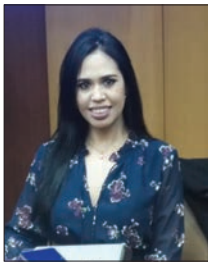




Science Diplomacy and Development in Honduras: Policies and Practices



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Introduction

It is a fact that Science Diplomacy (SD) has increasingly acquired more relevance today, even though, *Science Diplomacy is not new – it has a long history, since the end of the Cold War* (Amb. Saurabh Kumar, 2011). *Science Diplomacy is the use of scientific collaboration among nations to address the common problems facing the 21st century and to build constructive international partnership. There are many ways that scientists can contribute to this process.* (Fedoroff, 2009, p. 15).

The relationship between science and diplomacy can be articulated as three concepts– diplomacy for science; science in diplomacy; and science for diplomacy (or simply “science diplomacy”). Within this framework, science is considered in its broadest sense to encompass not only scientific research but also the whole range of international scientific cooperation activities including education and capacity building, as well as the people involved in the enterprise, who care involved in these activities. There is an association between science and international cooperation, in fact, one of the areas is Science in diplomacy, that provide enough knowledge and understanding regarding Science and Technology, required to equip international decision-makers. In looking at current challenges, such as those related to global health, climate change, weapons proliferation and economic growth as well as innovation, it must be acknowledged that science, technology and knowledge have a central role to play in providing possible solutions.

Since 2010, Honduras has been making efforts regarding the promotion of innovation in the country and increase Science in Diplomacy, in support with International Cooperation and the research community. As a first step, the National Planning System of Honduras established a regulatory framework which includes a Country Vision (2010-2038) and

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the National Plan (2010-2022), under the Legislative Decree No.286-2009, which constitutes one of the most notable efforts of public management, model based on a planning system with long-term vision and based on the commitment of various sectors of the country (Government of Honduras. 2009).

The 'Country Vision' integrates four (4) national objectives for 'a Honduras, without extreme poverty, educated and healthy, with consolidated social welfare systems; that develops in democracy, with security and without violence; a productive country, generating opportunities and jobs, that sustainably uses its resources and reduces its environmental vulnerability; and a modern, transparent, responsible, efficient and competitive country' (National Planning System 2009).

The consolidation of these objectives includes transversal topics talking about cooperation programmes and projects. In this matter, Honduras is also highly committed with the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. As a result of this process, it presented the first Voluntary National Report (VNR) on the High-Level Political Forum in 2016, and will present the second VNR in 2020. In this endeavour, international organisations, NGOs and private sector have been working together with the government of Honduras, in order to align the SDGs with the National Planning process. The United Nations System, through programmes and projects, coordinated by government of Honduras have worked together to operationalise the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The framework facilitates in integrated actions to design a road map, based on a country analysis and important international aspects, like the Paris Declaration to make Development Co-operation More Effective (United Nations 2017)

Honduras, as a signatory of the Paris Declaration and member of the Global Alliance for Effective Development Cooperation (AGCED), has participated in the different monitoring rounds that seek to measure progress in effective implementation of the agreed cooperation. The fulfillment of these commitments depends on the country as well as the cooperating partners and other development actors. The two previous rounds

of assessments, have reported some progress of the country related to alignment with the principles of the agreement (United Nations 2017). Honduras is strengthening the international scientific cooperation to build national capacities; some of them include bilateral cooperation with Canada, and multilateral cooperation, facilitated by the United Nations and European Commission, for creating the first National Cooperation Management Platform (PGC).

The use of country systems allows development programmes to be integrated better with expenditure plan, reducing duplication of effort and increasing positive effects of development cooperation, in terms of resources and the sustainability of activities as well as outcomes. At the same time, it must facilitate new relations with different actors, to increase national capacities, with the support of bilateral and multilateral alliances as well as development banking (Finance for Development Forum. 2019).

Science and Innovation in Honduras

The President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernandez launched the National Vision in 2009; He asserted: *'That we need a modern, transparent, responsible, efficient and competitive country....'* (National Planning System, 2009). *As quoted by Fedoroff (2009, P.5):*

"International scientific cooperation motivated by advancing science and is typically a win-win proposition, with private sector or civil society partners collaborating to produce, for example, better medications, cleaner water, improved hygiene or more disease-resistant crops"

The government recognises the need to promote, guide and encourage scientific, technological and innovation advancement, to formulate medium and long-term plans that boost the economic and social development of the country. For this reason, There were establishment of the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation - SENACIT, and consequently, the Honduran Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation – IHICIETI, (La Gaceta. 2014).

As rightly stated, the central purpose of science diplomacy is often to use science to promote a state's foreign policy goals or inter-state interests (Fedoroff., 2009). The institution, IHICIETI drives the efforts

of promoting, developing and strengthening the structure of Science, Technology and Innovation Systems of the country, through steering the regulatory framework. The vision of the institute reflects and encourages the growth and foment science and Technology, by financing studies and research; incentives such as awards, scholarships, grants, or any other recognition are given that boost scientific production, technology and innovation.

