

# CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN LATIN AMERICA

**JORGE BALBIS PÉREZ**

*Jorge Balbis Pérez is a Uruguayan author who has worked in the field of Latin American NGOs, in issues of civil society participation and international development cooperation for more than 30 years.*

*South-South Cooperation (SSC), as practiced in the Latin American context, needs to be analyzed not just from the exclusive standpoint of the governments that execute it, but including the perspectives and contributions of a variety of stakeholders who, as part of the development cooperation community, do not necessarily dialogue -still less interact- with each other regarding their practices and results. From such a multistakeholder view of international cooperation, this article addresses an aspect rarely dealt with before in the literature on SSC in the Latin American context: namely, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in defining, implementing, and evaluating the policies and actions of the region's governments in this area. In particular, it looks at how, to what extent, under what conditions, and with what results CSOs might intervene in the SSC offered by their countries' governments as the expression of a logic of public-private action, considering that the development cooperation provided by governments forms part of public policy (in this case, foreign policy) and is therefore perceived as a space open to citizen opinion and participation.*

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he practice of international development cooperation (ICD) in Latin America has undergone a sea change in recent decades, particularly with

regard to the growing importance of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TC) in the intraregional

field, and to the rising number of state and non-state actors intervening in it ever more actively.<sup>1</sup>

This change has transformed the countries of Latin America into interesting sources of innovative experiences on cooperation, both in terms of the diversity of approaches and policies, and of the development results obtained through its application and the forms of partnership among various actors (governments, local authorities, academia, civil organizations, and the private sector), either for mobilizing resources, or the joint deployment of knowledge and capacities to implement shared cooperation initiatives.

<sup>1</sup> There is no consensus over the definition of SSC. For the purposes of this work, we take it to mean a form of mutual cooperation between middle-income countries (MICs), geared to the development and strengthening of endogenous capacities through technical-scientific, economic, commercial, and cultural cooperation, and fulfilling certain basic principles that distinguish it from other types of cooperation: a consensual agenda among the parties; an agenda that is capacity-building and strengthening; that facilitates complementarity, participation, collaboration, and democratic ownership among its various different protagonists; that is sustainable, focused, effective, and efficient, etc. (Acuña & Vergara Moreno, 2009, pp. 393-397). According to SEGIB (2011) "[...] there is general agreement that the principal value added arising from South-South Cooperation is its contribution to developing and strengthening capacities between partners in a horizontal relationship where both parties benefit from sharing. In addition to capacity-building, development occurs through the exchange of know-how, technologies and experiences insofar as they strengthen human and institutional resources as well as national cooperation systems, encourage the production and use of local knowledge, skills and expertise and promote the systematization and analysis of successful experiences. In this sense, SSC constitutes an ideal vehicle that helps strengthen national ownership and leadership in developing countries". (SEGIB, 2011, p. 13) For other approaches, see *Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)*; UN (2009); ECLAC (2010); SELA (2011); *Task Team on South-South Cooperation, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)*; SEGIB (2011) and (2012). The lack of consensus over the definition of SSC also extends to the definition of Triangular Cooperation (TC). It can broadly be defined as a partnership relationship among actors of three countries; a cooperation provider or donor partner; a middle-income country (MIC) that also acts as a cooperation provider partner and recipient partner of a less developed country. The fundamental approach of TC is therefore defined by the joint action of two actors in favor of a third party: a donor, emergent or strategic partner, and a beneficiary partner (Gómez Galán, Ayllón Pino, & Albarrán Calvo, 2011, pp. 13-15). More specifically, in the case of developing countries, TC is adopted as a reinforcement to SSC because of the financial and institutional potential offered by the latter, thus deepening cooperation and extending it to other countries. Similarly, TC is also a potential scenario for civil society's participation in each of the countries involved, thus justifying its inclusion in the analytical outlook of this article.

Recognizing the importance of these trends, the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4) in Busan, Korea, at the end of 2011 drew attention to the new public and private actors in the global architecture of ICD and pointed out the usefulness of setting up "inclusive development partnerships" based on openness, trust, respect, mutual learning, and recognition of the diversity and complementarity of the functions each actor can perform (HLF-4, 2011, 11.c).<sup>2</sup>

In light of these developments, the diversity of SSC solutions and instruments practiced in the Latin American context needs to be analyzed not just from the exclusive standpoint of the governments that execute it, but including the perspectives and contributions of a variety of actors who, as part of the development cooperation community, do not necessarily dialogue -still less interact- with each other regarding their practices and results. From such a multistakeholder view of international cooperation, this article addresses an aspect rarely dealt with before in the literature on SSC in the Latin American context: namely, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in defining, implementing, and evaluating the policies and actions of the region's governments in this area.

CSOs have a long history as stakeholders in ICD, and in SS&TC too. So far, this has been executed very largely outside official cooperation actions by their countries' governments as an expression of a logic of private action. The region's official agencies for their part very rarely rely on the contribution of CSOs for the supply and implementation of SS&TC actions operating in an exclusively public logic of action. What is at issue here then is to review how, to what extent, under what conditions, and with what results CSOs might intervene in the SSC offered by their countries' governments as the expression of a logic of public-private action, considering in advance that the development cooperation provided by governments forms part of public policy (in this case, foreign policy)

<sup>2</sup> We rely on the results of the HLF-4 in the knowledge that some countries in the region feel this forum only addresses procedural matters peculiar to North-South Cooperation.

and is therefore perceived as a space open to citizen opinion and participation.<sup>3</sup>

The contents of this work are the result of information collection from official documentary sources -particularly governments and regional bodies - on the SSC practiced in the region, and from a review of the academic literature on cases of cooperation among Latin American countries and suggestions for national platforms and CSO networks on ICD in general and SSC at the level of some Latin American countries.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of such a limited comparison of sources and literature, I have outlined some working practices and modalities with the aim of identifying the capacities available and the most commendable public-private institutional arrangements to manage the growing diversity of financing sources and flows more effectively.

