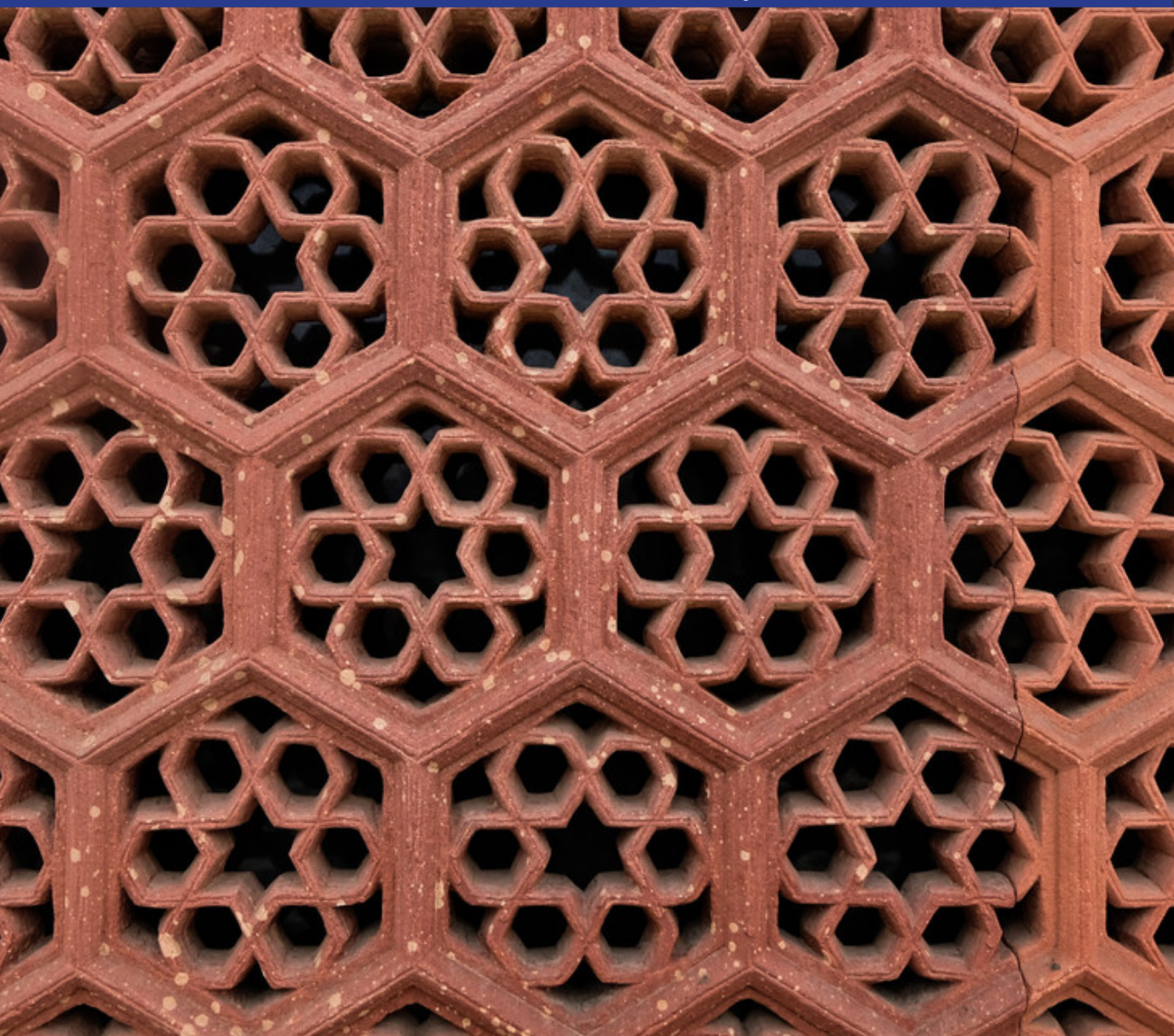


The ‘Measurement Politics’ of South-South Cooperation

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Occasional Report

India-UK Development Partnership Forum



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Published: April 2021 (Online)

Published with financial support from the United Kingdom's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

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Executive summary

- South-South Cooperation (SSC) partners have successfully resisted efforts to draw them into Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) definitions and practices of measuring development cooperation flows and assessing their impacts.
- Southern partners have also rejected efforts, at the United Nations (UN) and beyond, to create common SSC standards.
- As SSC has expanded over the last two decades, defining and measuring SSC has become a subject of debate between and within Southern countries; revealing that measurement and assessment is not just a threat, but also has potential value to different SSC partners for different purposes in different contexts.
- How to define, measure and assess the quantity and quality of SSC is a hot topic within and across the South, encompassing a range of very different approaches and positions.
- Southern-led experimentation with different forms of measurement and assessment is now opening up.
- India has played an important role, in both diplomatic and para-diplomatic arenas, in resisting externally driven measurement efforts. India has also led debates and fostered policy spaces in which Southern countries and development experts could innovate with Southern-led solutions around the need to measure, report and justify SSC to a range of internal and external stakeholders.

Introduction

Southern-led development cooperation, also known as South-South Cooperation (SSC), has expanded exponentially over the last decades, and constitutes a distinctive and essential part of the global development landscape. As SSC has grown in material, symbolic and political significance (Gu et al., 2016; Mawdsley, 2012a; Zoccal and Esteves, 2018), it has also become more heavily scrutinised in national and international policy circles, media, academia and by different publics. This scrutiny has led to growing conversations around accountability in SSC. Accountability debates include a variety of issues, ranging from the transparency of South-South development cooperation flows; to the results, impact and effectiveness of SSC initiatives on the ground; through to what it says about the underlying nature of the relations between Southern governments and between governments and their societies.

The current 'accountability turn' in SSC is shaped not only by ubiquitous principal-agent accountability debates, which can be found at the global level across all issue areas (Dubnick, 2014; Grant and Keohane, 2005), but also by important — and unresolved — normative issues in the field of global development.

This includes Southern partners', particularly the so-called rising or emerging powers, (lack of) conformity with existing Official Development Assistance (ODA or 'development aid') standards and 'best practices' for development cooperation providers. For bilateral development partnerships, the latter were historically agreed upon under the leadership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC). While acknowledging that 'the South' is very heterogenous and Southern providers' dispositions towards the DAC varies greatly (Lauria and Fumagalli, 2019; Mawdsley, 2012a), many Southern countries have repeatedly pointed out that the DAC framework does not represent the principles, historical political trajectory, or the interests and identities of SSC (Esteves and Assunção, 2014).

This report is part of a series of publications around accountability in South-South cooperation.¹ It focuses on the fundamental issue of measuring the quantity and the quality of Southern-led development cooperation. Measurement issues here refer to both the act of quantifying and reporting South-South development cooperation flows, and to the acts of assessing, monitoring and evaluating their impact.

¹ The following paper is devoted to the 'politics of accountability' in India's development partnerships.

Measuring SSC has become an issue of increasing interest and importance as South-South development cooperation flows have expanded and accelerated (Besharati and MacFeely, 2019; Di Ciommo, 2017; Li, 2018; Waisbich et al., 2017). This report argues that large SSC providers operating outside the DAC framework — including the Southern BRICS (Brazil, China, India and South Africa) and many others — have changed from an initial position of open resistance or opposition to engaging with the issue of accountability in/of SSC, to a willingness to discuss it on their own terms. This is particularly visible in the measurement agenda. While remaining reluctant to join the existing ODA-related norms, standards, metrics and measurement tools, SSC partners have in the last decade started to craft their own ways to engage with questions of measurement and development effectiveness. They have engaged in a series of conversations and negotiations around quantification, reporting and evaluation, many of which remain ongoing at this point in time. SSC partners' will to integrate *differently* reveals contested understandings of global and domestic roles and responsibilities in the field of global development, and their uncertain translation into what kind of scrutiny is deemed required and legitimate in Southern-led development cooperation.

The next section discusses the measurement and accountability turn in SSC. This is followed by an overview of global negotiations around quantification, reporting and evaluating SSC currently playing out in the field of global development. The final section concludes with reflections on what the unfolding SSC measurement negotiations mean to the broader global development cooperation field and its durable North-South politics.

The accountability and measurement turn in South-South Cooperation

Accountability is an omnipresent term in contemporary international development circles. The 1969 Pearson Commission Report on International Development is perhaps the first historical landmark for global policy debates over the purposes and results of foreign aid, and a sign of a fading optimism in and around the aid enterprise. However, it was from the 1990s onwards that concerns with 'aid accountability', as understood today, attained political and academic salience (McGee, 2013; Riddell, 2007). Growing questioning, in academic and policy circles as well as in public arenas, notably after the end of the Cold War, around development aid set the scene for an identity, credibility and legitimacy crisis in the 2000s: a 'donor puzzle' (Esteves and Assunção 2014), further accentuated by the 2008 financial crisis and the re-emergence of Southern-led development cooperation (Eyben and Savage, 2013; Yanguas, 2018). This has prompted a wave of normative codification and reforms at the global level and in several bilateral and multilateral

donors, leading to what is now known as the 'Aid/Development Effectiveness Agenda'. The agenda was largely built through successive OECD-led global debates, the High-Level Forums, in Rome (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011). In what is commonly referred to as the 'Paris Agenda for Aid Effectiveness', mutual accountability between 'Northern donors' and 'Southern recipients' was — alongside the principles of ownership, alignment, donor harmonisation and results-focused development — conducive to 'make development interventions work' (Eyben, 2008; Riddell, 2007). The effectiveness agenda also created, re-purposed and/or made more central a series of accountability tools, artefacts and infrastructures, including transparency and accounting systems, project and flow databases, project reports, impact evaluation reports, monitoring and evaluation matrices, Theories of Change, LogFrames and beyond (Waisbich, forthcoming). These mechanisms were put in place at the global and national levels amongst both 'Southern recipient' and 'Northern donor' countries (Eyben et al., 2015; Jensen and Winthereik, 2013; McGee, 2013; Rottenburg, 2009).

However, the Paris Agenda and its later avatars — such as the inclusive, supposedly 'equator-less' Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) — have been unable to garner the engagement of certain Southern powerhouses, including India, Brazil, China and South Africa (although there was interest from other SSC partners, including Mexico, Indonesia and El Salvador). North-South conversations around development cooperation effectiveness and accountability have also failed to find a mutually acceptable response to the large Southern providers' insistence on *differentiation*. Instead of being 'Non-DAC donors', they sought recognition for practicing something different — South-South cooperation rather than aid — and thus requiring differential commitments and responsibilities (Bracho, 2017; Esteves and Assunção, 2014).

Differentiation claims are embedded in existing, perceived or even performed normative, conceptual, methodological and institutional differences between Southern providers and DAC donors, and in parallel, between SSC and ODA. Differentiation applies to SSC as a collective enterprise, portrayed as accountable by the virtue of its horizontal and demand-driven nature (Chakrabarti, 2019, 2018; Kim and Lim, 2017). It also applies to rising powers themselves when portraying their cooperation as 'non-hypocritical' (Six, 2009), 'responsible' (Chaturvedi, 2012) or 'exceptionally benign' South-South development cooperation partnerships (Chanana, 2009; Dye and Alencastro, 2020). Ultimately, differentiation claims also back SSC partners' opposition to be measured by OECD-DAC tools, as discussed later in the report.

