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State-of-the-art in international development cooperation, with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation

Analytical study of knowledge accrued, 2013–2022

Anna Cristina Hernández Rosario



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cooperation, with a focus on South-South
and triangular cooperation**

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Anna Cristina Hernández Rosario



This document was prepared by Anna Cristina Hernández Rosario, a consultant with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), under the supervision of Enrique Oviedo, Political Affairs Officer, Office of the Secretary of the Commission.

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Introduction

This document explores the state-of-the-art in international development cooperation, with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation, based on the knowledge accrued between 2013 and 2022.¹

The document's structure begins with an explanation of the methodological approach used: research techniques and qualitative analysis, sources consulted, types of documents, classification criteria, and validation, analysis and evaluation of document priority.

The following section deals with the frame of reference used for the analysis and describes the historical evolution of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation and the most relevant milestones in that process.

The central chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the state-of-the-art in international cooperation for development, with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation. It contains four subsections on the issues deemed to be of greatest relevance for the analysis:

- (i) Development in transition as a foundation
- (ii) Multi-stakeholder environment: identification of key stakeholders
- (iii) Challenges and priorities in South-South and triangular cooperation
- (iv) Towards the reconfiguration of South-South and triangular cooperation as a development tool: a collective approach

Each of these central issues in the subsections identify and explore elements that are indispensable in understanding the reconfiguration process that the international cooperation system—and South-South and triangular cooperation in particular—continues to undergo, in light of the ideas put forward by various authors in highly rigorous publications and research.

The final section offers a summary of the central ideas developed in the earlier sections and identifies some of the main challenges faced by these cooperation mechanisms in pursuit of shared well-being for all the countries of the region.

¹ This is the final consultancy report titled *Review of the state-of-the-art in international development cooperation, with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation: analytical study of knowledge accrued, 2013–2022*. In addition to this document, the consultancy has compiled a set of bibliographic references and summaries of the documents reviewed.

I. Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative bibliographic analysis of documents on the current state-of-the-art in international development cooperation, with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation over the past 10 years (specifically, the period of review covers from 2013 to 2022), with a longitudinal view intended to enrich regional dialogue and informed decision-making.

The documentary analysis conducted involved a rigorous evaluation of the documents and their selection, validation (for veracity and objectivity) and classification, in addition to their interpretation and analysis. To that end, a descriptive approach was used to gather knowledge about the object of study, clearly distinguishing the authors' statements (indicated as quotations) from those of the compiler, in order to combine them in a normative approach.

The work covered different types of scientifically rigorous texts dealing with international, South-South and triangular development cooperation: academic literature in the form of research articles in journals (reporting the results of rigorous research or scientific or academic theses), articles in anthologies, reviews or critical commentaries on texts (exhaustive examination of the knowledge available on a specialized topic), books, book chapters, essays, monographs and proceedings from specialized conferences.

For that purpose, the main sources of information were the following:

- Documentation centres, repositories and online libraries
- Documentary databases of scientific/academic content
- Research publication platforms
- Other bibliographic search tools

An initial online search in the main repositories, documentation centres and academic search engines,² using the keywords "South-South cooperation", "triangular cooperation", "international cooperation" and "development cooperation—in both English and Spanish— yielded a compilation of more than 200 documents of different types (research articles in journals, articles in anthologies,

² The main sources consulted to compile the documents were the ECLAC Digital Repository, the CLACSO Virtual Library, the Scientific Information System Redalyc, the EUROsociAL Library, Dialnet, Science Research, ScienceOpen, World Wide Science, Refseek, Academia.edu, Google Scholar, JURN, SciELO and Koha.

critical commentaries on texts, reviews, academic theses, books, book chapters, essays, monographs and conference proceedings) with different levels of scientific rigour and on topics dealing, to a lesser or greater extent, with the global development agenda.

After the first review of the documents, the list was reduced by half, mainly on account of issues such as considerations of timeliness (publication dates far removed from the study period and with little substantive relevance), documents with little or no rigour in the presentation of the writing or arguments, in languages other than those relevant to this study (i.e. other than Spanish or English), repetitions (same publication in different sources with possible variations in the format alone), as well as texts that cited some of the key words but that had no relation to them.

After that initial classification, bibliographic record templates (output forms) were prepared to collate the relevant information from the documents, indicating the author (and editors and/or coordinators, in certain cases), title, date, country of publication, type of material, number of pages, document reference code (as available, ISSN, ISBN, licences and/or others), source, language, keywords in the document, category of relevance and key summary or synthesis of the document. The production of these bibliographic records, which required a comprehensive reading of the texts, identified 78 documents that were valid for the task at hand; in the fourth and final stage, corresponding to the preparation of the final report, another five documents valid for analysis were added, giving a total of 83 collected documents.

It should be noted that the summaries in the bibliographic records—which are not included in this publication—express statements by the authors exclusively. The reading of these documents allowed the identification of the central elements of the proposed analysis, many of which were contained in different parts of the document (deemed valid were some summaries and abstracts made by the authors indicating the problem, object of study and main results in introductions and conclusions or recounting key elements or central ideas in specific chapters or sections); accordingly, referring to those documents' syntheses or central ideas invariably requires the appropriate bibliographic citation of the document in question, as was done at all times in this final report.

The methodology used for classifying the documents by relevance should also be outlined: an evaluation table with several criteria was prepared, indicating scores on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). The elements examined and assigned different weights in this evaluation table (see table 1) were the following:

- **Scientific rigour–document type:** This section considers whether the publication comes from a school of higher studies, research centre, recognized organization or other institution, whether its arguments are supported by a broad and solid bibliography and whether it complies with all the methodological parameters of a research publication. The evaluation table assigns a score according to the level of compliance with those criteria.
- **Issue addressed by the 2030 Agenda:** This section examines whether the central themes are contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and whether they are addressed in accordance with the Agenda's terms. The evaluation table assigns a score according to the level of compliance with that criterion.
- **Publication year:** This section assigns a higher relevance for recent publications (highest scores for the current year and last year) and sets scores for the others according to their years of publication.
- **Publication country and region:** This section assigns a higher score to publications originating from a Latin American and Caribbean country or from an international organization focused on that region. However, the following scoring levels set the guidelines for determining their greater or lesser relevance for the analysis.

