



## CHAPTER I

### **Multilateralism as an answer to current challenges:** the experience of Ibero-American countries in South-South and Triangular Cooperation

REPORT ON SOUTH-SOUTH  
AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION  
IN IBERO-AMERICA 2020

**southsouth**

## CHAPTER I

# Multilateralism as an answer to current challenges: the experience of Ibero-American countries in South-South and Triangular Cooperation\*

## I.1

### The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ibero-America; post-pandemic actions

The 2020 Report refers to South-South and Triangular Cooperation initiatives implemented in Ibero-America in the 2018-2019 period. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the enormous challenge it represents for Ibero-American countries' cooperation are also analyzed in this chapter.

The world is currently facing an extraordinary and unprecedented juncture. We are witnesses to the speed with which the international scenario can be abruptly shaken by a global threat like the COVID-19 pandemic. Its rapid spread has posed an enormous challenge to countries' response

capacity, exposing the structural weaknesses of our health, food security, social protection, economic, education and trade systems, among others.

In addition, the impact of the pandemic threatens the achievements made on the proper implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals, and it deepens persistent inequalities that have not yet been overcome despite progress made in the last two decades. As Ibero-America, we have an opportunity to strengthen our collaborative work as a region, so as to honor this commitment by 2030.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest challenge we are currently facing. In light of this systemic crisis, our countries' priorities and efforts are destined to contain its spread, mitigate its effects, guarantee an effective and equitable access to the vaccine and work towards a rapid economic recovery.

\* This chapter was prepared and agreed by the Ibero-American Heads of Cooperation of the Ibero-American Program for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS) member countries. It is based on an original version prepared by Peru, together with Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Guatemala.

Specialized international organizations such as ECLAC indicate that the effects of this crisis place developing countries, including most of the countries of our region, in a situation of greater vulnerability. According to projections, the Latin-America and Caribbean region will experience a -9.1% fall in GDP and the unemployment rate would reach 13.5%.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the number of people living in poverty will increase by 45.4 million in 2020, raising the total number from 185.5 million in 2019 to 230.9 million in 2020, which represents 37.3% of the Latin-American population.<sup>2</sup> These figures imply an unprecedented contraction of GDP, deepening poverty, extreme poverty and inequality, increasing labor informality and unemployment, among other aspects that have an impact on regional development. Recovery will take time and effort.

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In light of this emergency, there is a renewed need to increase international cooperation and multilateral initiatives that support State-led efforts in the implementation of intersectoral contingency plans and strategies to strengthen health and social protection public policies and their specific necessities, according to the new post-pandemic context.

In this sense, solidarity, multilateralism and international cooperation, including South-South (SS) and Triangular Cooperation (TC), are essential to reduce the impact on vulnerable sectors and to support medium and long-term measures that contribute to resume economic growth and improve social indicators.

In the current context, Ibero-American countries and global development stakeholders have demonstrated their ability to adapt in areas such as health, education and social services, among others. However, it is necessary to continue promoting innovative, comprehensive

and relevant initiatives in these difficult times. This requires coordinated work between the states and global development stakeholders so as to increase the levels of social inclusion which contribute to consolidate democracy, strengthen the rule of law and safeguard human rights.

In this sense, and in the framework of Ibero-American countries' cooperation, it is time to increase our supportive and inclusive action, focused on the sustainable and resilient recovery of our societies, rethinking our development models and the mechanisms to fight against poverty and inequality, paying special attention to the promotion of digital innovation and transformation, with the purpose to keep contributing to design effective public policies in line with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## 1.2

### The role of multilateralism: a perspective from the Ibero-American space

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most serious, complex and urgent challenge our countries are facing. This demands for unconventional answers from a multilateral system that needs to be adapted and strengthened to face these contingencies in a more effective manner and, in addition, be prepared for similar situations that might arise in the future. States must strengthen multilateralism and international organizations to make them more effective in order to implement initiatives in line with the post-COVID-19 context.

