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Measuring Effectiveness of South-South Cooperation

Neissan Alessandro Besharati

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Preface

With the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), discussions on development finance have been revitalised. Mobilising sufficient financial support to meet the resource gap in SDG implementation is a critical challenge for developing countries.

Traditional aid flows to these countries have been restrained by both supply-side limits and demand-side pulls. However, new actors and innovative financial instruments create opportunities for additional funding. In this context, improving the quality of development cooperation (including financial flows) and assessing its effectiveness have become more pertinent than ever.

Economic and political factors aggravate the challenge of effective development cooperation. The current global development finance architecture lacks necessary political ownership and momentum. Further, the discourse suffers from an obvious lack of credible knowledge that reflects realities on the ground. Demand is thus high for Southern perspectives so as to embed them in future reforms.

That is what Southern Voice, a network of over 50 think tanks from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, is facilitating. It provides structured inputs from the Global South for debates on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With capacity gained through the successful execution of various research programmes, Southern Voice aims to contribute to the global discussion on the effectiveness of development cooperation in the era of SDGs.

The new initiative, "Rethinking Development Effectiveness: Perspectives from the Global South," is being carried out in partnership with the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in Dhaka, Bangladesh and with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The present study is the second in the series of nine occasional papers on rethinking development effectiveness. It discusses the progress of the challenges presented in the measurement of development in terms of South-South cooperation.

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Abstract

South-South cooperation has become an essential feature of the international development landscape. Several South-South partnerships are perceived as more economical, effective and favourable compared to North-South aid relations. However, not many systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of South-South cooperation have been undertaken, especially with regards to impact, contribution to development outcomes, quality of assistance and the added value of this type of contribution to developing countries. In that sense, the study discusses the political dynamics, unpacks technical and statistical challenges, and reviews progress made thus far with regards to measuring the volume, quality and impact of SSC. Furthermore, it describes the different initiatives and efforts undertaken in the past decade to systematise the monitoring and evaluation of SSC. The study concludes that given the absence of inputs in the monitoring and accounting processes due to the data, budgetary, and capacity limitations of Southern partners, more complex impact evaluation exercises around South-South cooperation remain a premature endeavour.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NSC	North-South Cooperation
NeST	Network of Southern Think Tanks
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	South-South Cooperation
TT-SSC	Task Team on South-South Cooperation
UNDCF	United Nations Development Cooperation Forum

Measuring Effectiveness of South-South Cooperation

Neissan Alessandro Besharati

Introduction

The international development community has entered the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are being tackled universally by developed, transitioning and developing countries. The North-South aid paradigm is no longer appropriate since from the era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), trillions of dollars are now required to achieve the SDGs (African Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund & the World Bank Group, 2015). New financing needs necessitate the mobilisation of a vast array of resources from traditional and emerging, public and private, domestic and external, and Northern and Southern development partners.

South-South cooperation (SSC) has become an important feature of the international development landscape. SSC is playing an increasingly large role in global trade, finance, investment and governance. These changes have opened up opportunities for further partnerships between countries in the Global South, as evidenced by the plethora of new initiatives aimed at fostering political, economic and cultural relations between and among developing countries. Within international development landscape, there have been numerous initiatives to promote South-South partnerships, which are generally perceived as being more economical, effective and favourable than North-South aid relationships.

Many aid recipient countries acknowledge that emerging development partners come from similar realities and have more relevant development experience, technical capacity and practical know-how from which they can draw. SSC has gained traction through supporting regional infrastructure development, transferring knowledge, building capacity and introducing new approaches to poverty eradication. Many Asian countries have spearheaded innovative approaches to development financing and blended finance. SSC has made substantial contributions in the areas of agriculture, social protection, infrastructure and industrial development. Trade and foreign direct investment among developing countries have reached record heights and are constantly growing as shares of global totals (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2016).

Many countries, which only 30 years ago were war-ravaged and poverty-stricken, have had exceptional rises and emerged as new global and regional powers. Mexico, Chile, and South Korea (recent additions to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (the BRICS), members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, and middle-income economies in Africa, Asia, and South America (see Schulz, 2010), are playing a more visible role in international development (Sidiropoulos, Pérez Pineda, Chaturvedi & Fues, 2015). Some of these SSC providers contribute between USD 1 billion and USD 7 billion per year in development cooperation (Besharati, 2013c; Kitano, 2018; OECD, 2017; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010), surpassing in volume in some cases the assistance provided by smaller OECD donors.

Over the past 15 years, SSC has been growing in prominence due to the rise in quantum, increased geographical reach and the diversity of approaches to new forms of development partnerships. This growth has occurred against the background of declining aid flows from traditional donors, a result of the global financial crisis and efforts by OECD countries to share global development responsibilities with newly emerging economies. There has been much pressure to align SSC with aid/development effectiveness monitoring systems, which have traditionally been the sole domain of the traditional donors of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC). Many emerging economies have vehemently opposed Northern attempts to straightjacket SSC into measurement, comparison, ranking, and peer-review processes, which are often considered to be overtly or covertly driven by the OECD-DAC (Bhatia, 2013a; Bhatia, 2013b).

As part of the political economy of international development cooperation, aid recipient countries and development partners have tried to refine and update their methods and systems for evaluating development effectiveness, but when it comes to SSC, many challenges—political, technical, and institutional—remain. This study explores these political dynamics, unpacks technical and statistical challenges, and reviews progress made thus far with regards to measuring the volume, quality and impact of SSC. Ultimately, it reflects on whether a development effectiveness framework can also be applied to Southern providers.



There has been much pressure to align South-South cooperation with aid/development effectiveness monitoring systems.

Why assess SSC?

SSC has been widely discussed in many political forums over decades, though debates suffer due to rhetoric and emotionally loaded messages¹. Views on SSC are generally not firmly grounded in evidence but rather reflect personal perceptions and political stances by officials and academics from various countries.

Nobody questions the constructive role that SSC can play in international development, yet the literature on the subject and evidence of the impact of SSC are still thin. Overall, not many systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of SSC have been undertaken, especially with regards to impact, contribution to development outcomes, quality of assistance and the added value of this type of contribution to developing countries.

As a result, debates are dominated by evidence-lacking rhetoric of both critics and supporters of emerging donors. Major knowledge gaps still exist when discussing precise volumes, impact, effectiveness and quality of development cooperation from emerging development partners. For all intents and purposes, strengthening the evidence of SSC is imperative.

Many middle-income countries are at embryonic stages in the establishment of their international development agencies (Chaturvedi, Fues & Sidiropoulos, 2012), so it is important that they get it right by learning from their past experiences, those of their peers, as well as those of traditional development partners, whether positive or negative. Evaluation is thus key to ongoing learning, refinement and improvement.

Demands for accountability and more impactful development programming are increasingly coming from the citizens, taxpayers and civil society of all countries involved in SSC (Besharati, 2013c). Whether they are developed, emerging or developing countries,

 **Views on South South cooperation are generally not firmly grounded in evidence but rather reflect personal perceptions and political stances.**

¹ Remarks by Talat Abdel-Malek of Egypt, chair of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, at the High Level Forum on South-South Cooperation held in Bogotá, Colombia in 2010.

governments need to justify to their citizens, parliaments and domestic constituents the investments that are being made abroad. Accountability towards the beneficiaries or partner countries of development cooperation programmes is also critical. Some recipient countries, particularly in Africa, have reported having experienced challenges with Southern providers that are similar to the ones they experienced with Northern donors².