Table 1
Evaluation table: classification of document relevance

Relevance: wighted scores from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) ^a				
Score	40%	30%	20%	10%
	Scientific rigour– Publication type	Issue addressed by the 2030 Agenda	Publication year	Country/Region
5 (very high)	1. The publication comes from a school of higher studies, research centre, recognized organization, or other institution. 2. Its arguments are supported by an extensive and solid bibliography. 3. Meets all methodological parameters for research publication.	The central themes are contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are addressed in accordance with the Agenda's terms.	Published this year or last year (2021–2022).	The publication comes from a country in Latin America and the Caribbean or from an international organization focused on the region.
4 (high)	Meets at least 2 of the 3 criteria for the highest score (5: very high).	The central themes are contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, while they are addressed with specific reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the approach is aligned with what the Agenda proposes.	Year of publication is relatively recent (2018–2020).	The publication comes from a country with strong cooperation ties with Latin America and the Caribbean and extensive experience in triangular and/or South-South cooperation.
3 (average)	Meets at least 1 of the 3 criteria for the highest score (5: very high).	The central themes are clearly related to those set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in some cases, the approach is in line with what the Agenda proposes.	The year of publication is between 2015 and 2017.	The publication comes from a country outside Latin America and the Caribbean but with extensive experience in triangular and/or South-South cooperation.
2 (below average)	Partially meets at least 1 of the 3 criteria for the highest score (5: very high).	The central theme is not specifically contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but various publications analysed identify it as relevant for the region.	The year of publication is between 2013 and 2014.	The publication comes from a country outside Latin America and the Caribbean with relatively little experience in triangular and/or South-South cooperation.
1 (low)	Does not meet any of the 3 criteria for the highest score (5: very high).	The central themes are not contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and few or none of the publications analysed highlight it as relevant for the region.	Published before 2013.	The publication comes from a country that does not belong to Latin America and the Caribbean and has little experience in international cooperation of any kind.

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of analysis of the publications.

^a Scoring bands: Very high: 4.6 – 5; High: 4 – 4.5; Average: 3 – 3.9; Below average: 2 – 2.9; Low: 0 – 1.9.

Of the 83 documents analysed, this evaluation exercise assigned twelve (12) to the “very high” relevance band, fifteen (15) to the “high” band, thirty-five (35) to the “average” band, nineteen (19) to the “below average” band and two (2) to the “low” band. It should be noted that although the year of publication was taken into account in the evaluation considered, certain non-recent publications were deemed to be of “very high” or “high” relevance.

The documents collected during the consultancy, with their central arguments and theories, are the basis for this report, which gives an account of the state-of-the-art of South-South and triangular cooperation in the Latin American and Caribbean region over the past decade (2013–2022).

II. Frame of reference

South-South and triangular cooperation, as growing and increasingly relevant forms of international cooperation, have been taking shape for decades, albeit with other nuances different from those that characterize them today. A review of the literature finds the first references nearly a century ago, with authors such as Huitrón Morales (2016) suggesting the first conference of the League against Imperialism (Brussels, 1927) as the first direct step in the conceptualization of South-South cooperation. This, according to Huitrón Morales (2016), was “the initial moment on which the political ideology of an alliance from the South was built”, but it was not until 1955, at the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, that the “discourse of the South” that has lasted until today was developed, with non-interference, respect for sovereignty and the promotion of reciprocal cooperation among its guiding principles. Huitrón Morales (2016) further states that “although economically the ‘spirit of Bandung’ did not transcend, in political and ideological terms it represented the admiration and liberalization of countries that were under the colonial yoke, raising a new voice and inspiring an international political discourse that positioned them as an independent force” (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021).

Alemany and Vaccotti (2021) also state that “international cooperation began to take shape in the form of collaboration between more developed countries and other relatively more disadvantaged countries after the Second World War. The more developed countries became aware of the existence in some societies of endemic problems such as hunger, illiteracy and poverty, which made improving their living conditions impossible. Between the 1940s and 1950s, a period recognized as the first generation of international cooperation for development, underdevelopment was associated with the backwardness of non-industrialized societies in contrast to the development of industrial societies.”

The 1960s were defined by a “developmentalist outlook”: “In those years there was a proliferation of conferences, research, studies and publications on the so-called Third World with the prevailing view of linear progress from traditional societies towards modern societies. Cooperation strategies aimed at rapid economic growth with investments in productive infrastructure. The reflections of Bandung (1955) contributed to the first Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade (1961), which united around a discourse that identified ‘developing countries’. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was also created in 1961 to establish the guidelines for its members’ cooperation policy, and it remains to this day the most authoritative institutional body for development cooperation criteria. The decade also saw the first

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held in Geneva in 1964, which led to the creation of the Group of 77 (later expanded to 118), which created the first venue for joint action among developing countries and, in addition, inaugurated what came to be known as the North-South Dialogue” (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021).

In the 1970s, as a result of ongoing changes within economies and societies, a critical view emerged that divided the world into the centre and the periphery; values of solidarity, equity and justice were incorporated into that vision, however, with calls for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) as embodied in the 1974 Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021). The 1970s were the decade of greatest activity in defining and promoting South-South cooperation. The key milestone was the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (ECLAC, 2021), convened in Argentina in 1978, at which 138 United Nations Member States adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA). Meanwhile, in 1982, the external debt crisis broke out in the region, triggering economic adjustment measures that had serious repercussions for living standards, basic rights and social policies (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021).

“The objectives of BAPA included promoting national and collective self-sufficiency among developing countries, while taking due account of the necessary support of global interdependence on the path to development. BAPA emphasized that technical cooperation among developing countries was intended to complement traditional development cooperation, and it sketched out broad guidelines for that endeavour. BAPA became a regional and global reference point: its outcome document—which laid the foundations and set the principles for horizontal technical cooperation, leaving behind the vertical, assistance-focused vision of traditional hegemonic cooperation that had prevailed prior to 1978—was the most frequently quoted work in the field of South-South cooperation until 2020” (Oviedo, 2021).

The author further notes that “another of the many contributions of BAPA was to promote the institutional strengthening of technical development cooperation. By way of example, its influence can be seen in the establishment of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in 1980 (known as the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation since 2003), the creation of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries in 1981, the launch of the South Commission in 1986 and the inauguration of the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation in 1995.” From an institutional perspective, “the 1990s saw increased financial, technical, human and institutional resources for development cooperation” (ECLAC, 2021).

“In the 1990s, amidst the political and economic realignments brought on by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the development and consolidation of globalization, the definition and scope of South-South cooperation became broader and more complex. In 1995, the United Nations General Assembly recognized South-South cooperation as an important element of international development cooperation, an essential basis for national and collective self-reliance and a guarantee for the participation and inclusion of developing countries in the world economy. The General Assembly also introduced the concept of ‘pivotal countries’ to refer to developing countries with the capacity to provide aid and expertise to other countries with similar or lower levels of gross domestic product (GDP)” (Oviedo, 2021). Additionally, ECLAC (2021) indicates that during the 1990s, “regional and subregional integration mechanisms started to gain recognition as important instruments for South-South cooperation; these mechanisms reached full development after 2000, when the countries of the South began to participate actively in discussion and agreements around the construction of a fairer and more effective architecture for development”.

