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The 2030 Agenda and South-South cooperation: The role of the IBSA Fund in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2018)

A Agenda 2030 e a Cooperação Sul-Sul: O papel do Fundo IBAS na implementação dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável em Santa Lúcia (2015-2018)

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the role of India, Brazil, and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund) in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Drawing lessons from the IBSA Fund project “Poverty Reduction through Livestock Development” in Saint Lucia, we highlight the advantages of South-South cooperation as a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Resumo

O artigo analisa o papel do Fundo IBAS para o Alívio da Fome e Pobreza na implementação dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável. A partir do projeto do Fundo IBAS em Santa Lúcia, intitulado “Redução da pobreza por meio do desenvolvimento pecuário”, enfatizamos as vantagens e os desafios em usar a cooperação Sul-Sul como um meio de implementação da Agenda 2030.

Keywords: 2030 Agenda; IBSA Fund; Saint Lucia; South-South cooperation; Sustainable Development Goals.

Palavras-chave: Agenda 2030; cooperação Sul-Sul; Fundo IBAS; Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável; Santa Lúcia.

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 to expand previous development commitments and build a truly global development agenda, based

on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that must be attained by all countries and stakeholders by 2030.

This agenda claims to be the most ambitious and comprehensive partnership for development so far, and one of its main innovations is the inclusion of a section dedicated to the means of implementation of each one of the 17 SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a whole. The purpose is to guarantee that this agenda goes beyond a rhetorical device and is incorporated in development projects all over the world.

Besides the financing of the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda highlights the primary modalities of international development cooperation for its implementation¹. The first means of execution is North-South cooperation, the traditional and dominant modality in the field since the post-War II. According to Hattori (2003, p. 233), North-South cooperation is based on a vertical, donor-recipient relationship between developed countries – mainly the Member States of the Development Assistance Committee under the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC) – and developing countries. Development projects usually have a large scale and encompass the provision of financial aid, better known as official development assistance (ODA), from donors to recipients.

The 2030 Agenda highlights that ODA and North-South cooperation remain relevant and necessary to the promotion of development globally, but new and complementary modalities are required to deal with development challenges in the 21st century. That is the case of South-South cooperation. As put by Mawdsley (2012, p. 256), South-South cooperation is a distinct paradigm in the international development field because it aims at differentiating itself from North-South cooperation projects that involve conditionalities attached to the disbursement of aid or that are tied to the procurement of goods and services. That is the reason this modality is based on the principles of solidarity, the respect for national sovereignty, and the promotion of national ownership through demand-driven and horizontal development cooperation projects (United Nations General Assembly, 2009 a, p. 2).

Since 2005, the UN has officially recognized the positive contribution of South-South cooperation to the promotion of its development goals. The main advantages of using this modality are the construction of local capacities, the deployment of solutions more adaptable to the reality of developing countries, and its multi-stakeholder approach. This recognition reflected the political and institutional efforts of the so-called emerging powers. They have encouraged partnerships with the UN to consolidate South-South cooperation as a full modality of international development cooperation (Weiss and Abdenur, 2014, p. 1755).

1 The 2030 Agenda lists three main modalities of implementation: North-South cooperation; South-South cooperation; and Triangular cooperation. The first two modalities will be discussed in this article. The third one, Triangular cooperation, is a hybrid between the others and it lacks a consensual definition. The 1995 "New Directions for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries" was first UN document that defined this modality as a South-South exchange financially or technically supported by a Northern donor. In the 2000s, the UN also included in the definition of Triangular cooperation the support of multilateral institutions, such as UN entities, to Southern development cooperation projects (United Nations General Assembly, 2009 b, p. 12). The IBSA Fund, however, does not consider the support of the UN system to its projects as Triangular cooperation. We will address this issue further ahead in this article.

That was the case of India, Brazil, and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund), a South-South cooperation mechanism for development. The crucial relationship between the IBSA Fund and the UN was established since its conception in 2004 and its operationalization in 2006. IBSA countries deliberately chose the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) as the institutional manager and the Secretariat of the IBSA Fund. Besides, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Fund has aligned all its projects with the attainment of the SDGs.

In this context, the objective of this article is to analyze the value of South-South cooperation initiatives under the IBSA Fund as a means of implementing the UN global development goals. We argue that for IBSA countries, the main objective of partnering with the UN was to benefit from its coverage and capacity in the development cooperation field to strengthen South-South cooperation initiatives. For the UN, we argue that the main advantage is the convergence between the IBSA Fund projects and the UN development goals.

The hypothesis is that the IBSA Fund has positively contributed to the realization of the 2030 Agenda due to the advantages of using South-South cooperation as a means of implementation, which are national ownership, the immediate impact on local communities, and the building of local development capacities.

