set, including the development and strengthening of the capabilities of the DEES researchers to make use of new analytical software. In the areas of research of strategic interest, an important element was the strengthening of interinstitutional links and participation of researchers in seminars, conferences and networks focusing on new research techniques.

As a starting point, the potential of the technical team and management was identified, revealing the existing challenges. In these circumstances, TTI funds served as a catalyst for transforming the structure of the think tank, as greater awareness was generated for creating capacities in research and communication, and greater visibility was given to the social area. These aspects were fundamental for achieving what are now the departments of economic, social, and legal studies, as well as the Center for Research and Statistics. Another aspect that stood out was IDRC's decision to grant core funding to the organization, as this allowed it to adjust the funding to its specific needs as an institution.

The mechanisms through which it was possible to strengthen and achieve transformations are diverse. These include the acquisition of 17 licenses of the Stata statistical software, and the license for versions 11 and 10 of the StatTransfer program, and its subsequent updates up to version 15 of this software. Given this purchase, 19 DEES executives were trained *in situ*. Following this, the knowledge was extended to eight researchers through an online course, for three of them with TTI funds and for five with another source of funds. At the same time, five licenses of the General Algebraic Modeling System (GAMS) program were acquired. Four members of the team of researchers received the training for this program.

Also, staff participated in other seminars, courses and training events. Some of these events are listed below:

- Seminar on “Translating policy analysis tools into action and change”, given by Professor Charles Wheelan of the University of Chicago. At the seminar were 14 participants from the DEES and three members of the FUSADES Board of Directors.
- Diploma course in tax law. Two DEES researchers attended, which allowed them to deepen their analysis of the tax reforms implemented in the country.
- Practical-theoretical course on “Labor markets, poverty and inequality”, conducted by Centro de Estudios Distributivos, Laborales y Sociales (CEDLAS, Argentina), in which one researcher participated.
- Training workshop: “Building effective networks”, conducted by the specialized firm Denkmodell, in which, in addition to the participation of FUSADES researchers, other members of the Competitiveness Initiative¹²⁸ of El Salvador who participated as discussion table coordinators received the training.
- “Research tools for public policies” course that provided an introduction to research for development, monitoring results, evaluation of the implementation of public policies, evaluation and proposal of programs, and performance measurement models. Additionally, this course included a statistical analysis factor applied to public policies. Three researchers participated in this course.

Also, by way of bibliographic strengthening, 18 reference books were acquired in the areas of politics, social sciences, education, health, poverty, and environmental sustainability, which serve as support for researchers.

Training, seminars and workshops, both national and international, on the new technologies and methodologies, changed the way research is done, mainly with regards to being at the forefront in research methods and information collection. One of the challenges faced by the FUSADES Center for Research and Statistics is to follow the rigorous

128 The Competitiveness Initiative (Iniciativa para la Competitividad) was carried out with TTI funds and is explained in the section on this study. “Fundamental in communication is: what, to whom and how.”

protocols required by quality economic and social research to make research more robust and reliable. For this reason, the working protocols have been revised and improved.

In addition to participation in the different areas of technical strengthening and the experiences shared in the meetings, the staff has had the opportunity to learn how research is done in other institutions, and to understand that every thought center evolves differently, in addition to each having different economic realities. It was also learned that the situation of the country influences, to a great extent, the research areas, but does not condition the strategic research agenda established by the institution. In this context, the quality of the network of research centers established internationally within the framework of the TTI has been of great benefit for strengthening the sustainability of beneficiaries, since its funds were used both to strengthen institutions and to carry out research. The challenge, now, will be to not go backwards once the Grant Agreement ends. Finally, being a member of the ILAIPP network (Iniciativa Latinoamericana de Investigación para Políticas Públicas, Latin American Initiative for Research for Public Policies) enabled new contacts and participation in other networks, such as Southern Voice,¹²⁹ a think tank network founded by the TTI through the Opportunity Fund.¹³⁰

FUSADES combines the willingness to apply experiences from other countries with the desire to have the funds to do so, in addition to becoming professionalized. It is considered that this has allowed a significant qualitative leap in the development of research, in addition to allowing the organization to participate in projects requiring quality research. In this way, contact was established with entities such as the World Bank (WB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and the Institute of Fiscal Studies of London, among others.¹³¹ The Center for Research and Statistics (CIE) was strengthened by acquiring equipment and training for capturing primary information through mobile devices. To this end, 50 tablets and a robust server were purchased to host the information generated. CIE staff was also trained on the use of Android and Java for developing programs to capture information. In another sphere, a workshop on “Statistical Techniques and Survey Methodology” was held, given by Dr. Alan De Brauw of IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute), with the participation of 16 DEES executives. Among the difficulties that arose with the new tools, there were unsuccessful experiences in the application of new technologies, as was the particular case of speech recognition technology, since the application was not developed for Spanish, and the additional cost necessitated adjustments to the budget and delimiting which type of technology to use. All this experience led to challenges to achieve sustainability and to be at the forefront in institutional training. Having new technologies at a good level, keeping the organization in the market and providing good services has been fundamental to growth of the services provided.

Throughout the eight years of the TTI grant, it was observed that research is possible from social, legal and economic viewpoints, albeit that the topics cannot be worked on in isolation, but must be tackled through a multidisciplinary and integral approach. A turn has been taken from considering the agenda of each area to taking research topics as a whole. In order to achieve this, as explained above, the skills of the technical and management teams had to be improved.¹³²

The organization was also able to participate in important international events, such as that of LACEA LAMES in Chile, which allowed it to be part of the network “Compromiso con la Equidad” (“Commitment to Equity”, CEQ), at Tulane University, an entity with which a cooperation agreement was signed to assess the impact of fiscal policies on the reduction of poverty and inequality. FUSADES also participated in the conference “Fiscal policy and income

129 For more information on the network, visit SouthernVoice.org.

130 These funds are submitted to a competition under certain lines of action in which participants make their innovative proposals.

131 For more information, visit <http://fusades.org/fusades/centro-de-investigación-y-estadística/nuestro-equipo>

132 A noteworthy result has been the study of “Analysis of the proposed health reform”, with Dr. Thomas Bossert of Harvard University.

redistribution in Latin America” at which a work on El Salvador was presented, and where the work of the other participating countries was also presented.

FUSADES has structured a plan for mentoring, training and development of junior researchers; some of them are interns who are about to graduate. These interns are given recognition for the research in which they participate. The program allows strengthening the areas of knowledge in the students and identifying capacities and potential that could be incorporated or linked with the institution in the future, thus creating a network of young professionals.

Finally, FUSADES has concentrated on gender by being part of the Gender Action Learning Project (GALP)¹³³ of the TTI, the objective of which was to train and make known the main conceptual tools of the economy, and quantitative methodological applications to carry out impact assessments or results with a differentiated approach. Although it had an economy perspective, the training was given for all areas, which allowed a review of the gender approach at FUSADES and to ask ourselves where we wanted to go in this regard. Some research of the institution was evaluated to identify how the topic had been addressed. This allowed establishing how the approach would be implemented, transversally, in all research.

4. Institutional transformation: better results

As already mentioned, FUSADES has carried out changes within the institution, not only in terms of its organizational structure, but also in its way of thinking, doing research and acting. In addition to having created the departments of economic, social and legal studies, and transforming its Center for Research and Statistics, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was created, given that one of the objectives set within this area of intervention was to implement a management system for planning, programming and monitoring the research projects. In relation to this, staff and technical advisors were hired with TTI funds to guide the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system.

In order to strengthen the sustainability of the institution, within the framework of the TTI, first a consultancy was first hired to assess sustainability and establish a resource mobilization strategy, which since then contributes to the sustainability of FUSADES in strengthening its equity. The overall objective, approved within the framework of the TTI grant for this strategy, has been to contribute to strengthening the foundation’s equity by formulating, implementing and following up on a permanent strategy for the management of technical and financial cooperation. Following this, a unit was created which is now in charge of obtaining funding. For this purpose, staff is constantly trained to be aware of the trends and interests of national and international cooperation.

FUSADES has an equity fund, but it needs to seek sources of financing for optimization; therefore, measuring its institutional performance is important, evaluating not only its technical performance, but also its financial performance, which is why the training to measure and build indicators has been of great benefit.

To strengthen its equity, FUSADES did two things: look for new projects and optimize the resources it had, being aware that the only way to stay active over time is by achieving sustainability.

Implementing different tools in research development and daily performance has made the organization more robust. Within the framework of the TTI, a participatory process of self-evaluation and reflection was carried out to prepare the Institutional Strategic Plan (PEI) for 2014 to 2019, with the support of a consultant. This program included the areas of research to be carried out during the period in question; then the topics on which research would be done were presented to the Board of Directors for its approval. All of the above was done in compliance with the objectives set to strengthen

133 Guatemala, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Ghana participate in this project, together with four other thought centers.

institutional performance, consolidate the process of strategic thinking, increase and improve the capacity of the Center for Research and Statistics, and implement a management system for the planning, programming and monitoring of research.

5. In communication, what, to whom and how are fundamental

The way of communicating 10 years ago was different from today. Because of this, it was important to make changes in the communication processes. One cannot transform a researcher into a communicator, but he or she can be trained to communicate effectively.

FUSADES built its vision not only as a thought center, but also as an entity that would have an impact on public policy in the country. In order to achieve the objectives of improving its quality and capacity, training was provided to staff, and communication synergies were created between the think tank and other organizations, both from the public and private sectors, reaching diverse audiences and developing capacities for economic and social analysis.

Using technological communication tools adequately had a positive impact on the transmission of messages. Such was the case of the long-term development vision of the country built by FUSADES, which had the technical advice that enabled El Salvador to be integrated into the global economy. In this exercise all FUSADES staff participated and experts from other national and international institutions were included, in conferences, workshops and training events that strengthened advocacy processes. This effort concluded with the presentation to presidential candidates in 2018 of the document “Progresando en el nuevo milenio” (“Making progress in the new millennium”)¹³⁴ that lays the foundation for a long-term country development strategy.

FUSADES staff received training for institutional speakers and recurrent workshops on theoretical and practical courses in front of cameras, with performance analysis. Also, within the framework of the TTI grant, adaptation was done, with a specialized team, of a press and video room for communication with national, international and social media (the Media Center). During the eight years, content was generated that made it possible to establish links with stakeholders, and to transmit and communicate ideas to the population in a better way. In addition, in this same grant framework, in 2017, FUSADES made visits to institutions in other countries to learn about their experiences in managing communication and using social networks. The visits included working meetings with Brookings Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), Atlas Network, and InterAmerican Dialogue, among others. With learning from these visits, the communication area strengthened its capabilities and now contributes to the strategy of sustainability and raising funds through the sale of services.

With the aim of creating synergies with public and private organizations, FUSADES adopted a strategy of advocacy in networks working on specific topics. All of the interviewees tell successful stories of FUSADES, and also state that FUSADES has positioned itself in Latin America, which was possible thanks to TTI funds.

One success case is, for example, the Competitiveness Initiative, in which 20 actions to be taken in five areas for the economic growth of the country were proposed. A Competitiveness Council, a Committee and eight working groups formed by the private sector and the government were established through the Ministry of the Economy.¹³⁵ Also, networks of people were formed with a common interest in promoting competitiveness in the country. In this way, a diagnosis was created and several proposals were made to see how El Salvador could improve its competitiveness.

134 See www.fusades.org

135 For more information, consult the document “Iniciativa para la competitividad, un esfuerzo de nación” of October 2014 (document without editorial).

The effort was made to promote the proposals to the government, but it had a different agenda and did not give way to the initiative, even though the Ministry of the Economy was involved. It was an enriching experience for building communication networks and channels with a common strategic vision. In this experience there were international professionals who trained the team on how to prepare the proposal that even has draft laws; however, the initiative was not approved by the government of that time. The proposal is still in force and will be presented to the new government.¹³⁶

FUSADES also participated in public-private partnerships (PPPs) during the period from 2009 to 2014, when the Economic and Social Council was created to deal with the issue of these partnerships. FUSADES participated in the board of the council, which was made up of different actors, such as universities and private companies. On the basis of the council, the government submitted a bill, which was discussed by all members. Much emphasis was placed on making the law take into account the issue of transparency. The council drafted a bill that was submitted to the Legislative Assembly, which issued an opinion on the bill, and presented it for approval by the Assembly. The project, however, was subjected to a transformation that eliminated the issue of transparency.

Despite this, FUSADES continued to participate actively and held a workshop with Assembly members, having brought to the country international experts with TTI funds. This contributed to the eventual adoption of the law, making the issue of transparency be included once again. Today, the country does not have any PPPs, even though the law for them is in place. The seminar given with TTI funds, “Best Practices in Public-Private Partnership Financing”, was very timely to deepen knowledge on the topic. Both of these experiences involved the departments of economic and legal studies.

136 This work was carried out over a period of five years. The working tables were in place throughout that period.

A new way to influence public policies: the mini-case of the Pensions Law

This is the name given to FUSADES’ success story about the Pensions Law in El Salvador, which is considered a window of opportunity for new ways of making public policies.

The notion that the policies of the country are those that arise from the involvement of society was put into practice. This is true; otherwise, it would be a case of government policies made through a top-down “ego system” rather than a bottom-up “ecosystem”.

What was the problem?

The state faced a situation of fiscal unsustainability. The pension fund was the objective, and workers needed a sufficient and sustainable pension to retire.

In February 2016, the government presented a proposal to reform the pension system that was not approved by the Legislative Assembly.

What was done?

Civil society reacted and created the Citizen Initiative for Pensions (ICP), formed by the Committee of Workers in Defense of the Pension Funds of El Salvador (CONTRADEFOP), the National Association of Private Business (ANEP), the Salvadoran Association of Pension Administrators (ASAFONDOS), and FUSADES. After 10 months of work, the bill was submitted to the Legislative Assembly and a law reform was consolidated.

FUSADES, in the process, designed and implemented the communication strategy, as well as the proposal for the campaign for education and citizen awareness in the media and social networks. This allowed the population to know the risks and benefits of this reform so that the population could reach its own conclusions on the subject. In addition, presentations were made at many universities, unions, professional associations, companies, the press, publishing spheres, and opinion circles throughout the country. The challenge was to communicate a complex topic in a simple manner. The ICP had national and international experts and each entity involved made available its resources. In the case of FUSADES, a multidisciplinary team was assigned, composed of experts from the departments of economic, legal, and communication studies.

Lessons learned

1. In order to build and propose a new pension system it was necessary to understand the root of the problem.
2. The experience of being part of the creation of something gives people power. It allows one to see the value of oneself in the context.
3. In order to change organizations, societies and individuals, there must be a collective path which allows seeing things from a shared perspective.

This is the best example that expresses how FUSADES went from being a traditional think tank doing desk studies, to having the individual as the central axis of its research. This has been thanks to training in the framework of the TTI, knowing that research must respond to reality based on evidence. Doing research and communication are the challenges that think tanks face to be able to have an impact and sell ideas.

Also, it can be said that the TTI grant to equip the Media Center was of great importance. Cameras, computers and equipment were purchased for the video recording and material production studio, in such a way that together with the training events, the way of making clear and frank communication was perfected, with the certainty of reaching the target population, generating as much impact as possible. This is why it is considered that the organization has been able to influence decisions in the political sphere for public policies. The research approach used to focus on the production of documents, and it changed to a dimension concentrated on communicating ideas (without neglecting the preparation of documents). The creation of visual communication capabilities positioned the institution as a think tank of global and local relevance. There is now a thematic advocacy plan, in which a real event is presented, together with the process to measure it, the communication output plan, the communication objective, the classification of the audience, and the quality of the messages. It should be said that it is essential to consider how the impact is evaluated, whether there is a dispersion of communication objectives and what is published in the media in relation to what has been made known.

Communication is one of the most important aspects for FUSADES. Much consideration is given to what is to be communicated and how. At the same time, the FUSADES team believes that it has done very intense work within the organization, since the population that it must reach firstly is its staff, since everyone must know how to communicate what is done. For this reason, communication training has been carried out within the institution. It was also considered important to train journalists in the country, as it is very important for them to understand how to transmit the messages.

This is why one of the challenges considered most relevant when the grant ends is how to maintain fresh funding to have the Media Center equipment up-to-date and continue training. For a foundation, this is not so easy, because the equipment is expensive, which is why services are sold.

6. The importance of networks

Something very important for FUSADES has been the establishment of alliances, not only with the ILAIPP network, but also with other national and international thought centers, as well as with other institutions, such as universities and government institutions, with which greater credibility has been achieved.

One of the greatest benefits of being a member of the ILAIPP network has been to compare ourselves with other think tanks, as well as to share capacities and experiences, recognizing that institutions are different in thought, size and mode of action. An example of this is to have participated in research funded by IDRC, such as that carried out on territorial productive development, completed in 2018, which was done together with think tanks of Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile, with almost all those involved being members of the ILAIPP network. As a positive result of the work of the research teams, the four countries developed a common methodology. The IDB promoted the issue at the regional level and invited these centers to join their research.

The dynamics of work in research and on the impact of public policies are increasingly aimed at working regionally or globally. It is therefore of the utmost importance to work in networks. One of the major challenges, in addition to sustainability, is how to keep, at the the institutions with whom relations have been established, the will to continue learning and growing.

7. What has been learned and achieved?

It is important to start this section by highlighting the fact that all the people interviewed mentioned the benefits and progress that FUSADES has had thanks to the TTI. They all agree that it has been essential to build an installed capacity within the institution, as well as to incorporate other actors in the country. Having had core funding has implied a vote of confidence that the money would be well-used. This has involved managing resources properly, establishing administrative processes so that what was planned was fulfilled, justifying the changes, and having the flexibility to modify the activities to the needs of the institution, always under the established lines of intervention and monitoring the financial and technical execution. Differences between what was planned and implemented are reflected in the implementation, due to different reasons, such as the availability of the experts who gave the seminars and training. The funds assigned to the implementation objectives of five years (phase 2) were achieved and implemented in three years. Eight years of implementation was reached in 2018, and we are currently in the process of closure. It is important to mention what the Project Manager said, that the relationship with the designated TTI official has been fundamental in guiding the management of the grant. The processes established for the presentation of the reports, both technical and financial, were in the specified formats.

Another challenge at the end of the grant will be to continue encouraging constant improvement. Communication is extremely important, because it defines the impact generated. The tools and approach of digital communication need to be improved, refined and updated. For this reason, as already mentioned, sustainability and income generation are important to stay at the forefront and seek new market opportunities.

While it is true that FUSADES has different funding sources, TTI funds have been instrumental in the transformation of the institution. It was necessary to make it very clear from the outset that the funds were not permanent, so there had to be a continuity plan. A dependency relationship had to be avoided, since the grant has only sought to strengthen FUSADES.

Cooperation is increasingly moving towards project funding, so it is necessary to develop greater capacities at thought centers to apply for such funds. That is why FUSADES believes it was right to have created a unit to raise funds. Of course, this unit needs to be further strengthened, as it is necessary to have local sponsors to fund research projects that benefit the country. It is also important to learn how to sell the benefits of research and make them valued, since unfortunately, in El Salvador there is a lack of a culture that encourages contributing money to research projects, so everything must be contributed by FUSADES.

Another lesson learned by FUSADES was to understand that any push for change must be supported by appropriate reforms and regulations in the institutional framework to ensure its sustainability.

A success case of institutional strengthening that shows the growth of the institution and its ability to develop good proposals is having obtained funding from the Opportunity Fund (described above) in a competitive way. Several projects were won, including one in the area of communication and another one in the management and raising of funds.

Among the achievements of FUSADES as a result of all the strengthening, is the establishment of regulations and standards for generating opportunities for professional growth within the institution as a way to encourage the continuous professional training of its teams.

Communication skills have been strengthened in all staff, as the spokespersons must be primarily the researchers. Of course, the level of learning has been different in each person. Communication has allowed the organization to reach different types of audiences and not be a think tank for the elite. Considering that the institution must be brought closer to people, the communication of information must be friendly, accessible and understandable, for a better understanding of public policy proposals in the population. The transformation has taken time; it has not been overnight, but it was possible because there was a lot of will and commitment.

“The funds granted through the TTI have fallen on fertile ground,” says the Executive Director. One of the most important aspects of the TTI has been that the contribution was not only monetary, but it was also considerable technical support at the local and regional levels. Workshops were held for thought centers to build their own resource management models. This aspect has substantially helped to develop the institutional and organizational capacity of these thought centers. This has meant that for eight years, FUSADES has been transforming its organizational structure, its manner of thinking and its impact on public policies.

6. What does it mean to influence public policies?

There are several ways to influence public policies. In FUSADES' experience, one way is to place the subjects in public opinion; another is to change the discourse and also generate proposals for action.

Definitely, measuring the impact on public policies and being able to demonstrate its causality is a complex matter. In any case, contact with the government is necessary. For this reason, FUSADES has carried out research that has been shared locally so that decision-makers have the elements from the ground up. It is necessary to know how to measure success in order not to become frustrated. There are small and big success stories. Sometimes the mere fact of generating debates constitutes success. FUSADES had to unlearn in order to learn anew.