“From 2000 onwards, the conceptual refinement of what aid was fair and effective for development was accompanied by an economic boom that led to a significantly increased flows of assistance. Notable during that decade was the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002, which produced the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development. One of that document’s stated priorities was the establishment of partnerships between

donors and recipients, particularly in support of those most in need, and it stressed that to be effective, those partnerships had to be guided by the recipient countries' development plans. It also offered guidelines on the mobilization of private and public resources, foreign trade and external debt. Also noteworthy was the 2009 High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation held in Nairobi, which reaffirmed that South-South cooperation was a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South, born out of shared experiences and sympathies, free from conditions, and based on common objectives and on the principles of solidarity and respect for national sovereignty. The Nairobi outcome document urged the countries of the South to strengthen their capacities in order to embark on the path of development in accordance with their values, aspirations and special needs. It also emphasized that South-South cooperation should not be considered official development assistance (ODA) because, among other reasons, it represented a solidarity-based partnership between equals" (Oviedo, 2021).

In 2015, the international community adopted the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes the important role of South-South cooperation in achieving its targets and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Along the same lines, Oviedo (2021) notes that "the 2030 Agenda —along with other important instruments such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030— promotes South-South cooperation activities as a complement to North-South, triangular and multilateral cooperation in strengthening international development cooperation".

"In 2019, at the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), the countries present underscored the importance of designing a methodology to measure the impact of South-South cooperation and to gather empirical evidence in order to mobilize additional resources for achieving the ambitious 2030 Agenda. Accordingly, the BAPA+40 outcome document urged developing countries to develop their own systems to assess the quality and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and to improve data collection at the national level to promote cooperation in the development of methodologies and statistics, in line with the specific principles and unique characteristics of South-South cooperation. It encouraged stakeholders to support, at the request of developing countries, efforts to collect, coordinate and disseminate information and data and to evaluate South-South cooperation. It also invited interested developing countries to engage in consultations and forums on non-binding voluntary methodologies, building upon existing experiences, taking into account the specificities and different modalities of South-South cooperation and respecting the diversity within South-South cooperation and within national approaches. As with the 1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), in 2019 the BAPA+40 Conference charted a path for the coming years that involved promoting stronger links between the countries of the South through increased technical, financial, social and political cooperation" (Oviedo, 2021).

At this point, to summarize the key milestones in the "reconfiguration of the new architecture" of South-South cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, the points made by Ayllón (2012) are worth mentioning:

- Renewed orientations focused on the human development approach and capacity-building, overcoming the prevailing economicist approach.
- Expanded themes on an agenda that has become richer, but also more complex, due to the overlapping of very diverse fields of action, such as gender, governance, human rights, the environment and public goods.
- New instruments and mechanisms designed to make the fight against poverty —the new mantra of post-Cold War cooperation— more participatory and effective, while aligning it with the priorities of developing countries.
- Complementary forms of financing to generate additional resources and channels for official development assistance (ODA), mobilizing the private sector in development partnerships with the public sector and adding other financial flows, such as remittances, to multiply the impact of aid.

- A new agenda that emphasizes efficiency and quality in the management of the aid offered and received, based on a series of principles set out in paragraph 43 of the final document of the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, 2002) and subsequently endorsed by Development Assistance Committee donors, multilateral financial institutions and some recipient countries (the “partners” in the new jargon) in the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation (2003), the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Declaration (2008) and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011).
- The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the 193 United Nations Member States in 2015, as a road map towards a new development paradigm in which people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships take a central role and serving as a point of reference and support for multilateral cooperation.³
- The proliferation of cooperation agents, especially from charitable institutions and the so-called “Global South”, with the arrival on the scene of emerging countries: mostly middle-income countries that increased their offerings through South-South cooperation and diversified them with new mechanisms such as triangular cooperation, concentrating on countries and sectors of action forgotten by traditional donors or usually reserved to Development Assistance Committee agencies.

³ Included by the consultant in addition to the original milestones in Ayllón (2012).

III. State-of-the-art in international development cooperation, with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation

The review of the state-of-the-art in international development cooperation with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation between the years 2013 and 2022 identified four themes that the existing literature has focused on or addressed in a significant fashion. They are presented below as subsections. The four themes are: the concept of development in transition as a foundation, because of its implications for both recipients and donors of international cooperation; the importance assumed by multi-stakeholder environments, revealing changes in international political coordination interests and discourse, as well as new distribution of leading roles; the challenges and priorities of South-South and triangular cooperation, which are still aimed at solving long-standing structural gaps; and, finally, the ongoing reconfiguration towards new collective approaches that these forms of cooperation are experiencing as a valuable development tool.

A. Development in transition as a foundation

International cooperation has been an undeniably important tool for promoting the development and economic growth of the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region: nations that, despite their shared challenges, are also very different in their characteristics and realities. However, high rates of economic growth—even including some boom periods—do not necessarily mean that the countries are making progress with the numerous pending challenges they face as a result of their own structural conditions.

For that reason, the concept of “graduation” that was introduced into the debate on international cooperation—whereby countries are no longer eligible for official development assistance (ODA) after reaching a certain level of income—acts as a stumbling block that threatens the sustainability of the growth and development reported by the region’s countries, many of which are already about to “graduate” or have already done so.

Basically, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) distinguishes two groups of countries to establish an “objective” criterion for receiving ODA: “developed countries” (basically the high-income countries, per the World Bank’s classification) and “developing countries” (the World Bank’s low, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries), which are the potential recipients of ODA. (However, the DAC criterion offers a degree of flexibility, in that a country that exceeds the high-income threshold remains on the list of potential ODA recipients for three years, and only leaves it after that period if it continues at that level; thus, a country is deemed to have “graduated” when it moves into the high-income bracket and no longer receives ODA (Sanahuja, 2020).

Graduation therefore perceives development as a stage or goal that is reached, without considering the possibility that the improvements recorded may not be sustainable and that contextual variations may deteriorate certain aspects of a country’s development; as a result, it would be excluded from being a recipient of ODA because of its income levels, but also stranded because it does not have its own mechanisms to face the challenges and/or leverage the necessary resources. Accordingly, as some authors point out, “international cooperation funds and the existence of an official dialogue channel between countries improve the chances of leveraging other resources both nationally and internationally” (ECLAC, 2021). The problem is therefore not only limited to the receipt or not of ODA. It also restricts, erodes and even—in some cases—destroys relations between countries (both developing and more developed), along with the venues for dialogue that they share: relations that go beyond the merely monetary and also involve exchanges of experiences and good practices, in addition to the shared vision of contributing to the generation of regional and global public goods.

Along those lines, some authors note that given the deterioration in relations between the economies of the North and the South and the ongoing reconfiguration of the international development cooperation system, the “Northern” countries have sought to engage with other cooperation models (such as South-South cooperation), through proposals with a multilateral approach (such as triangular cooperation) and other multilateral spaces and platforms, in order to prevent the loss of legitimacy and influence over the development patterns and behaviour of the countries of the South. In other words, many developed countries are seeking new interaction opportunities and a stronger presence for themselves on the South’s agendas (Morasso and Lamas, 2020).

