

# A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO SOUTH-SOUTH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: *PROPOSED FRAMEWORK*



**A Human Rights-Based Approach  
to South-South Development Cooperation:**  
*Proposed Framework*

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# INTRODUCTION



This conceptual framework is a tool on ways to monitor and report on the impact of South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC) using a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in development research at the regional and country levels. It also suggests sectoral, cross-border thematic areas of how the impact of South-South interventions can be documented and reported. The note builds and expands on existing frameworks.<sup>1</sup> It has been prepared in fulfillment of the decision of CPDE's Working Group on South-South Cooperation to measure the impact of SSDC in the context of HRBA and in promotion of horizontal SSDC. It is also informed by The Reality of Aid Network's 2013 report on South-South Cooperation. While reiterating the need for independent monitoring frameworks and processes for SSC, this framework goes a step further by proposing tools to operationalize and mainstream HRBA monitoring in the SSDC programs and projects of the Southern countries.

While general understanding and agreement exists on the value of SSC as a means of sharing knowledge and experiences and positively impacting development that originate in the South, discussions at the UN and other high-level meetings tend to focus on conceptual and political aspects of SSC. The *development aspect* of this cooperation tends to be neglected or touched on only superficially on such occasions. There is thus a need for a framework to track the *development impacts* of SSC.

For SSDC to have its intended impact, it is necessary to monitor and report on the overall system-wide policy frameworks, governance, coordination,

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. the Network of Southern Think Tank (NeST) Framework for measuring SSC

structures, mechanisms and dedicated resources. As a living document, the framework presents a common, practical and flexible approach to enable the future incorporation of lessons learned and best practices. The note does the following:

- i. It provides operational definitions of South-South development cooperation, and the benefits of capitalizing on these definitions in addressing national development priorities;
- ii. It identifies possible areas of cover and principle priorities at the global level where civil society organizations can apply HRBA approaches to measure the impact of South-South development cooperation when monitoring Southern development partners and South-South development cooperation initiatives;
- iii. It offers country and regional CSOs a practical approach to mainstreaming HRBA approaches in monitoring South-South development cooperation at country and regional impact assessment;
- iv. It suggests a practical set of principles and performance indicators on integrating impact assessment of South-South development cooperation approaches into HRBA.

### **Objectives of the SSDC Monitoring Framework**

- i. Provide a methodological framework for measuring SSDC through human rights-based approach;
- ii. Promote and encourage dialogue towards the adoption of the principles by SSDC actors; and
- iii. Promote and encourage the implementation of the development practice and initiatives consistent with the principles of SSDC.

### **Audience**

The conceptual framework targets policy advocates and development practitioners working in the civil society sector and academia at the country and regional levels, especially those responsible for South-South Cooperation initiatives.

More specifically, the framework is intended for CSOs in development research and monitoring and evaluation that provide data on the impact of South-South development cooperation. Inter-governmental organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa Platform for Development Effectiveness (APDEV), and United Nations regional and country teams could use the framework to enhance regional and country-level common data collection and analysis processes using human rights-based approach in the SSC context.

The framework could also act as a guide to their efforts in supporting governments' initiatives in measuring the impact of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through SSC.





# I.

## **SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN CONTEXT**



One of the key indicators of the changing development finance landscape has been the rise of South-South Cooperation. Although not a substitute, SSC has proven to be a valuable complement to North-South development cooperation, particularly when addressing emerging development challenges such as social protection, infrastructure development and foreign direct investment needs of developing countries. Increases in economic output and major improvements in key human development indicators as well as the rapid expansion of trade, investment and financial, technological and other flows between developing countries have been remarkable. This has liberated and strengthened the productive capacity of developing countries engaged in SSC.

South-South Cooperation as an approach to development financing and cooperation has brought into focus the volume, frequency and speed on matters of development financing that has never been witnessed before. This surge in interest is largely due to the increasing economic power of the countries from the South.

As world trade increased, so did South-South trade. By 2014, South-South trade in goods was valued at approximately US\$5.5 trillion. A high proportion included business with other developing countries outside their region; followed by intraregional trade, with the highest in East Asia (excluding China) and economies in transition; and trade with China. Developing countries now provide 33 percent of global investments, up from 13 percent in 2007, and are projected by the World Bank to account for more than half of total capital stock by 2030.



In addition to trade, South-South Cooperation has increasingly involved collective action by multiple countries at the global and regional levels in pursuit of mutually beneficial development outcomes, as indicated by the rise in the absolute and relative share of non-DAC contributors in financial, in-kind and technical development cooperation, especially from middle-income countries like China, India and some of the Gulf States. By 2015, SSC has increased to at least US\$32.2 billion, with three donors – Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Turkey – accounting for 85% of the US\$20 billion increase since 2012.

This is also seen in the building of economically vibrant regional communities, joint initiatives to address cross-border issues and having a collective voice to enhance these countries' bargaining power in multilateral negotiations (UN 2012).

Moreover, countries of the South are moving towards more formalized and institutionalized forms of South-South cooperation – with more and more actors involved, formal rules and norms being developed, and national and multilateral organizations being formed and dedicated for this purpose, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank.

