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**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE EL VALLE
PARISH GAD**

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DEDICATED TO

My mother, siblings, niece and son

SPECIAL THANKS

To my dear mother, for her unconditional love and unwavering support.

To my sister, who was always by my side, giving me words of encouragement when I needed them most.

To my niece, for being my companion and support during this stage.

To my son, Emilio, my greatest motivation and reason to strive every day. Your patience and understanding during my long hours of study are invaluable. I hope this achievement inspires in you the confidence to pursue your own goals.

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RESUMEN

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo diseñar un Plan de Gestión de la Cooperación Internacional para el GAD Parroquial de El Valle en Cuenca, que esté alineado con la Estrategia de Internacionalización de Cuenca 2021-2025 y enfocado en el eje 1 “Calidad de vida”. La investigación se enmarca en un enfoque cualitativo, específicamente un diseño de estudio de caso llevado a cabo en la parroquia de El Valle. Como principal método de recopilación de datos, se utilizó la técnica de entrevistas, las cuales fueron realizadas a los directivos del GAD para obtener información relevante sobre la cooperación internacional y la gestión de proyectos. Para analizar el territorio, las necesidades, desafíos, oportunidades y ejes prioritarios de la parroquia, se llevó a cabo un diagnóstico territorial que consideró tanto el Plan de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial (PDOT) de la parroquia como la información interna proporcionada por el GAD. Por último se realiza un plan enfocado en estrategias susceptibles y adaptables a la cooperación internacional con el objetivo de fortalecer las capacidades institucionales para mejorar la gestión y administración de la cooperación internacional.

Palabras clave: Cooperación Internacional, desarrollo local, descentralización, plan de gestión.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to design an International Cooperation Management Plan for the GAD Parroquial de El Valle in Cuenca, which is aligned with the Internationalization Strategy of Cuenca 2021-2025 and focused on axis 1 "Quality of Life." The research is framed in a qualitative approach, specifically a case study design carried out in the parish of El Valle. Data were collected through interviews conducted to the GAD managers to obtain relevant information on international cooperation and project management. In order to analyze the territory, needs, challenges, opportunities and priority axes of the parish, a territorial diagnosis was carried out that considered both the Development and Land Management Plan (PDOT) of the parish and the internal information provided by the GAD. Finally, a plan focused on susceptible and adaptable strategies for international cooperation with the objective of strengthening institutional capacities to improve the management and administration of international cooperation was developed.

Keywords: decentralization, International cooperation, local development, management plan.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to present the Decentralized International Cooperation Management Plan for the GAD Parroquial del Valle, located in the canton of Cuenca. This plan is framed within the Internationalization Strategy of Cuenca 2021-2025 and is aligned with axis 1: "Quality of Life." Its main focus is to strengthen the social projects developed and managed by the GAD del Valle through strategies that are adaptable and susceptible to international cooperation.

Decentralized international cooperation plays a fundamental role in promoting local development and improving the living conditions of communities. In this context, the GAD parish of El Valle recognizes the importance of establishing alliances and accessing external resources to strengthen its social projects and promote sustainable progress in the parish.

This plan focuses on designing efficient and effective strategies to take advantage of international cooperation opportunities. The objective is to develop solid and sustainable social projects that respond to the priority needs of the community and are aligned with local policies and priorities.

Through this Decentralized International Cooperation Management Plan, the GAD parish El Valle aspires to strengthen its management capacity and maximize the benefits of international cooperation in the development of social projects. Aligned with the Internationalization Strategy of Cuenca 2021-2025, it seeks to contribute to the construction of a prosperous, industrious and opportunity city, where international cooperation is a fundamental pillar for the progress and welfare of the community of El Valle.

CHAPTER 1

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Definition of International Cooperation

International cooperation, which was born after World War II, is a form of collaboration between countries to address global and regional problems. It can include economic assistance, the exchange of technology and knowledge, and collaboration in areas such as health, the environment and security. International cooperation is based on the principle that nations can work together to achieve common goals and address complex problems that transcend national boundaries (Smith, 2013).

There are many international organizations dedicated to promoting cooperation between countries, such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These organizations provide a framework for international cooperation and can provide technical and financial assistance to developing countries (Martinez & Martinez, 2020).

International cooperation can also take the form of trade and investment agreements between countries, which seek to promote economic growth and development. In addition, international cooperation can include the exchange of students and professionals, which can foster learning and skills development in different fields (Smith, 2013).

In general, international cooperation is a way of working together to solve global and regional problems and to promote the welfare and development of all countries. It allows the country, region, community or social organization to obtain resources whether financial, technological or knowledge to co-finance or carry out projects and thus expand the scope of action (Non-reimbursable and Decentralized International Cooperation | Urban and Cities Platform, 2010).

In this sense, as a historical example, the Marshall Plan, established after World War II, is a well-known model in the history of international cooperation, which was initiated by the United States to help rebuild Western Europe after the war. The

necessary financial and technical assistance helped restore the economies of the affected countries and ensure political stability in the region (Cerezal, 2022).

The Marshall Plan provided significant financial and material resources to the recipient European countries between 1948 and 1952. These funds were used to strengthen institutional capacity in the affected countries, as well as to rebuild infrastructure, encourage industrialization and promote trade. The Marshall Plan not only contributed to the economic recovery of Western Europe, but also laid the groundwork for greater regional integration and cooperation (Cerezal, 2022).

