



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY DEPARTMENT

**DIRECT OR BILATERAL MUNICIPAL COOPERATION
Values, Principles and Methodological Criteria**

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background.....	3
3. Values and Guiding Principles of Direct Cooperation.....	4
3.1 Values.....	5
3.2 Guiding Principles.....	6
4. Basic Elements and Methodological Criteria.....	7
4.1 Basic Elements.....	7
4.2 Methodological Criteria.....	9
4.3 Critical Aspects and Recommendations.....	12
5. Current Situation.....	14
5.1 Priority Cities in the Master Plan	15

1. Introduction

In the course of the almost two decades since the Barcelona City Council began to carry out development cooperation actions, there has been a progressive evolution of the concepts and practices linked to a cooperation model which, in the case of Barcelona, arose from a vigorous community spirit of solidarity and which has come to be one of Barcelona's distinctive traits in the international sphere.

The compelling political will to keep working and strengthening the Barcelona City Council's development cooperation is not only marked by a progressive increase of the budget allocated to this area but moreover involves a constant improvement and coordination of the pertinent framework tools with the aim to provide a quality cooperation that will achieve the respective goals and have the desired impact.

The Master Plan for International Cooperation and Solidarity 2009-2012 now forms the framework document of reference for the definition of this activity's mission, strategic lines, models and criteria of intervention. An appropriate review, assessment and analysis process in connection with this Master Plan will help to generate contributions in the process of developing the next Master Plan in 2012.

As a result of these years of experience, the direct municipal cooperation has been structured as a tool of Barcelona's international projection. The active exchange of experience and know-how in municipal management, and the teamwork between the Public Administrations that, regardless of their respective institutional organisation, share the same language, priorities and aspirations, form the core of the activities in this field.

The direct municipal cooperation carried out by the Barcelona City Council through accords with cities or cities networks, is essential to the consolidation of the city's specific role as a leader in initiatives involving the exchange of good practices and the transfer of knowledge. This specific and distinctive public policy of the City Council provides a large added value to Barcelona in this city's inter-relationship with the world.

2. Background

In 1992, the difficult situation in Sarajevo and its appeal for help to the international community marked the start of an unprecedented mobilization of solidarity in Barcelona, which became a leader and coordinator of the many initiatives which were launched at that time, undertaking a solidarity commitment to the city of Sarajevo which was extended 5 years in time through the creation of the so called District XI-Sarajevo (Barcelona City has ten districts, and Sarajevo was the eleventh at that time). The goal of this initiative went beyond the physical reconstruction actions which were carried out in that city, seeking essentially to contribute to the re-establishment of the dynamic of human and social relations which had been cut off in a Sarajevo battered by war. This process made evident

Barcelona's capacity to lead the mobilization of agents of civil society (and not only in the field of cooperation), with the aim to establish links and ties of solidarity collaboration and commitment, as with the formula called *People to People*. Proof of the strength of the ties that were established is that 15 years after the start of the initiative, civil organisations, private citizens and local governments continue to maintain, albeit with less intensity, a good collaboration relationship.

The success of this specific experience and the model of intervention that it involved, led to the emergence, within the Barcelona City Council, of a new municipal function focused on humanitarian aid and the support of community initiatives, which was the embryo of what, in the course of time, would become a specific department devoted to development cooperation actions and solidarity.

Following a period in which the City Council's cooperation activities were centred basically on Sarajevo, it became clear that Barcelona's experience, its city model based on proximity to citizens and its plural and integrative vision could serve as a reference for other cities in the world. New scenes of action were opened from that time in Latin America, Africa and the Mediterranean Area.

These years of experience give the Barcelona City Council enough perspective to centre its cooperation model on a formula that has provided good results. The bilateral **city to city** projects, which allow the exchange of Barcelona's experiences in municipal management with other local governments, have placed the emphasis on transfer actions of knowledge and good practices, aimed to contribute to the harmonious sustainable local development of cities. This direct relationship between counterparts does not exclude in any case the fostering of spaces of conciliation and working networks within the field of solidarity, which are key elements in the success of any cooperation initiative. To the extent that it is feasible, the Barcelona City Council always seeks to assure that the exchanges and collaboration projects go beyond the scope of the City Council itself, becoming true processes of cooperation between cities.

