

Caribbean Regional Program Evaluation

Subject Description:

The Caribbean Regional Program intervened in several sectors and involved many people and organizations. The program gave priority to three themes: i) human resources development, ii) environmental management, iii) institutional strengthening for economic integration and trade development. From 1993/94 to 2002/03, CIDA invested close to half a billion dollars (C\$468.6 million) in its Commonwealth Caribbean program, through various mechanisms and channels. CIDA's bilateral program provided 76% of the resources (C\$355 million) and Partnership Branch 14% (C\$64.2 million). Based on more limited data, we estimate that Multilateral Programs contributed about 10% (C\$48.7 million) in recent years (1998-2002). CIDA's Caribbean Regional Development Programming Framework (CRDPF, 1993) favoured an increase in regional initiatives while acknowledging the diversity of national and sub-regional circumstances and the need to continue to address some issues at these levels. Over the whole period, the regional components of the Program accounted for 38% of the total (C\$135 million) divided equally between the CARICOM-regional component (C\$67.1 million) and the OECS sub-regional component (C\$68 million). Other major components of the program were direct support to countries: Jamaica, 31% (C\$110 million), Guyana, 18% (C\$64.5 million) and other countries, 13% (C\$45 million).

Evaluation Description:

This Synthesis Report of the Caribbean Regional Program Evaluation, was undertaken by Performance Review Branch. The evaluation was done in collaboration with the Commonwealth Caribbean Program Desk at CIDA and with the participation of CIDA representatives in the field in Jamaica, Guyana and Barbados. At headquarters, the evaluation team consulted staff of Canadian Partnership Branch and Multilateral Branch. The evaluation focused on CIDA's regional and subregional initiatives of the Commonwealth Caribbean from 1993 to 2003. It assessed the implementation of the Caribbean Regional Programming Framework (CRDPF), which was adopted in 1993. The evaluation team examined the program's relevance, coherence, efficiency and results, also its effectiveness, sustainability, and the lessons that we can learn from it. The methodology included a program profile, a documentation review, numerous interviews in Canada and in the field, and visits to regional organizations. Approximately two hundred persons were interviewed or otherwise contributed to the evaluation. The evaluation team visited Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St-Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis.

Major Findings:

When CIDA adopted the Caribbean Regional Framework in 1993, it was a new approach different from previous approaches that had been based mainly on local and national level interventions. Part of the reason for moving programming to the regional level was the looming resource cuts of the early-1990s but part was also the sincere belief that the countries of the Caribbean should cooperate regionally. The approach had some inherent risks, especially considering the long history of hesitations to integrate the economies of the region, and because of the weaknesses of the emerging set of regional institutions.

CIDA's bilateral program funded fourteen projects related to trade and economic integration, for a total expenditure of C\$37.3 million (29% of all expenditures). Funded projects included the CARICOM Regional Institutional Strengthening Project (CRISP), the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC), the Eastern Caribbean Economic Management Project (ECEMP), and the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery. CIDA has also provided important support to the private sector through the CPEC initiative.

CIDA's bilateral program funded eleven human resources development projects under the Caribbean regional program over the past decade, for a total value of C\$44 million (34% of all program expenditures). Generally speaking the projects were important and relevant. However, they were spread very thin across many areas - primary & secondary education, short-term technical training and long-term tertiary education. A strategic perspective and focus were not clearly apparent.

CIDA's bilateral program has funded eight regional projects during the past decade that had to do with environmental management, for a total of C\$33.7 million (24% of all expenditures). A clean environment is fundamental to the future of the region. However the commitment of national governments to sound environmental management remains mixed and is mainly donor-driven.

The CRDPF listed equity as a primary objective (within a framework that promotes equitable distribution of economic gains). CIDA has recently produced an action plan that is innovative in linking discrimination to class and race as well as gender. However, the Regional Program has clearly paid more attention to gender equity than to class or racial equity (e.g. indigenous peoples and racial discrimination).

CIDA's Regional Programming in the Caribbean was highly relevant. The selection of themes was excellent. Our only concern is with the selection of areas of focus within each theme. Given the stated objectives, more attention could have been given to poor communities and the unemployed, to pressing environment problems and activities related to competitiveness that have a more direct impact on employment.

Synergy between the regional versus the national programs could be strengthened. The internal coherence at CIDA between the bilateral, multilateral and partnership interventions faces organizational difficulties that the evaluation team itself confronted

both at headquarters and in the field.

The program evaluation team had difficulty coming to clear and definitive conclusions concerning results and effectiveness. This partly reflects the fact that evaluation and monitoring of projects over the past ten years has focused mainly on operational issues. A second reason is CIDA's focus on "capacity building" approaches whose results are often difficult to identify let alone measure. Thirdly, it is difficult to measure results and change when no clear picture of the institution exists at the beginning of the program.

The Caribbean Regional Program is complex and remains a challenge to administer. During the last decade there were 180 bilateral projects and 595 projects supported by Partnership Branch. There were 19 staff at headquarters and 15 in the field, at the time of the evaluation. The "regional approach" brings its own costs (communication, transportation, multiple actors, etc.) and the evaluation team has not been able to document whether the savings or economies of scale were cost effective. Our analysis tends to indicate that multi-country initiatives have been more effective than support to regional institutions.