Effectiveness is a word often shunned by Southern countries because it is associated with OECD-DAC processes. But in a neutral political context, the concept of effectiveness is technical and can also be applied to SSC. It is about making sure that objectives are met and results are accomplished successfully. Thus, building strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and institutional capacities to provide ongoing evidence for the design and improvement of future cooperation programmes with the rest of the developing world is a priority for all development partners. In any case, evaluation of the effectiveness of a cooperation programme of an international development agency—Northern or Southern—is a necessary exercise.

Having established the need for and importance of M&E, evidence, and accountability for SSC, it is essential to have clear parameters to conduct these analytical exercises. Without clear definitions and reporting guidelines, SSC partners (both recipients and providers) cannot monitor the exact volumes of their financial and technical flows. Without standards and norms, they cannot empirically evaluate the quality and impact made to development.

Politics of integrating SSC into the effectiveness agenda

NSC and SSC have evolved over decades according to two parallel but very different historical narratives. NSC generally suffers from a historical legacy that links it to colonial and post-colonial dependency relations between the Global North and the Global South. The roots of SSC, on the other hand, are found in the solidarity politics and alliances pursued by newly independent countries in Asia and Africa, along with their counterparts in Latin America, during the Cold War (Alden, Morphet & Vieira, 2010). At its heart, SSC originated from anti-imperialist sentiments, with some of its biggest champions being Presidents like the late Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. It

² At a side-event with Oxfam, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development during a BRICS Summit in March 2013 in Durban, South Africa, representatives from African countries mentioned challenges with regard to transparency and tied-aid practices that they had been experiencing with some of the development assistance from BRICS countries.

was a movement that sought to counter Northern dominance, liberate countries from Northern dependency, and give Southern countries a stronger voice in shaping the global governance and development agendas.

SSC represented the opposite of what North-South relationships were perceived to be. Instead of a one-way charitable aid relationship, SSC was defined as a two-way cooperative relationship. Some of the principles that are infused in the SSC discourse are trust, mutual benefit, equality, peer learning, capacity development, national ownership, self-reliance, respect for sovereignty, non-interference, horizontal partnerships and long-term relationships. North-South aid relationships led by the OECD-DAC, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund have been marching on parallel but different paths than SSC led by the G77, Asia-Africa Summit, and other Southern alliances.

With the rise of emerging economies in Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, a new category of development partner often referred to as a 'SSC provider' emerged. This categorisation started debates and a gradual reconfiguration of the global development architecture. It has had implications and consequences for middle-income countries, which now receive less aid and are expected to share the burden of responsibilities (including costs) of international development with traditional donors³.

These emerging donors still have major development challenges and large numbers of poor. As a result, while aiding other countries, they remain mindful of their own national political and economic priorities and are therefore unable to completely untie aid in a way that is expected by traditional donors. Ideologically, the development and cooperation models of Northern donors and Southern providers come from very different experiences and may not be able to operate within the same framework.

Although these emerging economies are not a unified block and have very different policy approaches to development, they generally disapprove of the mainstream aid effectiveness agenda that they believe reflects a Northern paradigm to which they do not subscribe. They insist that they are not donors but rather engage with other developing countries in horizontal partnerships of mutual benefit, exchange, friendship and solidarity. Notwithstanding their overall gross domestic product, these countries are characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality; thus, they argue that they cannot be expected to carry the same responsibilities as traditional donors. Southern providers are therefore cautious to avoid that the historical responsibilities of OECD donors are not diluted or forgotten following the spectacular economic rise of the South against the backdrop of financial crisis in the North (Bhatia, 2013b). Contrary to what occurs in Northern policy

³ Concerns emerged in interviews with diplomats and academics from several BRICS countries.

and academic circles, SSC providers are also averse to being measured, ranked, and compared to OECD-DAC donors.

It is therefore not surprising that when the global aid effectiveness debate emerged at the First High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2003 led by the OECD-DAC, SSC partners kept an arm's-length distance from what they perceived as a heavily donor-driven process. Many of the big Southern aid providers, like Brazil, India, Venezuela, Cuba, and Nigeria, did not ratify the Paris Declaration. Many others, like South Africa, Indonesia, and Colombia, signed up to the process as aid recipients. In 2009, many Group of 77 representatives gathered at the High Level United Nations Conference on South-South cooperation in Nairobi expressed reluctance to engage further in the aid effectiveness agenda (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011).

These emerging development partners did not want to use the Paris Declaration as their modus operandi for South-South development cooperation. In Accra in 2008, Brazilian delegates made it clear that they prefer to distance themselves from a process that they see as dominated by a rigid view of international development and reproducing the models and practices of traditional donors⁴. China and other emerging economies have systematically refused to follow the same rules of engagement and be subject to peer review and accountability under criteria developed by Northern donors. The rationale for this distancing is that traditional donors have been involved in development cooperation for almost 50 years, in turn developing highly complex systems and providing mature experience. It thus would not be appropriate to compare SSC providers using DAC standards and criteria, especially considering that they function with very different models of cooperation. Many observers have argued that SSC should not even be compared to official development assistance (ODA)⁵.

Some emerging economies, such as Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, Indonesia, Egypt, and Turkey, have been less aggressive than Brazil, India, Russia and China in their anti-West political stances. They have also shown more willingness to engage in the DAC process and lead on various aspects within the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC). While the establishment of the Paris Declaration was driven by Northern donors, the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in 2008 was the beginning of the 'marriage' between SSC and the aid effectiveness agenda. The Accra Agenda for Action paved the way to the beginning of more visible Southern engagement in global aid effectiveness

4 Remarks by a Brazilian delegate at the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in 2008.

5 Remarks by Group of 77 delegates at the High Level Meeting on South-South Cooperation held in Nairobi in 2009.

debates. Shortly after Accra High Level Forum, Colombia and Indonesia put forward a proposal to establish the Task Team on South-South Cooperation (TT-SSC) as a subsidiary of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness.

During the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in 2011, Northern donors pushed for the inclusion of new development partners in systems led by the OECD-DAC. However, major SSC providers, such as India, China, and Brazil, were not interested in subjecting themselves to the monitoring, peer review and accountability mechanisms of the DAC aid effectiveness regime because it was inappropriate for their specific types of development engagement. SSC providers argued that they have differential commitments in the application of development effectiveness principles, since it would be unfair to compare emerging donors using standards for traditional donors that have been operating in the development sector for decades. During the Fourth High Level Forum at the 11th hour, India and China agreed to sign the Busan Declaration on Effective Development Co-operation with the addition of one sentence on the first page: "The principles, commitments and actions agreed in the outcome document in Busan shall be the reference for South-South partners on a voluntary basis" (OECD, 2011, p. 2).

Technical and institutional challenges to reporting SSC

Major SSC providers have resisted taking part in Paris-led processes and subjecting themselves to the same peer review and accountability as traditional donors in all previous High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness. As a result, transparency and rigour in the reporting of SSC have suffered in the case of most Southern providers. Aside from enormous political opposition, there are also many technical challenges that prevent systematic assessment of SSC effectiveness.

SSC has no doubt grown in volume and geographical reach, but with growth has come a plurality of approaches, modalities, instruments, patterns and scales of SSC. Just as there is no uniform approach to North-South cooperation, SSC is extremely heterogeneous and different SSC partners approach the provision of assistance to their neighbours and peers in very different ways. It is thus difficult to develop one common monitoring and reporting framework that caters to the diversity and complexity of all SSC partners in the spectrum of international development cooperation.