Over the course of these years, the projects have grown in number and budget and an organisational restructuring has taken place around the International Cooperation Department, leading to today's structure which comprises the management of both direct cooperation and the subsidies that are granted to city organisations working in the field of cooperation. Moreover, a new sphere of action has been added to the Department, involving the promotion of the culture of Peace, which allows pertinent programmes and initiatives to be supported.

3. Values and Guiding Principles of Direct Municipal Cooperation

The experience accumulated over the course of this period allows us to conclude that the overall balance of direct cooperation is highly positive, and it has shaped the specific representative character of the Barcelona City Council, consolidating the city's strength as

a reference in the field of municipal management through the transfer of knowledge and experience. Moreover, this cooperation model, committed to inclusive networking, has provided excellent results with respect to Barcelona's projection in the international sphere, as a revitalizing player in local development processes with the participation of a wide range of transformative social agents.

The Barcelona City Council has been one of the pioneering cities in this field, and from the experience that it has acquired in these years has emerged a set of values, principles and work methodologies which may be useful to any local authority that wishes to launch or expand an international cooperation policy and which have come to form a specific know-how that now forms part of the international practice in this sphere. These values and principles will be added to and will supplement the general values and principles that are already established in the Master Plan 2009-2012.

3.1. Values

- a) **Municipalism and local democracy:** The goal of municipal direct cooperation is to strengthen the capacities of the local governments of the countries in the South with the aim to meet the needs of their citizens, in consonance with the principles of autonomy and local democracy, promoting capable, transparent and efficient city councils that more effectively uphold the rights of citizens. Direct Cooperation is the most specific trait vis-à-vis other agents of international cooperation and it is an important asset to Barcelona's calling as a global city connected to the world.
- b) **Transversality** and the solidarity use of the accumulated practice: The experience accumulated in municipal management in diverse areas and fields makes Barcelona an international reference in the sphere of urban transformation. Making this experience available to the cities of the South is a good way to contribute to their progress in the quest for their own solutions. The aim is to globalise and transversalise good practices and to learn from the mistakes made in the past, promoting the socialisation of knowledge. This value should also be reflected within the organisation. Without the active participation of the City Council's various departments, it is not possible to possess a good programme of direct cooperation. For this reason a high degree of internal accord and coordination is necessary, as well as the indispensable political support.
- c) **Concertation:** Local cooperation should be an activity of relation between the citizens of the North and the South, aimed to work jointly on the solution to their problems. The local governments should see that the cooperation goes beyond their own framework, becoming a genuine city-to-city relationship that incorporates and enlists the participation of the greatest possible number of institutions and organisations of the local civil society. Consequently, it should seek to create spaces of concertation with other actors of the civil society of both the South and the North in order to create synergies and complementarities that will contribute to the

achievement of the Master Plan's goals, and channel efficiently and effectively the brotherly and solidarity feelings towards other towns and countries.

- d) **Creation of networks with other municipalities:** Barcelona has always been committed to joint, concerted and networked action with the rest of the world's cities in order to carry out cooperation projects. In consonance with the aforementioned values and principles, these concerted actions seek to favour the local autonomy or the creation of lines of financing from the international bodies that will allow pressing urban problems to be confronted.
- e) **Support to the multilateral system:** Barcelona will help to strengthen the multilateral system of good governance that is represented, above all, by the United Nations. It will do so to the full extent of its possibilities and through the networks of cities. In recent years, Barcelona has established cooperation agreements with some United Nations bodies and agencies, an area in which it has also been a pioneering city.