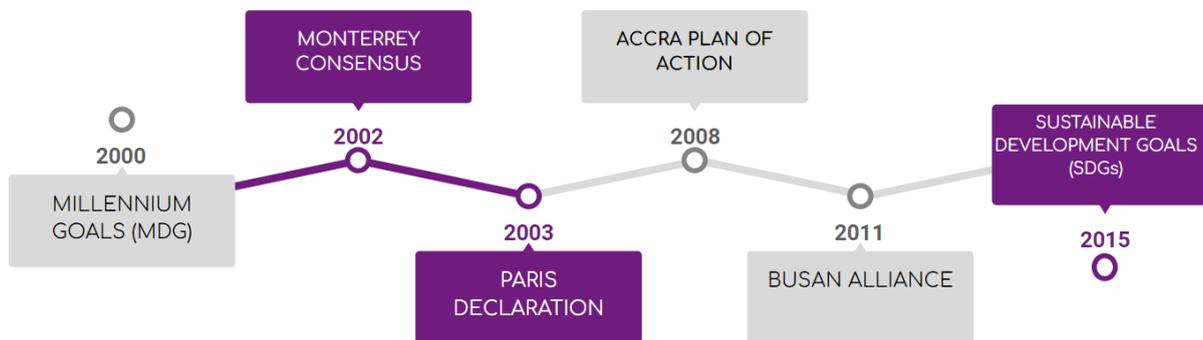
The success of the Marshall Plan led to greater recognition of the importance of international cooperation as a tool for addressing common challenges. It inspired the creation of international institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and laid the groundwork for the development of economic cooperation and development policies around the world. It demonstrated that international cooperation can have a transformative impact on the reconstruction of war-torn countries and paves the way for future global collaborative efforts (Cerezal, 2022).

The legacy of the Marshall Plan also demonstrated the need for international unity and shared responsibility to find solutions to global problems. It emphasizes that international cooperation can achieve significant results in mobilizing resources, facilitating knowledge sharing and fostering strategic alliances between countries.

1.2. International Cooperation Agreements

Figure 1.

International Agreements



Source: Adapted from Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, 2018

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were created in the year 2000 to find a way to channel development aid through international cooperation. In this sense the MDGs became the main axis on which efforts to generate worldwide development would be focused. These goals include the reduction of poverty and hunger, universal primary education, gender equality, reduction of child and maternal mortality, prevention of HIV and other diseases, environmental sustainability and the establishment of international partnerships for development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aim to improve people's living conditions and create a coherent system of international cooperation (The Sustainable Development Agenda, 2018)

In 2002, the International Conference on Financial Development was held in Monterrey, Mexico to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; however, partner countries did not have harmonized policies that matched national development systems and priorities, and over time the numerous requirements and procedures imposed by contributing countries for development assistance limited the capacity of partner countries and generated unnecessary transaction costs (Aid Effectiveness, 2011).

The agreement reached at the meeting included a provision for the allocation of 0.7% of the gross national income of developed countries to official development assistance (ODA), as it was recognized that developing countries must take

responsibility for their own progress by complementing foreign aid. In addition, it proposes to take into account the planning of budgets, programs and projects, the impact of development aid with key objectives such as: the reduction of poverty and inequality, secondly, increasing capacities and accelerating development in those countries that need it most, it is also an international agreement where global commitments are established through donor countries and recipient countries (Aid Effectiveness, 2011).

In March 2005, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was adopted as an initiative led by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, with the participation of more than 80 donor and recipient countries, international agencies and multilateral organizations. This declaration establishes principles and objectives to improve the effectiveness of international aid (Grandas, 2011).

The primary aim of this declaration, and perhaps its most crucial objective, is to address and eliminate the systemic issues that have impacted millions of individuals worldwide. Among these challenges are poverty, disparities in society, and humanitarian emergencies. This declaration contains five fundamental principles: local ownership (recipient countries manage their own development), integration (assistance linked to national expertise and systems), coordination (donors integrate the work), and accountability and ownership (Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, 2018).

The Accra Agenda for Action is the outcome document of the third high-level forum on aid effectiveness and was created in September 2008, whose short-term objective was to analyze the progress made to date on the commitments in the Paris Declaration. In addition, it emphasized the greater participation of civil society organizations as a contributor to the effective development of aid and the prioritization of three points: human rights, gender equality, and poverty reduction as cross-cutting approaches in international cooperation (Aid Effectiveness, 2011).

Among the main achievements of the Accra Action Plan are the reinforcement of the commitments of the Paris Declaration and the MDGs, the inclusion of civil society as a full-fledged actor of local governments and other private sector actors, and the increased attention to gender equality, human rights and disability issues. The agreements reached consist of predictability, country systems, conditionalities based on

development objectives and untied aid, the beginning of the recognition of South-South cooperation based on the important role it plays in this cooperation and the purpose of improving coordination between donor initiatives and government programs of accountability for results and information on aid activities (Ruiz S. and Cunego, 2012).

In 2011, the fourth aid effectiveness conference was held in Busan, South Korea, which emphasized the importance of multiple stakeholders. Almost 3,000 government delegates participated, including several high-level officials such as U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the President of Rwanda, civil society representatives, parliamentary representatives, local government authorities and private sector representatives, as well as donor and recipient countries (Aid Effectiveness, 2011).

The conference's Busan main objective was to restructure cooperation to improve aid effectiveness through four key principles. The first, "ownership of development priorities," recognized that developing countries should lead and design their own development strategies because they know their own needs best. The second, "focus on results," emphasized the importance of setting clear and measurable goals to ensure a real and positive impact on development. It also highlighted the need to create inclusive partnerships and promote transparency and shared responsibility in cooperation, the fundamental role of financing for sustainable development, as well as the importance of strengthening tax systems and combating tax evasion in developing countries (Aid Effectiveness 2011).

The Addis Ababa Accord, which was adopted at the 2015 International Conference on Financing for Development, established a comprehensive framework for international cooperation in financing with the objective of promoting inclusive and sustainable development. This international agreement recognizes the importance of strengthening the tax system and combating tax evasion in developing countries and helps mobilize domestic and international resources (Aid Effectiveness, 2011).

In addition, developed countries are obliged to fulfill their development aid commitments and find new sources of financing. They also expressed the need to attract private investors, improve access to international markets, exchange technology and strengthen institutions.

Finally, an agreement is reached on the Sustainable Development Goals, which are a set of 17 sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The SDGs build on the MDGs and expand their scope to include aspects such as gender equality, reducing inequality and environmental sustainability. The SDGs establish a global framework for international cooperation on sustainable development and set a set of goals at the international level to achieve a more just and sustainable world (Ruiz S. and Cunego, 2012).

