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THE EL SALVADOR AEROSPACE INSTITUTE – A NEW SPACE AGENCY IN A LOW INCOME COUNTRY: HISTORY, CHALLENGES, MILESTONES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE.**Abstract**

The El Salvador Aerospace Institute (ESAI) is a national project, whose mission is to “obtain the capability to develop and use aerospace technology to contribute to the national economy of El Salvador and improve the quality of life of its citizens”. The idea of a locally established headquarters for space activities based from this Central American country started in 2010, with the confluence of several projects led by young Salvadorian professionals. From its humble beginnings, the institute has grown into a government-academia-industry-and civil society effort to demonstrate the capabilities of the country to insert itself into a new paradigm of scientific research and technological development. This papers explores the prospects and possibilities of a newly created space agency and space program within the context of a low income country as estimated by a cost-benefit analysis not only economical but also social. The first part of this paper presents the logical and historical framework for the conception of ESAI, its most important milestones and its ongoing efforts to work in a series of alliances with local and foreign governments and academic institutions as well as the private sector. The second part of this paper presents the challenges and obstacles to accomplish ESAI’s mission, and the strategies to overcome them. This include, a PESTLE analysis of the current situation, a proposal for a legal, political and institutional framework to support space activities, several financing schemes and an analysis of their effectiveness, public-private models of cooperation and the resources needed to develop its administrative and technical manpower. The third part of this paper presents the National Aerospace Program (NASP) a 10-year plan to accomplish ESAI’s mission and metrics to assess the benefits it might provide to the country.