Accordingly, in the current context, where the concept of graduation still prevails, it should also be noted that “the cooperation agencies of traditional donor countries have adapted their cooperation strategies to reach graduated countries through regional development cooperation and triangular cooperation programmes. These enable graduated countries to support the development of neighbouring countries and deepen integration, while maintaining relations between traditional donors and the graduated countries”, and that “some bilateral donors, however, maintain their development programmes, even if the country is no longer eligible for ODA, if they consider that strategic partnerships exist in relation to specific themes or sectors” (ECLAC, 2021).

For that reason, the development in transition approach is seen as a response to the shortcomings of traditional international cooperation and the new realities that countries face. Development in transition sees development as a continuous “process” of progress and not as a simple series of stages to be reached (Sanahuja, 2020). This is based on the graduation mechanism (ECLAC, 2021), which “adopts a gradual, phased approach that flexibly combines public and private financing instruments for all countries on the basis of their ability to mobilize domestic and external resources, their willingness and capacity to contribute to regional and global public goods, and a common, prioritized diagnosis of the problems that need addressing”.

It also recognizes the existence of multiple gaps, in addition to income gaps, to which it assigns equal importance; it therefore represents a shift from a one-dimensional approach and measurement scale (countries’ income) to a multidimensional one that reveals the continued presence of challenges that constitute development traps or middle-income traps, including inequality, low productivity, weak human capital formation, climate vulnerability and many others. The “middle-income trap” concept refers

specifically to those countries that “having reached their technological frontier, are unable to compete globally on the basis of low wages and at the same time have not developed the capabilities to compete on the basis of innovation, technological change and the production of knowledge-intensive goods and services” (ECLAC, 2021), which undoubtedly constrains those countries’ development potential.

Additionally, according to ECLAC (2021), the development in transition approach recognizes that “countries that are in the transition stage of development will continue to demand technical cooperation, knowledge and expertise, with higher qualification levels and greater depth, both in terms of ideas, designs, strategies and planning of project cycles and in their implementation, monitoring and evaluation”.

This gap-based approach thus constitutes “an instrument for directing and coordinating cooperation based on recognition of the sovereignty of the recipient country, the interests of donors and the multidimensional scope of development” (ECLAC, 2021); furthermore, as a flexible instrument that adapts to countries’ needs according to their structural gaps, it facilitates the pursuit of the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The very adoption of the 2030 Agenda highlighted the importance of rethinking international cooperation and how countries relate to each other if they are to succeed in mobilizing public and private resources (whether domestic or external) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fulfil the promise of “leaving no one behind”.

Similarly, on the global scale, the changing dynamics of development, compounded by the severe impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, provided a clear example of how unprepared the countries were to face such a crisis situation (primarily those in Latin America and the Caribbean, the region most affected by the pandemic) in terms of both their own resources and, later, of private and external financing. It also showed that development is not always sustainable when structural gaps in countries are not addressed as a priority and, in addition, further corroborated the need to explore broader and more flexible measurements to understand what a country’s development implies and at what stage it is at, with the understanding that this development involves multiple stakeholders who can have an impact in its favour.

B. Multi-stakeholder environment: identification of key stakeholders

In line with the preceding comments regarding the transitional development approach based on a multidimensional, multilevel and multi-stakeholder logic, there is an increasingly crucial need to maintain holistic approaches that, in addition to addressing gaps in different dimensions of development, do so at different levels, in order to achieve a true territorialization of development and reduce inequalities. Moreover, this is a process that involves multiple stakeholders, who, as already noted, can and should play a leading role in the development strategies designed in the countries, in addition to participating in international cooperation discussion venues, particularly those that deal with South-South and triangular cooperation. The 2030 Agenda was not designed to be achieved with the participation of public authorities alone; instead, the role played by various non-State stakeholders, in accordance with their nature, is crucial in capitalizing on contributions that contribute to development and to a more efficient use of international cooperation resources.

“South-South and triangular cooperation is notable for its effective contributions to the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda and it has gradually brought together numerous public, private and civil society stakeholders, academics, non-governmental organizations and international agencies to take action on the different dimensions of development” (Oviedo, 2021). As some authors have noted, “it is increasingly important to create multi-stakeholder ecosystems in South-South cooperation in order to contribute to the construction of an international development cooperation system as a social project that involves creative and diverse forms of understanding and dialogue between non-State stakeholders and States, putting into practice South-South cooperation experiences that stimulate true democratic ownership” (Huitrón Morales, 2020).

ECLAC believes that it is not possible to deploy national and regional strategies for sustainable development without an explicit knowledge and understanding of the economic, social and cultural stakeholders involved (Correa, 2022). These new venues are thus conducive to the inclusion of stakeholders other than the States (central governments) as protagonists and leading agents in forums for the political and technical coordination of international cooperation; as already noted, key roles are also played by non-State stakeholders from civil society, foundations, academia, the private sector, cooperatives, social economy organizations and local and regional governments. While all these have always been an active part of the dynamics of development cooperation (even in implicit or not very visible ways), “in recent years their accumulated experience has positioned them as sources of knowledge, resources, capabilities and technology, generating—and requiring—new ways of linking with public stakeholders in pursuit of coordinated and effective cooperation” (Huitrón Morales, 2020; Balbis, 2013).

Accordingly, South-South cooperation, “understood as a network of relationships and cooperative and complementary exchanges among stakeholders in the South in pursuit of development, is based on the prior identification of a series of local, national or regional needs. These give rise to the request for cooperation and the negotiations, after which the objectives and actions mutually agreed on by the parties entering into the relationship will be determined” (Ojeda-Medina and Echart Muñoz, 2019; Ojeda-Medina, 2020).

It is therefore worth highlighting the role of local and regional governments, whose participation and visibility in international dialogue and cooperation venues has traditionally gone unnoticed. In the current context, through South-South cooperation (and specifically through decentralized cooperation) and triangular cooperation they are assuming a notable degree of importance in multilevel planning, in the execution of public policies in pursuit of the SDGs (Ojeda-Medina, 2020) and in the provision of basic services at the local level.

This is why decentralized South-South cooperation is of the utmost importance for local and regional governments: it represents a common practice in relations at this level of government, one that favours venues for strengthening the capacities of local institutions, expanding political decision-making spaces, increasing visibility, promoting shared solutions to common problems, diversifying and growing funding sources, transferring good practices in targeted sectors and objectives and so on (Ojeda-Medina, 2020).

The 2030 Agenda poses important challenges for local and regional governments in terms of territorialization and interconnections between the local and national levels, such as the alignment of local and national planning in the framework of the SDGs, which requires strengthening their institutional and management capacities by updating institutional and regulatory frameworks, as well ensuring the availability of resources (primarily technical and budgetary) to implement the necessary actions and that those actions are carried out transparently, allowing traceability through accurate data that can be consulted publicly and in a timely manner.