The article is organized in three main sections. *First*, it addresses a number of questions that explore the terrain, including some general considerations on SSC and the kind of participation of CSOs which we discuss below. *Next*, it looks at a number of experiences of CSO participation in the supply of SSC at the Latin American level. *And last*, on that basis, it identifies some issues to be kept in mind when moving toward more and better participation of CSOs in the region's supply of SSC.

<sup>3</sup> Clearly the object of this analysis is not to make a value judgment about the merits or demerits of SS&TC from the perspective of CSOs, as defined and practiced in our region with regard to objectives, resources, and results; its scope is far less ambitious, confining itself to a partial review and first discussion of the intervention of some CSOs in defining and implementing the SS&TC supply from some countries in the region.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of CSO we deploy in this work is more restrictive than that of civil society, but broader than that of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with which the world of civil society partnerships is often identified, given that it already includes a greater variety of organizations than NGOs alone: from these to study and research centers, community organizations and grass-roots associations, environmental groups, organizations for the defense of women's rights, cooperatives, observatories, trade unions, etc. (Revilla Blanco, 2012, p. 1). However, the spectrum of opinions of CSOs used in this article regarding the practice of SSC in the region is restricted to NGOs and organizations for the defense of women's rights, trade unions, and study and research centers.

## REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS

To try to define what the role of CSOs in SSC might be we can begin by understanding ICD as the mobilization of financial, technical, and human actions, and/or resources in order to resolve specific development problems, promote wellbeing, and strengthen national capacities. So we cannot speak of a definition or of a few unique, unambiguous, permanent, abstract objectives where ICD is concerned; it changes with time, place, global trends, the circumstances and interests of the parties involved, the priorities of the international agenda, and particularly with current notions of development. Development has many interpretations, meanings, and significations that depend on the viewpoint of the one interpreting and applying it (Rodríguez Vázquez, 2010, pp. 9-10). On this basis, the principal value added arising from South-South Cooperation is its contribution to developing and strengthening capacities between partners in a horizontal relationship where both parties benefit from sharing.

From the point of view of the actors involved in the practice of ICD, and particularly of SSC, we find subjects with highly diverse natures and functions, participating in public and private, national and international, generalist and specialist institutions and organizations, with different forms and strategies of action, as well as modalities of interaction with each other.<sup>5</sup>

In this regard, there is no doubt that CSOs and academic institutions -public and private- in the region have long played a leading role in the practice of SSC (and even Triangular supported by their counterparts in the North) in a spirit of solidarity with each other and among their different sectors, resulting in a rich and dense fabric of linkages among civil societies in Latin America. However, CSOs' participation in SSC can and must be analyzed from at least two other angles: (i) their possible intervention in the implementation of official cooperation programs and projects at the level of the beneficiary country (for the sake of their own strengthening too); and (ii) their inclusion in the

<sup>5</sup> According to the SEGIB, there is a recent trend, as SSC is practiced in the Latin American region, to "Move from exchanges with state actors as protagonists to a broader base of subjects and fields of action, fostering a more democratic ownership so as to create opportunities for different groups to benefit from the value provided by SSC. It should be noted that civil society and academia have made progress in this direction but further strengthening is needed". (SEGIB, 2011, pp. 14-15).

definition and implementation of the cooperation “supply” when its countries’ governments act as providers of development assistance (SEGIB, 2012, p. 52). In this sense, I believe that much remains to be done in our region, even if the inclusion of CSOs as potential beneficiaries of SSC is a far more frequent and less controversial practice than their participation in defining and implementing of the cooperation “supply”.

The participation of CSOs in the SSC supply has so far been the exception rather than the rule, and drawn attention to when it occurs. Mostly, if not exclusively, such cooperation is agreed, defined, and implemented by political and technical actors (including officials and professionals from the public sector and, sometimes, academics). This is due very likely -though not exclusively- to the nature of Technical Cooperation that what is today labeled SSC has had since its origins (initially called “Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries” - TCDC), as defined in the 1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) to promote and implement Technical Cooperation among developing countries in order to “create, acquire, adapt, transfer, and share knowledge and experience of mutual benefit, and to achieve national and collective self-sufficiency, which are essential to economic and social development”.

But by now it is all too evident that “SSC requires an inclusive approach which ensures the participation of all stakeholders involved in the development process, where the state must take a leadership role in designing and implementing SSC policies, understanding that the various stakeholders should work jointly with public sector institutions”. (SEGIB, 2012, p. 17). Given this reference framework, the emphasis of this analysis will be to review the possible role of CSOs as “strategic actors” in the definition and execution of the supply, as opposed to their exclusive performance as “beneficiaries” that is commonly recognized in the practice of SSC in Latin America.

### ON THE TRAIL OF CSOs IN LATIN AMERICA’S SSC SUPPLY

It is difficult to trace CSOs’ participation and contribution in the definition and implementation of the SSC supply in the region’s countries. First because, as mentioned above, such participation is

the exception rather than the rule, and a something striking to be drawn attention to when it does occur. To this is added the shortage of systematized information on such potential participation, perhaps as a result of the shortcomings often identified regarding the systematization of SSC information, or the fact that this aspect is ignored when it comes to keeping records of cases, focusing attention on the public institution leading (or coordinating) the implementation of SSC programs and projects. When such recognition does occur, very often the information on CSOs’ participation in SSC actions included in official reports and presentations is limited to merely mentioning the organization, without further details about its contributions or the nature of its intervention. Clearly, if we are to find out more about these interventions, a more detailed record of the role and contributions of all the possible stakeholders involved in each case of SSC would have to be kept, in the first place, rather than merely mentioning them or focusing attention exclusively on the action’s public stakeholders.<sup>6</sup>

