

THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL COOPERATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE NURSING PROFESSION IN THE AREA OF DEMAND REDUCTION IN LATIN AMERICA: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES¹

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ABSTRACT

A new framework of Technical & Financial Cooperation (TFC) has been used to develop a partnership between an international organization and universities in Latin America, to advance the contribution of the nursing profession in the area of demand reduction. The purpose of TFC is to support development in specific issues or areas that need to exert impact within the society as a whole. The “Regional Research Capacity-Building Program” for nurses to study the drug phenomenon in Latin America represents an example of a new TFC framework to stimulate nurses to use science and technology in health promotion, prevention of drugs use and abuse and social integration in Latin America. TFC has become a powerful instrument for the advancement of nursing professionals in the area of demand reduction.

Descriptors: technical & financial cooperation; research capacity-building programs; nurses; Latin America

INTRODUCTION

Migration, travel, and globalization of economic activities have created multicultural societies among countries in the Americas and around the world. They have broken down the geographical barriers against the transmission of diseases and the incorporation of new values, religions, norms, and much more. Solving social problems and achieving sustainable development requires the generation and application of knowledge to practical problems. Effective health policy, education, practice, and research programs must integrate diverse social, economic, political, cultural, technological and environmental aspects within their different activities and policies in the Americas.

International organizations, universities and non-governmental institutions can play a constructive role in this process by integrating more fully with their local, regional, and international communities. A key to success is knowledge about the power of partnerships. The success of a partnership depends on the ability of these institutions to know how to work together. Building partnerships requires collaboration among all parties involved in the process. But, most importantly, it requires sharing power, interest, knowledge, and leadership⁽¹⁾. The partnership must be based on mutual benefit and respect among all the parties involved⁽²⁾.

The process of developing a successful technical and financial cooperation involves autonomy, self-responsibility, time, effort, and resources from all participants. Technical & Financial Cooperation (TFC) can be used as a tool for institutional and professional development. This paper describes the process of moving from a vision to actions by means of technical and financial cooperation, with a view to closing partnerships for the advancement of nursing professionals in the area of demand reduction in Latin America.

BACKGROUND OF TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL COOPERATION AND ACTORS INVOLVED

Organizing a comprehensive and integrated approach to the development process is a fundamental challenge for the twenty-first century. The new thinking on development considers biological, ethical and political diversity, cultural sensitivity, community integrity and networks as critical aspects to achieve equity and sustainable development⁽³⁾. "Modernization" is restructuring relations among various governmental institutions and levels, as well as between the government and society as a whole⁽⁴⁾.

New and relevant alliances are now being formed. For example, organizations such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the Organization of American States – Inter-American Drug Control Commission (CICAD) and others have long been active in technical & financial cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Equally important, the international experience with technical & financial cooperation furnishes methods and models that are applicable to the structuring of regional, national, and local partnerships among communities, universities and other organizations.

Knowledge and skills regarding the technical & financial cooperation process are useful for mobilizing resources from all levels--local, regional, national, and international. Klinger⁽⁵⁾, defines international & financial cooperation as "supplementary foreign support for national action to develop joint activities among cooperating parties." Official Development Assistance (ODA) consists of resources which official agencies of developed nations (states, local government, autonomous government agencies) make available to developing countries and multilateral institutions in order to promote economic development and social welfare⁽⁶⁾.

Until 1971, technical cooperation was the central element in promoting and strengthening mutual economic relations among countries and was the most important financing source for development in developing countries. It basically involved economic and financial cooperation and, in some cases, included technical cooperative components⁽⁵⁾.

Over the years, the concept of the technical & financial cooperation model (TFCM) has evolved. From 1940 to 1950, TFCM was a unidirectional, north-south vector: richer countries, with greater technical expertise, provided aid to the poorer countries. Since then, many less industrialized countries have developed considerable knowledge and expertise, and the model has shifted to a view of cooperation as a mutual exchange, whereby all countries, regardless of size and level of development, can profit from sharing experiences and knowledge with one another⁽⁷⁻⁹⁾.

The current TFCM considers that the goal of technical cooperation is to develop human resources and increase institutional capabilities for the international health statecraft approach⁽¹⁰⁾. The new global framework of technical & financial cooperation supports a dialogue among all parties involved in this process and fosters participatory partnerships with local sustainable development initiatives. The partnership strategy focuses on: "(i) country-based review of development cooperation; (ii) country-based coordination of participatory development and good governance; and (iii) capacity for sustainable development"⁽⁷⁾.

Major actors in international bilateral and multilateral cooperation include the following: Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); World Bank; Inter-American Development Bank; Asian, African, and Caribbean Regional Development Banks; European Union, World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization; US Agency for International Development (USAID); Organization of American States (OAS); Inter-American Drug Abuse Commission (CICAD) and national and international foundations, such as Rockefeller, Kellogg, and Ford.