Therefore, one of the Sustainable Development Goals, precisely Goal 17, which focuses on strengthening international cooperation to achieve sustainable growth, an inclusive society and the eradication of poverty UCLG (2021), is aligned with the International Cooperation Management Plan for the parish of El Valle, as it seeks to strengthen the parish's capacity to contribute to poverty eradication through projects that improve access to basic services and economic opportunities, focusing on sustainable development and social inclusion, and on the effective and efficient use of resources to achieve a positive impact on beneficiary communities.

1.3. Legal framework for international cooperation

The normative framework of international cooperation is the set of laws, principles and rules that govern international cooperation and establish the rights and obligations of the actors involved. At the international level, there are a series of instruments and agreements that are part of the normative framework of international cooperation (Mantilla, 2014).

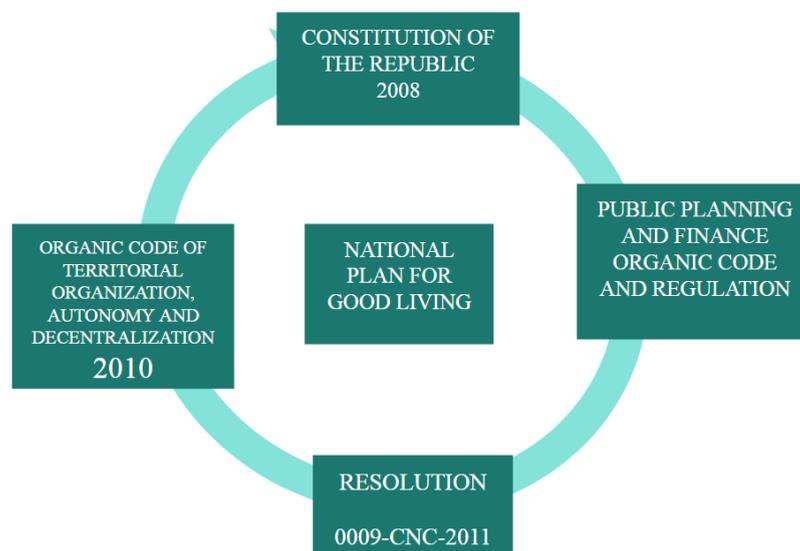
Some of the main international instruments and agreements of the normative framework for international cooperation include:

1. The Charter of the United Nations: sets out the principles and objectives of international cooperation and establishes the structure and objectives of the United Nations (UN).
2. The Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS): establishes the rules for trade in services between member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
3. The Declaration of Human Rights: sets out the fundamental rights of all people and provides a framework for the protection and promotion of human rights at the international level.

4. The Agreement on the Rights of Migrant Workers: establishes rules for the protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families.
5. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: establishes the rights of indigenous peoples and recognizes the importance of their participation in decision-making that affects their communities (Políticas y Estrategias de la Cooperación Internacional no reembolsable, 2019).

Figure 2.

Ecuadorian Legal Regulations



Source: Adapted from the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (National Constituent Assembly, 2008)

On the other hand, the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (National Constituent Assembly, 2008) establishes that the Ecuadorian State will be governed in a decentralized manner, in accordance with an equitable and progressive mandatory model that breaks with the previous model of voluntary and inequitable decentralization. It also established the territorial organization of the State, opened the way for the current decentralization to be framed in the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, inter-territorial equity, integration and citizen participation, also established the levels of governments, the regime of competences and the national system of competences clearly explaining that it will be governed by a special law.

In this way, the organic code of territorial organization, autonomy and decentralization COOTAD establishes the decentralization of State management which consists of the mandatory, progressive and definitive transfer of competences, develops and regulates the new territorial organization of the State in procedures for the transfer of competences, as well as the distribution of resources from the general state budget to the GADs (COOTAD, 2012).

The National Council of Competencies (2014), in accordance with its mandate, deploys efforts to organize and implement the decentralization process with the purpose of bringing the state apparatus closer to the citizens. This body seeks to prioritize the general interest over individual interests, fostering a government management that is closer and more sensitive to the needs of local communities. In its work, the CNC seeks to consolidate democracy, empowering regional and local governments to exercise greater powers and make decisions that have a direct impact on the welfare of the population.

For its part, the National Decentralized System of Participatory Planning is responsible for organizing, establishing norms and connecting this system with the National Public Finance System, ensuring its proper functioning at different levels of the public sector. This is done within the framework of the development regime, the regime of good living and compliance with constitutional guarantees and rights. (Politics and Strategies of Non-refundable International Cooperation, 2019).

Decentralization in Ecuador has the following objectives:

- The improvement in the management of public services and activities.
- The promotion and distribution of wealth in the territory.
- The promotion of development and the strengthening of local and national institutionality by promoting social participation and political presentation (COOTAD, 2012).

The functions of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs) are carried out through three interrelated aspects. First, they are responsible for normative legislation and oversight; second, they are responsible for the execution and administration of policies and projects; and third, they promote citizen participation and social control (COOTAD, 2012).

1.4. Decentralized International Cooperation for development

Decentralized cooperation is a phenomenon that has gained relevance in international cooperation in which regional or local governments of a country participate in development projects in collaboration with regional or local governments of other countries. In Ecuador, decentralized cooperation is a way of promoting local and regional development and encouraging citizen participation in decision-making (Grandas, 2012).

This type of cooperation can be conceived as an instrument of local public management, in which there must be a great institutional strengthening of the territorial governments so that the cooperation processes are much more egalitarian, reciprocal and contribute to local development. Decentralized cooperation is carried out between and for territorial governments, in which political as well as social and economic aspects of development converge in which the ultimate goal of this type of cooperation or this type of cooperation should be local development (Mantilla, 2014).

In addition, it promotes multilevel governance by fostering interaction and collaboration between the different governmental levels, both at the local and international levels for the improvement of living conditions in communities and sustainable development. And in order to optimize the effects of actions and avoid duplication of efforts, it is required to develop strategic alliances and coordination mechanisms (Mantilla, 2014).

The axis of decentralized cooperation is local development; therefore, its objective is to improve people's quality of life, promote local economic growth, strengthen institutional capacity and encourage citizen participation. This requires efforts in the areas of education, health, infrastructure, water management and environmental protection, among others (Grandas, 2012).