The region is in fact less reliant on ODA than it was in 1993, mainly because of the rapid growth of both direct foreign investment and the tourist economy during the late 1990s. At the same time, donors tended to cut back their direct assistance. Further analysis would be needed to determine if national government and regional organizations have been able to assume the responsibilities left from international organizations.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:

Despite changing circumstances in the Caribbean (and in Canada), ten years later we have to recognize that "regional programming" is an appropriate approach to deliver development cooperation for the Commonwealth Caribbean region. Such an approach could potentially be used for other middleincome countries.

The theme of trade, economic integration and competitiveness remains highly relevant for the region. If improved trade competitiveness is to be kept as one of CIDA's main development goals in the Caribbean, then programming should be balanced between the support to put an enabling policy environment in place and activities aimed at trade oriented private sector organizations and small/medium enterprises.

The theme of human resources development remains highly relevant for the region. If CIDA were to continue interventions in this sector, the evaluators would recommend more emphasis on technical & vocational training related to employment. This area would address training needs for groups that are currently under-served. Short term training for highly needed skills in targeted areas should remain a component of capacity development strategies in any area of intervention.

The theme of environmental management remains highly relevant for the region. If the CIDA Caribbean Regional Program decides to continue environmental programming, it could consider ways to make it more immediately relevant to people's living conditions. In the view of the evaluators, the program should consider giving more attention to environmental issues related to urban management (sprawl, sewage, traffic) and to pollution, loss of habitat, water management, and coastal zone management.

CIDA's Caribbean program needs to address the issues of equity and poverty more strongly. How to do this without adding a long list of domains and sectors of interventions remains a challenge for the entire organization (CIDA). However, in the case of the Caribbean program, what was considered a crosscutting issue must become an overarching consideration with a strategic and integrated perspective.

In the new Programming Framework, consideration could be given to linking with the international agenda of the Millennium Development Goals by "making regional cooperation work for the poor", including the goal 8 related to Global Partnership for Development.

The Division may wish to establish a plan of action to strengthen coherence, clarifying roles and responsibilities at headquarters and in the field. CIDA could consider leaving some areas to other donors or to the countries themselves based on a division of labour.

Support to regional organizations needs rationalization. Regional capacity building is a challenge to results-based management (outputs and outcomes) especially when base line data are not available. CIDA could consider commissioning full-fledged assessments of regional institutions, potentially in partnership with other donor organizations, before funding regional initiatives. Also, CIDA could assist some key strategic regional organizations to develop a 'service oriented approach' that would help them make a difference on the ground.

Given the complexity related to the issue of coherence (internal and external) and the absence of real lessons learned in this area, the Division may consider giving more attention to the issue in the new CDPF. An all-government and perhaps an all- Canada approach implies working in a complex web of relations with a number of actors having specific objectives, roles and responsibilities. The Division may wish to establish a plan of action to strengthen coherence, clarifying roles and responsibilities at headquarters and in the field. CIDA could consider leaving some areas to other donors or to the countries themselves based on a division of labour.

CIDA could explore ways to reduce the scope of the program and related costs, perhaps by making fewer, larger grants to a limited number of key organizations based on long-term partnerships. Regional organizations receiving CIDA financial support should be made responsible for demonstrating results. At the corporate level, CIDA could consider developing new tools to analyze cost-efficient and cost-effective alternatives especially in the context of regional programming.

At the corporate level, CIDA could pursue its efforts to draw lessons from its experience in regional programming and share it with interested partners. At the corporate level, CIDA should develop a policy and clear criteria concerning cooperation with middle-income countries. Our view is that CIDA should not exit the region but should develop a long-term partnership, perhaps with a lower level of effort given the middle-income country status of most countries of the region. New Framework for the Caribbean Regional Program could consider various risks in the region, and identify ways to address them. This also implies putting in place mitigation strategies. The high level of vulnerability of the region may suggest that a portion of the resources should be kept for unpredictable events and threats.

Lessons Learned:

Integration is a political process that takes a long time to bring about. Functional cooperation is more immediate and can show results in a shorter term. Both approaches can reinforce each other. Success in the former is primarily a matter of political will and local ownership. Investing in the latter may help bring support for the former.

Intervening mainly at the regional level raises the possibility that Canada's partnerships with individual governments might be weaker than they might otherwise be. For all the benefits of regional programming, this partial disconnect with individual governments gives one pause in the high-risk environment of the 21st century.

Donor coordination is certainly complex in a regional environment of many countries, institutions and problems. Exchange of information and partial alignment constitute essential first steps. However, over the years, donor collaboration is evolving more and more towards greater harmonization and division of labour.

Achieving, documenting and demonstrating results on the ground that make a difference to peoples' lives through regional programming remains a challenge. The missing link between global and regional considerations and national and local needs is difficult to find. "Making regional cooperation work for the poor" is a nice slogan that, in practice is quite a challenge.

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