Differentiation as a principle meant that Southern providers were not only different from traditional donors but also a diverse group of countries. Brazil (and other Latin American countries)

differentiate themselves from the 'Asian powers', and both Brazil and India portray themselves as different from a perceived Chinese 'model' and 'ways of working'. India, in particular, has consistently defined its global identity in opposition to China, often emphasising its democratic credentials and rule-based global development engagements. This is visible, for example, in an official press release by India's MEA on country's non-participation in China's-led Belt and Road Initiative:

We are of firm belief that connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognized international norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and equality. Connectivity initiatives must follow principles of financial responsibility to avoid projects that would create unsustainable debt burden for communities; balanced ecological and environmental protection and preservation standards; transparent assessment of project costs; and skill and technology transfer to help long term running and maintenance of the assets created by local communities. Connectivity projects must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Gol/MEA 2017).

India's positioning as a 'responsible connectivity partner/builder' — implicitly distancing itself from China — is increasingly present in official discourses, including during the 2019 BAPA+40 Conference, in which the Indian ambassador to the Conference stated that: 'All [Indian] projects follow universally recognized norms. They do not create unsustainable debt burdens' (Gol/MEA 2019). Differentiation vis-à-vis China, and eventually 'Othering China from the South' (Mawdsley, 2014a, p. 974), brings important elements into the current (geo)politics of SSC accountability, particularly in the Indian case. Experts and diplomats' evoking of Indian democratic and international law-abiding credentials serves as an instrumental diplomatic tool to position a 'democratic' and 'responsible' India as different from (and better than) the neighbouring 'authoritarian' and 'irresponsible' China. It should be noted, however, that the Government of India invests little at home to put in place accountability instruments in its own SSC compact, as discussed in detail in another paper in this series (see Waisbich and Mawdsley, 2021).

The (financial) responsibility issue

In the process of forging a 'community of donors', and for a set of socio-historical reasons, advanced economies, members of the DAC, have historically agreed on 'special responsibilities' (Bukovansky et al., 2012) in the realm of international

development. In particular, they agreed on a financial commitment for ODA efforts (the 0.7% GNI ODA target) and (from the mid-1990s) on giving priority to poverty alleviation efforts and to assisting the so-called Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (Alsayyad, 2020; Clemens and Moss, 2005). As with most of norms in the field, these are non-binding commitments, which explains why the majority of DAC members largely fail to meet them (Gulrajani and Calleja, 2019; Riddell, 2007).²

In the case of SSC, there is no equivalent agreed conception of responsibilities, and more specifically, financial commitments, to guide development exchanges between Southern countries. Absence of agreement does not just reflect the challenges facing low- and middle-income countries (LICs and MICs, respectively), or the lack of an organising body equivalent to the OCED-DAC. Rather, it is a politically principled position. The narratives Southern countries employ to define their role as 'development partners' oppose the ODA financial target, which they frame as a responsibility emerging from an 'historical North-South debt' turned into a financial compromise. SSC, it is argued, comes from a different rationale, reiterated since the 1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), of solidarity, collective self-reliance and mutual benefits. In both the 2009 Nairobi Outcome Document, agreed upon during the First High-Level United Nations (UN) Conference on South-South Cooperation, as well as in the 2019 Second High-Level Conference on South-South (known as BAPA+40), SSC was once more characterised as based on solidarity rather than a duty, responsibility or commitment, including from MICs to other developing countries, and thus a financial complement to North-South cooperation not a substitute (UNGA, 2019, 2009).

This is why calls for Southern countries to formally agree on a financial target to support global development in the context of the Agenda 2030 — including under new 'universal financial scaled contribution' for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Sumner et al., 2020) — were met with discomfort by several experts and governments in the South. Many feared the Financing for Development debates — 'from billions to trillions' under a so-called 'universal development' paradigm — and suspicious of attempts to devise new statistical measures to track these financial flows. In their eyes, both DAC efforts to 'modernise' the concept of ODA and its statistics as well as DAC-led attempts to create new metrics, such as the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), risked diluting the hard fought idea of a 'Northern duty' to uplift the South. A duty many in the South believe is based on the principles of global equity and reparation for centuries of colonial exploitation (Besharati, 2017; Esteves, 2017).

² The target is, nonetheless, hard law in the UK where it was enshrined in the 2015 International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act. In recent years, the 0.7% GNI target was only met by the UK,

Germany, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg and Sweden, as well as by three non-DAC countries, namely Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia (Sumner et al. 2020).

However, this is not to say that all Southern partners currently share the same view. There is a clear intellectual, political and normative divide within major Southern countries. On the one hand, there are governments and experts who reject the idea of ‘global financial responsibilities’ for Southern-led development cooperation, based on hard(er) interpretations of the Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) principle, brought from environmental intergovernmental negotiations to the development realm by the G77 and China. Examples of this hard(er) interpretation are found in official statements by the G77+China at the UN, which constantly emphasise the complementary nature of SSC vis-à-vis North-South cooperation in issues of financing for development (G77 2019a, G77 2019b). Scholars like Zhang (2020, p. 244) believe China’s current position reflects this hard(er) stance and that the country ‘will never commit to DAC’s 0.7% GNI target, as there is still a big poor population at home’. Similarly, Indian experts used the CBDR principle to contest the need for Southern providers to agree on ‘responsibilities’, arguing instead that responsibility in SSC is chiefly towards meeting partners’ demands in a horizontal way (Chakrabarti, 2019). According to this script, bilateral South-South exchanges are inherently ‘responsible’ and ‘responsive’ and would not require additional global responsibility regimes, and even less so, regimes based on financial commitments. Alternatively, Southern experts in Brazil, Mexico and Bangladesh have called for an alternative interpretation of the CBDR principle, arguing for ‘differentiated (financial) commitments’ under a framework for ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ (Bhattacharya and Khan, 2020; Bracho, 2017), or what Esteves et al. (2019) called a ‘CBDR 2.0’ based on ‘concentric responsibilities’, in which differentiation within the South also applies.

To make matters more complex, under an ever-thinning and fragile multilateralism (Zoccal, 2020a), the resistance of Southern countries to taking on formal financial responsibilities in the realm of global development has been met with ‘traditional’ donors backtracking on theirs. Moreover, Southern powerhouses, like India, diplomatically acted to resist or block collective initiatives that could restrict their autonomy and growth aspirations at this point. Under this ‘burden-sharing game’ (Bracho, 2017) and facing a real deadlock, Southern calls for ‘differentiated responsibilities’ risk becoming less of a tool to promote global equity and more of a cover for large Southern economies to retreat from global responsibilities (Sumner et al., 2020), while some Northern donors do the same.

The need to justify and measure

It is against this background of much contestation around measuring and auditing, and persistent North-South divides, that SSC has started to generate its own accountability debates and disputes. The growing need for Southern countries to justify and measure SSC mainly responds to two coexisting sources of pressure. First, as we have seen, from the DAC and other Northern-based actors; but more importantly, second, from other actors within Southern countries, including civil society, the media and in some cases national parliaments (van der Westhuizen and Milani, 2019; Waisbich, 2019, 2020a).

Greater calls for accountability in/of SSC grew in the 2000s in part because in light of increased material and symbolic competition between Northern and Southern providers and renewed pushes for mobilising resources to meet the SDGs. In this context, SSC accountability became a concern for many in the aid world, including policymakers from DAC donors and global civil society ‘aid monitoring movements’,³ in two interrelated ways. First, Southern-led development cooperation was perceived as lacking transparency. Second, SSC partners were seen as non-conforming with established DAC norms on what ‘good’ donorship is. According to Cesarino (2013, p. 17), negatively assessed as lacking transparency and engaging in a set of ‘heterodox practices’, Southern providers were judged somehow ‘jeopardizing the good work achieved by traditional aid thus far’.

SSC transparency deficits were identified in a number of areas: the availability of data on the total quantum of SSC flows; the exact nature of flows; and on SSC performance and impacts on the ground (Di Ciommo, 2017; OECD 2014; Simons, 2017). SSC (lack of) transparency was deemed problematic for at least three reasons. First, because most SSC providers do not report or report fully to external bodies (e.g., the DAC or the International Aid Transparency Initiative - IATI) due to non-membership and rejection of their hegemony and metrics. Second, due to the blurred lines of South-South development flows and their high share of either non-concessional or in-kind cooperation/non-monetary flows, which were methodologically and politically difficult to account through ODA metrics. Third, because the accounting systems of different Southern providers neither recorded nor publicised the full gamut of their development cooperation flows, due to lack of political will, technical capacity, or absence of national (open) data transparency policies.

Concerns with SSC transparency must be understood in light of the triple role transparency plays in traditional development aid: as an international soft law, a ‘best practice’ for development organisations, and a governing tool (Honig and Weaver, 2019;

³ For a discussion on ‘aid monitoring’ or ‘aid transparency and accountability’ movements, see Jensen and Winthereik (2013) and McGee (2013).

Jensen and Winthereik, 2013; Paulo and Reisen, 2010). Hence, calls for Southern providers to improve SSC transparency can be read as an extension of DAC 'club dynamics' to the 'newcomers', as happened with South Korea and the Eastern European countries in the mid-2000s (Kim and Lightfoot, 2011). Integrating Southern providers became even more crucial after 2015, in light of the renewed calls for robust measurement tools, enhanced statistical systems, and open data for development to assist tracking 'the trillions of dollars' needed to achieve the SDGs (Esteves, 2017). Concerns with SSC transparency are also a product of the anxieties among DAC members and of its will to know and discipline Southern providers, in which 'lack of transparency' worked as a stigmatising discourse vis-à-vis the 'rising Rest' (Zarakol, 2019). Under this script, SSC data 'scarcity' acted as the broken mirror of (a real or imagined) ODA data 'abundance' in the North, matching and reinforcing negative descriptions of SSC landscapes as 'poorly institutionalised' and of Southern partners as 'opaque'.

While concerns with SSC transparency were raised about all Southern providers, China has been singled out, especially in the context of China-Africa relations (Sears, 2019). China has also been the omnipresent case for the remaining normative discussions. Here 'the problem' was framed in terms of development impact or effectiveness, with China's 'accountability deficits' serving as a discursive umbrella for concerns ranging from 'normative deviance', 'rogue aid practices' (Collier, 2008; Naím, 2009) or the potential 'negative impacts' of Chinese engagements on the ground on issues such as democracy, human rights and governance, labour standards, debt and socio-environmental sustainability (Bräutigam, 2009; Mohan, 2014; Paulo and Reisen, 2010). In many ways, concerns with the negative impacts of SSC on local communities thematically converged with international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and Southern-based civil society organisations' (CSOs) own criticism of official SSC initiatives, not only regarding China but for all rising powers (Cabral and Leite, 2015; Poskitt et al., 2016; Thompson and Wet, 2018; Yeophantong, 2020). This alignment engendered various forms of collaboration between (often) Northern-based development actors, INGOs and foundations⁴ and Southern-based CSOs and knowledge actors on transparency, accountability, participation and socio-environmental issues in SSC.