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Annex

Interviews conducted with FUSADES staff

To carry out the case study, several people who were directly involved in the TTI grant were interviewed. Ten of them are working at FUSADES and another person is at another institution, but because he was the Director of Communication, interviewing him was considered important. Individual interviews were conducted with each of the individuals, in which open questions were asked to collect information about the objectives of this case study. The questions were generating, so that the person interviewed could explain her or himself openly and, in most cases, was able to make a contribution with only two or three questions, as the remainder of the questions were implicit in the first ones. Information on the grant was expanded, in relation to the level of involvement.

As an introduction, the purpose of the interview was explained to the interviewees, and their verbal authorization for conducting the interview was obtained. Then the interview began. The generating questions are listed below, not necessarily in the order in which they were asked. This is because in some cases it was not necessary to ask all the questions, as often the interviewees began to provide the information sought after having heard the purpose of the interview. There was no need to explain what the TTI grant was, because all the people interviewed were involved in the matter.

- In your view, what have been the benefits, challenges and lessons learned from the TTI grant?
- What were the main areas of focus in relation to the TTI grant and how has FUSADES evolved as a result of its impact?
- Do you consider that the impact of FUSADES on public policies has been enhanced?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of core funding as compared to project funding?
- Have the institutions of the ILAIPP network been strengthened to influence public policies at the regional level?
- Have they received training on the gender approach? What was this action?

Below is a list of the names and positions of the persons interviewed for the FUSADES case study.

The names and positions of the persons interviewed for the FUSADES case study.

Person interviewed	Position
1. Mauricio Shi	Researcher (Coordinator of the Center for Research and Statistics and Administrator of the TTI program)
2. José Ángel Quirós	Executive Director
3. Margarita de Sanfeliu	Director of the Center for Research and Statistics
4. Helga Cuellar	Director of Social Studies
5. Álvaro Trigueros	Director of Economic Studies
6. Rafael Domínguez	Head of Communication
7. Rodolfo Villamariona	Director of Finance
8. Marjorie de Trigueros	Senior Analyst, Department of Legal Studies
9. Ana Marcela López	Junior Researcher at the Department of Social Studies
10. Carmen Vergara	Coordinator of the Cooperation Unit
11. René Hernández	Former Director of Communication

CHAPTER TEN



ASIES in the Think Tank Initiative: A Story Told through Seven Voices

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1 Introduction

Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (Research and Social Studies Association – ASIES), a think tank established in Guatemala in 1979, has been part of the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) since its inception in 2010. This year, when its two phases of work were completed, a review was done of the achievements attained and of the challenges that need to be faced in the future. For this purpose, discussions were held with those who were directly involved in the implementation of the aims proposed by TTI.

2. Institutional strengthening as a central axis

Through TTI, the aim was to highlight the role of ASIES as a “prestigious partner that supports development in Guatemala” thanks to its ability to “provide high-quality, influential and policy-relevant research”. On January 25, 2010, Marie Claude-Martin, leader of the Think Tank Initiative program, contacted the entity to inform us that we were one of the 12 Latin American organizations selected for the program – out of 175 institutions that had submitted their applications – and that we were to move on to the phase of institutional support through core funding.

The process continued its course until a Grant Agreement was signed with the International Development Research Centre on September 6 of the same year, with the aim of achieving three specific objectives.

Table 1. Objectives of the Grant Agreement between ASIES and TTI

Increasing research quality	Strengthening organizational performance	Improving advocacy capacity in public policies
Expanding the team of researchers and full-time staff	Establishing a plan for long-term financial sustainability	Improving communication in research with reforms to increase the number of trained staff and their training
Improving staff retention by creating a new incentives regime	Strengthening staff through institutional leadership transition strategies and organizational and staff performance measurement systems	Redesigning the website and adopting new information technologies to increase influence through the media
Expanding the institutional research agenda by launching large projects, using econometric tools and creating new research areas	Updating administrative and financial systems and training staff in their use	Improving information management by modernizing the Information and Documentation Center
Increasing research standards by formalizing quality control mechanisms and incorporating training and internship programs	Modernizing technological infrastructure	

Source: Own preparation, based on information provided by ASIES.

In order to determine whether the entity had completed what had been proposed, some actors who carried out the implementation of the strategy evaluated the steps taken in recent years. For this, seven people were interviewed: Raquel Zelaya, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors; Eduardo Stein, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors; Directors Guisela Mayén, Olga Loarca and Ana Lucía Blas; Carmen Ortiz, a partner whose role in the first phase of the project was fundamental; and ASIES' current Executive Secretary, Pablo Hurtado.

In 2019, ASIES appeared, for the sixth consecutive year, on the list of the best think tanks in the world (not including those in the United States). The Global Go To Think Tank Index, prepared by the University of Pennsylvania for 13 years, evaluated 8,162 entities from five continents. In Central America, the Salvadoran organization Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social (FUSADES) held first place, followed by ASIES. (McGann, 2018)

Other entities included in this ranking were the Honduran Foro Social de la Deuda Externa de Honduras (FOSDEH) and Fundación Doctor Guillermo Manuel Ungo (FUNDAUNGO) of El Salvador. The four entities which appeared among the top 35 best think tanks in Central and South America, were also part of the Think Tank Initiative.

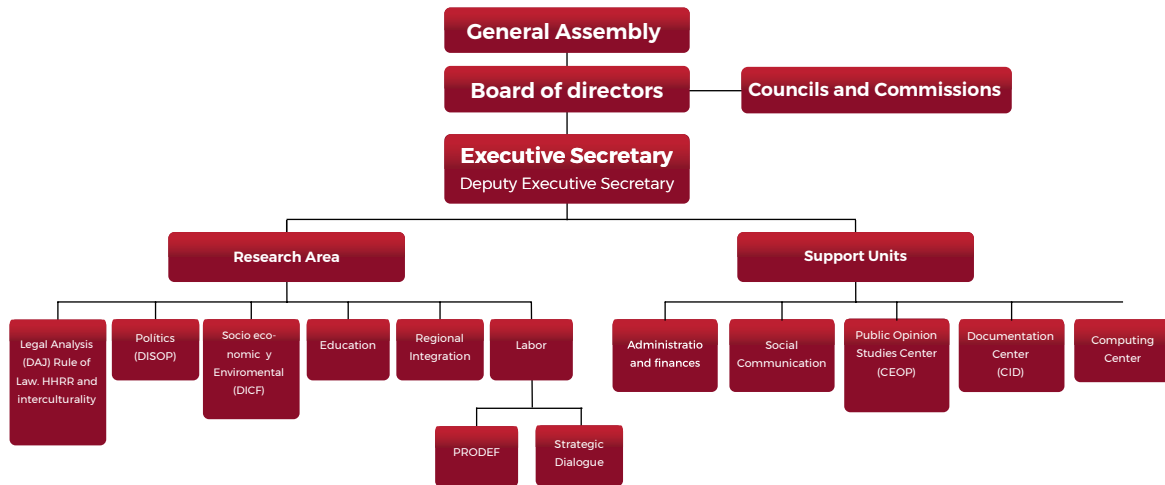
Before joining TTI, ASIES did not consider, as part its strategy for achieving presence, to seek positioning outside the local level. These spaces began to be sought as a result of the work developed since 2010. Because of what was mentioned, the entity did not appear in any ranking.

It is important to note that ASIES was, before the TTI intervention, an "...entity with local prestige. Since the year we were established, 1979, the research we did was professional. At one point we sought out a process to become strengthened and improve what we were already doing," says Guisela Mayén, Director of Research, Monitoring and Learning. "(...) also to become aware of what it means to be a think tank. And we realized that, in essence, we were one already," adds Executive Secretary Pablo Hurtado.

3. Changes in the organization chart

The TTI intervention covered several aspects, one of which was the reorganization of existing areas and units. Until 2013, the Executive Secretariat had been in charge of technical, administrative and financial activities (Figure 1). It had the responsibility for the entire operation of the institution, and directly coordinated the research areas and support units. It also represented the entity at the highest level, was responsible for maintaining contacts with political actors, and reported monthly on operations to the Board of Directors. (Mayén and Loarca, 2014)

Graph 1. Organization chart of ASIES until 2013



Source: Mayén and Loarca (2014).

During that year (2013), when the Executive Secretary was Luis Linares (former Minister of Labor and present leader of the labor area of ASIES research), the Board of Directors proposed eliminating the position of Deputy Executive Secretary, and to create, instead, four directorates, of: Administration, Research, Communication, and Projects, which were established when the second phase of TTI implementation began.

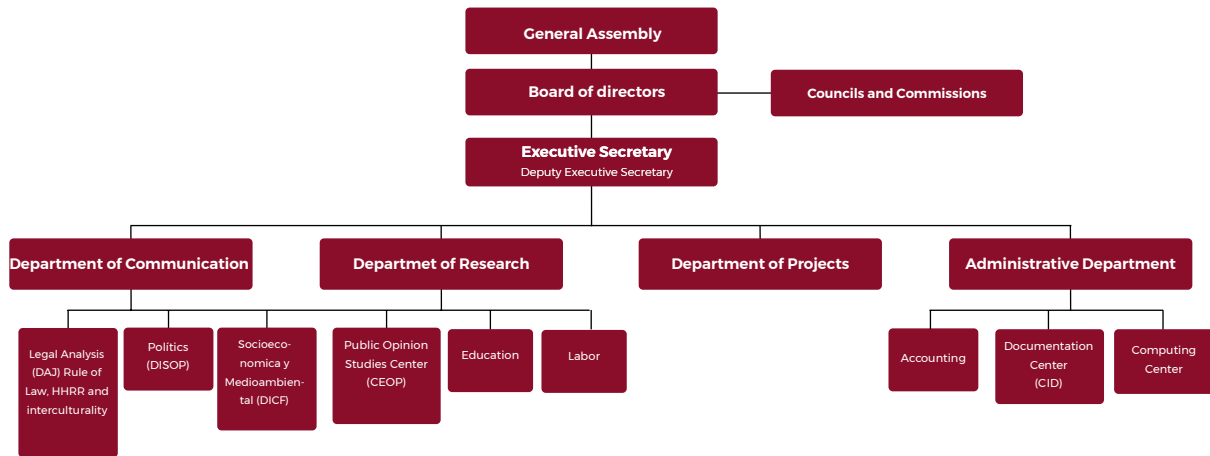
“These directorates already existed in a manner of speaking,” recalls Olga Loarca, Project Manager of ASIES, “because there were support units in charge of administration, projects and communication. However, the Research Unit started from scratch, and the other units were improved in their working methods.”

Presently, in addition to the four directorates, there are four research departments: Legal Analysis, Economic Consultancy, Socio-political Aspects, and Education. Fifty people work for the entity, essentially the same staff that was present at the beginning of the intervention.

Now, as before the start of TTI, there are two bodies, in addition to those mentioned, which carry out the functions: the Board of Directors (composed of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, a Secretary, two members with a voice, and an Adviser) and the General Assembly (which brings together 42 Guatemalan professionals from different fields).

The support that the Think Tank Initiative has provided to ASIES has been fundamental in several regards: it implied financial stability, was vital for carrying out the reorganization of the entity, and it also helped to improve processes and systematize actions. “Receiving such full institutional support (TTI’s core funding) allowed us to plan and project with peace of mind,” says Raquel Zelaya, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of ASIES. “Besides, as each step was accompanied by evaluations and monitoring, its implementation was effective.”

Graph 2. Organization chart of ASIES, 2018



Source: ASIES.

“It is important to note that TTI allowed us to assess, internally, the importance of think tanks in a society,” emphasizes Pablo Hurtado on his part. “Core funding allowed us to be more assertive with the proposals we presented and more strategic in selecting the recipients of our research. Funding by project, the usual way in which entities such as ours work, conditions the sphere of action in which we operate.”

“It was a great novelty for ASIES, and for all other TTI institutions, to receive funding for institutional support and capacity development,” recalls Carmen Ortiz, second member with a voice within the Board of Directors of the organization. “Our challenge was to make the most of these funds to improve the capacities and skills of our staff while making changes to our structure.”

4. Improvement of processes: training and education

“Having unconditioned funding, as was the case of TTI core funding, allowed us to develop all the activities we needed to improve our processes freely. Prior to this, the only similar experience we had was with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, but it was limited to topics of interest to them, such as indigenous peoples and Central American integration,” considers Olga Loarca, Project Manager at ASIES.

“It was very satisfying for us to be part of the two phases of TTI,” says Loarca, “particularly because four years was a very short period in which to achieve the expected results.”

From 2011 to 2018, 72 training events were carried out within the framework of TTI activities (Annex 3). Most of these were aimed at improving the quality of research – one of the three objectives set out in the Grant Agreement. Two specific strengthening activities (with six and seven modules respectively) were also developed to strengthen organizational performance, and other activities were organized to improve public policy advocacy capacity. Training activities were distributed as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of training activities at ASIES

Increasing research quality	Strengthening organizational performance	Improving advocacy capacity in public policies
2011 - 2012 Six education, training and/or updating programs ⁽¹⁾	2011 - 2012 Three encounters promoted by TTI/IDRC	2011-2012 Three education, training and/or updating programs
2012 - 2013 Seven education, training and/or updating programs ⁽²⁾		2012-2013 Five education, training and/or updating programs
2013 - 2014 Six education, training and/or updating programs	2013 - 2014 A workshop for preparing proposals for IDRC donors	2013-2014 Three education, training and/or updating programs (one workshop, one webinar and one course)
2014 - 2015 Five education, training and/or updating programs		
2015 - 2016 Eight education, training and updating programs ⁽³⁾	2015 - 2016 Six ILAIPP/TTI strengthening modules A course on leadership, management and governance of think tanks	2015 - 2016 Three writing courses (one of which in English: Writing to Achieve Policy Impact)
October 2017- December 2018 Eleven education, training and updating programs ⁽⁴⁾	October 2017- December 2018 Seven ILAIPP/TTI strengthening modules A course on leadership, management and governance of think tanks A workshop to build effective teams for designing and producing virtual courses	October 2017 - 2018 Five workshops on mainstreaming the gender focus A workshop to build effective teams for designing and producing virtual courses

Source: Own preparation, based on data provided by ASIES.

Notes: (1) The course on strengthening analysis and report drafting skills met two objectives: to increase the quality of research and to improve the capacities for having an effect on public policies. (2) The seminar-workshop named “Solving Cases of Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism”, as well as the course to strengthen report analysis and writing skills met two objectives: to increase the quality of research and to improve capacities for having an effect on public policies. (3) The drafting course met two objectives: to increase the quality of research and to improve capacities for having an effect on public policies. The six ILAIPP/TTI strengthening modules met the three objectives set. (4) The seven ILAIPP/TTI strengthening modules met the three objectives set. The workshop for building effective teams for the design and production of virtual courses met the objectives of increasing the quality of research and strengthening organizational performance.

“Being part of this initiative allowed us to better articulate the institutional response to the historical issues that motivated the creation of ASIES 40 years ago. I am referring to reforming the political and justice systems,” states Dr. Eduardo Stein, Vice-Chairman of the organization’s Board of Directors.

Stein, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996-2000) and Vice-President of the Republic of Guatemala (2004-2008), notes: “The lessons learned during this process allowed us to balance, in a better way, the topics we were concerned with, while doing monitoring that better met what the citizenry demanded.”

Stein also observes that, “we widened the spectrum of discussion with other organized sectors. We used to have discussions only with research centers.”

“We learned to work in alliances,” adds Guisela Mayén, Director of Research, Monitoring and Learning at ASIES, and part of the team that worked directly with TTI’s start-up. “By adding our proposals to those of other actors, we now have greater visibility with regards to national policy. It is also better understood today that our proposals are based on evidence and scientific studies, that our staff have skills and that our proposals are not simply things which occurred to us.”

“Here, what matters are the facts, the evidence and the figures, not perceptions,” says Zelaya, former Minister of Finance and Secretary of Peace of the Presidency of the Republic (1996-2000). “As our research has solid foundations, many entities have granted us unrestricted access to their databases,” mentions Zelaya, who was the organization’s Executive Secretary when the TTI process initiated. “This has been our experience with the Judiciary and the Institute of Public Criminal Defense: they know that the studies we do are serious and that they are carried out with the desire to build. Also, when good practices observed, their merits are recognized.”

“It is important to highlight another ingredient that has been strengthened in the last decade. The installed capacity for developing surveys is quite sophisticated, and the work is reflected in the periodic contributions we make to the hemispheric effort of Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) of Vanderbilt University, and in the specific measurements done on topics of national development,” adds Stein.

LAPOP, according to its web portal, “is the premier academic institution carrying out surveys of public opinion in the Americas, with over thirty years of experience. (...) AmericasBarometer is the only scientifically rigorous comparative survey that covers thirty-four nations including all of North, Central, and South America, as well as a significant number of countries in the Caribbean. (...) AmericasBarometer alerts public policy makers and international assistance agencies on potential problem areas and informs citizens on democratic values and experiences in their country, as compared to other countries.” (Azpuru, 2018)

5. Broadening the spectrum of interests

ASIES presently focuses on issues that go beyond what the original departments used to tackle before the organization joined TTI. Research is no longer only done on justice or political parties. “We pay attention to other aspects of the national reality, such as education and labor issues. The World Bank, with funds from the European Union, requested that this be the entity to conduct a survey of public employees in 2018. We had to face the objection of the National Institute of Statistics, who wanted our team to only do the fieldwork and for them to process the data, but the option was finally dismissed,” says Stein. “We had never before taken on a project of such magnitude,” notes Zelaya.

By improving research processes and methods, we also reinforced the international community’s confidence in ASIES. For this reason, the World Food Programme requested ASIES to carry out, firstly, a strategic analysis of the

situation of food security in the country, and subsequently called for the preparation of a proposal on how to deal with chronic malnutrition, “work for which we were well able to take advantage of the networks we had created with other institutions, other development entities, and international cooperation. Fine-tuning this instrument has been one of the net gains of being part of TTI,” states Stein, policy coordinator of both efforts.

“We have also expanded our field of action in other ways. We went from developing studies focused on macroeconomics, to specializing in more specific issues, such as competition, competitiveness and microcredit,” Zelaya adds. “These are topics that are, in a way, closer to the population.”

“In Guatemala there are research centers dedicated exclusively to economics. Our decision was to address topics that these centers were not working on, and that is why we specialize in competition and competitiveness,” adds Hurtado, Executive Secretary of ASIES. “Today we are the reference entity on both subjects. This is another of the great contributions of TTI: we learned to specialize, and thanks to this, we obtained better results.”

“The impression of how think tanks work has evolved a lot over the last decade,” Hurtado highlights. “Until ten years ago, the entities felt satisfied with the duty fulfilled by having made contributions, without necessarily achieving the results proposed. Today it is imperative that we meet the goal set. And for this, alliances and the involvement of all possible actors are crucial.”

6. Change of method to improve processes

“Being part of TTI was, for us, a window of opportunity to show others what we were doing, which helped us to see that, in fact, we were a ‘tank of thought’. We had sensed it, but being part of the initiative gave us this certainty,” says Mayén. “We realized that our work was well oriented. (...) Since we started operating, 40 years ago, it was clear for us that our perspective sought to influence and strengthen rule of law in Guatemala, but it was since we became part of this initiative that we learned how to better reach decision-makers and structure our work.”

“It was a challenge to improve what we were already doing,” Mayén confesses. “Until a decade ago, all ASIES publications, although always of quality and research-based, were intended for a very technical and therefore limited audience. The studies included a methodology, a theoretical framework and much more, but they were only read by those who thought along the same lines we did. It was not easy to accept that we had to stop doing 150-page works. I confess that I was the first to have to accept that change.”

To make this transition harmoniously, sharing with other countries was vital. “I think that one of the trips that impacted us most, in this sense, was the one we made to Peru,” reflects Mayén. “The centers of thought in Lima became a reference, both because of the intellectual capacity of their researchers, and because of their way of projecting their results. And this led us to another step: to strengthen the capabilities of our teams at the technical and knowledge levels. From this emerged the Department of Research, Monitoring and Learning. The goal was to improve the quality of what we were doing, through procedures that, year after year, have become consolidated.”

“Support to improve the skills and capacities was essential,” says Carmen Ortiz, who, in the first phase of TTI, was in charge of working on the structure of the Directorate of Communication. “Researchers are not trained in Guatemalan universities. Establishing clear methodologies, in this regard, has been one of the main contributions of TTI.”

“Now, most research is reviewed by international expert peers. This outside perspective makes us see our strengths and weaknesses.” All this, according to Mayén, occurred because of TTI. “This led us to greatly increase research

quality. I remember how afraid we were, at first, of these peer reviews by consultants from other countries. We were very nervous,” says Ortiz. “On one occasion we even rehearsed a presentation as if it were a theater piece.”

“Thanks to the new methodology adopted, since the moment the research is proposed, we include in the accompanying protocol how the advocacy will be developed and how the results will be communicated, also taking into account the theory of change,” adds Ana Lucía Blas, Director of Communication at ASIES, who ensures that all studies are presented in an attractive manner and are accessible to a wide audience.

It is important to note that the number of publications, books and working documents is similar to that realized before ASIES joined the TTI initiative. What changed is the way the message is conveyed and the fact that the works are now peer-reviewed, the Directors of the Communication, Research and Project Units note.