This cooperative approach involves local stakeholders such as governments, non-governmental organizations and other regional actors in the context of international cooperation. Unlike traditional centralized partnerships, this approach means that local stakeholders have a deeper understanding of local needs and realities and can be used more effectively and comprehensively to design development projects and programs. The direct involvement of subnational stakeholders in all phases of the process, from planning to implementation, growth and monitoring of the project, allows initiatives to be more effective in addressing community challenges and needs (Paton, 2020).

In synthesis, decentralized cooperation is to seek planning spaces or technical assistance spaces so that these local governments can learn to plan their international cooperation processes and promote much more institutionalized and planned cooperation processes to transcend this traditional model and to transfer good local practices that contribute to local public management and local development (Sotillo, 2019).

In this context, for the parish of El Valle, decentralized international cooperation offers a series of benefits. First, it allows the transfer of knowledge and good practices from other contexts and successful experiences. Through this transfer, the parish can learn from lessons already learned elsewhere and adapt them to its own reality, thus contributing to the sustainable development of the community. In addition, decentralized international cooperation provides access to financial and technical resources that may not otherwise be available.

These resources are critical to implementing development projects and programs that promote community well-being. By accessing funding and technical assistance, El Valle Parish can strengthen its capacities and carry out initiatives that benefit its inhabitants (Sotillo, 2019).

Another important benefit is the opening of new opportunities and collaboration networks. Through decentralized cooperation, the parish can establish strategic alliances and collaborate with non-governmental organizations, cooperation agencies and academic entities at the international level. These collaborations open doors to exchanges of experiences, access to additional funds, and participation in joint projects, which expands the possibilities for development and growth for El Valle Parish (Sotillo, 2019).

CHAPTER 2

2. DIAGNOSIS OF THE PARISH EL VALLE

2.1. Autonomous Decentralized Parochial Government El Valle

A GAD (hereinafter GAD) according to the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (2014), is a government entity that has autonomy to make decisions and manage its own resources in a given area. In the international context, a GAD is a management model that has been adopted in many countries, especially in Latin America, which has demonstrated that the experience of decentralization in the region has been an effective tool to improve efficiency in the management of public resources and to promote economic and social development at the local level (Paton, 2020).

The GADs have been the subject of interest and support from international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), who have promoted decentralization and strengthening the capacities of local governments as a way to achieve sustainable and inclusive development (Diaz, 2014).

In the case of the GAD Parroquial El Valle of Cuenca-Ecuador, it is a local government entity responsible for governing and managing the resources of the parish of Valle de Cuenca, and is therefore responsible for providing services and promoting the development of the parish. This may include the implementation of infrastructure projects, such as the construction of roads and bridges, the provision of health and education services, and the promotion of economic activities (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

El Valle Parish works in collaboration with other governmental entities and civil society organizations to promote the development and improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the parish, carrying out social, cultural and economic projects that benefit children, adolescents, adults and seniors, which are described in the 14 All these projects are carried out with resources allocated to the GAD (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

In order to know the territory, together with the needs, problems and potential, the parish GAD made the PDOT for the years 2019 to 2023, which allows making

decisions and promoting joint strategies and actions in order to align with sustainable development and good living.

2.1.1. Demographics

Population

It is a rural parish with a population of 33,406 inhabitants, divided between women with 51.72% (17,276) and men with 48.28% (1,16130) (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2020).

The upward population growth for the year 2030 will be 38622 inhabitants and the fastest growing group will be 25-39 years old (CNPV, 2010).

Migration

In the parish of El Valle, 742 people have left the country for different destinations, with the United States being the main destination with 85.44%, followed by Spain with 8.36% and other countries with the remaining percentage. The main reason for emigrating is to look for work, followed by being close to relatives, studies and other causes. In addition, it has been observed that men are more likely to emigrate than women (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.2. Health

According to available data, only 4.74% of the population has access to private health insurance, while 71.12% is affiliated with Social Security, with a total of 2,667 people. In addition, 1177 cases of disability have been reported, representing 4.84% of the population. In the period between 2000 and 2010, 599 adolescent pregnancies have been reported (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

The parish has three health centers: the Health Center located in Valle Centro, the Castilla Cruz Health Sub-center, which belong to the Ministry of Public Health, and the IESS Medical Dispensary in Gualalcay (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.3. Gender Equality

In the parishes, there are no solid practices and protocols in place to denounce violence and create support networks from the community councils to the cantonal and

provincial levels. Although there are cantonal councils for the protection of rights, there are few initiatives to end discrimination and violence against women and girls in parish territories (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

The projects developed in the territory do not address issues of cultural transformation such as machismo or the transformation of gender roles that perpetuate violence. There is also no statistical information available to determine the percentage of violence at the parish level, which makes it difficult to make decisions and identify strategies to reduce inequalities. However, at the provincial level, according to data obtained from INEC-2008, 7 out of 10 women have experienced some type of violence (psychological, physical, sexual, patrimonial) in Azuay (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.4. Poverty

Poverty is measured by Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN) and indicators such as economic capacity, access to education, housing, basic services and overcrowding are used. According to data from the Integrated System of Knowledge and Social Statistics of Ecuador, in the parish of El Valle, the UBN is 63.4%, with a percentage of 62.8% of women and men with 63.9%, far exceeding the average at the cantonal level, which is 38.2%. It is also above the provincial average, which is 48.3%, and higher than the national average, which is 60.1% (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.5. Education

In the parish of El Valle, approximately half of the economically active population (EAP) has completed primary education, while about 20% have continued with secondary education and only 11% have completed higher education. This represents an important limitation for the growth, development and innovation of the parish, since a trained and specialized labor force is needed to carry out projects, attract private investment, promote the territory and strengthen citizen participation (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

On the other hand, the population that does not know how to read and write is 1969 inhabitants, which represents 8.97% of the total population aged 0- 65 years and older (21963) (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021). According to information from the Ministry of Education, there are 13 schools in the parish (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.6. Economy and Productivity

