



On 22 May 2019, the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), associated with UNISA and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), co-hosted a dialogue titled ‘Appraising the Dynamics of South–South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation: Lessons beyond the BAPA+40 Conference’. The event reflected on the international development arena and global development in the context of the United Nations Conference on South–South Cooperation and Technical Cooperation for Developing Countries (TCDC), first held in 1978 and the second hosted in Argentina in March 2019.

The dialogue built on research drawn from the participation of the IGD at the BAPA+40 Conference and its engagement in a number of side events in Buenos Aires. The event brought together wide-ranging participants including scholars, academics, diplomats, government representatives, media and civil society.

This report is compiled by **Ms Faith Mabera**, Senior Researcher at the IGD.

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Appraising the Dynamics of South–South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation: Lessons beyond the BAPA+40 Conference

PROCEEDINGS REPORT

September 2019

Introduction

The Second United Nations (UN) Conference on South–South Cooperation, otherwise known as BAPA+40, was hosted by Argentina from 20 to 22 March 2019. The conference marked the 40th anniversary of the ground-breaking UN Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries that was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1978. The BAPA+40 conference, with the theme “Role of South–South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities”, took place against the backdrop of a Global South that is economically empowered and has developed important capabilities and comprehensive frameworks for intensified cooperation among the countries of the South. Sub-themes of the BAPA+40 conference included (i) the comparative advantages of South–South cooperation and the opportunities that can be seized for enhancing such cooperation in multilateral affairs and in South–South institution building, (ii) challenges with regard to strengthening the institutional framework for South–South cooperation, and (iii) scaling up the means to implement Agenda 2030 in support of South–South cooperation (SSC).

In light of the changing development cooperation landscape, BAPA+40 was an opportune moment for the Global South to reflect and build on the potential of SSC going forward, as well as allowing countries to assert solidarity and collective self-reliance in a shifting global context. The range of multilateral activities pertinent to development cooperation frameworks, including the 2015 Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2015 Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015, points to SSC complementarity with North–South cooperation and interlinkages with the sustainable development agenda. Highlighting the value of SSC in reinvigorating the spirit of ‘leaving no one behind’ and enhancing the global partnership for sustainable development, Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognises the complementary role that SSC plays in the implementation of the 2030 agenda with a focus on access

to science, technology and innovation, knowledge sharing and capacity building in achieving the SDGs.

The final outcome document of the BAPA+40 conference not only emphasised the interlinkages between SSC and sustainable development but also the values that underpin SSC, including respect for national sovereignty, national ownership, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference and mutual benefit. Nevertheless, the perennial concerns surrounding SSC persist, particularly the conceptual and definitional debates around an agreed definition, as well as the contentious issues concerning impact assessment and the effectiveness of SSC, given its demand-driven nature. Furthermore, no mention was made of the notion of common but differentiated responsibility as a key principle informing SSC and only a vague, abstract reference to the complementary role of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) members.

The dialogue began with insights on South Africa's approach to both SSC and triangular cooperation, drawing on Africa's participation at the BAPA+40 conference and its experiences as a key Global South development partner. The conversation then turned to the key lessons from the conference and implications for the future evolution of SSC and triangular cooperation, with an emphasis on challenges and opportunities for SSC going forward in an evolved development cooperation landscape. Finally, the viewpoints shifted to consider the perspective of civil society and the dynamics that have shaped the role of civil society in SSC.

South Africa's approach to South–South cooperation and triangular cooperation: Notes from South Africa's participation at the BAPA+40 conference

Today, the development cooperation landscape is markedly different from that of 40 years ago when the first Buenos Aires conference was held, with its strong emphasis on economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) and technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). The maturing of SSC, influenced by the efforts of member countries of the Group of 77 (G77) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), has brought about an increase in scope and diversity to include both big and small actors, and the incorporation of several modalities such as technology transfer, knowledge exchange, financial assistance and concessional loans.

