INSTITUTO LATINO-AMERICANO PARA O MULTILATERALISMO

A Multidimensional Analysis of Interregional Relations

Sectoral Paper on Development Cooperation

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1. Introduction

The relationship between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has historically been characterized by discontinuity, following a pattern of “peaks and valleys,” as described by Lechini and Morasso (2021). Although the early 21st century brought renewed optimism for deepening South–South Cooperation (SSC) between the two regions, the political shift toward right-leaning governments in Latin America after 2015 - which prioritized North-South relations, displace SSC from their foreign policies.

At the same time, the institutional weakness of the regionalism in each region implicates that South-South interregional has shown a limited capacity to produce practical results: the ample rhetoric declarations have been accompanied by short-term compromises with a highly symbolic impact (Lechini and Morasso, 2021).

The main rationale for fostering cooperation between Africa and LAC has centered on the notion that both regions face same development challenges (Molinari et al., 2022). Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect them to advance a shared agenda in the field of development cooperation. In this sense, the purpose of this paper is to examine how Africa and LAC engage within this domain, considering alignment, coordination and cooperation.

Given the broad scope the concept of development cooperation has acquired -particularly under the 2030 Agenda, with its economic, social, and environmental dimensions- it is necessary to narrow the analytical focus of this study. Based on the premise that development cooperation is a “symbolic policy field for international conflicts” and also “…an area to share international agendas and increase soft-power capacities” (Esteves and Klingebiel, 2021) this paper choose two core axes that define its scope. First, it analyzes the dimensions that currently shape the global debate on development cooperation: the retrenchment of official development assistance, the role of South-South cooperation and the normative changes, the increasing influence of China´s cooperation and the ongoing discussion on GDP as a criterion for assessing levels of development. Second, it explores a range of South–South and triangular cooperation practices that seek to build and strengthen capacities among participating countries through knowledge- and experience-sharing.

The first part of the paper provides an overview of the situation of both regions within the international aid architecture and examines how they are affected by the current aid crisis, with particular attention to the retreat of the United States and the growing role of China as a major provider of cooperation. The second part analyzes the position of each region in key multilateral forums related to development assistance. The third section examines triangular interregional cooperation initiatives. Finally, the paper discusses emerging prospects for Africa–LAC engagement.

2. Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of aid crisis

The world has become an uncertain place. The narratives that underpinned the so-called "international liberal order"—based on the belief in prosperous globalization, open trade, democracy as the best form of government, the possibility of collectively maintaining peace and security, and the promotion of a global development agenda—can no longer be sustained. The international institutions created to implement these aspirations are proving insufficient, paralyzed, or ineffective.

To explain the multiple crises affecting the international order, José Antonio Sanahuja draws on Gramsci's concept of the "interregnum," a transition from one hegemonic order to another, in which one is not yet fully dying, and the other has not fully emerged. It is a moment, he argues, when "all the monsters emerge": expressions of social discontent, open political violence, and the rise of extremism. As Sanahuja (2023) describes, economic globalization is receding, protectionism is on the rise, trade and technology wars are intensifying, and actors increasingly resort to the coercive use of interdependence—despite the high costs this entails for all involved.

In this context, international development cooperation—the so-called "aid system"—is undergoing dramatic changes, amounting to a seismic policy shift. On the one hand, the growing preeminence of geopolitical objectives and national interests among traditional donors has led to budget cuts that affect the normal functioning of programs, projects, and organizations that constitute the "aid industry." Traditional ODA focus areas -such as development paradigms and support for infrastructure construction- are increasingly embedded in geopolitical competition (Sumner, Klingebiel and Yusuf 2025:3). On the other hand, the crisis has once again exposed the structural dependence of low-income countries on foreign aid. Critical social sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure have been severely affected, particularly due to the dramatic cuts in U.S. aid.

However, this crisis is not entirely new. Over the past two decades, the aid system created in the 1960s has undergone a profound transformation. These changes span structural, institutional, and narrative dimensions.

Structurally, the emergence of Southern donors, particularly the role of China, has not only expanded the availability of development cooperation resources, but also introduced diverse views on how cooperation should be implemented.

Institutionally, the weakening of the OECD Development Assistance Committee as the cornerstone of coordination and norm diffusion has become evident. Attempts to establish more inclusive frameworks -such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation -failed to attract key new actors like China and have since lost momentum. As a result, the international institutional architecture for development cooperation is significantly more fragmented.

Regarding narratives, the concept of "foreign aid," understood as a North–South transfer of resources centered on ODA, has shifted toward a broader idea of development cooperation oriented to the provision of global public goods. At the same time a the discourse of South-South cooperation is changing the norms the cooperation system, introducing principles like horizontality and mutual benefits.

Together, these three dimensions help explain why ODA has lost centrality. As the main policy instrument in this field, ODA alone is increasingly insufficient to meet sustainable development needs.

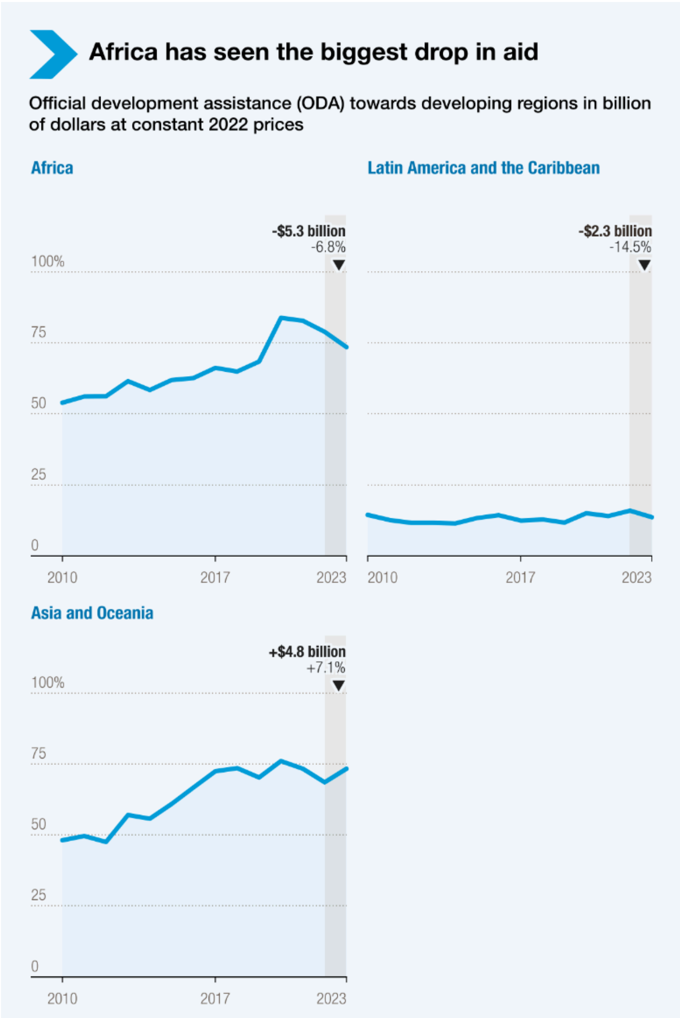
Latin America and Africa hold different positions within this system and face differentiated impacts from the current crisis. Middle-income countries in the region were more able to develop a critical position towards traditional donors and generate alternative development opportunities in terms of SSC, in part, because of their little dependence on foreign aid

