



**EDUCO 2015-2018**

## STRATEGIC PLAN EVALUATION REPORT

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## Abbreviations :

**AECID:** Spanish International Development Agency (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo)

**CRSA:** Child Rights Situation Analysis

**PSC:** Policies and Standards Commissions

**ECHO:** European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

**OCS:** Organisational Culture Survey

**CRA:** Child Rights-based Approach

**MEAL:** Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

**C&A:** Children and adolescents

**CO:** Country office

**LPO:** Local partner organisation

**CSP:** Child Safeguarding Policy

**ISP:** Institutional Strategic Plan 2015-2018

**AOP:** Annual Operational Plan

**CP:** Country Plan

**SCC:** Suggestions, complaints and commendations

**TOC:** Theory of Organisational Change

For more details, the complete 2015-2018 Strategic Evaluation Report is available on our website:

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

# 1

## Context

**At Educo we have travelled a long way since we adopted the 2015-2018 Institutional Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup>** and the 2016-2019 Country Plans, which have guided our actions over the last few years and have enabled us to place the Child Rights-Based Approach at the heart of our organisation and build a new identity for ourselves. In 2019, we entered a transition period, coming to the end of the previous strategic cycle at the same time as defining the next one. Before starting this new cycle, we wanted to assess the work we have done over the last five years. This exercise of collectively evaluating our strategic documents is considered a key action for feeding into our new strategic, programmatic and organisational development planning. It is also an obligation we undertook in the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan itself to ourselves and to all the stakeholders involved in Educo's work.

The evaluation process took place between March and December 2019. During the second semester of the year the Country Plan evaluations were carried out which provide a base on which each country office can develop their own 2020-2025 Country Programmatic Framework as well as their 2020-2023 Organisational Development Plan.



Result of an online survey of the Educo teams - words which currently define Educo - The size of the text reflects how many times the same words were used and therefore illustrates the opinion trends.

<sup>1</sup> Effective until 2019, after being extended for one more year.





# 2

## Background

**We are a global development and humanitarian action NGO which has been working for more than 25 years in favour of children and in defence of their rights, especially the right to receive an equitable and quality education.**

**We work in Spain and in countries in Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal), America (Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua) and Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia<sup>2</sup>, India and the Philippines)** through social projects in which more than 410,000 children and 220,000 adults participate, which promote just and equitable societies which guarantee their rights and wellbeing.

We want a world in which all children fully enjoy their rights and a life of dignity.

We are part of ChildFund Alliance, one of the main international NGO coalitions focused on child protection and present in all five continents.

Our 2015-2018 Strategic Plan is based on six strategic objectives. On the one hand, it focuses on three strategic development objectives focusing on the Right to Education, Right to Protection and Governance. On the other, it establishes three organisational strategic objectives which we consider fundamental for achieving the above: the integration of the Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA), funding, visibility and networking.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Cambodia CP is managed by ChildFund Cambodia, representative of ChildFund Australia. Both are members of ChildFund Alliance and therefore have not participated in this strategic evaluation process.

**Here is a reminder of the six strategic objectives and goals from our 2015-2018 ISP:**

**1. Education: Children and adolescents exercise and enjoy their right to an equitable, transformative and quality education throughout their lives.**

- **Goal 1.1:** Right to education: The necessary conditions are achieved to ensure fundamental education for all without distinction, aimed at learning to be, to do, to know and to live together.
- **Goal 1.2:** Rights in education: Relevant, creative and inclusive teaching-learning processes are established that are student-centred and aimed at helping children to fully develop their personality, talents and capacities.
- **Goal 1.3:** Rights through education: An inclusive, critical and participatory education is promoted that fully respects human rights and continuously engages its community in the pursuit of more just societies.

**2. Protection: C&A enjoy their right to live in safe and protective environments.**

- **Goal 2.1:** Children live in an environment free from violence, mistreatment, negligence and family and community abuse.
- **Goal 2.2:** The incidence of child labour is reduced and all forms of child exploitation are eradicated.
- **Goal 2.3:** Children and adolescents are protected from natural disasters by increasing community resistance and resilience.

**3. Governance: C&A practice active citizenship within the framework of public systems that promote their rights.**

- **Goal 3.1:** States' (principal duty bearers) fulfil their duty to establish effective laws, policies and structures that guarantee children's rights.
- **Goal 3.2:** Citizens and civil society (secondary duty bearers) play an active role in building and monitoring public strategies to defend and promote child rights.
- **Goal 3.3:** Children and adolescents (rights holders) participate actively in public spaces to express their ideas, defend their rights and influence the decisions that concern them.