However, for CSOs that have participated in SS&TC actions, either with other social organizations in tandem with the private sector or academia, or by acting as executors of a Technical Cooperation component provided by their countries’ governments, this is a major fact that they are careful to make visible and disseminate (among other things, for reasons of institutional prestige, but also of transparency and accountability). Still, such cases are not very numerous, although, as we shall see below, there are rich

<sup>6</sup> Particularly interesting and potentially highly profitable is the effort currently being made in the region through the Ibero-American Program to Strengthen South-South Cooperation (PIFSSC), which includes two lines of action that meet this need: *Line 2*: Support to cooperation information, computation, and recording-keeping systems (contributing to the development and consolidation of information systems of PIFSSC member countries); and *Line 5*: Systematization and documentation of SSC experiences in Latin America (contributing to the systematization and documentation of countries’ SSC experiences that may constitute good practice). Regarding the need we are seeing in terms of making CSOs’ participation in SSC actions in the region visible, even if the analysis of their contribution is included in any of the initial experiences subject to systematization by the PIFSSC, it would be of great interest to have an express and indicative recommendation to all participating official agencies to include a specific section in the records of their SSC actions in order to ascertain and gauge the human, technical, and financial characteristics, modalities, and resources contributed by participating CSOs at different stages of the project (PIFSSC, 2012, pp. 14-19).



experiences in the region that are extremely useful in terms of good practice and lessons learned.

To this effect, there follows a brief description of two cases of CSO intervention in the supply and implementation of SSC among countries in the region, and in one extraregional experience. The first two (Colombia's cooperation with Honduras and Mexico's with Haiti) include donor countries of different sizes, different institutional arrangements, and even with the participation of the private sector in one case, and correspond to different moments, needs, and objectives (dealing with the post-earthquake situation in Haiti and the development of an alternative modality for the construction of social housing in Honduras). The case of extraregional cooperation (between Costa Rica, Benin, and Bhutan) has been included for its condition as an SS&TC experience and the high degree of responsibility delegated by government agencies in conducting and implementing the project in the participating CSOs. The information gathered has been produced by official agencies and regional bodies involved in this area, or by the CSOs themselves who have been involved in the implementation of the projects analyzed. Needless to say, this section is not an exhaustive inventory of such practices; it is simply a showcase for actions that illustrate a variety of modalities of collaboration and roles of CSOs in defining the content and implementation of various SS&TC initiatives.

#### TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND HONDURAS WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF SERVIVIENDA

After Colombia and Honduras's signature of the Convention on Economic and Trade Cooperation, and Combating Drug Trafficking in 1993, an interesting Technical Cooperation experience was launched in the field of popular housing: the "SERVIVIENDA" project, carried out by the Colombian foundation of the same name, and consisting of a series of technology transfer actions in the construction of low cost modular housing and of support in providing financial facilities to purchase them (Uribe Villa, 2011, p. 76).

In this case, it was the public authorities that appealed to a private institution, the SERVIVIENDA Popular Housing Service Foundation, on the basis of its recognized expertise in this formal cooperation initiative with Honduras. SERVIVIENDA is a social, not-for-profit institution created in Bogota in 1976 by the Society

of Jesus. Its objective is to improve the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities through the development of comprehensive housing programs, as pioneers in Colombia in the use of extremely versatile light prefabrication technology for the construction of housing, schools, and health services, and for productive activities, after extending its operations to several neighboring countries (Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela).

In several analysts' view, this Technical Cooperation experience through the "SERVIVIENDA" project is regarded as one of the most successful cases (in terms of content) of cooperation among the region's countries in the 1990s. The entire action was paid for with resources of the Central America and Caribbean Cooperation Fund cofinanced at the time by Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela, i.e. with public funds, and its objective was to alleviate demands on less favored sectors via an action involving technology transfer to build low cost modular housing. The executing agency on the Colombian side was the SERVIVIENDA Foundation, while its Honduran counterpart was in charge of the Federation for Community Development in Honduras (FEDECOH). The first stage evaluated the need for low cost housing in Honduras; the second stage set up the factory and produced 40 houses for US\$2000 each; and the third stage corresponded to the deployment of financial mechanisms for purchasing the units.

SERVIVIENDA was directly responsible for carrying out the actions in Honduras at every phase of the project's implementation, in close collaboration with the countries' authorities. The result was an experience from a technical point of view very positively evaluated by many of the participating officials (Guáqueta, 1995, p. 13).

#### MEXICAN COOPERATION WITH HAITI: A LABORATORY OF INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION EXPERIENCES AMONG GOVERNMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Mexican cooperation with Haiti has a long history, but this entered a new phase after the 2010 earthquake, especially after the most pressing needs had been met and the challenges in rebuilding the country's devastated economic and social infrastructure began to appear. Mexican cooperation subsequently focused on medium- and long-term development projects in four

priority areas: health, education, social development, and agriculture, and incorporated a new practice unprecedented in this area of the country's foreign policy: public-private partnerships.

Thus, in November 2010, the Mexico-Haiti Partnership was formed with the participation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE) and seven private actors related to big companies: *Fomento Social Banamex*, the Bancomer Foundation, the Cuervo Foundation, the Chrysler Foundation, the Televisa Foundation, the Aztec Foundation, and *Unidos por Ellos*. The Mexican State and the private stakeholders made financial contributions and, in conjunction with the Haitian government, defined a set of projects for infrastructure, health programs, and agriculture, including the "*De Campesino a Campesino*" project on productive initiatives.