Accounting and reporting for SSC flows are weak and inconsistent, in large part due to the lack of a shared definition and conceptual framework. The data limitations and weak information management systems of most emerging development partners, which

hinder the production of accurate aggregate data regarding their total development cooperation, also contribute. The limited capacities of most middle-income countries constrain them in reporting their development cooperation according to the strict standards and complex accounting systems of the OECD-DAC.

One of the biggest challenges to thorough analysis and evaluation of SSC is the widely acknowledged issue of poor information management, accountability and results management capacity among Southern partners (The Steering Committee, 2010; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2008). Transparency and rigour are extremely weak in aid reporting by emerging donors (Besharati, 2012; De Mello & Souza, 2013; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2008). Some middle-income countries completely lack M&E systems for their development cooperation. Aid data from Southern partners are often unavailable, insufficient, difficult to access or difficult to compare given the lack of standardised systems. Financial information is often provided in the form of commitments rather than disbursements. Annual reports tend to focus on anecdotal information and administrative and low-level output data such as missions, activities and people involved, with not much on performance measurements such as cost efficiency, sustainability and impact.

Another factor contributing to SSC information deficits is the way that development cooperation is managed. In the cases of almost all emerging donors, numerous ministries, public entities, agencies, state-owned enterprises and academic institutions provide development assistance to third nations (Braude, Thandrayan & Sidiropoulos, 2008; Chaturvedi, Fues & Sidiropoulos, 2012; De Mello & Souza, 2013; Huang, 2013). Often, these middle-income countries do not possess an overarching development cooperation framework or a central agency to coordinate all development assistance from their institutions to other developing countries (Besharati, 2013b; Chaturvedi, 2012). As a result, different types of data are produced by each entity following different M&E protocols, reporting formats, standards and time frames, thus making it difficult to produce aggregate figures and account properly for all development assistance.

At the international level, there is no obvious institutional home for global reporting on SSC like the OECD-DAC is the authoritative reference point for information on NSC. There is a pressing need for a global forum where SSC partners can define, measure, regularly analyse, monitor, and account for their development cooperation. An information hub dedicated to the collection, coordination, compilation, processing, and dissemination of development cooperation data from middle-income countries is also needed (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2009). Moreover, a framework needs to be created with criteria, standards, principles, and norms to guide effective cooperation among Southern countries. Having such a system in place would then encourage peer review,

accountability, exchange, and the distilling of good practices among Southern providers: in short, an entire system similar to the DAC is required for the South. The bottom line is that one or more platforms need to be established where Southern partners can jointly define, monitor, and evaluate their development cooperation, which should encourage learning and further development of South-South development partnerships (Bhatia, 2013a).

As mentioned, the OECD-DAC platforms, including the GPEDC, have been criticised for being heavily driven by Northern donors and not adequately representative of the major SSC partners. The United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (UNDCF), which was established in 2008 and is held every two years, is seen as a potential alternative platform for continuing development effectiveness debates with a more inclusive, legitimate and balanced set of partners. The UNDCF could also allow for better linkages between the development effectiveness agenda and SDGs discussions, though many observers are sceptical about the effectiveness of the United Nations in advancing the agenda due to its historically inefficient bureaucracy and challenges in building consensus among a large number of diverse member states.

All these challenges in data management, monitoring and evaluation, and statistics on SSC have been widely acknowledged and discussed at many conferences, such as the High Level Conferences on SSC in Nairobi (2009) and Bogotá (2010). Held in April 2013, the Delhi Conference of Southern Providers explored some of these issues by unpacking the fundamental principles and modalities of SSC and assessed where the most persistent gaps lie both analytically and institutionally (Research and Information System for Developing Countries, 2013). The conference was influential in establishing a Core Group of Southern Providers within the UNDCF⁶ and stimulating the formation of the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST), which would go on to conduct substantial work on improving evidence, knowledge and understanding around SSC and analytical methods to measure SSC.

Initiatives and efforts to measure SSC

Alongside the various political, institutional, and technical reasons why SSC providers resist engagement with global development effectiveness agenda, there is also an acknowledgement that it is not enough to refute anything coming from the OECD-DAC

6 For more information on the UNDCF conference for the Core Group of Southern Providers outcome, see <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/dcfdelhi.shtml>.

without having an alternative proposal. Without necessarily following the same rules as Northern countries, Southern partners need to develop their own framework with definitions, standards, databases, and measurement systems to support the accountability of their development cooperation. Such a framework would build on the general principles that were agreed at SSC global conferences, while methodological details could be elaborated by technical experts and academics already present in developing countries. This section highlights key initiatives undertaken in the past decade to systematise the monitoring and evaluation of SSC.

One of the earliest agreements among major Southern providers to establish a set of criteria for the appraisal and subsequent monitoring and evaluation of development projects was the India-Brazil-South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (also known as the IBSA Trust Fund). Allocations by the IBSA Trust Fund are governed by ten effectiveness criteria (see Table 1), which provide a foundation for more SSC partners to agree on a common development cooperation framework in the future.

Table 1. IBSA Trust Fund criteria for project selection

1	Reduction of poverty and hunger
2	National ownership and leadership
3	South-South cooperation
4	Use of IBSA country capacities
5	Strengthening local capacity
6	Ownership
7	Sustainability
8	Identifiable impact
9	Replicability
10	Innovation

Source: IBSA Fund Guidelines (n.d), elaborated by the author.

A broader attempt to conduct more systematic analysis around SSC was when the TT-SSC was established following the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra. The TT-SSC had three functions, namely enrich the aid effectiveness agenda with practices from SSC, adapt the aid effectiveness principles to SSC, and ensure synergies

between SSC and NSC. The first initiatives of the TT-SSC were a thorough review of 110 case stories of good SSC experiences and how they contributed to aid effectiveness and capacity development. Of these case stories, 15 (nine from Latin America, Asia and Africa, three trilateral, and three cross-continental) were further developed into case studies where more in-depth exploration of SSC was undertaken to identify good practices. The analytical work was showcased at the High Level Event on South-South Cooperation and Capacity Development held in Bogotá in 2010. The TT-SSC continued its work for a short time after Busan as the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Building Block of the GPEDC.

Monitoring and accountability systems for SSC have been much more effective at the regional level. Some intergovernmental bodies have initiated processes for measuring and reporting SSC in their respective regions. Regional institutions have played an important role in norm-setting and accountability of development cooperation on different continents. They serve as useful intermediaries between national and global frameworks as well as stimulate a good deal of SSC among neighbouring countries (President of the General Assembly, 2009). TT-SSC had started to engage with several regional institutions, such as the Organization of American States and Pacific Islands Forum, and regional banks, like the Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank, to expand analytical endeavours related to SSC.

By and large, the region that has made the most advances in monitoring and reporting SSC is Latin America. Development cooperation agencies of specific countries, such as Brazil (Research Institute for Applied Economic Research, 2018) and Mexico, have developed sophisticated methods to account for their technical cooperation and made efforts to produce periodic reports. Within the context of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the national statistics bureaux and development cooperation agencies of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela have embarked on an initiative to develop a common framework for the quantification of their SSC. Similarly, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB, 2017) built a central database and has produced a yearly report that captures the SSC among 22 countries of the Iberian, Latin American, and Caribbean regions since 2007. The primary focus of these Latin American reporting initiatives is technical cooperation. Economic and financial cooperation that is typical among Asian partners does not feature in these reports.