Among the other stakeholders that have gained an important role as promoters of cooperation are the multilateral development banks. Not only do they offer combinations of grants and concessional loans, which allow for the scaling up of funding to the poorest countries; by leveraging government contributions to their capital to raise funds in the capital markets, they can also generate a significant volume of lending with a relatively low amount of capital disbursement and, by jointly financing projects with private banks, they can get more leverage. Another important element is the close collaboration between development banks and private financial institutions through ‘onlending’, which enables loans to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microfinance lending to be funded by the multilateral development banks but provided by national financial institutions, public and private alike, which are closer to the final borrowers (Ocampo, 2016).

Another characteristic that enhances the multilateral development banks’ role is their ability to provide counter-cyclical financing and support productive development by working closely with their domestic counterparts, for whom the multilateral development banks’ financial and technical support is of utmost importance. It should also be noted that most multilateral development banks have a

concessional lending facility for relatively low-income countries and a non-concessional lending facility for middle-income countries; however, the latter can also be used by countries that have difficulty accessing private capital markets, with a consequent reduction in financing costs, and that most multilateral development banks not only make direct loans to the private sector, sometimes through financial corporations; they also use domestic private financial institutions to provide funds to certain activities, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises and microenterprises. As such, they do not substitute private financial institutions but are complements to them (Ocampo, 2016).

It can therefore be seen that it is no longer only the public sector that benefits from the resources of multilateral development banks: the private sector has gained increasing importance by accessing funding from them in the form of direct project loans and by directing funds to national financial institutions in developing countries (Ocampo, 2016; Curmally, Sohn and Wright, 2005). This shows that the development cooperation system has broadened its instruments' mechanisms and scope.

The private sector plays an important role in designing, implementing and executing projects in developing countries (ECLAC/OECD, 2018). Specifically, it is important in achieving development and the Sustainable Development Goals through public-private partnerships, as stated in target 17.17, and in pursuing other corporate actions and strategies such as corporate social responsibility, corporate financing or direct action, philanthropy and so on, which have a direct impact on objectives such as decent work, economic growth and responsible production and consumption (Pérez-Pineda and Blanco Rangel, 2021).

Also relevant are the comments made by Sanahuja (2020): "The rising importance of private development finance flows offers opportunities in the pursuit of development goals, but it also poses many challenges. There are two main problems: first, the procyclical nature of most of the investments and, second, the investors' interest in certain sectors (infrastructure and banking) to the detriment of other more strategic areas. This factor compounds the development challenges faced by countries with a limited capacity to mobilize domestic resources and where external financing is of great importance."

Accordingly, "the potential of the private sector can be tapped through the use of development finance for mobilizing additional resources, primarily commercial finance, for sustainable development in developing countries" (ECLAC/OECD, 2018). In order to mobilize private resources for development, different instruments that facilitate investment are being used: blended finance, for example. The logic is to attract private resources that would not be allocated to development objectives if it were not for the use of public resources (Sanahuja, 2020). Likewise, the growing involvement of new stakeholders in multilateral cooperation venues increasingly encourages the formation of public-private partnerships or the corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies referred to above, which basically involve companies in voluntary actions to improve the social or environmental parameters of their environment (Ocampo, 2016).

At the same time, some authors point out that "in traditional (North-South) cooperation, the role of non-State stakeholders, particularly civil society, has been seen as more instrumental than protagonistic. Those stakeholders' participation has to be understood more in terms of the execution of development projects than in the design and/or evaluation of cooperation initiatives" (Huitrón Morales, 2020). However, it can be seen that civil society is playing an increasingly active role in those venues. "It also plays a fundamental role in creating incentives and stimuli to promote change, and in reasserting membership in the social contract in the region's weakened democracies" (Sanahuja, 2020).

Along the same lines, it is worth highlighting the different channels taken by the contributions of civil society, according to the literature: (i) in citizen empowerment processes, to give a voice to those sectors farthest away from political decision-making and to make the political process and political agendas more inclusive, (ii) in strengthening the political culture of public and citizen oversight, transparency and social accountability, which is essential in rebuilding confidence in the institutional system, (iii) in strengthening international solidarity networks and international advocacy strategies in the face of situations of rights violations in the context of the closure of democratic venues, and (iv) in renewing social and political leaderships, and the dispute of narratives in a context of the weakening of values linked to cosmopolitanism and the rights agenda (Sanahuja, 2020).

Likewise, closely related to civil society, is the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Their role has become more important since, beyond the volume of resources with which they operate (public and private, as well as the international solidarity-based cooperation that has long accounted for the lion's share of their funding), they "guarantee both the organization's autonomy with respect to the government of the day and the social support to their objectives and forms of action", as well as their participation in the definition and implementation of their respective governments' public-policy actions in the field of development cooperation (Balbis, 2013).

As a result, non-State stakeholders—such as civil society, NGOs, academia itself and international organizations and different multilateral forums—play a leading role as agents of change. Their accumulated experience in the execution of projects in diverse socioeconomic contexts, adapting resources and objectives to specific situations, contexts and inhabitants, offers an opportunity to forge partnerships in pursuit of cooperation for development.

Social economy organizations are equally and increasingly important. The social and solidarity economy (SSE) aims to be a market exchange model for people-centred organizations, while the innovation component of SSE brings it closer to the concept of South-South and triangular cooperation. This idea is based on the fact that South-South cooperation "allows countries to interact at a horizontal level, promoting solutions that are the outcome of an exchange of skills, resources and technical expertise, while promoting solidarity" (Amorim, Dale and Fakhri-Kairouz, 2015); this enables the impact of the solidarity economy to expand in national contexts by building regional and inter-regional networks of knowledge and sharing of experiences.

"Cooperative and social economy enterprises represent an intermediate space between the common good and the private good, between public goods and private goods" (Correa, 2022). "In addition, based on its constituent elements (such as cooperation, self-management, solidarity, participation of the local stakeholders or sustainable use of resources) the social and solidarity economy may contribute to rethinking the current development model, in the direction of inclusive sustainable development, with repercussions on local territorial development" (Pereira Morais, 2014).

Ultimately, the emergence of a growing number of stakeholders in international cooperation processes, as well as of new forms of cooperation, reveals the imperative of moving forward in the consolidation of national development and cooperation systems hand-in-hand with these key stakeholders. Equally crucial is "identifying and recognizing the working methods of the various stakeholders in order to devise mutually agreed formulas for action that respond to reality and aim at common objectives" (Ojeda-Medina, 2020).