For South Africa, SSC is one of the priorities on its foreign policy agenda, drawing on its participation in forums such as BRICS, IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), G77, NAM and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Going into the negotiations for the BAPA+40 Conference, South Africa was cognisant of the contemporary global landscape of contested cooperation, the rise in anti-globalisation sentiments, increased vertical and horizontal inequality and the spread of populism and protectionism. Acknowledging the spirit of solidarity among countries of the Global South, the crux of South Africa's position was strong affirmation for the principles of SSC, namely, respect for national sovereignty, non-conditionality, self-reliance, horizontality, multi-stakeholder partnerships and mutual benefits, as agreed during the 2009 High-level UN Conference on South–South Cooperation in Nairobi. During deliberations on the Outcome Document, South Africa supported the notion of SSC as being separate but complementary to North–South Cooperation. In addition, South Africa welcomed the acknowledgement of triangular cooperation as a beneficial, complementary modality of development cooperation with great potential for enriching partnerships. The

BAPA+40 Conference Outcome Document also made linkages between the SSC agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called for the upscaling of national and regional efforts to implement the Agenda.

The increasing calls for accountability and impact assessment were contentious in light of the demand-driven nature of SSC. Nonetheless, South Africa supported the view that an impact assessment of SSC initiatives, as well as their monitoring and evaluation, should be undertaken as the need arises rather than imposing a common template, especially in view of the variations in configurations and patterns and the extent of demands by partner countries. Overall, Mr Cedrick Crowley, Director of Economic Development, DIRCO, noted that South Africa endorsed the BAPA+40 Conference Outcome Document, taking note of its:

- reiteration of the principles of SSC as agreed at the 2009 Nairobi Conference
- grounding in strong, genuine, broad-based partnerships for development cooperation
- strong linkages to the 2030 Agenda
- affirmation of the strengthening of South–South trade in a WTO-consistent manner
- overarching message that the SSC agenda should be driven by countries of the South, based on extended lesson-sharing and knowledge exchanges.

Key takeaways from the BAPA+40 Conference: Challenges and opportunities for the evolution of SSC

Participants were in agreement that a major achievement of the BAPA+40 conference was that countries of the Global South were, for the first time, seen as *solution providers* rather than *solution seekers*. Furthermore, plurality/diversity as one of the cornerstones of SSC was established and strengthened by showcasing various success stories from across the developing world that employ different modalities and involve various sectors. On the other hand, a shortfall noted was the limited discussion on the means of implementation, as well as ambiguity in the complementary role of OECD/DAC members and the issues of base erosion and profit shifting. A contentious issue was the growing debate on efficacy and effectiveness, impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) regarding SSC. This was seen as problematic given the demand-driven nature of SSC; a more preferable approach would be a voluntary, partner country-driven approach based on the engagement of partners as either recipients or providers.

With regard to the evolution of SSC, a notable proposition from Mr Pratyush Sharma, a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Peace, was the linking of such cooperation to the Right to Development (RtD), based on the perspectives of international cooperation as a cornerstone for development, as highlighted in frameworks such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on climate change; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A first step to observing SSC through the RtD lens would be the incorporation of the human rights principles enshrined in RtD in the design, financing, implementation and M&E of SSC. Such an approach would seek to reinforce and complement many of the principles enshrined in the SSC conceptual framework. This framework is promising as it embodies many of the principles enshrined in the right to development such as equality, inclusiveness, participation, national ownership and self-determination. However,

linking RtD to SSC is a process fraught with difficulties, given the contemporary approach to SSC as an outcome-driven model and RtD as process driven.

A number of challenges to SSC were identified including (i) the heterogeneity of the Global South, made up of countries with different experiences, interests, needs and levels of development; there is thus the danger that SSC could be dominated by certain countries becoming more prescriptive, conditional and based on self-interest. (ii) The concern that civil society, affected communities and individuals are sometimes not sufficiently involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of SSC initiatives; for instance, Northern civil society organisations (CSOs) often fill the space in Southern countries. (iii) The challenge presented by M&E of SSC with regard to issues such as the diversity of modalities and lack of a universally accepted definition; evidence gaps and limited data on SSC; the lack of structured M&E mechanisms or information management systems; and limited experience or institutional capacity among Southern partners.