Africa has long been the most significant recipient of foreign aid, and several countries in the region have become highly dependent on this resource flow. According to OECD data (2023), major Western donors allocated USD 60 billion in aid to Africa, representing 27% of their global aid spending. On average, aid accounts for around 4% of gross national income (GNI) in the region, but this share reaches 27% in very poor countries such as the Central African Republic (The Economist, 2025).

The centrality of aid in Africa has been explained through various arguments. One line of analysis suggests that, following independence and the international recognition of African states as sovereign actors, development assistance continued to operate as a mechanism that reproduced colonial patterns of dependency. Another explanation points to the prominence of poverty reduction as the core objective of the Millennium Development Goals, which placed Africa at the center of global aid priorities. This focus shifted after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the growing dominance of geopolitical interests.

Given Africa’s position at the center of the aid system -and the degree of aid dependency in several countries- current budget cuts are having dramatic effects (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Recent evolution of ODA towards development regions



Source: UNCTAD, 2025

Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States together provided an annual USD 20 billion to LDCs and USD 22 billion to sub-Saharan Africa between 2015 and 2024, accounting for two-thirds of the total ODA received by each group. These donors have announced significant reductions in their ODA budgets. According to OECD projections (2025), African countries will be among the most affected: for sub-Saharan Africa, the projected decline ranges from 16% to 28%, following a 2% drop in 2024. Under the higher-cut scenario, countries in the region could lose around one-quarter of their ODA in a single year.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, loans fell by 33% to USD 5.1 billion in 2024. However, as most countries in the region have been "graduated" due to their classification as upper-middle-income countries, aid plays a much less central role. On average, it represents only 0.24% of GNI, meaning the region is less dependent on this flow.

Responses from Africa appear to reinforce perspectives calling for more autonomous development policies. An article in *The Economist* (2025) noted that many African political leaders view the crisis as an opportunity to reduce the dependence that has long distorted policymaking and undermined self-esteem. Relying on foreign aid has meant aligning national strategic objectives with the interests of donors and foreign investors—often those exploiting natural resources or importing agricultural commodities (Kingsley, 2024:4). The article also indicates broad public support for greater autonomy: an Afrobarometer survey in 34 countries (2019–2021) found that 65% of respondents preferred their governments to finance development domestically rather than rely on external loans.

Yet aspirations for autonomy face significant structural constraints. First, most African countries lack the fiscal space to assume responsibilities traditionally covered by donors, including essential social services. Second, rising debt service costs are crowding out public investment, further limiting the ability to deliver these services.

At the same time, this search for greater autonomy builds on broader trends that have gained relevance over the past two decades: the rise of South–South Cooperation (SSC) and the increasingly prominent role of China as a development partner. These dynamics have diversified the global cooperation landscape and created space for alternative approaches that emphasize mutual benefit and strategic alignment. They also provide a relevant foundation for exploring coordination and cooperation between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in this field.

2.1. South-South cooperation in Africa and LAC

SSC has been a rich policy area to contest the changing global governance of development cooperation and particularly foreign aid.

The primary focus of SSC in Africa is intraregional, as reflected in the narratives of regional institutions and Agenda 2063. *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* expresses the political will for a more autonomous development strategy tailored to the specificities of the region. Adopted in 2013 during the African Union's golden jubilee, it is a 50-year development blueprint (2013–2063) outlining Africa's long-term aspirations and identifying key flagship programs.
Training, technology transfer, and project financing are the main modalities of cooperation, highlighting the centrality of knowledge sharing in African South–South and triangular cooperation.

The principal institutional space for development cooperation at the regional level is the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD). Created in 2018 as the AU's technical body, AUDA-NEPAD is tasked with implementing the development vision embodied in Agenda 2063. Its mission is to foster Africa's transformation through coordinated planning, implementation of regional priority programmes, resource mobilization, and the provision of knowledge-based advisory services to Member States.
AUDA-NEPAD's scope of action encompasses a wide array of strategic sectors, including human capital development (youth employment, skills training, women's empowerment), industrialization and technological innovation, infrastructure and regional integration (transport, energy, ICT, trade), natural resource governance, and food security. The agency works to incubate high-impact "proof-of-concept" initiatives that translate continental frameworks into national development priorities, facilitate knowledge and experience exchange across countries, and broker partnerships and resource mobilization to implement the First Ten-Year Plan of Agenda 2063.

AUDA-NEPAD's current agenda reflects a dual challenge: accelerating continental integration and structural transformation while responding to economic, climatic, and governance pressures affecting African countries. Priority areas include infrastructure development on a continental scale, strengthening regional value chains, and promoting digitalization and technological innovation as drivers of competitiveness. At the same time,

the agency is intensifying its focus on food security, climate resilience, and sustainable natural resource management in light of increasingly frequent climate-related shocks. A key institutional challenge remains mobilizing adequate financing for continental initiatives and improving coordination among Member States, Regional Economic Communities, and development partners to ensure that high-impact projects can move from design to implementation at scale.
In addition to these intra-African dynamics, a new pattern in Africa's external relations has emerged since 2000, as African countries have engaged in new partnerships and cooperation arrangements with actors from the Global South. Kaplinsky and Farooki (2009) note that the primary vectors of interaction between Africa and emerging economies combine aid, trade, and foreign direct investment (FDI). Based on their analysis of seven key emerging economies—Brazil, China, India, Korea, Malaysia, Russia, and Turkey—they argue that a close strategic integration among these three vectors has shaped these partnerships, creating an experience markedly different from that offered by traditional Northern donors.

