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Picking and Choosing:

Contributions of Brazilian cooperation to more horizontal post-2015 partnerships

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National and international interest in Brazilian development cooperation has grown in recent times. Many have hoped that Brazil, along with other providers of South-South Cooperation (SSC), could contribute to new paths for international cooperation. Brazil, due to its progress in achieving the MDGs, has increasingly been seen as a “bank of experiences,” with policies and practices to be shared regarding its trajectory of economic growth with social inclusion.

Although Brazil has been a cooperation provider since the 1970s, its engagement was significantly boosted during Lula’s government (2002-2010), with the internationalization of social policies as well as an increase in disbursements. The experience accumulated during the last twelve years, although not systematized, may provide insights for renewed international cooperation in the post-2015 period.

Like other providers of SSC, the Brazilian government’s narrative emphasizes the principles of horizontality, non-conditionality, and responsiveness to the demands of partners. The discourse of solidarity, which gained centrality during Lula’s government through the concept of non-indifference, also permeates and justifies the government’s relationships with other countries of the South.¹ However, economic and political interests are also highlighted in the government’s narrative. Brazil’s development cooperation is seen as both altruistic and beneficial, without these two elements being perceived as contradictory.²

Since the 2012 Reality of Aid Report, there has been little progress in closing the gap in evidence concerning the disbursements, approaches and results of Brazilian cooperation. The latest official data published by the government is from 2010 (Chart 1). However, it is probable that this

Chart 1: Disbursements by modality (2010)

Modality	Total (Million US\$)	Percentage
Technical Cooperation	57.8	6.3%
Scientific and Technological Cooperation	24.0	2.6%
Educational Cooperation	35.5	3.8%
Humanitarian Cooperation	161.5	17.5%
Protection and Support for refugees	590.5	0.1%
Peace maintenance operations	332.4	36%
Expenses with International organizations	311.6	33.7%

Source: IPEA e ABC (2013)

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Chart 2: State General Budget –Budget line 212, International Cooperation

Year	Total Budget (Million R\$)	Percentage Change since 2010
2010	R\$1,411.1	
2011	R\$1,504.1	+6.6%
2012	R\$964.9	-31.6%
2013	R\$942.4	-33.2%
2014	R\$384.9	-72.7%

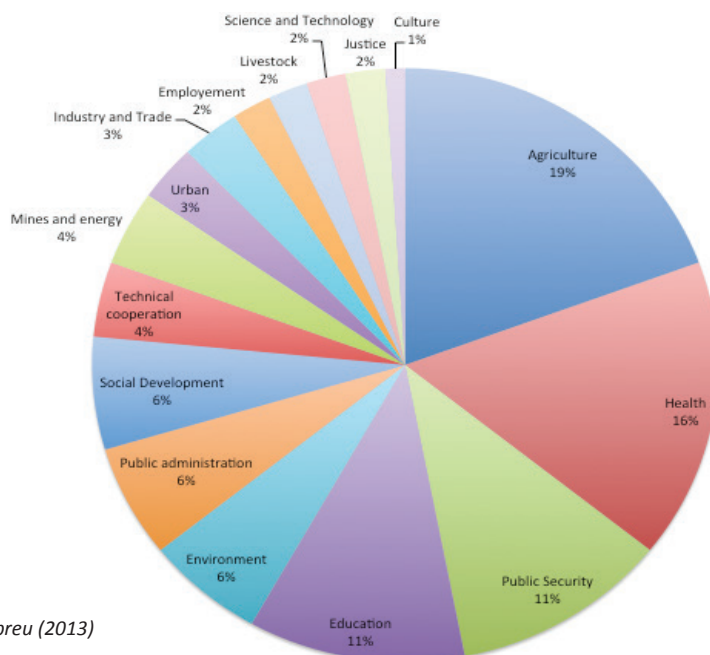
Source: Beghin (in press)

data is not representative of the current reality of Brazilian cooperation, due to the freezing and reduction of available resources for SSC since 2011 (Chart 2).

Data published by the current Director of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) sets out the sector division of technical cooperation in 2013 (Figure 1). Agriculture, health and education have traditionally been the major sectors of the Brazilian technical cooperation. But it is

noteworthy that 2013 is the first year in which public security is at the same level as education.³

There were some significant changes in the transition from Lula (2002-2010) to Dilma's government (2010-present). First, the current president does not share the enthusiasm of her predecessor regarding SSC. There is also a closer relationship between Brazilian interests in cooperation, trade and investment. Moreover,

Figure 1: Technical cooperation, proportion of expenditure per sector

Source: Abreu (2013)

the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MDIC) have intensified efforts to engage in SSC.⁴

Plurality of actors, diversity of approaches

Brazilian cooperation for development has several modalities and involves a multiplicity of actors, including government agencies, the private sector and civil society. This highly fragmented structure often leads to a lack of coordination and coherence in Brazil's engagement with the Global South. However, the fact that it involves several institutions should also be seen as one of the main advantages of the Brazilian SSC. This advantage results from the fact that initiatives are led by institutions and people that have had direct experience in the development and implementation of the programs and policies being shared (and not by an "aid bureaucracy"). Hence, it allows for more horizontal exchanges and the addressing of issues raised by partners.