On peace and security, Mr Sharma noted with concern that the absence of a peace and security dimension of development in the SSC agenda is attributed to the fact that many Southern countries believe that peace is a North-led process, dominated by the liberal peace paradigm. Southern presence in the peace-building process has traditionally been seen in post-conflict infrastructure, capacity and institution-building activities, for example India's post-conflict reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. However, there are instances of Southern countries contributing to the process of peacebuilding; South Africa, for example, has embarked on peacebuilding initiatives in DRC, employing convergent and divergent operational methods with the dominant liberal model of peacebuilding. In the past, India played a significant role during the Korean War (1950–53) by mediating at the behest of the United Nations between the warring parties, and the Indian initiative in the United Nations General Assembly led to the formation of the Disarmament Sub-committee of the UN in 1953. Overall, the South's role in UN-led peacekeeping operations has been well documented, and continues to grow in importance in the changing international landscape.

In view of the implicit mandate of the UN Office on South–South Cooperation (UNOSSC) to mainstream SSC across the 17 goals of Agenda 2030, there is now greater understanding of SSC in the areas of trade, finance, economics, infrastructure, science and technology and innovation, health, agriculture, education and climate change. Moreover, there is an evolving understanding of SSC in areas of peace, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, humanitarian responses, displacement responses, gender justice, the role of youth, and migration and diasporas.

There is a pressing need for an improved communication strategy on SSC and trilateral cooperation (TrC), especially given the negative public perception of development cooperation in the Global North brought on by the rise of right-wing political movements, leading to inward-looking tendencies. Fortunately, development cooperation is viewed positively in most Southern nations. However, these nations must look at issues of accountability, as well as M&E and impact assessment of SSC, not to please the North but to justify them to their own peoples. Plurality within SSC is celebrated and intervention (political and economic) is abhorred.

Circling back to the argument of an RtD approach to SSC, an invitation to learn from the African Union and the African Peer Review Mechanism was put forward as a recommendation

for promoting discussion on the use of a rights discourse as a platform for sustainable development.

Opportunities and challenges shaping the role of civil society in South–South cooperation

Guiding the discussion on perspectives from civil society, Ms Marianne Buenaventura Goldman, Global Impact Manager at Oxfam South Africa, highlighted the importance of civil society engagement on SSC in ensuring the incorporation of citizens' voices and matching SSC initiatives to their needs and exigencies. Accordingly, the BAPA+40 Outcome Document emphasises inclusive partnerships as an instrument for improving the impact of and actions in development cooperation and called upon all actors, including civil society and NGOs, to become meaningfully engaged in enhancing SSC and TrC.

Challenges such as the horizontal and political inequalities faced by the world, mostly in the global South, require urgent and effective policies in order to be effectively addressed. Hence, SSC and TrC seek to achieve human development within and between countries. At the heart of SSC should be the citizenry of the South; inclusive partnerships also speak to the idea of inclusive national ownership. It is important to answer the question of *what*, for *whom* and *why* in order to evaluate whether all actions are relevant. It is also important for the public to understand the role of each country, as well as regional efforts to understand whom the development is for and how it is linked to fulfilling national targets for Agenda 2030 and the idea of leaving no one behind.

The Civil BRICS Forum was cited as an example of civil society mechanisms by which to engage in deliberations on SSC. Since the Durban BRICS summit in 2013, civil society has been advocating for space in the summit, which has up to now been largely a government-to-government platform. However, there has been movement towards opening it up for civil society engagement. Reflecting on how SSC has become more formalised, including through the development of new Southern groups such as the BRICS and IBSA, civil society has increasingly mobilised and organised its engagement in these processes. There is an increasing role for society to engage in SSC processes, moving away from deliberations on state-centric platforms. In the South African and African model, the platform is multi-stakeholder in nature, involving government, non-state actors and civil society.