Latin America has been a highly active region in the development of South–South cooperation (SSC). This is not only due to its extensive experience in implementing cooperation projects, but also because it has significantly contributed to the conceptualization of SSC, to its political framing, and to the production and systematization of knowledge and information. middle-income countries the region were more able to develop a critical position towards traditional donors and generate alternative development opportunities in terms of SSC, in part because
of their little dependence on foreign aid (Kern and Pauselli, 2019)

The region played a central role in the revitalization of SSC at the beginning of the century. The so-called "renewed momentum of SSC" emerged in a context of increased resource availability—driven by rising commodity prices—and a broadly shared vision of the core principles of SSC. This convergence, together with active foreign policies seeking to position SSC in contrast to traditional aid, marked a distinctive phase in regional engagement.

Consequently, although diverse national narratives can be identified (Malacalza, 2020), SSC in Latin America has been "shaped by a normative discourse that seeks to generate consensus, identity, and group cohesion, as well as by emerging practices that are shared, recorded, and systematized" (Sanahuja, Tezanos, Kern & Perrotta, 2015). This discourse extends beyond the region, articulates a critique of North–South aid, and has gained global visibility.

Unlike Africa, LAC lacks a structured regional development agenda. However, several regional institutional spaces have shaped the discourse and oriented the practice of SSC. Countries in the region were active in developing regional political platforms to sustain alternative discourses and to give visibility to their particular practices (Kern and Pauselli, 2019)
Since 2021, ECLAC has institutionalized the promotion of South–South and triangular cooperation through the Regional Conference on South–South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Conference's core mandates include strengthening national South–South and triangular cooperation mechanisms, promoting their interaction with traditional North–South and multilateral cooperation, and enabling these modalities among regional and extraregional actors to foster technology transfer, knowledge exchange, and joint development actions.

The first formal meeting of the Conference's governing body took place in June 2024, gathering representatives from governments, the UN system, and regional and international organizations. Participants assessed the state of South–South and triangular cooperation, analyzed multi-actor strategies, and reviewed ongoing triangular cooperation projects—including initiatives to promote feminist foreign policy and cooperation for development (ECLAC, 2024).
The second plenary session, held in June 2025, took place in a more challenging regional context marked by economic uncertainty, rising debt burdens, fiscal constraints, environmental pressures, and declining traditional development assistance. It was emphasized that "South–South and triangular cooperation are not mere expressions of solidarity, but structural necessities for the region" (ECLAC, 2025a).
At the closing of the session, participating countries called for strengthening international development cooperation by adopting innovative mechanisms that move beyond traditional "graduation" criteria—such as per capita income—and instead incorporate more nuanced, multidimensional, or vulnerability-based indicators that better capture the development challenges of many Latin American and Caribbean countries (ECLAC, 2025b).
In summary, ECLAC's contribution to South–South and triangular cooperation operates along several complementary dimensions: as a political space through the Regional Conference, as a normative driver promoting shared principles and standards—including gender equality and sustainability—and as a strategic agenda-setter advocating for new definitions of development and innovative cooperation mechanisms.
The creation of the Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South–South Cooperation (PIFCSS) in 2010 provided an institutional space strongly embraced by the region. It enabled the articulation of political and conceptual consensus, the systematization and dissemination of information on projects and initiatives, and the strengthening of national institutions responsible for coordinating cooperation.

The Programme operates at two levels: a political level, where cooperation officers define action plans within the Intergovernmental Council; and a technical level, where officials in each country implement these decisions and coordinate with the Programme's Technical Unit. This organizational structure facilitated the development of a minimal common narrative on SSC and allowed for training efforts and knowledge products aimed at strengthening capacities, disseminating information, and generating knowledge on SSC and triangular cooperation (Nivia, 2020). As a result, the institutions responsible for SSC have been strengthened, a shared language has developed among officials and technical experts, and the topic has remained on the regional agenda despite political changes.

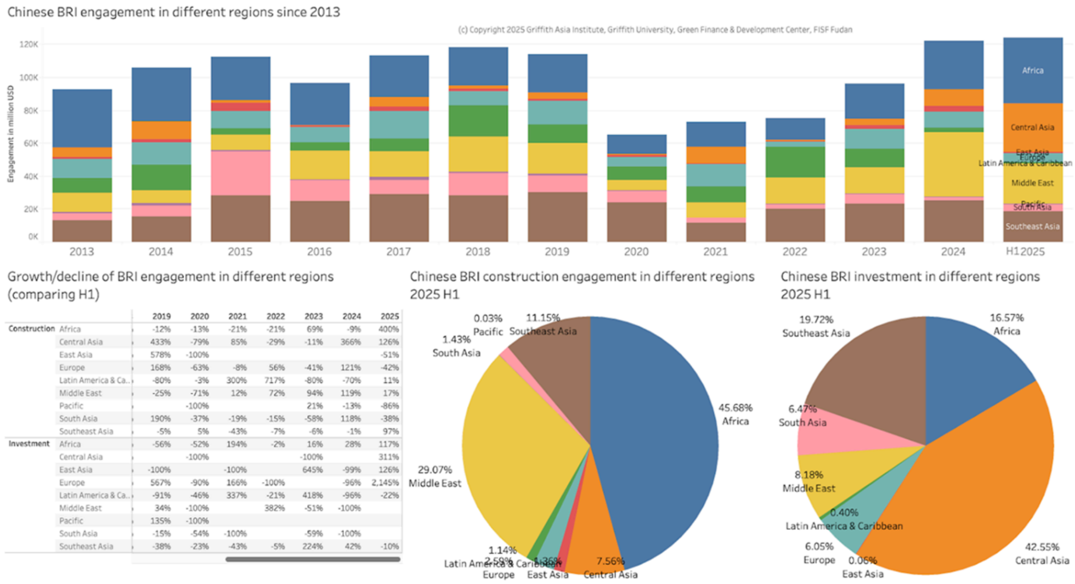
Taken together, the roles of ECLAC and PIFCSS have contributed to the emergence of a form of regional governance in Latin America regarding SSC. This has generated a shared vision, a set of common operational standards -even in contexts of political alternation. What makes Latin America particularly noteworthy is not only its capacity to consolidate a minimal shared base of concepts and norms, but also its ability to sustain this agenda over time. This gives Latin America particular consistency compared with Africa. This fact may also create some difficulties for alignment, coordination and cooperation in this area.