Through these partnerships, research centres, foundations and NGOs, Southern-based CSOs and knowledge actors brought SSC into existing 'aid monitoring movements' and advocacy networks. Southern providers' development cooperation flows and practices were included in independent aid transparency initiatives like Publish What You Fund rankings and Reality of Aid

reports (e.g., Publish What You Fund, 2017; Reality of Aid Project, 2010). Northern and Southern-based actors also joined forces to conduct research and act as watchdogs for SSC providers, with great emphasis on BRICS-related development cooperation with Africa and the BRICS-led New Development Bank (NDB) (Pomeroy et al., 2016; AFRODAD, 2012; Waisbich, 2021).

'Doing it our way': Southern providers' different justifications

How did SSC partners respond to the growing concerns with SSC accountability coming from different stakeholders, including Southern civil society? This section argues that, while upholding strong differentiation claims vis-à-vis ODA and the DAC, Southern countries, and notably rising powers, transitioned in the 2010s from a 'critical-resistance' position to a 'critical-innovation' approach to accountability and measurement issues.

During the early 2000s, accountability concerns were largely absent from the main Southern-led development-related policy and dialogue spaces (including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development - UNCTAD, the Geneva-based South Centre, or the G77+China coalition at the UN). SSC was also a blind-spot in the OECD-led 'Effectiveness Agenda', which received the (critical) support of several Southern countries, as 'aid recipients', perhaps because the 'accountability problem' there was mostly framed as an 'aid-related' issue for North-South partners. The strong assertion of respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and partner agency in SSC meant that accountability issues were ceded to partner governments; while domestically, Southern countries variously lacked the need, capacity or will to drive SSC accountability measures at home.

From reluctance to innovation and experimentation

The first formal mention of the term 'accountability' in an SSC-related intergovernmental document is found in the 2009 Nairobi Outcome Document. At the time, many in the South perceived the issue as either as undesirable or too sensitive. As accountability was *de facto* inserted in SSC debates, either against the will or with little support of rising powers, their reluctant and defensive positions started to coexist with more openness to engage with certain aspects of the agenda, notably its counting and managerial dimensions, in critical yet innovative ways. Relying once more on differentiation arguments, a set of knowledge, policy and institutional accountability innovations started to populate SSC policy and academic circles. Kim and Lim (2017), for example, propose adopting a 'soft accountability' paradigm for 'unlikely SSC settings'. At the diplomatic and para-diplomatic level, more conciliatory discourses and strategies started to

⁴ Among the main foundations and INGOs one finds the German party and political foundations (Heinrich Böll, Rosa Luxemburg and Friedrich-Ebert), as well as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Mott Foundation, The

Asia Foundation, the Oxfam Confederation, Action Aid, Greenpeace, WWF, and many more.

emerge, particularly from 2013 onwards, fostered by the creation of new policy spaces where Southern governmental and knowledge actors could meet and discuss SSC norms, institutions and practices. Among the new fora one finds the short-lived Core Group of Southern Partners within the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC),⁵ the launch of the Delhi Process (a political-academic dialogue on SSC hosted by the Indian government-affiliated think tank Research Information System for Developing Countries - RIS),⁶ and the creation of the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST), gathering scholars from Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.⁷

The surge in initiatives around that time can be seen as a response from certain large Southern providers, including Brazil, China and India (and a sign of their discomfort) to the growing attempts from the OECD-DAC to create an 'equator-less' universal partnership for global development, the GPEDC, following the Busan Fourth High Level Forum. However, and similar to Leveringhaus and Sullivan de Estrada's (2018) characterisation of India and China's 'innovation strategies' in the nuclear regime, this emerging conciliatory approach sought a compromise between harmonisation and resistance, and echoed recognition, autonomy and status-seeking strategies by rising powers. Through pursuing a sort of *differentiated integration*,⁸ large SSC partners searched for a degree of dialogue with the DAC-led normative order (which is itself in a period of flux), while projecting their alternative identities as Southern providers and rising powers (Waisbich, forthcoming). Characterising their behaviour as manifestations of their will to integrate differently helps understanding their subsequent engagement and active promotion of diplomatic and knowledge negotiations over accountability, notably over measurement; and their shift from openly stated blockages to alternative forms of contestation based on a set of 'doing our way' practices.

Negotiating South-South Cooperation Measurement

This section discusses how measuring SSC became a politically salient issue in global development politics and examines

emerging disputes in global policy spaces over quantifying, reporting and evaluating SSC.

From Nairobi to BAPA+40: how measurement entered the room

Measurement is a ubiquitous feature of the development cooperation field (Eyben et al., 2015; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019; Rottenburg, 2009). In the 2010s, as many Southern economies kept growing and the Agenda 2030 for 'universal development' was adopted, new measurement politics emerged. These included 'per capita income' and the 'graduation models' for measuring development, and thus defining who could/should benefit from development aid; how to 'modernise' the ODA concept and its metrics in era of growing nationalism and inequality in the North; how to account for private development finance; and, of particularly interest here, how to count development cooperation flows coming from 'Non-DAC' countries like Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Turkey and many others.

Nairobi and the birth of the measurement paradox

The first High-Level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2009, is a useful starting point. Nairobi marks an important step in the consolidation of the 'modern' SSC agenda within the UN (Pino, 2014). In Nairobi, SSC narratives were updated to a (post) post-Cold War setting and to a global landscape marked by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda, and by OECD-led agreements on aid effectiveness. The Nairobi Outcome Document reflects therefore this historical context as well as the growing aspirations of a 'rising South'. It contains several G77+China differentiation claims around SSC, stressing that SSC is 'not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation' (UNGA 2009, para. 14). It introduces, nonetheless, an 'intra-South differentiation' that echoed the self-evident gap between an increasingly heterogeneous South comprised of small and large Southern partners, MICs and LICs alike. In Nairobi, UN members 'recognize[d] the solidarity of MICs with other developing countries with a view to supporting their development efforts, including in the context of South-South and triangular cooperation' (para. 7). As mentioned, the document also features for the first time issues of 'accountability' and

⁵ The Group met briefly from 2013 to 2015.

⁶ The Delhi Process was set-up in 2013 as a 'track-two' diplomacy space, hosted by RIS with the support of India's MEA, for Southern knowledge and policy actors to exchange views on SSC. Since its inception, representatives from certain international organisations and from 'like-minded' institutions based in Northern donors (including the German DiE, UNOSSC and the OECD Development Centre) have been invited, albeit they remained a minority. After six editions, the Delhi Process has become one of the major global para-diplomatic spaces for debates around SSC, while being one convened and curated by India.

⁷ Mexico representatives had initially no seat in global NeST steering committee, although Mexican scholars have been active in the network since the beginning. This can be explained by the reservations expressed by other scholars during the founding negotiations regarding Mexico's hybrid identity as a 'Southern partner' and its proximity to the OECD-DAC. Mexican scholars, together with Argentinian scholars, have, however, full visibility in the NeST LATAM chapter, created more recently in 2019 to host debates among countries from Latin America.

⁸ The concept has been widely utilised in the context of the Europe Union integration. For a discussion on integration and stigma in the EU context, see Adler-Nissen (2014).

'development effectiveness' in SSC (para. 18), followed by a paragraph on measurement (para. 20, c).⁹

With the formal entry of accountability, effectiveness and measurement concerns in SSC intergovernmental negotiations, Nairobi marks the first successful 'attempt to introduce SSC partnerships into the donorship doxa' (Zoccal and Esteves, 2018, p. 135), which includes norms and standards around measurement. This was, nonetheless, a modest attempt both in the language adopted (Pino, 2014) and in light of the subsequent failure to unambiguously bring rising powers under the 'Effectiveness Agenda' tent. As mentioned, Brazil, China, India and South Africa never formally joined the GPEDC, refrained from committing to any financial target for their SSC efforts, and remained sceptical about the efforts to devise new 'universal' development cooperation metrics, such as TOSSD (Bracho 2017; Besharati 2017).

Nonetheless, having 'effectiveness language' in Nairobi's outcome document engendered a *measurement paradox* that would accompany SSC in the next decade (Waisbich, forthcoming). The paradox goes as follows: on the one hand, measuring development cooperation enables Southern providers to reduce the information gap around SSC and substantiate their claims that SSC is generating the development impact that traditional aid had largely failed to achieve. The Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) portrayed its SSC measurement efforts in Latin America as an opportunity to 'validate the political discourse that proposes this method as a low-cost, direct-impact, effective, efficient and beneficial way for cooperation' (PIFCSS 2016a cited in Escallón, 2019).¹⁰ On the other, the need to measure puts on Southern providers — and notably on rising powers — the burden to prove that SSC was not only *different* but also *more effective* than aid and opens the very SSC political project to challenge, questioning the validity of its claims. Ultimately, the measurement paradox not only inserts SSC into existing development evidence politics, but does so in particular ways: adding an additional geopolitical layer. As framed by Besharati and MacFeely (2019, p. 4) in a UNCTAD policy brief: 'SSC is no longer a side-show. Better data is now required to accurately tell the story of South-South cooperation. If the global South doesn't come up with its own definitions and measures, others (most

likely in the North) will continue to produce most of the analysis around SSC'.

The tensions generated by the measurement paradox grew in the aftermath of Nairobi, and as the debates on the Agenda 2030 progressed. Some started to talk about 'SSC contributions to the SDGs' (Corrêa, 2017; Di Ciommo, 2017; Esteves, 2018). In this script, measurement served rising powers' status-seeking and reputation-building strategies by showcasing their efforts, generosity and successes to international audiences. Concurrently, several also vocalised discomfort with the measuring agenda on at least four levels. First, was the fear that project and impact measurement would underplay, and even undermine, the political dimension of SSC. Second, was an unease with others applying ODA metrics and tools to measure a different form of development exchange: SSC (Chakrabarti, 2018; Corrêa, 2017; Li, 2018; UNESCAP 2019). Third, was a concern with overly relying on financial quantification methodologies that could rank SSC providers 'too low' among development providers, while simultaneously revealing 'too much' information thus generating unwanted domestic pressure. Fourth, was a widespread recognition that measurement was seldom a management priority for often overburden and understaffed SSC.

Incentives and concerns with SSC measurement played out simultaneously in different countries. The remaining of this section discusses distinct forms of diplomatic and para-diplomatic stances, and in particular those of India, using BAPA+40 Conference as a microcosmos for rising powers' resistance and engagement with the agenda.