To corroborate this argument, we will present a case study of the IBSA Fund project “Poverty Reduction through Livestock Development” in Saint Lucia, covering the period of 2015-2018. Based on official reports from the IBSA Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the UNOSSC, we conducted a qualitative analysis of how the main activities under the IBSA Fund project in Saint Lucia were connected with the implementation of SDG 1 (Eradication of poverty in all forms and dimensions); and SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).

The case of Saint Lucia was chosen for its unique characteristics. Besides considering the specific situation of a small island developing country in the Caribbean, this was the only IBSA Fund project related to livestock production so far. Besides, it faced the competition of a substantial real estate development project financed by a multinational corporation, challenging the main objectives of the IBSA Fund project. Due to these circumstances, the Saint Lucia case study allows us to examine the main advantages and difficulties in using South-South cooperation in the contented field of development cooperation.

This article is divided into four sections, besides this introduction. In the first section, we address the critical landmarks for the integration of South-South cooperation as a means of implementation of the UN development agenda in the period of 2000-2017. In the second section, we discuss the relationship between the IBSA Fund and the UN, highlighting how the Fund aligned its policy objectives with the 2030 Agenda. The third section presents the case of the IBSA Fund project in Saint Lucia and its connection with the implementation of SDGs 1 and 2. In conclusion, we draw some lessons on the main advantages and challenges of using South-South cooperation as a means of implementation.

South-South cooperation as a means of implementation of global development goals

At the dawn of the 21st century, it was necessary to reform the international development cooperation field to make it more responsive to the development challenges of that time. The UN responded to this new context with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)² at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. With this agenda, the UN had the intention of better coordinating international partnerships for development.

The MDGs were primarily an agenda for action in developing countries with the assistance of developed countries, and due to that, North-South cooperation and ODA were the central means of implementation. It was only in the 2005 World Summit – when the UN Member States committed themselves to achieve the MDGs by 2015 – that South-South cooperation was recognized as a potential mechanism for the promotion of the MDGs. As stated in the World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1):

“40. We recognize the achievements and great potential of South-South cooperation and encourage the promotion of such cooperation, which complements North-South cooperation as an effective contribution to the development and as a means to share best practices and provide enhanced technical cooperation” (United Nations General Assembly, 2005, p. 10).

This recognition was a response to the increasing cooperation ties among developing countries – such as China, India, South Africa, and Brazil, but also Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, among others – who performed unprecedented growth in their GDP, trade, capital flows, and investments in the early 2000s.

Cooperation among Southern countries dates from the mid-1950s³, but it was in the early 2000s that South-South cooperation consolidated its presence in the international development cooperation field. Under the rubric of emerging economies or emerging powers, these countries put South-South cooperation as a central pillar of their foreign policies as a way to push reform of the principles and practices in the international development cooperation arena so that they could incorporate a Southern perspective.

Four elements characterize South-South cooperation as a distinct paradigm in the field of international development cooperation: “the assertion of a shared ‘developing country’ identity; expertise in appropriate development; rejection of hierarchical ‘donor-recipient’ relations; and an insistence on mutual opportunity” (Mawdsley, 2012, p. 256). This means that developing countries defined South-South cooperation as a modality based on solidarity among Southern partners and that the main cooperation mechanisms are horizontal partnerships, peer-learning, and mutual sharing of Southern solutions for common development problems.

2 The MDGs were a set of eight global goals in the areas of poverty and hunger, education, gender equality, children and maternal mortality, and global health issues.

3 During the Cold War, developing countries expanded its Southern ties not only as a way to reduce political and economic dependence from Northern countries but also as a rhetoric device to demand a new international order in which the political and economic asymmetries between the global North and South would be corrected (Hattori, 2003, p. 229-30).

Development projects tend to have smaller funding, scope, and scale in comparison to traditional cooperation, and they can take many forms, from consultations and exchange of specialists to the building of infrastructure or the implementation of social programs. Southern countries claimed that the financing of South-South cooperation projects is untied and free from conditionalities, as a way of differentiating from traditional ODA disbursements⁴.

Many South-South cooperation initiatives were internationally acknowledged by their positive impact on development, enhancing local capacities, and combating hunger and poverty⁵. Successful experiences all over the world allowed emerging powers to consolidate South-South cooperation at a multilateral level. At the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation held in Nairobi in 2009⁶, UN Member States adopted the Nairobi Outcome, in which they agreed on a formal definition of South-South cooperation, highlighting its connection to the attainment of the MDGs:

“11. We recognize the importance and different history and particularities of South-South cooperation, and we reaffirm our view of South-South cooperation as a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance, and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. South-South cooperation and its agenda have to be set by countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit” (United Nations General Assembly, 2009 a, p. 2).