In Africa, the focal point for SSC has been the African Union's Development Agency (AUDA), previously known as NEPAD Agency. Not only has the institution been the African regional facilitator for the TT-SSC, but it has also fulfilled its function as an African South-South exchange hub through the support of the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank,

and other donors. The African Consensus on Development Effectiveness sets out post-Busan actions to be undertaken including the development of a mutual accountability framework for development cooperation in Africa. In 2017 with support from the United Nations Development Programme, the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development held formal exchanges with the Ibero-American General Secretariat to learn more about the Latin American reporting experiences and then started the process of producing a SSC regional report for Africa.

Think tanks such as the South-South Cooperation Research and Policy Centre (Articulação Sul), BRICS Policy Center, South African Institute of International Affairs, Research Institute for Applied Economic Research, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, German Development Institute, China International Development Research Network, and Centre for Policy Dialogue are among the most prominent research organisations that have contributed to the advancement of methodologies for the measurement of SSC. Southern Voice (2014) undertook important analytical work on the integration of SSC into the SDG and GPEDC processes as well as the concessionality of South-South development finance (Bhattacharya, 2016).

Since its establishment on the fringes of the First High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC in 2014, NeST has been an important forum for "the generation, systematisation, consolidation and sharing of knowledge on SSC approaches in international development" (NeST, 2014, p. 1). As a foundation for much of its empirical research and policy work, NeST has prioritised the development of methodological frameworks for SSC including definitions and conceptual frameworks, development of indicators, systematisation of data, and improvement of M&E systems for SSC. The first NeST workshop in Midrand (March 2015) launched a series of technical discussions—Johannesburg (September 2015), Geneva (December 2015), Xiamen (January 2016), Addis Ababa (June 2016), Mexico City (September 2016), Beijing (November 2016), and Rio de Janeiro (March 2017)—that saw the gradual unfolding of analytical frameworks to measure the quantity, quality, and impact of SSC.

The NeST technical working group discussions benefited from the contributions of experts and representatives of governments, civil society, academia, and multilateral organisations from across the Global South. Over two years, several NeST sub-working groups were established to work on specific areas such as a) the definition, quantification, and accounting of SSC flows; b) the development of indicators to measure the quality and effectiveness of SSC; c) South-South trade, investment, and public-private partnerships; d) the concessionality of South-South development finance and lending instruments; and e) common reporting systems and templates for SSC. The next three sections endeavour to summarise progress made on measuring the effectiveness of SSC from the perspectives of quantity, quality, and impact.



Quantifying and accounting SSC volumes

Despite the vast amount of research done on SSC, the exact magnitude of financial resources for development coming from the South is still not completely clear. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has done some useful analytical work around SSC flows through its International Development Cooperation Reports and background studies prepared for the 2008 and 2010 UNDCF reports. Nevertheless, many disagree with the figures of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Different experts' papers and reports present considerable variations in calculations of volumes of development cooperation from various SSC providers (see, for instance, Chaturvedi, 2012; Braude et al., 2008; Grimm, 2011; Vickers, 2012; Kitano, 2018). Variations are due to several issues. Quantifying SSC volumes is a relatively challenging measurement exercise due to political and technical challenges.

Some middle-income countries are reluctant to publicise their exact foreign aid figures, since publication may have repercussions in connection to their cooperation arrangements with other countries as well as their domestic stakeholders and taxpayers, who may question why money is being spent in other parts of the world when there are so many problems at home (Grimm, 2011; Besharati, 2013b; Hackenesch & Janus, 2013). Transparency and accountability are often problems with SSC given that it is closely linked to foreign policy, which is often treated with more discretion and secrecy. Sharing information about financial flows becomes more sensitive, particularly in Asian countries like India, China, and those with limited transparency and democratic space.

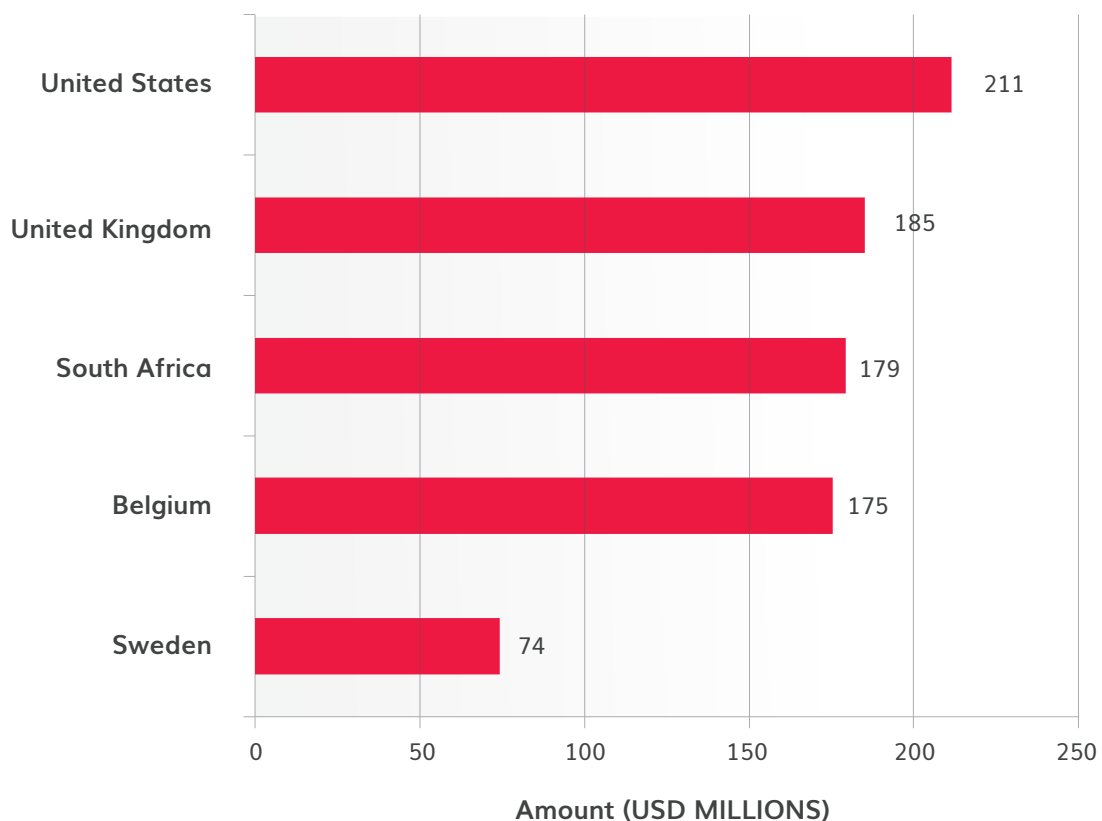
On a technical level, accounting for the vast range of human, financial, technological, and knowledge flows between developing countries remains a challenge for many Southern partners due to limited capacities. Southern partners do not subscribe to a common definition and standardised reporting parameters for SSC in the same way that OECD-DAC countries do when reporting their ODA. SSC measurement efforts are challenged by the lack of common concepts, shared standards, and consistent recording.