What is clear is that there is no single model of Brazilian cooperation, but instead, a variety of policies and a multiplicity of practices, deeply influenced by the implementing agencies and involved partners. Therefore, there is no single partnership model, but rather a plurality of practices and approaches. However, some common features are being identified in publications and debates as unique aspects of Brazilian cooperation. This chapter focuses on three features: the so-called structural cooperation; the role of civil society; and the overlap of different modalities of Brazilian cooperation in its engagement with other countries of the South.

It is important to note that it is difficult to analyse what is actually occurring on the ground,

due to a lack of publicly available research that explores and evaluates the impact of Brazilian cooperation. Moreover, there is no literature that compares, based on evidence, the practices of Brazilian cooperation with different Northern donors. Nevertheless, we hope that the three aspects raised below can point to ways to think, or rethink, partnerships for the post-2015 development agenda.

Structural Cooperation

Different Brazilian institutions that implement SSC use the concept/approach of structuring projects, or structuring cooperation. Although they do not share the same definition, these are guided by a common goal: to strengthen local capacities and institutions in order to increase autonomy in relation to the development of the country. These projects seek to have structural impacts in a medium to long-term perspective.⁵ In most cases, they involve establishing or strengthening governmental institutions, universities and research agencies - or capacity/supply chains that increase the autonomy of the partner country (see Box One).

The approach in these projects/programs also attempts to mobilize Brazilian institutions for the implementation of different components and seeks to create space for mobilization of triangular partnerships.⁶ The importance of dialogue between actors and the role of the partner government as a protagonist are other critical aspects raised.⁷ This role by the partner government is possible due to the interest and involvement of senior government officials from the moment of conception and negotiation of the project.

The health sector SSC agencies are the ones that have analysed this modality in more detail and conceptualized the approach. The literature notes that structuring cooperation seeks to break with

Box One: Examples of projects focusing on structural impact

Cotton-4: The Cotton-4 program, implemented by Embrapa and ABC, supports the development of the cotton industry in Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin and Chad through testing and adaptation of productive cotton varieties in order to organize a profitable regional supply chain. Cotton-4 includes training in techniques of cotton cultivation and the establishment of a research unit.

ProSavana: The ProSavana, trilateral project in partnership with Japan, has focused on agricultural development in the tropical savannah of Mozambique. The initiative is accompanied by the Nacala Fund whose objective is to attract private investment to promote the development of agribusiness and food production in the region. The actors involved in ProSavana have been challenged by Brazilian and Mozambican civil society actors, as the project promotes a model of development that conflicts with predominant family farming in the region.

Food Acquisition Program - Africa (PAA-Africa): PAA-Africa is inspired by the Brazilian counterpart program that constitutes one of the pillars of Brazil's Zero Hunger strategy. Launched in 2012, PAA-Africa aims to strengthen family agriculture through the creation of local food supply chains. The program also supports local food shopping projects related to the Purchase for Progress and Home and School Feeding, two initiatives of the World Food Program and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) respectively.

Medical drugs factory in Mozambique: The project, run by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, promotes technology transfer and the training of Mozambican technicians for the production and marketing of medicines, especially anti-retrovirals. The project hopes to support the distribution of medicines to other African countries as well.

Strategic Plan for Cooperation in Health in Portuguese-speaking Countries - PECS-CPLP: PECS, which began in 2009, is formulated by a board of health ministries of member countries and other "focal points." Interests and needs are identified through dialogue with authorities and other local and national actors, with reference to the targets for the Millennium Development Goals in each country.

the traditional passive transfer of knowledge and technologies, and instead emphasizes endogenous capacities and capabilities. Some of the aspects highlighted as "best practices" are:

- Partners as protagonists in the stage of project design;
- Planning based on the specific realities of the partner countries and their populations, and not from blueprints;
- Definition of clear co-responsibilities;
- Support for a comprehensive development of health systems; and
- Strengthening of key institutions and knowledge generation.⁸

One might question, however, the extent to which projects and programs truly reflect a structuring modality in the current context of Brazilian cooperation. Brazil's SSC does not

have an institutional framework for the effective design, planning, monitoring and reporting of the various forms of cooperation. Therefore, projects following this modality of cooperation can be impacted by changes in the priorities or in executive leadership in implementing agencies.