The reason to define South-South cooperation in a UN conference and to link it with the MDGs was twofold. Firstly, for the UN, it was a way of taking advantage not only from the very successful South-South cooperation initiatives but also from Southern financing for development. Although it corresponded to a small share of the UN financial resources, Southern countries increased their contributions to the UN system as a way of promoting South-South cooperation in the early 2000s. According to Weinlich (2014, p. 1833), China raised its contributions to UN activities for development from US\$61 million in 2009 to US\$70 million in 2012 (3.2% of the UN budget). Brazil increased its contributions from US\$29 million in 2009 to US\$ 52 million in 2011 (1.6% of the UN budget). India and South Africa kept their annual contributions at around US\$ 30 million and US\$11 million from 2009 to 2012, respectively (0.5% and 0.3% of the UN budget, respectively).

4 Drawing from the gift theory – which interprets the symbolic meaning of ODA flows as a ‘gift’ that consolidates and reinforces the superiority of Northern donor countries and the inferiority of Southern recipient countries – the principles of South-South cooperation can be defined as a symbolic alternative that challenges the vertical relationships in North-South cooperation. However, development cooperation practices of some emerging powers, such as China, may incorporate loans tied to the purchase of goods and services, to which Southern countries usually respond that these practices are exceptions (Mawdsley, 2012, p. 256).

5 Some examples were the Brazilian cooperation projects on agricultural farming and conditional cash transfers; Indian cooperation projects in public health and affordable medicine; and South African projects on post-conflict reconstruction.

6 This conference celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (known as BAPA), adopted in 1978 as the final document of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, held in Buenos Aires. BAPA is recognized as the first international framework for South-South cooperation.

Secondly, for emerging powers, it was strategic to associate South-South cooperation to the achievement of the MDGs, as a way of relying on the UN system as a facilitator of Southern initiatives. With the support of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)⁷, developing countries expected to have the UN as a strong advocate for the modality, and the UNOSSC would work as a Southern knowledge broker, facilitating the match-making process between Southern countries to achieve the MDGs.

The UN Member States formally began a process of assessing and reviewing the MDGs achievements and negotiating a post-2015 development agenda at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. For emerging powers, that was an essential moment for advocating the inclusion of South-South cooperation as an integrated part of the new agenda. Their demands were heard, and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) created the UN Development Group South-South and Triangular Cooperation Task Team in 2014 to mainstream South-South and Triangular cooperation across the activities related to the post-2015 agenda (United Nations General Assembly, 2014).

These efforts resulted in the inclusion of South-South cooperation as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN in 2015. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, which were built on and expanded the MDGs, focusing on areas related to people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. It was considered a truly global development agenda since its goals and targets are not only destined to developing countries, but to all nations (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Another innovation in comparison to the MDGs is that the 2030 Agenda entails a section on means of implementation, highlighting the main mechanisms to the realization of each one of the SDGs. Under SDG 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development), South-South cooperation is contemplated as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, alongside and as a complement to North-South and Triangular cooperation⁸.

South-South cooperation is directly mentioned in the targets related to technology transfer (target 17.6) and capacity building for development (target 17.9). The 2030 Agenda values the use of Southern technology and solutions as a means of accessing and sharing knowledge and innovation for the implementation of the SDGs. Besides, it recognizes the contribution of South-South cooperation to the enhancement of local capacities and mutual learning by deploying development solutions that are closer to the reality of developing countries.

In a policy brief for the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Development Cooperation Forum, the main advantages of using South-South cooperation as a means of implementing the SDGs were summarized as follows:

7 In 1974, the UNGA decided to give to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the responsibility of promoting the use of South-South cooperation across UN entities. For that, it created the Special Unit for Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, which was renamed as the Special Unit on South-South Cooperation in 2004. It was only in 2012 that the UN General Assembly decided to improve the status of the Special Unit and consolidate it as a UN office, culminating in its transformation into the UNOSSC.

8 In the UN, South-South cooperation is seen as complementary – and not a substitute for – North-South cooperation, since ODA and technical cooperation between developed and developing countries remain important to the promotion of development globally.

- “ – the plurality and diversity of partners and partnerships as well as multi-stakeholder approaches;
- Low transaction and implementation costs, and speed of service and project delivery;
 - Greater flexibility and absence of conditionality;
 - Use of national systems and capacities and demand-driven approaches;
 - A focus on mutual benefit and equality of partners and complementarity of capacities; and
 - Recognition of respect for national ownership and policy space” (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2017, p. 3).

Despite these advantages, the lack of consistent data on South-South cooperation makes it difficult to assess and evaluate its role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To face this problem, Southern countries started discussions to create a standardized approach for data collection, assessment, and evaluation of South-South cooperation financial flows as part of the annual ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development (FfD Forum).

The FfD Forum was created in 2015 at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The Forum comprises a revision and follow-up mechanism of all financial commitments for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Since South-South cooperation finance is one of the modalities under review, the efforts of Southern countries in the period of 2015-2018 were directed to the creation of their approach to monitor, review and evaluate its effectiveness in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda⁹ (Besharati, 2019, p. 27).

