

# COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2025-2028 AECID-ECOWAS

WORKING TOGETHER IN WEST AFRICA  
FOR A MORE RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE AND  
INTEGRATED REGION



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACA</b>	Acuerdo de Cooperación Avanzada / Advanced Cooperation Agreement
<b>AECID</b>	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo / Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
<b>APIA</b>	AECID's Support Programme for Inclusive Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>CSF</b>	ECOWAS Commission's Community Strategic Framework
<b>DER</b>	Directorate of External Relations
<b>ECOGO</b>	ECOWAS Gender Observatory
<b>ECOWAP</b>	Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Policy
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>ECREEE/CEREEC</b>	ECOWAS Centre for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
<b>CCDG/EGDC</b>	ECOWAS Gender Development Centre
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>MAP</b>	Marco de Asociación País / Country Association Framework
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>OCE</b>	Oficina de la Cooperación Española / Spanish Cooperation Office
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Aid
<b>PPDU</b>	Project Preparation and Development Unit
<b>RAAF/ARAA</b>	ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food
<b>RAO</b>	Regional Authorisation Office of the ECOWAS Commission
<b>RFSR</b>	Regional Food Security Reserve
<b>SC</b>	Steering Committee
<b>SRC</b>	Regional Climate Strategy
<b>TMC</b>	Technical Monitoring Committee



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Spain and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have a long and solid history of collaboration and cooperation to foster the deepening of regional integration and the prosperous and inclusive development of West Africa. The objective of this new Cooperation Programme (2025-2028), agreed in the Declaration of Intent on International Cooperation of 12 January 2023, is to establish a general framework document for sectorial and annual action plans to be implemented, which will then inform the development of specific projects and initiatives to be undertaken in each specific period. Building on the achievements of the common work of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and ECOWAS throughout the years, the programme defines the joint priorities that will guide ECOWAS-AECID collaborative actions into the future, continuing the existent lines of work for the resilience and prosperity of the people of West Africa, for the creation of opportunities and improvement of living conditions for the new generations who will shape the future of the region.

Following a strategic assessment of the framework

instruments and documents of both ECOWAS and Spain, as well as an analysis of the work undertaken in recent years, three main priority areas have been identified: (1) rural development, sustainable agri-food systems and food security; (2) access to clean energy; and (3) gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. In addition, the following cross-cutting priorities have been identified: connectivity and infrastructure; inclusive economic development and institutional strengthening.

An adaptable general results matrix will enable the measurement of progress towards the agreed goals, as well as the modalities for monitoring and evaluation. This matrix demonstrates the alignment between the Strategic Objectives and Orientations Vision (2050 ECOWAS) and the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2024-2027 with the prioritised and cross-cutting sectors.

To safeguard its effectiveness and correct functioning, this cooperation programme also defines a renewed governance structure with a Steering Committee (SC) and a Technical Monitoring Committee (TMC).

## PRIORITY SECTORS

Rural development,  
sustainable agri-food  
systems and food security

Access to  
clean energy

Gender equality and  
empowerment of all  
women and girls

## CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES

Connectivity and  
infrastructure

Inclusive economic  
development

Institutional  
strengthening

# 01

## PROGRAMMATIC BASES

### 1.1 Context and Background

The solid partnership between both institutions is materialised with an extensive cooperation programme between AECID and ECOWAS, based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2005 and further developed in the 2009 Abuja Declaration.

Total Spanish ODA disbursements from 2009 (Abuja Declaration) to 2023 amount to €174.4 million, distributed in the following sectors: agriculture, rural development, food security and nutrition; infrastructure; renewable energies; migration; gender and institutional strengthening. The actions developed in the framework of these sectors have been carried out in collaboration with various ECOWAS Specialized Agencies, such as the Regional Agency of Agriculture and Food (ARAA/RAAF), the ECOWAS Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU), the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE/CERECEC), the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (CCDG/EGDC) and the different ECOWAS Commission departments (internal services; political affairs, peace and security; economic affairs and agriculture; infrastructures, energy and digitalisation; human development and social affairs).

For years, the AECID has been committed to the institutional strengthening of ECOWAS, accompanying the work of its regional agencies. Since 2022, AECID has funded these agencies directly to be able to work directly with the implementing agencies in the priority sectors of interest.