The initiative for this project came from the Lindavista Center (*Centro de Investigación, Información y Apoyo a la Cultura*, A.C.), an NGO with a long track record in Mexico, and one of the leading organizations of the Haiti-Mexico Joint Committee of Civil Society for the Reconstruction of Haiti. To this effect, the Lindavista Center, together with Caritas Mexicana, set up a dialogue with the SRE in January 2010 toward the creation of meeting spaces for CSOs collaborating with Haiti or intending to do so, in order to find out about the Mexican government's strategy and actions in this area. Liaison mechanisms were subsequently established between the CSO and SRE initiatives, articulating a direct contact among civil societies (through the Haiti-Mexico Joint Committee of Civil Society) with the Mexico Alliance for Haiti, and having the two countries' governments as facilitators.

The "*De Campesino a Campesino*" project specifically sought to share successful production and marketing experiences with organizations of Mexican peasant producers, and Haitian peasants and promoters tailored to their circumstances and culture, and aimed at comprehensive long-term, local, sustainable development. It also sought to promote food security in rural Haitian communities participating through the incubation of food production projects, with the support of microcredits. The work proposal was submitted by the Mexican and Haitian CSOs participating in the Joint Committee of Civil Society to Mexico's SRE, which incorporated it in its Haiti cooperation agenda and supported it with resources

provided by the Mexico Alliance for Haiti. Various other Mexican public and academic institutions were added at the implementation stage and supervised by the Lindavista Center, responsible for executing the project.

The first phase of the project (2011) was of short duration, consisting essentially of Haitian peasants visiting rural communities in several Mexican states to give them knowledge of experiences of organic agriculture, and the development of productive capacities and access to information on how to incubate social enterprises and negotiate public resources, and so manage microcredit and savings cooperatives in an organized fashion. According to information from its organizers, the project to May 2012 enabled the incorporation of new technologies in the field for cultivation and irrigation, using elements drawn from the local environment, the planting of prickly pear cacti and their Haitian-style culinary preparation, and the establishment of experimental kitchen gardens. The second stage of the project took place in 2012, and the possibility of a third during 2013 is being considered, based on a comprehensive proposal for food production, and local and rural sustainable development in Haiti, provided the human and financial resources are in place to develop and maintain the institutional willingness of the Mexican government, the private sector, and Caritas Mexicana to continue supporting it.<sup>7</sup>

The Mexican authorities feel that the "*De Campesino a Campesino*" project is an example of possible "new practices that work in favor of so-called 'complementary development partnerships' by incorporating in them, alongside government, the private sector, civil society organizations, and other countries in triangular schemes" (Granguillhome Morfin, 2012, p. 26).

#### THE SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION PROGRAM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN COSTA RICA, BENIN, AND BHUTAN

An SS&TC exercise with intervention by a Latin American CSO is the Programmed of South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development between Benin, Bhutan, and Costa Rica (PSC) after the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), with the financial

<sup>7</sup> For further information, see: *Pro Tempore* Secretariat Mexican-Haitian Joint Committee (2012).

support of the Netherlands in the framework of the Sustainable Development Agreements.

The objectives set by the PSC included the development of reciprocity projects to generate knowledge and autonomy for the interested parties. Their results could be used as input to define sectoral strategies and draw up policy, mobilizing national governments, civil society, and the academic and private sectors in the partner countries to renew and strengthen the commitment to sustainable development in four thematic areas: sustainable tourism, production and sustainable consumption chains, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, access to sustainable energy, and efficient energy use. Gender equality was approached transversally in all PSC projects implemented between 2007 and 2011.

On the Costa Rican side, in addition to the specialized public units, participation was seen in the implementation of the cooperation actions offered by *Fundecooperación para el Desarrollo Sostenible*, a CSO set up in 1994 that works to improve the socioproductive, environmental, and gender conditions of Costa Rica's population by gearing their labor to meeting needs for financing and technical assistance to micro, small, and medium businessmen, individuals, or partners working toward sustainable, and in particular, innovative economic activities (e.g. sustainable agriculture and tourism, clean technology, and energy efficiency).

The PSC's political coordination arose out of a committee of government officials from each country, but the operation itself was down an organ comprising three directors or representatives from the national implementation mechanisms appointed by the governments in each of the participating countries. *Fundecooperación* acted, in Costa Rica's case, as a mechanism for implementation, participating in the execution of the actions offered and received by its country in the field of partnership, and acting as secretariat for the entire PSC.

Between 2007 and 2011, with a relatively small fund, wholly managed by private entities (supervised by their respective countries' authorities), PSC projects involved over 180 organizations, generating microbusinesses and jobs that enable the development of new products and services in its spheres of application. Mindful of these achievements, the program was hailed in 2010 as one of the best solutions for climate change and

protection of the environment, and received the United Nations' 2010 Global South-South Cooperation Award.

The three partner countries are currently seeking a new source of financing to enable them to continue under the new definition of "*Partners in South-South Cooperation*" (PSSC), with the intention of bringing in new partner countries.

#### SOME ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION IN PROMOTING THE INTERVENTION OF CSOs IN LATIN AMERICA'S SSC SUPPLY

It becomes apparent from this brief presentation of just a few experiences that CSOs' participation in our region's SSC supply has precedents. It is possible and beneficial, even if it is not that frequent and its implementation is limited to certain areas. Its coordination and execution require the combination of willingness, conditions, complex institutional arrangements, and difficult financial and administrative frameworks, but it is not impossible to achieve. Both CSOs and official bodies agree over this valuation, realizing that CSOs should play a role not just by controlling and critiquing official SS&TC, but also as proponents and executors of cooperation alongside their countries' governments.