3.2. Guiding Principles of Direct Cooperation:

- 1) **Strengthening and improvement of the institutional and technical capacities of the Local Authorities**, regardless of their institutional form, with the greatest respect for the autonomy and sovereignty of the Local Authorities within the frame of the cooperation relations and the joint work.
- 2) **Improvement of Governance and Promotion of Participation of Citizens** in municipal public affairs with respect to the steering of the projects. In the cooperation process we should endeavour to open experiences and channels of citizen participation which may be incorporated in the future into the habitual praxis of our partners.
- 3) Maximum endeavour of **coordination and exchange of information** with the rest of the actors of international cooperation at Catalan, Spanish and international level. The relations with the various Public Administrations in this field should be fluid and sincere.
- 4) **Joint work between cities should be carried out within the frame of the exclusive responsibilities and competences of the Local Authorities.** Since these elements differ according countries, it should be assured that this principle depends on a correct process of identification and accord of the cooperation activities. The performance of shared activities with other government levels, here and abroad, calls for a high level of knowledge of the real situation and sufficient capacity to assure the commitment of all the parties involved.
- 5) **Assurance of standards of quality in the results of the projects.** Any project, policy and/or service to be implemented or transferred to a city that is the object of

the Barcelona City Council's Direct Cooperation Programme should be perfectly applicable and endorsable in the City of Barcelona.

- 6) **Management transparency.** Direct cooperation should seek and assure the greatest possible transparency in the management of the programme. In addition to assuring the transparency of administrative processes, the programme should be explained to and shared with the established participation bodies.

4. **Basic Elements and Specific Methodological Criteria of Direct Municipal Cooperation:**

The task of creating and carrying out a direct cooperation programme is marked by specific aspects that make it substantially different from the classic process of identification, creation and management of a development cooperation project which is usually carried out by NGOs and other cooperation actors. Some of these aspects represent an advantage while other entail added difficulties. The basic elements which we propose here are the result of the working experience of the Barcelona City Council's Department for International Cooperation during the last 15 years, in which cooperation activities have been carried out with over 40 cities around the world.

4.1. Basic elements:

- 1) **The political aspect:** Direct municipal cooperation requires a political decision and the political managers' continuous support of the programme. Generally speaking, the local authorities are not politically or administratively conceived to play a significant international role. For this reason, the involvement of politics in their activities is indispensable:
 - Externally. In the international sphere, with respect to the local authorities, the Mayors and Vice-Mayors alone represent the city. This is why, even if only in an isolated and carefully selected way, the presence abroad of the highest political representatives is important. This basic element is shared with the tasks of International Relations in other spheres (economic promotion, procurement of investments, world organisations of cities, etc.). The convergence of this foreign presence with the city's own policy and obligations requires a high degree of coordination between the various areas and the Mayor's office managers, as well as a high degree of understanding of the importance of the "policy of direct city-to-city cooperation".
 - Internally. Direct cooperation programmes are based on the capacity to promote the participation of the various municipal services and professionals in the technical assistance and joint work process between cities. The achievement of this aim will depend to a large extent on the political managers' capacity to convey, to the various persons in charge of the services, the

importance of these activities to the city and the need to cooperate, allowing and foreseeing the participation of their professionals in the projects. These processes call for a certain investment of time aside from their usual duties, likewise entailing an added effort for the persons in charge of the services. The International Cooperation services are responsible for assuring that these workloads will be distributed in such a way that they do not harm the various services in any way.

- 2) **The technical aspect:** For the correct creation and management of a direct cooperation programme, it is essential to possess an appropriate technical team or a specialist department or area of the City Council that will implement and coordinate the programme in relation to the exterior and the interior of the organisation. This area should have personnel who are acquainted with the sphere of international cooperation and its actors, and with the internal operation of the administration. In addition to the indispensable knowledge of foreign languages among the project managers, these technical experts should have notions of international relations.

This department has the following functions:

- a) Internal coordination of the participation of the various areas of the organisation, assurance of quality in the identification and performance of projects, and correct management of resources.
- b) Fostering of the necessary transversality.
- c) Promotion of assessment and learning processes.