Currently, the enabling environment for civil society participation in SSC processes remains weak. If one looks at the closing civil space in some Global South countries, CSOs have called for support in accessing quality and timely information as well as engaging in formal spaces. The limited awareness by the public is another challenge, for instance of what countries are doing and how they engage in processes. There are opportunities to be proactive by providing information or support through engagement or finances, and by enacting a better communications strategy. This can be achieved with websites that provide detailed information, including that of DIRCO, engaging the media and regular reporting. In terms of an impact assessment of SSC, it is important to have a clear definition and a monitoring system in place to improve SSC accountability. In view of South Africa's long-term role in SSC, civil society believes that South Africa should intensify its efforts to strengthen accountability and capacity in order to access the effectiveness of its SSC initiatives. In so doing, South Africa may define its strategy and comparative advantages for its regional and international

development partners. Furthermore, South Africa has an opportunity to position inclusive national ownership as central to its work on SSC and to set an example for its leadership as a development partner in the Global South, as well as making progress towards the SDGs as part of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063 for Africa's goals of inclusiveness and sustainable development.

Conclusion

In sum, the dialogue was successful in reflecting the way in which BAPA+40 principles and views have changed as they address the 2030 Agenda and SSC; in particular the way the Global South is no longer a recipient of ideas and development experiences but rather a solution provider in shaping the narrative on global development. Secondly, African perspectives on BAPA+40, as reflected in the outcomes of the 2019 High-level United Nations Conference on South–South cooperation, are strongly aligned to the G77 position, which emphasises South–South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance for the South based on common objectives and solidarity. With specific reference to African initiatives during the BAPA+40 Conference, a noteworthy achievement was the presentation of the first African SSC Report, which reflected the activities of various African countries in SSC, as a crucial means of implementing their 2030 and 2063 agendas. The role of SSC as an important catalyst for the consolidation of regional cooperation and integration within the African continent, as well as with other regions of the South through interregional cooperation, was also recognised. In this respect, the need to designate national bodies or agencies dedicated to orchestrating SSC efforts and scaling up knowledge exchange in the African context was emphasised. Overall, recommendations made with reference to the outcomes of the Second High-level Conference on South–South Cooperation include improving communications, sharing information and dispelling preconceptions, but more importantly linking the Global South more effectively and communicating a strategic message on how triangular cooperation should be conducted.

Programme



Appraising dynamics of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation: Lessons beyond the BAPA+40 Conference

22 May 2019, Burgers Park Hotel, Pretoria.

Agenda

- 09h00-09h30: Arrival & registration
- 09h30-09h45: Welcome remarks
Dr Philani Mthembu, Executive Director, IGD.
Dr Heinz Bongartz, Country Director, FES.
- 09h45-10h05: South Africa's approach to South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation: notes from South Africa's participation at the BAPA+40 conference – *Mr Cedrick Crowley*, DIRCO, Director: Economic Development
- 10h05- 10h25: Mapping African priorities and an Africa position on the outcomes of the BAPA+40 Conference – *Ms Sara Hamouda*, Research Analyst/North Africa Regional Coordinator, APRM.
- 10h25-10h50: Coffee break
- 10h50-11h10: What now after the BAPA+40 conference? Key lessons from the conference and implications for future evolution of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. - *Mr Pratyush Sharma*, Doctoral Candidate, University of Peace Costa Rica
- 11h10-11h30: Perspectives from civil society: opportunities and challenges shaping civil society role in South-South cooperation - *Ms Marianne Buenaventura Goldman*, Global Impact Manager, Oxfam South Africa
- 11h30-12h15 Q &A
- 12h15-12h30: Concluding remarks & vote of thanks
Dr Philani Mthembu, IGD
- 12h30: Lunch
- End

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About the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)



The IGD is an independent foreign policy think tank dedicated to the analysis of and dialogue on the evolving international political and economic environment, and the role of Africa and South Africa. It advances a balanced, relevant and policy-oriented analysis, debate and documentation of South Africa's role in international relations and diplomacy.

The IGD strives for a prosperous and peaceful Africa in a progressive global order through cutting-edge policy research and analysis, catalytic dialogue and stakeholder interface on global dynamics that have an impact on South Africa and Africa.

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