The UN Secretary General's Report 2018 also underscored (a) the measures taken by at least 30 United Nations organizations/entities to place South-South cooperation at the centre of their strategic priorities, following the wishes of developing countries to accelerate sustainable development on their own terms; and (b) the promising efforts of United Nations organizations and Member States to turn South-South cooperation into a force to improve access by the global South to tested tools for poverty eradication, food security, industrial innovation and economic growth. These developments come in tandem with an increase in international contributions for South-South cooperation for development, exceeding the \$20 billion in contributions received in 2013: as a result of higher contributions from China, India and Saudi Arabia from 2014 onwards, total contributions for South-South cooperation in 2018 may exceed the level received in 2013.

Indeed, SSC has increasingly become systematic, politically-motivated and well-propagated. Its aim has been the establishment of multiple links between developing countries in achieving political, economic and social objectives. It has been seeking Southern solutions to development problems and fosters self-sustaining development among Southern nations. One of the challenges that this brings about and that concerns many development actors now is accounting these vast flows of human, financial, knowledge and technological transfer between developing countries, and reporting on their impact for the achievement of sustainable development. This arises from the fact that Southern partners do not subscribe to a common

definition and reporting parameters for SSC. Measurement efforts are further challenged by the lack of common conceptual framework, shared standards and consistent recording.

## **BRICS in SSC**

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) have emerged as major players in the field of development cooperation. Their rise expressed the growing capacity of middle-income countries in the South to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs not only as recipients but also as active providers of financial and technical support.

They form part of the Southern providers that include Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Malaysia, Mexico, Thailand and Venezuela, which are seen as diversifying the options for most of the developing countries of the South in terms of development financing. Their increased engagement in SSC meant that there are more resources available for lesser developed, Southern countries to finance their national development plans and to meet their SDG obligations. This is important because, among others, many Development Assistance Committee donors have been observed to be failing to meet their aid commitments. Aid levels have also been declining because of the past and current financial crises.

While they have largely been responsible for the increased trade and investment relations in the South, it remains a challenge to link their interactions with that of SSC. While they may be motivated by principles of solidarity in pursuing cooperation with developing countries, their own strategic interests and foreign policies equally drive them to engage in partnerships with other developing countries. For many, the BRICS remain self-seeking countries scrambling for natural resources from less advanced economies of the South with a view of advancing their commercial interests however exploitative these were and with little focus on human empowerment.

If left unprotected, these South-South relationships may evolve into new forms of underdevelopment and dependency, threatening the very foundation of such cooperation. It thus becomes imperative that the policies and practices of emerging Southern providers be also subjected to closer scrutiny through the lens of human rights-based approach to secure the founding principles of SSC.

### Box 1. BRICS in SSC

Within the ambit of BRICS, the five countries have initiated bilateral relations with each other on the basis of mutual benefit, non-interference and equality. For instance, Brazil has in the last decade developed its economic cooperation with China to the extent that the latter has overtaken the United States as Brazil's biggest trading partner. Indeed, trade between the two BRICS countries now amount to US\$39.298 billion.

The drawback of such economic cooperation, especially within the context of SSC, however, is that the more dominant and stronger economy naturally imposes its will and initiative over the weaker one. In the case of China and Brazil, the former has taken over much of Brazil's economy. According to Brazilian economist Paulo Gala, many of Brazil's industries have been effectively dismantled to give way to China's supplies in the domestic as well as international markets. Because of its more developed technological capacity, China is able to produce low-priced goods that effectively replaced local Brazil products. "(We) became mere suppliers of raw materials and importers of industrial goods from China," said Gala.<sup>1</sup>

Although China is said to still be part of the developing world, it is unquestionably a rising economic and political power across the world, and now rivals the traditional economic and political superpowers like the US. Therefore, its position among other developing countries has often been a position of power and advantage. Aside from its cooperation in BRICS, China's historically large-scale infrastructure initiative called the Belt and Road Initiative has shown that in many instances, its aggressive initiatives for economic cooperation have been characterized as one-sided and unequal.

This, of course, runs counter to the principles of South-South Cooperation, and more so, the Human Rights Based-Approach that should inform these cooperation initiatives.

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1 <https://clbrief.com/brazil-china-economic-relationship-marked-by-unstoppable-growth/>



## II. DEFINING SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION



While there has yet to be an internationally accepted definition of SSC, attempts have been made to define it to fit stakeholders' objectives or initiatives. It is defined in different ways: by the way the cooperation is financed, the role each stakeholder takes, and the domain in which the cooperation takes place. The concept, however, is generally used on a wide range of collaboration among developing countries, and is regarded as having three dimensions: political, economic and technical.

The United Nations defines SSC as a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions.

The UN Development Programme, which is actively promoting SSC, similarly defines the term as "a means of promoting effective development by learning and sharing best practices and technology among developing countries." It involves deepening relations among developing countries while conducting technical and economic cooperation.

