

South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Agenda in Ibero-America: critical junctions and horizons in the response to COVID-19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Publication general coordination:

Martín Rivero Illa and Rocío Rodríguez Cáceres
SEGIB Social Cohesion and South-South Cooperation Division

Author:

Bernabé Malacalza

Collaborations, SEGIB South-South Cooperation team

Cristina Xalma Mellado
Natalia Vargas Talero
María Dutto Piaggio

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Acronyms

ODA	Official Development Assistance	BAPA	Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD	BAPA+40	Second United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) of Buenos Aires
ECD	European Consensus on Development	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	PIFCSS	(by its Spanish Acronym) Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation
SSC	South-South Cooperation	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SSTC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation	MICs	Middle Income Countries
TC	Triangular Cooperation	EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)	SEGIB	(by its Spanish Acronym) Ibero-American General Secretariat
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation	UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
GPI	Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation		
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development		
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals		
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals		

Introduction

The world is facing a humanitarian, health, economic and social crisis without precedent in the last century. In Latin America, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has further battered economies weakened by slow growth and entrenched inequalities. Although vaccination processes have moved forward in several countries in the region, as uncertainty about the variants, the intensity and the duration of the pandemic increases, any estimate of the economic and social impact cannot be final. We now know that palpable declines in the target indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could put the totality of the 2030 Agenda at grave risk of imploding.

This extremely serious situation resulting from the pandemic is taking place in the unique setting that characterises Latin America. It is the most affected global region with respect to deaths per population, the one with the worst shrinkage in gross domestic product (GDP), the most unequal in terms of income distribution, the one with the highest violence figures, the one recording the severest deforestation and the one with the greatest habitat loss and degradation. In the last year, the poverty rate stood at 33.7%, inequality in income distribution increased by the equivalent of 2.9% of the Gini index, and food insecurity impacted 40.4% of the population, accounting for a proportion of 65 million people (CEPAL 2021). The situation, therefore, is not only one of a significant decline in economic and social indicators, but also of a broken social contract.

What would an appropriate response to this scenario be? Could South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) be a necessary transformative tool for tackling COVID-19 and, at the same

time, for restoring the social contract and a horizon of sustainable development? What spaces of convergence between the European Union (EU) and Ibero-America could be exploited? In urgent matters, the effectiveness of mass immunisation processes will depend on guaranteeing universal access to vaccines, while providing debt relief measures and financing mechanisms for the most vulnerable countries. Structurally, opportunities lie in strengthening cooperation capabilities to adapt to the transition between development agendas, in having innovative mechanisms in place and in promoting a substantive reform of the international development cooperation system. For this reason, the response of international cooperation to the global crisis must be coupled with reflection—and then action—so as not to maintain unsustainable courses of action that lead us to “business as usual”.

The following chapters address, firstly, the health of the SDGs worldwide and in Latin America; secondly, the evolution of debates on TC from the MDGs to the SDGs; thirdly, the general scenario and ways of adapting TC to the transition between development agendas; and, fourthly, innovative TC mechanisms for achieving the SDGs. Last but not least, a series of conclusions and recommendations are raised for a TC response to COVID-19 anchored in the 2030 Agenda.

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COVID-19 and the risk of the 2030 Agenda imploding

Before the pandemic, efforts to achieve the SDGs were not enough. Headway was not being made at the necessary pace or on the necessary scale, progress was uneven, and countries were not on the right track to fulfil them by 2030. During the 2019 SDG Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, called the enormous effort that would be needed to achieve the targets in the intended year the “Decade of Action”.

The extremely serious situation such as the one brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is a major obstacle not only for SDG 3 (Health), but also for the 2030 Agenda as a whole. It is estimated that the impact on areas such as health or education would cause the UNDP human development index to fall for the first time since 1990; the perspective of a shrinkage in the world economy would stand at 4.9%, placing figures at the lowest level since the Great Depression; and there would be 71 million more people suffering extreme poverty, with global rates similar to 1990s’ levels (Sánchez Miranda 2020).

Above and beyond the urgent challenges, the longer the duration of the global crisis, the greater the likelihood of implosion of the 2030 Agenda. A recent ECLAC report (2021) points out that most of the SDG targets would only be achievable with major policy interventions. In 29% of the targets, it will be essential to implement strong policy actions, while in 44% the trend is of stagnation or regression; hence, it will be imperative to take more drastic corrective steps. The measures associated with restrictions (closures of public places, mandatory quarantines and restriction of economic activities) had an impact on 94 of the targets of the 2030 Agenda and could adversely affect 47.3% of them.