<sup>1</sup> Special report COVID-19 N° 5 "Addressing the growing impact of COVID-19 with a view to reactivation with equality: new projections" (ECLAC, July 2020). Available in: <https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/contraccion-la-actividad-economica-la-region-se-profundiza-causa-la-pandemia-caera-91>

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

Dialogue between multiple stakeholders and regional and multilateral organizations' joint work is currently crucial to contain and counteract the pandemic's severe impacts on the population, and to guarantee the fundamental right to life. This means the response to the pandemic should be coordinated among governments and the different global development stakeholders, addressing the crisis from a humanitarian, social and even environmental dimension, safeguarding the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It is equally important that this response contemplates local actions and the participation of sub-national institutions.

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In line with the aforementioned, it is necessary to continue encouraging and empowering regional institutions with clear mandates and strong commitments. This will bring confidence to a multilateral cooperation order that promotes initiatives to support Ibero-American countries' efforts to develop more productive, inclusive and resilient societies that can overcome the effects of the crisis. In this sense, it will be crucial to strengthen dialogue in the different regional spaces, fora and platforms. Among these, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB by its Spanish acronym) stands out as an important space to agree on actions, share experiences and adopt measures that can contribute to find the necessary health, social, economic and environmental solutions for the current context.

Multilateral answers must include developing countries in general, which are facing structural limitations that are worsened by this pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to sustain and broaden international funding for our countries, together with innovative initiatives and mechanisms that contribute to the recovery of the region's growth, in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

This multilateral effort is even more relevant in the Ibero-American space given its commitment to implement the recommendations of the Second United Nations High-level Conference on South-

South Cooperation (BAPA+40) outcome document. This declaration acknowledges the voluntary, participative and demand driven nature of SS and TC, and its ability to strengthen capacities, reduce asymmetries, promote sustainable and inclusive development, and design public policies that contribute to the region's positioning in the international political and economic scenario, thus reaffirming Ibero-America's multilateral calling.

In line with this, it is essential to keep strengthening SS and TC's institutional frameworks from within the Ibero-American space. Ibero-American Cooperation Agencies and Institutions are, in turn, called upon to play a key role as dialogue coordinators and facilitators in their respective countries, promoting reflection and collective action among all global development stakeholders.

Likewise, it is necessary to promote dialogue and increase the exchange of experiences, good practices and capacity building in sectors which impact on sustainable post-pandemic recovery is higher, such as agriculture, industry, trade, health and education, among others. It is also crucial to promote the participation of the private sector, academia, civil society and local governments through SS and TC; to boost decentralized cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships, coordinated by the respective governments; to share data and evidence on best practices and innovations, and to strengthen cooperation for mutual benefit.

# 1.3

## Convergence between Ibero-American Cooperation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Ibero-American space is a place for horizontal and peer-to-peer collaboration. SS and TC's promotion and management are therefore an example of our region's commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Sharing common positions within the Ibero-American space enables the search for concrete and joint solutions. On this path, Ibero-American countries have supported improvements in SS and TC's quality and its positive impact, hence effectively contributing to development. To this end, it will be important to continue strengthening institutional frameworks and SS and TC's coordination and promotion at the regional and global levels.

Knowledge, experience and good practices registered and exchanged in recent years among Ibero-American countries and between them and other regions' developing countries, stand out for the diversification of the areas of action. These areas account for the region's strengths and its potential to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Three main sectors can be highlighted according to what has been reported by Ibero-American countries. Health, where Bilateral SSC is mainly concentrated; agriculture and livestock, and all matters related to institutional, government and public policy strengthening. In this sense, Ibero-American cooperation has been specially focused on SDG 3, SDG 8 and SDG 16. Meanwhile, areas related to environment, the fight against climate change and the management of natural disasters were those with a highest share in terms of TC.

This cooperation must continue strengthening joint work to protect our societies' most vulnerable, under the principle of leaving no one behind. It must deepen cooperation ties between our countries and it must advance innovation and integration, safeguard and protect human rights,

as well as implement measures that support socially inclusive economic growth, always based on each country's strategies and priorities.

New international contexts and dynamics call for the redefinition of a new international cooperation architecture and of multidimensional and inclusive criteria to access development assistance, considering countries' particular and complex development processes, regardless of their income levels.

It will be necessary to address issues such as multidimensional poverty, the mobilization of national, international, public and private resources (monetary and non-monetary), and the access to funding on favorable conditions for developing countries, especially for the countries of our region, as well as the support to the region's trade and its productive recovery.