The 2009 UN Conference on South-South Cooperation reaffirmed the importance of SSC as a common endeavor of Southern countries and its peoples. Its outcome document sets forth the rationale, principles and key actors of South-South cooperation as follows:

“...South-South cooperation is a common endeavor of peoples and countries of the South, born out of shared experiences and sympathies, based on their common objectives and solidarity, and guided by, inter alia, the principles of respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free from any conditionalities.”

The Document also states that SSC “is a partnership among equals based on solidarity.... (It) embraces a multi-stakeholder approach, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia and other actors that contribute to meeting development challenges and objectives in line with national development strategies and plans.”

In the development of the concept and definition of SSC, some notable elements permeate. Among these is the idea of an exchange of expertise and technical or economic knowledge and skills to facilitate development between two Southern countries. Additionally, the Nairobi Outcome Document also emphasized the importance of CSOs in SSC and the pivotal roles these organizations play in enhancing the rationale and the principles of SSC.



## Principles of SSC

Developing countries laid the foundations for SSC in the Declaration on Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation, adopted in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Since then, SSC has developed as an independent and valuable modality of cooperation with guiding principles. Many Southern countries have become important providers, mainly through knowledge sharing schemes (GPDEC 2013).

The Buenos Aires Action Plan for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries establishes the objectives of cooperation among developing countries and proposes 38 recommendations to promote it at the national, regional and global scale.

The 2009 United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation Nairobi outcome document outlines the main principles of SSC which included moving away from development assistance mode of co-operation and towards international cooperation, based on the key principles that include:

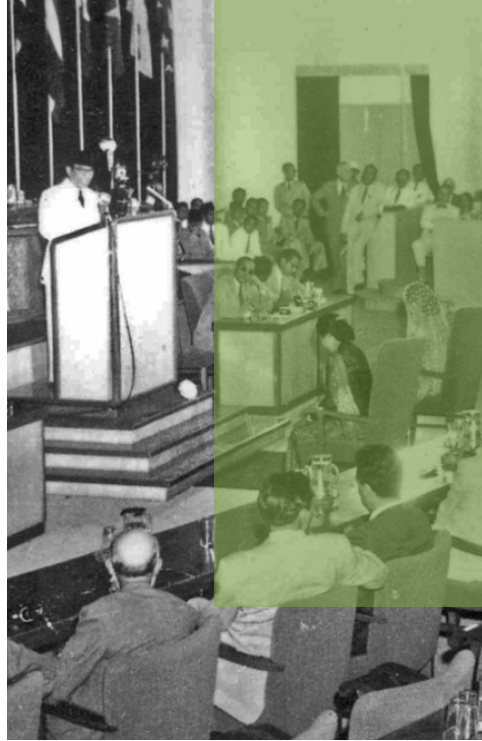
- Nationally owned and demand driven, so that countries set agendas free of conditionality and sensitive to the national context;
- Partnerships of equals, based on trust, mutual benefit and equity;
- Focus on mutual development through the sharing of experiences, technology and skill transfers, training and research;
- Commitment to results and mutual accountability

Governments, national organizations, international organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and the private sector have since, at different levels, sought to mainstream South-South development cooperation in their bilateral and regional cooperation, exchanges of knowledge and technologies, institutional and capacity development, and policy development in the programs and initiatives.

However, in spite of the adoption of the principles, their application at the national level remains ad hoc at best. There are neither deliberate nor common political efforts at the global level to monitor and evaluate the impact of those principles on countries policies and programs. Each country relies on its strategy and political interest to guide its activities and projects.



### III. HISTORY OF SSC AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SSC PRINCIPLES



The idea of development cooperation among developing countries all over the world came as a reaction to the political and economic changes of the post-World War arena. These countries shared a common experience having gone through colonialism that for the most part stifled economic growth and brought poverty and misery to a vast majority of their populations. They also shared decades-long experience in struggling against the colonial masters for their national independence.

Developing countries gathered at the Bandung Conference in 1955 where they professed *mutual cooperation and respect* aimed at fostering economic development. Six years later, they formed the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Developing countries also showed unprecedented *unity and solidarity* at the First Summit in Belgrade in 1961. In 1964, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established by the UN General Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, through which an initial 77 member organizations from developing countries committed to work together for social development to be integral to economic growth.

The adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) in 1978 further entrenched the validity and importance of SSC. It spurred the international recognition of *technical cooperation* among developing countries (TCDC) and created practical guidelines for carrying out TCDC. There was a growing realization that the expansion of international cooperation and relations needed the *equal participation* of developing countries and fair distribution of benefits. TCDC was seen as a means to foment *national and collective self-reliance* and provide developing countries the capacity to solve their development problems. It advocates *technical exchanges of knowledge* and

successful policies and experiences in addressing social and development problems for the participating countries' *mutual benefit* (IBON, 2014).

In Nairobi, Kenya in 2009, what was dubbed then as the “most important UN meeting on SSC in decades” happened, focusing on the increasing political and economic interconnectedness between developing countries (UN 2009). The conference tackled many important global concerns that these developing countries face, from managing their food security to confronting the challenges of the climate crisis. The conference strengthened the coordination between these developing countries, as well as promoted triangular cooperation. Its outcome document outlined the key principles and unities of the representatives of participating countries.