C. Challenges and priorities in South-South and triangular cooperation

As already argued, while the realities and levels of development of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are to some degree heterogeneous, it is increasingly evident that today's regional and global challenges are both borderless and shared, and that geopolitical, health, climate, economic or even specific national political crises can have major repercussions at the global scale. It is precisely the interdependence and interconnectedness of an increasingly globalized and multipolar world that has led us to a situation that requires multilateral strategies with a multidimensional approach that can address persistent vulnerabilities in the three pillars of development (social, economic and environmental) as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which serves as a point of reference and support for multilateral cooperation. "The Agenda defines universal development challenges that apply to all countries independent of their income and requires international cooperation, beyond national efforts" (ECLAC/OECD, 2018).

Likewise, as already noted in dealing with the concept of development in transition, one of the main challenges facing South-South and triangular cooperation in the region are the graduation processes and their consequences: as has been argued, these could lead to significant setbacks in some of the fundamental dimensions of development in the countries, as well as to the deterioration of the cooperative ties they

previously enjoyed with developed countries. Moreover, as discussed above, a country's income level does not necessarily mean that its development is sustainable, nor does it reflect its capacity to access development financing or to mobilize internal and external resources. The complexity of this situation increases in the context of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when both concessional and non-concessional funding sources were subject to constraints.

In fact, some reports state that “the cooperation and response initiatives of multilateral financial institutions have not been commensurate with the financing needs of the countries in the region” (ECLAC, 2021), which demonstrates the growing importance of developing cooperation and financing mechanisms that align development resources with national needs, and of ensuring that measures adopted with cooperation funds within the South are not merely reactive or palliative in nature. This also underscores the need to “move towards the design of more complex and revealing multidimensional taxonomies, which will cast light on the dissimilar challenges in terms of progress the countries face and, consequently, guide cooperation policies appropriately” (Sanahuja, 2020).

In addition, as has been argued, the region continues to face major challenges: these are mainly social in nature (dealing with inclusion, the reduction of inequalities and sustainability) and, most particularly, health-related, since even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, health had already been recognized as a priority issue for cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean (Ubierna, 2022). Similarly, some studies have determined that the social sector is the leading focus of South-South cooperation, followed by the economic and productive sectors: “more than a third of the projects between 2007 and 2017 were aimed at building capacities in the social area and another third were in pursuit of economic goals” (Fernández Sánchez, 2020).

However, it has also been argued that “in recent years, cooperation has ceased to have the sole objective of lifting people out of poverty. Socioeconomic progress in many regions, particularly Latin America and the Caribbean, has revealed new challenges across the five Ps of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [...]. These new challenges reflect a society that has better socioeconomic conditions in some areas but remains vulnerable and requires multidimensional cooperation embracing bilateral, multi-country, regional and international partnerships. This is where triangular cooperation is particularly relevant” (ECLAC/OECD, 2018).

South-South and triangular cooperation are therefore extremely valuable tools for the interregional—or even international—exchange of knowledge and good practices for addressing development challenges (especially knowledge acquired by emerging economies) in that they promote a series of new partnerships with multiple stakeholders and this, in addition to improving the countries' technical capacities in the design, formulation, implementation and monitoring of their public development policies, strengthens relations and creates new venues for dialogue and opportunities for cooperation. That this is the case can be seen in the fact that “emerging economies have engaged in collaborative learning models to share innovative, adaptable and cost-efficient solutions to address development challenges” (ECLAC/OECD, 2018), as is the case with China, for example.

Although numerous challenges that need to be addressed on a priority basis have already been identified—such as environmental degradation and the resulting climate change, inequality, low productivity, low innovation and investment in research and development (R&D), limited access to technologies, complex labour and trade dynamics and so on—it must be remembered that these challenges not only affect a country's local and national environment, but also have an impact at the global scale. Therefore, perhaps an even higher priority challenge in addressing these issues involves the question of governance. The report *Emerging challenges and shifting paradigms: new perspectives on international cooperation for development* (ECLAC/OECD, 2018) notes that “the current governance structure is dated. Institutions and development policies have to be able to adapt to the new context to tackle emerging issues. New partnerships and new governance schemes are needed for the world to face the increasing number of development challenges.”

At the same time, other studies also highlight “the importance of South-South cooperation in supporting countries’ development, as well as the debate on new cooperation mechanisms and actions needed by the process of institutional consolidation to increase the effectiveness of South-South cooperation on a regional and global scale” (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021). They also underscore the fact that this institutional strengthening should be geared towards improving information management and data access: in other words, promoting transparency in accountability through the implementation and/or consolidation of monitoring and evaluation systems in the cooperation agencies of Southern countries, where in many cases they are still weak or non-existent.

In addition to the above, Alemany and Vaccotti also point out that “the undisputed political value of South-South cooperation in the region—and, particularly, in the foreign policy of Latin American and Caribbean countries—has recently received a series of challenges focused on the institutional framework (including intra- and inter-institutional coordination in the countries), on the global analysis of costs and benefits for cooperating partners from the viewpoint of the public policy cycle, and on the incorporation of indicators to allow a substantive appraisal of cooperation. In other words, a critical analysis of the capacities, coherence, consistency and impact of the South-South cooperation undertaken from and within the region.”

Although a consensus regarding the need appraise South-South cooperation exists in most Latin American and Caribbean countries, it is clear that it has not been a priority in the region. “While some countries have made progress in building a formula for appraisal, it does not yet exist at the regional level, nor at the level of the global South. Many Southern stakeholders see appraisals as an agenda of traditional development partners, or something inherited from aid effectiveness. They do not see appraisals as a concern of their own intended to improve the outcomes of South-South cooperation, to quantify its contributions to sustainable development or to improve the transparency of its processes” (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021). The authors further state that “the need to know the amounts involved can only be understood in two senses: (i) to further the academic understanding of the South-South cooperation being executed in the region, and (ii) to reveal the volume of funds that each country contributes through its South-South cooperation and to account for the use of those resources to the public”.

Along the same lines, it has been said that “the greater dynamism and relevance that South-South cooperation is acquiring demands a system for its quantification, measurement and appraisal in the broad sense: one that not only provides information on project numbers or economic flows, but also on where the outcomes can be seen, the costs and benefits they represent for the partners and, above all, their contribution to national capacity-building and, as a result, to the comprehensive development of the recipient countries. A monitoring system would also be useful in observing the results of the assistance provided and, accordingly, in analysing whether the demands and needs of the recipient country were met in an effective and positive way” (Fernández Sánchez, 2020). This would facilitate the follow-up of the actions, projects and programmes carried out by South-South cooperation and reduce the perceived deficit in the systematization of experiences in the region.