The crisis, therefore, is rightly seen as a syndemic rather than a pandemic, as it will enable us to focus

not only on the health crisis, but also on the ensuing global, economic and social risks. Based on this diagnosis, the greatest danger would be for the end of the crisis to lead to a return to “business as usual”. The great dilemma of these times is not between choosing to respond to COVID-19 or achieving the SDGs, but ensuring that post-COVID-19 recovery is anchored in the 2030 Agenda and that immediate action is in sync with long-term goals.

Opportunities for an appropriate response would lie in combined interventions. An example of this would be international cooperation in the transformation of agriculture and consumption patterns that would have an impact on climate change, the conservation of natural resources, the end of hunger and an improvement in family income and people’s health. Along these lines, ECLAC (2021) identifies eight industries that would drive a big push for sustainability: i) energy transition (renewable energies and a reduction in the use of fossil fuels); ii) urban electromobility; iii) the digital revolution (universal access); iv) the health manufacturing industry; v) bioeconomy (biological resource- and natural ecosystem-based sustainability); vi) care economy; vii) development of the circular economy; and viii) sustainable recovery of the tourism sector. In these areas, TC, due to its nature as a modality entailing wide-ranging commitment by actors and opening up to North-South dialogue, could offer a transforming potential. Is it possible to take advantage of the transfer of knowledge and technologies that developed countries possess to scale up the response and to increase the impact of development cooperation? Could TC serve as a bridge to South-South Cooperation (SSC) as a mechanism for adapting development cooperation to the 2030 Agenda that adds horizontality, roots and ownership to the initiatives?

SSTC in the transition between development agendas

The debate on the nature and identity of TC has as its precursor the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), approved at the First United Nations High-Level Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (1978), where the first tacit recognition was given to this modality. However, the approach to TC as a specific identity modality only appeared in the mid-2000s, after the surge of the MDGs and the approval of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005. This process, promoted by different international meetings, generated significant changes in the rationale of Official Development Assistance (ODA), establishing new guidelines and motivations in donor cooperation strategies. The ensuing lesser inclination to cooperate with the Middle Income Countries (MICs) resulting from this process, together with the greater interest of traditional donors to support shared cost mechanisms, contributed to a relaunch of TC as a complementary modality to lend legitimacy to the Paris Agenda.

From 2008 onwards, an incipient gradual rise in forums and spaces that addressed TC was observed, both in the United Nations and in those arranged by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), increasing from an average of one event per year in 2008 to four annual events

in 2019. TC acquired more and more relevance in different forums and became more visible in the international narrative of development financing and aid effectiveness agendas and in the high-level forums of Accra 2008 and Busan 2011. With the approval of the 2030 Agenda, TC came on the scene associated with SDG 17 (targets 17.6 and 17.9) and with the creation of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) in 2014, in which context the Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation (GPI) was incorporated in 2016. This process redefined the approach to TC from a perspective of sustainable development and multi-actor partnerships.

Following the Second High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC in Nairobi in 2016, and the launch of the GPI, an exchange platform was opened between the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the DAC donors and the countries offering SSC, where the proposals of the “effectiveness agenda” began to interrelate with those of the “horizontal paradigm” in a vision of TC as a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda. The final document from the BAPA+40 (2019) is a reflection of this attempt at harmony. There it is stressed that TC is a modality that complements and adds value to SSC and, at the same time, contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.

Another of the noteworthy points of this conference is that it expressed the need to invigorate TC for greater scaling in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the promotion of sustainable development, complying with SDG 17 and advocating the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. After BAPA+40, a road map was consolidated that identifies new challenges and recognises the need to continue with the building of evidence and systematic learning about TC with the aim of providing greater visibility, innovation and dynamism for this modality.

One of the relevant questions raised in the current debate on the nature and identity of TC is whether it can play a transforming role in the search for a more horizontal, inclusive, supportive development cooperation system. Is it possible for southern providers to articulate a more coherent alternative to DAC rules and push for a reform of northern donor practices? Or, is there a serious risk that TC might be used by both the North and the South as an instrument to promote the donors' own geopolitical priorities? How could TC contribute to the transition from a development cooperation system founded on vertical aid chains to one based on horizontal transnational networks and multi-actor ecosystems?