This was pointed out by the Task Team on South-South Cooperation prior to HLF-4, when it stated that broad-based horizontal partnerships with mutual leadership involving stakeholders such as local governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia, where all parties contribute and share responsibilities when it comes to planning, implementing, and evaluating (shared ownership), are indispensable if SS&TC is to achieve effective and lasting results in terms of development. This multistakeholder approach can also serve to build trust between countries in the long term, beyond relations between governments, and be sustained over time if knowledge sharing among partners covers a broad range of sectors and fully involves a diverse set of actors such as local governments, civil society, private sector and academia as part of broad-based horizontal partnerships, with a two-fold strategy (policy-makers and practitioners) to create formal and informal links that allow them to jointly identify key challenges, practices and solutions to be shared and adapted with a view to policy and

institutional changes. (Task Team on South-South Cooperation, 2011, pp. 01-02).

CSOs view both their general participation in the SSC supply and their specific practice in Latin America at the level of certain countries and sectors in similar terms. In particular, CSOs in the region feel that their solidarity has contributed a great deal to horizontal cooperation among countries, making this experience a valuable repository of human development knowledge and practices, which have form the qualitative differential of SSC, since many of the public policies shared as “good practice” by their countries’ governments are the result of social constructs and political struggles in which Civil Society has been a major player. For all that Civil Society’s commitment to ICD is already a reality, it could be expanded and deepened through partnerships with those responsible for cooperation and other potential stakeholders in their countries.<sup>8</sup>

However, acknowledging that this practice in our region is for the time being still in its infancy and rather sporadic, several conditions must be fulfilled before the number and quality of instances of it increase:

- a. To recognize that numerous stakeholders, not just public institutions, have experience, capacities, and skills to offer for cooperation, given that “Although the entities offering cooperation are experts in specific sector areas, the actual staff involved in the project often lack experience in cooperation processes or do not have enough time at their institutions to prepare the materials and methodologies needed for the cooperation”. (SEGIB, 2011, p. 132).
- b. CSOs in particular should not only play a watchdog role, but also be recognized and given a role that identifies, proposes, executes, and evaluates SSC. In these cases, the comparative advantages of this role in general and in each case of cooperation they intervene in should be made clear.
- c. The political will for dialogue and cooperation, i.e. sharing and implementing a participative

view of ICD, and of the necessity and usefulness of involving a broad spectrum of potentially interested public and private actors with recognized backgrounds (CSOs, academia, the private sector) in partnerships to tackle the different development challenges. This would enable the reciprocal recognition of roles and capacities on which basis potential courses of multistakeholder action can be identified, combining clearly established roles and capacities, and even sharing responsibilities and resources in the implementation of cooperation projects and actions.<sup>9</sup>

- d. This means that, under the leadership and coordination of the relevant government agents, there are stable spaces and mechanisms for consultation and participation supported by a legal framework in which substantive aspects of ICD policy and practice as offered by countries are discussed, agreed, and coordinated. This would allow the exchange of experiences, points of view, proposals, while agreeing on work objectives and modalities to improve contribution, interaction, and collaboration in SSC practice.<sup>10</sup>
- e. Through dialogue and consultation exercises like these, identifying the potential sectors and designing the most appropriate collaborative proposals and arrangements for the inclusion of this wide variety of stakeholders who enable inclusive alliances to be built and developed, in the knowledge that each stakeholder has capacities and skills to respond to specific demands or contribute to the cooperation supply. It is not a matter of reducing potential contributions of one stakeholder or another, but

<sup>9</sup> “Several countries, to a greater or lesser degree, have developed stable frameworks to coordinate and work with other ministries and administrations, as well as with civil society. Coordination occurs at three levels: Government ministries; Regional and local government (decentralized cooperation); Academia and private organizations (NGOs, unions, associations, enterprise...) Recipient countries develop a closer coordination...” (SEGIB, 2010, pp. 143-144). In this author’s view, however, this coordination should be strengthened and extended to countries offering cooperation.

<sup>10</sup> “The practice of consultation with civil society, academia and other stakeholders is underused. Other than participation in shared public information systems, interaction is limited to occasional town hall meetings that are neither regular nor supported by a legal framework”. (SEGIB, 2010, p. 146).

<sup>8</sup> For examples of these arguments, see *CSO Statement on South-South Cooperation* (UN, 2009); *ALOP-Reality of Aid* (2010); *ABONG* (2011); Martínez-Gómez (2012).



of enriching the possible supply and meeting the demand for cooperation more diversely. Clearly, such joint actions are not possible in all areas covered by the practice of SSC, especially if still limited to Technical Cooperation alone. But identifying them and agreeing their execution on the strength of their specific realities and institutional arrangements would be done on a national case-to-case basis.<sup>11</sup>

- f. The next step is for information systems to be improved to detect any such assets through the development of comprehensive lists of the capacities of all stakeholders involved;<sup>12</sup> then to recognize and systematize experiences (successful and unsuccessful), to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different working practices and procedures, and finally to define the most recommended institutional arrangements to manage the growing diversity of financing sources and flows more effectively, while recognizing, valuing, and, where possible, better coordinating the contributions of the various stakeholders of each country's cooperation system (Romero Keith, 2009, pp. 432-435).
- g. In the absence of systematic information on the interventions in the SSC offered and implemented by the countries of the region:

- i. As recommended by the SEGIB in its 2012 SSC Report, it would be extremely useful to include indicators and questions for information collection on this point in the surveys and systematizations carried out by the national organizations responsible (SEGIB, 2012, p. 68). This information should refer to the participation of the different public and private stakeholders involved in specific SSC projects at each phase (identification, negotiation, and formulation, implementation and follow-up, and evaluation). Particular attention should be laid on keeping records of each partner's type, role, and contribution, and the relationship that develops between them, including the institutional mechanism put into operation and the contribution of each to financing it.
- ii. It would be very timely and much needed to extensively investigate a significant and diverse number of countries on specific cases of CSO intervention in the SSC supply. This will make it possible to identify good practices and lessons learned, and thus possibilities and limitations of CSOs' participation in such cooperation.