2.2. China´s increasing relevance in development cooperation.

China's engagement in the Global South is marked by significant asymmetries in the intensity of its commitment, particularly evident in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) data. Since 2013, BRI engagement has prioritized Africa, which continues to experience the absolute largest construction engagement globally. In the first half of 2025 (H1 2025), Africa received $30.5

billion in engagement compared to $6.1 billion in construction. This heavy economic activity aligns with a regional trend, as Africa is the continent with the most partnership upgrades or new partnership establishments with China in recent years.

Figure 2- Chinese BRI in different regions since 2013



Source: https://greenfdc.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-investment-report-2025-h1/

China's overseas BRI focus remains centered on infrastructure, specifically in energy (31%) and mining (21%), consistent with China's strategy for energy diversification and the necessity of acquiring natural resources. Furthermore, China leverages these partnerships, particularly with developing countries in Africa, to solicit political support for key national security issues (such as the One-China principle) and praise for its new global initiatives, including the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI).

Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries under the BRI umbrella are seeing low Chinese engagement, registering the lowest values for investment and construction in the last ten years. This cooperation in LAC, even in areas like green development, faces significant constraints and tensions, including political fluctuations within LAC countries (e.g., changes in government policy regarding critical minerals), domestic economic risks, and the need for Chinese enterprises to adapt to complex local legal and cultural environments.

A potential new dimension of China's cooperation focuses on green development and renewable energy in both regions. China has strengthened institutional support for green cooperation in LAC under the China-CELAC framework and the GDI, focusing on areas like clean energy and green agriculture. Notably, clean energy and non-fossil energy infrastructure projects accounted for 52.73% of total energy infrastructure projects in LAC between 2005 and 2024, involving areas such as solar, wind power, and lithium batteries. In Africa, China intends to implement 30 clean energy and green development projects. Despite this common developmental focus, China's expanding presence in Africa, notably through institutional mechanisms like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), risks reducing the autonomous margin of action for Africa-LAC bi-regional cooperation. Existing bi-regional mechanisms, have lower visibility compared to FOCAC and CELAC-China frameworks.

3. Cooperation, coordination and alignment between LAC and Africa

3.1. Global Multilateral Institutions

Beyond GDP agenda

The debate on "Beyond GDP" has become increasingly prominent within the United Nations as member states call for development metrics that better reflect the complex current realities. It represents a relevant political space for discussing a new conceptual framework for development cooperation and involves both regions.

At the UN, the Pact for the Future crystallizes this momentum when governments commit to *"develop a framework on measures of progress on sustainable development to complement and go beyond Gross Domestic Product"* (Action 53). This Pact emphasizes that sustainable development must be pursued in a balanced and integrated manner, capturing economic, social, and environmental dimensions of progress. This reflects a growing recognition that GDP alone cannot capture the full spectrum of a country's development challenges, levels of inclusion, or long-term sustainability. Finding metrics and criteria beyond GDP is also recognized as crucial element for countries to access development finance and technical cooperation.

This idea was further developed in the Interim Report 2025 of the High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP, which stresses that the aim is not to replace GDP but to complement it through a more multidimensional framework. This Report outlines five guiding principles for a new measurement agenda: improving the assessment of current material well-being; capturing broader aspects of well-being beyond income; looking beyond averages to address inequality and exclusion; adopting long-term perspectives to safeguard environmental, social, and institutional sustainability; and accounting for people's overall well-being.

Latin America and Africa are clearly aligned in promoting this agenda. The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) was an opportunity for both regions to show this alignment, during the high-level side organized by OECD, UNCTAD, SEGIB and the government of Spain that launched the *Coalition of the Willing on the Beyond GDP* Agenda, a global alliance of countries and international organization committed to advancing the integration of more comprehensive metrics of development into policy and financing practice.

Across both regions, the beyond GDP debate intersects with two political discussions. One concerns access to Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the practical implications of shifting development metrics for financing criteria. The other involves reframing the very concept of development to reflect multidimensional well-being rather than economic growth alone. While Latin America is primarily engaged in the first discussion, Africa has placed greater emphasis on the second.

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the work of ECLAC reflects a regional position underlining that the way development is measured directly affects countries' eligibility for development assistance and the nature of international partnerships. There is a broad consensus in the region on considering the prevailing practice of using per capita income as the main proxy for development as insufficient, particularly for middle-income countries (MIC) - a category into which most Latin American nations fall. The argument is that GDP per capita fails to capture structural vulnerabilities, inequality traps, environmental pressures, and institutional challenges that remain acute across the region. For MIC in the region, monetary criteria alone can restrict access to development financing despite persistent structural gaps. Latin American countries therefore approach the Beyond GDP agenda as an opportunity to reshape cooperation frameworks to reflect the MIC countries needs and support more equitable access to international development resources.

African leaders and regional institutions have also become strong advocates of redefining development frameworks beyond traditional economic indicators as GDP. At above mentioned event on this topic at FfD4, AUDA-NEPAD executive director called for a fundamental rethinking of global development cooperation and of the indicators that guide it. She argued that Africa must move past conventional growth measures like GDP toward metrics grounded in dignity, sustainability, and shared prosperity (African Business, 2025). This position was reinforced by examples from several African countries already experimenting with post-GDP frameworks. Botswana is piloting the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions—including inequality and public sentiment—into national accounts. South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 applies multidimensional metrics focused on health, education, and inequality; Statistics South Africa is strengthening quality-of-life indicators; Rwanda's Imihigo system measures governance and human development beyond monetary terms; Nigeria has expanded its statistical systems to include multidimensional poverty and regional disparities; and Mauritius continues to blend human development metrics with investment in innovation and social protection.

The African Union, AUDA-NEPAD, and the African Development Bank are collectively working to promote a people-centered metrics, building on the regional Agenda 2063 and including dimensions like inequality, resilience, and inclusive growth. Underlying this push is a shared critique: reliance on GDP has produced a narrow, incomplete understanding of development in Africa. As Hod Anyigba (2024) explain, rooted in colonial economic structures and reinforced by neoliberal policy frameworks, GDP-centered approaches have prioritized extractive growth and profit maximization over social justice, equitable resource distribution, and human well-being. As a result, growth has often failed to address the real needs of African populations.