–Ibero-America in the debate about SSTC

Between 2006 and 2019, the number of TC initiatives implemented by Ibero-American countries stood at 1,959, which makes the region the most dynamic in the world in this field (SEGIB 2021a). In addition to this, for more than a decade, the Ibero-American space has pressed ahead with conceptualisation and systematisation work on SSC and TC, to which SEGIB and the Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS) have made a significant contribution. The political, conceptual and normative flow of the Ibero-American space achieved around TC includes a definition of a conceptual framework for TC, a better, more comprehensive systematisation of what is done under this modality, and greater, better knowledge of the operating system it functions under (PIFCSS 2015).

This new momentum in the debate marked by the 2030 Agenda has renewed the impetus of the Ibero-American space in three fields:

- (i) the development of a methodology for the systematisation of TC contributions to the SDGs;
- (ii) participation in instances of multilateral dialogue for the construction of an inclusive development

cooperation system for sustainable development; and (iii) technical advice to the European Commission in its Adelante Programme and to UNDP-Africa in the preparation of a SSC report for the region (PIFCSS 2020).

How could Ibero-America contribute to the debate on the reinvention of TC and its adaptation to a transformation of the development cooperation system in line with the 2030 Agenda? Is it possible to build bridges with traditional donors without risking the principles and values of SSC? Two of the main future challenges that the Ibero-American space poses with respect to TC are: firstly, to work to ensure that the principles, values and learning developed in the long experience of SSC are properly incorporated into TC; and, secondly, to promote common ways of recording and quantifying TC to generate development cooperation reports jointly, whether regional, sectorial or global (SEGIB 2018d).

–The European Union and Latin America in SSTC

Development cooperation between the EU and Latin America has gradually lost dynamism over the last two decades due to multiple factors. While some of them are global systemic changes that affect geopolitical balances, such as the emergence of China and competition with the United States, Brexit or the crisis of global and regional multilateralism, others either relate to trends in international cooperation itself, such as the phenomena of “graduation” and the marginalisation of middle-income countries from official development aid flows, or to the increasingly visible justification of financing for development in terms of the interests of the donors to the detriment of the needs of the beneficiaries.

In Latin America, in addition to these systemic changes, underlying issues are emerging that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to accelerate, such as social inequalities and digital divides, or which respond to regional dynamics but with transregional effects, such as the crisis of regional integration processes, growing political polarisation and citizen unrest. These pressures on development cooperation jeopardise its adaptation to the more complex, multidimensional nature of the new global sustainable development agenda and to the new conditions posed by the pandemic.

The adoption of the new European Consensus on Development (ECD) in 2017, the proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 and the new Neighbourhood, Development

and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI) set out EU commitments in three major areas of action: a) in the 2030 Agenda itself, recognising its interrelationships with peace and security and the environment, as well as other cross-cutting development elements; b) in the means of implementing this agenda, which combine traditional aid with other mechanisms for mobilising resources and investments from the private sector; and c) in adapting the relations of the EU and its Member States to the diversity of situations and development actors, including the MICs (European Commission 2017).

The EU accepted, through the new ECD, a more receptive narrative to the needs of the MICs and the countries recently graduated from ODA in Latin America. In addition, it recognised the need for “innovative engagement with the most advanced developing countries”, pushed a call for “innovative partnerships” and advocated a broader range of

development financing tools together with the promotion of SSC and TC. However, and above and beyond the narrative adaptation to the 2030 Agenda set down in official documents, doubts about the transition towards more constructive practices with the MICs did not disappear, due to the persistence of strong normative resistance within the DAC/OECD, which European countries actively participate in. This conservatism can be seen, among other issues, in a reluctance to abandon per capita income as the main metric for aid allocation in the EU and in the member countries. Is it possible that this agreement on principles and priorities for development cooperation results in a better adaptation of TC to the principles of SSC and horizontality? How could a bi-regional partnership contribute to overcoming the traditional donor-recipient arrangement currently in force? These are some of the unanswered questions.



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Adapting SSTC to the transition between development agendas

The intergovernmental relations approach is the most influential in the main multilateral definitions of TC. The first mention of TC appears in the 1978 BAPA. Through the expression “triangular schemes”, TC is referred to as a subsidiary modality and intended to favour the role of SSC. For its part, the 2009 OECD definition refers to intergovernmental partnerships, differentiating between facilitating partners (DAC donors), pivotal countries (SSC providers) and beneficiary countries (ODA recipients) (OECD 2009). In turn, countries such as Germany and Japan promote, in the bilateral arena, a conceptualisation of TC as a complementary modality to the traditional North-South bilateral format.