In El Valle parish, the number of people of working age (PET) is 19,409, which represents approximately 79.82% of the total population of the parish. Of this population, about 52.15% is economically active (EAP), while the remaining 47.85% is economically inactive (EIP). The activity rate in the parish is 41.63%, being higher for men with 51.41% and somewhat lower for women with 32.87% (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

The main economic activities in El Valle parish are manufacturing, commerce and construction, which represent 24.03%, 15.69% and 13.62% of the EAP, respectively. Both men and women are involved in industry and manufacturing, while commerce stands out as the second most relevant activity for women and the third for men. Agricultural, livestock and fishing work is mainly led by women, while construction is a male-dominated activity. It is also noted that women are mainly responsible for household chores (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

In the parish of El Valle, a total of 1,375 economic establishments have been identified, most of which are micro-enterprises (96.1%), while a smaller number are medium-sized enterprises (3.7%), and a smaller number are small and medium-sized enterprises (3.7%) very small percentage are small enterprises (2%). Microenterprises focus mainly on commercial activities, industry and manufacturing, as well as transportation and warehousing. On the other hand, small businesses are distributed in sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, education, and industry and manufacturing (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

In the parish of El Valle, a total of 1,375 economic establishments have been identified, the majority of which are microenterprises (96.1%), while a smaller number are medium-sized enterprises (3.7%), and a very small percentage are small enterprises (2%). Microenterprises focus mainly on commercial activities, industry and manufacturing, as well as transportation and warehousing. On the other hand, small businesses are distributed in sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, education, and industry and manufacturing (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

In terms of land use, a total area of 319 hectares has been allocated for crops in El Valle parish. This area is distributed among different communities in the parish, with 16 communities having an agricultural area of more than 1%, while 15 communities have a percentage between 1% and 2%. In addition, 7 communities have a percentage

between 2% and 3%, 3 communities are in the range of 3% to 6%, and only two communities have a percentage higher than 7% (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.7. Basic Services

Electric power

Electricity service in the locality has high coverage, reaching 96.99% of households in 2010, according to the Development and Land Use Plan (PDOT) of GAD El Valle (2021). In addition, this service has experienced a steady growth over the years, with a linear trend of increase from 1990 to 2010, increasing by 11.89% in that period, going from 85.1% to 96.99% (GAD, 2015).

On the other hand, in relation to public lighting, the roads that connect different communities mostly have lighting in the second, third and fourth order categories. However, there is concern among the inhabitants due to the lack of attention to public lighting on some roads that are mandatory, as mentioned in the PDOT of GAD El Valle (2021).

Drinking water

In the parish of El Valle, 75.24% of households have access to water through the public network, 5.10% have access to water through a well, 13.56% of households use water from rivers, springs, ditches or canals, 0.12% from a delivery truck and 5.98% obtain water through rain (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

Sewer

El Valle parish does not have a complete sewerage system, as it only has a public sewerage system in the parish seat. According to the 2010 census, only 31% of households are connected to a public sewer system, while the rest are connected to septic or cesspools, have direct discharge to the river, or have no toilet or toilet facilities (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

The communities with the greatest access to service are Castilla Cruz, Primero de Enero and Chilcapamba. Regarding the use of household toilets or toilets, 74.04% of households have toilets for exclusive use, while 12.35% share them with several households. According to the GAD Cuenca, the sewerage network covers an area of

928 ha in the parish and the treatment plant covers 20163.42 ha of the parish territory (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.8. Public Services

Transportation system

In the parish, two main types of transportation have been identified: one for passenger transportation, which is carried out by buses, vans and cabs; and the other related to light cargo transportation, which is carried out using vans. In terms of transportation services, both for light and heavy loads, the parish has companies that are duly legalized and authorized to carry out these activities (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

Garbage collection

The company EMAC EP is in charge of garbage collection two days a week in the parish of El Valle. According to official data, in 2010 78.29% of the areas had collection coverage, and the remaining percentage used other means. Over time, the service has improved significantly, but there are still areas that need to be covered (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

Parish road system

El Valle Parish has 428.22 km of roads.

The road network in El Valle parish is in poor condition, with 56% of the roads in fair condition, 34% in poor condition, and only 10% in good condition (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

Pedestrian infrastructure in rural areas is insufficient, and only in the parish center and some consolidated sites is there some sidewalk infrastructure, but it is not used properly. There is also no infrastructure for bicycles, which generates insecurity when walking or biking on the roads due to the high vehicular flow (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.9. Equipments

In the parish, 32 communities have a community house, 25 have a sports field, and 15 have public toilets. In addition, a Municipal Library has been identified and is located in the center of the parish capital, as well as about 8 stages located in different communities of the parish (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

In the parish there are two security facilities or community police units located in the parish center and in the community of Morochoquigua - La Libertad (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.10. Use of Public Space

As for the use of public space, there is a shortage of green areas and recreational spaces in the parish center, with only one central park. However, a certain level of availability of these spaces can be found in the communities. Of the 49 communities, 16.33% (8) have a playground, 51.02% (25) have a sports field, and 65.31% (32) have a community house (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.1.11. Citizen Participation

The parish of El Valle has an established system for citizen participation, regulated by the Regulation that shapes and regulates the operation of the System of Citizen Participation and Social Control of the Decentralized Autonomous Government of the parish of El Valle. These mechanisms include the Empty Chair, accountability, citizen oversight, public hearings and public action to file complaints. In addition, the community and local leaders have a large participation in the selection of projects for the Participatory Budget, which is allocated by the Decentralized Autonomous Government and amounts to \$738,380, distributed among the 4 zones of the parish (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.2. Needs and Opportunities of the GAD of El Valle

The needs and opportunities of El GAD Parroquial del Valle according to its internal information and aligned with the axis "Prosperous, industrious and opportunity city", are defined as follows:

Needs:

→ Strengthening of social projects developed and managed by the GAD del Valle.