Alliance against hunger and poverty

The "Alliance against hunger and poverty" was one of the main deliverables of the Brazilian G20 presidency. G20 provided a platform to establish the initial framework of the Alliance and created a proper space for its launch in 2024, but the initiative goes beyond the G20 member states. The initiative has been endorsed by 182 members, including 93 countries, 28 international organizations, 10 international financial institutions, and 51 foundations and other knowledge organizations.

This Alliance aims to accelerate progress toward the eradication of hunger and poverty (SDGs 1 and 2), while also reducing inequality (SDG 10) and strengthening global partnerships (SDG 17. Departing from the acknowledge that financing mechanisms

-including development cooperation- suffer from fragmentation, small-scale focus, high transaction costs and risk aversion this initiative offers an innovative approach for a more predictable, coordinated, and responsive development cooperation.

The cornerstone of the Alliance is the “Policy Basket”, a curated set of rigorously evaluated interventions—such as cash transfers, school feeding, family farming support, clean cooking, or water storage—that acts as a common reference for cooperation and matchmaking. This creates a relevant space for promoting South-South and Triangular Cooperation, including between Africa and LAC.

The Alliance is structured around three mutually reinforcing pillars: the National Pillar, composed of governments committing to adopt or scale policies from the Policy Basket; the Financial Support Pillar, which brings together public and private donors prepared to co-finance these policies; and the Knowledge Pillar, formed by research institutions, development agencies, and UN bodies that provide technical assistance and help adapt policy instruments to national contexts.

The Summit Against Hunger and Poverty provides political guidance and reviews global progress, while the Board of Champions, composed of high-level representatives from governments and international organizations, steers the Alliance’s strategic direction and intervenes when partnerships require facilitation Latin American and African countries occupy prominent positions within its governance structure. Brazil serves as one of the Co-Chairs of the Board of Champions and Mexico also participate in the Board. African representation is significant: Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Ethiopia, and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) hold key seats within the Board, ensuring that the governance of the Alliance reflects the priorities of the region.

In April 2025, the Board of Champions prepared a guidance note to inform concept note negotiations for the Fourth Financing International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4). Although this note was not binding for the positions of the members of the Alliance, it represents “a high-level convergence regarding the most important concepts, assertions and commitments that must be properly contemplated in the FfD4 Outcome Document from the perspective of the Global Alliance´s vision, objectives and approach” (Board of Champions, 2025:1),

This document reflects global coordination, that includes LAC and Africa representatives regarding important development cooperation challenges:

- Reversing erosion and fragmentation in international development cooperation for SDG 1 and 2 and enabling large scale country-led action. This topic is framed as follows: “Instead of piece-meal, pilot-scale, project-based approach, dwindling and fragmented development assistance budgets need to coordinate, synergize and unite behind supporting the implementation country-led, large-scale programs that can ultimately be funded by the implementing countries themselves” (Board of Champions, 2025:2)
- Addressing hunger and malnutrition
- Climate finance must protect the poorest and finance human-centered adaptation and resilience

3.2. Interregional organizations

CELAC-African Union (AU)

CELAC and the African Union are main regional institutions for promoting interregional relations. Despite their shared global development challenges and common priorities, no high-level summit between the two blocs has yet taken place. Instead, a series of political dialogue spaces convened around UN events, in which senior representatives exchange views, reaffirm political will, and mention opportunities for deeper cooperation.

In 2024, such dialogue took place in the context of the 79th United Nations General Assembly in New York. Speaking on behalf of the AU member states, Mauritania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, recalled the historical political bonds between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean shape by common struggles against colonialism and by shared aspirations for freedom and justice. He stressed the need to deepen strategic cooperation in areas such as energy, technology, sustainable agriculture, climate change, and trade. (….)

It was also proposed a CELAC–African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government to reinvigorate political ties and historic connections between the two regions and the creation of a permanent forum for political dialogue, aimed at strengthening a multipolar order grounded in sovereignty, self-determination, and solidarity. Until now, this event has not taken place.

In 2025, inter-regional engagement advanced through a high-level meeting between Colombia's Vice President, Francia Márquez, and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf. The AU reaffirmed Africa's strong interest in deepening ties with Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly around shared priorities such as racial justice, reparations, peacebuilding, climate action, and sustainable development (AU Commission Communication, 2025). It was also emphasized the need for stronger coordination between the AU and CELAC in UN forums in New York and Geneva to defend common interests at a time of growing pressures on multilateralism. (….)

These expressions demonstrate the willingness on both regions to advance a more strategic alignment and coordination in the global agenda. However, this expressions unfold at a moment when the notion of the "Global South" as collective identity that link both regions is undergoing significant reconfiguration, particularly in Latin America where extreme right parties are emerging. Driven by political polarization and shifting geopolitical alignments, the idea of global south decreases its relevance. As this collective identity loses its centrality, the conditions and incentives for deepening institutional ties with Africa become more complex.

CARICOM-African Union

After a first Summit in 2021, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between CARICOM and the African Union in 2024 was a significant milestone in the deepening of interregional cooperation. Through this agreement, both organizations commit to strengthening institutional collaboration and enhancing people-to-people links — not only through trade and investment, but also via social, cultural, and developmental initiatives. In addition to facilitating economic ties, the MoU aims to foster solidarity by creating platforms for closer interaction, including opportunities for diaspora volunteer exchanges, which can help connect individuals of Caribbean and African descent with tangible development projects.

The renewed CARICOM–AU relationship reflects a broader historical and cultural dimension rooted in shared heritage. Leaders of Caribbean and African peoples are reclaiming their interconnected identity. In this sense, the relationship puts a strong emphasis on reparatory justice and recognition of a shared African diaspora. This was the central topic in the Second Africa-CARICOM Summit on September 7th 2025, hosted by the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia under the held under the theme "Transcontinental Partnership in Pursuit of Reparatory Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations". This is a central topic for cooperation and this Summit approved and joint instrument that unfolds coordination in this topic: The Addis Ababa Declaration on Transcontinental Partnership in Pursuit of Reparatory Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations.