In a unique way, the Ibero-American space has developed its own definition that affords centrality to SSC. Conceptually, TC is understood as a modality (without its own clearly defined identity) subordinated to the principles and practices of SSC. Functionally, a decisive role is given to the countries

of the South as “first providers”, while developed countries and multilateral organisations are called “second providers”. In turn, the “SSTC” terminology used by the PIFCSS recognises the hybrid nature of TC. One of the limitations of this definition, however, is its State-centric nature, since it refers exclusively to States and multilateral organisations (SEGIB 2014).

The broadest definition of TC is the one adopted from 2016 onwards in the framework of the different events of the GPEDC, of the EU Adelante Programme and in the final document of the 2019 BAPA+40. This concept recognises the role of TC in the formation of partnerships for sustainable development and in the mobilisation of resources from multiple actors and sources—public, private, national and international—to implement the 2030 Agenda. Finally, the OECD adds to this definition the concept of co-creation and innovation, incorporating the principle of shared costs in TC (OECD 2019).

TABLE 1: FOUR MAIN DEFINITIONS OF TC

Definitions of TC	Approach	Actors	Geometries	Areas
1) As a support instrument for SSC	Instrumental	State-centric	North-South-South	United Nations
2) As a supplement to North-South bilateral cooperation	Instrumental	State-centric	North-South-South	Germany and Japan
3) As an SSC modality	Normative (SSC principles)	State-centric	South-South-South, South-North- South, South-International Agency-South, Triangular +1	Ibero-American Space
4) As a commitment by multiple actors	By networks or multi-actor partnerships	Multi-actor	Governments, multilateral agencies, civil society, NGOs, philanthropic organisations, private sector, academy, etc.	GPEDC, GPI, OECD, EU and BAPA+40

Source: compiled by author.

Is it possible to differentiate TC from North-South cooperation and SSC? As is the case with its conceptual root, there is no international consensus on a specific narrative of TC based on its own principles, norms and values. In the current debate, TC finds itself midway between two narratives. On the one hand, it is presented as a transformative vision to drive the gender perspective, care of the environment

and the fight against climate change, systemic change in production and consumption patterns, digitalisation, and multi-actor partnerships consistent with the 2030 Agenda. On the other, it maintains asymmetric logics, respect for hierarchies, verticality and high transaction costs typical of a conservative, change-resistant agenda. As can be seen in Table 2, different narratives coexist in the definitions and principles of TC.

TABLE 2: TC, SSC AND OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PRINCIPLES

Paris Declaration (2005)	SEGIB-PIFCSS (2009)	UNOSSC (2014)	SEGIB-PIFCSS (2015)	OECD (2019)	GPI (2019)
Official Development Assistance	South-South and Triangular Cooperation	South-South Cooperation	Triangular Cooperation		
Appropriation	Horizontality	Demand-based cooperation	Adaptability Articulation	Building of appropriation and trust	Appropriation by the country and demand-driven cooperation
Alignment	Mutual benefit	National appropriation and independence	Access to information Contributions by all parties	Promotion of complementarity and increased coordination in development cooperation	Shared commitment
Harmonisation	Beneficiary leadership	Equality	Joint learning on management	Sharing joint knowledge and learning	Focussing on approaches and results-based solutions
Results-based management	Effectiveness and efficiency	Non-conditionality	Absence of conditionalities Consensus-based communication Clear definition of roles	Co-creating solutions and flexibility (*)	Inclusive partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogues (*)

Mutual accountability	Mutual responsibility	Non-interference in domestic matters	Effectiveness of initiatives Efficiency in resource use	Strengthening the volume, scope and sustainability of TC	Transparency and mutual responsibility
		Mutual benefits	Demand-based approach	Meeting global and regional development goals via development partnerships (*)	Innovation and creation (*) Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (*)
		Respect for national sovereignty	Shared results management Shared results		Joint learning and knowledge exchange for sustainable development
			Beneficiary leadership Action sustainability and visibility		Leaving no-one behind (*)

In bold: Principles of the effectiveness agenda. (*) New criteria incorporated with the 2030 Agenda.