**4. Integration of a CRBA: The CRBA is integrated at all levels of the organisation.**

- **Goal 4.1:** Personal and professional development plans are established for staff, as well as internal processes and procedures that integrate the Child Rights-Based Approach.
- **Goal 4.2:** The work culture is oriented towards ensuring accountability at all levels, through the evaluation of processes and results and evidence-based decision making.

## 5. Funding: Economic sustainability is achieved in support of the organisation's mission

- **Goal 5.1:** Private funding is consolidated.
- **Goal 5.2:** Alliances and collaborations with companies and private foundations are established whose actions are coherent with our institutional principles.
- **Goal 5.3:** Funds from public sources are secured.

## 6. Visibility and networking: The organisation is a leader in the area of Children's Rights locally, nationally and internationally.

- **Goal 6.1:** The visibility and credibility of the organisation is enhanced.
- **Goal 6.2:** Efforts and the exchange of knowledge and experience are combined with other organizations to improve impact and learning.

**A central theme which operationalised the 2015-2018 ISP was the internal transformation process (Theory of Change - ToC) carried out by the organisation between 2016 and 2018.**

**The ToC process emerged from the decision to focus on impact measurement and the search for a coherent and effective “programmatic tool” to carry out our mission.**

**Inspired by the U-Theory<sup>3</sup>**, approach, this process proposed collectively reflecting on what the organisation is and does, contemplating the meaning of social change in relation to our mission and finding answers to the question of what value our action contributes. In summary, the organisation opted for this process in order to contemplate the components of the 2015-2018 ISP and to become an integral and connecting element of the multiple efforts and initiatives carried out until now.



3 [Link U-Theory Definition](#)

## 3

## Evaluation objectives and criteria

The main objective of this strategic evaluation was to carry out a participative assessment of the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan and the 2016-2019 Country Plans with the aim of obtaining a variety of useful evidence for constructing Educo's new strategic cycle together and extracting the lessons learned for ongoing improvement of what we "are" and "do".

To carry out this strategic evaluation the five known CAD (Comité de Ayuda al Desarrollo - OCDE) criteria<sup>4</sup> were taken into account: impact, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and relevance.

## 4

## Methodology and limits

We carried out an internal evaluation of our 2015-2018 ISP using a participative methodology with two types of information sources: primary sources (online survey, focus groups, interviews, Country Plan evaluation reports, organisational culture survey) and secondary sources (project evaluation reports, institutional accountability documents, etc.) in order to collect more qualitative than quantitative data.

Due to certain internal limits (absence of a "usable" baseline, very general indicators with a wide range of interpretation possibilities, lack of homogenous frameworks for measuring in the countries and head office) we decided to focus on an evaluation which would allow us to extract collective and institutional "self-learnt" lessons and focus methodologically on the development of a qualitative survey of the perceptions of the different groups of people involved in the work developed by Educo.

---

<sup>4</sup> The version previous to the update approved in December 2019 was taken into account.



## Main achievements and lessons learned from the strategic objectives

Overall, the focus on the areas of education, protection and governance has been successful. It has enabled us to focus our programmatic strategy, generate know-how and obtain recognition in these areas. However, the ability of the organisation to generate impact in these three areas has been unequal. Additionally, the fact that each area is treated separately has reduced Educo's ability to achieve greater impact.

The Education Strategy has provided a clear framework for action. However, our education efforts have almost always focused on the formal education system. In the future, we must place greater emphasis on working with children and adolescents who are outside the school system. Also, we will work to place more emphasis on early childhood, the transition from primary to secondary education and ensure access to inclusive, critical, safe, and equitable education.

As an organisation, we have made significant progress in protection issues, especially considering that in 2015 we did not have tangible internal knowledge in this field. The elaboration of the Child Safeguarding Policy and its implementation have been key results in this area, as well as the addition of experts in protection to the Educo teams. Additionally, we understand education as a safeguarding measure and specific safeguarding projects are being carried out. Even so, we need to advocate for safeguarding in a more integrated way and continue to strengthen our capacities at both programmatic and organisational levels.

Despite our efforts to carry out relevant projects in child-friendly accountability, as well as children's councils, governance is the strategic area in which we have made the least progress. The absence of a clear strategy and the lack of experts in this field means that it makes it harder to make more progress in our governance work. In the future, we will need to emphasise child participation by promoting their own agency. To do this, we will need to increase our knowledge about what children value in their lives and share and use this information better and more extensively.

