



Task Force 06

## **STRENGTHENING MULTILATERALISM AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

# **Shifting Norms, Multiplying Actors, And Empowering Voices from The Global South: The G20's Role in Shaping the Emerging Landscape of International Development Cooperation**

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# **TF06**



## Abstract

Global challenges require collective responsibility and a clear, updated, and participatory set of principles and norms to shape needed actions. Multiple crises, including the unequal impact of climate change and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, are acting as accelerators and catalysts of norm transformation in the changing landscape of International Development Cooperation (IDC). In this context, voices from the Global South have an important role to play in setting the agenda, priorities, and potential solutions to the major challenges of a growing community of actors. Norms that previously evolved and served the interests of one particular group of actors seem no longer fit for purpose, including those related to development cooperation and its objectives (the Official Development Assistance concept and target); how it is delivered (modalities, principles), who is responsible and who benefits from it (accountability and eligibility), how it is assessed (development effectiveness principles and measurement frameworks), and how it is agreed upon (policy and norm-setting spaces). The Presidency of the G20 process in the Global South for three consecutive years offers a valuable opportunity for Southern priorities to affect change, promoting the shift to more updated and participatory norms for IDC. Recommendations for action by G20 members are: (1) prioritize inclusion and participation throughout the process of norm determination; 2) build upon existing norm deficiencies; 3) put in place a strong monitoring structure such as a G20 agreements observatory and 4) engage with other IDC policy spaces to ensure universal adherence to established norms.



## Diagnosis of the Issue

The current multilateral system struggles to respond to new challenges - such as the impacts of climate change and health hazards like the COVID-19 pandemic - and old ones - such as conflict, inequality, poverty, and hunger. Countries around the world are grappling with the interconnected complexities of supporting economic prosperity and wellbeing, while moving towards a more sustainable planetary environment, and ensuring that economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities are comprehensively tackled so that no one is left behind. These objectives and aspirations are enshrined in the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and recognised by the G20 as key priorities.

The current multilateral system and International Development Cooperation (IDC) norms have, to a large extent, been set by a community of donor countries over several decades. Understood as “key concepts establishing specific behaviors to which a group of actors (including donors, bilateral government agencies, and multilateral development organizations) commit, based on a common idea of what is moral or appropriate” (Taylor et al, 2023), these norms have for many years guided coordination and governance of IDC under the broad mantle of multilateralism. The Paris Declaration of 2005 brought together over 100 developed and developing countries, and proposed a roadmap to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development (OECD, 2005), and a set of overarching norms for 21st-century IDC (Brown, 2020). However, at the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in 2008, countries from the Global South, and global networks of civil society organizations (CSOs) and social movements, joined forces to criticize existing norms that did not sufficiently include inputs from the Global South.

The IDC landscape continues to evolve. New alliances and regional agendas such as Africa 2063 are emerging. Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Indonesia, and other G20



countries play ever more central roles in IDC, alongside private and philanthropic organizations. Existing norms are being challenged with some countries reflecting on the pros and cons of joining the table alongside other donor countries (Kim and Lightfoot, 2017). By gathering the wealthiest nations on the same platform with emerging economies, and making consensus a cornerstone of decision-making, the G20 can provide a more inclusive, and potentially equitable framework for setting global agendas and renewing public confidence in IDC.

South-South cooperation is on the rise, shaped often by negative shared experiences of many Global South countries as former aid recipients (Chandy and Kharas, 2011), rejection of traditional “donor-recipient” relations, and driven by strong interest in mutual learning and reciprocity (Mawdsley, 2011). New needs are arising for unprecedented levels of global cooperation where the interests of Global South countries are front and center (RIS, 2023). Except for Russia, all G20 members are actively engaged in IDC, either as traditional donors and members of OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) or as eligible ODA receivers and South-South Cooperation (SSC) players<sup>1</sup>

There is also a trust deficit, notably in the Global South, in global governance arrangements for IDC (Trithart and Case, 2023). Many citizens and communities are striving for more inclusive and participatory approaches to governance and development

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<sup>1</sup> South-South cooperation players check at least one of the following criteria: a. has published at least one official IDC report in the past five years (since 2019), b. SSC is mentioned in at least one foreign policy discourse (from Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Presidency-PM level) in the past five years starting from BAPA+40 (2019), c. has engaged with at least one UN entity as provider of technical and-or financial resources to a partner country, d. published in UNOSSC Galaxy.



(Burns et al., 2021), which can create tension and raise expectations, but also offer an opportunity arising from a widespread appetite for positive change. The G20, whose strength lies in global policy coordination, can allow voices from the Global South to construct a meaningful narrative around their individual development journeys and the strategies needed to address endemic and borderless challenges.