Source: compiled by author based on OECD (2005), UNOSCC (2014), OECD (2019), PIFCSS (2015) and GPI (2019)

Since the second post-war period, the development cooperation agenda has been hampered by the dividing logic between North-South cooperation and SSC. After the 2008 crisis, a variety of SSC providers emerged with strength, advocating the horizontality narrative, while traditional donors continued to adhere to the effectiveness agenda and the Paris Declaration. Since the approval in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda, the dividing line between welfare narrative and South-South narrative factions has become more tenuous. The call of SDG17 to form a global alliance for sustainable development has enabled North-South dialogue on the characteristics of TC and on its impact on the formation of multi-actor ecosystems. Thus, the new approach of networks and of actors' multiple commitments has proceeded to dominate the discussion on TC, putting the focus on the effectiveness agenda and eclipsing the horizontality paradigm. As can be seen in Table 2, several of the effectiveness principles set forth in the Paris Declaration are incorporated into the new TC narratives; while the principles agreed upon in the Ibero-American space seem to reflect a greater alignment with the narrative of SSC and horizontality than those identified by the OECD and the GPI.

The new development resulting from the 2030 Agenda is a change of focus in TC from an instrumental and State-centric approach to one based on the commitment of multiple actors.

One example of this is the principle of “inclusive partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogues” that constitutes a contribution by TC to SDG17. Other cases are the principle of “promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”, which is consistent with SDG5 and SDG10, and the “principle of leaving no one behind”, which advocates inclusive multi-actor partnerships in support of the most vulnerable, as considered in SDG1, SDG2, SDG3, SDG4 and SDG10.

In short, three root narratives guide the current discussion on TC: i) the effectiveness and shared result agenda, ii) the horizontality, demand and non-conditionality-based approach, and iii) the actor multiple commitment-based approach in line with the SDGs. The common ground that cuts across all these narratives is appropriation by the beneficiary country to promote capability building and sustainable development. However, taking into account that the effectiveness narrative seems to dominate other approaches in current definitions, the pending debate would be on how the lessons learned from the Ibero-American space could be used to establish more balanced definitions of TC. It is there where the Ibero-American SSTC could make an important contribution.

Innovative SSTC mechanisms against COVID-19 in Ibero-America

One of the problems facing international cooperation today is the severance of the fields of development cooperation and cooperation in science and technology. The latter has not been, in general, aligned with the development cooperation agenda, but has, rather, followed different paths. At the present time, the 2030 Agenda has enabled a policy space for science, technology and innovation so that they finally become core aspects of international cooperation. Without scientific and technological knowledge or the generation of innovations, it is not possible to face major challenges such as environmental sustainability, which implies, for example, a change in the energy matrix; the modernisation of or a change in the productive matrix; the growing digitalisation of the manufacturing industry; an improvement in the population's nutrition, education and health conditions and the solution of weaknesses in basic infrastructure, such as access to drinking water or energy sources (Heimerl and Raza 2018).

Among TC's innovative mechanisms to support a response to COVID-19 anchored in the 2030 Agenda, we can highlight the following: i) combined interventions; ii) the digitalisation of development cooperation; iii) cross-cutting initiatives to reduce social inequalities; iv) strengthening the gender perspective; v) the provision of global digital

public assets; and vi) the territorialisation of the development agenda. The affirmation of digital technologies in the pandemic enables a greater capacity for the blanket intervention of development cooperation processes. In this field, technical knowledge stands out as something EU-Ibero-American cooperation could exchange.

The first area of action to promote this integration of agendas could be the digitalisation of development cooperation. TC could take advantage of practices from European countries such as Spain, Belgium, Denmark and Germany that have designed strategies and concept papers on this matter to align digital innovation processes with the SDGs. In turn, this would facilitate the creation of intersectorial partnerships with entrepreneurs, transnational companies, SMEs and scientists, allowing the entrepreneurial multi-actor ecosystem to be articulated in a more connected, efficient way (ECLAC-GIZ 2020).

A second field of action could be to take advantage of cooperation in science and technology to reduce structural gaps (territorial, social, gender, business, etc.). This proposal is based on the recognition that digital technologies are important for implementing the 2030 Agenda's "leaving no one behind" principle. Access to digital is, in many cases, prior to access to

basic services, which enables a necessary link between both areas. The main mission of this agenda—here called FAMA (Table 3)—would be to promote access to and the use of digital technology applications to reduce social

inequalities, boosting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, women, children, youth, rural sectors, indigenous communities, immigrants, refugees or people with disabilities.