According to the traditional definition, SSC is mainly constituted by technical cooperation, technology transfer, knowledge exchange, and capacity development, which are difficult to measure and assign monetary value towards (United Nations Development Programme, 1978). The problem with comparing technical cooperation from different countries is that its value varies depending on salaries and prices in each economy. One million United States dollars of goods and services in China, for example, gets you a lot

more than one million dollars of goods and services in Switzerland. Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID) developed a complex system to measure the cost of technical assistants and seconded experts and officials, based on international per diem rates and international civil servant salary scales.

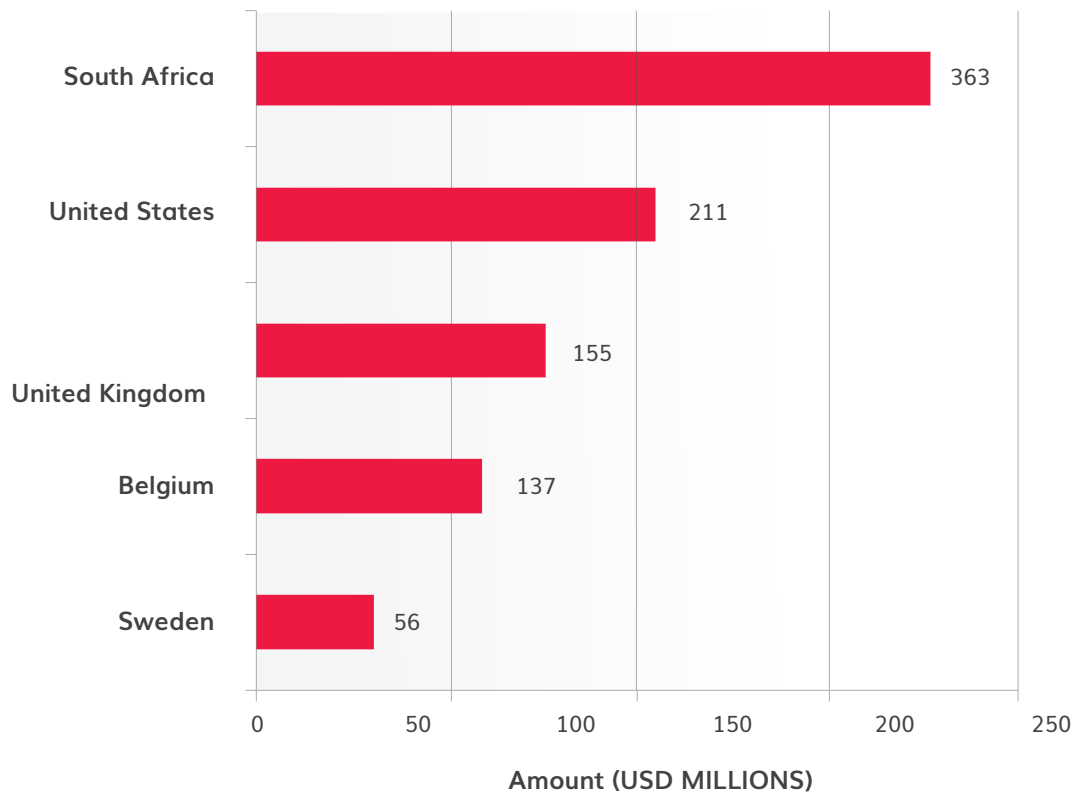
When comparing SSC to NSC, several development scholars (Besharati, Rawhani, Sterns, & Sucuoglu, 2017; Mullen, 2014) have started to adjust development cooperation figures to purchasing power parity. This results in a better comparison of different development partners' contributions based on economic capacity. To illustrate this with a study on South Africa's development cooperation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa's ranking among the top providers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo had a two-place variation (from third to first place), depending on whether the amounts were converted in relative United States dollar terms or whether purchasing power parity was applied to exchange rates (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Top five providers of development assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2008 (relative USD terms)



Source: Besharati (2017).

Figure 2. Top five providers of development assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2008 (purchasing power parity adjusted)



Source: Besharati (2017).

While accounting for the 'inputs' towards sustainable development is certainly important, most peoples and countries are more concerned with the 'outcomes' of development efforts. The excessive focus on financial inputs overshadows non-financial contributions that are equally—if not more—important. For instance, "a trip, by say former president Thabo Mbeki, to a neighbouring African country to mediate between opposing parties in a conflict-affected region does not cost much, but its impact on long-term development can be much greater than a large-scale United Nations peacekeeping mission" (Besharati, 2017, p. 4). For some of the above reasons, Brazil has advocated for a quantification approach rather than a monetisation approach when reporting SSC (Correa, 2017) and proposed a detailed flexible and voluntary platform for the M&E of SSC.

The concept of ODA is challenged by many Southern partners, which argue that it is too narrow and does not capture the specificity and full extent of their SSC activities. The OECD-DAC definition of development assistance is in fact fairly narrow and excludes trade

and investment, debt relief, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, export credits, and blended finance instruments, which represent the majority of what Southern partners provide to other developing countries. Developing countries have convincingly argued that such other forms of cooperation constitute effective means for promoting development and yet are excluded from traditional ODA definitions, which are narrower and privilege mainly grants, technical cooperation, and concessional loans.

The bulk of financing from India and China is in the form of lines of credit tied to products and services from the provider country. This arrangement causes international observers to question whether these financial flows have a developmental or commercial intention. Asian partners argue that SSC is about reciprocity and mutual benefit; therefore, there is no dichotomy for China, for instance, to support the export of its domestic industries while providing infrastructure and other developmental support to partner countries. Also, much of SSC does not occur through

government institutions but rather the private sector, which trades and invests in other developing countries. Commercial loans are usually distinguished from development finance through the concept of 'concessional,' as defined by the OECD-DAC and International Monetary Fund/World Bank parameters (Bhattacharya, 2016). While they contest Northern development finance regimes, SSC partners have yet to define their thresholds and approaches to calculating the concessional of their various lending instruments.

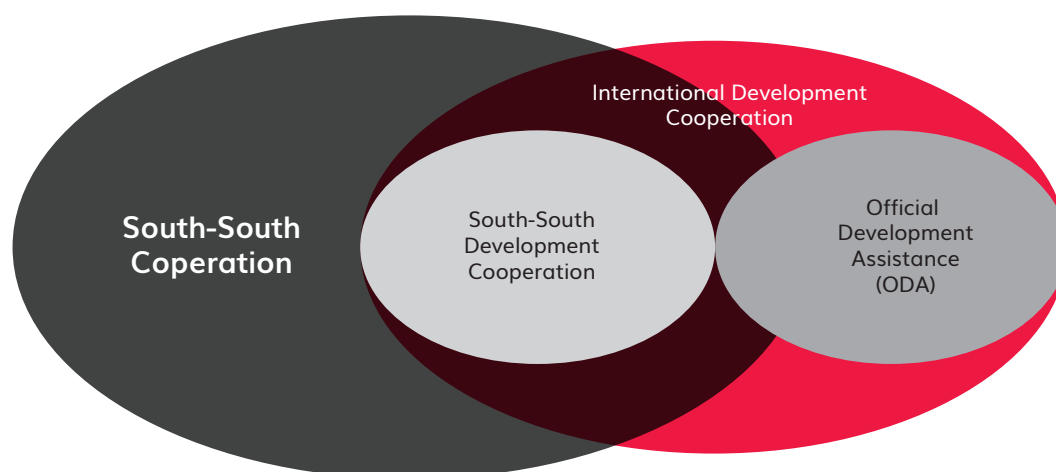
Academics across the South continue to debate the relationship between international development cooperation and SSC (see Figure 3). Some view SSC as a form of cooperation in the wider arena of international development cooperation, while others consider international development cooperation to be intrinsically part of a bigger SSC framework. At the time of the Bandung summit (1955), SSC was used more in the political sphere, but today developing countries use the term SSC to encompass much of the economic relations between them (Bracho, 2015). Some have argued that SSC is too broad and instead put forward the term South-South development cooperation to define the specific development cooperation between and among Southern partners. Others oppose this term since it emerged out of OECD-DAC and GPEDC debates.