We need a more long-term and impact-oriented approach to our work, so we need to develop greater capacity to measure the impact we generate and our progress in pursuit of the results to be achieved. Therefore, it is necessary to have better, more focused common and global indicators, to work with a results-oriented approach, and to promote accountability both internally and externally, with the aim of improving

our doing and continuous learning. This will enable us to make evidence-based decisions to improve social impact. Moreover, a greater emphasis on knowledge generation will help Educo become more impactful.

The gender in development approach is not sufficiently integrated at the programmatic and organizational levels. We must place greater emphasis on strengthening the capacities of teams and partner organizations in the gender in development approach, promoting gender mainstreaming and strengthening our work empowering girls and women.

The commitment we made in 2015 to develop stronger partnerships and to participate in alliances and networks has been a success, since it has allowed us to collaborate and co-create with other civil society organizations and public administrations and has fostered mutual learning. However, we must place even more emphasis on the multi-stakeholder approach (Educo, private companies, civil society, public administration), with a special emphasis on collaboration and working together with the private sector. In addition, we will need to promote more global consortia with key international actors.

Regarding our advocacy efforts, Educo has made tremendous progress over the last five years. Although we have struggled to develop a coherent, global strategy as well as to generate specific position papers, we have started to develop internal expertise and carry out important advocacy efforts, such as the global campaign Joining Forces. Most importantly, over the last five years we have grown more and more convinced of the critical, strategic need to further strengthen our advocacy and public engagement capacities. In the future, we want to be even more ambitious with our work in the area of advocacy at community, national, regional and global levels.

Over the last five years, we have increased our ability to obtain and successfully manage public, institutional funds from prestigious funders such as AECID and ECHO. However, to increase the organization's sustainability we will need to further diversify our funds, continue to improve the overall quality of our programmatic efforts and increase their focus in order to be more efficient as well as to have more impact. We will also need to consider and adapt to the evolving complexity of the contexts we work in where we face rapid change and security issues.

## 6

## Main lessons learned from the implementation strategies

The internal appropriation of the child rights-based approach over the last five years is one of the elements that stands out the most. Although there are still differences between the level of appropriation and implementation of the approach between the different country offices as well as head office, there is no doubt that Educo has become a child rights INGO. In the coming years, we will build upon this capital and continue to deepen the child rights-based approach at both levels: the programmatic and the organizational one, and also explore and deepen its relationship with the child wellbeing approach.

During this strategic period, all the CO have incorporated work with LPO in their intervention models, so we now have three types of intervention: direct intervention, mixed intervention and intervention through LPO. Increasingly the type of relationship for partnerships is being understood in the same way, as a balanced and co-creative relationship.

The development of new institutional policies enabled the implementation of our strategy and in particular of the Child Rights-based Approach. The policies have been shared, appropriated and applied in a heterogeneous manner and not at the same pace in head office and the CO. However, various policies like, for example, the Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP), the Suggestions, Complaints and Commendations Policy (SCC), the Gender Policy and the Environmental Policy have taken effect and their implementation is strengthening the quality of our actions.





## 7

# Conclusions and recommendations

## Overall

- The impact criteria could not be analysed in depth. Indeed, in the absence of a valid institutional baseline, we were unable to measure the impact of our actions comprehensively. However, we do have evidence of impact from project evaluations and the perceptions shared by our project participants, external local stakeholders and our local partner organisations.
- The objectives and goals formulated in the 2015-2018 ISP were valued as too ambitious for such a short period of time (4 years). It is recommended that for the next strategic cycle more realistic ones are formulated that are measurable and have a longer time frame.
- Consolidating the application of the CRBA is recommended. Both at a programmatic and organisational level, differences were observed between head office and CO and between their integration in the programmatic and organisational activities. The differences in the levels of comprehension, application and integration of the SRBA between the regions can be analysed by the accompaniment and strengthening of the abilities on behalf of the regional coordinators both in Africa and America and the absence of a fixed regional figure in Asia. At head office, there has certainly not been as much appropriation due to differences in accompaniment and training between the different departments/directorates of the organisation.
- In order to make progress in the application of the CRBA, it would be necessary to advance in the definition and generation of mechanisms which enable more participation from children and young people in the governance of the organisation itself.
- Strengthening the visibility of our institutional policies is recommended in order to improve their implementation at all levels of the organisation.
- Despite highly substantial achievements in fundraising, the organisation requires a clearer and more coherent funding model to achieve greater sustainability. In this regard, it is recommended that a business plan be formulated and implemented with a view to intensifying the search for external funding and developing strategies for attracting local funds, as well as at the CO level, be they major donors or individual ones.