7. The generational succession and its implications

“The main challenge we faced in joining TTI was to address the need for developing generational succession at all levels,” states Raquel Zelaya, who served as Executive Secretary of the entity when the initiative began. “ASIES senior coordinators became the mentors of the people who were going to occupy their positions, allowing a friendly shift without harm along the way,” adds Zelaya. “Having notable people like political scientist Karin de Maldonado, former president of the Bank of Guatemala Lizardo Sosa, the Dean of Universidad del Valle de Guatemala Roberto Moreno, and former judge of the Constitutional Court Carmen María de Colmenares, all willing to give their time *pro bono* to empowering a new generation within ASIES was something extremely valuable,” she notes.

“It wasn’t easy for them,” says Ortiz. “Such a process affects people emotionally, especially because they were associated with the entity for many years. It meant being on the way out. Nonetheless, the generational shift was very positive.” In addition, this new generation of researchers was given support that surpassed the process of being trained by their mentors. “They were given the opportunity to participate in various training events to establish better links with the media. Or the possibility of applying for master’s degrees,” says Zelaya.

“TTI allowed us to transfer the technical and institutional capacities from one generation to another: from the senior consultants of the time, to the youngest,” Mayén states. “Initially, this process gave us the feeling of leaping into a void, because there was no team of intermediate consultants and the process was dramatic. But we succeeded.”

Mayén also highlights the importance of having changed the governance system. “Before, everything was vertical. There were no middle managers making technical decisions. So, while the generational transition was taking place, our new organization chart began to work.”

8. Less is more: the policy papers

Ana Lucía Blas has been Director of the Communication Unit since October 2014, the month in which this unit began operating. She recalls the transition: “The most important thing was to transform our way of making the message heard. In the past, for example, a seminar of political parties was organized through a discussion conducted with experts, which did not reach the website or social networks. Discussions took place within a closed and academic circle.”

Structural modification “and transformation towards a center of thought, as defined today, had communication as its central axis. It all started in a precarious way. We wanted, beyond developing research, to have an impact. The training given to us thanks to the support of TTI was very important for this purpose. We learned how to identify key messages. Similarly, the entire team received spokesperson training. It was a first endeavor that made us change the whole working method.”

“In the first phase we also began to strengthen the website. Similarly, three consultants started creating the ASIES social networks on Facebook and Twitter, and they were regularly updated,” says Blas. “There was not much awareness of their importance, but we were allowed to launch them. We started feeding them with motivational phrases and famous quotations. And we began to gradually grow in these spaces.” To date, ASIES has not invested in promoting its networks. “All our followers (15,851 on Facebook and 19,578 on Twitter) are organic,” says Blas. Before the start of TTI, the entity did not have social networks, and the website was limited to communicating, in a brief way, some news, and uploading documents produced by the researchers.

“Communicating the results in a better way has been fundamental,” highlights Hurtado. “We realized the importance of this, and have also seen that we get better results when instead of launching extensive research, we present infographics, policy papers or any other more reader-friendly format. It makes a huge difference when you think about the recipient.”

“Research cannot be conceived for consultants who want to show off making it known that they handle complicated methodologies and who therefore write in a way that is difficult to understand,” says Ortiz. “Translating a message in a clear way does not mean that the quality of the study is lost. What we want is to reach much wider audiences.”

“Diagramming in a different way was also relevant,” adds Blas. “In 2011, we made our first effort in this direction. Researcher Javier Brolo developed an Analytical Report of the Electoral Process that included many graphs and data. Until then, everything we published was very flat, as in a simple Word document. This was the first publication not printed, because the resources were used to present it in an attractive way. This constituted a radical change. A before and after.”

In fact, the Analytical Report of the Electoral Process (four years ago) is a 16-page document, which begins as follows: “For the sixth time since the beginning of the democratic opening up in 1985, Guatemalan society is going to elect the authorities that will govern the country’s destinies during the 2008-2012 four-year period.” This language was more appropriate for specialized audiences, had little visual appeal, and was limited to eleven statistical tables (see Annex 2).

On the other hand, the 2018 brochure *Que No Nos Metan Gol*, which employs soccer terms, explained, in a didactic way, the scenarios present in Guatemala in 2019 in the processes to elect the President, Congress Representatives and Mayors, and the appointment of officials of the Judiciary (*i.e.* the Supreme Court of Justice and the Magistrates of Appeals). “This document was a success; in it we briefly explained a problem without going into details additional to what was presented in the brochure,” explains Hurtado. “The reception was fabulous. When we presented it to Murphy Paiz, Dean of Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, he immediately asked us for 30 copies for his meeting the following day with the Higher Council of the university.”

9. Strengthening the institution

“The essential part of TTI was to collaborate in our institutional strengthening through foreign mentors who carried out diagnoses to identify what needed to be changed,” sates Mayén. “With them we work remotely, although there were face-to-face workshops. I, for example, was involved in the transformations of evaluation, monitoring and learning. I received calls for virtual participation in the training modules and held very fruitful meetings with the facilitators of the exercises we did through Skype,” she recalls.

“We were lucky enough to have very demanding mentors with whom work was constant,” recalls Olga Loarca. “It was a very enriching experience to work with people like Vanesa Weyrauch from Argentina.”

“After we made the transformations, many similar organizations wanted to know about our new internal governance system,” Zelaya recalls, “because this method had worked for us and it was developed at all levels, even in the way

the Board of Directors worked. Our way of working is much more involved with the organization than what occurs at other entities. We are constantly informed of what is being done and financial reports are presented,” she emphasizes.

“We stopped being hierarchical and vertical, as we were ten years ago,” Zelaya states, as does Mayén. “All the processes of the institution were systematized as a result of being part of TTI. This is why we have manuals such as the Institutional Identity Manual and the Publications Manual,” says Loarca, the Director of Projects.

“Also, without the support of TTI we would not have been able to develop the technological updating that today allows us to have IT equipment according to our needs, with original licenses for the programs,” says Loarca. “There was a positive change in each of the three pillars of the initiative. There was also great freedom to organize events to support the topics we were working on.”

10. The challenge of mainstreaming the gender focus

Guisela Mayén, Director of Research, recognizes that the gender focus has not been addressed as it should have. “Although we have made efforts over the past five years to make all researchers aware that this approach must be incorporated into each of the studies undertaken, these efforts have not been entirely successful.”

She goes on to say, “We do more analysis of women’s issues — such as how much they participate in politics or what their economic situation is — than in-depth research that addresses the perspective of women transversally. However, we are still working on the issue thanks to our present involvement in TTI’s Gender Action Learning Project (GALP). Our reality is that this is a *machista* society and we are not very sensitive.”

In *Guía de Principios Éticos en la Investigación Social* (Mendizábal, 2017), a publication produced by TTI, there is a chapter on the gender perspective in research projects, and it also proposes a method to incorporate the matter in all studies carried out. “The design and methodology of any research involving individuals must ensure the identification of possible differences between men and women, taking into account, in an equitable manner, the particular situations of each of these groups. It must also be ensured that all research groups (e.g. intervention and non-intervention) have a gender balance,” she notes, among other issues.

“This guide was a first step,” says Mayén. “We are working on the next step through the GALP. Our goal is for the protocol of all research to indicate, from the outset, that if the gender issue is not addressed, the reasons must be indicated. And if there is no such justification, it is understood that it will be addressed. Nothing will be approved if this aspect is not included.”

11. The theory of change and the future of ASIES

“Before TTI, we had never considered what the theory of change could mean for our growth,” says Raquel Zelaya. “In fact, we did not know it as such, because its procedures, such as setting scenarios and mapping actors, were done empirically. But now we do not consider developing research without incorporating it.”

“We update actor maps every year. This is useful to us because it gives us some clarity regarding who we should make advocacy efforts with. Sometimes we realize that certain studies are purely academic, so then we socialize them in small forums. Other studies are for much wider audiences,” adds Blas.

“The theory of change projected light on all the research,” says Carmen Ortiz. “But we still need to innovate. This is a pending task: we need to give our consultants space so they can be creative and start thinking outside the box,

from scratch.”

“Although I believe that institutionally we have always had prestige and recognition, in my perception, today our position has improved,” considers Mayén. “We have not measured this, but the entity has consolidated itself as an important reference for certain national issues, as the organization’s mission states.”

Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales has defined its aims as being to “promote and advance research, studies and the interpretation of national and international problems, in order to propose solutions focused on promoting democratic, pluralistic and just coexistence,” as indicated in its website.

“Our goal is to strengthen rule of law in Guatemala, and this has led us to delve into other issues, particularly new lines of institutional work such as the fields of labor and education.” On this point there is agreement between Mayén and Eduardo Stein, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors.

“Also, we see ASIES as a talent pool,” says Raquel Zelaya. “We encourage researchers to become university professors. They, in turn, identify the talents that participate as pollsters in projects, and these people then join the institution.”

“Many leave and come back,” adds Loarca, “because the prestige of working here opens up many doors. When they consider working elsewhere, they miss the working environment that has been generated at this institution over time.”

“Carlos Escobar Armas (one of the founders of ASIES) always used to tell me, ‘ASIES is like a pigeon loft. Here people come and go, because this place is like their home,’” says Carmen Ortiz.

“Being part of this organization opens up new horizons for young researchers. Working here for a year opens up opportunities in other fields, because being here is almost like doing a master’s degree. The average time people work for ASIES is eight years. And in four decades of existence we have only had one labor-related problem with a person from an outside entity who falsified his work. Also, there are many cases of people who go to do master’s degrees and have a job guaranteed here for when they return,” Zelaya states.

12. Influence on public policy

“We have been involved, recently, with groups that have set for themselves the goal of having an impact on public policies. I am referring to developing efforts to promote reforms in the justice sector, an endeavor which had the participation of other entities, such as Universidad Rafael Landívar and the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG),” says Raquel Zelaya. “The role we played in the G-40 has also been essential.” The G-40 is a group of independent economists and fiscal analysts who formed a forum for debate and analysis of public policy related to financial issues, of which former ministers of Finance and the Economy and former Presidents of the Bank of Guatemala are a part.

Zelaya adds: “We have counted on the trust of several international cooperation entities, which made it possible for ASIES to accompany the processes they developed. In recent years, we have worked closely with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UNICEF, and UNESCO. They all consider us competent interlocutors in Guatemala.”

According to Mayén, Director of Research, “My perception is that we have more impact on the legislative sphere than on public policies.” And, although we have maintained a line of work with the political parties, their situation is precarious. Dialogue with them, in general, becomes a monologue. However, from the analysis tables, such as those established to address security and justice, very important proposals have emerged that have become an important voice, and civil society has taken ownership of them.”

“One of the main virtues of TTI was that, thanks to its intervention, we realized, as an institution, how valuable and important it is for a think tank to play a liaising role,” says, on his part, Pablo Hurtado. “This led us to transform our understanding. We went from competing with other proposal-making centers to becoming united based on common objectives.”

“When we perform this function, the results are clearly visible,” adds the Executive Secretary. “I can cite several examples, such as the leadership role we played in the Guatemala Forum or having been the architects of the Great National Campaign for Education; these are spheres in which ASIES established the structure, while taking into account other actors. The entity plays a coupling role to achieve concrete results.”

The Guatemala Forum, as indicated in the ASIES website, “is a space of a political nature, established in August 2001, in which institutions and organizations from different sectors of Guatemalan society converge. Its commitment is to contribute to the consolidation of the country’s institutionality and to the establishment of new and better relations of social and political coexistence.” It works on several thematic axes: rule of law, the system of administration of justice, transparency and publicity in the election of authorities, the electoral and political party systems, institutional strengthening, transparency in the programming of public spending, the fight against corruption, public safety, and human rights.

Additionally, the role of ASIES has also been instrumental in implementing the Great National Campaign for Education (GNCPE), “which emerged in 1999 as a social movement made up of various organizations with broad academic representation: indigenous, business, educational, religious, human rights, communication, and research organizations, in response to the concern of addressing, as a matter of urgency, the enormous quantitative and qualitative educational gaps.” (Arévalo, 2017)

In order to advance the impact process through concrete advocacy actions and political dialogue, in the first months of 2013, together with GCNPE partner organizations, a proposal was developed to create the National Observatory for Educational Quality, which would be dedicated to monitoring some indicators important for educational quality. (Arévalo, 2017)

Guatemala Camina (Guatemala Goes Forward), the effort to influence public policy: a mini case

Four years ago, when the country was electing its new authorities, “all the political parties came to us to become better informed on our program platform Guatemala Camina,” Zelaya recalls. “We also influenced the organization of panels with presidential candidates in the 2015 electoral exercise.”

“In fact, many of the questions that were asked in those debates came from the policy papers,” adds Ana Lucía Blas.

Guatemala Camina is the effort of twelve policy documents that address different key issues for the country’s integral development.

“This effort was accompanied by home videos that had considerable impact,” Hurtado recalls. “For me, the most emblematic of them was the one developed by researcher Javier Brolo, in which he explained the functioning of political parties using beans. With these seeds, a representation was made of how majorities are established, and how

the quorum and other systems work, in such a way that the end decisions remain in the hands of a very small group of people (only six), without there being internal democracy within the organizations.”

“Guatemala Camina was a particularly important challenge, because in establishing it, we had to reconsider how to develop the national agenda. To achieve this, we made use of part of the experiences developed by other thought centers members of TTI, such as Paraguay Debate and CIPPEC of Argentina. We left complicated matrices aside to publish only policy papers,” adds Blas.

“In this electoral year we are planning to adapt the public policies contained in Guatemala Camina, relaunch them, and present them to candidates,” mentions Blas. “The core themes remain the same. Four years ago this effort was relegated by political events: the launch of the initiative coincided with the resignation of then Vice-President Roxana Baldetti and President Otto Pérez Molina.”

Guatemala Camina, concludes Blas, “established the framework on which to act in the following years: for example, greater support for the Supreme Electoral Court; or making labels such as #ReformasYA go viral, which transcended to other spaces and was present in the networks during 2015 and 2016.”

Guatemala Camina was part of the examples embodied in the effort Plataformas Electorales: Fortaleciendo las Capacidades para Incidir en el Centro Electoral, by On Think Tanks, in 2017, a project that benefitted from the support of Think Tank Initiative. The collecting and editing of the series of good practices and tools was carried out by researcher Leandro Echt, and was an example in the section “Good Practices”.

On this website the effort was described as follows: “ASIES developed an agenda of policy priorities for Guatemala with the aim of contributing to the debate, encouraging informed voting and contributing to the development of policies in the new government administrations. In view of the September 2016 general elections, in a context marked by strong allegations of corruption, citizen discontent towards the political class and the resignations of the President and Vice-President, ASIES redoubled its efforts within the framework of the initiative Guatemala Camina: Pasos Firmes para Cambiar.”

Several questions were also drawn from this effort to guide debate and reflection in the electoral processes. The elements and conclusions of Guatemala Camina were the starting point for the role that the entity played in moderating television forums with candidates, to raise the quality of the discussion and to act as a backdrop. Similarly, the entity played a role in forums and organized spaces to disseminate the proposals at the national level.

Meeting the challenge of influencing public policy has been particularly difficult in Guatemala, mainly because there is no strong and stable political class capable of undertaking medium- and long-term commitments. At the moment, the country has 27 political parties, of which very few are positioned in the voters’ perception. The Congress of the Republic consists of 14 blocks, with few ideological nuances separating their positions. A loan to support efforts to combat malnutrition was approved in extremis, thanks, in large part, to pressure from the citizenry and the media.

Despite current obstacles, ASIES will concentrate its efforts, in 2019, to rethink the positions contemplated in Guatemala Camina and influence the government teams elected in the June and August elections.

13. Tasks to be completed

“In the matters of the peer review and publications in specialized journals, we have fallen short. We are aware that this counts in the academic world and we need to improve it,” reflects Raquel Zelaya. This is one of the commitments made in the second phase of the implementation of TTI. “Part of the reason that peer reviewing was not as successful as one would like is that the people of all the organizations know each other, and if the research is about the political parties, it is evident that we are the ones behind it. This is why we focus on strengthening, even more, our relations with foreign think tanks,” she adds.

“TTI helped us a lot in this regard. I remember that on a trip to South Africa with Carmen Ortiz, we split up between panels to establish more contacts,” says Zelaya.

“We were already a reference, at that time, in what we had advanced in the governance structure. This is what we went to present in South Africa,” adds Ortiz.

“The importance of networks and synergies promoted by TTI is crucial in these times,” Hurtado says. “In countries like Guatemala, we are overwhelmed by reality and the circumstances of the moment. These spaces allow us to see best practices, ways of adapting to new challenges and, also, how to access new opportunities for studies at an international level. This has led us to the internationalization of ASIES.”

“All our accumulated experience, plus participating in events in other countries, have allowed ASIES to also succeed in organizing world-class forums, such as Southern Voice in 2018, which promoted Guatemala in the academic field.”

The First Latin American Think Tank Summit took place in the city of Antigua Guatemala within the framework of the 21st Latin American Heads of State Summit on October 3 and 4, 2018. Representatives of thought centers from 17 countries participated in this event, including seven that, like ASIES, are part of the Southern Voice network. Pablo Hurtado is presently one of the six members of its steering committee.

“TTI has allowed us to carry out activities with regions we normally did not interact with. We have been able to learn what the reality of these countries is and what obstacles they face in carrying out their research. At the same time, we have projected ourselves and now they know our strengths,” Hurtado adds.

“We overcame the very local and provincial vision that, in a way, we had until recently,” says Ortiz. “We went from being a local entity to venture into other spheres, firstly regional, then Latin American, and finally global, thanks to TTI.”

ASIES, in addition to being part of Southern Voice, is also a member of Red Anticorrupción Latinoamericana (Latin American Anti-corruption Network – REAL), together with eight other study centers in the region, from Paraguay, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, and Ecuador. ASIES also belongs to Iniciativa Latinoamericana de Investigación para Políticas Públicas (Latin American Initiative for Public Policy Research – ILAIPP), which receives TTI support, and to South-South Global Thinkers (in which both Southern Voice and ILAIPP are present).

However, in order to enhance the alliances of which ASIES is presently a part, another challenge needs to be faced, Hurtado points out: “We need to have the capacity to do research in a globalized language. I mean English. The Latin American region has the advantage that all countries speak the same language, which at the same time makes us become isolated. We have discussed this matter, on more than one occasion, within ILAIPP.”

“We live in a society that does not value knowledge,” points out Carmen Ortiz. “And this aspect is important to consider for the future, because the work done in a think tank is not appreciated, and salaries are not commensurate with the work performed.”

“Today the challenge is how to ensure that this entity, without losing its research essence, can combine its daily activities with projects that generate income. Our challenge is a financial one,” states Zelaya.

“That is our main challenge,” Hurtado agrees, “that thought centers may continue operating and making their contribution to society without relying on external funding projects. This requires being innovative, reaching target audiences in the best way possible.”

“There is no doubt that the remaining challenge is sustainability. We haven’t found the right path to this yet. The big challenge is to maintain a proper balance between income generation (selling *ad hoc* studies) and fostering the country’s agenda — the path we set for ourselves 40 years ago.”

The convening capacity of ASIES and the experience demonstrated in organizing events is another aspect that both Mayén and Ortiz highlight and that was perfected thanks to the role played by TTI. “Technical content and logistics go hand in hand harmoniously at ASIES,” argues Mayén. “And our activities are attended by the right people, regardless of whether it is a public forum or a small workshop to validate a piece of research. They always come.”

“ASIES grew a lot with TTI. Our mission, now, is to take all the knowledge generated and use these tools to project ourselves towards the future in a sustainable way,” Carmen Ortiz thus closes this spoken story.

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Annexes

Annex I: Interviewees

- Dr. Eduardo Stein, Vice-Chairman of the ASIES Board of Directors. Dr. Stein was Vice-President of Guatemala, and also Minister of Foreign Affairs. In recent years he has coordinated several projects involving ASIES related to food and nutrition security.
- Raquel Zelaya, currently Chairwoman of the ASIES Board of Directors. She served as Executive Secretary of the entity during the greater part of the TTI implementation. She was Minister of Finance and also Secretary of Peace of Guatemala.
- Dr. Guisela Mayén, Director of Research, Monitoring and Learning. Dr. Mayén has been associated with the organization since its inception and was one of the main architects in the implementation of TTI's modifications and recommendations.
- Olga Loarca, Director of Projects. Together with Dr. Guisela Mayén, she was one of the main architects and implementers of the changes suggested by TTI.
- Ana Lucía Blas, Director of Communication. Her most active role was the one exercised during the second phase of TTI implementation.
- Carmen Ortiz, member with a voice of the Board of Directors. She was involved in the first phase of implementation of the TTI initiative.
- Pablo Hurtado, currently Executive Secretary of ASIES. He was involved, particularly, in the implementation of the second phase of TTI and is the main face of the entity in its new role of international projection, which was reinforced by TTI's implementation.