Much of South-South cooperation does not occur through government but rather the private sector.

At the core of the measurement challenge, then, is a conceptual challenge with discussions still ongoing about whether development cooperation is part of SSC or SSC is part of development cooperation.

Figure 3. Relationship between SSC, international development cooperation, South-South development cooperation, and ODA.



Note. Author's adaptation from original figure.
Source: Besharati, Moilwa, Khunou & Garelli Rios (2015).

Depending on how much technical and financial cooperation is included, figures relating to aid from Southern partners can vary enormously. To bridge the currently large information gap in SSC, allow more transparency and accountability towards citizens of developing countries (in other words, in both partner countries), and provide standardised data that will allow for comparison of SSC flows between Southern partners as well as traditional OECD-DAC donors, it is paramount that a common conceptual framework is developed for the quantification and accounting of SSC among developing countries. When constructing a common conceptual framework for SSC, flexibility needs to be maintained to allow countries to adapt it to their own contexts and specificities. A definition of SSC should be broad enough to recognise the diverse approaches of different Southern partners while allowing for innovation and alignment with core SSC principles and values (Besharati, Moilwa, Khunou, & Garelli, 2015).

While this debate remains a technical challenge for Southern think tanks and policymakers, the United Nations system has urged Southern partners to agree on common standards for reporting SSC and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda. In December 2015, the Group of 77 plus China called on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and NeST to improve statistics on SSC as part of the data

revolution required for realising the SDGs. More recently, among the areas that the UNDCF has identified for further work in the lead-up to Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA+40) is the systematisation of data and information on SSC.

Assessing the quality of South-South partnerships and processes

While discussions about defining, accounting, and reporting SSC flows remain inconclusive given diverse views and approaches, the area where most progress has been made is measuring the quality and effectiveness of South-South partnerships, relationships, and processes. The NeST technical working group that met in Johannesburg in September 2015 reached a ground-breaking consensus and produced a working document with a preliminary set of indicators organised along six dimensions as well as a monitoring framework to guide analysis of SSC effectiveness. These developments are important steps towards a common methodological framework that helps generate more knowledge and empirical evidence on SSC, which could be systematised to compare different country experiences.

The NeST technical working group agreed that a M&E framework for SSC could not be based on principles, standards, or approaches developed by OECD-DAC donors, whose paradigms differ from those of Southern partners. Rather, a potential assessment framework for SSC needs to be rooted in the principles, norms, and experiences of cooperation and exchange across the developing world. In Johannesburg, the NeST experts set themselves the task to identify principles that developing country governments agreed would guide SSC in the outcome documents of key SSC conferences (Bandung, 1955; Buenos Aires, 1978; Nairobi, 2009; Bogotá, 2010; and Delhi, 2013). These SSC principles are presented in Table 2.

The NeST technical working group operationalised many of these SSC principles into performance indicators. Each indicator was accompanied by guiding questions and suggestions for data collection methods and potential sources of information. The NeST M&E framework would rely on data collected and triangulated from interviews with a variety of stakeholders from both provider and recipient countries. It would also use experiential observations from field-based research. The set of indicators—and accompanying M&E framework—was expected to be a flexible, adaptable tool that different countries and research teams could use as a reference for their own specific needs and contexts.

Table 2. SSC principles emerging from key SSC conferences

Bandung (1955)	Buenos Aires (1978)	Nairobi (2009)	Bogotá (2010)	Delhi (2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for human rights • Respect for sovereignty • Equality • Non-interference • Mutual interest and collaboration • International justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reliance • Exchange and sharing • Capacity development • Knowledge transfer • Respect for national sovereignty • Economic independence • Equality • Non-interference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multilateralism • Environmental sustainability • Mutual benefit, win-win, and horizontality • Capacity development • Mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and technology transfer • Transparency and mutual accountability • Respect for national sovereignty • National ownership and independence • Equality • Non-conditionality • Non-interference • Inclusivity and participation • Results, impact, and quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity development • Human rights and equity • Environmental sustainability • Solidarity and collaboration • Mutual benefit and win-win • Knowledge transfer, exchange, and learning • Specificity of SSC and complementarity to NSC • Inclusivity and participation • Flexibility, adaptation, and context-specific • Partnership, equity, trust, confidence, and respect • Ownership and demand-driven • Transparency and accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand-driven • Non-conditionality • National ownership and independence • Respect for national sovereignty • Self-reliance and self-help • Mutual benefit • Common but differentiated responsibilities • Voluntary partnerships • Solidarity • Complementarity to NSC • Diversity and heterogeneity • Capacity development

Source: Besharati, Moilwa, Khunou, & Garelli Rios (2015).

In subsequent months, the NeST M&E framework was translated into Mandarin and Spanish to allow for broader dissemination among a wider range of Southern stakeholders. A number of consultations were held at the national, regional, and international levels with government, civil society, and other stakeholders in Geneva, Xiamen, Manila, Delhi, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, and New York to seek further inputs and feedback on proposed approaches and methods for SSC assessment. The M&E framework was also discussed at various side events during global development forums such as the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (July 2015), United Nations Sustainable

Development Summit (September 2015), UNDCFs, 14th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (July 2016), BRICS Forum (September 2016), and Second High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC (November 2016).

To test the set of indicators and M&E framework, empirical field-based case studies were conducted in different geographic, operational, and sectoral contexts by various Southern think tanks and researchers. These pilot studies all used the indicators to assess the effectiveness of the development cooperation of South Africa (Besharati & Rawhani, 2016), Brazil and India (Vazquez & Lucey, 2016), Turkey (Sucuoglu & Stearns, 2016), and Mexico (Pérez, Ibarra, Delgadillo & Reyes, 2016; Besharati, Garelli & Huitron, 2016). The framework was designed for the evaluation of SSC initiatives at both the project level and country level (in other words, the aggregate of all SSC projects). It was more effectively used in the assessment of bilateral cooperation between two partner countries—typically a larger Southern provider and smaller Southern recipient—and in some cases, was also used to assess regional SSC initiatives (Pérez et al., 2016).

In September 2016, the researchers involved in these case studies (the testers) and the NeST technical working group (the developers) regrouped in Mexico City to revisit the M&E framework and set of indicators. They integrated the experiences gathered from the field-based case studies as well as the inputs received from various national, regional, and international consultations held in 2015 and 2016.

The new M&E framework was simplified, streamlined, and condensed not only to make it more user-friendly and accessible to different stakeholders, but also to better demonstrate the linkages between previously separated dimensions that were mistakenly viewed as mutually exclusive. The discussions in Mexico City resulted in a new set of 20 indicators organised along five dimensions (Inclusive National Ownership; Horizontality; Self-reliance & Sustainability; Accountability & Transparency; Development Efficiency), which now guide M&E processes related to the quality of South-South partnerships for development (see Table 3).