The CARICOM-AU partnership aims to promote South–South cooperation in a multidimensional way: by mobilizing private-sector investment, encouraging youth and diaspora involvement, facilitating cultural exchange, and jointly addressing structural inequalities inherited from the histories of colonialism and slavery.

The MoU stated a compromise to formalize modalities of cooperation, including mechanisms for information exchange, technical collaboration, and implementation frameworks. It attempts to provide institutional architecture for coordinated action in sectors such as health, transportation, trade, investment, and cultural exchange. However, none of these mechanisms are already in place.

For the moment, partnership creates a political space based on a shared identity and a common unfair history that performed "unique" vulnerabilities. The Summits create a specific space put in place this shared "unique" to align a shared agenda on some sustainable development topics and to promote coordination in global fora[1]:

- Recognized the "unique socio-economic vulnerabilities" of developing countries: challenges related to economic diversification, high debt burdens, limited access to adequate concessional development financing.
- Claim for a comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture, "acknowledging that the current system is inadequate to meet the unique development needs and vulnerabilities of African and Caribbean nations."
- Enhance coordination to advocate for improved access to climate financing and to promote the Bridgetown Initiative for the reform of the International Financial System, to help developing countries build resilience to address the climate crisis.
- "Work together to strengthen forest-based economies, combat biodiversity loss, and advocate for fair and predictable climate finance, including through jurisdictional approaches and market-based mechanisms, technology transfer, and capacity building to safeguard their shared natural heritage for present and future generations"

Africa-South America (ASA)

The relationship between Africa and South America lacks of this share cultural and historical identity and was mainly supported by political will.

The Africa-South America summit had its first meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in 2006. The meeting was convened to establish a mechanism for intensifying cooperation between Africa and South America for mutual benefit and to promote multilateralism as well as address the challenges associated with it. A broad agenda for cooperation was agreed, including multilateral affairs; legal affairs; peace and security; democracy and political issues; agriculture; water resources; trade and investment; combating hunger and poverty; infrastructure development; energy and minerals; social issues, tourism and sports; science

[1] See Draft communique 2nd Africa-CARICOM summit in Ethiopia

and information and communication technology (ICT); health; education; environment; gender; and institutional development and information exchange.
Two meetings followed this first one: a second in Margarita, Venezuela, in 2009; and the third one in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in 2013. As Gardini and Malamud describe, ASA plays the role of a 'large umbrella' as it 'brings together very diverse groupings of countries under a same, moderately inconsequential, working mechanism: summitry' (Gardini & Malamud, 2018, in Lechini y Moraso, 2021)

As ideological alignment and political will were key for this initiative, after 2015, the decrease relevance of SSC in the neoliberal foreign policies of most Latin American countries and the dismantling of UNASUR made ASA process vanished.

4. Development cooperation projects

Development cooperation projects involve joint planning, resource allocation, and coordinated implementation of activities aimed at achieving agreed results. In this sense, they constitute concrete cooperation initiatives. Producing a complete and exhaustive mapping of such projects lies beyond the scope of this work. However, this section presents and systematizes some cases that illustrate the opportunities generated by non-strictly ODA modalities of cooperation.

Interregional triangular Cooperation

Triangular cooperation (TrC) is a mechanism that may promote interregional projects in areas of common interest. The concept of TrC refers to three different roles that countries play in a project: a beneficiary or soliciting partner that has a demand and requested support in dealing with a specific challenge: a pivotal partner, which has knowledge, expertise and resources to face this challenge in a similar context; a supporting partner (facilitator), which provides financial or technical support to the partnership.

TrC allows offers to developing countries a leverage resources, access cooperation management structures in other regions, and foster the advantages of diversified global partnerships, knowledge exchange, network expansion, and the promotion of technical diplomacy. This modality also involves important challenges regarding partners' coordination and transaction cost, specially at the beginning.

In the case of **Germany**, Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Partners of Latin America and the Caribbean, financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), has been supporting TrC projects since 2011.
The Regional Fund operates on demand from beneficiary partners through biannual calls for proposals and focuses on promoting TrC with countries and multilateral partners "in" and "with" Latin America and the Caribbean. Projects with partners from other regions have been eligible and the Fund has so far developed eight interregional projects with countries in Africa: Mozambique, Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania (Table 1).

Table 1. Triangular cooperation supported by the Germana Regional Fund (2011-2025)

Soliciting Parner	Principal partner	Project
Mozambique	Brasil	Disaster risk reduction in Mozambique (2013-2015)

Morroco	Costa Rica	Improving the management and sustainable use of forests, protected areas and watersheds in the context of climate change (2013-2016)
Mozambique	Brasil	Strengthening metrology and the National Standards Institute in Mozambique FORTINNOQ (Phase II) -2015-2017
Tunisia	Costa Rica	Strengthening and promoting sustainable tourism (2016-2018)
Ghana	Brasil	Improved cashew plantation and by-product processing technologies for Ghana (2017-2020)
Ethiopia	Brasil	Pluralistic Extension System (PES) for Ethiopia to increase agricultural productivity (2022-2024)
Kenya, Tanzania	Argentina	Capacity building to improve smallholder livestock systems and contribute to sustainable agriculture in Kenya and Tanzania (2023-2025)
Kenya	Mexico	Enhancing the nutritional value of maize through alkaline cooking (nixtamalisation) (2024-2026)

This Fund has been very open to interregional cooperation and Brazil has participated as pivot (principal) partner in the half of them

Germany has a similar Fund for regional cooperation with Asia that operates with two main pivotal partners, China and India, to design and implement triangular cooperation pilots together with implementations countries (Beneficiary Partners). Other Asian countries and institutions can participate as pivotal partners, while any developing country can be beneficiary. Until now beneficiaries have been Asian or African countries, except one case which has specific focus on emerging economies. This project “Emerging Market Sustainability Dialogues (EMSD)” involved China, India, Mexico, South Africa, and offered a platform for interregional exchange. For example, one activity was a joint Global Summit in held in Berlin on “Emerging Market Investment Strategies: New Pathways for Green Growth“, where member think tanks from Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, China, India, Russia and Germany participated in panel discussions, round tables and Design Thinking formats[2]

Portugal has recently become an active TrC partner and agreed and instrument for interregional cooperation. The “Camões–SEGIB project with Africa” refers to a triangular South-South cooperation initiative jointly promoted by Camões – Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua (Portugal), SEGIB – Secretaría General Iberoamericana and African partner institutions, primarily PALOP (African countries with Portuguese as an official language).