'It takes two to tango': measurement negotiations in BAPA+40

Between 2018-2019, eyes turned to the Second UN High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, or BAPA+40, to be held in Buenos Aires, in March 2019. The UN presented as key conference goals the need to 'institutionalise' and 'revitalise' SSC within the UN, and to unambiguously link it to the SDGs agenda (UNGA, 2018). Aligned with these goals, the UN preparatory note highlighted the need to enhance 'reporting on South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation on the national and

⁹ Paragraph 18 reads: 'In that regard, we acknowledge the need to enhance the development effectiveness of South-South cooperation by continuing to increase its mutual accountability and transparency, as well as coordinating its initiatives with other development projects and programmes on the ground, in accordance with national development plans and priorities. We also recognize that the impact of South-South cooperation should be assessed with a view to improving, as appropriate, its quality in a results-oriented manner.' Whereas paragraph 20, c reads: 'Encourage developing countries to develop country-led systems to evaluate and assess the quality and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and improve data collection at the national level to promote cooperation in the development of methodologies and

statistics to this end, as appropriate, while bearing in mind the specific principles and unique characteristics of South-South cooperation, and encourage all actors to support initiatives for information and data collection, coordination, dissemination and evaluation of South-South cooperation, upon the request of developing countries.'

¹⁰ SEGIB is neither a purely Latin American nor a Southern international organisation since it includes the 22 countries that make up the 'Ibero-American community' (the 19 Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries in Latin America and those of the Iberian Peninsula, Spain, Portugal and Andorra). See <https://www.segib.org/en/who-we-are/> (last access: 21/10/2020).

regional levels on a voluntary basis and in accordance with their national capacities' (ibid).

In light of the broader North-South politics and the fragile state of UN multilateralism of the last decade, the BAPA+40 Outcome Document was pre-negotiated in New York ahead of the actual conference in Buenos Aires.¹¹ The Argentinian government and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) led the negotiations in a cautious way, proposing an initial draft containing what was perceived as non-controversial topics around SSC: 'scaling-up', 'Institutionalisation' and 'best practices'. Measurement issues were explicitly left off the table.

High hopes, thin multilateralism

Many commentators and practitioners in the field hoped that the BAPA+40 process would generate the right conditions for Southern providers to agree on a unambiguous definition of SSC, and on goals, targets and the means to financially commit to achieve the Agenda 2030 (Esteves and Klingebiel 2018; EU 2019). Many also hoped a commonly agreed definition of SSC would enable more systematic efforts of quantification of cooperation flows between developing countries (Besharati and MacFeely 2019). Such agreements were not achieved. Despite the high hopes, BAPA+40 only secured the minimum common possible.

From 'responsibilities' to 'methodologies'

In Buenos Aires, UN members agreed to align SSC to the SDGs and to major 21st century global development consensus around infrastructure building, the role of private sector in development cooperation, and triangular cooperation. Yet, when it comes to commitments, responsibilities and accountability, BAPA+40 offered yet another illustration of what observers had been calling a normative 'race to the bottom' (Alexander and Kornegay, 2014; Mawdsley, 2014b). Northern donors were successful in securing no explicit mention to their 0.7% ODA/GNI target in the final document. At the same time, Southern providers ensured that the language around 'mutual accountability' and 'impact assessments' (for instance, in paragraphs 25 and 29) was an *ipsis literis* copy of paragraphs 18 and 20 from Nairobi, showing almost no diplomatic conceptual-normative advances in a decade.

While responsibilities were off the negotiation table, measurement remained on the agenda. In Paragraph 26 of BAPA+40 Outcome Document, UN members acknowledged the importance of measuring, reporting and assessing the impact of SSC. It noted that this would not be done through a common framework, but rather through 'non-binding', 'voluntary', and 'country-led systems' (UNGA, 2019).¹² The paragraph illustrates the persistent unease with the topic and reiterates relatively stable diplomatic stances by SSC partners on the matter from the past decade, emphasising: (i) the autonomy of Southern countries to develop SSC-specific evaluation and assessment systems; (ii) the respect of the uniqueness, plurality and diversity of SSC and SSC partners; and (iii) the demand-driven, Southern-led, flexible nature of these accounting and reflection exercises. Terms, such as 'autonomy', 'plurality', 'diversity' and 'flexibility', are easily traced in other diplomatic statements and scholarly reflections on the topic (e.g., NeST, 2019; Turianskyi, 2017). India's official statement during the Conference, for example, is emblematic of this insistence, as shown in Box 1, below.

¹¹ Negotiations took place within the UN General Assembly, in New York, between December 2018 and February 2019, thus ahead of the formal conference, which was in March 2019. They produced a Zero Draft (dated from January 22nd), a second draft (dated from February 11th), and a third and final agreed upon draft, transmitted in March 6th to the President of the General Assembly two weeks before the actual conference in Buenos Aires (UN 2019a; 2019b; 2019c) (UN 2019a; 2019b; 2019c).

¹² The full paragraph reads: 'In this regard, we invite interested developing countries to engage in consultations, within the regional commissions of the United Nations, relevant intergovernmental fora on South-South and triangular cooperation, or regional organizations, as appropriate, on non-

binding voluntary methodologies, building upon existing experiences, taking into account the specificities and different modalities of South-South cooperation and respecting the diversity within South-South cooperation and within national approaches. In this regard, we take note of the efforts of certain developing countries that have developed methodologies for planning, monitoring, measuring and evaluating South-South and triangular cooperation in their regions on a voluntary basis and acknowledge the interest of some developing countries in order to establish a methodology for accounting and evaluating South-South and triangular cooperation.' (para. 26).

Box 1 – Government of India statement during BAPA+40

'The cardinal principle that underpins South-South cooperation has been and remains that sharing valuable capacities, experience and knowledge amongst developing countries can be a catalyst for development. It does not substitute or supplant but only supplements North-South cooperation. (...) Over the last decade, India has extended Lines of Credit of about US \$ 25 billion to more than 60 countries of the South. All projects follow universally recognized norms. They do not create unsustainable debt burdens and ensure skill & technology transfer to help local communities maintain and sustain assets created. (...) More and better South-South Cooperation now is on account of the global South enjoying more rapid and sustained economic growth. Yet, South-South Cooperation retains its distinct nature and values, as well as diversity of forms and flows. It defies easy categorization. (...) The trajectory of global growth and the declining share of ODA during the last decade or so has seen attempts to subsume South-South cooperation in the international aid architecture. Such efforts are not helpful. They do no justice to either its historical heritage or its future potential. Let us not venture to strait jacket South-South cooperation into a format that it cannot fit into'.

(Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, March 2019)

The language employed in Paragraph 26 echoes concerns from larger Southern providers about being measured by others and with others' tools and standards. Indeed, over the past decade, OECD reports started to include estimates on flows of 'Non-DAC' providers (OECD 2015).¹³ Chinese aid and development finance flows, in particular, became the object of multiple external estimations by an ecosystem of research institutions, mostly based in the West (Sears, 2019).¹⁴ Marcio Côrrea, from the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), framed this discomfort as follows:

Developing countries have been witnessing other international actors trying to quantify horizontal/South-South flows based on criteria conceived for other realities and purposes. The consequences of this process are: under-accounting, unilateral segregation of data, or inaccurate classification of horizontal/South-South cooperation. (ABC, 2015).

Similar anxieties were vocalised by Indian experts, such as Milindo Chakrabarti (2019, p. 49) from RIS, when arguing for 'the idea [of SSC] not be caged into some defined templates and lead to potential death by strangulation'.

The final lines of Paragraph 26 indicate, however, an opening to keep the discussions on measurement on the global SSC agenda. In a cautious way, the document refers to 'ongoing national and regional experimentation' and recognises — without explicitly naming — efforts such as those taking place for more than a decade now in Latin America, in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico, and under the umbrella of international organisations such as the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and SEGIB (Esteves, 2018; Mitra, 2018; Silva et al., 2016).¹⁵ Around the time of BAPA+40, a similar measuring effort took place in Africa where the UNDP and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) partnered with SEGIB to map South-South and triangular cooperation projects in the continent (UNDP/NEPAD 2019). No similar mapping has taken place in Asia, where scholars like Chaturvedi (2018) have opposed similar regional

¹³ The OECD estimates flows from: Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Qatar and South Africa, some of which send their data voluntary to the OECD. See <https://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/non-dac-reporting.htm>.

¹⁴ Several analysts, including non-Chinese academics (e.g. Bräutigam, 2009; Dreher et al., 2017; Kitano, 2018) and transparency groups like Publish What You Fund (2020) have been estimating China's development flows, in an effort described by Grimm et al. (2011, p. 22) 'putting together a jigsaw puzzle' or by the German Sinologist Marina Rudyak as 'peering into the black box of Chinese aid' (See <http://china-aid-blog.com/>, last access: 27/10/2020). This includes comprehensive independent databases such as the Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset from the China AidData initiative, nested within the US-based William & Mary College AidData

initiative (see <https://www.aiddata.org/china>, last access: 03/01/2020); the China-Africa Research Initiative from the US-based John Hopkins University database on Chinese lending to Africa (see <http://www.sais-cari.org/>, last access: 18/01/2021); and the Boston University China's Overseas Development Finance geospatial data for analysis of Biodiversity and Indigenous lands (<https://www.bu.edu/gdp/chinas-overseas-development-finance/>, last access 18/01/2021).

¹⁵ Since 2007, SEGIB collects data on SSC in Latin America under its Ibero-American Program to Strengthen South-South Cooperation (PIFSS). In 2015, SEGIB replaced the primary tool, the questionnaire, used to collect the data for drafting the reports with an online data platform: the Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

experimentation efforts arguing that the ‘Asian ways of doing SSC’ (which includes greater emphasis on economic than on technical cooperation) make measuring and reporting of South-South exchanges less possible or desirable.

Persistent diplomatic and para-diplomatic resistance to measurement

Insiders to the BAPA+40 negotiations largely credit Indian diplomacy for resisting stronger commitments to measurement. The second draft included, for instance, an entire section on ‘monitoring and reporting’ that received wide support from traditional donors but was dropped during the negotiations (EU 2019b).¹⁶ India’s blocking does not come as a surprise considering its historical intellectual leadership within the G77+China and the language employed in country’s statement during BAPA+40 (see Box 1, above).

Indian-sponsored side events in Buenos Aires, all led by the Ministry of External Affairs-affiliated think tank RIS, clearly echoed these concerns. RIS sits in a para-statal capacity and its thinking has historically backed Indian governmental stances on development cooperation (Chaturvedi et al., 2014). RIS has also been a major source of critical-resistant stances on SSC accountability and measurement, in a pragmatic and adaptive way. During BAPA+40, RIS hosted a parallel event on ‘The Plurality of South-South Cooperation’ and another on ‘Exploring Asian Narratives on South-South Cooperation’.¹⁷ The notions of ‘plurality’ and ‘Asian ways’ have also been strategically mobilised by RIS scholars to justify Indian’s opposition to common standards for SSC, and a single metric to count SSC flows (Chakrabarti, 2018; Chaturvedi, 2019). At the same time, RIS led most of the NeST side events, including one on ‘Impact Assessment and Monitoring & Evaluation vis-à-vis South-South Cooperation: The State of the Debate’ (RIS, 2019).