Annex 2: Training and education that were part of the TTI Initiative

Education, training or refresher programs

2011-2012
Master's degree in corporate law (until 2013)
Online courses: i) Monitoring and evaluation of public policy impact; ii) How to formulate a public policy advocacy plan
English courses (10 researchers) (until 2013)
Diploma course in human rights (justice and security), virtual mode
On-campus course on techniques for the impact assessment of CINVE policies
72-hour course on strengthening research capacities (until 2013)
Eight-hour course on strengthening analysis and report drafting skills (until 2013)
Communication update workshops: (i) Advocacy policy communication conservatory; (ii) Practical workshop on relating to key audiences
Three encounters facilitated by TTI: i) Use of knowledge for public policies, Lima, Peru; ii) Resource mobilization workshop, Asuncion, Paraguay; iii) TTI exchange, South Africa
2012-2013
Workshop on geographical analysis
Course on political values and action
Seminar-workshop: "Transfer pricing"
Seminar-workshop: "Solving cases of prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism"
Update in communication (five sessions)
Course: "Social marketing and political communication"
Workshop: "Monitoring and evaluation for performance and impact", Lima, Peru
2013-2014
Course: "Gender statistics and indicators", Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Course: "Innovation to action" (gender)
Course: "Global economic cooperation and revitalization"
Course: "Strategic implications of human rights and rule of law"
Basic theoretical and hands-on course: "Methodology for the impact assessment of public policies, CEDLAS, TTI and GRADE, University of La Plata, Argentina
Workshop on developing proposals for IDRC donors
Workshop on climate change

Training workshop on advocacy and political dialogue (5 sessions)

Webinar: “Communicating with the media” (5 sessions)

Course: “Policy engagement and communications”, Lima, Peru

2014-2015

Course: “Gender statistics and indicators”, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Course: “Innovation to action” (gender)

Course: “Global economic cooperation and revitalization”

Course: “Strategic implications of human rights and rule of law”

2015-2016

Diploma course in qualitative research for the study of urban violence

Professional writing course

Training program: “Assessment of the impact of sectoral and trade policies on employment”, International Labour Organization

Course: “Writing to achieve policy impact”, On Think Tanks

Anti-corruption training, PartnersGlobal

Internship at FUSADES, El Salvador

Workshop for learning the GUATECOMPRAS portal

Strengthening modules, ILAIPP/TTI (until 2018)

October 2017 - December 2018

Diploma course on the social market economy

Virtual course on writing publishable reports

Course: “Leadership, management, and governance of think tanks”, Universidad del Istmo Business School

Course: “Ethics in education: The development of critical thinking and the culture of originality”

International course on corporate e-learning

Seminar: “Human development of migration”

Training in the use of the IDRC RQ+ evaluation framework

Workshops for gender mainstreaming in research within the framework of the Gender Action Learning System (14 ASIES participants)

Workshop: “Building effective teams for the design and production of virtual courses”

Source: ASIES.

Chapter



CHAPTER ELEVEN

FOSDEH: A Laboratory of Ideas for Equity; Countercurrent of Exclusion

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Introduction to the case

This is the story of the experience of Foro Social de la Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras (Social Forum on Foreign Debt and Development of Honduras, FOSDEH) during the eight years in which it participated in the Think Tank Initiative (TTI). The story illustrates, from the perspective of its protagonists, the dynamics of the transformations that occurred in research, communication, advocacy, and organizational development within the institution, in a complex context of ruptures and fragility of democracy. In this experience, a team participated that was in a continuous learning process, which toppled old paradigms of work to build new ones. This experience is not over, as many former challenges still need to be faced, old processes must be strengthened and it is necessary to continue building upon what has been created.

2. The relevance of a think tank with quality and influence in a weak and captured state

FOSDEH is a small institution that administrates, on average, one million US dollars per year, with a university technical staff that does not exceed 10 persons (six men and four women). Its Director, Mauricio Díaz Burdet, states that it is “a living organization that is created and recreated under complex workings, with a network dedicated to processes towards the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ of the organization.”

This case study covers a period of eight years of participation between the TTI and FOSDEH, a period consisting of two phases: the first of which runs from 2010 to 2014, and the second from 2014 to 2019. The framework for implementation of this period is based on the Legacy Project, carried out with the aim of “showing the organizational transformations that the beneficiary institutions of the TTI program in Latin America, including the ILAIPP network, have had thanks to this intervention, highlighting the advantages of core funding over project funding.”¹

The case is developed on the basis of certain guiding questions: What was the evolution of FOSDEH and what is its current situation in terms of research, communication, advocacy, and organizational development? What have been the approaches and strategies that have worked well? What have been the relevant institutional changes (good or bad) that occurred and that were related to the implementation of the Think Tank Initiative?² How and why have these changes occurred? Have the transformations helped or hindered the center’s capacities to promote research and debate on public policies? What has been the influence of context changes on the actions, challenges and lessons learned of the institution? How has gender been addressed at work? Have the methods, policies and processes included and strengthened gender issues over the past eight years? How and why?

The search for information was based on secondary sources: annual reports, minutes, other reports, and institutional publications. Interviews were also conducted with the management, research and communication teams, the Assistant Director and the General Administrator. In addition, interviews were held with two women members of Congress, Suyapa Martínez (leader of Movimiento Feminista), Gustavo Irías (Director of Centro de Investigación Económica), independent researcher Raúl Medina, journalist Amada Ponce, and Julio Raudales (Vice-Rector of the National University). In addition, two conversations were held with junior researchers and FOSDEH volunteers.

137 See Muriel (2018).

138 Events.ThinkTankInitiative.org (2019) Think Tank Initiative (TTI) — Think Tank Initiative Exchange, 2018. Taken from: <http://events.thinktankinitiative.org/es/organizer/la-iniciativa-think-tank-itt/>

A. The beginning and the crisis

FOSDEH was founded between 2000 and 2005, playing a lead role in the negotiation process for the cancellation of the foreign debt. During its first decade, it did monitoring of the cycle of the General Budget and Income and Expenditure, witnessing the behavior of indicators of poverty, external cooperation, debt, and public policy performance.

Between 2009 and 2010, the coup d'état in Honduras and the *de facto* government marked a turning point for civil society organizations (CSOs) in the country. Bridges were torn down and barriers were established that separated civil society between “coup organizations” and “non-coup” organizations. Who’s side was each organization on? This was defined by their political vision, their actors and, often, the label attached to their international cooperation or other actors.

In this context, the “anti-coup” popular voices criticized the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, declaring a “silence of complicity by Cardinal Rodríguez and Evelio Reyes in the face of the political crisis.”¹³⁹ This element was relevant because, since its foundation, the Board of Directors of FOSDEH was presided over by Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez, with the participation of the Evangelical fraternity of Honduras. Because of these figures, FOSDEH was labelled as a “pro-coup” organization, and this led to aggression and criticism from important sectors of CSOs, political actors and cooperation. “The public was not aware of the internal conflict of institutional governance due to the fact that the Board of Directors was composed of various organizations who were also emblematic “anti-coup” actors: Movimiento de Mujeres “Visitación Padilla” and Coordinadora de Organizaciones Campesinas de Honduras (COCOCH), among others. “We lived in the firing line between two camps,” said Assistant Coordinator of FOSDEH.

In this scenario, and against the backdrop of the label placed on FOSDEH, cooperation proposed an external evaluation of the work of the institution. The intentions can be deduced when one reads, in the 2010 external evaluation report, “FOSDEH has lost its *raison d'être* by not being involved in the ranks of Mel Zelaya Rosales.” The organizations that funded FOSDEH since its beginnings ended up withdrawing in 2012, after completing the projects they had begun, on the grounds that the TTI provided considerable funds and could finance what was required by the institution at a time when the cooperation of European NGOs was declining. The collaboration agreements were not renewed.

This chain of events forced FOSDEH to leave its comfort zone and reinvent itself, in relation to the new internal and external contexts. According to the Director of FOSDEH, notwithstanding the labels, “All actors recognized the technical capacity and impact of FOSDEH in poverty reduction, public budget and debt management.”

B. Reinventing oneself based on new contexts

Starting in 2010, the TTI at FOSDEH began in a context of crisis. The post-coup Head of State, and then the new President of the Republic, ruled in a fractured democracy and in a political fragility that was only surpassed by the situation of conflict and high levels of poverty that flooded the country. The Director of FOSDEH explained that, in this context, the first step was to establish an internal process of reinvention. This would involve rebuilding the strategic plan, under a new consensus on the institutional vision. This vision would aim at a society with equity, freedom, justice, transparency of information, criticism, solidarity, respect for human rights, democracy, and participatory public policies that would have a positive impact on people. Similarly, the mission would aim to contribute to the construction of public policies aimed at national transformation, based on social justice, equality, solidarity, respect for human rights, and democratic legitimacy.

139 Elpulso.hn (2019). *El silencio cómplice del Cardenal Rodríguez y Evelio Reyes ante la crisis política en el país*. Taken from: <https://elpulso.hn/cardenal-evelioreyes-crisis/>

It was then that the TTI-FOSDEH association established the purpose of strengthening the role of FOSDEH as a public policy institution, by strengthening its capacity to provide high-quality, influential and politically relevant research. At the specific level, it was proposed that the quality of research be improved, organizational development be fortified and public policy and communication links be strengthened.

However, the general elections marked the restructuring of the political and economic forces to strengthen the Honduran “capture of the state”. As a result, local power elites and external private funding strengthened a state discourse that promoted privileges to the private sector and limited public initiatives and civil society demands.

In 2014, Juan Orlando Hernández took ownership of the Executive Power. His government focused on privatization and weakening public enterprises. It also established the Secrets Act and a Criminal Code to control protests¹⁴⁰ and freedom of expression.¹⁴¹

During this government, social conflict increased at the national level, mostly on territorial and economic issues. There was also a deepening of inequality, poverty and migrant caravans to the United States. The policies, and changes in laws and public institutionality, consolidated the capture of the state, which affected the dynamics, roles and functions of FOSDEH.

The network of relationships between the actors and the factors that guided FOSDEH in recent years are arranged, for presentation purposes, in three components of the TTI-FOSDEH relationship. In practice, there was a dynamic of synergies between the development of knowledge management capacity, scientific evidence on public policies, advocacy, communication, and new paradigms of organizational management, all carried out with the same values: autonomy and independence of thought.

3. Doing quality research

The Director of FOSDEH, Mauricio Díaz Burdet, explains, “At the start of the TTI, the Honduran macroeconomic situation showed slight improvements, so governments appropriated a discourse of bonanza and success before the population. In contrast, the daily lives of citizens were seriously deteriorating. Honduras demanded alternative interpretations of the phenomena, as an obligatory path to influence the gradual change of society. We understood that, more than ever, advocacy, which was the main strength of FOSDEH at the beginning of the TTI, had to be balanced with research, communication and organizational development.” Transparency and access to information were required to monitor, audit, evaluate, and have evidence on the progress of public policies and the situation in the country.

Consequently, FOSDEH developed a series of changes. Research Coordinator Rodulio Perdomo states, “FOSDEH research, prior to the TTI, was qualitative and descriptive, mostly expressed in expert opinion articles. Presently, at the end of TTI, this has shifted towards scientific research processes.”

How was improving research made possible? For researcher Ismael Zepeda, “Research and communication at FOSDEH have in common the factor of quality scientific evidence. FOSDEH has the capacity to present analyses and proposals with data in real time; trends and historical behaviors of phenomena are compared; primary information is generated, as was the case of the survey of multidimensional causes of poverty; correlations are established, such as regarding concessions, indicators of development and exemptions.”

140 Comité por la Libertad de Expresión (Committee for Freedom of Expression) (2019). *Grave retroceso a la libertad de expresión en Honduras*. C-Libre. Taken from: <http://www.clibrehonduras.com/index.php/alertas/censura/770-grave-retroceso-a-la-libertad-de-expresion-en-honduras>

141 Meza, D. (2019). *Nuevo Código Penal. Pasos de animal grande*. Taken from: <http://www.pasosdeanimalgrande.com/index.php/es/contexto/item/2173-aunque-no-esta-vigente-nuevo-codigo-penal-ya-se-esta-aplicando-articulo-que-criminaliza-la-protesta-social>

A. Ongoing training

- Perdomo explains, “Based on a diagnosis and the definition of a strategy, four modules were developed annually, where the FOSDEH team of researchers acquired skills to apply, operate and analyze econometric analysis tools using SPSS, Stata and Excel. Training was also provided on the methodological basis of quantitative and qualitative research.” At the international level, the TTI developed training processes. “The training focused on public policy impact assessment methods became a catalyst for learning,” states the Director of FOSDEH.
- Junior researchers confess, “Where we learned best was in the field, through the accompaniment of senior researchers in the research processes to apply what we learned and to put into practice the FOSDEH research standards.”
- In the second phase of the TTI, the progressive construction, application and institutionalization of qualitative, quantitative and mixed research protocols was consolidated.
- For the Research Coordinator, “The synergies generated in the research carried out with other organizations associated with the TTI (such as FUSADES and FUNDAUNGO), and with the faculties and institutes of universities of Honduras, Spain and the United States, have been essential. Also important were the debates, alliances and discussion spheres established with academic actors from universities, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), the International Budget Partnership Learning Network and the “multi-actor” spaces for constructive dialogue established based on the National Research Agenda.”

B. Establishment of the team of researchers

With practice and training, the FOSDEH group built teams of qualitative researchers, senior and junior researchers, and associate researchers. In this process, TTI’s core funding provided the opportunity to hire expert and experienced specialists who, with funds from specific projects — such as the Swiss programme “Impactos y Cooperación”, formed a new generation of committed junior researchers.

Burdet recalls, “Many experienced researchers had received better salary offers and had been employed in CSOs or in public entities. Although they remained allies, research had become weakened over several periods. However, with the research protocols, associated researchers, and links with academia, the identity and culture changed. FOSDEH went from being a non-governmental organization to a think tank.”

The team of researchers benefitted from young university students who did professional internships in economics or international cooperation. Assistant Coordinator Raf Flores stated, “We enriched ourselves with the participation of young people, which implied a generational shift. Researchers aged less than 30, who in the process study or have studied postgraduate programs and other languages, committed themselves to and became associated with constructive dialogue, at different levels, in the public sector, and with social activism. They are defenders of human rights and democratic values.”

C. The inclusive approach to research

In 2015, at a public event, Gladis Lanza, a figure in the Honduran feminist movement in Honduras, made the following public demand: “FOSDEH is indebted to us women. It should consider the impacts, situation and position of women

in its analyses and proposals to help women's gender equity aspirations in fiscal policies." In contrast, in 2019, Suyapa Martínez, feminist, Director of Centro de Estudios de la Mujer de Honduras (CEM-H), stated, "FOSDEH publications have improved and are of great help to the women's movement, because they present data classified by sex, supporting, with information, the construction of an advocacy agenda in the plans of the feminist movement."

In phase 2 of the TTI, gender categories were used more frequently in research. Such was the case with research on investment in security, poverty analysis, the impact of a single tax on women's initiatives, and the impact of extractivism on women.

How was FOSDEH able to include the gender approach and human rights in research and communication functions? Gisell Vásquez, researcher, responded, "First, a gender policy was structured. To the extent that sources allowed, we disaggregated the information by sex. We also developed analysis tools that provided evidence on how inequality and exclusion underlie poverty and fiscal inequality as a backdrop. Overall, it is clear that fiscal policy is not neutral and that gender dynamics are a determining factor throughout the cycle of social policies."

In conversations with various technicians, it was observed that gender inclusion favored participation in several regional discussion groups. Such was the case with the analysis of women and extractivism, the Observatory on Investment in Latin America and the Taxation and Gender Group with LATINDADD.

FOSDEH's Administrator considers that "Gender inclusion in FOSDEH is associated with TTI's core funding, because it enabled investment in capacity development in order to understand gender categories, in addition to funds such as those from the Swiss cooperation human rights program."

The concepts of inclusion were accompanied by questioning other paradigms. In an impoverished country like Honduras, with little attention paid to academics, the "truth" of risk qualifiers and international financial organizations requires an alternative understanding of the phenomena, to make it is possible to influence the gradual, but more integral change of society. The Research Coordinator states that "The current scientific paradigm in the economic sciences must be transformed, with new theoretical bases, to examine the reality of Honduras. The foundations of a macroeconomy that stands as an end in itself must be demonstrated, relegating the welfare of the population to the "spill-over", where it is assumed that wealth on its own will reach the poorest households."

Perdomo reflects, "Scientific research developed a wide range of topics, allowing to focus on various public policies, such as public-private partnerships, public investment, indebtedness, development cooperation, the fight against corruption and fiscal policy. FOSDEH, through the TTI and other cooperation (e.g. the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development, Oxfam and the National Foundation for Democracy), have developed at least 35 pieces of research over eight years."¹⁴²

A statistical department, with a powerful 10-year information base, was also created on the behavior of various economic, fiscal and social variables. Some of these variables were debt, poverty, investment, health, education, trusts, and trade. In addition, a national survey on the multidimensionality of poverty was implemented. A geoportal on energy concessions and mines at the national level was also built, together with various academic actors, in combination with environmental, fiscal and social indicators of the territory.¹⁴³

With this summary of the scope, the Director adds, "There is still a lot to be done. During the TTI, we had no interest in audited publications, publications in scientific journals and the establishment of peer-reviewers systems, nationally and internationally. However, we have now learned to navigate in complex contexts, having developed a good starting point. Is it perhaps time to move to the next level?" starting point. Is it perhaps time to move to the next level?"

142 See the FOSDEH virtual compilation at <http://www.fosdeh.com/category/publicaciones/>

143 See the geoportal in at <https://territoriosenriesgo.unah.edu.hn/>

4. Unleashing the potential for change with new actors and new communication technologies

For FOSDEH, the role of research is relevant for Honduras, as it can contribute to international frameworks – such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) –, in social actors, political actors, and evidence-based public policies. In order to respond to the new internal and external contexts, communication and advocacy at FOSDEH faced several challenges, especially with regards to the new research dynamics. FOSDEH's Communicator, Joel Alemán, says that “Communication is seen as a tool for advocacy, fueled by research funded by the TTI and other sources.”

Another challenge for communication at FOSDEH has been to become updated, facing the rapid change in communication technology and resources. Alemán explains, “The continuous emergence of communication technologies, new approaches, social networks, and new spaces present challenges. These challenges are in changes in trends and trends in interactive and dynamic spaces, used by more and more people and organizations. Specialization is required to ‘reach’ different segments of populations and themes.”

Joel Alemán believes that “The constant challenge is to move from a flat, passive communication, where content is exposed hoping that some user of the information will enter into contact simply through the power of our brand, to reach creative communication, where we bring content closer to the users, respecting their culture and participation.”

To achieve this goal, the following set of communication strategies¹⁴⁴ was developed during the eight years of the TTI:

- Construction and continuous fine-tuning of the communication manual, which allowed the design and execution of innovative strategies: campaigns, infographics, videos, and memes.
- Training and monitoring of the capacity of spokespersons to communicate effectively to different audiences of interest.
- Training in specific areas that allow the effective transmission of knowledge and the development of intelligence tools in communication. Within this, the development of the Media Book was carried out with the work on mapping, new media, visual impact, video production, effective presentations with an impact, effective use of social networks, etc.: a social media school.
- Accompaniment and training for communication with the ILAIPP network.
- The exchange of experiences between TTI communicators.

144 FOSDEH 2019 Communication Report.

Table 1. Institutional development of the communication scope of FOSDEH

Communication channel	People reached yearly	
	2011	2018
Visits to the website	62.039	716.553
Downloads of research	36.676	866.924
Printed publications	1.500	6.000
Facebook	0	3.314.616
Twitter	0	3.126.321
User interactions	0	1.791.999

Source: Media Report (FOSDEH, 2018).

The strategies applied led to changes in management, tools and communication processes as described in Table 1. The changes resulted in an increase in reaching people: over three million. The communication tools allowed the research findings and proposals to reach an audience with different levels of education and from different sectors: CSOs, businesspersons, public officials, cooperation, and others.

The Communication Coordinator explains, “The most successful strategy that was applied was that of campaigns, which involved reaching different audiences simultaneously, with synchronicity of tools and media that generated an extraordinary synergy of information in social networks, the mass media, public debate, infographics, in publishing houses, and in others.”

Evidence of the progress and impact of the development of the spokesperson is described in Table 2, which shows the presence of FOSDEH in the press, radio, television, and public days (*i.e.* forums, debates and university graduate courses), with an average coverage of 1,000 people in 2019.

Table 2. FOSDEH in the media, 2011-2017-2018

Year	Media interviews	Media references	Hours on the air	Public days
2011	158	Sin registro	38	6
2017	731	743	98.5	8
2018	871	981	109.54	12

Source: Annual Media Report (FOSDEH, 2018).

For the closure of the TTI, Perdomo stated that, in terms of communication, challenges still exist: “defining criteria for spokespersons. This is done by those who are brave and can do it. It is the case because there is a weak editorial line. Individual opinions prevail, leading to confusion of the audience and the message. We are seen as Marxists, Spaniards, or pro-government! Data quality still needs to be improved because there is no editorial control. Erroneous numbers are filtered, and even misspellings! Spokespersons become people who do everything. Journalists ask all types of questions and answers are obtained for everything.”