The cooperation model follows a triangular structure in which Portugal acts as facilitator, Latin American countries to participate through knowledge sharing, SEGIB provides the institutional platform, and the African partners are the primary beneficiaries.

[2] See more information at Global Summit on Emerging Market Investment Strategies: New Pathways for Green Growth – EMSD and EMSD – Emerging Markets Sustainability Dialogues

By leveraging SEGIB's role as an institutional link, the initiative seeks to introduce Ibero-American knowledge and administrative practices into African cooperation frameworks, supported by shared linguistic and institutional affinities. This instrument aims to create structured channels for the transfer of Latin American technical expertise to African partners, reinforcing cross-regional collaboration and mutual learning. In the Call of 2024, a total of 370 proposals were received. Objectives of these projects include: support institutional capacity-building in priority sectors such as public administration, education, legal reform, and cultural cooperation; Facilitate triangular South-South exchanges between Africa and Latin America through SEGIB's networks; Strengthen Lusophone cooperation platforms while connecting them to Ibero-American mechanisms.

Table 2. "Camões–SEGIB Projects approved

Project Name	Participating Countries	Beneficiary Countries	Area
Bio-agrobiodiversity of cocoa for environmental conservation and climate resilience	Partner Leader: Portugal Other partners: Colombia, São Tomé and Príncipe	São Tomé and Príncipe	Climate change
Building Links: Initiatives to Strengthen Professional Training for Ibero-American and African Nurses	Leading Partner: Brazil Other Partners: Cape Verde, Colombia, Mexico, Mozambique, Peru, Portugal, Uruguay	Cabo Verde Mozambique	Health
Triangular International Cooperation Argentina-Portugal-Angola for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices in Education for Development	Leading Partner: Argentina Other Partners: Angola, Portugal	Angola	Education for Development
Global Circuits for the Sale of Second-Hand Clothing	Partner Leader: Portugal Other Partners: Mexico, Mozambique	Mozambique	Education for Development

Triangular Alliance for the Digital Transformation of Príncipe	Partner Leader: Portugal Other Partners: Argentina, São Tomé and Príncipe	São Tomé and Príncipe	Digital Transformation
Cities of Knowledge	Partner Leader: Portugal Other Partners: Argentina, Cape Verde, Mozambique	Cabo Verde Mozambique	Culture

An interesting observation is that even though this instrument is restricted to PALOP countries, Latin America countries' participation was very diverse, with multiple partners involved from both regions.

International organizations as platforms for inter-regional cooperation

International organizations (IOs) play a catalytic role in facilitating South–South and triangular cooperation. After BAPA+40, UN organizations have accomplished the mandate to strengthen their role in SSC and TrC and play a relevant role in connecting experiences, enabling knowledge exchange and capacity building, and promoting a broad diffusion of good practices IOs have been mainly focusing their support to these modalities in with a regional perspective. However, there are also some rich experiences that involve countries of Latin America and Africa

Three initiatives[3], were chosen to illustrate different modalities and outcomes of such facilitation. Together, these projects reveal how international bodies can convene actors, broker technical partnerships, and scale locally relevant solutions across regions.

The Virtual Health Library Network (VHL) implemented by BIREME/PAHO/WHO with coordination from PAHO country offices and national institutions, demonstrates the relevance of open access to key information. Originally focused on Latin America and the Caribbean, the VHL's decentralized, collaborative architecture has extended its reach to Portuguese-speaking African countries, improving visibility and access to scientific evidence. By consolidating millions of bibliographic records and full-text documents through a regional portal, the VHL has democratized access to health knowledge and narrowed the gap between research and practice. Its impact on evidence dissemination and policy uptake highlights the value of interoperable information platforms as instruments of cross-regional cooperation.

The project "Training of Radiation Medicine Professionals" supported by IAEA exemplifies a training-and-exchange modality that leverages established centers of excellence in one region to address human resource gaps in another. Between 2018 and 2023 the program enabled African candidates from countries lacking local training to undertake long- and

[3] More details on these cases are available in Home - South-South Galaxy and UNOCSS, 2022

short-term academic and clinical placements in Brazil and other partner countries. The scheme produced a measurable increase in qualified radiation oncologists, radiotherapy technicians and medical physicists, while advancing a harmonized regional quality control protocol for radiology and nuclear medicine services. This combination of individual capacity development and common technical standards has strengthened service safety, ensured continuity of practice, and enhanced institutional sustainability across participating states. At the same time, the project promote a diffusion of agreed international norms framed in IAEA mandate.

Finally, the project "Online Training on Food Packaging and Labelling for African, Latin American and Caribbean Countries"[4], supported by Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM CSSTC) illustrates how virtual modalities can convene a geographically dispersed cohort from these regions to address regulatory and market challenges. By sharing technical guidance on packaging technologies, labelling standards and market requirements, the course contributed to improving product value chains, food safety practices, and regulatory alignment. Together, these cases demonstrate that international organizations can act as neutral conveners, technical brokers and scaling agents—facilitating exchanges that are simultaneously horizontal (peer-to-peer), triangular (involving a technical partner or donor), and regional in scope.

Multistakeholder platforms

A distinctive example of interregional cooperation facilitated through a multi-actor platform is the Agricultural Innovation Marketplace, jointly supported by EMBRAPA, IFAD, the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, ABC, the United Kingdom's DFID, IICA and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). Implemented by EMBRAPA and the Government of Brazil, the Marketplace was conceived as an online hub connecting agricultural stakeholders from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to catalyse policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and collaborative research. By making EMBRAPA's technological solutions accessible to institutions operating in comparable climates, the initiative sought to avoid "reinventing the wheel" and to accelerate innovation processes across continents.

The platform operates through three complementary pillars. First, it promotes policy dialogue among African, Latin American, Caribbean and Brazilian authorities, helping to shape a supportive institutional environment for collaboration. Second, it hosts a knowledge-sharing and knowledge-management forum that strengthens participants' capacities to formulate, refine and consolidate research ideas, drawing on communication tools to facilitate interaction across regions. Third, it provides a structured mechanism for collaborative research for development, including matchmaking between institutions and financial support for promising proposals. This architecture enables the Marketplace to function simultaneously as a policymaking space, a technical cooperation mechanism and a business-oriented tool for partnership development.