D. Towards the reconfiguration of South-South and triangular cooperation as a development tool: a collective approach

As has been shown throughout this document, South-South and triangular cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean—particularly in the recent context of instability, uncertainty and global crisis experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic—has undergone a renewed expansion that has made it a valuable tool within the international cooperation system and that has distinguished it from its traditional role and historical behavioural dynamics. However, this renewed expansion reveals the subtleties of a reconfiguration that is not only necessary but unstoppable and in which, according to some authors, different ways of understanding South-South cooperation coexist and there are multiple dimensions in which it manifests itself (economic, technical and political), and which also calls attention to the absence of a single,

“universal” metric for the exchanges carried out under this form of cooperation (Sanahuja, 2020). Thus, in the transition towards the 2030 Agenda, this necessary “reconfiguration” or “reinvention” by the region’s countries led them to take advantage of their mutual capabilities and to conduct exchanges between partners with similar or lower income levels (leaving aside the concept of ODA income), “as well as their reinsertion in the new scenario of development cooperation through the progressive adoption of a dual role” (Sanahuja, 2020): a form of cooperation that is much more aligned with the multidimensional approach to development that underpins the 2030 Agenda and that is therefore more likely to succeed in attaining its goals and objectives.

The literature’s descriptions of South-South cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean mainly emphasize its horizontality, reciprocity, equity, recognition, orientation towards common goals and shared solutions, bidirectionality, shared responsibility, non-conditionality, moral principles, multidimensional linkages, the predominance in its interventions of technical, economic, commercial, social and political assistance and cooperation, mutual benefit and respect for sovereignty; but without forgetting that for many countries there also exist (perhaps more implicitly) strategic interests. Furthermore, “South-South cooperation is seen as a flexible regime, with broad margins, centred on the development of the national State and, through that, on improving the population’s living conditions” (Fernández Sánchez, 2020); or, expressed in plainer terms, “South-South and triangular cooperation is carried out under the premise that all involved partners have to share solutions for development needs, and that they engage in such cooperation with a view to mutual benefit” (ILO, 2014).

By way of contrast, note the arguments of some authors that “South-South cooperation in the region in the first decade of the twenty-first century was characterized by a post-neoliberal thrust; by an attempt to overcome the models of open regionalism and to make the recovery of political and economic sovereignty the central focus of the construction of a counter-hegemonic bloc; and, finally, by a resignification of South-South relations that would lead to a considerable reduction in poverty, greater economic and political stability, and an attempt to understand solidarity in a different way from traditional aid” (Lo Brutto and González-Gutiérrez, 2017).

Thus, in this multipolar, multilateral and interdependent scenario, where “the classic division between North and South, developed and underdeveloped or centre and periphery is becoming more complex and diluted” (Lechini, 2022). The same author points out that “Souths” are emerging in the North and “Norths” are emerging in the South. This does not mean that traditional forms of cooperation such as North-South cooperation (vertical relations) must disappear from the region, but rather that they will be complemented and enhanced by other methods that are more flexible and accessible for all the region’s countries, such as South-South and triangular cooperation (horizontal relations), where what is on offer and what the countries can obtain has a scope and value that far transcends the merely monetary.

As a result of the shared history and culture of the countries that make up the Latin American and Caribbean region, as well as their geographic proximity and socioeconomic complementarities, South-South cooperation has also meant that “different countries in the Latin American region (among other areas of the South) have been able to strengthen relations among themselves through the exchange of experiences, where some of them can be providers and recipients of aid simultaneously (a reality that is also compatible with being recipients of official development assistance from OECD donors)”, as explained by Fernández-Sánchez (2020). She further states that “in the region, South-South cooperation is mainly technical in nature and is aimed at capacity-building, exchanging experiences and institutional strengthening. The different alliances or agreements that have been reached pursue either integration and development or political coordination, along with economic aspects, all with the same purpose: regional integration through South-South cooperation.”

Innovative forms of South-South cooperation include the creation of numerous programmes, bilateral funds, funds managed by countries with United Nations agencies, the use of regional integration programmes to promote South-South and triangular cooperation with their own funds and cooperation modalities, and participation in international organizations and forums that strengthen relations between

the nations of the South and promote the North-South cooperation dialogue. As has been noted, “in these mechanisms, the region has highlighted the need for new cooperation criteria and modalities, the re-founding of multilateralism through multilateral cooperation at various levels, which includes new and traditional stakeholders, new sources of financing, technical assistance, debt reduction, technology transfer and new strategic partnerships” (ECLAC, 2021).

This entire paradigm shift in South-South and triangular cooperation, with its new nuances, thus underscores the urgency of establishing “a framework that fosters multilateralism and drives the design and implementation of concrete tools and policies to tackle local, regional and global challenges so as to leave no one behind” (ECLAC/OECD, 2018). “Revitalize a new social diplomacy that gives movements the role of deciding supranational relations within a new way of understanding the relationship between the State, society and market by reconstructing and revitalizing the forms of solidarity that gave rise to it” (Lo Brutto and González-Gutiérrez, 2017): a clear form of multilateral governance that offers the opportunity for a collective and participatory approach.

Therefore, promoting collective approaches among national stakeholders in the same region is seen as an optimal strategy for helping reduce asymmetries between States and within the regional blocs themselves and, in global terms, for attracting technical and financial resources from international cooperation. In particular, it is an opportunity to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation strategies, where knowledge- and technology-transfer processes will be facilitated by the presence of partners with similar levels of development, and thus strengthen the “decolonization” of the global cooperation process (ECLAC, 2018, cited in Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021). The participation in subregional venues of countries that share the challenge of inequality is a way to strengthen the voice of relatively smaller stakeholders, as well as to work for the establishment of more balanced power relations (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021).

In short, as has been shown, cooperative relationships—and South-South and triangular cooperation in particular—are dynamic and flexible, but sensitive to external factors that could affect their continued existence. Therefore, a renewal of international cooperation is needed, in which South-South cooperation must be rethought, conceptually, practically, normatively and institutionally, in order to address this increasingly complex interdependence and to move from “diffused reciprocity” to “specific reciprocity” (Zoccal, 2020), and thereby progress towards cooperation strategies that enable global challenges to be addressed, leaving behind the traditional donor-recipient and North-South dichotomies.

International cooperation must continue to play—and strengthen—its role in assembling and facilitating public venues for dialogue that “give voice” to the challenges faced by the region’s countries and promote collective action by all development stakeholders (SEGIB, 2021), particularly by strengthening the crucial role of South-South and triangular cooperation.

IV. Conclusions

This review of the state-of-the-art in international cooperation with an emphasis on South-South and triangular cooperation began with the position held by ECLAC that “the countries of the region have begun to graduate from cooperation and official development assistance” but that they suffered from “persistent development traps in the productive, social inclusion, institutional and environmental areas”. In particular, significant reference was made to the concept of development in transition, precisely because of those structural gaps, given that the analysis of the documents revealed that this is a widespread and widely accepted narrative in the field of cooperation research.