Over the past two decades, new actors have emerged in the technical & financial cooperation process, with substantial impact on initiatives toward health and development. These are the international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). NGOs and CBOs often provide a linkage between the government and foreign donors or turn into a direct channel between the community and national or international donors. These organizations are searching for ways to increase their interaction with the State and to have their voices heard in times of national policy development, planning and execution⁽⁷⁾.

The Technical & Financial Cooperation between CICAD/OAS and universities/schools of nursing in Latin America has created new opportunities for the advancement of the nursing profession in the area of drug demand reduction. The larger goal is to create a cadre of nursing professionals with scientific knowledge and technical skills to work on drug demand reduction in the areas of health promotion, drugs use and abuse prevention and social integration throughout Latin America.

TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL COOPERATION WITH UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS OF NURSING IN THE AREA OF DEMAND REDUCTION IN LATIN AMERICA

Technical & Financial Cooperation (TFC) plays a critical role by providing the stakeholders with expertise, training, and related equipment, both as part of capital cooperation projects and as free-standing interventions (technical cooperation related to institutional development). The primary purpose of TFC has been to promote the development of human and institutional capacities, with a view to autonomous resource mobilization and management.

TFC considers (institutional and professional) capacity development as the central purpose of technical cooperation at both university and institutional levels. The new approach to TFC emphasizes the promotion of local control, knowledge and participation, and the dynamics of interrelationships among various actors, programs and organizational levels.

The development of capacity-building programs involves individuals, organizations, institutions and societies (individually and collectively), which perform functions, solve problems, establish and achieve objectives through the development and implementation of a strategic plan. TFC objectives and actions include the following:

- Develop strong and sustained political commitment with a view to cooperation among international organizations, government, universities and NGOs in different parts of the world.
- Provide institutional and professional capacity-building programs to manage cooperation in a self-sustainable manner.
- Involve local, national, and international economic actors and members of civil society in discussions and decisions on important issues that impact on demand reduction and sustainable development in the short, middle, and long run.
- Ensure support for cooperation from national and international donors.
- Monitor the activities related to drugs, equity, health and sustainable development through information and technology.
- Develop and strengthen local, national, and international partnerships.

Using TFC as a strategy for the advancement of nursing professionals in the area of Drug Demand Reduction in Latin America, in 1997, the Inter-American Drug Control Commission (CICAD), with financial support from the government of Japan, and later with additional support from the Governments of the United States and Canada, launched a pioneer project to work with nursing schools in Latin America. This pioneer venture stands out since there are few nursing schools in industrialized or less industrialized countries that address the topic of drugs in their nursing education curricula.

Nurses are key actors to work towards change and transformation of individuals, families, and communities. Moreover, nursing professionals form the largest work force in the health system, they have most contact with communities and are able to recognize where there is a drug problem. Nurses bring new leadership roles to the CICAD Demand Reduction Program; they bring the critical-holistic international health perspective to study the drug phenomenon, and the health promotion approach to work with individuals, family, and community.

The CICAD Schools of Nursing Project works with fourteen nursing schools, distributed among ten countries in Latin America: Argentina (2); Brazil (2); Bolivia (1); Chile (1); Colombia (1); Ecuador (1); Honduras (1); Mexico (3); Peru (1); Venezuela (1). The basic project components are: (i) education: nursing curricula with content of drugs at undergraduate and graduate levels; faculty development through permanent education activities, regional and international research capacity-building programs; and leadership institute; (ii) community extension activities: development of health promotion, drugs use and abuse prevention and social integration; educational programs aimed at high-risk groups, school children, community and professional associations; and (iii) research: development of local, national, transnational, and multi-centric studies on drug issues and related problems.

The drug-related phenomenon represents a new field for nurses' professional performance, which presently faces a serious predicament in relation to the use and trafficking of illegal drugs, particularly in Latin America. Such predicament has also changed the demographic and epidemiological situation of various communities, due to the high levels of urban violence this practice entails.

In the context of nursing education at Undergraduate, Master and Doctoral levels, the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto School of Nursing, Brazil, has been distinguished regionally, nationally and internationally. As a result of the recognition of its research excellence, it has been a WHO Collaborating Center for Nursing Research Development since 1988. Therefore, considering the impacts of the drug-related phenomenon in Latin America and the goals of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), as well as the characteristics of the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing, with its large experience in graduate nursing education, CICAD invited the School of Nursing of Ribeirão Preto to be its partner in the implementation of the "Regional Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America."