TABLE 3: FAMA AGENDA FOR INNOVATIVE TC IN IBERO-AMERICA

Action lines	Principles	Sectorial scopes and cross-cutting areas of application	Target population
Further cooperation in science and technology for sustainable development from TC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Equal access to technologies: Guaranteeing conditions for access to and the use of technology for the entire population. ■ Equal access to health, education and the labour market: Fair access to healthcare and education services and to the labour market. ■ Solidarity and the use of technology for social purposes: Adaptation of technology for use by groups in situations of social vulnerability and its focus on meeting human needs. Incentive for open innovation and the potential and creativity of users. Support for cooperative ventures and multi-actor ecosystems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gender equality ■ Telehealth ■ Teleworking ■ Tele-education ■ Response to global risks ■ The environment and the fight against climate change ■ Digital public assets ■ Capability building and training Social protection ■ Food and nutrition security 	<p>Groups in vulnerable situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The elderly and the population at risk from COVID-19 ■ Populations in rural areas with difficulty accessing social services ■ Women and LGBT groups ■ Young people outside the labour market ■ School-age children ■ The immigrant or refugee population in a situation of job insecurity ■ The prison population in quarantine ■ People with physical disabilities Indigenous communities ■ The digital illiterate
Align TC with the SDGs with regard to reducing social inequalities and providing digital public assets.			
Multiply SSC with the support of TC through the formation of multi-actor ecosystems in the field of science and technology to reduce social inequalities.			
Articulate and strengthen development cooperation and cooperation in science and technology in the institutional areas of SSC management.			

Source: compiled by author

A third field of action refers to gender equality in SSTC. TC with a gender perspective could support the (re) organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that the gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies, at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved. In recent years, the EU has contributed to this perspective through cooperation projects, and Ibero-America could take advantage of the lessons learnt. Worthy of note are the following experiences as a “gender agent” in Austria; the development of capabilities and training in the e-learning programme for the incorporation of a gender perspective and gender equality; or the G+ programme in public budgets to improve gender equality by the Regional Government of Andalusia (Spain), among others (EIGE 2013).

Finally, a fourth field of action could be affirmation of the territorialisation of development cooperation, taking advantage of the wide-ranging commitment by actors to mobilise resources and knowledge and to generate engagement with local citizens. Although the territorial or local level is a fundamental space for the effective, sustainable resolution of development challenges and objectives, TC continues to be led by national governments and international organisations. A deepening of decentralised and cross-border triangular cooperation could play an important role in the community appropriation of development processes.

Conclusions and recommendations

The debate on the possibilities of adapting TC to the 2030 Agenda has two sides. From a normative point of view, there is a narrative that is increasingly present in international forums that presents TC as a transformative option, consistent with the 2030 Agenda and a driver of the gender perspective, care of the environment, digitalisation and multiactor partnerships. However, from an empirical point of view, it should be noted that TC maintains asymmetric logics, respect for hierarchies, verticality and high transaction costs. Consequently, we can see a decoupling between the system of international development cooperation that is really in force and the narratives or principles that are promoted by TC. Closing that gap is essential.

The syndemic could be a window of opportunity. In addition to the fact that it implies one more blow to the donor-recipient scheme of ODA with its principles of verticality, unidirectionality and assistance, it demonstrates the importance of the provision of global public assets for facing

pandemics, climate change and other planetary and social imbalances. Ibero-America has, within this context, a fundamental role to play in proposing a way-out of the COVID-19 crisis anchored in the 2030 Agenda, making available the entire political, conceptual and regulatory flow of the Ibero-American space achieved around SSC and TC.

Above and beyond the current context, academic literature on development cooperation sets out some potentialities and non-negligible risks that need to be taken into account. The future of the adaptation of TC to the transition between development agendas is debated between the weight of power hierarchies and the transformation towards horizontal, multi-actor, multi-level networks. Could TC reinforce ODA vertical and welfare relations? Or, would TC open up the space to more horizontal, cooperative schemes based on shared work, the wide-ranging commitment of actors, co-creation and mutual learning networks? The dilemma is open for discussion (Table 4).

TABLE 4: POTENTIALITIES AND RISKS OF TC ADAPTATION TO THE 2030 AGENDA

Potentialities of adaptation to the 2030 Agenda	Risks of non-adaptation to the 2030 Agenda
It offers, in a scenario of budgetary restrictions, close, effective solutions at a reasonable cost.	It is not always able to break the hierarchical, unilateral structures of ODA in favour of a more horizontal, cooperative action between partners.
It promotes the exchange of experiences and capabilities among developing countries, also strengthening their capabilities, appropriation and trust.	Doubts are raised about leadership in a TC intervention, given the presence of various decision makers and the high likelihood of overlap and a lack of role clarity.
It serves to strengthen the dual nature of the MICs as beneficiaries and, at the same time, facilitators of potential cooperation.	It may mean an increase in transaction costs resulting from negotiation and agreement processes between the partners involved.