After more than fifteen years of intense and close collaboration, on 12 January 2023, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, signed a Declaration of Intent in Abuja to renew this cooperation.

### 1.2 Strategic framework

The relationship between Spain and ECOWAS is framed, in the first place, within the new Spanish Strategy for Africa, approved in September 2024. This Strategy highlights the importance of West Africa, the Sahel, and its regional organisations. In the field of cooperation, the 2023 Law on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity and the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2024-2027 include West Africa, the Sahel and its regional bodies as a priority and identify sectoral and cross-cutting priorities for Spain's development cooperation policy in the region, the wider continent and the world.

The Spanish Cooperation is represented in West Africa and the Sahel through the Spanish Cooperation Office (OCE) for Nigeria and ECOWAS, as well as the OCEs in Cape Verde, Mali, Niger and Senegal. Spain has entered into bilateral cooperation agreements with the different countries in the form of either MAP (Country Association Framework) or ACA (Advanced Cooperation Agreement).

On its side, in 2022, the ECOWAS Commission published its new strategy, Vision 2050. Ultimately, this programme aims to contribute to the backbone of ECOWAS' Vision 2050, to achieve a fully integrated community of people living in a peaceful and prosperous region, with strong institutions that respect fundamental rights and freedoms, striving for inclusive and sustainable development. To this end, AECID and ECOWAS will continue to strengthen their collaboration through projects and actions to be implemented by the different ECOWAS agencies and institutions.

In addition, the Strategic Objectives established in the Commission's Community Strategic Framework (CSF) 2022-2026 (known as 4x4) were published in 2022, comprising 4 Strategic Objectives –i) enhancement of peace and security at the regional level; ii) deepening integration; iii) good governance; iv) inclusive and sustainable development–and 2 key factors –i) competent institutions and ii) equitable partnerships–.

The ECOWAS Commission has also developed a series of sectoral policies and strategies that have informed the preparation of this document. In particular, the ECOWAS Commission Regional Climate Strategy

(SRC), the CEREEC/ECREEE Strategic Plan 2023-2027, the Protocol relating to free movement of persons, the ECOWAP 2025 Strategic Policy Framework, the RAAF/ARAA Master Plan 2021-2025, the CCGD/EGCD Strategies for gender equality and women and girl's empowerment 2023-2027, the launch of the ECOWAS Gender Observatory (ECOGO) and the ECOWAS Regional Infrastructure Master Plan 2020-2045.

Finally, the experience of AECID and ECOWAS in the framework of interventions financed with European funds has contributed to highlighting the strategic nature of this alliance, positioning them as key actors in the work with the EU..

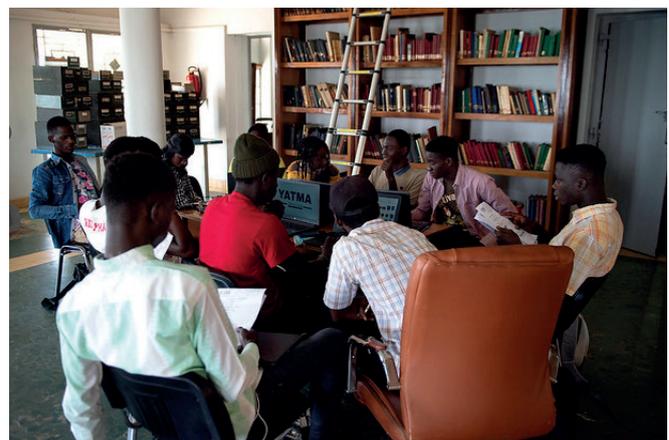
### 1.3 Sectors/Areas of cooperation

The lessons learned during these years, the challenges of the region and the legal framework in which the AECID-ECOWAS collaboration takes place have contributed to identify the following three priority sectors and three cross-cutting priorities.

#### 1.3.1 Priority sectors

##### a. Rural development, sustainable agri-food systems, and food security

AECID has enjoyed a close and productive collaboration with the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF/ARAA) since its creation. Furthermore, it provided support for the implementation of the re-



gional agricultural policy and the development of the ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF/ARAA), specifically assisting RAAF/ARAA in the creation of tools, processes and capabilities to inform decision-making in food crises.