Considering that the 2030 Agenda now recognize South-South cooperation as a valid modality in the field of international development cooperation, many Southern initiatives have connected its development cooperation projects with the attainment of the SDGs, as it is the case of the IBSA Fund.

The role of the IBSA Fund in the implementation of global development goals

India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger (known as IBSA Fund) is a development cooperation mechanism created out of India, Brazil, and South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA Forum) in March 2004¹⁰. At that time, the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and the South African President Thabo Mbeki shared a view that cooperative efforts among developing countries were necessary for the promotion of development globally.

With an annual US\$ 1 million contribution from each one of its members, the IBSA Fund became operational in 2006 (IBSA Fund, 2018). Its main goal is to finance development projects in

⁹ This attempt of creating a standardized mechanism of review was also a reaction of Southern countries to address the pressure from OECD-DAC countries for aligning South-South cooperation monitoring and review with their own aid effectiveness agenda (Besharati, 2019, p. 10).

¹⁰ The IBSA Forum was created on the sidelines of the 58th UNGA meeting in 2003. On that occasion, the three countries also decided to start negotiations for the establishment of a development fund. Then, on the sidelines of the 59th UNGA meeting in 2004, the IBSA countries officially launched the IBSA Fund (Stuenkel, 2014).

developing countries – especially in the least developed countries – by using Southern best practices in the fight against poverty and hunger. The Fund adopts the principles of South-South cooperation in the design and as a means of implementation of its projects.

The IBSA Fund also claims to respect national sovereignty and be responsive to the development needs of Southern countries. For that, proposals are received on a demand-driven basis, and projects are supposed to build development capacities and strengthen national ownership over development knowledge, technologies, and solutions¹¹. As stated in the IBSA Declaration on South-South Cooperation:

“Respect for national sovereignty is at the core of SSC. SSC is about interdependencies and not ‘new dependencies.’ The partner countries themselves initiate, organize, and manage SSC activities. IBSA believes that the primary responsibility towards development rests with the States themselves under their ownership and leadership” (IBSA Dialogue Forum, 2018).

India, Brazil, and South Africa have declared their interest in mobilizing the IBSA Fund as a Southern platform that would contribute to the strengthening of multilateralism on a global scale. For this reason, the Fund’s work is carried out in partnership with the United Nations (UN) as a strategy to reinforce the multilateral system through working with international organizations (IBSA Dialogue Forum, 2003).

The relationship between the IBSA Fund and the UN has taken shape in both institutional and policy terms. Regarding the institutional aspect, IBSA countries have chosen the UNOSSC to be the institutional manager of the IBSA Fund and the Secretariat of its Board of Directors¹². The UNOSSC collaborate in the formulation and preparation of project proposals and is responsible for strategically guiding implementation through Southern partnerships. The Office also prepares financial and progress reports to the IBSA Board of Directors and monitors and supervises the IBSA Fund activities (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2018; IBSA Fund, 2007).

IBSA countries have perceived the UN as an honest broker; therefore, the UNOSSC is responsible for guaranteeing the neutrality, the demand-driven approach, and the respect for sovereignty in all IBSA Fund projects. The institutional connection with the UN also has a pragmatic objective. The coverage, capacity, experience, and institutional memory of the UN in the field allow the IBSA Fund to have greater scope than it would have if solely relying on the capacity of its three members. IBSA Fund projects usually are implemented in partnership with other UN funds, programs, offices, and agencies, not to mention the UN commissions and research and training organizations that provide support to the Fund’s activities. The UNOSSC management allows the IBSA Fund to systematize best practices and match the available Southern expertise with the real needs on the ground.

11 The IBSA Fund claims to refuse the traditional categories of international development cooperation, such as the vertical donor-recipient relationship, in which the donor is the main responsible for project design and implementation.

12 The IBSA Fund Board of Directors is composed by the Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives and Deputy Permanent Representatives of India, Brazil, and South Africa’s Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2018).

Even though this role of the UNOSSC would characterize the IBSA Fund as a modality of Triangular cooperation – which is commonly defined as Southern partnerships for development supported by a multilateral organization or a developed country – IBSA countries do not define their Fund as such. In all documents and reports, South-South cooperation is the language used to define the Fund's primary activities¹³. For IBSA countries, the UN works as a neutral facilitator of South-South cooperation, expanding the reach and visibility of the IBSA Fund in the field of international development cooperation.

Because of this institutional relationship, the IBSA Fund has sought to align its policy objectives with the global development goals defined by the UN. From 2009 to 2015, the IBSA Fund focused on projects that would develop Southern solutions for the achievement of the MDGs, to increase the visibility of South-South cooperation as an effective modality of implementing global development goals.