It acts as a great promoter of partnerships between countries, between cooperation actors, and in the combination of instruments it advocates.	The involvement of the first provider may be merely instrumental for the second provider.
It is detached from the concept of income and graduation: it emphasises the exchange of experiences and the search for shared solutions.	The beneficiary partner does not always lead the process, which hinders appropriation of the development.
The participation of different actors, from different countries, in the identification of a project, in its formulation, in its execution and in its oversight generates a relationship of mutual trust and of awareness of the other's perceptions and approaches.	Given the power asymmetries between countries, the second provider may impose its leadership role as the main provider of resources, thus reproducing the shortcomings of more traditional North-South cooperation.
It uses a traditional donor to provide precisely what is scarcest (financial and technical resources) in the poorest countries, enabling interventions on the scale required.	The first provider may try to consolidate its regional power or use the resources of the second provider to maintain hierarchical relations with the beneficiary partner.
It encourages interaction and exchanges of learning and innovation (co-creation) in all directions, in accordance with the increasingly shared, complex nature of development challenges.	Supply-driven cooperation could be favoured, damaging the appropriation principle and the demand-driven approach.
It establishes trust and collaboration ties between countries, generating partnerships that may last beyond the timeframe of a specific intervention.	It may generate an increase in the levels of fragmentation of development cooperation, since the universe of TC actors tends to be broad and dispersed.
It affords greater proximity in the partners' conditions and experiences.	It may contribute to reproducing traditional donor formulas and one-size-fits-all development narratives, which are not viable in developing countries.
It is more suited to multidimensional development approaches and is, therefore, better prepared to successfully respond to SDG17 and to the current 2030 Agenda.	It may anchor the response to COVID-19 in the interests of the donors rather than in the needs of the recipients.

Source: compiled by author

Regardless of whether visions centred on complementarity, shared costs and mutual learning prevail or not, it would be important for donors to make transparent the broader geopolitical reasons behind TC initiatives, making explicit the economic, commercial, investment, access and influence motivations in each case. The promotion of a transformative TC should avoid the depoliticised vision that presumes an absence of unequal capabilities and powers among the partners, or the automatic presence of coherent purposes. Rather, it should be assumed that there are diverging interests and that it is necessary to channel these differences or asymmetries towards a more balanced form of cooperation. There is no adaptation or appropriation if the autonomy of the recipients is constrained.

In order to move towards a systemic change, Alonso and Santander (2021) identify five factors that contribute to the adaptation of TC to the global development agenda: i) the simultaneous strategic vocations of the countries involved, underlining the value of the partnership as a goal in itself; ii) proper

identification of the added value provided by each partner; iii) a precise definition of roles and decision-making processes; iv) the establishing of flexible learning and common work processes; and v) the predominance of a medium-term vision that goes beyond a project. In short, the innovation capability of SSTC will crucially depend on the relationships built between the actors involved, the principles that guide the action and the vocation to influence international arenas through development cooperation.

A fundamental task ahead for the adaptation of TC to the transition between development agendas will be to break with the vertical, welfare chain of aid in favour of a more horizontal cooperative action. The pieces on the board should be analysed transparently and from a political economy approach, taking into consideration the interests and incentives of the different actors, and shedding light on the different options on the table. The importance of structural factors associated with economic power, technical capability and the geostrategic position of the countries should be recognised, in addition to other

variables related to the narratives that guide TC. We propose, along these lines, a roadmap based on at least four courses of action:

1. **A sustainable development dimension:** to drive TC strategies and initiatives that contribute to a way-out of COVID-19 based on the implementation of the SDGs.
2. **A political-systemic dimension:** to promote a vision of TC in international forums that contributes to narratives and practices that result in a better adaptation of TC to the 2030 Agenda and which, at the same time, drive a transformation of the development cooperation system towards one that is more horizontal, inclusive and supportive.
3. **A narrative-practical dimension:** to afford visibility to a TC narrative consistent with the principles of horizontality and non-conditionality of SSC which, at the same time, promotes open, multi-actor, evidence-based management methodologies.
4. **An innovation dimension:** to start up innovative TC mechanisms that contribute to moving forward in the achievement of the SDGs, making the most of the advantages offered by the digital world in the new context of the pandemic and the global crisis.