With the NeST M&E framework being driven by qualitative approaches, which possess both strengths and weaknesses, there have been suggestions to complement the qualitative assessments of SSC initiatives with more quantitative systematic evaluations. The initial 2015 framework document shied away from proposing ratings and ranking to avoid Southern countries' political sensitivities about similar OECD-DAC processes. However, all SSC case studies recommended the use of a balanced scoring system to rate not only each indicator but also the overall dimension characterising the quality of SSC. Researchers conducting different SSC case studies could systematically collect and analyse responses from

various stakeholders about the performance of SSC initiatives and then provide an average score to characterise performance along each dimension. These scores could later assist in efforts to improve South-South partnerships and projects as well as support research efforts and cross-country analyses.

Table 3. Indicators to measure the quality of SSC

Dimensions	Inclusive national ownership	Horizontality	Self-reliance and sustainability	Accountability and transparency	Development efficiency
Indicators	Multi-stakeholder partnerships	Mutual benefit	Capacity building	Data management and reporting	Flexibility and adaptation
	People-centred inclusivity	Shared decisions and resources	Knowledge and technology transfer	M&E systems	Time and cost efficiency
	Demand-driven	Trust and solidarity	Use country systems and human resources	Transparency and access to information	Internal and external coordination
	Non-conditionality	Global political coalitions	Domestic revenue generation	Mutual accountability and joint reviews	Policy coherence for development

Note. The revised NeST M&E framework for SSC compiled by Besharati, Rawhani and Garelli in 2017 provides a more detailed elaboration of each of the five dimensions that make up the effectiveness framework and suggests measures that can be used for each of the indicators within each dimension.

Source: Besharati, Rawhani, & Garelli (2017)

To further compensate for the subjectivity generated by the heavy use of qualitative methods, researchers were encouraged to triangulate data by consulting both sides of each partnership as well as third-party observers, such as international organisations and other development partners. When interviewing stakeholders from both provider and recipient countries in SSC initiatives, researchers were encouraged to consult government officials and project managers as well as civil society, the private sector, academia, and the legislatures of all partner countries.

The extensive work done by NeST over the past two years was showcased to the international development community during the Second High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC held in Nairobi in November 2016. There, NeST had the opportunity to introduce an alternative monitoring framework, which was developed by Southern experts and is technically sound and politically more appropriate than the GPEDC monitoring framework, to undertake in-depth analysis of SSC and its contribution to the SDGs. For the first time, emerging and developing countries had a common frame of reference for evaluating the effectiveness of their SSC programmes.

The NeST framework for measuring the effectiveness of SSC is primarily an academic tool, but it is made available to the international development community to be used as deemed appropriate in the policy arena. While it is not the only system for conducting M&E of SSC, the NeST framework puts forward one of the first concrete tools created by think tanks and development practitioners from the Global South for evaluating the quality of South-South processes, practices, and relations. It is cost-effective, practical, and straightforward to use.

Development partners and stakeholders were encouraged to view the framework as an evolving tool, adapt it to their specific contexts and purposes, and integrate its elements into national, regional, and global accountability mechanisms. Following a series of multi-stakeholder policy dialogues in Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian think tanks produced a complementary guiding document for the development of M&E systems for Brazil's development cooperation (BRICS Policy Centre & South-South Cooperation Research and Policy Centre, 2017). Between 2016 and 2018, NeST China members adapted the NeST M&E framework to the Chinese context and piloted it during a case study on China's aid, trade, and investment in Tanzania (China Institute for South-South Cooperation in Agriculture, 2018). A year later, another case study was conducted on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor using the set of effectiveness indicators developed by NeST in Johannesburg and Mexico City (Ali, 2018).

Evaluating impact of South-South development projects

As mentioned, the lack of a clear definition makes SSC accounting very difficult. When basic monitoring and the collection of simple development cooperation information are weak or unavailable, conducting complex analytical exercises like impact evaluations becomes even more difficult. As discussed, international development agencies in Southern countries are relatively new and still lack the seasoned evaluation experience of traditional donors. Annual reports tend to

focus more on low-level administrative data about inputs, activities, missions, and people involved and sometimes on immediate outputs (such as hospitals built and kilometres of roads constructed). Most evaluations are qualitative, subjective, and anecdotal and reflect perceptions and political stances. Less attention is dedicated to assessing outcomes, quality, sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness like in traditional DAC evaluations.

Although many low- and middle-income countries have conducted interesting randomised controlled trials for their national policies and programmes⁷, not many rigorous impact evaluations have been conducted on SSC projects. This is in part due to the fact that SSC initiatives tend to be relatively small, making it hard to justify the often-prohibitive costs of complex impact assessments. As mentioned, even when there is a desire to conduct rigorous impact assessments, the required data are unavailable due to poor monitoring systems. Overall, SSC initiatives are much smaller relative to NSC projects and therefore their effects are much more difficult to isolate and quantify in the context of national development outcomes. Considering the limited size and scope of SSC projects, sample size becomes problematic when conducting impact assessments, with both internal and external validity becoming more difficult to ascertain.

When choosing appropriate methods to conduct impact evaluations of SSC, some observers argue that classical quantitative approaches are not easily applied to SSC projects, which tend to be small and more concerned with relations and processes rather than results. In most evaluations of SSC, qualitative methods are easier, cheaper, and thus preferred means to assess the effectiveness of a South-South partnership. However, both qualitative and quantitative methods have their advantages and shortcomings. A mixed-method approach would, therefore, provide more flexibility and complementarity when choosing a particular impact evaluation method and adapting it to specific contexts.

Considering the data limitations in SSC, one of the easiest and most commonly used approaches in most research on and evaluation of SSC is the case study method. A case study provides deeper understanding of a context and an intervention. It also allows for some qualitative comparison of countries and cases, which encourages the exchange of good practices and lessons learned. However, case studies are often mainly driven by qualitative methods and thus based on the subjective views of respondents and researchers involved. Balance can be achieved through well-conducted case studies that use mixed methods, provide in-depth analysis, and encourage triangulation of diverse information sources.

⁷ See, for instance, impact evaluations of: PROGRESA in Mexico by Behrman in 2005; Bolsa Família and Bolsa Escola programmes in Brazil by Glewwe and Kassouf in 2010; child/women nutritional programmes in Sri Lanka by White in 2009; and Dinaledi schools' initiative in South Africa by the World Bank in 2010.