The Nairobi conference was quickly followed up by the UN High-level Meeting on South-South Cooperation and Capacity Development on March 2010 in Bogota, Colombia. The meeting focused on *sharing best practices* of technical cooperation among developing countries, especially in the fields of agriculture, infrastructure, and medicine. It also discussed the importance of triangular cooperation to support SSC initiatives and help develop the capacity of these Southern countries to meet the challenges of inclusive economic development.

The Conference of Southern Providers in New Delhi, India on April 2013 further explored the fundamental principles and modalities of SSC. The conference became a dialogue for *sharing ideas and experiences of developing evidence-based analysis, information sharing, financial and knowledge brokering, and multilateral support for political and knowledge exchange mechanisms*. Discussed at length was the need for authoritative evidence-based analysis of SSC. By analyzing SSC practices based on evidence, Southern providers better design their policies, strategies and projects.

**Box 2. Evolution of SSC Principles**

Bandung (1955)	Buenos Aires (1978)	Nairobi (2009)	Bogota (2010)	Delhi (2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for fundamental human rights</li> <li>• Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations</li> <li>• Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations</li> <li>• Non-interference or interference in the internal affairs of another country</li> <li>• Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations</li> <li>• Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers</li> <li>• Abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries</li> <li>• Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country</li> <li>• Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means</li> <li>• Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation</li> <li>• Respect for justice and international obligation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reliance;</li> <li>• Exchange and sharing;</li> <li>• Capacity development;</li> <li>• Knowledge Transfer;</li> <li>• Respect for national sovereignty;</li> <li>• Economic independence;</li> <li>• Equality;</li> <li>• Non-interference in domestic affairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• multi-stakeholder</li> <li>• Environmental sustainability;</li> <li>• Mutual benefit, win-win, horizontality;</li> <li>• Capacity development;</li> <li>• Mutual learning, knowledge exchange, technology transfer;</li> <li>• Transparency and mutual accountability;</li> <li>• Respect for national sovereignty;</li> <li>• National ownership and independence;</li> <li>• Equality;</li> <li>• Non-conditionality;</li> <li>• Non-interference in domestic affairs;</li> <li>• Inclusivity and participation;</li> <li>• Results, impact and quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development;</li> <li>• Human Rights and equity;</li> <li>• Environmental sustainability;</li> <li>• Solidarity and collaboration;</li> <li>• Mutual benefit, win-win;</li> <li>• Knowledge transfer, exchange, learning;</li> <li>• Specificity of SSC and complementarity to NSC;</li> <li>• Inclusivity and participation;</li> <li>• Flexibility, adaptation, context specific</li> <li>• Partnership, equity, trust, confidence, respect;</li> <li>• Ownership and demand-driven</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand-driven;</li> <li>• Non-conditionality;</li> <li>• National ownership and independence;</li> <li>• Respect for national sovereignty;</li> <li>• Self-reliance and self-help;</li> <li>• Mutual benefit;</li> <li>• Common but differentiated responsibilities;</li> <li>• Voluntary partnerships;</li> <li>• Solidarity;</li> <li>• Complementarity to NSC;</li> <li>• Diversity and heterogeneity;</li> <li>• Capacity development</li> </ul>



## IV. DEFINING SOUTH-SOUTH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



The idea of South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC) is suffused with political, historical, and aspirational meaning. It is rooted in the shared conditions and experiences of Southern nations, namely poverty, underdevelopment, dependency and colonialism. It is driven by the realization that Southern countries have similar realities and developmental experiences. They have similar levels of technical capacity and practical know-how, and exchanges among themselves regarding these could fast-track their own development. SSDC involves identifying problems and finding and/or adapting Southern solutions to particular development challenges with a different blend of both financial resources and technical assistance.

SSDC, thus, can be understood as an expression of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South, and one that contributes to each country's national well-being, self-reliance and capacity to achieve *development goals*; a common endeavor of peoples and countries of the South, born out of shared experiences and sympathies, based on common objectives. It is thus a demonstration of solidarity between equals and a desire for mutual development.

SSDC is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historical and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations. It is about increasing the ability of Southern countries to promote development based on a genuine and broad-based partnership and solidarity.

Partners in Development and Population defines SSDC as development cooperation that empowers developing countries to uplift the quality of

lives of each others' citizens. It recognizes the specificity and comparative advantages of each country in their ability to influence the development agenda. While this definition addresses empowerment issues, it fails to recognize the role of non-state actors in SSDC. We, therefore, expand this definition to include non-state actors to include CSOs.

In this regard, we define SSDC to be the initiatives by Southern countries and non-state actors in these countries aimed at empowering and uplifting the quality of life of its citizens. There is mutual respect among these countries, and they recognize the specific and comparative advantages of each stakeholder in their ability to shape the development agenda.