- Developing a strategy of learning communities which enables the capitalisation and sharing of achievements, good practise, political vision and positioning, among others.
- Consolidation of our collaborations with other local organisations in the medium term allows us to strengthen our role as a catalyst and our recognition as facilitators of social change.
- Integrating the gender-based approach in future strategic plans is recommended, it is a significant missing element from this ISP and as a consequence is also missing in this strategic evaluation.
- Strengthening our advocacy actions is recommended, based on the results obtained in our programs and projects. Equally, we should carry out more social research studies to support our advocacy campaigns.
- Strengthening internal communication in relation to strategic decision-making processes to achieve greater transparency and internal accountability.
- Improving communication and the creation of networks with relevant bodies and strengthening existing ones like ChildFund Alliance and the Joining Forces alliance through which we can consolidate our organisational positioning and contribute to the global agenda for the defence of children's rights and wellbeing.

### In relation to the 2015-2018 ISP Development Objectives

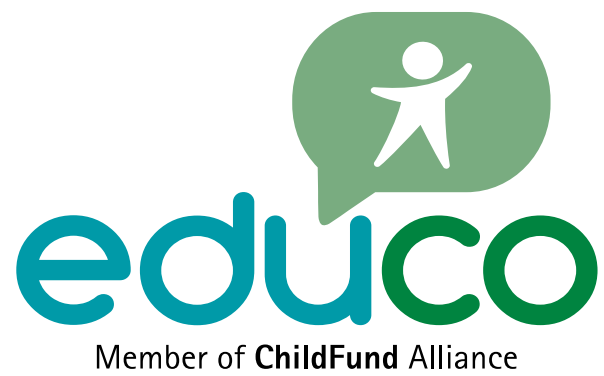
- Participation of C&A makes them more resilient and prepared to protect themselves. It is important that Educo continues to put efforts and resources into encouraging the participation of C&A in all of its actions. Above all, we believe that the active participation of the people involved in all phases of the project is essential to reduce any risk, since they are the ones who can best anticipate possible problems, obstacles or dangers.
- For good appropriation of the Child Safeguarding Policy and real implementation, resources are needed (time, people, training, etc.).
- The third strategic development objective, regarding Governance, is the one which has had a more sporadic implementation globally. Indeed, the lack of a strategy, experts and key positioning have not facilitated its progress.
- Strengthening the integration of protection processes within education processes taking into account that education activities are a means for protecting C&A.
- Although the foundations have been laid for holding governments accountable for greater advocacy actions, there is still much to be done in terms of local public policy implementation and budgeting.
- Incorporation of the gender and new masculinities approach in all program interventions needs to be strengthened.
- Being able to measure the social impact<sup>5</sup> that we want to achieve with the child wellbeing approach is recommended.
- One suggestion is that Education for Development projects be developed with the aim of linking actions in Spain and projects in other countries, and advocacy work be carried out promoting a culture of peace and awareness of global citizenship.
- Making the most of our successful pilot experiences in programs and projects as a differentiating factor and replicable in other CO.

---

<sup>5</sup> Our mission: We work with children and their communities to promote more just and equitable societies which guarantee their rights and wellbeing.

## In relation to the Organisational Objectives in the 2015-2018 ISP

- More and improved analysis of the return on investments made at institutional level is recommended in order to improve our efficiency, effectiveness and internal accountability.
- Improved integration of our system for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) is recommended in the programming cycle for Educo programs and projects, which will allow us to systematise the lessons learned for ongoing improvement and be accountable to all the stakeholders we collaborate with throughout the life cycle of programs and projects.
- Improving systems for decision-making by encouraging more empowering leadership and making them more transparent.
- Improving internal accountability. Indeed, in all the evaluation activities (survey, Focus Groups) the lack of information and global vision and the lack of exchanges of and access to information at head office have been mentioned. This improvement would encourage constructive criticism and collective learning.
- Carrying out more systematic monitoring of the implementation of training plans is recommended and associating them with solid and empowering talent management, therefore encouraging the improvement of internal capacities.
- Creation of multidisciplinary teams at each stage of the project/program (formulation, implementation, evaluation) is recommended, as it helps to broaden the shared responsibility for the sustainability of the project/program in question.
- Further work is recommended to maintain the optimal balance between structural and activity/project costs.
- Encouraging economies of scale in the procurement of goods and services, for example by unifying procurement systems globally and respecting the local development of each country, is recommended.



900 535 238 | [www.educo.org](http://www.educo.org) | [f @educOONG](https://www.facebook.com/educOONG)  
[@educO\\_ONG](https://www.twitter.com/educO_ONG) | [@educO\\_ong](https://www.instagram.com/educO_ong)