- Improvement of infrastructure and services in the parish to promote economic development and the generation of opportunities.
- Development of training and capacity building programs for the local population, focused on industrial and business sectors.
- Implementation of sustainable development and economic diversification projects.
- Improvement of environmental management and conservation of natural resources in the parish.
- Promotion of local tourism and development of sustainable tourism activities.
- Road and transportation infrastructure improvement to facilitate mobility and access to economic opportunities (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

Opportunities:

- Possibility of accessing external financing and support through international cooperation to strengthen existing social projects.
- Attraction of investment and cooperation in industrial and business sectors to promote local economic development.
- Potential for promoting the parish as a tourist destination, taking advantage of its cultural and natural resources.
- Establishment of alliances and collaborations with international actors for the development and promotion of the parish.
- Support for the implementation of training and capacity building programs for the local population in areas relevant to industrial and business development.
- Possibility of accessing international expertise and best practices in sustainable development and environmental management (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

2.3. Priorities of the GAD Parroquial de El Valle for International Cooperation

Productive Economic Axis

- Encourage the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in sectors such as industry and manufacturing.
- Promote support for local farmers.

- Develop sustainable tourism by promoting typical food, handicrafts and nature tourism sites.
- Improve market competition conditions by regulating intermediaries and stabilizing product prices.
- Diversify the economy by promoting new productive sectors and attracting investment (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

Sociocultural Axis

- Promote economic development and employment in the parish, with emphasis on improving opportunities for youth and women to avoid migration.
- Reduce the illiteracy rate.
- Create strategies to reduce gender inequality and combat machismo and discrimination against women.
- Conserve and promote the cultural and traditional heritage of the parish, including heritage assets and cultural practices.
- Strengthen the organizational system in the communities and encourage participation in parish activities.
- Improve the infrastructure and basic services in the parish, especially related to access to potable water, sewage, garbage collection and public transportation.
- Improve the quality of life of the population through the construction and maintenance of road and pedestrian infrastructure, and improved signage and street lighting.
- Improve access to ICTs in rural areas and improve internet and cell phone services (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

Political Axis

- Strengthen the capacity of the GAD Parroquial to plan and execute development programs and projects.
- Improve coordination and collaboration between the GAD Parroquial, the Provincial Government and the Cantonal Government.

- Improve participatory processes and transparency in the public management of the Parish Council.
- Encourage the commitment of existing social organizations to promote local production.
- Improve attention to priority groups such as the elderly.
- Ensure continuity in the management of the Parish Council through participatory processes (PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021).

CHAPTER 3

3. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE PARISH GAD EL VALLE

On March 18, 2023, interviews were conducted with the directors of the GAD of El Valle in order to gather opinions and perspectives on international cooperation and the management plan in the context of the development of the parish. During the interviews, a series of questions related to the parish's priorities, needs and challenges were addressed, which coincide with those previously mentioned in the diagnosis of the territory. They also emphasized the importance of gender equality and the integration of this perspective in the GAD's projects.

The GAD representatives interviewed positively valued international cooperation as a crucial tool for the development of El Valle parish. They recognized that international cooperation provides access to financial resources, technical resources and expertise that are essential to effectively address challenges.

Regarding the benefits of international cooperation, interviewees highlighted several benefits derived from international cooperation, such as the transfer of knowledge and technology, the promotion of cultural exchange, the strengthening of local capacities, and the generation of economic development opportunities.

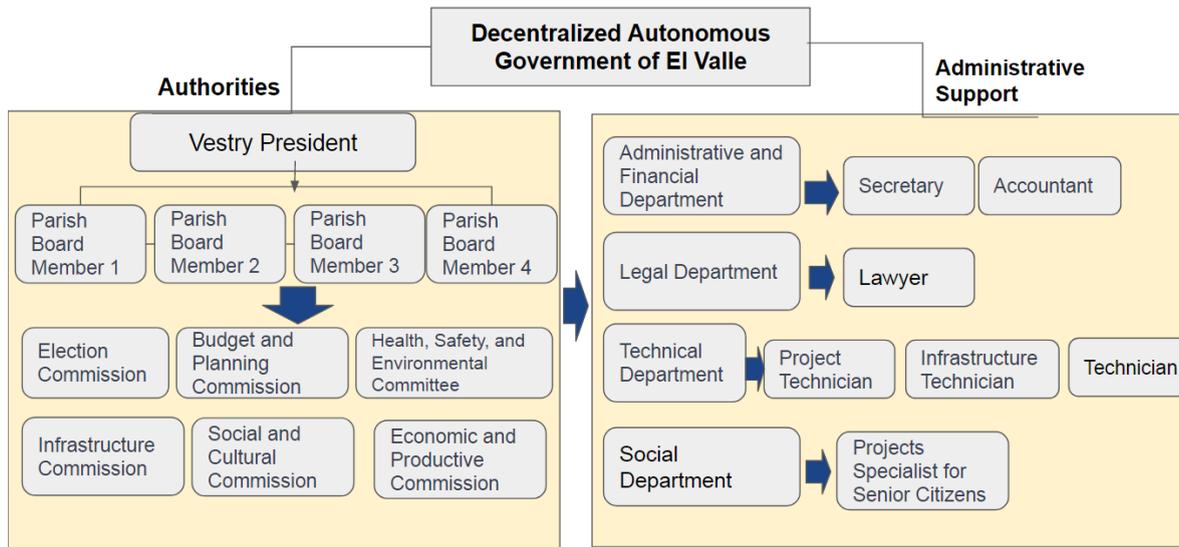
They also mentioned the importance of having a well-structured management plan oriented towards the sustainable development of the parish, which will allow establishing clear priorities, identifying specific actions and efficiently allocating available resources to achieve common objectives.

Finally, they mentioned that the GAD of El Valle presents important challenges in relation to capacity and knowledge in International Cooperation. The lack of experience and expertise hinders the effective implementation of projects, while the scarcity of strategic alliances and professional networks limits access to resources beneficial to the community.

3.1. Organizational chart and functions with the transversalization of the International Cooperation

Figura 3

Organizational chart of GAD El Valle



Source: PDOT GAD El Valle, 2021

Within the organizational chart of the GAD of El Valle, it is intended to designate authorities and officials activities and responsibilities to carry out ↓↑ international cooperation and thus identify opportunities for cooperation, establish contacts with international organizations, manage development projects and programs, as well as manage resources and funds from international cooperation.