Another example, this time of open resistance, is found in a communiqué by the G77+China issued just after BAPA+40. In its statement, the Group reiterated a firm will to ‘defend’ SSC

principles (G77 2019b, para. 2). It also opposed to the adoption of DAC tools or any UN top down measurement of SSC, cautioning against the risk of incurring in an unfair double standard situation, since ODA measuring frameworks have been historically negotiated inside a ‘closed space’, the DAC, rather than in wider UN forums (Hynes and Scott, 2013; Vanheukelom et al., 2012).¹⁸

While these accounts of BAPA+40 and its immediate aftermath depict a panorama in which SSC partners show a range of diplomatic and para-diplomatic resistance stances to SSC measurement or accountability issues, this is just part of the picture. The other part consists of several moves in the past years in other, and rather informal, ‘global tables’ where Southern experts (governmental and non-governmental) have been critically engaging with existing metrics and ways of doing accountability and proposing ‘Southern-grown’ alternatives. This includes alternative policy debates and experiments by intergovernmental, governmental and quasi-governmental entities, such as Brazil’s ABC, RIS in India, and the Ministry of Commerce in China, as well as through by transnational knowledge actors like NeST, to be explored next.

The politics and tensions of measuring from the South

As SSC practitioners and experts started to discuss measurement, they did so not only by engaging existing standards, metrics and mechanisms but also disputing their meanings and proposing alternative constructions. This section unpacks different sets of geopolitical and epistemic negotiations over SSC quantification and impact assessment and the distinct ways different Southern countries have engaged in those. In particular, it shows the ongoing measurement-related conceptual and methodological innovations Southern providers have tested in the past decade and the many tensions that accompany them, on three dimensions: quantification of monetary and non-monetary SSC flows, quantification of Southern-led development finance (notably, infrastructure-related loans and grants), and assessing performance, results and impacts of SSC initiatives.

¹⁶ Paragraphs 32 and 33 from this draft read: ‘32. We invite Member States to consider voluntary reporting on the South-South and triangular cooperation activities, during the regular sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, that will facilitate peer-learning and the exchange of experiences and good practices, including lessons learned and challenges, as well as the promotion of South-South and triangular partnerships. 33. We request the Secretary-General with the support of UNOSSC to develop methodologies and other relevant tools that would enable Member States, United Nations organizations and other relevant stakeholders to gather and provide data and information on the implementation of these Outcome Documents and to report such information on a voluntary basis to the biennial sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, to the General Assembly via the annual report on the state of South-South cooperation and to the High-level Political Forum as appropriate’. (UN 2019c).

¹⁷ The first side-event was co-hosted with the Brazilian BRICS Policy Centre and the NeST, while the second one with the China Institute for South-South Cooperation in Agriculture (CISSCA) (RIS, 2019).

¹⁸ An extract of the statement reads: “The Group of 77 and China remains concerned and strongly oppose attempts to measure, monitor or harmonize with the ODA frameworks, which will not bring more resources for development; but, on the contrary, it will jeopardize the existing diversity of flows. Demands of measurement, monitoring and reporting on South-South Cooperation, will only divert and waste treasured resources for development and the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Southern countries shall detect and define their own needs regarding monitoring with the aim of improving and learning from their actual experiences. Any attempt to create conceptual frameworks on this field shall derive from the initiative of the involved parties.” (para. 4).

Challenging OECD-DAC's obsession with financial quantification

As mentioned before, several Southern governments and experts opposed to external efforts — either by the OECD-DAC, the UN or by CSOs and researchers in the West — to financially quantify SSC. Brazil and other Latin American countries have long championed a version of this critique. These are countries for whom technical cooperation (e.g., capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and technology transfer) and in-country support (e.g., scholarships for foreign students and refugee support) are emblematic cooperation modalities. As such, they opposed a perceived 'obsession' with counting financial flows and/or collecting data exclusively on SSC financial resources.¹⁹ Such a move, they argue, oversimplifies the nature of SSC and undervalues its developmental impact: it 'diverts our attention from pursuing development in structural terms (better policies, better capacities and better means) to only look at accessing sources of funding' (ABC, 2015). This argument is further developed by Côrrea (2017) to whom monetary accounting is incomplete and also methodologically problematic. Because South-South technical exchanges are mostly done by civil servants (rather than through outsourcing to consultants), any financial appraisal of the 'development effort' of Southern providers, he argues, would have to come with methodologies to capture and account for the opportunity cost of not doing work domestically, the embedded investments in the technology being transferred free from cost, and the proportional cost of wages and daily fees in soft currencies.

As a response to these technical and political challenges to count SSC, governments and experts in Latin America have advocated for complementary measures capable of attributing value to South-South development exchanges, termed 'non-monetary quantification' or 'value-adding/valuation'²⁰ (ABC, 2015; Escallón, 2019; SEGIB, 2016). The 'valuation' methodology has been used by SEGIB, since 2007, to document SSC technical cooperation flows in Latin America through the lenses of 'SSC projects' rather than 'SSC budgets', while also assessing their 'cost of intervention' and 'economic value'. SEGIB understands the former as 'direct expenses incurred to execute the cooperation (such as air tickets, travel allowance, and materials)' and the latter as 'the equivalent to the value assigned to the technical and professional resources mobilised to execute the cooperation, adding to the "technical

hour" value' (PIFCSS 2016a cited in Escallón 2019). 'Valuation' is also employed by countries like Chile, since 2013, and Colombia, since 2017.

Brazilian official development cooperation statistics (known as *Cobradi* reports) also critically engaged with this issue. *Cobradi* surveys, the first nationally-led systematic reporting of SSC flows outside the DAC reporting framework (Milani, 2019), moved away from using the OECD-DAC 'development effort/GNI ratio', that would make SSC 'invisible' in the national budget. They also feature qualitative descriptions of Brazilian cooperation practices, explaining what cooperating agencies *do* rather than merely accounting for financial flows using ODA modalities considered 'foreign to the Brazilian reality' (Lima and Pereira Jr., 2019). Rather than radically breaking away from the established boundaries of the DAC-led international regime and measurement and reporting practices, Brazilian *Cobradi* researchers ultimately looked for 'practical solutions' that fitted Brazil's own budgetary and cooperation reality (ibid).

Importantly, critiques of financial quantification/monetisation of SSC flows are far from consensual. Some countries, including Mexico, Turkey and China, have showed more willingness to monetise SSC contributions (Mitra, 2018): either harmonising with OECD measuring methodologies, embracing new 'universal metrics' (like TOSSD), or creating alternative Southern-led metrics. Mexico, a country that puts statistics as a key pillar in its SSC system,²¹ has already experimented with accounting for the monetary value of experts' work through 'cost-opportunity' and 'cost of mobility' methodologies (AMEXCID, 2018). At the UN level, ECLAC has a Working Group on quantification of SSC since 2013. No consensus has been reached on a final methodology, but, since 2016, it has worked with its members on ways to adapt its 'satellite/national accounts' methodology to generate statistics for SSC flows in Latin America (ECLAC, 2018, 2016).²² ECLAC attempts echo other adaptations, including the Mexican one, to apply the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) or adjust Southern experts' work values to standard international (mostly UN or World Bank) salary tables, as to have a better sense of the 'development effort/contribution' by Southern countries which contribute financially with less dollars because their cooperation efforts and experts are cheaper (also Besharati and Rawhani, 2016).²³

¹⁹ In the context of TOSSD, Besharati (2017) raised a similar concern and denounced what he called the existing 'devils of financial quantification' and the 'obsession' with counting development cooperation financial inputs rather than development outputs.

²⁰ *Valoración*, in Spanish.

²¹ This is unique among SSC providers but not surprising considering Mexico's proximity to the OECD, of which it is a member (Haug, 2020). Mexico's Cooperation Law, for instance, makes no direct mention to SSC principles as enshrined in BAPA or Nairobi but has integrated OECD five effectiveness principles (Zea, 2016).

²² ECLAC is a historically strong knowledge producer around development and also relies on a robust statistics component. ECLAC, together with SEGIB in Latin America, has been one of the first international bodies studying how to measure SSC and developing tools to report on SSC (Silva et al., 2016)(Silva et al., 2016). SEGIB started its reporting in 2007 and ECLAC started theirs in 2012. Whereas SEGIB has worked with development cooperation agencies in the region, ECLAC has mostly worked with the national statistical agencies. SEGIB and ECLAC measurement methodologies have significantly diverged.

²³ The need to adjust prices and wages is also recognised by proponents of 'post-aid metrics' (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2020).

Questions about financial quantification are exercising Northern/DAC donors — as they devise new ‘post aid’ metrics, like TOSSD, and blended Financing for Development tools (Besharati, 2017) — and Southern providers. For example, Turkey, which voluntarily reports its development cooperation flows to the DAC, has adapted the way it counts its humanitarian and refugee-related disbursements in the Syrian crisis. Rather than abiding by the current — and still contested internally — DAC standard for characterising in-country refugee support as ‘development aid’ (that limits reporting as ODA the spending disbursed during the first 12 months only), Turkey decided to report the totality of its disbursements. Turkey’s measuring ‘subversion from within’ recalculates its position to be among the largest ODA contributors in terms of share of national income in the recent years (Haug, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2020). Scholars have also suggested that Indian development efforts would be better appreciated if adjusted to PPP;²⁴ and reported China’s unease with the lack of recognition for non-monetary and in-kind aid (Sears, 2019).

Altogether, the debates and experimentation mentioned above assist Southern providers in distinguishing their contribution from other development cooperation flows, giving visibility and differentiating SSC’s ‘unique’ contribution to the SDGs. Rather than purely technical discussions these counterpoints re-politicise measurement and create openings to question the politics of ‘aid generosity’ (Mawdsley, 2012b; Veen, 2011), asking what counts as generosity and challenging the kinds of generosity being counted. Ongoing disputes and experimentations provide a telling illustration of the SSC measurement paradox. They reveal agency amongst Southern providers in advancing ways of counting SSC that are seen as fairer and/or more beneficial to them. But they also demonstrate the tensions policy and knowledge entrepreneurs face when confronting a historically dominant set of normative and institutional forces, including the costs of being caught in unfavourable logics and metrics.

Quantifying Southern development finance

A second set of measurement negotiations relate to Southern-led loans and grants and revolve around issues of concessionality, grant element rules, and of ‘hybrid’ development financing instruments. Here DAC-led metrics have been criticised for either overestimating or underestimating SSC contributions when applying ODA golden rule of ‘levels of concessionality’ and ‘grant element’ to hybrid SSC instruments. This is the case for Indian trade promotion and development assistance-related EXIM Bank-

led Lines of Credit for Development Projects scheme (LOCs), for example, which apply different degrees of ‘softness’ while requiring the import of goods and services from India up to a minimum of 75% of the contracted amount (Bathia, 2021; Gol, 2015).²⁵ This is also the case for China’s non-commercial loans operated by its main policy banks, China’s Exim Bank and the China Development Bank, which adopt variable concessional rates. For China’s Exim Bank loans, no less than 50% of materials and equipment are required to be purchased from China (Zhang, 2020).