When analyzing the IBSA Fund Overview Project Portfolios from 2011 to 2015, of the 14 projects developed or under development by the IBSA Fund in that period, eight had a direct contribution to the achievement of the MDGs¹⁴. Due to this effort, the IBSA Fund was the recipient of the MDG Award in 2010, recognizing South-South cooperation as one of the most efficient mechanisms for the implementation of the MDGs (IBSA Fund, 2018).

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the IBSA Fund continued to focus on Southern projects and partnerships that could contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, and this effort drew accolades from top-level UN officials. According to Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General:

“The IBSA Fund shows how developing countries can work together to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful and sustainable world for all. As countries intensify their efforts to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, South-South cooperation is a strong asset for exchanging knowledge, transferring technology, and sharing development solutions” (IBSA Fund, 2017, p. 6).

The UNDP Administration, Mr. Achim Steiner, also recognized the positive contribution of the IBSA Fund to the implementation of the SDGs:

“India, Brazil, and South Africa are key actors in South-South cooperation, a critical contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The IBSA Fund's partnerships and rich portfolio of projects are improving many lives across the global South, delivering concrete development results for those in need” (IBSA Fund, 2017, p. 6).

¹³ More recently, Brazil has adopted the term “Trilateral South-South cooperation” to refer to the support of UN entities to their South-South cooperation initiatives, but this language is not used in IBSA Fund documents (Unicef and ABC/MRE, 2017, p. 9).

¹⁴ Based on the analysis of project objectives and outcomes, the IBSA Fund projects that most directly contributed to the achievement of the MDGs were those in Burundi (MDG 6), Cabo Verde (MDG 7), Guinea Bissau (two projects, both related to MDG 1), Sierra Leone (MDG 1), Haiti (MDG 1), Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (MDG 1) and Viet Nam (MDG 1) (IBSA Fund, 2018).

Since 2016, the IBSA Fund Overview Project Portfolio report has made direct mentions to the 2030 Agenda, indicating how each one of the funded projects is related to the implementation of the SDGs. When analyzing project portfolios from 2015 to 2018, all 15 ongoing or recently approved projects by the IBSA Fund in that period made a direct mention to the SDGs in their policy objectives. The 15 IBSA Fund projects based on the SDGs are located in Bolivia (SDG 6), Cambodia (SDG 8), Comoros (SDG 2), Fiji (SDG 5), Grenada (SDG 3), Guyana (SDG 12), Haiti (SDG 1), Kiribati (SDG 2), Palestine (SDG 3), Saint Lucia (SDG 1), Sierra Leone (SDG 1), Sudan (SDG 8), Timor-Leste (SDG 2), Viet Nam (SDG 3), and Zambia (SDG 2).

Seven of these projects are directly related to the implementation of SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) and SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture), reaffirming the priority of the IBSA Fund to support projects for the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

SDG 1 focuses on one of the main challenges the international community faces today. For the UN, the condition of extreme poverty subjects' people to live in a situation of profound deprivation, which is aggravated by violent conflicts, social vulnerabilities, and disasters. Although more than one billion people have left poverty in the last 25 years¹⁵, projections showed that, in 2030, 6% of the world population will still be living in extreme poverty, especially in rural areas, where 79% of the world's population is located (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2019 b).

Combating poverty is directly related to the purpose of SDG 2. Estimates show that, in 2015, about 784 million people were malnourished, and, in 2017, that number jumped to 821 million people (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2019 c). For that, achieving SDG 2 would require the redesign of agricultural and food systems, combined with measures to build the resilience of family farmers. Family farmers are responsible for producing about four-fifths of the food consumed in the world. Still, they are among the groups more affected by economic and social inequalities (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019 b, pp. 4-5).

To further analyze how the IBSA Fund has consolidated the modality of South-South cooperation by strengthening its connection with the 2030 Agenda (and more specifically, with the implementation of SDGs 1 and 2), we will now turn to a case study of the IBSA Fund project on the island of Saint Lucia, "Poverty reduction through the development of livestock," in the period of 2015-2018.

Firstly, this project was chosen because of its regional perspective. Considering the seven IBSA Fund projects related to SDGs 1 or 2, three of them were in Africa, two were in the Asia-Pacific, and two were in Latin America and the Caribbean¹⁶. The project in Saint Lucia was the only one in this region that connected both SDGs 1 and 2 in its objectives, so it would be possible to analyze the relevance of South-South cooperation for a small island developing country since the literature fewer covers this category.

¹⁵ While in 1990, 36% of the world population lived in poverty, that number dropped to 16% in 2016 and to 10% in 2015 (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2019 b).

¹⁶ This regional distribution is aligned with the general geographic scope of the IBSA Fund: until 2018, 37% of all projects were conducted in Africa, 24.5% were conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 20.9% were conducted in the Asia-Pacific (IBSA Fund, 2018, p. 9).