In the first place, the president of the GAD of El Valle has been considered as the key person responsible for the general supervision and leadership of the management of international cooperation, accompanied by the vice-president to collaborate in coordination and representation tasks in this area, as well as support in decision-making, in coordination with the team in charge.

The Social Projects Technician will play a key role in the detailed planning, regulation, management and control of international cooperation projects and activities. He/she will also provide technical advice to the president and the team on issues related to international cooperation, identifying opportunities for collaboration, establishing alliances and coordinating with international partners.

The International Cooperation Commission, made up of the members of the GAD Parroquial del Valle, will participate in strategic decision making and in the definition of policies related to international cooperation. In addition, it will provide support in identifying needs and priorities for international cooperation in the parish.

Within the Technical Area of the GAD, there will be technicians specialized in different areas, such as economic development, infrastructure, environment, among others. These technicians will work closely with the International Cooperation Technician or Specialist to implement international cooperation projects in their respective areas of expertise.

Regarding the legal area, it would be responsible for providing legal advice in the management of international cooperation, ensuring compliance with the regulations and agreements in force, while the financial area would be responsible for the economic management of cooperation projects, including budgeting, accounting and transparent accountability.

If necessary, external advisors or consultants with expertise in international cooperation may be sought to provide guidance and specialized knowledge in this area.

It is important to note that this organizational chart and the functions assigned are adapted to the current capacities and resources of the GAD Parroquial del Valle, and comply with the guidelines established in Resolution 009-CNC-2011 for the management of international cooperation in Decentralized Autonomous Governments.

3.2. Proposal of the International Cooperation Management Plan of the GAD of El Valle

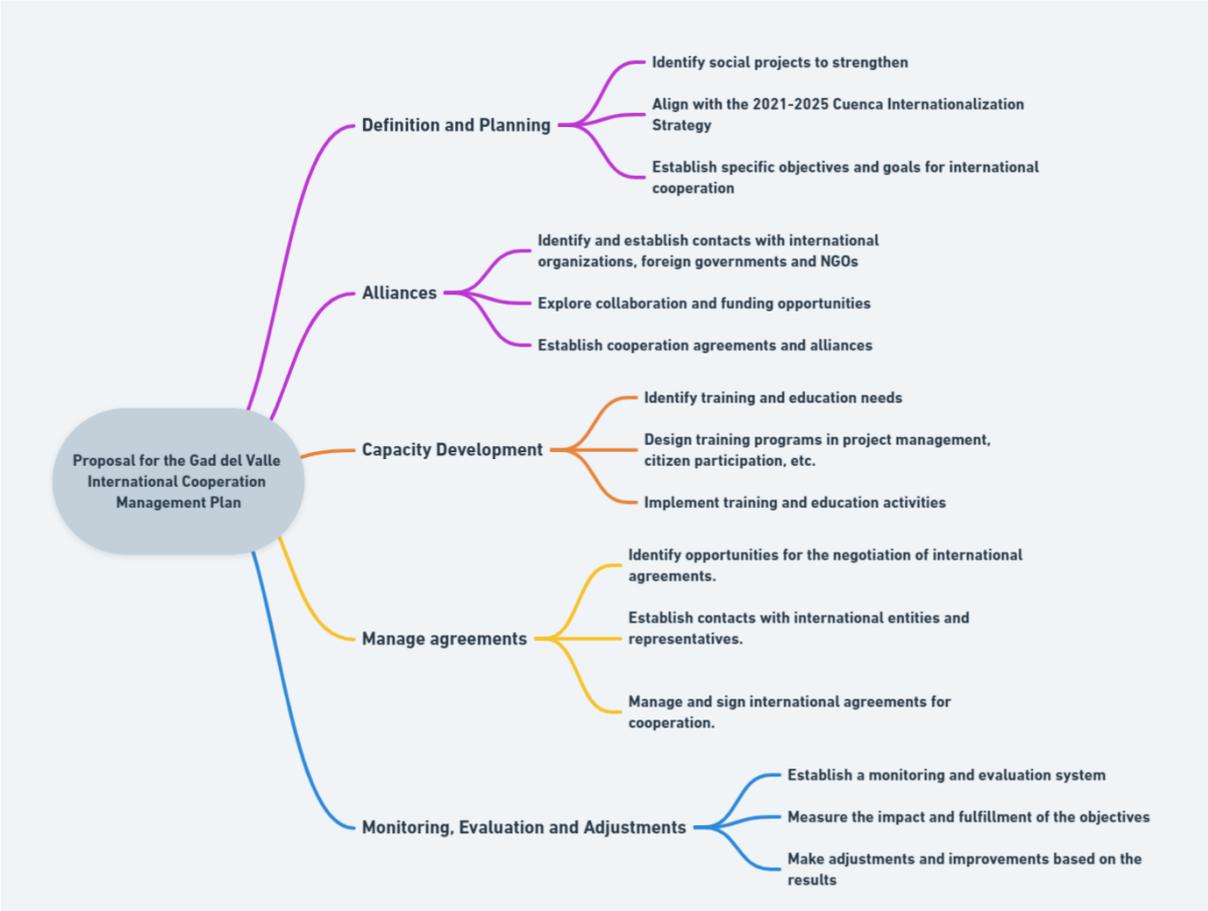
In this part, we present in detail the International Cooperation Management Plan for the parish of El Valle, which aims to strengthen the social projects developed and managed by the GAD, in line with the Internationalization Strategy of Cuenca 2021-2025 and the axis of "Prosperous, industrious and opportunity city." This plan focuses on the establishment of strategies that are adaptable and susceptible to international cooperation, seeking to take advantage of the benefits of collaboration with international actors for the development of the parish.

The international cooperation management plan is based on a participatory approach, which involves various local stakeholders, such as representatives of the GAD, community leaders and civil society organizations. A participatory diagnostic

process was carried out to identify the priority needs and opportunities of El Valle parish, taking into account demographic, economic, social and infrastructure aspects. In addition, a comprehensive analysis of Cuenca's Internationalization Strategy 2021-2025 was carried out, with the objective of aligning the proposed actions with the objectives and goals established at the cantonal level.