This concept of development in transition, developed by ECLAC in conjunction with the European Commission and the OECD Development Centre, considers a wider range of possibilities than whether or not a country is developed (or a middle-, upper-middle- or even high-income country, which may also face structural gaps in multiple dimensions); instead, it treats development as an “evolutionary continuum in which some problems are solved, as in the fight against hunger, while others emerge, such as growing technology divides, distrust of institutions, environmental degradation and difficulties in moving towards welfare States” (ECLAC, 2021; Sanahuja, 2020). And this then leads on to the concept of the “development trap” or “income trap”: “a constraint on development because it prevents countries from maintaining steady long-term growth and converging on more advanced economies. In general, it is asserted that countries may fall into the middle-income trap owing to their inability to manage a structural shift towards innovation and more knowledge-intensive production” (ECLAC, 2021).

ECLAC has therefore argued the need to reconfigure the traditional cooperation models and to adopt one that addresses the new realities: “a multilateral, multilevel type of cooperation involving traditional and new stakeholders (horizontal, regional, South-South, North-South, South-North and triangular cooperation) and working with an extensive toolkit that includes, among other things, financing instruments, climate change funds, blended finance, debt for environment swaps and domestic resource mobilization” (ECLAC, 2021).

Moreover, the significant development gaps that have historically been present in the countries of the region have been compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their economies; however, this has also highlighted the importance and potential of not only the financial dimension, but also of technical cooperation, capacity-building and technology transfer as key elements offered by South-South

cooperation to contribute to economic and productive recovery (FAO/UNOSSC, 2022; FAO, 2019). This came precisely at a time when Latin America and the Caribbean were losing their relative importance as recipients of traditional cooperation (Alemany and Vaccotti, 2021; ECLAC/OECD, 2018), as some studies have argued, because most of their countries are considered middle-income. This demonstrates the error of using homogeneous criteria to pigeonhole countries with heterogeneous realities and profound internal asymmetries and leaves open to debate the need to abandon this "one-dimensional" approach in favour of a "multidimensional" approach, such as the one offered by the aforesaid concept of development in transition.

At the same time, as the region's economies embark on the path of recovery and get back on track towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the literature highlights the key role played by the private sector, mainly through public-private partnerships, as well as business strategies shaped by philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, funding or direct action by companies (Pérez-Pineda and Blanco Rangel, 2021), among others.

Along the same lines, the literature also highlights the greater openness that the international development cooperation system has shown towards other new stakeholders (non-State stakeholders, in addition to the business sector) as providers of cooperation, such as civil society, foundations, academia, cooperatives and social economy organizations: not only because of their accumulated experience, but also because they are sources of knowledge, resources, capabilities and technology (SEGIB, 2021). This denotes a new capability of South-South cooperation as a generator of "multi-stakeholder" ecosystems, marked by a participatory spirit, dialogue and understanding for a true "democratic ownership" of country projects, and some authors even associate it with the social and solidarity economy (Amorim, Dale and Fakhri-Kairouz, 2015) in that it promotes, in national contexts, the construction of regional and interregional networks of knowledge and exchanges of experiences.

Likewise, the documentary analysis highlights the crucial role played by governments, specifically local and regional governments, in the execution of international cooperation in the form of South-South (decentralized) and triangular cooperation (Ojeda-Medina, 2020), and also in the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda. Local and regional governments, it is argued, "are agents of sustainable development that are ideally suited and have the relevant experience to join multi-stakeholder partnerships in localizing the SDGs in their territories", where decentralized South-South and triangular cooperation are useful tools for achieving that goal (Ojeda-Medina, 2020).

The role played by multilateral development banks was also highlighted, since, as indicated by the documentation analysed, these "not only offer combinations of grants and concessionary loans, which allow for the scaling up of funding to the poorest countries; by leveraging government contributions to their capital to raise funds in the capital markets, they can also generate a significant volume of lending with a relatively low amount of capital disbursement and, by jointly financing projects with private banks, they can get more leverage" (Ocampo, 2016).

Another issue widely addressed in the literature on South-South cooperation in the Latin American and Caribbean region is that, although the region reports experiences with bilateral and triangular South-South cooperation and other regional mechanisms, there are "deficits in South-South cooperation in the region; for example, the lack of systemization and monetary and non-monetary valuation of cooperation, as well as the absence of impact assessments" and this has prevented them from showcasing the enormous contributions they make international development cooperation (ECLAC, 2021). This is also important insofar as it affects the capacity, primarily of the cooperating partners, to be able to ensure the transparent accountability of South-South cooperation, as well as to "identify areas of mutual priority, in order to reconcile the areas of interest of the financial, cooperating or donor agencies with the interests of the requesting parties" (Rodríguez and Aramendis, 2019), which is only possible through information mechanisms that are accessible to the interested parties.

In addition, the analysed literature states that the changes in the international cooperation system since the implementation of the Aid Effectiveness Agenda⁴ —whereby many Latin American and Caribbean countries were excluded as recipients of official development assistance (ODA) because they had experienced considerable economic growth in the twenty-first century and had therefore “graduated”—led to a deterioration of relations between those economies and the countries of the North; thus, it has been observed that the latter are in search of “new interaction opportunities and a stronger presence in the region through triangular cooperation and programmes of international organizations” (Morasso and Lamas, 2020), with which they seek to recuperate their influence on the agendas and institutions of the South.

In short, the literature reveals that there has been a clear transformation in international cooperation for development: specifically, a greater increase in South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as other partnership and “reciprocity” mechanisms that have progressively gained prominence, in a context with common objectives such as those established in the 2030 Agenda for Development, as well as global challenges that, although they are shared (such as pandemics, wars and their consequences for geopolitics, climate change and so on), do not have universal recipes for the multiple realities and complexities of each territory. This calls for a greater strengthening of the institutional framework for South-South and triangular cooperation from the region itself, as well as a conceptual, practical, normative and institutional rethinking of South-South cooperation that can foster dialogue and promote greater exchanges of experiences, good practices and capacity-building in those sectors with the greatest impact on the region’s countries (SEGIB, 2021) and can address this increasingly complex interdependence. This will enable an evolution from “diffused reciprocity” to “specific reciprocity” (Zoccal, 2020), to foster and facilitate, as already argued, multi-stakeholder and multilevel partnerships for the generation of regional and global public goods and the achievement of shared well-being.

⁴ This refers to commitments made by both donor and recipient countries, international agencies, international financial institutions and civil society organizations to ensure effectiveness in development outcomes. These commitments are grouped around five main principles: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability (Ruiz Sanjuán and Cunego, 2012).

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This publication analyses the state-of-the-art in international development cooperation, with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation, based on a bibliographic and documentary review of more than 80 publications published between 2013 and 2022. The contents are organized under four headings: (i) development in transition as a foundation, (ii) multi-stakeholder environment: identification of key stakeholders, (iii) challenges and priorities in South-South and triangular cooperation, and (iv) towards the reconfiguration of South-South and triangular cooperation as a development tool: a collective approach.

Through a review of concepts and proposals discussed in Latin America and the Caribbean over the last ten years, the author reflects on some of the challenges facing international development cooperation—and South-South and triangular cooperation in particular—in the context of the new development challenges shaped by the spirit of universality and indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



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