To support the processes of debate and implementation of the SDGs, it will be important to carry out studies that contribute to further exploration of the approaches and differential impacts of these projects.

The role of civil society

Over the past 20 years, Brazil experienced an unprecedented and significant level of institutional innovation with the institutionalization of large-scale spaces for participatory processes.

Increasingly, social accountability mechanisms and processes are being recognized as important constituent elements of the Brazilian development model, based on economic growth with social inclusion.

With regard to Brazilian development cooperation, a number of results from this process can be highlighted: (i) Brazilian cooperation shares policies that were developed with close ties with social movements, which defended their rights while proposing concrete solutions in public policies; (ii) these policies relied on civil society's reach for its implementation and participatory management and, finally, (iii) they are policies that provide institutionalized social accountability spaces, which contribute to their legitimacy and sustainability.

Considering the national context for participatory engagement, this section highlights some dynamics that exemplify the possible consequences of the participation of civil society in setting up partnerships within Brazilian international cooperation. First, organized sectors of civil society are contributing to the formulation of narratives and recommendations to influence the agenda of cooperation. This engagement seeks not only to ensure that their perspectives are taken into account on certain agendas, but also to include and strengthen the participatory component of cooperation initiatives and the ties between civil societies. The following examples stand out: the role of the National Council for Food Security (CONSEAs),⁹ the initiative for the Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture in the Mercosul (REAF), and the Food Security Network (REDSAN), which became recognized for mobilizing the participation of civil society and the creation of the CPLP's Council for Food and Nutrition security.¹⁰

Another dynamic relates to cooperation projects by civil society organizations (CSOs) from the South, which bring innovation both in terms

of principles and methodologies, as well as in expected results. One example is the cooperation project between Brazil-Mozambique-South Africa for the creation of a native seed bank, led by CSOs and social movements of the three countries. Based on principles such as intercultural dialogue and appreciation of traditional knowledge, the project designed and structured actions for food sovereignty and social and political mobilization of participants.¹¹

From a perspective of cooperation driven by the Brazilian government, we stress the importance of recognizing the role of society as inherent to the processes of policy making and local development projects. PAA Africa, for example, helps to promote this participatory perspective with governments and partners in multilateral organisations and involved countries. The program seeks a role for civil society, farmers, school and community workers, which is not limited to the notion of the project beneficiaries, with participation restricted to implementation. But rather these civic actors are conceived as active agents, with spaces to influence governments to ensure the implementation of the agenda for Food and Nutrition Security.¹²

This more dynamic role for civic actors should not only rely on the discretion and sensitivity of government institutions and individuals that are promoting cooperation initiatives. The participation of Brazilian civil society in the debate on the priorities and approaches of governmental cooperation is crucial. There is a growing consensus among academic and political circles in Brazil that foreign policy, alongside public policy in other areas, is subject to being influenced by interests that are present in society.¹³ To ensure that only particular groups have influence in the decision-making, there is a historical demand by civil society to create a Participatory Foreign Policy Council, which would also include discussions on development cooperation.¹⁴

A tangle of modalities

Abreu, the current director of the ABC, has suggested that Brazilian SSC is “guided primarily by the mission of contributing to the strengthening of its relations with developing countries,” reaffirming the horizontal character and principle of mutual benefit.¹⁵ In this perspective, it is natural that the boundaries between technical, humanitarian and financial cooperation and commercial incentives such as debt relief, concessional credits or export credit are blurred.

Cooperation in agriculture is the sector that most exemplifies these dynamics. PAA Africa combines actions of emergency humanitarian assistance with technical cooperation; ProSavana combines technical cooperation with Brazilian financial support and commercial interests; and More Food Africa combines technical cooperation with concessional credits.¹⁶ Additionally, some projects are based not only on the successful sharing of national development experiences, but

directly relate to disputes in multilateral spaces in which particular notions of development are being promoted. The latter include development initiatives where international trade plays a key role, such as the case of the Cotton 4 Project and Drug Factory in Mozambique, both of which symbolize battles at the WTO.

These areas of convergence between modalities could promote better coordination between different aspects of cooperation and support more comprehensive development strategies with partners. They can also, in some cases, determine the existence of funding lines for CSO initiatives. On the other hand, considering the lack of a policy that requires clear guidelines for Brazilian cooperation, this entanglement also indicates the multiple interests present in the domestic sphere that are competing for the cooperation agenda. The risk is that projects are influenced by certain powerful sectors of Brazilian society, which is compounded by the lack of spaces for participation and accountability.