Urgent efforts are needed to establish a clear set of norms through more inclusive and equitable mechanisms that can help shape needed collective, complementary and cooperative actions and responses in the future. This raises a number of questions: what kinds of IDC norms and objectives are needed and how these should be delivered; who is responsible and who benefits; how cooperation is assessed; and how it is agreed upon.



## Recommendations

### **1. Prioritize inclusion and equitable participation throughout the process of norm determination**

**1.1 The presidencies of the G20 Brazil and G20 South Africa need to formalize the process of participation and inclusion of non-G20 member countries in various levels of decision-making.** Many Least Developed Countries (LDCs), in spite of the addition of the African Union (AU) block, remain unrepresented. Furthermore, while recognizing the current 'good practice' of Presidencies inviting non-G20 members (including LDCs) to join G20 processes each year, this remains an ad hoc practice that may not support meaningful contribution to norm/policy-setting. LDCs which are not members of the G20 need clear mechanisms whereby their views can feed in via explicit communication channels, as well as selected representation by specific LDCs, to ensure the voice of those most impacted by existing IDC norms and practices is heard.

The needs and interests of countries from the Global South must be contemplated and safeguarded in conceiving new IDC norms. One key action for the G20 presidencies of Brazil and South Africa will be to **ensure better representation of the Global South in both Leaders' Summits and other tracks held at the Ministerial level** where many of the G20 agreements on development-related matters happen ahead of the Leaders' Summits. Another action will be to guarantee that the AU is effectively represented in key decision making meetings such as the meetings of ministers and central bank governors, as well as the G20 Finance Track and Sherpa Track technical working groups.

**1.2 The G20 must foster a shared understanding of principles that will guide this process of norm definition.** Ensuring that this G20 presidency and the next lay a good foundation for new, better-suited IDC modalities begins with a clear understanding



about the core principles that should guide them (Bhattacharya et al., 2020), including: representation, participation, accountability, adaptability, multi-stakeholder engagement (with a particular emphasis on CSO involvement), and the prioritization of some issues more pertinent to the most vulnerable countries.

The Paris Declaration was agreed at the end of a long process, in which countries of the Global South, and CSOs emerged as discordant voices. In the past, IDC norms have arisen mainly through conferences and gatherings of DAC countries, with gradually expanding engagement. Over time, non-DAC and different groupings of countries have met and started identifying forms of cooperation that are now leading to a diverse, fragmented system. The G20 is uniquely positioned to propose a process that looks specifically at the question of future IDC, and identifies where the G20's principles, approaches, and mutual accountabilities lie regarding this cooperation. **The Brazilian Presidency should convene a dedicated event to kick-start this process to reconcile current debates regarding the Paris Declaration, with follow-up discussions hosted by the South African Presidency.**

**1.3 The G20 must integrate South-South Cooperation (SSC) in ensuring that norms foster equity between the Global South and North.** New norms relating to SSC need to be identified, developed, and accountability mechanisms built collectively. The recent addition of the AU as well as the current Troika being from the Global South, will put the Brazilian and South African presidencies in a good position to consolidate new SSC norms and factor them into the reform of IDC norms. This could involve the **creation of a task force to help to build action on SSC in South Africa's presidency considering the main inputs, learnings, and agreements from Brazil's term.**

In order to enable targeted support to weaker economies, it is also critical to recognise the disparities in wealth and power that exist within the Global South. **New norms will**

**need to transcend the traditional North-South binary, as well as the provider-recipient binary, towards fostering more equal partnerships globally.**

## **2. Build upon existing efforts in addressing norm deficiencies**

**2.1** Considering the proposed timeline for initial action, **the Brazilian and South African G20 presidencies should build upon existing Southern-led initiatives, to support the design of a strong evidence-based normative framework within a short time span.** This will support further buy-in and enforcement of these norms especially among more disadvantaged countries which may distrust them. A series of meetings should be planned, through which a draft framework can be developed prior to a gathering in South Africa, and then discussed and ratified during the 2025 G20 process. This can be informed by a number of Southern-led initiatives which already address issues relating to measurement, eligibility, effectiveness, and policy coherence of IDC efforts (see Appendix 1).

**2.2** The G20 needs to **reconcile best practices in mainstream ODA with the diversity of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) approaches,** and enhanced inclusion and participation of civil society and social movements, towards a renewed normative framework for IDC. G20 members participating in current discussions for a SSC normative framework (in the UN Office for South-South Cooperation - UNOSSC, or within the Ibero American region, for example) should advocate one that encourages different views of development and foster equal relationships of mutual learning. This new normative framework for IDC must include civil society organizations and social movements as full-fledged development partners to discuss and negotiate strategies, and participate in programme and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, consistent with the priorities held by the



Brazilian G20 presidency. Existing Centres for Excellence and leading policy centers in the Global South need to be made permanent fixtures within this process.