So while SSDC was clearly borne out of the need for solidarity among developing Southern nations and cooperation based on mutual respect, there still appears to be limitations and pitfalls in implementing these initiatives. In particular, governments and other participants in SSDC need to express a deeper commitment to social justice, gender equality,

### **Box 3. Some examples in LAC, Asia, and Africa**

In 2006, Latin American developing countries Mexico and Chile signed a strategic association agreement in order to cement their bilateral cooperation, specifically their exchange of technical assistance, financial support and joint projects between the two countries. Mexico formed the Cooperation Commission as well as a Joint Cooperation Fund where the two countries allot US\$1 million each for projects within a three-year period.

In 2007, the number of cases of dengue fever among children rose dramatically in Cambodia, and reached near-epidemic levels. After the country made an international appeal for help, Thailand allotted a \$580,000 fund for medical supplies, equipment and a deployment of medical professionals to assist Cambodia in stemming the medical crisis. This cooperation was done under the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS). The strategic program did not just include the two countries. It involved other Southeast Asian countries like Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

India and the entire African Union have also developed its own project called the Pan African E-Network. The initiative aimed to help Africa in developing its educational capacity, through technical assistance and cooperation by the top Indian universities and other educational institutions. It also focused on medicine education through online medical consultations between medical practitioners of both India and the African nations. The project was called Continuing Medical Education (VME), which had a budget of \$130 million as a grant from the Indian government.

environmental sustainability and human rights, as well as a commitment to actively involve and engage all stakeholders in development; thus, the need to apply a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to SSDC.

## **Towards Horizontal SSDC**

Knowledge-sharing between countries and other actors in SSDC remains one of the most dynamic dimensions of and has developed into a third pillar of South-South development cooperation, complementing its finance and technical assistance. This changing context has allowed for the emergence of a paradigm where “horizontal SSDC”, based on equity, trust, mutual benefit and long-term relations, become an alternative way to do development cooperation.

Furthermore, similar development levels and experiences have greatly contributed to growth and development of horizontal sharing of good practices and development solutions that are highly adaptable to local economic and social conditions. Some key notable features of South-South horizontal development cooperation include:

- **Created and Developed Trust** - Partners trust each other, and this trust increases as formal and informal peer linkages are built and strengthened.
- **Committed Political and Technical Leadership** - All partners have strong leadership and are willing to engage in horizontal partnerships. Political commitment from high-level authorities is essential to ensure sustainability of South-South cooperation. Their leadership can be decisive to boost reforms at the institutional and policy levels in the countries involved. This is supported by highly motivated change agents who make a decisive difference in promoting endogenous capacity development.
- **Mutually Identified Benefits with clear responsibilities** - Partners identify mutual benefit, learn from each other and clearly define responsibilities in the cooperation arrangement;
- **Desire for sustainability and growth** - Cooperation is built upon long-term relations, and willingness to scale up and diversify partnerships;

Horizontal SSDC, as a new form of SSC, has taken shape both in inter-regional and intra-regional terms dismantling the client-patronage dominant relationship that exists between the traditional SSC and the North-South development cooperation.

#### Box 4. Examples from Cuba

Among Cuba's first initiatives date back to 1963. It was during that time when the country, only a few years into its social revolution, sent medical brigades to Algeria.

Since then, it has assiduously maintained and expanded this program of sending medical brigades for actual medical help as well as training – even to countries that it did not have diplomatic relations with. Cuba is considered a poor or underdeveloped country, but it has established horizontal cooperation with more than 180 countries, and has accepted students to study in its medical school from countries across the world. Its initiative called the Henry Reeve Medical Brigade has provided medical assistance to more than 3.5 million in more than 20 countries.

In fact, its initiatives have been recognized by international institutions. The Henry Reeve Medical Brigade has been awarded by the Executive Board of the World Health Organization (WHO) with the Dr Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health. Overall, the UN Economic Commission for Latin American and Caribbean has even called Cuba as a “model of South-South cooperation to promote equality and development.”<sup>1</sup>

One of its more expansive initiatives is with countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, it has developed cooperation initiatives in health education and sports. Meanwhile, Cuba has been one of the most active countries in offering medical support in WHO-directed efforts in the aftermath of catastrophic natural calamities like that of earthquakes in Armenia (1988), Pakistan (2003), as well as the tsunami in Indonesia (2005).

According to the 2018 report on Cuba of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation, “Cuban medical brigades have attended more than 1,500 million patients, applied 13.6 million vaccines, carried out more than 14.6 million operations, and assisted in more than three million births. The intervention of these health professionals has saved the lives of more than six million people.”<sup>2</sup>