This specific area may adopt diverse forms and each local authority is responsible for deciding on its format and volume. The only condition is that it should be in keeping with the expectations placed on this sphere and assure the existence of the necessary specialised technical personnel.

- 3) **The strategic aspect:** Once the decision has been made to perform programmes of this type, each local authority should carry out a process of defining the work strategy. This necessarily involves the definition of the budget, principles, values, work sectors and priority geographical areas. All this should be included in a strategy document and/or a Master Plan. This strategy should never be for a time frame of less than four years. In a shorter time than this, it is difficult to see the results in any field of international cooperation and especially in that of municipal direct cooperation.

4.2. Specific methodological criteria:

The project cycle in processes of international bilateral cooperation and collaboration between cities is not substantially different from the classic model although it does have certain specific features. For this reason we will be speaking here primarily of the process cycle rather than of the project cycle.

1. **Political Decision.** In contrast to other actors who carry out international cooperation programmes and projects, in which the manifestation of the political will corresponds to the organisation's selfsame essence, the local authorities require the formation and formalisation of this political will. Once this point is reached, the process cycle begins.

2. **Process Cycle of Direct Cooperation.**

- Identification phase. As in other spheres of international cooperation, this phase is essential to assuring the success of cooperation processes. Once the request has been made and the political will has been expressed to support it according to the adopted strategy, the first task is to carry out an analysis of the Frame of Action that will allow the establishment of the basis of this cooperation relationship.
- Knowledge of the Frame of Action. In this first step, the specialized areas make a preliminary exchange of information and visits to identify the parameters of the cooperation relationship, including the following aspects:
 - socio-political and economic reality of the country
 - political and competence-related structure of the local authorities
 - preliminary approach to the possible work areas
 - Analysis of the administrative model and technical capacity of the local authority.

The active participation of the rest of the municipal personnel is not indispensable in this phase. Generally speaking, in these initial visits it is positive the participation of elected officials and political managers, but a careful technical identification cannot be obviated. Sometimes the spheres of work and even the projects are already established in the political decision but this phase of technical identification is indispensable to the success of cooperation activities.

- Concretisation. Once the Frame of Action has been identified and once it has been internalised by the technical and political managers, if it is decided to go ahead with the action then a quicker process of concretisation of spheres of work and of possible projects to be implemented during the process gets under way. This phase, which will also involve some exchanges and visits, will necessarily call for the participation of the municipal experts and specialists in the defined areas, since they will help to assure the quality of the project to be

performed. The real scope of this collaboration can only be concretised by means of a frank open dialogue with the municipal experts of both parties. This phase may extend for one year, depending on the distance between the cities involved and their realities. At the same time, in this phase the negotiation of the accord (Protocol or Agreement) that will govern the process in the implementation phase will also be started up.

- Accord Phase. It is highly recommendable to establish a written accord in which the process is described, including: work spheres, obligations of each party and time calendar. In this phase, the existence of a flexible and collaborative legal and administrative structure is totally indispensable. It should be recalled here that the local authorities were not initially conceived to maintain international relations. There are diverse legal formulas and instruments for formalising this accord:
 - Twinning Accord. This is the figure that the city councils have traditionally used to formalize accords. It is a formula which emerged after World War II and which has subsisted to our days. It is a very political formula but technically little operative. It does not usually have an expiration date and the terms of collaboration between the cities are not specified very clearly, beyond the exchange of institutional visits. It has been many years since the Barcelona City Council last used this formula in its international cooperation policy, although it does use it in other spheres.
 - Friendship and Cooperation Protocols. This formula is similar to the *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU). It is a good tool for establishing and orienting the bases of joint work. This document usually defines the areas of mutual interest in which the cities will carry out activities. Additionally, it usually establishes a period of validity of four years. In this type of accord, beyond stays and technical visits, economic commitments do not usually appear. It is the formula most commonly used by the Barcelona City Council in the field of International Cooperation.
 - Executive Agreements. This legal tool is a development of the previously described accords since it is usually signed within the frame of a Friendship and Cooperation Protocol. It is used when economic commitments are derived from the activities agreed on. Moreover, it is indispensable when investment projects are carried out that involve transfers of funds abroad. These agreements establish the obligations of the two parties with respect to the performance of the project, the management of the funds and their justification.
- Implementation Phase: Once the accords have been formalised, the Department for International Cooperation (or the specific department appointed in each case), in coordination with the respective municipal technical experts, will monitor the

performance of the activities, whether they involve exchanges and training or executive projects. In this phase, the participation of the municipal officials is indispensable since the transfer process of knowledge and good practices unfolds to a large extent in this stage. Consequently, it is important to take into consideration the following aspects:

- Flexibility. In any cooperation process, a great number of elements may affect the pace and progress of a project. It is indispensable to have the capacity to adapt and update the process in order to assure its final success. It should be considered that the project involves two Public Administrations that do not always (if ever) have the same formalities and time frames in their proceedings. It is important to work with the technical monitoring commissions to provide effective monitoring and modification tools, especially in executive agreements. The work of the municipal personnel is essential in this respect.
- Monitoring the context. The function of monitoring the political and social context of the counterpart country and city is very important. This is a function of the city councils' departments specialised in international cooperation. Since long-term processes are involved, there are many circumstances that may affect the correct implementation of a project. We are referring here to political cycles, possible crises and destabilisations of conflict situations.
- Monitoring and supervision of the performance of projects. In addition to the active participation of the municipal personnel, the monitoring of the implementation of projects by the cooperation experts is essential. These personnel have an in-depth knowledge of the accords and the legal and administrative terms for the performance of these activities. The technical municipal personnel of other services attached to the projects cannot carry out this job since, once they are in Barcelona, they have their own duties in their respective departments.

In the absence of a correct monitoring of these aspects, which assure the performance of the project pursuant to the established accords, problems may arise when the time comes to justify the funds that have been used.

3. Project Justification and Assessment Phase: This phase of the cooperation process involves the justification of the funds that have been used and the assessment of the overall functioning of the process and of the expected impact.

- Justification: In this phase, the specialised department should watch out for the correct accounting of the funds used in the implemented project. Diverse methods of justification exist since each local authority must

perform the justification according to its own internal legislation. It is indispensable to include the justification model in the accord phase in order to ease this process.

- Technical assessment of projects: In addition to the correct accounting of funds and the verification of the implementation of the activities foreseen, the key element to be assessed in transfer processes of knowledge and good practices is how this knowledge has affected the work of the local authority. In this phase the term "process" acquires its full meaning in direct municipal cooperation over and above the "project". A process that culminates successfully will be considered one in which it is verified, once the exchange, training and/or joint work activities have been finished, before the start-up of new initiatives, that the techniques and/or innovations which have been worked on in the course of the process and in the various projects have been incorporated into the customary praxis. There are diverse techniques and methodologies for the assessment of projects and the assessment may be carried out internally or externally. The choice of method is made according to the type of project or process that is to be assessed. The assessment of the cooperation praxis allows a continuous learning process to be unfolded.
- Process Appraisal Phase: At the end of the cooperation process, which is usually marked by the extinction of the validity of the Protocols and Accords relating to the projects, both partners should carry out a process appraisal. This appraisal is always necessary but it is especially important if it is wished to repeat or renew the cooperation between cities. This phase should incorporate the technical assessment of the projects with the political appraisal of the relations created in the process.

The cooperation should be a learning process that will help to improve one's own work and the future joint work, and it should also help to build and consolidate the political relations with geographical areas of interest.

The joint appraisal of the things done well and of the problems that arose in the course of the cooperation relationship will allow the instruments and mechanisms to be adjusted with a view to new commitments. The results of this appraisal should be incorporated into the assessment and design process of future strategy documents and/or Master Plans.

4.3. Critical Aspects and Recommendations:

Despite the positive appraisal of direct cooperation activities in recent years and the fact that Barcelona has been a reference in this field at both national and international level, a

critical analysis allows us to propose some recommendations for the improvement of the programme's functioning.