### **3. Develop a strong monitoring framework to assess the norms' effectiveness**

**3.1 Establishing an observatory with participation of G20 members may support appropriate monitoring of good practices relating to norm adherence**, to inform IDC pathways towards the SDGs and beyond. This can also help solidify progress through the next G20 presidency, ensuring longevity. In setting up the governance structure of this observatory, strong attention should be paid to the existing power asymmetries between countries.

**3.2** New norms must contribute to rebuilding trust within the multilateral cooperation space, which has been suffering increasing erosion since the COVID-19 pandemic, and remains extremely fragile in the face of current conflicts. To ensure transparency, G20 countries can develop **an information hub dedicated to the collection, coordination, compilation, processing, and dissemination of IDC data** (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2010).

**3.3** The G20 should spearhead the **development of regional metrics for measuring South-South development cooperation** that can apply to large countries or regions. There are several ongoing processes and proposals for SSTC measurement and valuation, including regional processes like the Ibero-American General Secretariat's Programa Iberoamericano para el Fortalecimiento de la Cooperación Sur-Sur (SEGIB-PIFCSS<sup>2</sup>), the ongoing SSC quantification exercise led by the United Nations Conference

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<sup>2</sup> <https://informesursur.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2023/03/completereportssandtc2022en.pdf](https://informesursur.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/completereportssandtc2022en.pdf)



on Trade and Development in the context of broader SDGs monitoring and measuring efforts, through initiatives such as the TOSSD.

These three components of a monitoring framework can be achieved by 2026 through the South Africa G20 process.

#### **4. Engage with policy spaces outside the G20 to ensure universal adherence to established norms**

**4.1** While the G20 space currently presents a strong opportunity to develop and begin to cement new IDC norms, these will only serve their purpose if they are applied in existing UN-based formal multilateral cooperation spaces. Since the shift in the G20 structure from a convening of Ministers of Finance to a convening of Heads of State, there is clear alignment between representatives of countries within this informal space, and within the United Nations Membership. This should enable an easier transition of new norms from one forum to the other. The Summit of the Future, in September 2024, provides an opportunity for initial exchange, and alignment on objectives. The G20 can also work to align processes during 2025-26 with the UN and G7/8 to bring together discussions about norms and accountabilities within the frameworks and fora of these different groupings.

**4.2 Aligning priorities between the G20 and regional blocs** such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and the AU could be extremely beneficial to facilitate continuous dialogue. For instance, Indonesia assumed the G20 presidency in 2022 and held the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2023. Similarly, from 2023 to 2025, Brazil and South Africa will chair BRICS, while India will lead the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). These countries not only hold regional influence and represent emerging economies but



are integral members within their respective blocs. The Brazil and South African G20 presidencies can move to formalize consultations on IDC norms with these regional blocs by 2025, to help accelerate a plurilateral shift in the global order.





## Scenario of Outcomes

Gaining sufficient traction on these new norms and metrics through the remaining two Southern G20 presidencies will help better attain the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and effectively shape the internationally agreed framework that will follow it<sup>3</sup> - responding to the challenges ahead.

Assertive political will from G20 members will promote a scenario where IDC is accounted for in an open and inclusive forum, and where all IDC flows, either stemming from the Global North or South, are accountable to donors and beneficiaries. They will then be grounded in transparent and participatory decision-making, and lessons learned from official development cooperation will be combined with good practices from SSTC. Development effectiveness is therefore enhanced and practices and methodologies recognize and support participation of different stakeholders, including the private sector, nongovernmental organizations and social movements.

At the political level, IDC is coherent with other policies and practices impacting development in different regimes such as trade, investment and intellectual property, and consistent with global agreements underpinning the multilateral system. Concurrently, multilateral institutions are sensitive to the needs and priorities of developing countries and LDCs, and relevant rules and provisions promote differential treatment for these countries to help create a conducive environment for their development. IDC measurement methodology is considerate of the “distinct yet complementary” nature of

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<sup>3</sup>“Well-defined metrics of measurement could play an important role in instituting an appropriate system for monitoring progress on SDG delivery” - from [Rethinking Development Effectiveness: Insights from Literature Review](#)



SSC vis à vis North-South cooperation, and of the higher “opportunity costs” for technical and financial resources that are sent abroad. SSC is strengthened through triangular arrangements, with effective use of each party’s resources and specific added value.

At the technical level, IDC is results-oriented and managed efficiently: reporting and accountability processes use national systems as much as possible and are therefore swiftly incorporated by technical stakeholders in cooperation agencies and implementing institutions.

The process of conforming new norms among such different players should not be underestimated - but the urgent need to combine forces towards achieving the 2030 Agenda justifies the effort of reconciling norms and renewing IDC for a viable future for all. This in turn will promote the cause of economic development, social inclusiveness and environmental sustainability, which lie at the heart of the SDGs and the future we want.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: [Existing Southern-led initiatives on IDC monitoring](#)







# Let's **rethink** the world