Figura 4.

Propuesta de Plan de gestión de Cooperación Internacional del GAD de El Valle



Source: Adapted from GAD Provincial de Tungurahua (2019) Management for international cooperation.

As shown in Figure 4, the strategies proposed for the Management Plan seek to establish strategic alliances with international organizations, foreign governments, NGOs and other key actors in the field of international cooperation. These alliances will allow access to financial, technological and knowledge resources for the development of specific projects in El Valle parish. For example, establishing a cooperation agreement with an international organization specialized in sustainable

agricultural development to implement a project to strengthen local agricultural production.

The capacity building strategy focuses on strengthening the capacities of local stakeholders for planning, implementing and managing development projects. Therefore, it is crucial to invest in specialized training programs, participate in events related to international cooperation and seek opportunities for exchange and collaboration with specialized organizations.

The strategy of managing international cooperation agreements focuses on establishing solid and effective alliances with potential partners, both nationally and internationally. This strategy involves identifying opportunities for collaboration, assessing the needs and capabilities of both parties, and negotiating mutually beneficial agreements.

It also involves efficient management of the agreements, ensuring the proper execution of projects, monitoring of results and compliance with the commitments made. An effective management strategy for international cooperation agreements seeks to maximize the impact and sustainability of joint initiatives, promoting the exchange of knowledge and the creation of networks that contribute to the development and well-being of the communities involved.

Finally, the plan seeks to implement a monitoring and evaluation system to measure its impact and improve its effectiveness and efficiency. The plan's success indicators are as follows:

- Number of local producers trained and financed
- Number of jobs and economic opportunities generated by the sustainable tourism development project.
- Number of projects managed for international cooperation.
- Number of families with better quality of life.
- Number of managers or collaborators of the GAD trained in international cooperation.
- Evaluation of the results of the IC management plan.
- Clear accountability.

Through the implementation of this management plan for international cooperation, it is expected to strengthen the capacity of the parish GAD El Valle to address the challenges and take advantage of development opportunities in line with the Internationalization Strategy of Cuenca 2021-2025.

3.3. Relationship of the strategies of the Management Plan with the Strategy for the Internationalization of Cuenca 2021-2025

The Cuenca Internationalization Strategy 2021-2025 is a reference framework that seeks to promote the integral development of the city, strengthening its presence and competitiveness at the international level. When analyzing the strategies of the international cooperation management plan for the GAD parish of Valle, it is important to establish its alignment with the objectives and priorities established in the Internationalization Strategy of Cuenca. The Management Plan, being a strategic planning tool at the local level, should take into consideration the guidelines and approaches set forth in the higher level strategy (Cuenca Internationalization Strategy 2021 2025, 2021).

A solid relationship between the Management Plan and the Internationalization Strategy implies identifying opportunities for cooperation and synergies between the two. For example, if the Internationalization Strategy seeks to strengthen the local economy, the Management Plan of the parish GAD del Valle can promote economic development projects at the local level that align with this priority. This may include the promotion of local entrepreneurship, training in entrepreneurial skills, improvement of infrastructure to attract investment, among other actions.

In addition, the promotion of culture and heritage is another important pillar in the Internationalization Strategy. In this sense, the Management Plan can focus on projects that preserve and promote local culture, such as the restoration of historical monuments, the organization of cultural festivals or the promotion of cultural tourism in El Valle parish. These actions would contribute to project Cuenca's cultural identity and strengthen its international attractiveness.

Likewise, the generation of international partnerships is a priority in the Internationalization Strategy. To achieve this, the Management Plan can explore opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with cities, institutions and international

organizations that share similar interests and objectives. This could lead to knowledge exchanges, participation in international cooperation programs or the joint promotion of sustainable development projects.

In summary, the relationship between the strategies of the Management Plan and the Cuenca Internationalization Strategy 2021-2025 is based on the identification of opportunities for cooperation and synergies between the two. By aligning local actions and projects with the objectives and priorities of the higher-level strategy, the impact of local initiatives is strengthened and contributes to the comprehensive development of Cuenca in the international arena. It is through this close relationship that the economic growth, cultural preservation and international projection of the cities can be boosted.

CONCLUSIONS

Decentralized international cooperation plays an essential role in promoting local development and improving the living conditions of communities. The GAD Parroquial del Valle recognizes the importance of establishing partnerships and accessing external resources to strengthen its social projects and promote sustainable progress in the parish despite the limited capacities and knowledge within the GAD.

The main objective of the Decentralized International Cooperation Management Plan is to develop solid and sustainable social projects that address the priority needs of the community and are aligned with local policies and priorities. It seeks to establish efficient and effective strategies to take advantage of international cooperation opportunities.

Capacity building in the GAD del Valle is fundamental to be able to carry out international cooperation in an effective manner in the parish. To achieve this, it is proposed to attend training programs in collaboration with organizations such as KOICA of Korea and JICA of Japan. These programs would include training trips to Colombia and exchange opportunities with experts in International Cooperation. These initiatives will strengthen capacities in project design, efficient resource management and the establishment of strategic alliances, thus contributing to the sustainable development of the community and the achievement of the parish's objectives in international cooperation.

The active participation of the community in the design and implementation of the initiatives is fundamental to foster local ownership and empowerment of the actors involved. The plan promotes the inclusion of the community in all stages of the process, thus ensuring the relevance and impact of the projects.

The establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will make it possible to measure the results obtained, make necessary adjustments and learn from experiences to improve the management of international cooperation in the future. Ongoing evaluation will ensure the effectiveness and impact of the projects implemented.

Through the implementation of this Decentralized International Cooperation Management Plan, the GAD Parroquial del Valle seeks to strengthen its management capacity and maximize the benefits of international cooperation in the development of social projects. This approach is aligned with the Internationalization Strategy of Cuenca 2021-2025, contributing to the construction of a prosperous city of opportunities, where international cooperation is a fundamental pillar for the well-being of the community of El Valle.

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