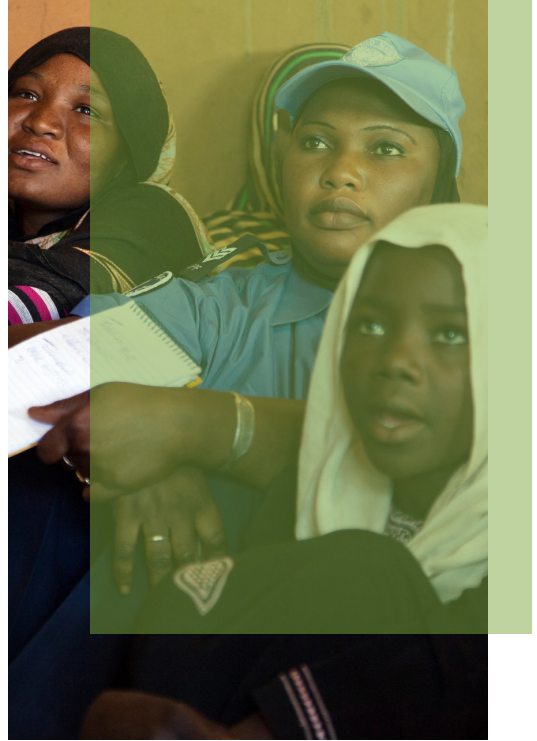
An example of a specific medical initiative by Cuba is Operation Miracle (Operacion Milagro), a campaign against blindness and other ophthalmological disorders. In pursuit of the campaign's objectives, Cuban medical professionals have so far made three million operations on patients in 34 countries in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean.

The Cuban government has institutionalized its policy cooperation with other developing countries through the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment. The ministry is tasked with crafting and helping execute the policies on economic, scientific and technical cooperation with other countries.

1 [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/08/c\\_137162549.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/08/c_137162549.htm)

2 <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/2018/05/07/south-south-in-action-from-cuba-to-the-world-2018/>

## **V. DEFINING HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES (HRBA)**



There has been a felt need to expand the development framework from a focus on economic work towards the inclusion of different, though interrelated, dimensions of development: political, social, cultural, etc. Through this holistic approach to development, people are able to fulfill their full potential.

A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It entails the participation of rights holders in the decision-making processes relating to development plans and initiatives. This also entails that the duty-bearers or governments be held accountable to the rights-holders in their obligation to uphold international human rights laws and local legislation.

HRBA seeks to analyze inequalities that lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress. Essentially, HRBA affirms the primary role of marginalized sectors and communities in charting their own development, while delegitimizing the long-held notion that the poor and marginalized are mere passive recipients of aid and charity.



### **Box 5. The Common Understanding for HRBA**

*(Adapted from the UN Practitioners Portal on HRBA)*

- *All programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.*

A set of programme activities that only incidentally contributes to the realization of human rights does not necessarily constitute a human rights-based approach to programming. In a human rights-based approach to programming and development cooperation, the aim of all activities is to contribute directly to the realization of one or several human rights.

- *Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process.*

Human Rights principles guide programming in all sectors, such as: health, education, governance, nutrition, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, employment and labour relations and social and economic security. This includes all development cooperation directed towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the agenda 2030.

Human rights principles guide all programming in all phases of the programming process, including assessment and analysis, programme planning and design (including setting of goals, objectives and strategies); implementation, monitoring and evaluation

- *Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and/or of 'rights-holders' to claim their rights.*

In HRBA, human rights determine the relationship between individuals and groups with valid claims (rights-holders) and State and non-state actors with correlative obligations (duty-bearers). It identifies rights-holders (and their entitlements) and corresponding duty-bearers (and their obligations) and works towards strengthening the capacities of rights-holders to make their claims, and of duty-bearers to meet their obligations.

## VI. HRBA IN THE CONTEXT OF SSC AND SSDC



From its beginnings in the Bandung Conference to today, among the core principles of South-South Cooperation are mutual respect, mutual cooperation and understanding among Southern countries, many of which experienced underdevelopment while under colonial subjugation.

By taking on a human rights-based approach to South-South development cooperation, these core principles take on a deeper meaning, as the approach involves the active involvement and cooperation, not just of governments from Southern countries, but of stakeholders, specifically marginalized peoples, in these countries. It involves duty-bearers taking into account the conditions, vulnerabilities and contributions of these rights-holders.

However, while most of the Southern development cooperation actors note human rights from time to time in their statements and speeches on development cooperation policies and programs, they do not prominently hold up to them as key objectives or principles. Human rights considerations do not seem to have any bearing on the allocation of development cooperation financing or other flows and relationships. The limited evidence on allocation, for example, suggests that geo-economic interests, regional interests, and historical ties are the dominant factors shaping South-South development cooperation.

However, their role in offering recipient nations greater choices in their sources of financing and assistance, and demonstrating alternative models and approaches to economic growth may well prove more effective in increasing productivity, and security. Therefore, aligning their support to HRBA becomes paramount.

Furthermore, South-South development cooperation activities might impact poverty reduction, social justice, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and human rights in a magnitude that have never been seen before. For this to happen though, SSDC principles will have to be used to define its policy frameworks, programs and initiatives in the context of HRBA. Adoption and alignment of particular principles including environmental sustainability, national ownership, mutual accountability, horizontality and mutual learning have potential in facilitating HRBA compliance.