Secondly, whereas most of the IBSA Fund projects related to SDGs 1 and 2 were in the areas of agriculture and fishery, the project in Saint Lucia was the first and the only one so far in the area of livestock production. Thus, we could analyze how South-South cooperation was used in a new cooperation area for the IBSA Fund.

Thirdly, this project faced unique challenges faced in its implementation. Usually, IBSA Fund projects encounter difficulties because of delays in procurement and budget. But in the case of Saint Lucia, the main challenge was the competition with another development project in the same site of the IBSA Fund project, making this case study useful to investigate how South-South cooperation development projects deal with rival development cooperation modalities.

The IBSA Fund project in Saint Lucia and the implementation of SDGs 1 and 2

One of the main objectives of the IBSA Fund is to show the value and potential of South-South cooperation initiatives as a means of implementing global development goals. Drawing lessons from the IBSA Fund project “Poverty reduction through the development of livestock” on the island of Santa Lucia (2015-2018), we analyzed its objectives and results, and the potential of using South-South cooperation to implement SDGs 1 and 2. We conducted a qualitative analysis, based on official reports from the IBSA Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

The government of Santa Lucia made a global commitment to the 2030 Agenda, recognizing that achieving the SDGs is vital to meet its development challenges, such as external economic shocks, natural disasters, and the impact of climate change. To this end, sustainable development has become an essential part of national development plans and programs. In 2017, the government created the National Coordination Mechanism for the 2030 Agenda, composed of the National Coordination Committee for the Sustainable Development Goals¹⁷ (SDGNCC), responsible for guiding the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs in the country; and Subcommittee of Ministers of the SDG Office (CSC), responsible for providing all necessary policy guidance (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2019 a).

With the support of these institutional mechanisms to guide and monitor the implementation of the SDGs, the government of Saint Lucia started to look for appropriate mechanisms, strategies, and partnerships to finance the implementation of the SDGs, which also included finding the human, technological and institutional resources to their implementation (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2019 a).

In 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture of Saint Lucia adopted a new strategy to increase livestock production to solve some of the social and economic problems resulted from its agricultural-based economy. The country's exports – mainly of bananas – were well below the levels allowed to cover national debts. Besides, its agricultural sector was very fragmented and unprofitable, preventing the creation of

17 The SDGNCC is a multisectorial committee, formed by members of the government and chaired by the Ministries responsible for the area of Economic Development and Sustainable Development. It also includes members from the private sector, academia, non-governmental bodies, and civil society (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2019 a).

jobs. Also, the country faced a situation of food insecurity due to natural and economic shocks, having a high degree of dependence on imported food. With the strategy of increasing livestock production, the government of Saint Lucia expected to diversify its economy and address the increasing demand for meat by strengthening local production. The strategy also intended to create new job opportunities for small and young farmers while reducing meat imports (Government of Saint Lucia, 2018).

At that time, Saint Lucia already counted with different international development partners conducting cooperation projects for food security and economic resilience, but none of them included livestock production¹⁸. Considering this context, the government of Saint Lucia showed interest in partnering with the IBSA Fund to reposition its rural development strategy and submitted a proposal in line with its national priorities of strengthening its livestock production market by using South-South cooperation as a means of implementation (Government of Saint Lucia, 2018).

Therefore, the project was demand-driven and, after going through the IBSA Fund process of assessing and approving proposals, the request of Saint Lucia was accepted. The project “Poverty Reduction through Livestock Development” was officially launched in 2015, with a duration of 3 years and a budget of US\$ 1,291,100.00. Its overall objective was to create a Livestock Center of Excellence in the Beausejour Livestock Station, located in the far south of Saint Lucia. This Center would develop Southern knowledge and expertise on sustainable livestock production and management, focusing on the continuous training of farmers and the incorporation of new methods, techniques, and best practices in their companies, to increase efficiency and productivity. The Center would also be responsible for establishing a Small Ruminant Breeding Program to provide improved small ruminant, pig, and rabbit bloodlines to producers (Joseph, 2017, pp. 1-3).

The project had other complementary activities. The Farmer Field Schools (FFS) aimed to provide training in agricultural practices for small farmers and ranchers. The Livestock Information System for Saint Lucia (AIMS) was a web portal with data and information collected from all veterinary and livestock production activities in the country. Other activities were the creation of new communal production facilities in strategic places, the rebuilding of pastures and fodder banks for nutrition and animal feed in new locations, and the distribution of new forage species to small ruminant farmers (Joseph, 2017; IBSA Fund, 2018).

During the implementation of the project, there were some difficulties. The project faced bureaucratic delays in the transfer of financial resources, political delays as a result of changes in the government of Saint Lucia, in 2016, and economic delays due to the government’s decision to import animals and semen from the United States¹⁹. But the main challenge was the competition with the Pearl of the Caribbean development project, signed by the government of Saint Lucia in 2016 and with a US\$2.6 billion investment from the Hong Kong multinational Desert Star Holdings Limited.

