

Outcome Note

“South-South Data for Development: Starting a New Chapter”

The side event to the Financing for Development (FFD4) conference discussed progress in measuring South-South cooperation with country-owned data after the historic agreement on a voluntary initial *Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation*, developed by the Global South and endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2022.

Highlights from the panel:

The “[UN Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation](#)”, a landmark initiative developed by and for countries of the Global South, was introduced by **Ms. Anu Peltola**, Director at the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Statistics Service, who moderated the panel discussion:

- The Framework provides a standardized methodology to capture the diverse contributions of South-South cooperation from financial to non-financial. The UN Framework enhances the visibility of South-South cooperation in global data and debates, ensuring that the South’s contributions to sustainable development are measured and recognized.
- In 2022, when endorsing the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicator 17.3.1, countries requested UNCTAD to enable the testing of the Framework, building countries’ capacity and reporting South-South data to SDG indicator 17.3.1. Data on North-South flows are reported from the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), hosted by the OECD.
- In 2025, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico reported the first South-South data in the UN Framework. These data confirm the critical role of non-financial flows: technical cooperation, in-kind support, and capacity-building, and can be presented alongside long-existing North-South flows data.

Ecuador is a pilot country in a global [UN Project](#) on quantifying South-South cooperation. **Ms. Cristina Camacho**, Minister, Undersecretary of International Cooperation in **Ecuador**, outlined the country’s structured approach to quantifying South-South cooperation:

- Ecuador has developed mechanisms to collect South-South data, such as its International Cooperation Management Information System (SIGECI), to register and monitor international cooperation and adapted to report data to the UN Framework.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility (MREMH) serves as the central authority for international cooperation and is preparing to implement a new cooperation law. A specialized directorate is tasked with optimizing the data collection methodology, and a results-based evaluation framework is in place to assess South-South cooperation agreements and projects.
- Available data show Ecuador making a significant contribution to populations in situations of human mobility. According to 2023 data, approximately \$70 million was allocated to support efforts focused solely on education and social integration, and this figure is expected to increase in 2024.

Recognizing the growing importance of South-South cooperation in the development trajectory of the **Philippines**, **Mr. Jesus Enrique Garcia**, Minister at the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the UN in New York explained the country's interest in South-South data using the UN Framework:

- As the Philippines moves toward middle-income status, it is shaping an active role in contributing to regional and global sustainable development by sharing its experiences and technical expertise, such as technology training and scholarships. Consolidating South-South cooperation efforts across ministries to develop a coherent national approach is a priority.
- The lack of standardized tools to measure South-South cooperation limits the visibility and strategic use of these contributions. Measuring South-South cooperation is essential for understanding its impact, enhancing inclusivity in global development cooperation, and identifying countries' unique value in this space.
- He emphasized the need for reliable South-South data to inform policymaking, budgeting, and partnership strategies, particularly in areas like agriculture, health, disaster risk reduction, and digital transformation. Given its vulnerability to climate shocks, the Philippines values context-specific solutions often found through this cooperation.

The State of Qatar hosted the Doha Inter-regional Expert Meeting on Quantifying South-South Cooperation in June 2024, and **Mr. Ahmed Khalid Al Sumaiti**, Director of International Indicators and International Cooperation Department at the National Planning Council highlighted:

- The Doha event reflected the high momentum and interest of the countries of the South to use the UN Framework in a country-led effort, aligned with their national development priorities, contributing to sustainable development, and to report data to SDG Indicator 17.3.1.
- The country experts gathered in Doha emphasized the need to strengthen national statistical capacities, especially in countries with limited resources, as they discussed the UNCTAD [Manual](#) for the Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation. The Manual was welcomed as a key resource to guide all interested countries in how to start collecting South-South data. The meeting also highlighted the importance of coordination among national statistical offices, line ministries, and international cooperation agencies.
- The expert meeting in its [Summary Outcome](#) note made a call for significant strengthening of national capacities and advancing methodological and technological innovation as priorities, alongside developing harmonized tools and templates that enable the Global South to showcase their contributions to sustainable development.

Colombia, a pioneer in measuring South-South cooperation and a key player in developing the UN Framework, was represented by **Mr. Daniel Rodriguez**, South-South Cooperation Director at the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC):

- He emphasized the strategic and political importance of South-South data measured by countries directly using the UN Framework, asserting that what is not measured remains invisible. The UN Framework is flexible in capturing both financial and in-kind contributions and can be aligned with varying national priorities and diverse cooperation modalities.