In the context of the Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) review by ECOWAS in 2025, AECID will provide support to RAAF/ARAA in promoting sustainable and inclusive food systems that protect the environment, guarantee healthy food and safeguard the livelihoods of farmers. To do so, AECID and the RAAF/ARAA will focus on:

- consolidating AECID's support for the Regional Programme of Support to National Social Safety Nets in West Africa through the development of a multi-annual School Canteen Programme among other interventions.
- extending the scope of the regional reserve mechanism.

### **b. Access to clean energy**

AECID has been supporting CEREEC/ECREEE since its creation in 2010. AECID's contribution to the CEREEC/ECREEE will facilitate the advancement of existing initiatives included in CEREEC/ECREEE's strategic plan that prioritise the development of circular economy interventions and the Water-Energy and Food Nexus, including the needed inter-agency coordination, as well as the promotion of clean cooking models. Other key areas of support will include clean energy access for rural communities, the development of innovative forms of renewable energy and support for mini-hy-



dro systems. These interventions are designed to enhance the resilience of farming communities (agriculture, fisheries and livestock) through the provision of energy solutions, including solar water pumps, cold chains (conservation) and clean cooking solutions.

### **c. Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**

As a result of AECID's joint experience with different ECOWAS agencies such as the RAAF/ARAA and the CEREEC/ECREEE, the need to harmonise the work on gender mainstreaming in regional institutions has been identified and it was therefore decided to strengthen the work of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (CCDG/EGDC), including the development of human resources. In the coming years, AECID will continue to collaborate closely with the Centre through actions aimed at mainstreaming the gender approach in all of ECOWAS institutions and in all the interventions they carry out and supporting programmes related to reproductive health (i.e. fistula programme), digitalisation (i.e. enhancing the 50 million African Women Speak Platform) and encouraging the participation of women in community dialogues.

#### **1.3.2 Cross-cutting priorities**

##### **a. Connectivity and infrastructure**

In the Abuja Declaration 2009, Spain committed to supporting the establishment of the Infrastructure Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU) of the ECOWAS Commission and to contributing to the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Infrastructure



Development Plan. Currently, this plan encompasses 201 projects across four key sectors: transport, energy, information technology and trade liberalisation. It is expected that a review of the implementation of this Master plan will be carried out next year. Additionally, the PPDU is in the process of finalizing its 2025-2029 Strategic Business Plan, and its outcome will inform the discussion to define concrete areas of collaboration with AECID. This support is anticipated to include ongoing training and capacity-building for ECOWAS Member States, technical assistance to the PPDU, and joint financing for project preparation activities.

### **b. Inclusive economic development**

AECID is committed to mobilise multi-stakeholder partnerships involving civil society, governments, the private sector and international organisations to address inclusive development and the fulfilment of socio-economic rights. A key priority across all sectors of the programme will be to create quality jobs and economic opportunities across ECOWAS member countries, for women and youth. This cross-cutting approach allows to address root causes and can maximise the positive impact of migration on countries and communities. AECID and ECOWAS will foster initiatives that aim to promote economic opportunities and employability of women and youth. From this perspective, in the Abuja Joint Declaration, Spain undertook to promote the Spain-ECOWAS Fund on Migration and Development to support the Commission and Member States in the development and implementation of the ECOWAS Common Approach to Migration. Likewise, AECID's Support Programme for Inclusive Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa (APIA), financed a regional project to support the development of national action plans for youth employment in the

ECOWAS Member States of Cape Verde, Senegal, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. In the coming years, AECID will continue promoting the empowerment of vulnerable groups (young people, especially women, and displaced populations), support to employability and technical vocational training through the actions developed in the framework of the three priority sectors mentioned above.

### **c. Institutional strengthening**

AECID, through the Spanish Cooperation's Office in Nigeria and for the ECOWAS, has been accompanying the strengthening of various ECOWAS specialised agencies and institutions in their continuous efforts of improving public and managerial capacities.

In the coming years, AECID will continue to promote the reinforcement of public agencies' capacities, supporting the establishment of regional priority policies, improving donor alignment and synergies, as well as facilitating the elaboration of institutional mechanisms necessary to guarantee the implementation of the policies themselves and the continued growth and relevance of ECOWAS agencies.