Efforts to empower communities, poor households and citizens - to treat them more than mere recipients of development projects and programs but as rights-holders with legal entitlement - have been entrenched in the development effectiveness agenda. The need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for citizens of the world and more specifically those in the South to be put at the center of development agenda through design, planning and implementation. To this end, SSC as a framework for development cooperation should also seek to put people to claim their rights. Government institutions in the South should therefore no longer see themselves as mere service providers but as 'duty-bearers,' who are under an obligation to deliver on people's empowerment.

Questions abound, however, as to whether Southern governments' SSDC initiatives align with human rights commitments as expressed in the ratified international human rights treaties, national constitutions and legislation. At the same time governments of the south are conflicted over the role of stakeholders, including communities, CSO, private service should have on the realization of human rights and responsibilities in the context of achieving the SDGs. How SSDC actors empower citizens and the role of various stakeholders articulated and implemented will define the nature and the magnitude of impact the cooperation will have towards people's empowerment.

As it stands today, most of the development policies implemented by Southern countries have yet, for the most part, to reflect human rights commitments; this despite most of the governments of these countries being signatories to important human rights treaties. Most of these countries have also yet to include the marginalized sectors and communities in crafting their development policies in pursuit of SDGs. It is therefore of paramount importance that SSDC also be measured in terms of people empowerment and fulfillment of human rights commitments.

Additionally, the prevalence and further encouragement of business sector, international financial institutions, and traditional donors' involvement in projects and programs pose human rights issues including labor conditions, consumer protection, and social and environmental impacts. It is pertinent and should be strengthened so that the acclaimed advantage of Southern

donors in terms of their avowed respect for sovereignty and policy of non-interference is not abused.

HRBA should be applied to all forms of development cooperation that every country enters into, whether it is North-South or South-South. As such, every country in the community of nations, including those in the South, has obligations under International Law and International Human Rights Covenants and Conventions. They are obligations assumed by all governments and should therefore inform their dialogue and agreements on international cooperation (ROA, CPDE, 2018).





## VII. EFFORTS TOWARDS MEASURING SSDC



SSDC stakeholders participate in the GPDEC as recipients. Their role and impact in changing the landscape of development cooperation remain at the center of development policy debate. Their blend of various instruments, the speed with which the partnership is conducted and the guidelines set by each actor in the SSC provides both opportunities and challenges of equal magnitude in the field of development cooperation. There is thus an urgent need for an operational framework to facilitate the measurement and the impact of SSDC.

The Busan outcome document (herein to be referred to as Global Partnership Agreement) recognized South-South and triangular cooperation as having the potential to transform developing countries' policies and approaches to service delivery by bringing effective, locally-owned solutions that are appropriate to country contexts. It saw SSC as playing complementary rather than replacing other forms of developing cooperation. The global partnership agreement committed to the following:

- a) Scaling up – where appropriate – the use of triangular approaches to development cooperation;
- b) Making fuller use of South-South and triangular cooperation, recognizing the success of these approaches to date and the synergies they offer;
- c) Encouraging the development of networks for knowledge exchange, peer learning and coordination among South-South cooperation actors as a means of facilitating access to important knowledge pools by developing countries; and



- d) Supporting efforts to strengthen local and national capacities to engage effectively in South-South and triangular cooperation.

Tremendous efforts have been made towards the realization of the action areas agreed upon in the Global Partnership. One glaring gap, however, exists in the full participation of SSDC provider governments as a stakeholder in the GPDEC. While all the stakeholders participate in some form assessments including those of CSOs and the private sector, SSDC providers remain less connected to the GPDEC monitoring process. Part of the challenge is due to the lack of a relevant monitoring framework and tools that address both the rational, technical and development needs of SSDC.

There are, however, new efforts by various global initiatives, including that of the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST), to monitor and measure SSDC from the providers mainly from China, Brazil, India, Turkey and South Africa. Other efforts are led by individual provider countries such as China and Brazil. These efforts are, however, still at their infant stages and will no doubt contribute to enriching this body of work. It must, nevertheless, be noted that the various elements of the ongoing work do not base their framework entirely on human rights-based approach and deals mainly with emerging providers from the South including Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Turkey. They do not recognize SSC that exists beyond countries other than those in the BRICS and Turkey.

## VIII. TOWARDS A HRBA MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR SSDC



HRBA is an internationally-acknowledged normative framework used by civil society worldwide to mobilize people to claim their rights and hold governments accountable. It provides a framework for measuring how governments, stakeholders, sectors, institutions and policies are transparent, inclusive and partnering, allowing for better services and meaningful participation of all citizens, including disadvantaged groups. Thus, HRBA framework for monitoring SSDC implies that human rights serve as a guidance and yardstick for development cooperation and policy across all sectors and levels of intervention in the South. It seeks to measure, among other things, ownership, sustainability, and accountability, and facilitates country and stakeholder learning.

Achieving development results does not happen automatically but relies heavily on the social, economic and political interests under which two cooperating partners operate. SSDC has both the supply and demand side elements that play a critical role in facilitating its cooperation. Nevertheless, the cooperation must respect, protect and fulfill the rights of all the citizens, regardless of their origin, or any other such status. Resources and partnership deployed in this development cooperation must reduce discrimination and improve universal access to essential public services and resources. They must empower citizens to claim their rights to development. Each stakeholder must play a distinct role in development cooperation when addressing the issues of ownership, accountability and sustainability.