The institute is also committed to promote the culture of scientific research and technological development in the country, and support the applied research with the aim to find out optimal solutions to general problems that are facing society (HICIETI 2019), with this in mind, it foment interest of young Honduran students and scientists, and they are encouraged to participate in the promotion of the science in the country.

In the light of all this, some successful case studies can be enlisted that have been under development since 2014. For example, the Photonic cranial-spinal neuronal regeneration system (2014), the Implementation of an automated center based on CAD design and 3D printing (2014), study of the photonic band of neuronal regeneration and construction of a new prototype (2014), Construction of water harvesting prototypes in the semi-desert area of the El Paraíso department, municipalities of Texiguat and Liure (2015), Creation of Virtual and Mixed Reality Laboratory (2016), “Robotic Vehicle Recognition and Support for Firefighters and Bomb Squad” (2016), Use of Bacteriophora Heterhorabditis for the Biological Control of Pine Bark Weevil *Dendroctonus Frontalis* (2016), Design and Construction of Devices for Disabled Mobilization (2017), Platform for Administration and Control of Hospital Processes in Honduras (2017), among others (General Coordination Secretariat of Honduras. 2019).

Financing research projects with the purpose to foster the promotion of national talents is a task that the institute gives year by year, through the organisation of an important general Call for applied to Research Projects that generate knowledge to enrich the country’s scientific area, according national policies and it brings real solutions to the country problems. With the purpose of focusing

the efforts of the government, the institute has developed prospective studies and it has determined five important areas necessary to foster the technological and innovation development in the country: Materials Science, Energy and Environment, Electronic, Information Technologies and telecommunications and Biotechnology.

On the other hand, the institute works with international cooperation in order to establish portfolios of projects given by private and public sector for development scientific and technological area and mobilise national and international resources for financing science and technology actions. Throughout this time, the government of Honduras has invested around US\$ 230,000.00 in six launched Calls for scientific projects proposals.

Technological Progress and Governance

In accordance to the SDG 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions, Honduras’ commitment to implement the principles of Transparency and Accountability of International Cooperation and its participation in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). The country has strengthened the Cooperation Management Platform (PGC), which allows the management of cooperation to be made visible through the registration, monitoring and referencing of projects. Since 2011, the government of Honduras has been making efforts in this field. It initiated the investigation in the development of instruments for external transparency.

To begin, Honduras hired the company Development Gateway (DG), in order to map the technological challenge of the country, based in the Declaration of Paris of 2005 on Aid Effectiveness. It started a communication with the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who had already financed the implementation of the Platform in other countries, which consists of three stages: Diagnosis, Implementation and Institutional Support. The project was successful, with the support of, the government of Canada, European Commission (EC) and the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). The National Cooperation Management Platform promotes effective management of

development cooperation through the strengthening of dialogue and coordination among the actors involved in the management, administration, monitoring and evaluation of international cooperation funds.

Honduras as a member of the Global Alliance for effective cooperation for development, is the impeller of the principles that emanate from this alliance, ensuring that through the PGC, the principle of Transparency and Accountability is transferred to the National Plenary, including Official development assistance, as well as other cooperation modalities such as the Private Sector, South and Triangular. The PGC is beneficial for the country by providing transparency, efficiency, coordination, easy of analysis and decision making. The PGC also seeks to strengthen the capacity of the government, to align international assistance with country priorities and improve coordination and harmonisation among cooperators.

Honduras has accumulated and developed a set of lessons, experiences and knowledge in different sectoral areas, achieving willingness to share with other countries which have similar development conditions, geographical location, challenges and expectations. The thematic priorities of the projects reflected on the PGC are: Health, Education, Environmental Protection, Drought, Disaster Prevention, Security, Human Rights, Infrastructure, Science and Technology, Agro Development. All of these projects are developed by the private sector, whether based on their corporate social responsibility or as foundations, churches, Academies and / or Civil Society Organisations' in the country's development through the strengthening of communication channels and coordination with the public sector. The international cooperation in Honduras is moving forward with the active participation of different actors. It is achieving transparency and innovation, applying the IATI standards for Programmes and Projects at various stage of development cooperation (financing, implementation Etc.). There are currently 1,491 projects entered into the PGC, related to science and technology and allied areas.

Conclusion

Despite the progress we have made in recent years, much remains to be done. This includes challenges such as security, human rights, migration, gender equality, elimination of discrimination, and environmental sustainability, which are not unique to our country. However, our challenges are a part of the global agenda and have been identified and included in the Global Alliance. It is important to mention in this context that the qualification of Honduras as a low-middle income country is a recognition of our progress towards international and national priorities. It also places us in a narrower category of access to traditional cooperation.

To move ahead in this direction, the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action on financing for cooperation was adopted and the possibility of partnerships are being explored as per the Agenda. The country will develop financially, improve the national fiscal framework, expand the territorial vision of development, generate greater internal capacity in the public-private sectors, and incorporate ODS, among other benefits, which would boost science, technology and innovation in the country. With the implementation of The National Cooperation Management Platform, alternatives are being drawn to fulfill the aforementioned objectives.

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