A. Research that has an influence on public policy and people's lives

At the beginning of this section, the relationship of research with communication and advocacy was explained. The Director of FOSDEH explains, "Advocacy is understood as a process based on the demand of CSOs, which, based on research, culminates in the generation of a change in the responses of the state to satisfy the demand of the most excluded sectors of society. In the middle, a process of analysis, knowledge, prioritization, and proposals is developed and, finally, a set of actions and subprocesses are carried out that end up in the generation of a change, in the definition and the course of action of a public policy, whether or not it is recognized by the public sector. Advocacy transcends the technical sphere and operates beyond the political sphere; it is an exercise of the power of the citizenry."

From the context described at the beginning of this study, it follows that there is a challenge of realigning the perspective and impact of strategies. Traditionally, FOSDEH has influenced decision-makers under constructive dialogue strategies, behind closed doors, in public debate, or in political lobbying. Collaborative relationships had been established to contribute, even with discrepancies of vision, to the highest levels on technical and political issues, such as the Directorates of the Economic Cabinet, the Secretariat of Finance and social development programs. By 2009, governments had limited dialogue with civil society to spaces that could be controlled (AGA-H, EITI and COST). Added to this cloak of opacity was the presence of corruption scandals among political employees, both at the executive level, as well as at the legislative and judicial levels.

Díaz comments, "We gradually reached a level of scientific quality research. How would we manage to make it influential? Several strategies were implemented." To paraphrase various views, the strategies referred to:

- An exhaustive mapping of actors from all sectors and power, under the tipping point methodology.
- The construction of a policy agenda for advocacy⁹¹⁴⁵, and, above all, the fine-tuning of proposals according to research findings.
- Changing the priorities of "targets". The Director of FOSDEH comments, "In the early years in the context of the TTI, the highest priority was the international impact in the spring and autumn meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, because they outlined the agenda of agreements from the IMF visit to the country. In addition, a peer relationship was established with officials at the highest level of the government. In the second phase with the TTI, this strategy was consolidated. As a result of its effects and scope, other sources of cooperation financed advocacy trips, which were extended to meetings with members of the U.S. Senate, such as Tim Rieser, Clay Boogs, Assistant Congresswoman Norma Torres and Richard Guines from the State Department and the Wilson Center."
- Program management based on a constructive model of civil society, with the public sector where possible.

The dialogue, carried out with certain partners related to the "targets" of advocacy, such as the chambers of business, and the Mission of Support Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH).
- The "citizenization" of issues on the advocacy agenda: vital economic decisions, such as budget, spending, public investment policies, the fight against corruption, and others.

145 The FOSDEH Policy Agenda for Advocacy is a political instrument derived from the FOSDEH Strategic Plan, from the analysis of the context and power relations between the different actors. It identifies the general and specific themes that will guide policy action for strategic changes, and provides an analysis that will help to understand the desired themes and development. These themes define the meaning and horizon of the advocacy. They constitute a factor of unity from internal action among members, and a bridge with other external actors who will identify themselves with this horizon.

In 2017, according to the University of Pennsylvania (international think tank monitoring body), FOSDEH ranked 33rd among the 1,023 most influential think tanks in South and Central America. The Coordinator of FOSDEH states, “We are influential actors. We contributed to the reform and restructuring of the legal and institutional framework of the new state tax entity. We gave technical direction to the national assessment of tax exemptions for companies. We were involved in changes that improved the accountability of public-private partnerships (PPPs), as well as improving the registration and control of firm liabilities and trust contingencies, transparency, and control of banks and others.” A successful experience in open and other data is described below.

In each advocacy experience, various processes and technical, political and financial alliances converge. In all of these, acquiring a certain level “power” is required, as is the case with CSOs (see Figure 1). Flores explains, “Structural factors are influenced because interests of power are affected. New challenges always arise.” The dynamics of the impact on PPPs and the experience in transparency are presented below.

Figure 1. Impact on the policy of the public-private partnerships



Source: FOSDEH.

Mini-case: Impact on transparency and access to public information

Context

Research and communication on the economy and fiscal justice require clear transparency and accountability with respect to public finances. Alejandro Kaffati, researcher, explains, “Transparency is a strategic resource for FOSDEH. We monitor compliance with international standards of transparency and open budget accountability. We also lead spaces for dialogue for the formulation of national open government plans. Transparency has been a recurring theme on FOSDEH’s advocacy agenda, with members of the U.S. Senate and the spring and autumn meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.”

In January 2019, the Secretariat of Finance (SEFIN) published, in the official newspaper *La Gaceta*, Ministerial Agreement 842-2018. In it, a new non-disclosure of information was ordered “based on the request for merit, to consider the information of taxpayers included in the Administrative Platform of the Exoneration Module of Honduras and the General Budget Law of the Republic to be confidential, and for it to be classified as such, as long as the information has not been formally submitted to the National Congress of the Republic for approval.” (Secretariat of Finance, 2019)

What did FOSDEH do?

Initially, the institution presented a public statement, stating that this decision was considered a step backwards in transparency and accountability that limited citizens’ possibilities to observe, monitor and evaluate the performance of the use of public funds. Letters were sent to the main government decision-makers and to members of international cooperation, showing evidence of these implications of the decree, specifically in the General Budget of the Republic.

Political lobbying activities were carried out with the Mission of Support Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), and with the Minister of SEFIN. The Director states, “It was emphasized that there were no technical or national security reasons that would support the cover-up of the draft budget as a document of a ‘confidential nature’. We warned that these policies would facilitate corruption and impunity in the use of public funds, with no reduced accountability for public officials.”

Simultaneously, a communication campaign was developed on social networks, using infographics and hashtags on Twitter. Major national and regional media were used, while also employing alternative and digital media.

The results

The Secretariat of Finance decided to eliminate agreements reclassifying information from the General Budget of the Republic. In addition, an information letter was launched on the official website of the Secretariat of Finance, in which the Minister ordered the elimination of the decree classifying the General Budget of the Republic. The Finance Minister explained, “I thank FOSDEH for the warning. I am proceeding to ask the Institute for Access to Public Information for authorization to amend these decrees and to not make the preliminary draft budget a secret at any time.”

FOSDEH appreciated the rectification made by the Secretariat of Finance. A few days after this statement, FOSDEH was invited by the Secretariat to the private presentation of the information platform of the Secretariat of Finance, with its features positioned in an open government plan. The Monitoring Officer said, “This is a new portal (www.sefin.gob.hn), with open data on budget information, debt, macro fiscal profiles, agreements, alliances, exoneration, tax spending, waivers, and public investment, in formats such as Excel and PDF, ready to be printed. All this means greater and easier access to information, for specialized organizations such as FOSDEH and for the citizenry.” The portal will facilitate progress in the transparency of the citizen’s budget, allowing to monitor various programs and make it possible to carry out impact assessments of different funds, such as the Vida Mejor Program and others. (*La Tribuna*, 2019)

5. New paradigms of organizational management with the same values: autonomy and independence of thought

The sociopolitical context and the reflections of internal management drew attention to issues of organizational development, internal governance, and monitoring and evaluation systems, as none of these topics were on the institutional agenda yet. The interest arose from the organizational development component established in the TTI agreement, which was then catalyzed with the challenge of “institutional self-regulation” proposed by an alliance of CSOs aimed at preventing government control actions. Within this framework, a self-diagnosis of organizational components and systems was developed. (FOSDEH, 2013) The results showed a wide range of internal improvement challenges that resulted in an organizational development plan, updated over three continuous years.¹⁰⁶

The TTI and ILAIPP played a key role in the design and implementation of policies and strategies aimed at sustainability, governance, planning, and monitoring and evaluation for learning. This work was carried out through training, accompaniment and technical advising. Also, the flexibility afforded by core funding, compared to project funding, facilitated synergy with other funding: it encouraged debate, ownership and agreeing on internal operations. Consequently, sufficient funds were available for the realization of national and international advising, legal procedures, internal debates, consensus, consultations, and implementation of work processes.

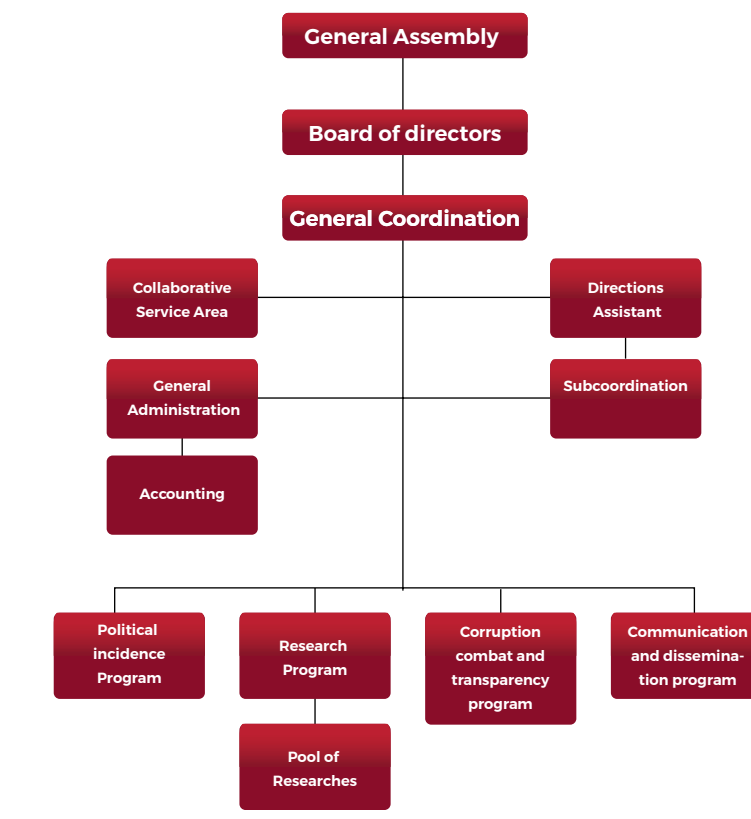
Additionally, according to Administrator Jorge Henríquez, “The Coordinators and Board of Directors of FOSDEH committed themselves to the organizational improvement plan. In this way, the results constituted the support structure of the complex functions of research and advocacy. Among the most important of these are readjustments in the Board of Directors. After eight years, the Board of Directors was reconfigured and its internal governance was strengthened.”

The reports of the Board of Directors Assemblies from 2016 to 2018 describe some of the effects on organizational development:

- Institutional functioning on the basis of a Strategic Management Plan.
- Definition of the Manual of Administrative Procedures, which was updated with the new legal frameworks, making clear the levels of authority and autonomy, processes, operations and transactions, all of this considering segregation of duties and methods of the designation of authority.
- On the role of the manual, the Director’s Assistant states that “Internal policies do not restrict individual initiative; they define autonomy according to the powers inherent in the positions and the profiles established for them.” In turn, the Methods Manual articulates a series of auxiliary manuals. In line with the FOSDEH Institutional Development Plan, protocols and manuals were created and implemented within the framework of transparency and internal control processes. Accounting, administrative and procedural manuals were thus established. (FOSDEH, 2017)
- Updating and harmonization with respect to the relationships of staff, through the organizational system (organization chart), considering structural changes according to the systems of internal processes created and regulated; for example, the creation of the FOSDEH Collaborative Services Unit.

146 The organizational diagnosis covered the following areas: leadership and strategic planning, program management, accounting and financial management, financial sustainability, human and material resources, and external relations and communication.

Figure 1. FOSDEH organization chart, 2018



Source: Organizational Development Manual, FOSDEH.

- Structuring programs for quality control in internal management. A progressive construction of planning, and monitoring and evaluation was carried out. For this purpose, a progressive construction of the Planners App digital tool was carried out. (FOSDEH, 2018) This made it possible to change the management system by projects to a joint vision of the Institutional Strategic Plan.
- Development of the image and registration of the brand. With the mentoring of ILAIPP, a manual was developed with certain corporate identity standards for FOSDEH. A chromatic code was established and corporate colors were determined, which are easily recognizable and associated with Foro Social de Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras, the FOSDEH brand. (FOSDEH, 2018)

In pursuit of financial sustainability, FOSDEH developed a series of business tools: inventories, mapping, medium-term business plans based on market research, and long-term investment plans. (FOSDEH, 2017) The Professional Technical Services Unit of FOSDEH, coordinated by the FOSDEH Administrator, recognizes that “Designs and proposals were made with fairly effective results. We have between 30% and 40% approval of the proposals, so even though we have maintained internal autonomy and independence of thought, we still face the challenge of sustainability and achieving satisfactory funding targets.”

The technical team argues that there are many factors that led to the failure to meet the program funding targets. Among the main factors, there is a growing trend of cooperation towards developing an external agenda. Ismael Zepeda, researcher and spokesperson for FOSDEH, reflects, “It seems that cooperation is looking for implementers of

Some factors leading to the reduction of development cooperation in Honduras that affected FOSDEH

- Corruption and the weakness of rule of law, having caused important cooperation agencies, such as the Swedish cooperation, to leave the country
- The global financial crisis, which affects cooperation organizations
- The contraction of funds, which makes cooperation carry out more rigorous processes for funding. The path of funding the ideas and intentions of organizations through competitions, “modern” approaches, integrating into digital platforms, and creating alliances, among others
- The political conditioning of some cooperation entities, which carry out “filters of thought” and proposals that undermine the independence of thought of FOSDEH

its projects, rather than accompanying CSOs in building their own development.” Other factors, such as increased cost of operations and less cooperation workers are also involved. The attached box explains some of the reasons.

Researchers, who are permanent workers in the organization, pose another factor: “At FOSDEH, the formulation of competitive proposals is a task that requires rigor and time. Technical teams and the Coordinators face an excess workload with the formulation of proposals that end up being done in marginal times.”

Depending on the challenges for sustainability, some questions remain unanswered: Do we need to delineate the fine line of when we seek to generate profit for sustainability and when it is a development project? Do we lack improvement in subjective aspects of organizational culture? Have we been able to adapt to the changes of cooperation in the context?

Carmen Gálvez, Assistant to the Director, adds, “Institutional sustainability at FOSDEH is beyond funding. It is the result of the synergy between conceptualization, the strategic vision of the institution, the vision of its functions, communication, planning, and monitoring and evaluation systems, business plans, and other components. We will not achieve sustainability as long as the challenge of consolidating the changes made in the manuals, policies, culture, and organizational practices remains.”

The experience of the organizational development of FOSDEH has been subject to several elements of progress and setbacks. The Director is satisfied and acknowledges that “The start of the TTI meant a change with no possibility of going backwards in organizational development. Changes were made that supported the development of institutionality as a laboratory of ideas that contributes to exercising the right to access information, influence changes in public policies, and enrich the political agenda of civil society and social movements.”

6. Conclusions

- The balance between research, advocacy and communication are functions that generate powerful synergies: Eight years in the TTI have led FOSDEH to a turning point for its organizational and institutional development as a think tank that is also an actor in development that influences public policies.
- FOSDEH has historically been a national benchmark for public policies. With the TTI, it developed the capacity to generate scientific evidence. Its discourse is often not popular among the power elites; however, it is not refuted. It is often called on for the vital decisions of the country and is a reliable source of information for the citizenry and social movements that base and integrate their struggles with technical arguments.
- Eight years of construction of changes and research, advocacy and communication skills were possible even in complex contexts of political instability and fragility of democracy. The desired changes are not always achieved, but the cracks are exploited for change. There were certainly moments when FOSDEH had to define its position in favor of the vulnerable and impoverished population.
- In sensitive sociopolitical contexts, research, communication and advocacy of strong organizations manage to contain negative impacts. The innovation of the proposals and the strengthening of “multi-stakeholder” partnerships are alternative routes for contributing to the country in pursuit of sustainable development.
- FOSDEH has faced the challenge of institutional sustainability by changing the fund management model. It went from exclusive dependence on solidarity cooperation with the interest of carrying out projects to a mixed model that includes cooperation funds and consultancy services undertakings. In the latter model, profits are invested to maintain an independent and autonomous agenda.
- Advances in research, communication and advocacy have been adapted and developed for learning and improvement. In the field of organizational development, we have the challenge of instating it in the organizational culture, turning policies into practices.
- In the field of internal management and research, communication and advocacy protocols, FOSDEH has a vision that addresses social inequalities by understanding the influence of the patriarchal system and power relations.
- Core funding is constituted as a mechanism of cooperation that is respectful and enhances an institution’s own agenda. It favors effective performance of organizations as social and political actors (non-partisan). On this point, the TTI played an essential role: to develop institutional capacities that allowed maintaining institutional autonomy, with independent positions vis-à-vis the various actors that emerged from the reconfiguration of government power.
- The impact of ILAIPP on capacity development — especially communication, sustainability, and monitoring and evaluation — is evident in the tools and skills achieved. This progress contrasts with the neglect of strengthening the network as a project to articulate think tanks in Latin America to do research and influence significant regional spaces.
- In the second phase of the TTI, FOSDEH allowed itself to permeate the institutional political intention with the emergence of new paradigms and approaches to analysis for gender equity and human rights approaches. Research and advocacy resulted in the development of tools, policies and alliances that made concrete both issues in the form of public policies and discourse in economics and fiscal matters.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The Case of the Latin American Public Policy Research Initiative

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The relevance of studying ILAIPP

In November 2013, in the city of Antigua Guatemala, representatives of twelve thought centers from seven Latin American countries formed the ILAIPP network, with the following objectives:

- To generate knowledge to enrich and propose debate on public policies and development in Latin America.
- To build a space for exchange, discussion and learning between thought centers in the region, around proposals and experiences of impact on public policies.
- To promote actions that strengthen the institutional capacities of member organizations (ILAIPP, 2013).

According to Article 1 of the ILAIPP Statutes, this is “an academic, non-profit, non-partisan and independent body made up of Latin American thought centers that came into being with the aim of contributing, through research, to the challenges of Latin America, and which fosters the vision for knowledge to prompt social, economic, institutional, and political changes, thereby creating opportunities for Latin Americans.” (ILAIPP, 2014)

Since then, ILAIPP has developed a number of joint activities thanks to the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which, through the Think Tank Initiative (TTI), has collaborated with this network in an open and propositional manner, to strengthen the capacities of its members, improve comparative research and generate an impact on public policies.

The functioning of ILAIPP is of great interest, as it is a considerable challenge to make it possible for civil society organizations and thought centers of several countries to become associated in a network of common objectives and to articulate efforts despite their different institutional characteristics. This has been an ambitious project, considering the limited time available to the centers and the scarce resources they have for research and advocacy.

This document is a case study of ILAIPP, based on qualitative research techniques. It also contains a success story regarding regional conferences as mechanisms of influence of ILAIPP members for public policy debate. The interviews conducted for the collection of information are presented in Annex 1. Annex 2 contains the questions of the anonymous survey conducted to the directors of the member organizations of the network, which allowed knowing their opinions regarding the topics addressed in the present study.

2. The origins of ILAIPP

Orazio Belletini¹⁴⁷ mentions that ILAIPP was conceived in 2012 at a meeting convened by the TTI program. During this meeting, in a coffee shop, the importance of Latin America as a region was reflected on, as was the need for comparative research spaces, “given that there was no research on policies for Latin America made from the whole region, making evident the need for Latin American centers to generate an impact on regional and supraregional policies, and on the integration spaces, such as UNASUR, CAN, MERCOSUR, and SICA.” (O. Belletini, 2019)

145 Orazio Belletini was Director of Grupo FARO from its foundation until February 2018. (Grupo FARO is a research center, founder of ILAIPP, based in Ecuador.) He was on the Regional Executive Committee and currently serves as the Executive Secretary *pro tempore* of ILAIPP.

²¹⁴ *The legacy of the program Think Tank Initiative in Latin America*

For Belletini, ILAIPP responded to Latin America’s need to think of itself as a region. It had the objective of generating knowledge that would enrich Latin America and have an impact on public policies and development. Along these lines, ILAIPP sought to generate ideas that, supported by research, would be aimed at promoting changes in the economic, political and social situation of the region.

Subsequently, in January 2013, twelve thought centers, from seven different countries in Central and South America, called on themselves to shape the idea of building a network (Table 1 lists these founding centers). The twelve organizations met in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, at a two-day workshop, where they envisioned ILAIPP, reflecting the strategic objectives mentioned. Since then, eleven of the twelve founding centers in Latin America have worked to realize the purpose of the network.

In November 2014, the ILAIPP Statutes were signed with the participation of the twelve entities. It was a collaborative effort that was nourished by the diverse knowledge and experiences of the research centers, located in countries of different characteristics and representing a space for exchange and discussion in relation to these characteristics.

Table 1. Founding centers of ILAIPP		
Center	Acronym	Country
Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales	ASIES	Guatemala
Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya	CADEP	Paraguay
Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental ⁽¹⁾	CEDA	Ecuador
Foro Social de Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras	FOSDEH	Honduras
Fundación ARU	ARU	Bolivia
Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo	FUNDAUNGO	El Salvador
Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social	FUSADES	El Salvador
Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo	GRADE	Perú
Grupo FARO	FARO	Ecuador
Instituto de Desarrollo	ID	Paraguay
Instituto de Estudios Peruanos	IEP	Perú
Instituto de Estudios Avanzados en Desarrollo	INESAD	Bolivia

Source: ILAIPP (2013) Constituent instrument of ILAIPP.