- A **good coordination between political decision-making and technical work** would help to avoid forced cooperation processes that sometimes produce complications in the creation, management and justification of projects. There is enough accumulated experience to help to define the priorities and possibilities of the Action Plan in the field of international cooperation as an integral part of the city's International Relations and International Projection.

- **Budget forecast.** Clarity in the budget forecast, independently of the budget amount devoted to the programme, will allow a better planning of the volume and type of activities to be carried out in direct cooperation. This forecasting will avoid the creation of false expectations in our partners and clarify, from the beginning of the process, the scope and characteristics of the cooperation activities to be implemented. This clarity should be especially visible for the budget item relating to foreign investments, since the allocation to this budget item and its foresee ability, depend to a large extent the structure of the programme.

A large budget is not necessary to carry out useful direct cooperation processes with good quality but it is necessary to have knowledge of the margin of action. Budgetary foresee ability also allows the suitable planning of processes and, consequently, their correct assessment.

- **Consolidation of a technical structure appropriate to the expectations of the programme.** The high degree of specialisation of the personnel attached to any sphere of work in international relations calls for a suitable human resources policy, which means personnel specialised in international cooperation with on-site and project management experience. When forming the team, consideration should be given to such aspects as training, knowledge of foreign languages or, for example, the flexibility of working hours and calendar that this job requires (work on holidays, long stays and trips, etc.).

- **Improvement of the articulation process between the Specialized Department of International Cooperation and the Municipality's Administrative and Legal Services.** We consider it to be indispensable to carry out a good process of exchange of information and knowledge so that these areas will understand each other's specific features and needs. This relationship is essential in order to carry out Direct Cooperation Programmes, assuring at any time that the administrative procedure is carefully performed and that the deadlines are met.

- Introduction of the Direct Cooperation Programme into the work of the **Municipal Council for International Cooperation**, or into the participation body that is used by each municipality. A better knowledge of this programme on the part of Barcelona's civil society would improve the possibilities of working jointly and establishing more synergies.

5. CURRENT SITUATION. Barcelona City Council Direct Municipal Cooperation Programme.

The current Master Plan for International Cooperation and Solidarity (2009-2012), approved in 2008, marked a step forward in the definition and systematisation of the quality of the development cooperation carried out by the Barcelona City Council, which showed itself to be a leader in the definition of public policies in this field. In the case of direct cooperation, it establishes the guidelines of the interventions in the respective period, allocating a total of approximately 25% of the existing resources in response to the political will to strengthen the direct municipal actions unfolded by the City Council.

The guidelines of these Master Plans (2006-2008 and 2009-2012) have given rise in this period to a series of direct cooperation projects, notably including the following:

- 1) Modernisation of solid-waste collection in the *Beni-Makeda* district. **Tanger**. (2006-2007)
- 2) Promotion of local good governance in northern Morocco. **Tanger and Tetouan**. (2004-2006)
- 3) Urban development of the Al Nasser district. **Gaza City**. (2005-2008)
- 4) Technical assistance on mental health matters in the **Gaza Strip** (2005-2008)
- 5) Seminar on *How to Build Peace, Dialogue and Development...* **Medellin** (2006)
- 6) White Paper on Community Safety and Positive Coexistence in **Bogotá** (2006-2007)
- 7) Organisation of the documentary heritage of the Municipal Prefecture of **Campinas** (2003-2007)
- 8) Technical assistance in Tax Policy. **Quito** (2006-2008)
- 9) Technical assistance on Tourism, Economic Promotion and International Relations. **Sarajevo** (2007-2008)
- 10) Urban Rehabilitation of Barcelona Street in **La Havana** (2005-2008).
- 11) Community development projects to the districts of **La Havana** (2005-2007)
- 12) Integral programme of Prevention and Care of Women suffering from Gender Violence. **Puebla de Zaragoza**, Mexico (2006-2010)
- 13) Twinning between the Youth Councils of **Nablus** and Barcelona. (2006-2008)
- 14) Inter-plot paths in **Postrer Río**. Dominican Rep. (2007)
- 15) Technical Assistance to SERDA (Economic Development Agency of the Sarajevo Region). **Sarajevo** (2008-2010)
- 16) Creation of the Municipal Administrative Archive of **Maputo**, Mozambique (2007-2009)
- 17) Rehabilitation of the Ntsindiya Cultural Centre. **Maputo**, Mozambique (2007-2009)
- 18) Support for the Creation of the Municipal Archives System of the Metropolitan District of **Quito** (2007-2009).
- 19) Strengthening Technical Vocational Capacities of Youth in the Municipality of San Salvador. **San Salvador** (2007-2008)
- 20) Support for the Re-engineering and Strategic Plan of the city of San Salvador. **San Salvador** (2007-2009)
- 21) Support for the creation and activities of IDELCA - Institute for Local Development in Central America. **San Salvador**. (2006-2009)