TABLE 5: ROADMAP FOR THE REINVENTION OF TC FROM ITS TRANSFORMING POTENTIAL

Dimensions	Political and conceptual axes	Challenges for the Ibero-American-European Union relationship
Political-systemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To drive TC as a point of convergence to revitalise multilateral spaces for dialogue, multi-actor partnerships and policies aligned with the 2030 Agenda. ■ To promote, through TC, high-level political dialogue in the Euro-Ibero-American space as a form of governance in the face of the COVID19 crisis. ■ To activate international awareness of the obsolete nature of the development cooperation system and its inconsistency with the 2030 Agenda, playing through TC a transforming role of the development cooperation system towards one that respects horizontality, inclusiveness and solidarity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To renew collective efforts to strengthen multilateral and bi-regional articulation capabilities in development cooperation, TC and sustainable development issues, considering that the main anchor of the 2030 Agenda is multilateral governance. 2. To work on establishing a comprehensive strategy for transition from a development cooperation system based on vertical aid chains to one based on horizontal transnational networks and multi-actor ecosystems. 3. To drive TC in the multilateral sphere as a key mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (SDG17) and as a way-out of the COVID-19 crisis, highlighting the contributions that TC makes to the provision of global and regional public assets. 4. To showcase the political, conceptual and normative flow of the Ibero-American space achieved around TC regarding the definition of a conceptual framework for TC, the complete systematisation of what is done under this modality and knowledge of the operating mechanism under which it works. 5. To drive the development of common forms of recording and quantifying TC to jointly generate reports, whether regional, sectorial or a Global Report on SSC and TC.
Narrative-Practical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To promote in TC adherence to the principles that define SSC, such as horizontality, non-conditionality, co-creation or multi-actor partnerships. ■ To consolidate a consensus around the value of TC as a seed for the future of a more horizontal, inclusive, supportive development cooperation system. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To work to ensure that the principles, values and learning developed in the long experience of SSC are properly incorporated into TC. 2. To double the commitment to the cross-cutting agenda of the transformative narrative of TC: the gender perspective, care of the environment and the fight against climate change, the systemic change in production and consumption patterns, digitalisation and multi-actor partnerships. 3. To drive the narrative link between TC and SSC, both from the principles of SSC that enrich TC, and from the financial and knowledge support that TC provides for SSC.

<p>Sustainable development-related</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To promote TC as a multilevel, multiactor, multisectorial partnership for Sustainable Development. ■ To install and showcase TC as a means of effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ■ To underpin TC as an answer to a way-out of the COVID19 emergency consistent with the SDGs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To call out the importance of making consistent diagnoses of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global crisis, promoting the notion of a syndemic. TC will have to face not only the health emergency, but also global or planetary risks, as well as in an extremely serious economic, food and social context. 2. To alert to the need to double efforts to reduce internal, vertical and horizontal social inequalities in all countries, a problem that has worsened with COVID-19. It is necessary to receive support from TC to address social divides, especially those relating to access to health, education, social policies and employment. 3. To disseminate that the origin of this crisis lies in planetary imbalances that accelerate the spread of zoonotic diseases. This call must promote a TC aimed at reducing climate vulnerability in all Ibero-American countries. 4. To support combined TC interventions that simultaneously impact several SDGs, interlinking responses and ensuring that post-COVID19 recovery is anchored in the 2030 Agenda.
<p>Innovation-related</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To support the digital transformation of development cooperation through TC in science and technology (F.A.M.A. Agenda). ■ To facilitate via TC access to and the use of technologies applied to reducing social inequalities and digital gaps. ■ To contribute through TC the provision of digital public assets. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To alert to the need to support technological change in MICs through TC to overcome digital divides and reduce social inequalities, focusing mainly on groups in vulnerable situations. 2. To strengthen the gender perspective through its application in all the development and management stages of SSC and TC projects. 3. To work on the digitalisation of development cooperation, linking SSC, TC and cooperation in science and technology in the management areas. 4. To promote the notion of digital public assets both for the renewal of the social contract and for the discussion on responses to COVID-19 in the multilateral arena. 5. To guarantee, through TC, greater digital literacy, to promote socially inclusive access to the digital world, and to raise the level of implementation of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, big data analytics and blockchains. 6. To move forward via TC in the territorialisation of the 2030 Agenda through multi-actor, multi-level partnerships, and prioritising the integration of groups in situations of social vulnerability.

Source: compiled by author.

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Cooperation and the Sustainable Development
Agenda in Ibero-America: critical junctions and
horizons in the response to COVID-19**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Secretaría General
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