**/// International cooperation must continue to strengthen its role as dialogue coordinator and facilitator, promoting all global development stakeholders' collective action. It must also, and especially, consolidate SS and TC's role ///**

Ibero-American cooperation in the framework of SEGIB is firmly committed to continue contributing to SS and TC's strengthening, through capacity development, the definition of conceptual frameworks, the exchange of experiences and the design of methodologies, reports and systems, among other instruments, for which it has the support of the Ibero-American Program for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS by its Spanish acronym).

In addition, regional cooperation will continue to be effectively coordinated through the joint development of instruments such as the Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SIDICSS by its Spanish acronym), as well as through the implementation of the Ibero-American methodology to identify SS and TC's possible alignment with the SDGs, making both modalities' contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development visible.

The annual Report on SSC is an example of the convergence between Ibero-American countries' cooperation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as it is an effective instrument that enhances the importance of systematizing our region's SS and TC actions, projects and programs, as well as the participation of the different stakeholders, the diversification of the areas of action and the contribution to the SDGs.

The Ibero-American community is committed to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Through its various actions to strengthen SS and TC, our region is a global reference for the creation of new partnerships and alliances that boost international cooperation for inclusive development.

## I.4

### Facing the COVID-19 pandemic: challenges for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

As it was previously mentioned, the Second United Nations High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) has demonstrated that, more than four decades after the first conference, SS and TC have made great progress to gain a foothold as valuable instruments for sustainable development, generating tangible results and always calling for the participation of our societies' multiple stakeholders.

In addition, Ibero-American countries, mostly under a dual role, have been undertaking commitments to go beyond the traditional paradigm of North-South cooperation. In this sense, Ibero-American cooperation's progress confirms that multilateralism is key to continue addressing countries' priorities and regional and global challenges that impact on development.

The current context sets new horizons for international cooperation and it represents an important opportunity to join efforts and share capacities, knowledge and experiences to support countries' efforts to address the crisis generated by this pandemic.

This situation raises a series of challenges for this space's cooperation. These challenges must be translated into actions aimed at reinforcing our national policies to promote SS and TC, and at strengthening coordination mechanisms with public and private stakeholders both at the national and sub-national levels. Our efforts should also be focused on strengthening information and data collection systems at the national level so as to promote the development and exchange of methodologies and statistics to assess the quality and impact of SS and TC programs, as well as their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In light of this, international cooperation must continue to strengthen its role as dialogue coordinator and facilitator, promoting all global development stakeholders' collective action. It must also, and especially, consolidate SS and TC's role, not as a substitute but as a complement to North-South cooperation, and it must include these modalities in technology facilitation mechanisms on mutually agreed terms.

Therefore, entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems and national processes' digitalization should be promoted, mainly in matters related to health, education, food, overcoming poverty, decent work, the strengthening of value chains, the development of science and technology and environmental protection, among others.

Ibero-American countries' cooperation will continue to strengthen SS and TC's effectiveness and its scope through results-oriented management and by promoting solidarity and strategic actions among the different global development stakeholders, in coordination with the governments of the countries of the region. It will also continue mobilizing monetary and non-monetary resources in a coordinated, coherent, inclusive and transparent manner.

This will contribute to enhance SS and TC's comparative advantages, fostering comprehensive initiatives, innovative solutions and coordinated mechanisms for multi-stakeholder partnerships which promote the exchange of knowledge, experiences, technologies, and that mobilize both public and private resources to complement our governments' efforts to face common challenges, including those related to the pandemic.

Ibero-American countries agree that multilateralism, based on consensus, coordination and joint work among all global development stakeholders is an appropriate answer to address development challenges.

The key to overcome the current crisis lies not only in the design and implementation of policies or concrete actions, but also in jointly analyzing and addressing pre-pandemic systemic problems to build cohesive societies with solid democratic institutional pillars at the service of our citizens.

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Tackling the pandemic's impacts is a great challenge for the region and for the cooperation that is implemented between Ibero-American countries. This challenge must be faced through reinforced multilateralism to continue consolidating international cooperation; highlighting SS and TC's contributions to complement countries' efforts to reactivate sectors which have been most affected or that require special attention; and implementing the necessary reforms to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.