18 Some development cooperation projects run in Saint Lucia in the period of 2015-2018 were: the European Development Fund project for the development of micro, small and medium-sized companies (2014-2020) (European Commission, 2014); the Japan International Cooperation Agency project for the reduction of natural disasters and the fight against climate change in the fishery sector (2014-2018) (Japan, 2014); and the FAO project to the development of fruits, roots, tubers, and vegetables crops (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019 a).

19 The project was supposed to be completed in 2018, but its status remains “in progress” until the release of the 2019 IBSA Fund Report in 2020.

This project entailed a resort and other enterprises, such as a shopping mall, race and golf courses, and residential buildings that would occupy the same site where the Beausejour Centre of Excellence, funded by the IBSA Fund, would be built (Government of Saint Lucia 2016).

The Pearl of the Caribbean project received many criticisms from workers and environmental organizations due to its damaging social and environmental impacts. However, the government of Saint Lucia decided to reallocate the construction of the Centre to another land. In respect to the national ownership over the project, the IBSA Fund agreed to redefine its budget and work plan to transfer the construction to a different site, which was done in 2017 (IBSA Fund 2018).

Despite these difficulties, the IBSA Fund project in Saint Lucia was able to attain targets 1.4, 1.5, 1.a, and 1.b under SDG 1; and targets 2.3, 2.4, and 2.a under SDG 2. We summarized the main findings in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected targets of SDGs 1 and 2 and their connection with the activities of the IBSA Fund project in Saint Lucia (2015-2018)

<i>Selected targets of SDGs 1 e 2</i>	<i>IBSA Fund</i>
<i>SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere</i>	
1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women (...) have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to essential services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property (...).	The Livestock Center of Excellence and the Small Ruminant Breeding Program allowed better and greater access by small producers in Santa Lucia to economic resources, ownership and control over land, and access to natural resources and new technologies.
1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability (...).	The Farmers Field Schools contributed to the resilience of local farmers by offering diversified training and building local capacities.
1.a Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programs and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.	The IBSA Fund contributed to the mobilization of resources to combat rural poverty through a multi-stakeholder perspective while preserving the national ownership of the project.
1.b Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.	The project in Saint Lucia had a pro-poor development strategy and contributed to the creation of a national policy framework in livestock production.
<i>SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</i>	
2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (...) including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources, and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.	The entire project focused on strengthening small producers and local farmers through access to agricultural and livestock resources and techniques.
2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices (...)	The focus on sustainability in agricultural and livestock practices permeated all activities under the project.
2.a Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development, and plant and livestock gene banks to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular, least developed countries.	The main resources of the project were invested in rural infrastructure and personnel training, which allowed the incorporation of more modern and sustainable rural practices.

Source: own elaboration based on information available at the United Nations General Assembly, 2015; Joseph, 2017; IBSA Fund, 2018.

The IBSA project took a significant step towards improving the access of small farmers from Santa Lucia to better livestock services and products, directly achieving target 1.4 of the 2030 Agenda. The Livestock Center of Excellence in the Beausejour consolidated itself as an institution capable of supplying rural communities with economic resources (such as the low-cost distribution of quality breeding through the Small Ruminant Breeding Program, so the country could improve its national livestock production and rely less on imports); ownership and control over land (such as the establishment of new strategic and shared lands among small producers for the production and establishment of pastures and forages); access to natural resources and the incorporation of environmentally sustainable practices; and new technologies (both by the Small Ruminant Breeding Program, which included artificial insemination activities to improve production; and by the development of AIMS, that provided information technologies to collect better and manage data).

The development of the Farmer Field Schools, in its turn, demonstrated the project's commitment to empowering local producers and ranchers, to create an environment in which, through diversified training, they could become increasingly autonomous in the conduct of their economic activities. This goal was reached by the exchange of expertise among Southern partners, with the presence of three livestock specialists from neighboring Caribbean countries, namely: Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines²⁰. The exchange of knowledge with other Southern specialists was crucial to consolidate the Farmer Field Schools, which played an essential role in building the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable people and preparing them to face other possible challenges, as described in target 1.5.

The IBSA project in Saint Lucia was entirely focused on the main targets of SDG 2 since its primary goal was to strengthen small producers and local farmers, either individually or through cooperatives. The activities under the project improved production and national trade, contributing to the achievement of target 2.3 due to the increase in livestock productivity and the income of small food producers in Saint Lucia.