# 02

## MANAGEMENT BASES

### 2.1 Governance and financial structure

#### 2.1.1 Steering Committee (SC)

The SC will be composed of representatives of AECID and ECOWAS and chaired jointly by the AECID Director and the President of ECOWAS or the persons to whom they choose to delegate. AECID will also be represented by the Director of Cooperation with Africa, the Arab World and Asia, the Spanish Ambassador to

Nigeria and the General Coordinator of Spanish OCE in Nigeria and for ECOWAS. On the ECOWAS side, the Commission's Director of External Affairs will also be present. This committee will be responsible for steering the overall implementation of the programme and making strategic decisions. It will monitor the overall programme, identify good practices, make recommendations and, if necessary, strategic reorientations. Aspects related to the financial management of the programme will also be addressed by this committee, as well as the monitoring of the disbursement plan.



The SC shall hold face-to-face meetings at least once a year but may hold additional online meetings upon request of the parties. Prior to each of its annual meetings, ECOWAS and AECID will prepare an annual monitoring report for the previous period, analysing progress in relation to the identified development results and indicators. This report and the action plan for the following period will be submitted for approval at each annual meeting.

### **2.1.2 Technical Monitoring Committee (TMC)**

The TMC is the coordination and monitoring structure of the programme. It will be responsible for monitoring the programme and its results, identifying any unforeseen events or obstacles that may affect the implementation of the intervention. The Committee will be co-chaired by the Director of External Relations (or his/her representative) and by the Deputy Director of the Deputy Directorate of Cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa (or the General Coordinator of the Spanish OCE in Nigeria and for ECOWAS). In the case of ECOWAS, this committee will be composed of representatives of the Directorate of External Relations (DER). The Committee is also comprised of the ECOWAS beneficiaries' Departments and Directorates/Specialized Agencies/ and of Representatives of the Spanish Embassy in Nigeria and the AECID. Its meetings will be held annually, either in person or by videoconference, although meetings may be held whenever both parties deem it necessary.

AECID's contributions will include a financial provision to support an Institutional Strengthening Technical Advisor to the ECOWAS Directorate of External Relations (DER). This advisor will, among other tasks, assist in commissioning on strategic, operational, and technical matters related to programmes financed by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development and will assist in the preparation of the technical Committee.

### **2.1.3 Indicative financing**

The programme's indicative financing for the period 2025-2028 is Euro 16 million. Actual amounts disbursed on an annual basis will be subject to AECID's overall budgetary appropriations and implementation progress.

## **2.2 Monitoring and evaluation**

The main tools for programme monitoring will be the programme's matrix and the Periodic Action Plans. The progress of the programme will therefore be rigorously monitored against the expected results and specific objectives. Follow-up and monitoring will be in accordance with the dimension and complexity of the intervention and will allow adopting decisions based on the evolution and on any unforeseen events that may arise.



The monitoring and evaluation exercise will also contribute to strengthening the institutional capacity of ECOWAS facilitating the identification of lessons learned and the replication of good practices. These good practices shall be reflected in an external mid-term and final evaluation report.

Annual financial and narrative reports will be produced by ECOWAS and then submitted to the Technical Monitoring Committee and to the Steering Committee.

In addition, each ECOWAS specialised agency or institution concerned by this Cooperation Programme must, as established in the mandatory cooperation MoUs, report to the AECID on the implementation of the respective projects/action plans of the funding lines annually and at the end of each action, preparing narrative and financial reports, as well as a final report for this purpose. All these reports will be considered for monitoring the development of the Cooperation Programme as a whole by the aforementioned Committees.

The Spanish Embassies and OCEs in ECOWAS member countries will be involved in the process and provide support for the implementation and monitoring of the programme's actions in each African country, identifying possible complementarities and synergies with other Spanish cooperation actions and projects;

and including possible collaborations with other Spanish Cooperation actors (academic institutions, research centres).

## 2.3 Visibility

AECID and ECOWAS will seek the best ways to ensure the visibility of their collaboration and work programmes. Both parties will seek through their own means to ensure the understanding of these activities across its beneficiaries and foster collaboration and engagement with other actors and partners with similar agendas.

In the framework of a year, a comprehensive communication strategy will be produced and adopted in the framework of Technical Monitoring Committee to establish clearly defined goals and practical guidelines to achieve the greatest efficiency of the used communication channels and ensuring synergies with established communication plans with the support of the ECOWAS Development partners Coordination Cell (Ex RAO Support Cell).





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