Participatory methods are also well suited for the evaluation of SSC since they allow space for joint assessments of development outcomes, strategic results, and institutional processes for all parties involved in mutually beneficial SSC initiatives. As also stressed during the Nairobi High Level Conference (2009), research on and evaluation of SSC should engage the multiplicity of stakeholders involved in SSC. Other more complex methods that Southern researchers could experiment with in SSC evaluations include outcome harvesting, crowd sourcing, randomised controlled trials, quasi-experiments, and econometric approaches (see, for instance, Myers & Gallagher, 2017)

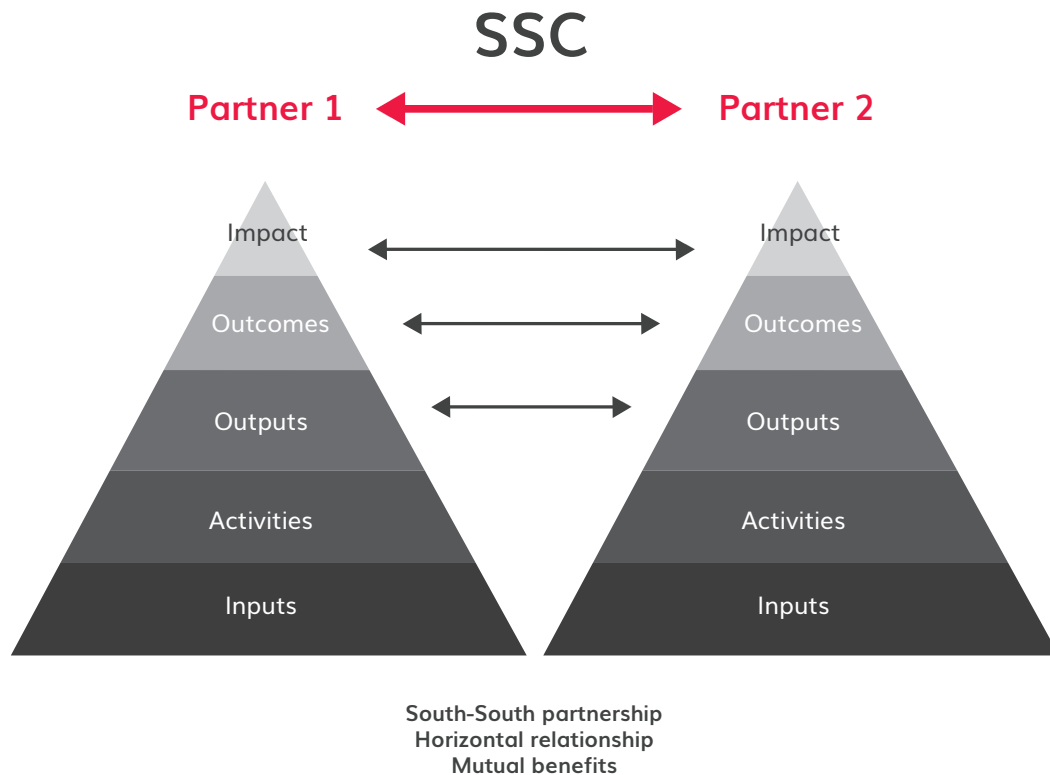
Despite criticism (see Ramalingam, 2011), results-based management has been used for decades by traditional bilateral and multilateral development partners and it is now also being used by SSC partners as a framework to assess the impact of development programmes and interventions. The South African government's M&E system is, for instance, on an outcomes-based approach. It needs to be noted, however, that much of SSC is not always centred around development outcomes but rather around the multiple foreign policy objectives of partners, including strategic, political, and economic relationship-building. This is also reflected by the fact that most officials in emerging economies who are engaged in development partnerships tend to be diplomatic personnel rather than development practitioners (Cabral, 2010; Besharati, 2013b).

Results-based management can thus be useful also for SSC, but it needs to be integrated with the Southern concepts of horizontality and mutual benefit. This moves away from the North-South aid paradigm where one partner is giving and the other receiving. Since both partners benefit with SSC, the results of cooperation need to be reflected on both sides. This requires transparent and open recognition of all parties' interests, benefits, and objectives during a SSC initiative. In acknowledging mutual benefit, a double-sided results chain can be developed for both parties involved in a SSC project. While the existing evaluation paradigm followed by OECD-DAC donors only considers the impact of a development intervention on a recipient country, an impact assessment of SSC interventions should look at the impacts of a partnership on both parties (whether they are providers or recipients) in cooperation activities (see Figure 4).



An impact assessment of South-South cooperation interventions should look at the impacts of a partnership on both parties.

Figure 4. Results-based management in South-South horizontal partnerships



Source: Besharati, Moilwa, Khunou, & Garelli Rios (2015).

In summary, due to poor data availability, lack of basic monitoring systems, absence of baselines to do pre- and post-intervention assessments, unclear objectives, limited budgets and technical capacities, and other challenges discussed in this study, exploring impact evaluations of SSC is probably premature, especially when basic monitoring processes and accounting of inputs do not take place. The more pressing and urgent steps in ensuring effectiveness of SSC are to agree on a common conceptual framework and strengthen the current fledgling M&E and statistical systems of all developing countries.

Conclusion

With such a drastic shift in the development finance landscape and a diversity of new players and approaches, the accountability frameworks, tools, methods, and standards to measure the effectiveness of sustainable development endeavours also need to be redefined. ODA, which for decades has been the main lens through which countries'

contributions to international development were assessed, is far from being an adequate measure in the current development architecture.

SSC does not sit comfortably within the M&E frameworks that have been established for traditional NSC. Many political, institutional, and technical challenges prevent Southern providers from participating and reporting within the systems developed for OECD-DAC countries. On a conceptual level, SSC encompasses relations between developing countries that go beyond aid and technical cooperation to include trade, investment, development finance for regional infrastructure, peace and security, and other political and governance arrangements.

Some proponents (mostly Northern) push for universality in development cooperation norms, expecting NSC and SSC to follow the same rules of engagement and be evaluated under the same frameworks. Other proponents (mostly Southern) strongly advocate for the specificity of each type of cooperation and tend to highlight the incompatibility of NSC and SSC, which originate from different histories, follow different inspirations, paradigms, and premises, and operate according to different models, approaches, and delivery mechanisms (Bhatia, 2013a; Bhatia, 2013b).

Politics aside, important progress has been made around monitoring, evaluating, and reporting SSC, particularly by Latin America countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, and regional entities such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and Ibero-American General Secretariat. Progress has been mainly in the accounting of technical cooperation, but there is still no global consensus on a common conceptual framework for SSC that would allow for a standardised way of quantifying such flows, in the same way that ODA acts as a common measure used by OECD-DAC countries. Given the absence of basic monitoring and reporting activities due to the data, budgetary, and capacity limitations of Southern partners, more complex impact evaluation exercises around SSC remain a premature endeavour.

While little progress has been made on the accounting of financial inputs and the empirical assessment of development impacts of SSC, academic and civil society groups such as the Reality of Aid Network, Southern Voice, and NeST have made substantial inroads in developing appropriate frameworks to measure the quality and effectiveness of South-South processes and relations. SSC principles introduced during major historical conferences of the Global South have been translated into operational indicators and used to measure compliance with SSC norms by partner countries. Elements of such M&E frameworks for SSC can potentially be integrated into national, regional, and global accountability frameworks.

While SSC providers have kept themselves at arm's length from the aid effectiveness discourse, principles and values for development cooperation contained in OECD-DAC documents are similar to the SSC principles contained in documents produced during the Bandung (1955), Buenos Aires (1978), Nairobi (2009), and Bogotá (2010) conferences. SSC and NSC converge, for example, on national ownership, alignment of development assistance with the priorities of recipient countries, inclusiveness and multi-stakeholder participation, the importance of capacity development, the principles of transparency and mutual accountability, and the quest for quality and results in development cooperation.

National frameworks for evaluating the effectiveness of development finance need to evolve gradually based on globally and regionally agreed norms and regimes. International standards and M&E systems remain useful reference points, but when it comes to effective oversight mechanisms, national accountability systems can be powerful because development partners have a moral and often legal obligation to follow the rules of the country in which they operate. Such national accountability systems should build on best practices and the highest standards expected for both NSC and SSC, though also align carefully with a partner countries' development priorities and country systems. Partner countries need to have their own space to define their national policies and be in the driver's seat in control of their cooperation arrangements with all development partners.

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