- h. Endowing the SSC supply with more potent and effective financial resources. This point is repeatedly made as a debit to be dealt with by the region's countries by establishing new genuine resource funds for their cooperation actions, and not just to putting their contributions to international or regional organizations funds down as such, or valuing any operating costs and government officials' salaries involved in their actions as a contribution to their SSC. These resources should come from government contributions, but also the private sector, foundations, and, if possible, CSOs themselves (or CSOs should value operating costs and salaries of staff devoted to SSC actions as their contribution).

<sup>11</sup> At the Ibero-American level "traditional cooperation (ODA) is better coordinated than SSC received, and articulation is still in its infancy in the case of cooperation supplied. The exceptions are countries such as Spain, with a long tradition and many years spent strengthening coordination systems (Box VII.2); and Portugal, where an Interministerial Cooperation Committee and a Coordination Forum coordinate with other stakeholders. Portugal also instituted a decentralized management system pivoting around IPAD, with ministries, NGOs, academia and other institutions. [...] Mexico is also moving towards strengthening coordination. It has developed one of the most powerful and complete information systems in the region, expected to collect data from all the ministries and public offices receiving or providing cooperation. Cooperation received is aligned with the National Development Plan; cooperation given has a preliminary planning framework that needs fleshing out". (SEGIB, 2010, pp. 143-145).

<sup>12</sup> A good example of this would be the information collection mechanism implemented by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), which, under the heading "Actors" in its survey of good practice and international technical cooperation products, includes associations, non-profit organizations, networks, academic or research centers, government bodies, the private sector, public companies, etc." (Governo da República Federativa do Brasil, Agência Brasileira de Cooperação: "*Levantamento de Boas Práticas e de Produtos*").

There is a big difference between what happens among CSOs in the North (in particular, European NGOs) in the practice of North-South cooperation where their participation is concerned in defining, implementing, and financing their countries' ICD, and what happens with their Latin American counterparts regarding SSC.

NGOs from the main European donor countries are usually convened by the public agencies responsible for their countries to discuss priorities, agendas, action plans, budgets, and targets of resources allocated to ICD as part of the decision-making processes on development cooperation policy (also true in many cases at the decentralized level, and for the European Union as a whole). Moreover, through different modalities of award processes, contests, grants, and cofinancing, and a series of rigorous conditions and controls, they are even responsible for the implementation of part of the resources allocated to ICD in the relevant public budgets in terms of their own development partnership agendas, albeit aligned with national priorities for cooperation laid down by the competent organs of the State. And even if this access to public resources is being increasingly conditioned to contributions of significant percentages of their own resources to the total financing of the work plans, a good number of European NGOs finance most of their partnership cooperation with funds from the public coffers.<sup>13</sup>

Obviously, this practice is not exempt from questions and objections (even from the NGO sector itself), but it has become accepted and recognized practice in European North-South cooperation mechanisms, helping to strengthen this sector of civil society's role in defining and implementing part of public policy on their respective governments' development cooperation, and, in the process, contributing to the financing of these organizations. To this NGOs operating with public resources add private funds that they themselves collect and the importance of which, the volume of such resources aside, lies in the fact that 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.<sup>14</sup>

Where CSOs in our region are concerned, the subject of resources and their financial sustainability is just one aspect of a far more complex problem to do with their role, legitimacy, and survival in their countries' social fabric, but which also touches on their potential

participation in SSC actions, a weakness that in recent times has been aggravated in several countries in the region, either by tensions arising from issues of autonomy or social legitimacy or by growing financial difficulties due to cuts in international partnership cooperation, where the bulk of its resources have long come from.

An ideal scenario in this regard lies in CSOs' capacity to mobilize resources for themselves from contributions by their partners or taxpayers, who share the objectives of their action (e.g. an organization like Greenpeace Argentina, which claimed to have financial contributions from 85,000 partners in 2012, although this type of revenue usually enables the financing of public campaigns and not the regular working of the organizations). But this scenario is extremely rare in the region for now and a CSO can hardly survive with a single source of revenue. The usual practice, then, is that these organizations have to combine varying percentages of contributions from different sources for their financing, such as the voluntary contributions mentioned above, contributions from international cooperation and the private sector (either directly from companies or from foundations linked with them), or even from State agencies through the implementation of public projects and programs.

This issue, which is beyond the scope of this article, is of growing importance for CSOs in the region, almost all of which face serious financing problems, and the treatment of which can also be approached from an SSC perspective. One possible approach is to review the role of CSOs of countries that broaden their SSC supply and whether they are called upon to adopt a leading role in this dynamic. In that case, having resources of their own is a condition that will enable them to operate autonomously regarding the actions of their countries' governments. Another possible approach is to conceive of CSOs intervening in SSC actions and implementing resources from government agencies or foundations linked to or coming directly from the private sector.

Where the latter possibility is concerned, to take up the previous examples again, we can see that, in several of the cases presented, CSOs access and implement public funds earmarked for cooperation, both from the donor countries' governments and from funds contributed to by the private sector and international organizations. This is current practice in the region that should be promoted, expanded, and diversified. It requires clear and objective rules for access to public

<sup>13</sup> For example, in Spain's case, in 2011, the average public aid introduced and implemented by the country's nine largest NGOs accounted for nearly 20% of each of their budgets (López, 2012, pp. 40-41).