STEPS TO DEVELOP TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL COOPERATION BETWEEN AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND A UNIVERSITY – SCHOOL OF NURSING

The technical & financial cooperation development and implementation process involves the following steps:

- Technical Aspect: Development of a Joint Proposal

In the case study of CICAD and the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing (USP/EERP), a joint proposal was developed to implement the “Regional Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America.” The proposal was organized to include the following aspects: (i) **context**: includes aspects related to the importance and justification for this kind of program in terms of cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness; (ii) **process**: describes the different actors involved in this process from a macro (international organization) and micro (universities) perspective; (iii) **content**: describes the condition (academic program structure); situation (the content of each module and evaluation system); results (technical research report); products (joint scientific publications); (iv) **Budget**: indicates how much the program will cost. This should include: human resources; equipment; infrastructure; logistics (travel expenses, lodging and food, health and travel insurance, books, etc.).

- Financial Aspect: Project Sponsor

The International Organization (CICAD) is responsible for finding the necessary financial support for the implementation of the program. In this specific case, the Government of Japan sponsored the program.

- Legal Aspect: Letter of Agreement

After the proposal has been approved by the technical sector of the two institutions, and financial support has been assigned for its implementation, a “Letter of Agreement” needs to be developed and submitted to the legal sector of the two institutions for its final approval. Then, the disbursement process can start. This “Letter of Agreement” explains that all publications about the program will need to be approved by all parties involved in the publication process.

- External Evaluation and Auditing Aspect

The international organization (OAS/CICAD) has the legal right to do an external evaluation and audit of the program implemented by the university (USP/EERP) during a period of three years after its completion.

IMPACTS OF TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL COOPERATION ON NURSING HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA OF DEMAND REDUCTION IN LATIN AMERICA

The implementation of a technical & financial cooperation, with an innovative design, between an international organization and university/school of nursing, recognized in Latin America for its excellence in graduate education and research, has proved to be an efficient strategy to prepare nurses to work in the area of drug demand reduction in Latin America.

CICAD and the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing has already implemented two “Regional Research Capacity-Building Programs for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America,” with the participation of thirty-three nursing faculty from nine countries in Latin America. Eighteen participants graduated from the first program, and eighteen scientific articles have been accepted for publication. Fifteen other participants from the second program are implementing the research studies in their countries.

The nursing faculty who graduated from the first program are already occupying leadership positions as a Dean or Vice-Dean or graduate programs coordinator in their nursing schools, and have been responsible for creating research groups in the area of demand reduction. Some of them will be responsible for representing the nursing profession within the National Drug Control Commission in their countries. They become the driving force in the advancement of science and technology within their schools of nursing and at national level in the area of demand reduction.

CHALLENGES OF TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF DEMAND REDUCTION AND IN UNIVERSITIES AND NURSING SCHOOLS

In using the new international technical and financial cooperation framework for the development of partnerships with universities and nursing schools, some challenges become evident:

- The new framework of international TFC at universities and especially at nursing schools is a new idea and unique experience in Latin America.

- Most actors at micro level (universities and nursing schools) did not have any previous experience of working with OAS/CICAD. Hence, they needed to learn how to negotiate and prepare annual technical and financial reports to OAS/CICAD.
- The new conceptual and operational model for international TFC requires the involvement of all actors, who need to think and act beyond their usual academic or institutional boxes.
- The new international TFC provides space and environment to mobilize the power, interest, knowledge, and leadership of different parties involved in the process, with a view to achieving the equality and benefits of different actors.
- The “Regional Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America” has become a powerful instrument to prepare nurses to work in the area of demand reduction and to apply the new framework of international TFC to other situations in Latin America.

PERSPECTIVES OF TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF DEMAND REDUCTION AND IN UNIVERSITIES AND NURSING SCHOOLS

As a result of the success achieved through the implementation of two “Regional Research Capacity-Building Programs for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America”, CICAD and USP/EERP have decided to adopt the on-line modality for this program, in order to reach a large number of nurses and other health professionals interested in working in the area of demand reduction in Latin America.

This strategy has facilitated the linkages among the nursing schools in nine Latin-American countries and has fostered other type of supports, with a view to using this model of “Regional Research Capacity-Building Programs” for other subject areas, such as Public Health in Latin America.

The use of the new international TFC framework has facilitated the success of the Regional Research Capacity-Building Programs at the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing and has provided the basis to replicate this program on an international scale with universities in Canada and the United States.

CONCLUSION

The new international TFC framework is an important tool and strategy for the Demand Reduction Area of CICAD and for universities, with a view to implementing research capacity-building programs at the regional and international levels. Universities and nursing schools should enhance their knowledge and TFC management skills at the regional, national and international levels, in order to achieve better results and products for all parties involved in the process.

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NOTA

I This article strictly represents the authors' opinions and does not represent the position of the organization they work for or its administration