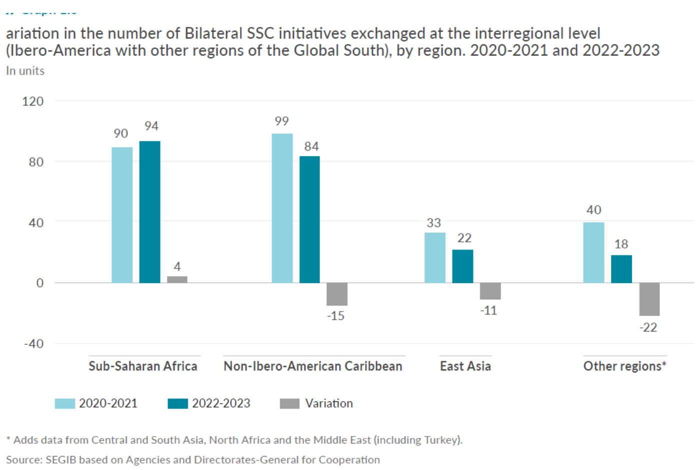
The results achieved illustrate the platform's potential to scale cross-regional innovation. The Marketplace mobilized more than USD 20 million to support multiple projects across nine Latin American and 13 African countries, organized four international events and funded over 80 research-for-development initiatives. A subsequent follow-up programme, *Building on the*

[4] Participant countries were Indonesia, Belize, Burundi, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Panama, Rwanda, Suriname, United Republic of Tanzania

Successes of the Marketplace, raised an additional USD 9 million. To date, the initiative has contributed to training more than 2,000 people; developing over 170 technologies, products and services; producing 129 technical publications; enabling the exchange of more than 1,000 germplasm samples; and convening over 100 events.
This multi-actor, multi-regional platform therefore stands out as an innovative modality of cooperation. It promotes the convergence of digital tools, institutional partnerships and South–South exchanges to advance agricultural development across regions

4.1. Bilateral development cooperation

According to the last SEGIB Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero America (SEGIB, 2024) between 2022-2023, 218 SSC initiatives -that means projects and actions- were carried out by Latin American countries with other regions. Among these, 93 (43%) were developed with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa - 4 projects more than the previous period.



Source: SEGIB, 2024

Considering the roles play by countries in each region, this report highlight that highly polarized patter: while ca 95% of Ibero-America countries act as providers, countries in other regions of the global south act as recipients. This pattern was particularly significant with Sub-Saharan and North Africa.

According to the data provided by SEBIB reports in 2022 and 2024, countries involved in bilateral SSC with Africa have been Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia y Cuba.

As in the case of traditional North-South cooperation, bilateral SSC is intrinsically interlinked with foreign policy interests

5. Main findings and prospects for Africa and LAC alignment, cooperation and coordination in the field of development cooperation

By examining Africa–Latin America–Caribbean relations through the lens of cooperation, coordination and alignment, we move beyond questions of motive or structural determinants and focus instead on cooperation as a social practice -a dynamic process through which actors interact, adjust expectations, mobilize resources and, potentially, transform their identities and normative commitments. This approach follows the institutionalist emphasis on reciprocity, future-oriented expectations and iterative interactions (Keohane 1984; Axelrod & Keohane 1985), while also incorporating the constructivist insight that cooperation generates social processes through which norms, ideas and shared identities evolve. Under this conceptual lens, the diverse interactions between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean reviewed in this paper can be understood as arenas in which intersubjective meanings and long-term expectations may be shaped.

This paper has shown that Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean share a political willingness to advance more structured interregional cooperation, but that a gap persists between declarations and concrete implementation, mainly due to weak governance mechanisms. Nevertheless, a variety of global platforms offer suitable spaces for alignment and coordination in the field of development cooperation.

Most of the policy spaces identified in this paper reveal alignment -convergent positions in global forums- and coordination -joint declarations and summit communiqués- on topics that represent global challenges for developing countries, such as criteria for defining development and distributing aid, climate finance and the coordination of global resources to fight poverty and hunger.
In the case of CARICOM–AU, the emerging process of summits is grounded in the value of a shared identity and the idea that both regions face “unique vulnerabilities.” This concept creates a broad space for coordination in current discussions on development cooperation.

Cooperation occurs primarily through South–South technical exchanges promoted in bilateral initiatives and diverse forms of triangular frameworks. The rules and procedures for designing, presenting, selecting and implementing South–South and triangular projects have created a modest but growing institutionalization, consolidating a recurrent practice between both regions. SSC principles such as horizontality and mutual benefit stand at the core of an emerging normative system that increasingly guides development cooperation between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. The current retrenchment of ODA, combined with a renewed call in African countries for more autonomous development policies and regional agendas, creates an opportunity to consolidate this new normative system.

Within this changing development cooperation landscape, China occupies a prominent and distinctive position. This paper highlights China’s extensive engagement in Africa -particularly through infrastructure, energy and mining projects, and instruments such as the BRI- and notes that China’s institutional platforms (e.g., FOCAC and the GDI) can reduce the visibility and operational space of still weak birregional mechanisms linking Africa and LAC.

However, China’s presence may also bring opportunities for coordination and cooperation. The shared need of Africa and LAC to access strategic resources (e.g., minerals, energy), coupled with a mutual interest in negotiating with China from a stronger collective position, could potentially reactivate or strengthen Africa–LAC cooperation. In this context, triangular cooperation offers a relevant model: for example, Australia has supported governance frameworks, mining legislation and taxation regimes in Africa through triangular cooperation, and Latin American countries -possessing competitive expertise in these areas- could assume a similar role as third partners in triangular cooperation efforts with China and Africa in selected sectors. Such an approach could harness complementarities and maximize mutual benefits.

China is also actively participating in South–South and triangular cooperation modalities directly relevant to Africa-LAC exchanges, as seen in the Asian Fund for Triangular Cooperation supported by Germany and in other experiences involving international organizations. These instruments provide practical entry points for triangular projects linking Latin American technical expertise with Chinese implementation capacity and African development needs. Yet a political and institutional risk remains: unless African and LAC actors anchor such projects in jointly agreed governance arrangements, China-centered modalities could relegate the emerging normative system described above to a secondary role or reproduce classical asymmetries in development cooperation.

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