<sup>14</sup> Private resources can come from a variety of sources: associate dues, aid from private entities (usually companies), specific fund-raising activities, or periodic actions such as public collections, etc.

resources, as well as transparency and rigor when it comes to the accountability and evaluation of the results obtained. In this way, problems will be avoided regarding possible cuts to the autonomy of CSOs, or risks of favoritism and clientelism associated with access to resources and, in the process, transparency and accountability will be ensured, narrowing the margins for uses not consistent with the purposes that justify the public financing received. It requires involvement from political representatives, practitioners, Civil Society, and academia in national debates about the challenges and difficulties involved in such practices, especially in areas such as information systems, communication with citizens, documentation of experiences, focus on results or transparency, and accountability to national interest groups. Feedback and review among national and international peers is critical in order to enrich these discussions, and the lessons learned from thematic platforms such as the *International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)* can help to evaluate the scope of such challenges, but also to identify ways of developing mechanisms of governance, transparency, and accountability (Task Team on South-South Cooperation, 2011, p. 02).<sup>15</sup>

CSOs intervening in these actions should assume a role not only of implementing public resources, with all the requirements that such activity might force them to comply with for the organs controlling the State and public opinion, but they could also contribute to the difficult task of helping to explain to their societies the need to allocate public funds to meet the needs of others when there are persistent high levels of poverty, inequality, and unmet needs in their own countries. In this sense, as suggested by Bruno Ayllón Pino, the participation of CSOs as implementers of SSC actions would also strengthen their role as “educators for development and international solidarity”, helping to justify the investment of resources in SSC not only in terms of altruism, but of mutual benefit and national interest to the donor country” (Ayllón Pino, 2013).

## CONCLUSIONS

A valuable message derived from Busan is the expression of willingness to change thinking and actions from “Aid Effectiveness” to focus on “Development Effectiveness”, i.e. on real sustainable benefits for people. To this end, it is important to note the role of several actors in development cooperation which go beyond traditional donors and recipients: participants that are both providers and recipients, local governments, parliamentarians, civil society, the private sector and academia. To achieve successful development, the following will be necessary: an alliance between all parties, true democratic ownership, the adoption of rights-based approaches, and policies that coherently promote national and international development and a series of commitments to increase respect for diversity, inclusion and environmental sustainability which are fulfilled by all actors.<sup>16</sup> In this respect, Busan drew attention to the importance of the new public and private actors in the global architecture of ICD and pointed out the usefulness of setting up “inclusive development partnerships” based on openness, trust, respect, mutual learning, and recognition of the diversity and complementarity of the functions each actor can perform, in a clear reference to civil and public logics.

Something similar is recommended by the SEGIB for the Latin American sphere when, in its *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2010*, it analyzes future trends and challenges in terms of coordination with other cooperation institutions and actors, and emphasizes that “Equal importance should be given to encouraging social engagement and coordination with other players in cooperation plans and activities. From joint policy and program discussions to coordinated sector and geographic area interventions, there is an array of opportunities for participation -insufficiently explored, with little legal coverage, therefore lacking stability and relevance. Creation of Cooperation Boards with clear competencies and sound frameworks would be a positive step forward”. (SEGIB, 2010, p. 149).

<sup>15</sup> On the IATI, see: “Supporting Aid Transparency”.

<sup>16</sup> International civil society is already working in this direction, as are Latin American CSOs, as part of it, through their participation in initiatives such as the CSO Partnership on Development Effectiveness to participate in the *Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*, or their involvement in the work of several Building Blocks, notably the ones regarding SSC, created in Busan.

In light of these arguments, the diversity of SS&TC solutions and instruments promoted in LAC should be analyzed and shared among the diversity of actors which, as part of the ICD community, do not necessarily dialogue about their respective practices, results, and possible synergies as often as might be wished. For all the above reasons, it would be extremely useful for some countries in the region, individually or in concert, to draw up a line of work in the supply of SSC to promote the creation and operation of inclusive multistakeholder partnerships whose operation and results could be systematized and evaluated in terms of effectiveness, systematizing experiences (both successful and unsuccessful), evaluating the advantages

and disadvantages of different working practices and procedures, identifying the capacities available and the most commendable institutional arrangements to manage the growing diversity of financing sources and flows, recognizing and valuing and, as far as possible, better coordinating the contributions of the various SS&TC stakeholders in the region in the knowledge that "government and civil society apparatus involved in cooperation policy in a country are not transformed through administrative technical change, but through the implementation of new policies requiring continuous interaction between the technical and the political". (Warrens & Zapata, 2011, p 30). ♦

## REFERENCES

ABONG. 2011. "Declaração de Organizações da Sociedade Civil Brasileira sobre a Cooperação Internacional e a Eficácia do Desenvolvimento: País Cooperante, Sociedade Cooperante".

ACUÑA, HERNÁN & VERGARA MORENO, ARTURO. 2009. "Cooperación Sur-Sur para el fortalecimiento de capacidades", in: Ayala Martínez, Citlali & Pérez, Jorge A. (Coords.). *México y los países de renta media en la cooperación para el desarrollo: ¿hacia dónde vamos?* Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mora/FLACSO México/CIDEAL. pp.393-411.

ASOCIACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA DE ORGANIZACIONES DE PROMOCIÓN AL DESARROLLO (ALOP) Y THE REALITY OF AID. 2010. *Cooperación al Desarrollo Sur-Sur: ¿Un desafío al Sistema de la Ayuda?* Reporte especial de Cooperación Sur-Sur 2010. Medellín. March.

AYLLÓN PINO, BRUNO. 2013. "Tendencias globales: los nuevos donantes de CID", oral presentation in the Seminar: "México y la Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo". Mexico, D.F.: Oxfam México. February 20.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC). 2010. *International Cooperation in the New Global Context: Reflections from Latin America and the Caribbean*. Note by the Secretariat. March 26.

EDWARDS, MICHAEL. 2002. *Un futuro positivo: la cooperación internacional en el siglo XXI*. Barcelona: Intermón Oxfam.

GÓMEZ GALÁN, MANUEL; AYLLÓN PINO, BRUNO & ALBARRÁN CALVO, MIGUEL. 2011. *Reflexiones prácticas sobre cooperación triangular*. Madrid: CIDEAL.