Note (1): Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental voluntarily withdrew from ILAIPP

In recent years, the possible accession of new members to the different ILAIPP spaces has been discussed. A group of members proposed the opening up of the network to new centers of other countries in the region. Also, consideration has been given to include in the network only the entities supported by TTI, which would be in agreement with ILAIPP's vision of identity.

The possibility of integrating other centers that do not have the support of the TTI program led to inviting certain institutions from Mexico, Brazil and Chile as a first opening up exercise. Thus, in 2016 Espacio Público became a member; it is a Chilean center that is very active in the network and that co-organized the Third Regional Conference. Its presence has shown the potential benefits that can be derived from new members. Espacio Público is currently a member with a voice, but without a vote. (ILAIPP, 2017a)

3. TTI support for ILAIPP

Since ILAIPP was established, its members have had the support of the TTI program, dedicated to strengthening research centers to produce better research and, in this way, increase their advocacy capacity.¹⁴⁸ In fact, it can be said categorically that ILAIPP exists thanks to two elements: TTI funding and the willingness of the ILAIPP institutions to work collaboratively.

It is essential to note that before the existence of ILAIPP, the TTI program already worked with the founding centers individually. The organizations have thus had more of a relationship with IDRC and its TTI initiative as a donor. As stated by Julie Lafrance,¹⁴⁹ the initiative has supported Latin American research and thought centers on public policies since 2009. Twelve and then eleven independent centers were part of the community, the aim of which was to seek solutions to the problems of development and public policies in their countries and throughout the region.

Lafrance highlighted the fact that the centers, prior to establishing ILAIPP, had no relationship with each other and that “with the facilitation of TTI coordination was achieved between them, and this work was fundamental for the possibility of having an influence on regional changes.” In addition, she stressed that, in the field of advocacy, it is more strategic to support a group than an individual entity.

In addition, TTI decided to support ILAIPP with a fixed amount of funds under the core funding¹⁵⁰ mode in matters of governance and structures, in order to allow the operation of the network, covering the expenses of the Executive Secretariat. Lafrance mentioned that core funding is more flexible, positive and beneficial than simply financing a project, since in this way the institution has the freedom to use its resources in operations (J. Lafrance, Skype conference, January 28, 2019).

For Mr. Díaz,¹⁵¹ TTI wanted to support a regional work agenda that did not exist in Latin America and that had been worked on by international networks in other fields, such as trade and security.

Lafrance noted that TTI also operates with the mode of project funding, which is intended for projects that are

148 From the ILAIPP press release: “Iniciativa Latinoamericana de Investigación para las Políticas Públicas (Latin American Public Policy Research Initiative) was created to generate development proposals for the region”, in October 2013.

149 Julie Lafrance is Program Officer at TTI.

150 Core funding is recognized as essential funding which focuses on collaborating in the operation of institutions. However, there is no single definition; the terms “core costs”, “operating costs” and “central costs” are used interchangeably and refer to essential operating costs, including support costs, income generation expenses and governance activities. Basic funding or core funding can provide voluntary organizations with an invaluable opportunity added to their resources, to plan, innovate, improve, have more space to think, or simply ensure a degree of security. Taken from <https://www.ivar.org.uk/get-support/voluntary-and-community-organisations/core-funding/>

151 Mauricio Díaz is Executive Director of Foro Social de Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras (FOSDEH).

not research-oriented and that relate to events, meetings, workshops, or the strengthening of the capacities of organizations. In this sphere, support was given for the holding of a number of regional conferences. Lafrance stated that when ILAIPP began to grow, the need to diversify funding sources was considered, and the possibility was explored of generating a revenue model based on training courses or workshops. Thus, TTI supported the realization of seven modules dedicated to capacity development, which were worked on by the members themselves. This allowed for the exchange of knowledge within the network.

For Mr. Cuenca,¹⁵² core funding allows institutional strengthening, is a good opportunity for particular projects, and strengthens institutions, particularly when they are new. However, he considers that this has a complicated side, since there is a bonanza that does not allow diversifying financing alternatives. He is of the opinion that, while the training modules were funded with the aim of contributing to the sustainability of the network, competition for resources was generated between the centers as such and the network. (R. Cuenca, 2019)

Mr. Rowland¹⁵¹ noted that the network has no legal status, and that this has obligated the transfer of funds directly to ILAIPP members and not to the network as such. (M. Rowland, 2019)

4. Governance in ILAIPP

According to the ILAIPP Statutes, governance is established at three levels: the governance, the administrative and the advisory level. The level of governance consists of the General Assembly and the Regional Executive Committee (CER); the administrative level is made up of the Administrative Unit and the Executive Secretariat; and the advisory level consists of the Advisory Council.¹⁵⁴

For Cuenca, ILAIPP has the advantage of being a democratic and horizontal organization, with the downside being the complexity of the operation of the network, due to its characteristics. He mentions that the headquarters was defined after a few years of operation, but that it still does not have a role to play or a job to do, since the network does not have resources for implementation.

For Rowland, governance did not work well, in terms of achieving the financial sustainability of the network. He considers that the operational structure made sense on paper, but that, in practice, the Executive Secretariat, consisting of the Technical Secretary and a communicator, made funding very difficult. Rowland mentioned that ILAIPP depends more on the people who run the centers and their good will than on the structure itself, as was observed in the Regional

152 Ricardo Cuenca is the General Director of Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, an institution that is a member of the Regional Executive Committee (CER) of ILAIPP.

153 Michell Rowland served as Executive Secretary of ILAIPP until February 2018.

154 As established in Article 12 of the Statutes of ILAIPP (2014), determining the following main functions of its spheres: i) the General Assembly, the highest decision-making body, is composed of the legal representatives or Executive Directors of the centers that make up the network and, exceptionally, by a delegate of one of the two persons mentioned; ii) the CER is composed of six full members, three position holders and three alternate members, ensuring that the two subregions of the network are represented. The members are elected for a term of three years and can be reelected once, and their membership in the CER can be renewed in a phased manner, one per year, in order to ensure continuity in management; iii) the Executive Secretary is appointed by the General Assembly from a list submitted by the CER, with the secret vote of at least two-thirds of its members, for a period of three years, which are renewable; iv) the Administrative Unit is approved by the General Assembly with the secret vote of at least two-thirds of its members for a three-year renewable period and is in charge of managing the projects and the budget; and v) the Advisory Committee is appointed by the members of the General Assembly and its members provide support, in an honorary manner, in defining and guiding priority themes, as well as in liaising with other networks. It is to be made up of a group of up to ten Latin Americans with recognized backgrounds who exercise their positions for three years.

Executive Committee, which worked or not according to the will of its members.

Rowland believes that the Executive Secretariat should function under (or be present in) a member organization, to facilitate operation, reduce costs and drive processes. He explains that, in part, this is why it was decided to move the headquarters to Paraguay, based on a consultancy that evaluated the different options with comparative parameters.

In 2017, work was done on a proposal for governance reform to be discussed in the General Assembly. Among the proposals, the issue of centralized and/or decentralized management was highlighted in relation to each of the key areas in ILAIPP, which are summarized in Table 2.

Consideration was also given to the headquarters of the network and its functions; however, this issue has not yet

Areas	Centralized strategy	Decentralized Strategy
Comparative research	X	X
Advocacy strategies	X	
Capacity development	X	X

Source: ILAIPP (2017a).

been resolved by the General Assembly.

The Executive Secretariat had funding until early 2018. Since then, in the absence of funds, by unanimous decision of the centers, the position of Secretary *pro tempore* was established as a rotating mechanism to manage the decisions of the General Assembly and the Regional Executive Committee. Grupo FARO currently holds the Secretariat *pro tempore* of ILAIPP.

Ana Patricia Muñoz¹⁵⁵ points out that the General Assembly always had the financing of TTI, and that the Regional Executive Committee (CER) is a working structure that avoids a monopoly, but that, in her view, did not fulfill the role of monitoring and verifying whether the other ILAIPP spheres were working well or not, since this body has a shared responsibility in the operation of the network.

The members of the Regional Executive Committee agreed that the governance structure set out in the Statutes had not been fully complied with, as there is no administrative unit, the Advisory Committee is not operational and the headquarters does not yet have functions or funding.¹⁵⁶

At present, the governance of ILAIPP is analyzed as a topic linked to sustainability. The discussion focuses on a model that is simpler, less bureaucratic and that requires fewer resources. Hence, a minimum operating model has been proposed to change the scheme in which the network meets and organizes itself. One proposal is that the biannual conferences continue and that the meetings be held virtually, or, at the most, with one in-person meeting per year, to share the status of the research.

155 Ana Patricia Muñoz is Executive Director of Grupo FARO, the center that currently holds the Secretariat *pro tempore* of ILAIPP.

156 The ILAIPP website indicates that Dionisio Borda and Clarisa Hardy are members of the Executive Committee. Taken from: <https://ilaipp.org/gobernanza/#AddingRenovation>

5. Milestones of ILAIPP management

This section presents the progress in each of the areas which were, as a founding basis, determined to be strategic within ILAIPP. The mentioned areas are: comparative research, strengthening of the institutional capacities of the centers, and impact on public policies.

Comparative research at ILAIPP

In the field of research, among the actions developed is the formulation of a research agenda, which was reflected through the study “Saliendo del Cascarón. La Red ILAIPP y su Nueva Agenda de Investigación Comparada a Escala Regional”, prepared by researcher Raúl Hernández. In this document, validated at the ILAIPP Assembly in San Salvador (August 2014), four research axes were defined according to the objectives of ILAIPP, the research areas in which the member centers have focused, and the needs of deepening and updating knowledge. The axes defined are:¹⁵⁷ economic policies, poverty and equity; democracy, human rights and political culture; natural resources, the environment and climate change; and education.

157 Taken from the ILAIPP Research Agenda, Axis 2: “Democracy, Citizen Rights and Political Culture”, formulated by Hugo Novales, 2016.

Table 3. The ILAIPP Agenda and its relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

ILAIPP Agenda	SDG
1. Economic policies, poverty and equity	1. No poverty 2. Zero hunger 8. Decent work and economic growth 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 10. Reduced inequalities 12. Responsible consumption and production
2. Democracy, human rights and political culture	5. Gender equality 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
3. Natural resources, the environment and climate change	6. Clean water and sanitation 7. Affordable and clean energy 11. Sustainable cities and communities 13. Climate action 14. Life below water 15. Life on land
4. Education	4. Quality education

Source: Rowland (2017).

In December 2017, at one of the meetings of the General Assembly, the axes of the agenda, its importance and its relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were presented, as summarized in Table 3.

To develop each axis, expert researchers were hired to review the relevant academic works, and the agenda priorities and strategic plans of multilateral organizations (or think tanks) with influence in Latin America. Synergies with other relevant agendas were also identified.¹⁵⁸

Regarding the situation and progress of research at ILAIPP, it was argued that failure to realize the research agenda was mainly attributable to the lack of funding to implement it. For Muñoz, although the agenda was not implemented, it is worth highlighting the strengthening of the relationships between the institutions of the network. These relationships can bear fruit due to their intangible contribution to research at the level of members, more than through ILAIPP as such.

For Díaz, it is possible to develop the Latin American agenda, but it needs to be strengthened. It is necessary to define the pending issues and to consider the weight that middle-income countries carry, with the corresponding difficulties obtaining funding for research.

Regarding the problems relating to advance research, Lafrance pointed out that the first TTI funds were provided for building and implementing the research agenda, but that later, in practice, it was observed that the interest of the centers at the regional level was more focused on executing projects than on conducting research.

In order to enhance research at ILAIPP, work was done on a new proposal that the research continue forward with the work of the Regional Executive Committee and the Executive Secretariat, with the support of at least two centers that could carry out a decentralized search for opportunities. In this regard, ILAIPP proposed that the Executive Secretariat support:

- The preparation of the proposal
- The communication strategy
- The monitoring and evaluation strategy
- Administration

If the proposal were accepted, the centers would recognize the contribution of ILAIPP based on a table that establishes a percentage between 10% and 12%, depending on the amount of the project (ILAIPP, 2017a).

ILAIPP's institutional website highlights that "The member centers have partnered to carry out different comparative research, taking advantage of the synergy generated by belonging to the network and the support of TTI. Among the topics is a comparative analysis of social research in Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru; a proposal on the Law of Political Parties in El Salvador; an analysis of multidimensional poverty in Paraguay; and the creation of a Regional Citizenry Observatory of Fiscal Policy." (ILAIPP, 2019b)

In the field of research, progress was also made in the creation of a directory of ILAIPP member researchers. This consists of a database with the contact information of over 150 Latin American professionals who collaborate with the member centers that belong to the network. They do research within the four axes of ILAIPP. This basis contributes to providing visibility for the work of the men and women researchers in Latin America and to generate opportunities to strengthen their networks. (ILAIPP, 2019)

Strengthening of institutional capacities

158 Information taken from the Terms of Reference of the ILAIPP Research Agenda.

The Capacity Development Program, funded by TTI, has been one of the most important activities within ILAIPP, as it focused on improving internal management in the centers that were a part of it.

Based on the learning and training needs identified in each member, a proposal was created to develop modules focused and adapted to strengthen the activities of the centers, on different topics, through the exchange of experiences and methodologies, to facilitate the work in these organizations. This process was informed by the training needs identified by the centers, and by the work done in the various meetings held by ILAIPP members between 2013 and 2016 for designing and agreeing on the strategic plan and the objectives of ILAIPP's actions. (ILAIPP, 2019b)

In this sphere, seven modules were designed that had an implementation schedule of up to 30 months, with a virtual platform and combined learning methodologies (ILAIPP, 2016). The member organizations of the network developed the modules indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Training modules			
Center	Module theme	Objective	No. of persons present
Grupo FARO (Ecuador)	1. Electoral platforms	To strengthen the capacities of the centers to influence and enrich the electoral cycle and electoral processes in their countries	11
Grupo FARO (Ecuador) y ASIES (Guatemala)	2. Monitoring and evaluation	To implement a methodology that is clear and connected to the needs and contexts of the centers, to establish, or strengthen, participatory monitoring and evaluation systems	11
ARU (Bolivia)	3. Impact assessment	To achieve greater capacity of the centers to develop impact assessments as part of their institutional strategies	17
FUSADES (El Salvador)	4. Communication of the research	To provide the centers with a Communication Manual to design and execute strategies in their spaces, and to develop the capacities of their spokespersons to communicate effectively to different audiences of interest	14
ASIES (Guatemala)	5. Research quality assurance systems and ethical standards	To implement a program to strengthen systems to ensure the quality of research and ethical standards that respond to the characteristics and needs of the centers	23
GRADE (Perú)	6. Rigorous methodologies for synthesizing evidence	To strengthen capacities in the member centers in the use of rigorous methodologies for synthesizing evidence	19
CADEP - CONSULTORES (Paraguay)	7. Sustainability strategies	To strengthen the capacities of ILAIPP and of each center to maximize their long-term sustainability, through innovation and diversification of their resource mobilization strategies	23

Source: Own preparation, based on ILAIPP (2017c).

Lafrance points out that during the first phase of capacity development, experts from outside Latin America were present, and they provided training to the centers of the network, but that the outreach was not very positive. For this reason, for the second phase of training, the TTI program proposed that the centers themselves share their knowledge, thus allowing the exchange of strengths. In this regard, noteworthy was the joint work, the development of capacities and the strengthening process that enabled the centers to be both implementers and recipients simultaneously. This work represented a great investment for TTI; however, Lafrance regrets that the General Assembly has not appropriated it as a mechanism to generate sustainability in the network through the sale of this service to other centers and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the region.

Muñoz said that the ILAIPP meetings always highlighted capacity development as an achievement in the network, allowing mutual learning in the centers, although sufficient coordination was not achieved to strengthen the Capacity Development Program as a whole.

For Vanesa Weyrauch,¹⁵⁹ the results of this training process varied according to the level of impact and some challenges faced by ILAIPP in managing the initiative. She believes that at the organizational level, many modules improved the understanding at what stage the organizations were in terms of some core functions. Although the centers did not achieve all the expected results throughout the process, they did change, innovate and expand learning in some way. Some adopted new tools and practices to better communicate or ensure the quality of research; others created new units for training and impact assessment; others initiated longer processes to discuss changing existing models and practices. The consultant highlighted the fact that through the training modules, the think tanks were able to share their specific lessons learned and their tools — such as online platforms — to provide virtual training and help participants define the results of the organizations (Weyrauch, 2019).

In January 2018, as a challenge of the Capacity Development Program, the closure of the implementation of the modules in an appropriate manner was envisioned, as well as the preparation of what would be offered in the future, based on the products of ILAIPP.

The impact on public policies

The idea was for ILAIPP to have an impact on public policies through generating evidence by means of demanding research work. Therefore, it was understood that advocacy depends on research and its quality, making it possible, with appropriate resources, to study problems shared by all the countries, such as corruption, inequality and lack of development.

Regional conferences have been perceived by some members as a mechanism that aims to generate an impact on public policy; however, many also recognize that influencing in this sphere implies greater, longer and more sustained work. In Lafrance's words, it is undeniable that the conferences helped to address issues of common interest such as education, inclusion and the fight against corruption, and to strengthen knowledge, the organizations, the common search for analysis, methodological applications and technical proposals; however, the conferences did not have a direct impact on public policies. For Lafrance, it is important to keep in mind the two levels of advocacy: one at a scientific level and the other of a popular nature. She also states that technical rigor and popular ownership will allow having an impact on government, international organizations and the citizenry.

Rowland, on the other hand, believes that at its Second Regional Conference, ILAIPP achieved a significant impact on public policies, having had, in its final panel of education, the presence of ministers from two countries. It also included certain policy makers in the debate and promoted exchanges between education authorities following the event. She

159 Vanesa Weyrauch is the ILAIPP consultant who worked, since September 2016, to develop and accompany training modules for the network.

also highlighted the fact that at the conference in Honduras, convened by TTI and IDRC in 2017, ILAIPP was presented to a pool of multilateral cooperation workers who were interested in learning about the network and its functioning.

Rowland noted that, in Guatemala, the network participated in a meeting within the framework of the Ibero-American Summit of Presidents and Heads of State, and that ILAIPP made its voice heard at the United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. Both were spaces of great importance and influence in regional policy.

For Lafrance, it is difficult to achieve advocacy without a clear strategy. This strategy depends on the vision of the network, which is considered confusing in the case of ILAIPP. In this regard, most of the members of the CER agreed that the construction of research and the impact on public policies will not be achieved in ten years, but are instead issues that will require more time and more resources. Nevertheless, it was recognized that progress was made in this sphere.

The ILAIPP documentation reflects the interest of this network in influencing political spaces, such as working on SDGs at the regional level and promoting projects in this field. Examples include the Ibero-American Summit in Guatemala in 2018 and Argentina's presidency of the G-20. In both cases, the network considered acting as a subregional organization. (ILAIPP, 2017b)

It is noteworthy that advocacy has been the subject of meetings and encounters between the members of the network. In this way, the dialogue “Evidencia y Políticas Públicas: un Diálogo entre Think Tanks y Cooperantes en el Triángulo Norte de Centroamérica” was carried out in May 2017, in San Pedro Zula, Honduras, with the support of TTI. (ILAIPP, 2017d)

These opinions and different views on the issue of impact in ILAIPP reflect the complexity of it, where different strategies, objectives and mechanisms are established, even more so considering the different scenarios of impact in the countries. In any case, a line of work is needed in the current situation of the network.

Regional conferences: a successful mini case study

Some of the interviewees in this study pointed out, as one of the important milestones of ILAIPP, the development of the three regional conferences that, since 2014, were held biannually, and addressed issues of interest to the region, presenting in-depth analyses and evidence-based proposals for action. Conferences are spaces in which comparative research, capacity development and public policy impact converge.

The **First Regional Conference** addressed the theme “**Latin America towards social inclusion: progress, learning and challenges**”. It featured presentations and comments from the twelve member centers of the network, as well as outstanding researchers and representatives of regional bodies such as ECLAC and IDRC. Experiences on social inclusion of vulnerable groups was the topic of priority analysis, related to the institutionalization of social policies to promote it, the importance of social capital in the processes of regional inclusion, multiculturalism, and fiscal matters. This space allowed the review of various situations of progress, but also of outstanding challenges in this sphere. The event took place in Antigua Guatemala, in November 2014, and was organized by the Guatemalan center ASIÉS.

The **Second Regional Conference** addressed the theme: “**Education, human capital and knowledge generation**”. In this space, five comparative studies conducted by researchers from the network, presentations by international experts on notions of innovation and quality in research and education policy, and innovations in large-scale educational programs were presented. The meeting included a policy table in which the Ministers of Education of Peru and Guatemala participated. The event highlighted the need to generate more scientific knowledge in the region, as well as the challenges for the coming years, in a context where most countries do not have state initiatives to fund research. The conference, organized by GRADE and Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP), was held in Lima in November 2016.

The **Third Regional Conference** addressed the theme “**Fighting corruption: research and innovation in Latin America**”, and promoted contended and objective debate on a topic of concern and current relevance in the region. The event, held in Quito, Ecuador, in December 2018, was attended by various representatives of the public sector, international cooperation actors, international delegations, university professors, and other representatives of civil society. The conference was organized by Grupo FARO (Ecuador), which is responsible for the Executive Secretariat of ILAIPP and Espacio Público (Chile).