- 22) Reconstruction of the Barcelona Peace Park in **Gaza City** (2010)
- 23) Remodelling of Sports Facilities in **Medellín** - Moravia District (2010-2011)
- 24) Technical assistance on matters of Municipal Markets Management in **Medellín** (2009-2011)
- 25) Remodelling of the public space at the *Mine Peza* Housing Area, **Tirana** (2011-2012)
- 26) Technical assistance to the city of **Tirana** in Urban Development, and Management of Civic Centres (2009-2012)
- 27) Technical Assistance on the drafting of the Libraries Plan of **Maputo**, Mozambique (2011-2012).
- 28) Remodelling Project of Samora Machel Avenue in **Maputo**, Mozambique (2011-2013). Under preparation.

5.1. Priority Cities according to the Master Plan 2009-2012 of the Barcelona City Council:

Mediterranean Area: **Tangier region and Gaza.**

The physical and cultural proximity of the Mediterranean cities has given rise to a long and fruitful cooperation. Ties of friendship exist with the cities of northern Morocco and there is a line of work already under way to strengthen municipal governance there. Cooperation has been under way with Gaza since the year 1998, within the frame of the Trilateral Accord signed between Barcelona, the Palestinian city and Tel Aviv. The relations with Gaza have always been based on the endeavour to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants by strengthening the municipal services. By working in this direction, a contribution is made to the strengthening of the conditions there with a view to achieving a just and lasting peace in a context of conflict. This work has never jeopardised the good relations with the city of Tel Aviv, which maintains active collaborations with other departments of the Barcelona City Council.

Africa: **Maputo and Niamey.**

The cooperation activities in Africa have been a constant aspiration of the Barcelona City Council and perhaps one of the major challenges that have been met in recent years. The cities of Maputo and Niamey exemplify some of the urban problems of Africa's big cities today: social imbalances, deficient infrastructures (sewage, water supply, etc.) and debility of institutions and municipal management. The Barcelona City Council seeks to participate in processes aimed to improve municipal management, according to the priorities established by the cities themselves. This process has been a success in Maputo, although less so in Niamey due to the difficulties inherent to the institutional and technical debility of its Public Administrations and the internal and security problems that have lately been experienced by the country.

Latin America: **San Salvador and its metropolitan area, and Medellin.**

Medellin, the second largest city in Colombia, had been considered in recent decades to be one of the world's most violent cities but is now recognised as a model of social and urban transformation, a change brought about on the basis of education and culture. Within this context, the Barcelona City Council has sought to contribute to this exemplary process and its participation in cooperation projects here has been quite stimulating, entailing a consolidation of the task carried by Medellin's civil society and its local institutions in the eradication of violence.

San Salvador and its metropolitan area form the scene of a leadership for the whole Central American region in processes aimed to bolster the local governments and the strength of municipalism in order to solve citizens' problems there. This model for the present and the future meshes with the city of Barcelona's calling to advance along this path and to establish a real exchange of experiences and strategies.

Barcelona, 26 July 2011.
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Contributions made by all the municipal experts who have managed the Direct Cooperation Programme for 15 years.