GRANGUILLHOME MORFÍN, ROGELIO. 2012. "La cooperación mexicana en Haití: entre la solidaridad y la innovación", in: *Foreign Policy* (Mexican Edition), N° 03. April-May. pp. 24-26.

GUÁQUETA, ALEXANDRA. 1995. "La cooperación técnica en Colombia como una herramienta estratégica de política exterior", in: *Revista Colombia Internacional* N° 30. Bogota: Universidad de los Andes. April-June. pp. 3-15.



FOURTH HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON AID EFFECTIVENESS (HLF-4). 2011. *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*. Busan. November 29-December 1.

LÓPEZ, ALMUDENA. 2012. "ONG: crisis sin fronteras", in: *El País*. Madrid. October 14.

MARTÍNEZ-GÓMEZ, RAQUEL. 2012. *La Cooperación Sur-Sur en América Latina y los desafíos para la agenda de la igualdad*. Montevideo: Articulación Feminista Marcosur. March.

MEXICAN-HAITIAN JOINT COMMITTEE. 2012. *Informe de Actividades 2010-2011. A dos años de trabajo: Primeras reflexiones para un diálogo*. Mexico, D.F.: Centro Lindavista A.C.

NIVIA-RUIZ, FERNANDO. 2009. "La cooperación internacional Sur-Sur en América Latina y el Caribe. Aproximación a un estado del arte", in: Julio Giraldo, María Carmela & Nivia-Ruiz, Fernando. *Cooperación Euroandina y Sur-Sur en América Latina*. Cartagena de Indias: Escuela Latino Americana de Cooperación & Desarrollo/Universidad San Buenaventura-Cartagena. pp. 125-220.

PIFCSS - IBERO-AMERICAN PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION. 2012. *Sistematizar para aprender. Lecciones de nueve experiencias de Cooperación Sur-Sur y Triangular*. Working Paper N° 1. Montevideo: PIFCSS-SEGIB.

REVILLA BLANCO, MARISA. 2012. "Las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil (OSC) y la agenda internacional del desarrollo: escenario latinoamericano", in: *Escenarios XXI*, III (14). Mexico, D.F. September-October.

ROBINSON, JAMES. 2008. "La posibilidad de la cooperación", in: Gottbacher, Markus & Lucatello, Simone (Comps.). *Reflexiones sobre la ética y la cooperación internacional para el desarrollo, los retos del siglo XXI*. Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mora. pp. 68-91.

RODRÍGUEZ VÁZQUEZ, HORACIO. 2010. "La cooperación internacional para el desarrollo desde una perspectiva latinoamericana", in: Pollack, Aaron (Coord.). *Temas de cooperación internacional para el desarrollo: criticar, proponer, sistematizar*. Postgraduate Papers. International Development Cooperation. Master's Degree. Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mora. pp. 9-34.

ROMERO KEITH, JOSÉ. 2009. "Hacia un modelo de Cooperación Sur-Sur y desarrollo de capacidades en América Latina", in: Ayala Martínez, Citlali & Pérez, Jorge A. (Coords.). *México y los países de renta media en la cooperación para el desarrollo: ¿hacia dónde vamos?* Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mora/FLACSO México/CIDEAL. pp. 412-437.

SÁNCHEZ GUTIERREZ, GABRIELA. 2009. "La iniciativa de Ley de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo: ¿pasos hacia una nueva institucionalidad mexicana?", in: Ayala Martínez, Citlali & Pérez, Jorge A. (Coords.). *México y los países de renta media en la cooperación para el desarrollo: ¿hacia dónde vamos?* Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mora/FLACSO México/CIDEAL. pp.136-160.

SCHMUKLER, BEATRIZ; AYALA MARTÍNEZ, CITLALI & SÁNCHEZ GUTIÉRREZ, GABRIELA. 2008. *Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo en México. Hacia una agenda participativa*. Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mora/Grupo Editorial Miguel Ángel Porrúa.

SEGIB - IBERO-AMERICAN GENERAL SECRETARIAT. 2010. *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2010*. Madrid: SEGIB, PIFCSS & AECID.

----- 2011. *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2011*. Madrid: SEGIB, PIFCSS & AECID.

-----, 2012. *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2012*. Madrid: SEGIB, PIFCSS & AECID.

SECRETARÍA PRO TEMPORIS COMITÉ MIXTO HAÍTI-MÉXICO. 2012. *Informe y Perspectivas. A dos años de trabajo: Primeras reflexiones para un diálogo*. México, D.F.: Centro Lindavista A.C.

SELA - LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM. 2011. *Oportunidades, perspectivas e instrumentos de financiación de la Cooperación Sur - Sur en América Latina y el Caribe*. SP/TR-FIFPCSS-ALC/DT N° 2-1/Rev.1, background paper for "Taller Regional sobre Fondos e Instrumentos para la Financiación de Proyectos de Cooperación Sur-Sur en América Latina y el Caribe". Mexico, D.F. July 28-29.

TASK TEAM ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION. 2011. *Towards Effective South-South and Triangular Cooperation, Good Practice Paper*. October.

URIBE VILLA, PABLO. 2011. "Colombia: hitos y tendencias como nuevo donante", in: Santander Campos, Guillermo (Coord.). *Nuevos donantes y cooperación Sur-Sur: estudios de caso*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid/ Instituto Complutense de Estudios Internacionales. pp. 63-86.

UNITED NATIONS. 2009. "[High Level United Nations Conference on South South Cooperation](#)". Nairobi. December 1-3.

VIVARES, ERNESTO & ZAPATA, SANDRA ZAPATA. 2011. "Hacia una economía política de la cooperación pluralista y sudamericana", in: *Revista Cooperamos* N° 2. Quito: Secretaría Técnica de Cooperación Internacional. August. pp. 30-35.