Quantification has domestic as well as external political implications. Brazil’s *Cobradi* reports include financial contributions to multilateral development banks, like the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, or the BRICS-led NDB, but have excluded from the calculations the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) and its Exim scheme, through which BNDES acts as an export credit agency and provides loans for international infrastructure building under variable rates (Leite et al., 2014). *Cobradi* researchers at the Brazilian governmental think tank IPEA intended to include a study of BNDES Exim scheme in the more recent *Cobradi* reports. However, due to the inter-institutional technical and political controversies over whether BNDES ‘international operations’ should be considered ‘South-South development finance’ and whether the loans were made under ‘ODA-like’ concessional terms, data on BNDES was never included.²⁶ Indeed, BNDES has never framed its Exim operations as ‘development finance’ or ‘development cooperation’ (BNDES, 2018). Moreover, the Brazilian working definition of SSC — the one frequently put forward by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ABC — is narrower, excluding export credits and other more business-friendly financing.²⁷ The debate in India and China is exactly the opposite. There, several experts opposed separating commercial from concessional loans, arguing this was inconsistent with the very logic of SSC, which for them includes economic and financial cooperation regardless of the levels of concessionality eventually applied (Chaturvedi, 2016; Chenoy and Joshi, 2016; Tan-Mullins et al., 2010). This stance is not unrelated to the claim that measuring the ‘grant element’ is necessary for ODA in order to hold DAC donors accountable for their 0.7% ODA/GNI target, a responsibility that is absent from SSC partnerships (Besharati, 2017; Bracho, 2017).

Overall, there has been no agreement between Southern practitioners and scholars, including within NeST, on whether financial quantification should be restricted to what can be verified as ‘concessional’ or ‘grant-like’ flows. While some agree

²⁴ This observation was made by Rani Mullen, expert on Indian development cooperation, in a public event at the Brookings India (New Delhi, 2018).

²⁵ This percentage was higher in the past, but was formally fixed in 75% in 2015. In practice, however, countries, like Bangladesh, have managed to negotiate and secure more favourable deals in some cases (Bhattacharya et al., 2019).

²⁶ Interviews with development experts at IPEA, Brasília, Sept. 2018.

²⁷ The traditional ‘allergy’ to the private sector that has been changing in the last few years due to budgetary restrictions, and, particularly since 2016, when a new coalition came into power more inclined to work along the private sector (Marcondes and Mawdsley, 2017; Suyama et al., 2016).

this is the only way to produce comparability among SSC providers and between SSC and ODA flows (Besharati and MacFeely, 2019), others prefer more flexible, self-defined approaches where countries would choose what they would report as flows, with no intention to produce comparisons. Such a flexible approach, they say, would be coherent with the very 'spirit of SSC' (ABC, 2015; Chaturvedi et al., 2019; Li, 2018; Turianskyi, 2017). Behind the country-led flexible approach, however, also lies the unresolved political consensus around a commonly accepted definition for SSC.

These evolving technical and political negotiations around how to quantify financial and non-financial SSC flows help explain why statistical information on SSC remains fragmented. Unlike ODA, there is no unified metric or repository to account for all South-South development cooperation flows. Data remains limited to the circumscribed *ad hoc* tools developed by the OECD, academics or by regional organisations, like SEGIB. Early efforts to produce cross-regional accounts of SSC flows were made by UNDESA in its 2010 development cooperation report, but these efforts stalled. Another attempt came from the Brazilian government in 2015, when ABC presented to the Core Group of Southern Partners at the UN an initial proposition on a 'Reference Platform' for the collection of monetary and non-monetary information on development-related exchange flows between developing countries (ABC 2015; Corrêa, 2017). In ABC's proposition, each country would decide what to report according to their own practices. The Platform was the first concrete proposal for a common inter-governmental site where Southern governments could self-report their development flows in their own terms (Silva et al., 2016). While a tentative compromise — a common platform but not one that mobilises a common quantification tool — ABC's proposition had little political buy-in from other Southern countries and Brazil itself did not use its diplomatic capital to push it further in the following years.²⁸ Though UNCTAD and UNOSSC have maintained discussions on the topic, no other UN body has been officially mandated to develop tools and metrics to count SSC, even after BAPA+40.

With or without an intergovernmental consensus, however, Southern providers still have to manage others (mostly obviously DAC donors, academics and civil society) counting SSC flows, and the numerous domestic implications of these external estimations and of their visibility. These include not only intra- and inter-bureaucratic tensions and competition, but also powerholders having to deal with public and policy responses to the inconsistencies between stated policy priorities and budget allocation. An example of this is found in India's EXIM Bank

disbursing more in Africa than in its own neighbourhood, in a move away from its Neighbourhood First policy (Mullen and Arora, 2016). Increasing domestic visibility has fuelled public perceptions that 'too much' was being spent abroad (Hardt et al., 2020; UNDP China, 2017), instigating debates about lack of official transparency, about the purposes of SSC, and/or about the domestic benefits of investing in development projects abroad (Waisbich, 2020a).

Assessing impact

Measuring the quality of SSC is another arena in which Southern providers have challenged existing practices and started to experiment and innovate. There are numerous contextual drivers for the growing attention to this issue, and great variance across countries, and across sectors and modalities within countries. Yet, as SSC entered its consolidation phase (Mawdsley, 2019), building evidence through evaluations and/or impact assessments became increasingly important, if not a necessity, for certain actors in the South. This has prompted a series of policy and operational reforms, as well as a greater global activism by knowledge actors, to craft alternative ways to evaluate Southern-led development cooperation.

While still incipient and *ad hoc* practice in all large SSC providers (Esteves, 2018; Milani, 2019; Rizzo, 2019), more and more evaluations are being conducted driven by and embedded in a combination of status-seeking, strategic, and management concerns. Evaluations, reviews and assessments are increasingly valued for assisting in policy learning and contributing to strengthening policy management and to the institutionalisation of SSC programmes and policies inside providers (Costa, 2018; NeST, 2019). Evaluations also serve SSC partners for reputational stakes: working both as 'wake-up calls' to prevent things to go wrong in the future (Jiang, 2019), and as tools to communicate and continue to internationally market SSC innovations and successful experiences (Constantine and Shankland, 2017). They also play a role in Southern providers' diplomatic activism by providing legitimising evidence to back-up SSC principles, such as horizontality and mutual gains, and differentiated cooperation approaches, including the Brazilian propositions of 'structuring cooperation' (e.g., Almeida et al., 2010) or the Indian 'development compact' (e.g., Chaturvedi, 2016).

Innovation is mostly taking place at the epistemic level, where a range of Southern actors have engaged in conceptual, lexical-semantic and methodological negotiations over SSC evaluation. Knowledge actors, among them scholars in NeST, have pioneered

²⁸ Mostly due to extreme political volatility in Brazil, which marginalised ABC within the federal government, and made development experts cautious about leading on any ambitious initiative. A similar profile was adopted in BAPA+40, despite Brazilian leadership in SSC throughout the previous decade. Likewise, the Platform was never operationalised inside Brazil. Its

set up has been hindered by the fact that it requires disaggregated data from different sources that are not readily available, but also politically by the persistent disagreements among Brazilian bureaucracies on the subject of SSC quantification and reporting.

new tools and applied them in internal or independent assessments of SSC initiatives. An early example is the ‘Framework for South-South Cooperation’, NeST’s proposal for a common conceptual and evaluation framework for SSC. First agreed in 2015, as a draft proposal, the framework operationalises SSC principles into workable evaluation criteria and methodologies for SSC initiatives (NeST 2017, 2015). The framework was since applied to particular case studies by NeST scholars from Brazil, Mexico and South Africa²⁹ and used as inspiration for further conceptualisations in the course of SSC evaluations, notably in Brazil and China.³⁰

However, despite the initial push, strongly led by South African experts in the network, the proposal was neither fully embraced by all network members nor formally adopted as a common measuring tool by Southern governments.³¹ For a short period, the framework was debated and internally updated. However, from 2017 onwards, NeST stopped advocating for its adoption. Under a stronger leadership from the India-based RIS, NeST started advocating instead against any common framework, and in favour of each country adopting its own operationalisation of SSC principles into evaluation practices (Chakrabarti, 2019). This shift is visible in a recent UNOSSC-commissioned NeST paper, edited by RIS scholars, on the topic of impact assessment. The paper provides examples of Southern-led frameworks used to assess development cooperation initiatives led by Brazil, China, India and South Africa. In the paper’s introduction, however, the editors stated their aim to ‘argue against a common assessment framework, even though there may be some common elements’ among the assessment practices they have gathered (NeST, 2019, p. 8).

Another example of RIS’s knowledge entrepreneur role is seen in its calls to replace the term ‘evaluation’ by the term ‘assessment’. RIS Director General, Sachin Chaturvedi (2018), explains the preference for the term ‘assessment’ as resulting from the need to explore the ‘nuances’ of SSC: ‘It is not mere semantics that we call it impact assessment and not monitoring and evaluation on which there is huge emphasis from our Northern partners’. RIS scholar, Milindo Chakrabarti (2018), further insisted that, unlike aid, SSC is not a contractual relation and thus should not be judged against external benchmarks, or through OECD evaluation criteria for project and programme evaluation, namely Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability (OECD, 2009).

²⁹ For studies that applied the NeST evaluation framework, see Besharati and Rawhani (2016); Vazquez and Lucey (2016); Garelli (2018). The framework was also applied by the German development think-tank DiE to assess the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Ali, 2018).

³⁰ For conceptual discussions on evaluating Brazilian SSC, see BPC/ASUL (2017); Waisbich et al. (2017); Costa (2018). For examples of external evaluations of Brazilian SSTC that sought to operationalised SSC principles into evaluation criteria and methodologies, see ASUL/PLAN (2015); ASUL/Move (2017); ASUL (2020). For an adaptation done in China, see

In his view, SSC partners should jointly conduct assessments as a reflective diagnosis and a learning exercise. According to Chaturvedi (2012), India has conducted joint political reviews in the past, with countries like Nepal, which included discussions on development assistance. However, it is in Latin America that one finds more systematic use of joint reviews of development cooperation initiatives, notably by Brazil’s ABC and Mexico’s AMEXCID.³²

So far, however, RIS’s proposition for SSC partners to adopt the term ‘assessment’ found little traction, even among other development experts in India.³³ But even while unsuccessful in shifting the SSC terminology on evaluation, RIS’s proposition remains a clear demonstration of ongoing epistemic negotiations over evaluation, and of Indian activism on this front to find home-grown solutions to measuring development cooperation, in a sign of Indian identity projection efforts (Leveringhaus and Sullivan de Estrada, 2018). RIS’s role has expanded in recent years. After having rejected common frameworks proposed by others, RIS is now leading a new round of efforts, enabled by a UNOSSC research grant, to work on a ‘synthesis framework’ (UNOSSC, 2020). In the project: ‘Experiences from partner countries will be used to create a synthesis of the “assessment” tools which would be comprehensive but not a “standardized” model for assessing SSC’ (ibid). Similar accommodating stances are found in RIS stances towards triangular cooperation. On the one hand, RIS scholars have expressed wary and critical views on triangular cooperation, and on how it risked watering down SSC principles and approaches (e.g., Chakrabarti, 2019). On the other, RIS decided to mainstream this modality in its own annual multi-stakeholder event on SSC — the Delhi Process — in 2019, just after the BAPA+40, and in subsequent dialogues with the OECD (e.g., Chaturvedi and Piefer-Söyler, 2021). Altogether, these moves show RIS’s intent (and India’s more broadly) to present solutions on its terms, in a gesture of both pragmatism but also leadership-seeking.