The importance of this meeting was to identify and analyze the causes, expressions and consequences of corruption, as well as the means to deal with it from an institutional perspective, in order to promote coordinated actions between the public sector, the private sector and the third sector. The main topics addressed included analysis of good practices in the evaluation of anti-corruption programs, outstanding institutional reforms, lessons learned from the Odebrecht case and the role of civil society and the private sector in combating corruption.

It is noteworthy that, for the organization of the Third Conference, Red Latinoamericana Anticorrupción (REAL) provided support, led by Espacio Público, a Chilean entity that allied with ILAIPP. Having the participation of REAL in this event was a technical and institutional strength to address the fight against corruption and to count on the most recognized researchers and policymakers in the region (and the world) in this field.

6. The challenges faced by ILAIPP

According to the information provided by the interviewees,¹⁶⁰ according to the data collected in the survey carried out with the directors of the member centers,¹⁶¹ and according to the documentation analyzed, the following topics were identified as the greatest difficulties ILAIPP has to face:

- The limited availability of funds to conduct research in Latin America. This highlights the need for the centers to commit to working together, allocating time and resources for the network. This difficulty is twofold, given the characteristic of the average income in many countries where the centers are located, in a field in which funding is lower.
- The little time spent on research by the centers, since the dynamics they face do not allow for exclusive dedication to the network. This situation, according to Muñoz, obliges thought centers, in countries like Ecuador, to allocate a small part of the resources and time of intervention projects to carry out research. It is difficult to maintain a robust research agenda without funding.
- Institutional differences between network centers. This is a great challenge, as it has apparently undermined work in the network and made it difficult to build a common vision. For some members interviewed, there is competition between individual centers within ILAIPP for resources, which is why there is a need to establish an identity and a meaning with the network, as well as a role in the Executive Secretariat.
- For Cuenca, one of the biggest difficulties is to fulfill the research agenda. The research agenda was designed, but has not been implemented, due to lack of decision on the part of members and lack of funding to develop comparative research.

160 The list of the interviews conducted for the present case study can be found in Annex 1.

161 Annex 2 contains the anonymous survey on ILAIPP, carried out using Google forms, to the Executive Directors and Secretaries of ILAIPP member centers.

- For Belletini, the main challenge in collective processes will always be to keep the group motivated and actively participating. He pointed out that only seven of the twelve centers were active in the last survey, and that it was rarely possible for all to play a participatory role.
- In the study of the impact of civil society networks on public policies, developed by ILAIPP, it has been observed that almost all the networks studied agree that the scarcity of funding harms the sustainability of CSOs. For example, the case of Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción al Desarrollo A.C. (ALOP) is cited. The organization “is affected by a sustainability crisis for this reason” (Arndt, 2017, p. 5). This occurs because with the restriction of resources, the first thing that is stopped is political advocacy, because few donors fund these processes. The study also notes that “It is more difficult for regional networks to obtain international funds than it is for national organizations or networks, as few donors have the option of supporting networks at the regional level.” (Ibidem)

Networks in developing regions also point out that changes in government in member countries can significantly affect the environment for CSOs and their chances of achieving an impact on public policy.

7. Lessons learned from ILAIPP

This point indicates the main aspects highlighted by the persons interviewed and surveyed, in relation to the collection of information indicated in Annexes 1 and 2.

- The realization of the three regional conferences and publications brought together many key and strategic regional actors, and at the same time promoted comparative research and allowed establishing a preliminary space for advocacy on public policies. All this happened thanks to the fact that topics of interest in the region could be discussed among the authorities, policy makers and influential figures of academia.
- It is difficult to develop research agendas in the short-term, as they require more time and resources to implement. Similarly, the impact on public policy takes time and requires funding; even more so at the regional level, where there is disparity and asymmetry between countries and centers.
- The strengthening of the capacities of members and the exchange of experiences between the centers was generated through the development of the training modules, which was enriching and achieved the participation of the majority of the member centers.
- TTI’s support for ILAIPP was fundamental, since it became the only donor of the network, which, under the majority mode of core funding, promoted its operation. This support made it possible to learn about the experiences of other regional networks that receive IDRC funds and also work in research and advocacy on public policy.
- It is essential to think about the sustainability of networks since the moment of their creation, as they face greater difficulties than individual centers. Core funding alone does not promote sustainability.
- It is difficult to obtain funds for the traditional operation of a regional network of thought centers, as well as to develop research in the Latin American context.
- The lack of clarity of common objectives disorients the aims of ILAIPP and causes the network to be conceived as competition between member centers, thus affecting the interest in consolidating ILAIPP.

- There is an urgent need to rethink the structure of ILAIPP, evaluate its impact and analyze alternative mechanisms of operation that are less costly, but effective, allowing the network to remain active and fulfill its aims.
- For the initial operation of a network, at least a minimum structure is needed, consisting of a secretary or coordinator, a communicator and a fundraising officer in charge of promoting the network and being the link with the partners.
- From the perspective of TTI, ILAIPP had to define the headquarters as a prerequisite for providing individual grants to the centers directly. Delivering the funds to ILAIPP would have made the network be in charge of the implementation of the modules. In this sense, the decentralized model, without direct accountability to an individual or organization, meant that the way projects were implemented was more lax and diffused. This flexibility led, in some cases, to the creation of significant changes in relation to the initial objectives, to the failure to achieve some results and to the failure to adhere to deadlines and commitments. (Weyrauch, 2019)
- Measuring the impact of a network is different from measuring the impact of a center, and the dynamics of a network are equally different from that of a center, even more so when the scope of the network is international, as other dynamics exist and other needs are present.
- The relationships that have been formed between ILAIPP centers have allowed the development of joint works and projects. The relationship between members would not be as strong if the network did not exist.
- In order to implement the regional research agenda and develop diagnoses and comparative studies, it is necessary to abandon the idea of dealing exclusively with the topics of each center. Joint strategies and mechanisms need to be defined to achieve common goals. Similarly, the centers must understand the added value of conducting joint research and studies.

8. ILAIPP and its prospects for the future

Once the TTI program has been completed and the sustainability of the network is considered, it is expected that the future of ILAIPP will be discussed at the next meeting of the General Assembly. This matter has been discussed in a preliminary manner.

Some centers consider the option of modifying the identity of ILAIPP to meet every two years within the framework of regional conferences, which is the mode of operation of many networks in the region. Another option is to change the norm regarding the network as set out in the Statutes.

If the desire is to maintain ILAIPP, the most feasible thing to do would be to change its governance and its aims, to operate with a smaller structure and scope, to hold regional conferences and to invite policy makers of the region.

A group of Directors of the centers considers ILAIPP to be a valuable experience that can contribute to the region and needs to be modified to ensure its sustainability. This would mean that the network would operate as a second floor institution that does not compete with the centers, and that its administrative role would be less important. Other members hope that all organizations that make up ILAIPP will take on their commitments, comply with their outstanding obligations and have a more participatory attitude.

Given the lack of resources, the *pro tempore* mechanism of the Secretariat could be an alternative to energize the network. In this same vein, there is the proposal for a model that is decentralized and includes virtual meetings, which requires the commitment and resources of a large part of the members.

Muñoz recognizes the difficulty in maintaining an expensive organizational structure, because the centers belong to other networks, possess scarce resources and do not always recognize the value of networks. However, Muñoz considers that if the desire is to position topics of interest to the region, this should be done within a network, so ILAIPP could focus on two or three topics of regional interest. As an alternative to the need to reform the structure, Muñoz considers that thought could be given to dispensing with the role of the CER and that the Executive Secretariat should take on its functions.

The directors of the centers agree that the challenges for ILAIPP are enormous; that the functioning of the network must be changed; that expectations must be reduced to less ambitious and more achievable objectives; and that sustainability will depend on ILAIPP's ability to reinvent itself and the level of commitment of its members to the network.

One of the greatest difficulties is the shortage of funding, which harms sustainability and advocacy capacity, making it more difficult for regional networks to obtain international funds as compared to national organizations, with few donors supporting regional networks and funding advocacy processes. (Arndt, 2017, p. 52)

In a four-year review of ILAIPP's operation, ensuring the sustainability of the network was already established as a challenge, as well as meeting the proposed vision, achieving the expected objectives in the medium- and long-term, and expanding geographic and thematic coverage. The answer to these issues is to refine the current rules, the need to take an additional step and concentrate on dealing with the processes of comparative research in detail, the development of institutional capacities, and the acceptance of new members in the network. It is necessary to strengthen the various levels of institutional commitment and to keep everyone united in the midst of ideological, thematic and managerial differences. (ILAIPP, n.d.)

9. By way of conclusion

The establishment of the network has generated many added values for the partners, who today have different allies in the region, in addition to having expanded their social capital and capacities, through the exchange of experiences and information.

Core funding is a necessary and appropriate form of cooperation for the emergence of institutions. It offers greater freedom and more benefits than funding by projects. However, from the beginning of its delivery, work must be done on the sustainability of the recipients, in order to avoid complex situations such as those currently faced by ILAIPP.

The progress achieved by ILAIPP is significant and must be strengthened and promoted, as in the case of the Regional Research Agenda, which requires that mechanisms be managed for its implementation.

The regional conferences held by ILAIPP are valuable elements that contribute to working in the areas of interest of the network and to creating spaces for the analysis and discussion of regional problems. Members have recognized the need to continue holding these conferences

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Annexes

Annex 1

Interviews for the ILAIPP case study			
Interviewee	Position	Date	Mode
Julie Lafrance	IDRC-TTI	28-01-2019	
Vanesa Weyrauch	ILAIPP consultant in charge of the modules	25-01-2019	Skype
Orazio Belletini	Former Executive Director of Grupo FARO	31-01-2019	Telephone
Ricardo Cuenca	Executive Director of Instituto de Estudios Peruanos	1-02-2019	Skype
Mauricio Díaz	Coordinator of FOSDEH	04-02-2019	Skype
Víctor Vásquez	Director of Instituto de Desarrollo	30-01-2019	Skype
Michell Rowland	Former Executive Secretary of ILAIPP	01-02-2019	Telephone
Ana Patricia Muñoz	Executive Director of Grupo FARO	05-02-2019	Personal

Source: Own preparation.

Questions guide

The interviews were semi-structured. Thus, in the course of carrying them out, and according to the answers and dialogue, changes and, in some cases, additional questions, were made.

1. Based on your experience as Executive Secretary of ILAIPP and as a member of the CER, what aspects could you highlight of TTI support to ILAIPP in the following fields: i) the matter of research quality; ii) organizational performance; and iii) advocacy capacities in public policies?
2. Why was TTI interested in supporting ILAIPP and what topics did TTI want to position in working with ILAIPP? How have these matters changed over time?
3. What relevant changes, good or bad, occurred within ILAIPP regarding its operating structure that were related to the implementation of the TTI program? How have these changes occurred?
4. What advantages or disadvantages can you point out regarding grants of the core funding type received by ILAIPP, compared to the project funding methodology?
5. What difficulties were faced in the operation of ILAIPP to carry out the proposed projects?
6. Point out the main achievements of ILAIPP in terms of impact on public policy, and why they occurred.
7. How have TTI funds helped or hindered centers to promote public policy research and debate through ILAIPP?

8. What is your opinion regarding the internal governance of ILAIPP? What advantages and disadvantages did the functioning of the governing bodies generate (*i.e.* General Assembly, Regional Executive Committee, General Secretariat, Administrative Unit, and Consultative Committee)?
9. Within ILAIPP, was work done on inclusion (gender, countries, subregions) in the last five years? How and under what approaches?
10. What are the main lessons learned by ILAIPP in the field of work with TTI?
11. Considering that the funding of TTI for ILAIPP has concluded, what could be the future prospects of ILAIPP?

Annex 2

Online interviews with ILAIPP Assembly members (six members responded)

Questions guide

1. What are the main benefits and learning that the center you represent achieved by being a member of ILAIPP?
2. What are the main challenges that the organization you represent has had to face in the framework of ILAIPP?
3. With regard to the objectives of ILAIPP, how do you evaluate compliance with them in the years of operation of the network? Do you believe that the aims for which ILAIPP was established have been achieved?
4. In the field of research, what is the evaluation of your organization regarding the work of ILAIPP? What aspects were properly worked on and what issues remain to be strengthened in this area? How can research of the network be improved? What proposals do you have in this regard?
5. How have ILAIPP and TTI work areas influenced in determining the topics and areas of work of your institution?
6. What is your opinion regarding the governance of ILAIPP? What opinion do you have about the functioning of internal bodies?
7. What is your opinion regarding the prospects for ILAIPP's functioning, considering funding through the TTI program?
8. What recommendations could you give to strengthen the ILAIPP network?
9. Do you consider that it is feasible to influence the public policies of Latin American countries from a regional space of civil society? How do you believe effective advocacy can be achieved and in what spaces?
10. How do you see ILAIPP's programmatic and financial sustainability and what actions do you consider could be proposed in the network to achieve this sustainability?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The TTI: Experiment in Strengthening *Think Tanks*

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Context

The role of local actors and institutions, such as think tanks, in generating locally relevant evidence and knowledge, providing inputs into the design of policies and programmes best suited to contextual realities, and engaging with a range of locally invested stakeholders is increasingly well-documented in development literature. Donors, both international and domestic, have increasingly recognized that local ownership is critical to successful development interventions and their future sustainability. Despite this recognition, however, investments in local organizational capacities and their institutional landscapes to set, shape and implement locally relevant development agendas have not always been a high priority for donors. This increases the risk of ineffectiveness and failure of development interventions, no matter how well-meaning the interventions may be.

The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) was set up in response to bridge the gap in the market for locally informed, context-specific public policies. The initiative's core aims were to strengthen the organizational capacities of a group of local, independent policy research organizations, or think tanks, based in East and West Africa, South Asia and Latin America to produce and communicate high-quality, contextualized, objective and timely evidence that informs and influences policy and practice. The donors of this programme understood the long-term commitment required to do this and subsequently designed the initiative with a 10-year time horizon, divided over two 5-year phases—phase 1 from 2009 to 2014 and phase 2 from 2014 to 2019—which allowed the funders to take stock of grantee performance, revisit the core principles of the initiative and make any design tweaks required at the end of phase 1.

Funders

Conceived by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, TTI was initiated in 2008 by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which both funds and manages its implementation in the three regions. Subsequently, three other funders came on board to join the initiative. These were the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) for phase 1 (2009–2014). Following a review at the end of phase 1, all donors except DGIS¹⁶² remained on board to support this work over the next five-year period. The Norwegian government's Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) joined the initiative as a funding partner for the final year of phase 1 and committed to support it along with the Hewlett Foundation, IDRC, BMGF and DFID until the end of its cycle in September 2019.

Programme mission, design and approach

TTI's mission is to strengthen the capacity of local think tanks to produce objective, high-quality research and evidence that can be utilized by policy-makers to support interventions that contribute to more equitable and prosperous societies. Following through on this¹⁶² ambition required investments in building local capacities over a longer time horizon as compared to usual development programme cycles. In order to contribute to context-specific development priorities, think tanks had to be able to establish their own research agendas to fill specific evidence gaps, stay invested within research portfolios over a period of time in a planned and strategic way, and be ready to respond to emerging opportunities within the local development context.

¹⁶² A change in their organizational priorities led to DGIS' decision to not join Phase 2.

Strengthening organizational research quality mechanisms, improving organizational performance, and sharpening policy outreach and communication of think tanks' outputs were identified as the three core areas or pillars for support in the initiative's design. To enable this, the support provided to think tanks included a combination of core, or flexible, non-earmarked funding and complementary, targeted and supplementary capacity-building support explained as follows:

- 1. Core funding support:** This component formed 60 per cent of the funding provided to think tanks over the life cycle of the initiative. It comprised flexible, non-earmarked, long-term funding support, allocated across the three pillars against a set of objectives determined by the think tanks themselves in consultation with TTI programme officers. This ensured that the think tanks owned and remained committed to building capacities across the organization in line with their mission and priorities.
- 2. Technical support:** In addition to core support grants, TTI provided technical support to the grantee think tank. While the technical support provided in both the phases was linked directly to the TTI Results Framework, the modalities of its delivery were starkly different. In the first phase, targeted technical support was provided in the area of policy engagement and communications. It was designed and delivered through TTI selected agencies. A review of this support at the end of phase 1 revealed that this format was not well-suited to such a diverse grantee group with different needs, priorities and expertise in the area. Therefore, in phase 2, a more concerted effort was made to design and deliver the capacity-building support, taking into account these differences and better aligning with grantee needs and priorities across all three pillars of TTI. In addition to such targeted capacity offerings in both phases, additional support was made available, including on developing new research portfolios and encouraging research collaborations, through two other specific modalities—the Matching Fund calls in phase 1 and the Opportunity Fund calls in phase 2.

Key learning events have also facilitated capacity building through peer learning for the TTI grantees across the three pillars of the initiative. These include the TTI Exchanges that took place in Cape Town (2012) and Istanbul (2015) and the three ILAIPP Conferences in Latin America on Social Exclusion (2015), Education (2017) and Corruption (2018) have enabled spaces for thematic discussions and the implications for the region as well as for think tanks to learn lessons emerging on the opportunities and challenges faced within the peer networks.

The selection process

At its global launch in 2008, the programme selected a cohort of think tanks. It had the following specific aims:

- 1.** Assist them to assess critical areas of strength and weakness, and identify opportunities for improved organizational performance.
- 2.** Provide a combination of general support funding or core support and access to training and technical support to achieve improvements in research quality, policy linkages and other aspects of organizational performance.
- 3.** Capture and share programme learning about strategies for supporting and managing policy research organizations in order to influence the future activities of the funding partners, think tanks and other development actors.

Four geographic clusters of countries in the three continents were identified globally for the work of the initiative on the basis of five broad criteria: need (based on income per capita), population size (since very small countries may not have a sufficient range of research organizations to warrant support), political openness (since willingness of governments to make use of independent research results is critical), political stability, and extent of local funding of research and development (as an indicator of the ability of local governments to contribute over the longer term to the work of independent think tanks). These regions/countries included the following:

- East Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda
- West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal
- South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan
- Latin America: Honduras, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru and Paraguay

A rigorous selection process across the globe produced a mixed portfolio consisting of independent think tanks that varied in size (large, mid-sized and small), age (young and established), areas of policy focus (themes as well as local, national and international) and division of work between research and advocacy projects. Of the total 52 selected think tanks, 12 were based in Latin America.

Governance structure

The governance structure for this multi-year, multi-country and multi-donor initiative reflected the composition of funders active in TTI. The Executive Committee (EC), comprising representatives from each of TTI's five funders, was the main body for discussion and joint decision-making by all donors. It focused on strategic decision-making and learning, leaving most of the operational decision-making to IDRC. An International Advisory Group (IAG) consisting of eminent scholars from different parts of the world was also constituted to guide the design and implementation of the programme at its start. Over the course of the implementation period, the IAG's role was found to overlap with that of the EC, thus it was dissolved. Subsequently, the EC took the lead on all strategy decision-making and learning for most of phase 2.

Mid-program: phase 2 review (2014)

A reassessment of the organizations selected for grants on the completion of the first five-year phase in 2014 was built in at the design stage of the grant call. This meant that the think tanks for support in phase 1 had to demonstrate continued commitment and considerable improvements in their operational capacities, research quality and policy engagement, and communication capabilities at the end of the phase to be considered for continued funding.

After looking at the results of the programme and strategic deliberations, the EC decided to restrict the eligibility of think tanks to receive TTI support in phase 2 to those that had already won the competition in phase 1. It was felt that funding grantees from within the existing cohort was appropriate, given that the original country selection criteria still held, and in light of TTI's rationale as a long-term institutional capacity development programme.

A number of lessons learnt from the experience of phase 1 were identified which, combined with the findings of the external evaluation and valuable inputs from the EC, grantees and other stakeholders, have been instrumental in steering the design and strategy of phase 2 approach. Thus, at the programme level, prominent lessons that informed the phase 2 approach included the following: the need to preserve the regional diversity of the cohort, the importance of further encouraging and catalysing peer-learning and regional collaboration, the acknowledged value and benefits of core support (strongly buttressed by the results of the external evaluation), and an imperative to further improve the suite of monitoring tools based on the varied and enriched understanding of what 'success' meant to different grantees and donors.

It was also decided that the support to grantees that were unable to fully benefit from participation in the programme and experienced difficulties in their leadership and governance—despite the efforts of programme staff—be discontinued. In

a few cases, phase 2 support was made contingent on achievement of certain specific milestones by midway through the phase. As a result, 11 of the 12 Latin American TTI grantees were chosen to receive support for a further five years.

Programme monitoring

The provision of core support had an element of trust in organizations and organization building, no matter how rigorous the process of selection of the think tanks was. It was critical to maintain a balance between detailed monitoring for accountability purposes on the one hand and allowing enough flexibility and space for think tanks to know and exercise real ownership in the use of the core support on the other. Considerable efforts have, therefore, gone into thinking strategically and then designing and refining the multiple tools to monitor progress both of the think tanks' use of core grant and of the programme results.