For the provider, HRBA implies support to partner institutions in translating social, economic and cultural rights into peoples' empowerment through

policies, projects, programs and financial instruments. On the part of the recipient partner, HRBA interventions work towards empowerment of rights holders to claim and realize their rights by supporting human rights education, awareness, monitoring, and action.

The focus is to measure how SSDC brings about improvements in people's lives as well as changes in ownership, accountability and sustainability in the cooperation. Furthermore, it addresses the multi-dimensional and complex development outcomes of SSC initiatives of the SSC: financial and technical flows, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and social and economic infrastructural projects on citizen participation. It will also address issues of citizens' access to basic resources and services, such as education, justice, health and water.

Measuring SSDC in terms of HRBA also means reviewing minimum standards used for shaping analyses, identifying development priorities and objectives, implementing strategies as well as monitoring impact. Fundamentally, therefore, the end result must empower and protect the rights of the marginalized groups, women, youth, indigenous groups and persons of disabilities.

More specifically, the framework requires that the focus on measuring how sets of action from the two cooperating countries or entities fulfill their role in the realization of development based HRBA.

This monitoring/assessment framework will assess the following elements of SSDC in:

1. Democratic Ownership
2. Sustainable Impact
3. Accountability

## Democratic Ownership

The following will be assessed with regard to co-operating partners

- The extent to which there is alignment with democratically determined country priorities and strategies including priority SDGs
- The extent to which political and administrative procedures follow clear and publicly known rules, that decisions by government agencies are comprehensible, and that information on issues of public concern is publicly available and accessible and debated
- The extent to which there is a good understanding and availability of necessary conditions, environment and space for meaningful and broad structured stakeholder participation in relevant processes at micro, meso and macro level with regard to policy formulation, projects and program design, implementation and evaluation
  - » The extent to which development projects and programmes reach out to and work with a diverse set of local partner organizations, including advocacy CSOs, community-based organizations, national or local parliaments, trade unions, national human rights institutions, ombudspersons, and the media
- The extent to which the provider supports structures, institutions, policies, and legal frameworks that sustainably widen spaces for broad and meaningful participation and democratic ownership engagement in the partner country;
- The extent to which projects or programs integrates the development of the skills of individuals and groups (capacity-building) so that they can contribute to the development process and claim further improvements in the fulfillment of their rights.

## Accountability

- The existence of accessible citizen complaint and redress mechanisms (e.g. health watch committees, ombudspersons, national human rights institutions), and introducing measures to improve independence and accessibility;
- The availability of effective and participatory monitoring and evaluation systems, which allow for systematic monitoring of progress made towards poverty reduction and people empowerment;



- The extent to which accountability process is inclusive and participatory, and includes monitoring, evaluation, accountability mechanisms and remedies;
- The extent to which other stakeholders have organizational capacity to mobilize, gather information and undertake advocacy campaigns, and also to apply HRBA principles to their internal management and procedures;
- Existence of groups with skills and resources to monitor human rights fulfillment and infringements, including the monitoring of aid, loans, projects and programs;
- The extent to which the cooperating partners enable individuals and groups to claim their rights, in courts, press, the internet, public hearings, social audits, etc.;
- The extent of transparency in data and availability of information for all stakeholders and interested parties.

## Sustainability

- The extent to which there are support structures, institutions, policies and legal frameworks that sustainably widen spaces for broad and meaningful participation and democratic ownership engagement in an initiative;
- The extent to which the projects or initiatives have developed technical capacity to translate human rights into effective peoples' empowerment policies with appropriate budget allocations, and based on concrete legal entitlements to basic services.

## Monitoring Process

In monitoring the impact of SSDC, the process seeks to ensure the following in the initiatives and projects of SSDC:

- That the most marginalized people are getting involved and contributing to the programs;
- That in development, the effectiveness of programs are not only seen in its outputs, but also in its outcomes and processes;
- That the final outcomes of programs ensure that the processes are human rights-friendly and lead to people's empowerment.

For the monitoring framework to be operational, actors/researchers have to assess SSDC projects and initiatives in terms of the HRBA framework. The assessments can be conducted on any country, as well as stakeholders' initiatives to establish the adherence of any sets of programs and projects with HRBA.

Some specific actions to help bolster the monitoring impact of SSDC initiatives and programs are: (a) working with a common definition; (b) establishing the existence of a coherent strategy for SSDC cooperation; (c) systematically applying monitoring guidelines and guidance; (d) systematically using reporting mechanisms; and, (e) systematically using data collection and reporting mechanisms.

### **Reporting Requirement Assumptions**

- a) SSC actors adopt the SSC principles;
- b) Reporting requirements are agreed upon at the political level;
- c) Indicators are agreed upon at technical level;
- d) Countries and entities submit their data;
- e) A Southern-based institution is tasked to collect and collate data and publish each SSC's Data and Implementation Report on a mid-term basis.

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