The ABCs of South-South Cooperation

(or everything you wanted to know about South-South Cooperation but were afraid to ask)

Steve MacFeely
The political context

South-South cooperation is a powerful tool as we advance, together, towards the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfill the promise to leave no one behind.

New York, June 2017

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
SSC is a broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains.

Involving two or more developing countries, it can take place on a bilateral, regional, intraregional or interregional basis. Developing countries share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through concerted efforts.

Recent developments in SSC have taken the form of increased volume of South-South trade, South-South flows of foreign direct investment, movements towards regional integration, technology transfers, sharing of solutions and experts, and other forms of exchanges.

Source: [https://www.unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/](https://www.unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/)
Some key dates

1974  UNGA in res. A/3251, endorses the establishment of a special unit within the UNDP to promote technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

1978  Conference of the Global South adopts the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for promoting and implementing TCDC.

2003  UNGA in res. 58/220 declares 19 December as UN Day for SSC. It is first celebrated in 2004.

2004  Special Unit for TCDC is renamed Special Unit for SSC (SU/SSC)

2009  High-level UN Conference on SSC in Nairobi.

2013  UNGA res. 67/227 reaffirms the mandate of SUSSC but renames it UN Office for SSC (UNOSSC).

2019  BAPA+40 - 2nd High Level UN Conference on SSC, Buenos Aires.
Guiding principles

SSC is a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The SSC agenda and SSC initiatives must be determined by the countries of the South, guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

Reaffirmed at Nairobi (2009)

‘If measured only in monetary terms, most of SSC would become statistically irrelevant, with negative implications to the foreign policy of developing countries’

‘…the question of how international development cooperation is to be evaluated goes beyond the issue of public statistics to explicitly incorporate a political dimension’

Márcio Lopes Corrêa (2017)
No consensus on scope

Multiple versions of SSC adopted by developing countries

*Latin America:* prevailing view is that SSC is basically capacity building. CEPAL/ECLAC and SEGIB trying to develop common quantification framework.

*Asia:* focus mainly on trade, investment and economic cooperation – blended finance, grants (although there is also technical cooperation and training).

*Africa:* AU NEPAD trying to replicate Latin America. But probably more aligned to Asian perspective. Argue that humanitarian, safety and security can be justified as support to sustainable development.
The confusing world of development cooperation

One possible framework?

A multifaceted data set integrating the following components:

1. appraisal of inputs compatible with monetization;

2. quantifying the volumes of all types of in-kind resources mobilized by South-South partner countries, regardless of their position as providers or receivers, and for which monetization is not the best indicator;

3. assessment of the connection between financial and nonfinancial inputs and outputs; and

4. evaluation of the results attributable to these initiatives and to their respective beneficiaries.
Continued absence of data

Given the importance of South-South cooperation, there must be a way of monitoring it and analyzing the data. This analysis is crucial if we are to achieve our development goals.

H.E. Ms. Cecilia Rebong
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Philippines and Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China in Geneva (2015)
South-South Trade

UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics

https://stats.unctad.org/handbook/MerchandiseTrade/ByPartner.html
Further reading…