The TTI's vision of promoting the production and use of high-quality evidence to inform and influence policy-making is also reflected in its programming. The initiative's monitoring and learning tools are premised on collecting evidence on performance to be utilized both by the grantees and TTI to address accountability needs of both as well as to learn from the data to tweak objectives and programme design in real time. It has also been used to inform other funders already engaged in, or interested in undertaking, organizational strengthening efforts.

Grantee-level tools

At the start of each phase, a set of long-term, organizational change objectives across the three pillars of TTI's support were negotiated and agreed to with each think tank for the duration of that phase, that is, five years. These were tailored to the specific needs and ambitions of each grantee. The objectives were then broken down into annual work plans with clear milestones. These helped the think tanks periodically assess their own progress towards the set objectives. The approach was designed to be flexible enough to allow think tanks to re-evaluate priorities and respond to changing demands within their national policy contexts over the course of the programme. The tailored objectives thus formed the basis for the assessment of progress and improvement at the individual think tank level.

The monitoring tools to collect data against these objectives were designed to help not just generate evidence on performance but also help make self-assessments and reflect on the progress made year on year. These included the following:

- 1. The annual technical and financial reports:** These enabled data gathering for the purposes of monitoring progress made towards achieving the tailored objectives, managing risks from implementation and designing of the work plans and budgets for the following year.
- 2. The annual monitoring questionnaire (AMQ):** This collected grantee-level data around the common indicators outlined in the TTI Results Framework, identified after extensive consultations with grantees, TTI staff, IDRC's in-house evaluation experts and donors. In phase 2, this monitoring instrument was revised to include a smaller number of indicators that were more closely aligned with what grantees themselves and the programme found useful in informing their budget-allocation choices over time.
- 3. Institutional monitoring visits:** These underpinned the 'trust factor' of the core funding relationship built with the think tanks over the years. The annual monitoring visits enabled TTI programme officers to formally visit grantee organizations and take stock of progress towards the objectives with the think tanks themselves. These visits provided in-depth, critical feedback on performance and allowed for the sharing of lessons from other similar think tanks on how they responded to challenges and opportunities emerging within

their national policy contexts. These conversations, underpinned by the data collected in the technical and financial reports and the AMQ, formed the basis for honest, if sometimes difficult, conversations.

Programme-level tools

1. **Programme snapshot:** Limited to the implementation of phase 1 of the programme, the snapshot provided an overview of programme performance across four main areas, including grantee progress, grantee spending, a newsfeed of grantee activities and TTI spending, showing the annual progress on spending against the budget by line item. As all data for the snapshot were available from regular TTI monitoring tools, this required no additional data collection. In phase 2, the information they contained was compiled on an ‘as needed’ basis for particular organizations, rather than annually for the whole programme.
2. **TTI technical and financial reports to donors:** The technical and financial reports for TTI as a programme were sent annually to funders using the same common technical reporting framework that was agreed upon by all funders in phase 1. The technical report provided an overview of TTI’s programme activities over the year, progress towards the implementation of the programme in relation to the Results Framework and to the annual work plan reviewed by the EC, lessons learned over the year and challenges ahead.

Learning tools

1. **Grantee scorecard:** The grantee scorecard included self-assessments by grantees as well as assessments by the programme officers in the form of numeric scores on progress made towards yearly milestones within each tailored objective. Scores were allocated to each milestone and to each tailored objective as a whole. This scoring mechanism allowed the programme to scale up the analysis of grantee progress at country, regional and cohort levels. These scores were shared back with the think tanks in order to help them track progress, and as a basis for identifying capacity development needs.
2. **Peer review:** The peer review generated a score for up to four research papers produced by each grantee. This review, conducted by external reviewers, was undertaken for all grantees at the beginning of phase 1, then towards the end of phase 1 and finally towards the end of phase 2. A sample of grantees were reviewed in the second, third and fourth years with the intent of having two data points for each grantee in phase 2, and four data points overall. The peer review exercise was designed to track grantee progress in the area of research quality. The outcomes of peer reviews undertaken in phase 1 informed each think tank’s phase 2-tailored objectives related to research quality. As is customary, peer review scores and feedback were shared back with the grantee think tanks to help them strengthen their research quality processes.
3. **Policy community survey (PCS):** PCS is a perception survey that was administered to a wide variety of policy stakeholders in each country where TTI was active. Targeted respondents included senior-level policy-makers (both elected politicians and unelected bureaucrats), media, civil society and union leaders, and other researchers and academics. PCS was designed with three objectives in mind. First, it was intended to shed light on the nature of the demand for research by the wider policy community within which the selected think tanks operate and to capture perceptions of each think tank’s contribution to national policy processes. Second, it provided a basis for reflection by each think tank on its own performance as seen through the eyes of its key constituents. This, it was hoped, would help them identify critical organizational capacity needs that required attention. For instance, if respondents indicated a poor awareness of a think tank’s work, this was a sign that the think tank in question should invest more in connecting with and engaging the stakeholders who were supposed to be the consumers of its research. Finally, it was felt that PCS would capture shifts or broad

changes in the policy community in a particular country over time, and by extension serve as a basis to judge the extent to which each think tank is perceived to have adapted to those changes. PCS was administered at the beginning of and towards the end of phase 1, and again in the final year of phase 2, allowing for longitudinal comparisons of change in the policy contexts within and across countries.

Programme evaluation

Over the two phases of TTI, independent, external evaluations were commissioned twice—a mid-term summative evaluation at the end of phase 1 and an accompaniment evaluation, which began at the start of phase 2 as a way to inform ongoing implementation of the initiative. Key lessons from this independent, external evaluation of phase 1, applicable to the programme globally and not just in Latin America, indicated that the TTI model of support has provided compelling results across its key areas of support to think tanks, that is, research quality, policy engagement and communication, and organizational performance. For instance, it found that most think tanks invested in improved research capacity through staff training, investments in analytical software and improved internal peer review systems as a result of this long-term funding. It also found strong evidence of increased research breadth and depth among funded think tanks, and more regular publications.

Several lessons from this phase 1 evaluation informed the design of phase 2 of TTI and helped to set its implementation priorities. The following were some of these lessons:

- 1. Collaboration:** The phase 1 evaluation highlighted that while think tanks often work on similar themes, pooling and scaling this work through collaboration was not always feasible due to resource and capacity constraints. TTI recognized this issue towards the end of phase 1 and made subsequent funding available that required think tanks to collaborate on multi-country or regional projects, build targeted research capacities, seed new areas of thematic research and strengthen wider networks with non-TTI partners.
- 2. Data collection:** The evaluation in phase 1 highlighted the need to focus on the collection of better data on policy engagement and outreach of think tanks. Monitoring tools were accordingly modified at the beginning of phase 2.
- 3. Design of the capacity-building component:** The evaluation also raised questions about the extent to which targeted, supplemental capacity development support in phase 1 was adequately needs-based. As a result, phase 2 followed more of a demand-led approach, with the intention of increasing ownership by the think tanks of the modality and better linking of these activities to the think tanks' strategic objectives. This also resulted in increased engagement of local service providers and allowed for think tanks themselves, where they had the demonstrated capacity, to get involved in delivering this supplemental technical assistance.
- 4. Cohort selection and flexibility in implementation:** The evaluators confirmed the validity of selecting the original think tank cohort and the diversity in terms of their size, age, thematic expertise and the regional spread that resulted. They also confirmed the value of the open and flexible approach in defining what the three pillars of the initiative (research quality, policy engagement and communications, and organizational performance) looked like for each organization, as this accommodated the different national contexts. In turn, this made the organizational strengthening objectives more relevant for each organization and aided the learning process on how best to use core and technical support. The same approach was, therefore, adopted in phase 2.

On core funding: use, size, ownership and long-term sustainability use

As also highlighted by the evaluators at the end of phase 1, core funding has played a critical role in the strengthening of think tanks. The long-term, non-earmarked and predictable nature of ‘core’ funding, combined with principles of flexibility, ownership and a focus on both accountability and learning for the TTI and the grantees, has enabled a cohort of Latin American think tanks to make a step change in the way ¹⁶³ organizations work. For instance, assuring research quality, implementing prudent financial and human resources practices, resourcing policy engagement and communications teams, and undertaking strategic planning exercises at set intervals are now a core part of the business of grantee think tank management.

The phase 2 evaluation reports highlight the links among core grants, think tanks’ independence and strategic planning, leadership and governance, and how they are positioned for influencing policy and practices within given contexts.

Think tanks’ credibility to work in contested political spaces stems from their ability to remain independent. While how think tanks defined what independence meant varied—from the ability to set their own research agenda independent of donor and/or government priorities to the ability to maintain an impartial, evidence-based stance in political debates—core funding played a crucial role in helping the organizations define this sense of independence and confidence for themselves. Closely connected to this was the positioning of think tanks, or their ability to influence policies within the given context. We observed that both independence and positioning were significantly driven by the investments made in strategic planning processes, strengthening thematic leadership practices, and having in place organizational structures and systems that were fit for the purpose.

Size

There has been some discussion on what constitutes the right amount of core funding in proportion to the think tanks’ organizational budgets. In the absence of any preceding evidence and guidelines, we decided to provide typically one-third of the total organizational budget as core grants. This was based on the principle that the core grant support should be large enough to enable the think tanks to make a transformative difference in their organizational effectiveness and yet small enough to not make them dependent on this core grant in the long run. There were arguable important exceptions to this thumb rule, where a small think tank needed a larger dose to overcome critical challenges as identified in institutional assessment reports, or where the organization’s budget was too large for TTI to meet the thumb rule without compromising on the quality of support to many other smaller and younger think tanks. Overall, despite the thumb rule, the decision was based on institutional assessment reports—areas of identified and expressed (by think tanks) strengthening—as well as the TTI team’s assessment of critical factors needing support for a transformative change. On balance, this approach based on the principle of optimum support seems to have worked well.

Ownership

Another important nuance in this approach that also worked well is worth noting. The think tanks were allowed to distribute the total grant spread over two multi-year instalments (of five years each) in the manner that they thought best but after having to make a persuasive case to TTI. Some think tanks chose to front-load their grant distribution, while some others back-loaded this. Many were comfortable with an equal distribution over the grant period. This flexibility and assurance of being able to draw down their total grant in a way most useful to them was a source of

163 Report available at <http://www.thinktankinitiative.org/blog/new-findings-tti-evaluators> (accessed on 17 August 2018).

tremendous confidence to the think tanks. But it was not an unfettered freedom they enjoyed—they had to make a persuasive case to be able to carry forward, or defer, expenses. Annual monitoring visits by TTI programme officers combined with regular conversations during the year played an important role in this mechanism working seamlessly.

An interesting observation from the initial year of TTI grant making relates to the challenges many think tanks faced in drawing up an independent set of objectives for the entire grant period as was required of them. Several think tanks realized that the process was challenging because for many of the executive directors, handling a TTI core grant was a ‘first-in-their-lifetime’ experience, while for several others, there was little existing organizational mechanism to develop a set of grant objectives that was owned by the entire organization—from governing board members and directors to research staff as well as administration, human resources, communications, library and IT staff. The process of setting up such mechanisms and getting them to function was reported as an important organizational strengthening by many think tanks. Most think tanks could do it in months, but few took longer.

From our experience, and from think tanks’ reports, we know how they have transformed themselves not only as a result of the use of core funding but also due to the processes that have been set in place to handle the grant’s objective—setting and organizational ownership of such objectives for core grants.

Long-term sustainability

Would this flush of core grants over a decade make them sustainable forever? While the core grants have made them stronger, more effective, more confident, more credible and independent, organizations require sustainable sources of such funding to be able to maintain similar levels of credibility and effectiveness. Decade-long TTI core grants have transformed the business of think tanks in the cohort—it has propelled them into a higher orbit of effectiveness, organizational efficiency, influence, credibility and strategic positioning. However, we have argued at multiple forums on the need for strengthening research ecosystems and enhanced public funding for policy research which is a public good. This highlights the fact that to ensure longer sustainability of think tanks, it is not enough to strengthen the think tanks’ capacities alone; this requires investments in the ecosystem within which think tanks work. Indeed, our efforts to create awareness on the need for a vibrant national research ecosystem for think tank sustainability were drawn from our early learning in the TTI programme.

On programme tools, including evaluation

TTI’s data collection tools were designed to encourage the grantees’ use of evidence and data generated in planning for their own organizational journeys. As a matter of fact, the processes of institutional assessments were reported by many think tanks as very useful in helping them put in place organizational systems and processes as knowledge management system as well as management information system (MIS) tools at the organizational levels.

In the case of the use of the peer review process, a standard tool to assess research quality of academic products, however, the tool did not successfully translate as a means to map research quality of think tanks’ products. Grantees typically submitted research outputs that were already published or completed, which meant feedback could not be incorporated into the outputs themselves. Further, peer review proved to be an imperfect tool for measuring non-academic products like policy briefs or reports, as reviewers found it difficult to judge these outputs on grounds other than academic rigour. Moreover, think tanks themselves frequently operated with different priorities and different quality principles, which meant they often put greater weight on factors such as accessibility and timeliness of research products rather than purely on academic rigour. These differences reflect broader debates, both about the

different ways of measuring research quality in individual policy research outputs and the challenges of measuring improvements in organizational research quality.

The global programme evaluation was a major learning tool for TTI to understand and learn systematically about the impact of core funding on think tanks' organizational performance and subsequently their contribution towards better informed policy-making processes as a result of such strengthening. With in-depth case studies from the Latin American region included in the report¹⁶⁴, the evaluation provided both a helpful feedback on the programme's ongoing implementation in the region and a valuable basis for learning for those case study organizations. The evaluation methodology was also able to reaffirm more rigorously what programme officers judged intuitively through their work.

On balancing learning and accountability within think tanks

While TTI has been successful in helping translate core funding to improve internal and external accountability systems, particularly with regard to human resources and financial systems management, strategic planning exercises and research quality management processes, it is less clear how this has helped transform think tanks into hubs with significant expertise on knowledge management to promote learning on themes. The think tanks worked on multiple themes within their own organizations and linking data and evidence across themes and over time would have enhanced the quality of research to support policy and practice.

However, think tanks focused on the use of core and complementary support to set up and strengthen accountability systems and process for much of the TTI period and less so on transforming into learning organizations with strong knowledge management systems in place. This is reflected in the second interim report of the evaluators, which, for instance, has recommended that in future, think tanks should focus on developing more analytical narratives describing their organization's conceptual and strategic positioning rather than the instrumental use of their stories of impact narratives. An organizational structure focused on learning as a key goal would have been able to use the data being produced to do just that.

This again brings an important issue to the fore. Given the contextual constraints within which think tanks grow, and do so in stages, balancing the accountability and learning functions would require resourcing over a longer-term time frame than the TTI's 10 years.

On the programme officer accompaniment model

Grant-making is both an art and a science. The approach to grant-making that IDRC adopts in its programming is known as the 'grants-plus' model, which includes technical expertise provided by programme officers in addition to the financial grants provided for projects. In the case of TTI, programme officers provided active support to each institution in shaping their objectives, often acting as sounding boards to provide critical, objective and constructive inputs through their development journey. Such inputs were grounded not just in the technical expertise and training of the programme officers but also knowledge of the changing dynamics of the ecosystems within which think tanks worked. This approach is in sharp contrast to many other funders who restrict their engagement strictly to administering and monitoring the grant or those that tend to be very directive in the way the projects are conceptualized, designed and delivered. In the case of TTI, each grant was administered separately, customized to the specific requirements of the think tank as articulated by the think tanks, combined with objective inputs provided by the programme officers.

Capacity-building grants deal with sensitive issues such as organizational leadership, governance and people

164 Final Evaluation of the Think Tank Initiative: <http://www.thinktankinitiative.org/blog/final-evaluation-think-tank-initiative>

management and are premised on relationships based on principles of trust and ownership. For the TTI programme officers, this required balancing the responsibilities around grant management in the three support areas and respecting each think tank's decision-making sovereignty around these sensitive issues early on in the implementation of the initiative.

There is no single recipe to create the deep sense of trust and ownership required in this case, but it became clear very early in the programme that both these would be crucial to the successful implementation of the initiative. Monitoring visits by programme officers, therefore, focused on working with the research, non-research, management, leadership and governance staff at think tanks to get their buy-in for the programme, and establishing mutual respect and space for honest conversations and ideas. This was not a time-limited process—trust building for honest feedback remained a process all through the programme's implementation phases for both the think tanks and the programme officers.

This relationship served the achievement of programme objectives as well as the purpose of strengthening the grantee think tanks themselves. It took time, but eventually we learnt what is now strongly confirmed in literature¹⁶⁵: deep and trusted interpersonal relationship based on mutual learning and appreciation is key to policy influence.

As informed interlocutors and trusted critics, we were frequently asked to share our insights and reflections with think tanks to help them perform better, set up bespoke institutional research quality assurance mechanisms, identify and address their areas of vulnerabilities and challenges as they grew rapidly,¹⁶⁵ help them mobilize resources¹⁶⁶ for financial sustainability, or engage their governing boards on ways to improve governance and organizational leadership, and redesign organizational structures and systems for stronger organizations. These relationships developed across think tanks created a huge source of social capital for the IDRC and TTI's funders as well as the think tanks themselves—these will prove to be an amazing asset that will long outlive the programme's life. While the extent and depth of engagement with the think tanks varied by institution, the 'soft' power of persuasion, developed through deep and regular engagement, enabled us to achieve the outcomes of TTI grant better and more effectively. The same power also helped us in the programme to tweak our programming approach and modify our modalities and tools better and quicker to suit the needs and interests of the think tanks as we learnt from them while walking the journey together with them.

However, by the very nature of such human transactions, much of this relationship remained undocumented but constituted an important pillar of programme achievement and think tank effectiveness. It required playing multiple roles at different times—that of task masters to ensure deadlines and standards of grant reporting were met, as well as that of informed knowledge interlocutors, objective counsels, respected peers and trusted confidants as needed. The TTI's first interim evaluation report of June 2017¹⁶⁷ also highlighted the important 'coaching' role of programme officers and reported their valuable 'nudging' role in the region. The second interim report went on to say that:

The accompaniment role [of the POs] in ... [strategic planning] ... was particularly appreciated and there are initial signs that this may help the grantees in reflecting, over time, about the ways that a business model should bridge concerns about resource mobilization with overall strategic planning.¹³

165 See <http://www.ids.ac.uk/news/social-relationships-are-at-the-heart-of-knowledge-for-development> (accessed on 17 August 2018).

166 <http://www.thinktankinitiative.org/blog/adolescence-adulthood-managing-growth-think-tanks> (accessed on 17 August 2018).

167 Referred to as 'secret ingredient' by a TTI programme staff in her blog. Available at: <http://www.thinktankinitiative.org/blog/programme-officers-tti%E2%80%99s-secret-ingredient> (accessed on 17 August 2018).; Christoplos, Pain, Kluykens, Sagasti, and Hedqvist, *External Evaluation of TTI Phase Two*

Continuing the journey

Over nearly a decade, TTI has demonstrated that think tanks can, and do, influence policies and practice in their countries, regions and internationally. We know that research and evidence foster vibrant policy landscapes and accelerate development progress, and IDRC has for long been working to get knowledge into the hands of those who can use it. The TTI programme was a bold step in that direction; bold because at the time when TTI was conceptualized, there was precious little donor funding available as core support for think tanks' strengthening. The role of think tanks in development processes, such as in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was clearly recognized and supported by TTI.¹⁶⁸ TTI has remarkably demonstrated that long-term development research is done and leveraged best when think tanks have the bandwidth to define their long-term research agenda independently and have the confidence to resource this decision in a sustainable manner. TTI has not only strengthened think tanks but has also equally contributed to strengthening the research ecosystem through its support to and engagement with national research granting councils, thus building the knowledge landscape as well as creating conditions for sustainable production of good-quality, collaborative social science research, as in Asia. As contributors in the SDGs process, many think tanks in low- and middle-income countries have combined rigorous research with locally rooted citizen and policy engagement. They have bridged the local with the global, connected citizens with decision-makers and generated creative yet grounded solutions.

A lot has changed since TTI started in 2009. A dramatic set of political and economic events globally has brought rapid changes to the national, regional and international policy landscape. In many countries, donor and government ideologies and priorities have changed significantly, risks of increased fragility from climatic shocks have increased and global governance that seemed relatively assured now seems less certain with major political upheavals in a wide range of contexts, both traditional donor and recipient countries alike. At the same time, in many quarters, the value of evidence as a key input towards informed policy- and decision-making is increasingly recognized. 'No public policy can be developed, no market interaction can occur, and no statement in the public sphere can be made, that does not refer explicitly or implicitly to the findings and concepts of social and human sciences.'¹⁵ The experience of TTI has shown that support for evidence-based policy-making by strengthening think tanks can help achieve inclusive, transparent and rigorous action around development challenges as defined by the SDGs in a more sustainable manner and through organizations that are resilient to tough times and challenging institutional contexts.

168 One example of this initiative is the 'Southern Voice' network of 48 think tanks from around the globe that was catalysed by the TTI programme to bring evidence-based voice from the global south into agenda setting for SDGs. See <http://southernvoice.org> (accessed on 17 August 2018).

THE LEGACY OF THE PROGRAM

THINK TANK INITIATIVE IN LATIN AMERICA

CASE STUDIES



BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



Participating *Think Tanks*

