

New approaches for a new world development agenda

*by Hadil da Rocha Vianna**

The post-2015 development agenda will be universal in terms of objectives, goals, commitments and actors. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) shall bring about a soft revolution in the way development cooperation has been carried out for the last decades.

The universal character of the new development agenda will challenge the traditional roles performed by developed and developing countries. The rise of new dimensions of development cooperation, particularly South-South and trilateral cooperation, has been moving up and down, left to the right and vice-versa, the boundaries of what was so far understood as donor and recipient countries. This new landscape, envisaging an ambitious worldwide mobilization, might trigger a new era in development cooperation. This context will also comprise the growing and assertive role of civil society organizations, and the engagement of segments of the private sector in development-related initiatives.

The conformation of an expected new institutional and operational architecture of development cooperation under the auspices of the SDG will not take place solely as a positive outcome of the collective sense of solidarity and commitment to end hunger and poverty. To be successful in its goals, the post-2015 development agenda will demand improved levels of rational use of available resources, better planning and management of development cooperation flows, cost-effective operations associated with the best mix of knowledge, technology and financial and non-financial resources, from all natures and sources. To make this jigsaw puzzle works, the major actors of development cooperation shall be prepared and willing to debate strategies, coordinate policies and establish operational synergies, at the same time preserving their identities, comparative advantages and autonomy.

Although developed and developing countries agree, in principle, on a set of basic characteristics of development cooperation, including, *inter alia*, the implementation of (recipient) country-led processes and adequate sources of development finance, there are differences in relation to its political motivations, as well as in the operational practices and goals pursued. For instance, tied-aid and the prescriptive aid policies get face to face with the speech of promoting local ownership and alignment to national development policies. While some development cooperation actors maintain that developing countries should give priority to improving their national tax collection systems and combating tax evasion, other courses of actions have been quite neglected, such as improving local capacities in developing countries to map economic potentialities as a basis for attracting local or foreign investors, and the support to the development of local and regional value-added productive chain, as a means to promote sustainable job and income generation.

The global framework for development provided by the SDG will not take away the influences coming from foreign policy – and foreign trade – national interests. One of the challenges ahead of the major players in development cooperation will be how to strike a balance between national interests and global commitments.

A more effective development cooperation depends a good deal on the level of proficiency and autonomy of developing countries to coordinate and manage the cooperation developed with foreign partners. In this sense, together with the identification and implementation of capacity building in areas associated with the SDG framework, it would be recommended special measures of institutional strengthening in developing countries, aiming at improving their capacity to make the best use of the opportunities open by development cooperation initiatives.

There are no available indicators to measure the actual relevance – beyond the effectiveness – of the current development cooperation strategies and practices. Similarly, there is no consensus on the evaluation of the degree of coherence between development cooperation and other crucial drivers of development, such as trade, technology and finance. The evaluation of the sustainability of development cooperation initiatives cannot ignore the impact of subsidies, non-trade barriers and prescriptive economic models by traditional donors and some international organizations on the economic structure of developing countries.

No less important will be addressing the demand from developing countries regarding the reshaping of the current structure of governance of development-related multilateral organizations and mechanisms, and its subsequent impact on development cooperation.

Under this prospect of major transformations in development cooperation, the regional level actors, such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the European Union, might contribute to the post-2015 development in very substantial ways, in addition to the current political and/or financial support granted to developing countries. For instance, CELAC and the EU may champion debate and dissemination of new views and strategies among their member states regarding the implementation of the SDG agenda approved by the United Nations General Assembly. Also, both entities could promote new spaces for dialogue and support the conception of innovative schemes of partnership, which will characterize the daily reality of this new agenda. Such improved coordination would contribute to optimize the use of resources mobilized through bilateral and regional channels, and heightening the impact and sustainability of development cooperation.

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