Experimenting with evaluations

Parallel to the conceptual and methodological debates, experimentation with evaluations is already happening on the ground, at the programme-level, led by Southern governments, UN agencies, or by non-governmental knowledge and civil society actors. While experimentation, particularly with what is

CISSCA (2018). For a more recent crosscutting discussion by NeST scholars, see NeST (2019).

³¹ Interview with development cooperation experts, members of NeST, Jul. 2018, Aug. 2018 and Jun. 2019.

³² For an example of joint evaluation meeting conducted by ABC with Ecuador, see ABC (2018). Another example of this joint construction can be seen in the process of designing the evaluation of the Cotton-4 initiative, in which the evaluation framework was co-constructed by all partners (ASUL/PLAN 2015).

³³ Interviews with independent development experts, New Delhi, Dec. 2018.

commonly known as *ex post* external/independent evaluations, has expanded in countries like Brazil and China, less has been seen in India, as illustrated in the non-exhaustive compilation below.

Table 1 - Evaluations of South-South cooperation (Brazil, China and India)

Project name	Year	Nature	Authorship	Public availability	Country
Brazil-FAO-WFP Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA Africa)	2014	Learning and results report	PAA Africa programme	Yes	Brazil
Supporting the development of the cotton sector in the C4 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali) - Cotton-4 ¹	2015	External <i>ex post</i> evaluation	Articulação SUL; PLAN	Yes	Brazil
Brazil-WFP contribution to Mozambique's National School Feeding Programme (PRONAE)	2015	Independent assessment	Action Aid Brasil	Yes	Brazil
Brazil-WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger interventions (2011-2016)	2016	External <i>ex post</i> evaluation	Articulação SUL; Move Social	Yes	Brazil
ABC-JICA-UNSSOSSC Capacity Development in Management of South-South and Triangular Cooperation	2016	Internal <i>ex post</i> evaluation with external consultants	Commissioned to individual external consultant	No	Brazil
Brazil-UNICEF Trilateral South-South Cooperation Programme	2016	Learning and results report	Commissioned to individual external consultant	Yes	Brazil
"Memories of ProSavana"	2016	Independent assessment - civil society organisation study	FASE, Brazil	Yes	Brazil
"Advancing South-South Cooperation in Education and Skills Development"	2016	Independent assessment - based on NeST evaluation framework	Brazilian Center for International Relations - CEBRI, Brazil	Yes	Brazil
Brazil-ILO South-South Cooperation for the Promotion of Decent Work in Cotton-Producing Countries in Africa and Latin America	2017	Internal evaluability assessment	Commissioned to individual external consultant	No	Brazil
Brazil-FAO-WFP Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA Africa) Senegal	2017	PAA Decentralised Evaluation	Commissioned to individual external consultant	Yes	Brazil
Brazil-FAO Support to National and Sub-regional Strategies for Food and Nutritional Security and Overcoming Poverty in Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean	2018	Review	Commissioned to individual external consultant	No	Brazil
Brazil-FAO-WFP Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA Africa) Malawi	2018	PAA Decentralised Evaluation	Commissioned to individual external consultant	Yes	Brazil
Brazil-WFP contribution to Mozambique's National School Feeding Programme (PRONAE)	2018	PAA Decentralised Evaluation	FAO and International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth - IPC-IG	Yes	Brazil
Cooperation Brazil-Cuba-Haiti for Strengthening the Haitian Health System	2018	External <i>ex post</i> evaluation	Commissioned to individual external consultant	No	Brazil
Brazil-UNICEF Trilateral South-South Cooperation Programme	2019	External <i>ex post</i> evaluation	Articulação SUL	Yes	Brazil
Cotton Shire Zambeze (Malawi and Mozambique)	2020	External <i>ex post</i> evaluation	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation - Embrapa, Brazil; International Center for Tropical Agriculture - CIAT, Colombia	No	Brazil
Cotton Vitoria (Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi)	2020	Internal <i>ex post</i> evaluation	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation - Embrapa, Brazil	No	Brazil
SENAI vocational educational training centres (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, East Timor, Paraguay, Colombia)	2011-2016	Internal evaluation missions and reviews	National Service for Industrial Training - SENAI, Brazil	No	Brazil

Brazil-FAO Strengthening School Feeding Programmes in the Framework of the Zero Hunger Initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean 2025	2016-2017	Review	Commissioned to individual external consultant	No	Brazil
"Perceptions on China-Lao Agricultural Investments"	2015	Independent assessment - civil society organisation study	Oxfam Hong Kong	Yes	China
China-UNFPA partnership on South-South and Global Cooperation	2016	Internal mid-review	UNFPA China	No	China
"A Civil Perspective on China's Aid to Cambodia"	2016	Independent assessment - civil society organisation study	The Asia Foundation	Yes	China
China-Tanzania Cooperation in agriculture	2018	Independent assessment - with UNOSSC grant, based on NeST evaluation framework	China Institute for South-South Cooperation in Agriculture - CISSCA, China	Yes	China
"The case China-Pakistan Economic Corridor"	2018	Independent assessment - based on NeST evaluation framework	German Development Institute - DIE, Germany	Yes	China
China-UNFPA South-South & Triangular Cooperation (2016-2019)	2019	Internal final-review	UNFPA China	No	China
Nepal Small Development Projects	2013	Independent assessment - governmental think tank study	Research and Information System for Developing Countries - RIS, India	No	India
"India's Development Cooperation with Ethiopia in Sugar Production"	2015	Independent assessment - governmental think tank study	Research and Information System for Developing Countries - RIS, India	Yes	India
"India's Development Cooperation with Bangladesh: A Focus on Lines of Credit"	2017	Independent assessment - civil society organisation study	Participatory Research in Asia - PRIA, India	Yes	India
A case study on Indo-Bangla Lines of Credit'	2019	Independent assessment - civil society organisation study with UNOSSC grant	Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh	Yes	India
"Case Study on India and Mozambique: Solar Technology"	2019	Independent assessment - based on NeST evaluation framework with UNOSSC grant	Research and Information System for Developing Countries - RIS, India	Yes	India
"A case study of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme"	2020	Independent assessment - civil society organisation study with UNOSSC grant	Public Affairs Centre, India	No	India

Amongst Southern providers, Brazil is the country that has most extensively experimented with evaluating SSC, notably its technical cooperation initiatives (bilateral, multi-country and triangular³⁴ cooperation with DAC donors and/or international organisations). The first major publicly available *ex post* independent evaluation, on the *Cotton-4* project, was published in 2015 (Bueno, 2018; ASUL/PLAN, 2015). Since then, the Brazilian government has evaluated several of its triangular initiatives with bilateral donors (like the Germany and the UK) as well as with UN agencies, including FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP (ASUL, 2020; ASUL/Move, 2017), as listed in the table above.

The case of Brazil is unique not only for the number of external and publicly available evaluations conducted, but also to extent of its engagement in triangular technical cooperation.³⁵ Triangular cooperation, structured around policy and political dialogue and knowledge and technology sharing on issues such as agricultural development and social protection, currently responds for an important slice of Brazilian development cooperation (Almino and Lima, 2017; Milani, 2017).³⁶ Triangular cooperation with UN agencies moved from small pilot projects in the early 2000s to more structured initiatives, including through new arrangements: full-fledged programmes, multi-donor

³⁴ Brazil calls its triangular cooperation 'trilateral' to emphasise the horizontal nature of this relationship between two Southern countries and either an international organisation or a bilateral donor or both, what ABC calls 'Trilateral Development Cooperation+1' (ABC 2019).

³⁵ Although triangular cooperation is not a new modality in most large SSC providers, Brazil has a more consolidated experience of partnering with both bilateral donors and UN agencies in triangular cooperation

arrangements (Chaturvedi and Piefer-Söyler, 2021; Paulo, 2018; Zhang, 2020; Zoccal, 2020b).

³⁶ According to Milani (2019), in 2015, more than 70% of the total executed budget for technical cooperation under ABC coordination was channelled bilaterally in partnerships with international organisations. This number represented only 1.9% in 2009.

cooperation arrangements, Centres of Excellence and beyond (Waisbich, 2020b).³⁷ Partnering with Brazil on SSC has been a pilot for many UN agencies and bilateral donors, many of which have developed their SSC corporate strategies based on experiments with Brazil. Due to their longevity and consolidation levels, partnerships with Brazil also inaugurated evaluation pilots under this expanding cooperation modality.

Partnering with DAC members has been crucial to Brazilian experimentation with SSC monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Examples include the UK-supported knowledge related activities within Brazilian flagship initiatives such as the Brazil-FAO-WFP Purchase from Africans for Africa (*PAA Africa*),³⁸ or the Brazil-WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger (CEAH). It also includes support for knowledge actors and policy dialogues to develop domestic conversations around SSC, such as the BRICS Policy Centre-led Dialogues on International Cooperation the first edition of which was co-hosted with ABC, and was devoted to measurement and M&E of SSC (DFID 2017a).³⁹ The UK has also adopted a similar strategy in China, to support knowledge actors and development knowledge-related initiatives, including the China International Development Research Network (CIDRN)⁴⁰ and the China-UK Global Health Support Programme, which funds policy-relevant academic assessments of China's Global health development assistance (DFID, 2017b).⁴¹

While still in their early days, evaluations offer opportunities to negotiate conceptions of accountability in development cooperation with traditional development actors as well as ways to practice it, including methodologies to assess results and impact. Unlike India's open opposition to adopting OECD criteria, recent evaluations on Brazil triangular cooperation initiatives have sought to operationalise SSC principles into evaluation frameworks, combining them with the traditional OECD-DAC criteria, as required by UN agencies' evaluation policies. Experimentation is also visible in the incipient, but growing, evaluation efforts happening in China. At the same time, UN development experts (located in the country offices in rising powers or within the still marginal 'SSC hubs' at the headquarter-

level) have shown increasing openness to craft alternative ways to conceive results, impact and social/policy change, acknowledging SSC impacts on 'final beneficiaries' can be long term, intangible and/or unmeasurable.