Box Two: International Public Financing for Sustainable Development

In addition to cooperation, Brazilian engagement in the field of international development also includes funding initiatives that symbolize change and innovation, yet also involve risks and challenges.

The IBSA Fund for Alleviation of Hunger and Poverty is an example. Recognized by awards from the international community, the IBSA Fund finances “demand-driven” projects, which include in their design both capacity strengthening and conditions for sustainability. Hence, they are implemented through triangular partnerships with international organizations and federal or decentralized national institutions. On the other hand, the Fund has disbursements of only US\$3 million annually and has been criticized by civil society for its lack of transparency and access to information.

To take concrete steps to strengthen a multi-polar international order, the BRICS New Development Bank (NBD) emerges as an important supplement to the efforts of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to finance infrastructure. The NBD, with initial authorized capital of US\$100 billion, has the objective to pursue sustainable development. However, agreement between the BRICS about the type of infrastructure to be financed and about their understanding of sustainable development will be key to defining the character of the funded projects and how far they truly ensure sustainability.

Finally, the Bank of the South — set up in 2009 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela — aims to finance projects that accelerate the integration of Latin America, reducing regional inequalities as well as dependency on external IFI finance and its related conditionalities. However, the Bank that was announced in 2007 and had committed funds of up to US\$20 billion has not become operational as yet.

The case of ProSavana is an example of the tensions that can be generated by this dynamic. Disputes over the project revolve around the important question of the extent to which gains for certain economic sectors create significant losses to local communities.¹⁷ The challenges reflect conflicting models of agricultural production, such as agribusiness and family farming, indicating the need to reflect on whether Brazilian cooperation, for the various reasons above, is contributing to the export of internal conflicts.¹⁸

Possible Brazilian contributions to post-2015 partnerships

The intensification of Brazilian cooperation with other countries in the South led to the expansion and redesign of its partnerships. Despite the lack of a single approach and possible contradictions that these multifaceted commitments bring, we believe that Brazilian cooperation can contribute to procedural and structural changes necessary for emancipatory post-2015 partnerships.

First, the trajectory of Brazilian development challenges the notion of a unique development path. These policies and practices shared by the country through its development cooperation contribute to the pluralisation of voices that influence the debate and global practice. In this sense, greater influence on the part of countries involved in SSC can facilitate the emergence of new paradigms of development.

Moreover, the defense of economic and commercial interests and concerted actions in international forums such as the WTO, the G20 and other areas of global governance points to the importance of recognizing that structural changes, including international trade, are necessary for autonomous and sustainable development of the countries of the South.

Some principles are fundamental to the establishment and guidance of horizontal partnerships. It is common to hear the importance of the so-called “inspiration factor” in SSC. For example, Brazil does not impose the Brazilian experience in its cooperation, but rather, holds the view that cooperation is the result of demands by countries that admire its experience, hence enabling a more equitable relationship. This principle applies not only to government, but also to the cooperation experience of civil society, even if it is still largely unrealized. We look forward to future analysis of Brazilian development cooperation that can bring more evidence on the actual preconditions for horizontal partnerships.

Brazilian cooperation (and SSC in general) due to its specificities and diversity, has not yet clearly articulated a theoretical framework that helps to define the limits of SSC. There are no criteria and indicators that help organize evidence and establish the impacts arising from the various modalities in which it works. Also absent is a reflection on SSC’s responsibility to promote human rights and social justice. Advancing a theoretical and practical conceptualization and evaluation of SSC results, based on reflections of SSC practitioners, should inform future practices and debates. The elaboration of this framework will contribute effectively to the consolidation of new concepts and practices in international development cooperation.

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Endnotes

- 1 Abdenur and Neto, 2014. The concept of "non-indifference," used by Lula for the first time in 2004, stresses that, although the country is oriented by the principle of "non-intervention," its actions are also guided by an attitude of non-indifference to the problems that affect partners.
- 2 MRE 2010.
- 3 IPEA and ABC, 2013; IPEA and ABC, 2013.
- 4 Leite et al, 2014.
- 5 Farani, s/d.
- 6 Abreu, 2013: 6.
- 7 Almeida et al, 2010, 28, CG-Hunger, s/d.
- 8 Kastrup and Person, 2012; Almeida et al, 2010; AISA, 2009.
- 9 Beghin, in press.
- 10 CPLP, 2012.
- 11 Suyama and Pomeroy, 2014.
- 12 PAA Africa, 2013.
- 13 Pinheiro & Milani, 2011; Leite, et al 2014.
- 14 Lima & Milani, 2014.
- 15 Abreu, 2013, 6pp.
- 16 Masagão et al, 2013.
- 17 National Farmers Union, 2014.
- 18 Mello, 2013.