Environmental sustainability was a pillar of the Livestock Center of Excellence, contributing to the creation of sustainable food production systems in alignment with target 2.4. The Center focused on creating a sustainable animal health system in Saint Lucia to control and prevent animal diseases and mortality. Besides, the training and workshops offered at the Beausejour Livestock Station, the Farm Field Schools, and the Small Ruminant Breeding Program sought to incorporate and disseminate environmental sustainability, preservation, protection, and conscious use of natural resources (Joseph, 2017).

The use of South-South cooperation as a means of implementation was crucial to the attainment of these targets. As indicated in target 1.a, the IBSA Fund is a vital financing mechanism because it adopts a multi-stakeholder perspective. The project in Saint Lucia involved not only the IBSA countries, but also the UNOSSC, the FAO, and even a triangular cooperation initiative with the United States

20 Participants were Dr. Cedric Lazarus, FAO Livestock Development Officer, from Jamaica; Dr. Gabrielle Young, a specialist in pigs and small ruminants, from Trinidad and Tobago; and Mr. Dwight Mckie, a specialist in small ruminants, from Saint Vincent and Grenadines (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2017).

for the import of animals and semen. Not to mention the extensive participation of the government of Saint Lucia, which guaranteed the national ownership of the project. Besides, as mentioned in target 1.b, the project was designed with a pro-poor development strategy, and it contributed to the creation of sound policy frameworks, as was the case of Saint Lucia's National Livestock Policy.

As for target 2.a, the IBSA project proved to be an essential mechanism that directed investments in rural infrastructure. The project promoted better livestock services through technology transfer, personnel training, and the incorporation of modern and sustainable agricultural practices. The project had a low cost, and its flexibility allowed us to deal with some delays without jeopardizing project delivery. As a result, the main achievement of the IBSA Fund project in Saint Lucia was the fast impact on local communities, with more than 100 farmers certificated with training on sustainable rural practices and the consolidation of the first program of breeding sheep and goats in the country.

Therefore, South-South cooperation was an important mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Saint Lucia. The IBSA Fund project was able to build national development capacities in the country to the attainment of SDGs 1 and 2 while consolidating the sharing of expertise and knowledge between the government of Saint Lucia, three developing countries in the Caribbean region, and the three IBSA countries, with the support of UN entities.

Conclusion

A critical characteristic of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is its emphasis on using different modalities of international development cooperation to universally implement its 17 SDGs. Although South-South cooperation is not the dominant modality in the field, the efforts of several developing countries in the early 2000s led to its inclusion as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Despite its small scale, South-South cooperation has been placed alongside North-South triangular collaboration and cooperation, and it is now internationally recognized as an efficient mechanism to the attainment of global development goals.

The IBSA Fund, as an international development cooperation facility that became operational in 2006 under the IBSA Forum, has been considered by the UN as one of the most successful initiatives from developing countries to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The partnership between the IBSA Fund and the UN is part of a strategy shared by both sides to strengthen the multilateral system.

At the institutional level, this partnership has expanded the scope of the IBSA Fund, since it relies on UN coverage, capacity, experience, and institutional memory in the field. For IBSA countries, partnering with the UN is strategic to consolidate the use of South-South cooperation across the UN activities for development. At the policy level, the IBSA Fund has aligned its objectives with the 2030 Agenda, focusing on projects that directly contribute to the implementation of the SDGs.

That was the case of the IBSA Fund project "Poverty Reduction through Livestock Development" in Saint Lucia (2015-2018). In alignment with the 2030 Agenda, the design of the project was based on a multi-stakeholder perspective, and there were different actors involved in the implementation, such as the IBSA Fund, the UNOSSC, the FAO, and the government of Santa Lucia.

Even though facing competition with another development project – based on a different development strategy – the main activities of this project were successfully implemented under the perspective of South-South cooperation. The creation of the Livestock Center of Excellence, the Small Ruminant Breeding Program, the Farmers Field Schools, and the Livestock Information System presented results directly connected to the implementation of targets 1.4, 1.5, 1.a, and 1.b under SDG 1 (End poverty); and targets 2.3, 2.4 and 2.a under SDG 2 (End hunger and malnutrition).

We argued that the use of South-South cooperation enhanced the achievement of these targets as a means of implementation. Despite its small scale, the main advantages of using South-South cooperation were guaranteeing national ownership and the building of development capacities in the country. Development solutions were designed, taking into consideration the reality of the country, and they were adaptable to make an impact on and empower local communities. Thus, not only developing countries but the UN itself sees the value of South-South cooperation initiatives in the implementation of the SDGs, raising the profile of the UN development agenda.

On a final note, it is worth mentioning that due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, future IBSA Fund projects based on livestock production will have to incorporate a greater emphasis on health and sanitary sustainability. As highlighted in the last FfD Forum, held in April-June 2020, the current health crisis will leave devastating effects on the development of the Global South and jeopardize the realization of the SDGs by 2030. Undoubtedly, transformative recovery will require strengthening cooperation between the UN and Southern partners through South-South cooperation initiatives.

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