Some of these debates echo longstanding calls from counter-hegemonic actors in the development field, many of which advocate for a shift from creating success through the generation of positive numbers (and from the golden standard of experimental and quasi-experimental studies) as to recognise the complexity, uncertainty and the *longue durée* of development processes (Eyben et al., 2015; Honig, 2020; Mosse, 2005). NeST experts, in their turn, have strongly advocated for the use of qualitative methods in SSC evaluation, including through case studies, reviews, documentations, systematisations of lessons learned, ethnographies, Theory of Change-based contribution analysis and others methodologies focusing on understanding the processes of cooperation as much as its results (BPC/ASUL, 2017; CISSCA, 2018; NeST, 2015). Qualitative methods were also favoured by those designing and implementing SSC initiatives based on their acute awareness of the lack of baseline and monitoring data on SSC projects, the intangible policy/knowledge exchange nature of several technical cooperation initiatives, and the limited budget available for M&E activities. Programmers and experts within large Southern providers are also politically aware of the 'attribution' and 'responsibility' sensitivities in evaluating SSC initiatives, based on strong ownership principles that emphasise the role of the other Southern partner in policymaking and service delivery and thus on collecting data on impacts.⁴²

Yet advocating for qualitative methods has not been free from tensions. In Brazil, this has materialised in numerous debates within ABC and other national implementation institutions, and in the contexts of trilateral cooperation arrangements, like the Brazil-WFP CEAH, over whether to rely on qualitative methods or on more 'powerful' forms of quantification that would pass as *clear* evidence of success rather than *possible* contributions to

³⁷ UNFPA started its work on SSC with Brazil in 2002, ILO's in 2007, while FAO's formal TSSC programme with Brazil started in 2008. UNICEF has worked with Brazil on SSC since 2004, and a formal TSSC programme was established in 2011. As for WFP, the Brazil-WFP CEAH was set up in 2011. Brazilian cooperation also has a special relationship with and an operational dependence of UNDP since the 1980s (Cabral and Weinstock, 2010; Milani, 2017).

³⁸ PAA Africa ran from 2012 to 2016 and included the following countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal. From the Brazilian side, PAA Africa was led by the then CGFome and the Ministry of Agrarian Development, both extinguished in 2016. The ad hoc insertion of a DFID-funded 'knowledge component' to implement a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system for the PAA was conceived to prove that the Brazilian model of family farming 'worked' and boost internal paradigm battles within the

national and global food security and agricultural development policy communities (Cabral et al., 2016).

³⁹ For an overview on the Dialogues on South-South Cooperation, see <https://bricspolicycenter.org/en/projetos/south-south-cooperation-dialogues/> (last access: 04/09/2020). The first 2017 Dialogue and the following one in 2018 were organised with the financial support of the UK, among other sponsors.

⁴⁰ The Network is chaired by the Beijing-based China Agriculture University and gathers around 20 other institutions (DFID 2018).

⁴¹ Examples of studies published under this Programme, include Li et al. (2019), Wang et al. (2019) and Yang et al. (2018).

⁴² Interview with development scholars, Beijing, Nov. 2018. Interview with a development cooperation practitioner, Brasília, Mar. 2019. Interview with a development cooperation practitioner, Mexico City, Aug. 2018.

outcomes in partners countries.⁴³ The fear of being assessed through what many perceive as less-valued, or valuable, types of knowledge/evidence is revealing of the anxieties within Southern providers. It shows prevalent ‘measurementalities’, or the ‘governance through numbers’, and its correlated epistemic violence (Fukada-Parr and McNeill, 2019; Mitchel, 2002; Porter, 1995) perpetuated by SSC partners themselves, sometimes producing or reflecting an internalised stigma (Zarakol, 2014).

Practitioners’ anxieties also illustrate the many tensions embedded in assessing SSC initiatives, and in particular technical cooperation/capacity development interventions: first, the existence of intangible and unmeasurable results in South-South partnerships promoting advocacy and high-level policy dialogue activities to build ‘domestic coalitions of change’, or at operational level with hands-on exchanges between civil servants rather than on service delivery. Second, the uncertainty about who is accountable for the results and who is interested or in charge of evaluations, particularly in cases where project implementation is co-shared or *de facto* led by UN agencies. Third, the difficulties in telling ‘stories of change’ without particular kinds of data, considering that the first SSC evaluations in the 2010s had to reconstruct processes and outcomes with insufficient project documentation (in a way reinforcing the calls for greater transparency from within).⁴⁴

Final remarks

This report shows a plethora of ongoing negotiations over whether and how to measure Southern-led development cooperation. Thus far, the global development community has not reached a universal normative and epistemic agreement on frameworks and on what and how to count (and account for) all, North-South and South-South, development cooperation flows and their impacts. Growing pressure, notably by the so-called ‘traditional’ development donors, for SSC partners to measure (quantify and evaluate) SSC include a range of influencing strategies whereby DAC members and UN agencies negotiate with Southern providers ways to mainstream measurement issues. At the same time, ‘traditional’ development actors have increasingly come to accept that Southern countries, and particularly rising powers, will lead on efforts and come with their own solutions to the ‘accountability problem’.

In what could be seen as a win-win situation or an attempt at co-option, certain ‘traditional’ or Northern-based development actors funded knowledge and learning initiatives and commissioned papers giving voice to Southern experts and CSOs to present ‘Southern-ways’ to measure SSC. UN agencies in

particular have reinforced the trend towards measuring in joint triangular projects, acting as brokers of intergovernmental exchange processes, and/or offering technical support for Southern partners (Esteves, 2018). This has been accompanied and reinforced by DAC donors (notably the UK, Germany, Japan and Australia) own diplomatic efforts to enhance the ‘management’ and/or ‘knowledge’ areas within ‘SSC bureaucracies’, through funding studies, policy dialogues, institutional strengthening activities, and M&E of SSC initiatives.

Southern providers, in turn, have consistently emphasised their autonomy in deciding how to measure SSC, showing a strong preference for ‘country-led’ ‘non-binding’ measuring tools, and a lack of urgency in forging cross-regional consensus on the matter. There is, nonetheless, variance in the ways large Southern providers have projected their preferences. Brazil, Mexico and Turkey, for instance, have shown a critical-conciliatory diplomacy; China a more pragmatic (if not disinterested) one; and India has adopted more critical-resistance stances. Indian opposition is marked by a will to assert its identity in opposition to both a ‘Northern/Western’ paradigm but also to alleged ‘Chinese or Latin American models’, in a demonstration of symbolic and material competition and/or differentiation within the South. Indian diplomatic and para-diplomatic stances are also increasingly pragmatic: acting less to transform the world than to carve a more favourable space in it, through ‘the selection and fusion of different—and sometimes competing—ideas and ideological commitments in order to improvise new policy positions’ (Miller and Sullivan de Estrada, 2017, p. 28). Diplomatic behaviour also featured a wider range of domestic experimentations with measuring compared to India, as discussed further in another IUKDPF paper (see Waisbich and Mawdsley, 2021). Rather than co-option, North-South negotiations reveal complex processes of mutual socialisation, with both an increased politicisation of measurement debates (in some cases leading to dead-ends at the multilateral level), and at the same time conceptual and methodological experimentation and innovation at the operational level, both in rising powers and in multilaterals.

Unwilling or unable to create a Southern-led autonomous negotiation table to agree on common measurement tools, as demonstrated by the short-lived Core Group of Southern Partners, little progress happened at formal large multilateral forums like the UN Development Cooperation Forum (UNDCF) or the BAPA+40 process. After more than a decade of debates, the South still asks for more time and space to lead on discussions and move them forward, while remaining strongly divided on the matter. Whereas for some countries more time means a commitment to keep building a consensus, for others this is a

⁴³ Interview with development cooperation practitioners, Brasília, Oct. 2018 and Mar. 2019.

⁴⁴ Interview with a development cooperation practitioner, Brasília, Mar. 2019. Interview with a development cooperation evaluation expert, Brasília,

Sep. 2018. Interview with a development cooperation practitioner, São Paulo, Oct. 2018. These challenges are also discussed in some of the evaluations of Brazilian Trilateral South-South cooperation initiatives, e.g., ASUL (2020); (ASUL/Move, 2017).

useful strategy to achieve an indefinite postponement (and a situation which can be represented as a natural consequence of desirable difference).

Another set of negotiations is happening within the global development epistemic community. On the one hand, some development experts continue to propose and devise new 'universal' tools to account for all development flows, embracing a 'equator-less'/'beyond aid' era where flows from 'traditional' and 'new' public and non-public actors are counted together (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2020; Sumner et al., 2020). On the other, Southern experts, including inside NeST, remain engaged but divided over whether and how to count SSC. Southern experts have helped setting the agenda around SSC measurement while acting with what Walter Mignolo once called 'epistemic disobedience' (Caixeta, 2015; Rizzo, 2019). Numerous debates were hosted by a range of SSC providers and at the margins of international forums. Yet little agreement was achieved, making clear that both intergovernmental and epistemic consensus are unlikely considering the ongoing macro-geopolitical divides, the various degrees of foreign policy autonomist stances, and the individual and institutional micro-disputes among and within the Southern expert/policy communities.

Additionally, there are SSC measurement negotiations taking place within large Southern providers, including India. Internal divergences between knowledge and policy actors, and within these groups, contribute to shape global conversations. Domestic negotiations not only sustain Southern providers' international activism but also create more (or less) unified diplomatic stances. Internal negotiations, present in all large SSC partners in different forms, reveal fractures over foreign policy and international roles, over development cooperation, and over how to produce knowledge about it. They also reveal policy management and bureaucratic/institutional competition, with domestic actors (development practitioners, knowledge actors and civil society groups) jumping scales and using transnational arenas to disseminate their own views and preferences on how to define and measure SSC but also how to improve it.

Domestic negotiations further re-politicise SSC measurement, as citizens, civil society organisations, the media and other parts of the public bureaucracy question the purpose or usefulness of diplomatic measurement negotiations, and its intrinsic relation to the Financing for Development paradigm. While benefiting from more and better data on SSC flows and practices, domestic actors, including programmers implementing SSC initiatives, problematise the preponderance of measurement debates and its precedence over other agendas related to strengthening SSC in a rapidly changing world. Indeed, for practitioners in nascent or still fragile 'SSC bureaucracies' and for a growing range of interest and pressure groups, the most pressing SSC issues at play might be less about trying to find ways to count cooperation efforts than to expand or improve existing SSC initiatives. While the

measurement agenda is here to stay, these are important reminders of the need to open again the box of the effectiveness and accountability debates. In particular, this critical gaze on the SSC measurement turn calls for a renewed effort to connect the conversations around quantifying development cooperation flows and gathering evidence on its impact *and* conversations around SSC purposes, goals and approaches. This is even more pressing in light of new development challenges of the 21st century, from the climate emergency to the COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

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The India UK Development Partnership Forum, hosted by the Margaret Anstee Centre for Global Studies, Newnham College, University of Cambridge, is an initiative of the Department for International Development under the India-UK Global Partnership Programme on Development. Our policy briefs aim to provide high quality analysis and practical recommendations for policy makers on important development issues.

Published April 2021