- Data is a powerful storytelling tool that validates the contributions of the Global South to the 2030 Agenda and SDG target 17.3. The UN Framework is seen as a vital step in recognizing the agency, innovation, and technical capacity of the countries of the South.
- Colombia, along with Brazil and Mexico, were the first countries to report data in the UN Framework in spring 2025. Colombia reported its 2023 data based on information from their Fund for International Cooperation and Assistance (FOCAI). In early June 2025, they also shared the initial 2024 data with ECLAC's Statistics Division for review prior to reporting it officially to UNCTAD.

The UN Office for South-South Cooperation (**UNOSSC**), represented by **Ms. Ines Tofalo**, Trust Fund and Project Management Specialist, emphasized the critical role of data in enabling South-South and Triangular Cooperation to drive sustainable development across the Global South:

- She highlighted the launch of the Manual for the Framework to Measure SSC, developed by UNCTAD, as a major milestone in institutionalizing South-South data collection and reporting. The Framework helps to address challenges such as inconsistent data recording, limited capacities, and weak institutionalization. Reliable, interoperable data is essential for strategic planning, regional integration, and effective policy making in the Global South.
- UNOSSC's mandate and service lines support this agenda through intergovernmental coordination, facilitating UN system engagement, knowledge management, and trust fund project implementation.
- The office supports strengthening South-South data systems, including by its [Handbook](#) for integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation into Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), training modules for UN staff, and a new institutional capacity-building project under the Triangular Cooperation Window.

The organizers invited **Ms. Christy Marlene Wong Bobadilla**, a young economist from **Peru**, engaging on behalf of the Millennials Movement to share her remarks. She highlighted the importance of engaging youth globally, including from Latin America and the Caribbean, in the FfD4 process and making the contribution of the Global South visible via data. She emphasized uniting the private and public sectors, academia, and civil society to transform global development structures to empower the Global South in leading its own progress. She highlighted the transformative power of South-South data, and the importance of participatory, intergenerational accounting of development efforts, calling for investments in human capital, data generation, and transparent, justice-centered financing at the FfD4.

Key discussion points:

- South-South cooperation offers a **distinct model of development cooperation** rooted in solidarity, mutual benefit and non-conditionality. It is a complement, not a substitute, to North-South cooperation - driving innovation, resilience, and mutual progress.
- **Data is key to understanding and benefiting from the Global South's transformative role** in the international economic and development systems.
- Data can **amplify the visibility and effectiveness** of South-South cooperation, especially in support of human and institutional capacity and sustainable development.

- It is time to **center Global South data and solutions** in global development cooperation discussions.
- **Ownership of data systems by the countries of the South** empowers shaping countries' unique South-South cooperation narratives, roles, and priorities.
- Development priorities are increasingly **solution-oriented and peer-driven**. We need to build national information systems and capacities that enable data reporting for multiple purposes, selected by countries, without added burden.
- **The UN and partners should come together** to support countries in their efforts to implement the UN Framework nationally and report South-South data on SDG indicator 17.3.1.

Tangible outcomes and next steps:

1. Political momentum building

The FFD4 Outcome, the Sevilla Commitment, encourages the countries of the South to report their data using the UN Framework and recognizes UNCTAD's role in supporting them. UNOSSC reported that 50% of countries discussed South-South and Triangular cooperation integration in their VNRs showing increasing interest, and UNOSSC's Interagency Mechanism, involving 40+ UN entities, can facilitate voluntary South-South data pilots and broader UN support to countries.

2. Unmet demand for support for country-led South-South data

In Doha, experts from 66 countries called for UN support to operationalize the Framework and its Manual through peer-to-peer exchanges and a meeting platform, supported by UNCTAD, to enable regular consultations, country-led methodology development, and joint capacity building. Ecuador called for enhanced standard definitions and institutional stability to support transitioning from projects to integrated South-South cooperation with systematic data within the UN Framework, stronger governance and regional consensus building.

3. New opportunities for data partnerships and peer support

UNCTAD, with partners like ECA, ECLAC and UNSD, launched a Community of Practice on South-South Data through the Sevilla Platform for Action (SPA) to respond to countries' requests to facilitate country-led progress and share tools and solutions, encouraging partner support. Countries of the South are increasingly joining forces, for instance APC-Colombia is supporting Argentina, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay via technical workshops and assistance. Countries of the South and their partners are invited to collaborate in the SPA initiative.

4. South-South data to convey country perspectives

UNCTAD will launch a South-South Data Insights platform, to showcase South-South data reported in the UN Framework for SDG 17.3.1. The Data Platform will expand as new countries report and is intended to foster peer learning, innovation, and use of South-South data. Ecuador underlined the potential of data for a more systemic, multidimensional approach to South-South cooperation and scaling of successful models; the Philippines called for strong South-South data systems to reflect the priorities of the Global South with the UN Framework through peer learning with Ecuador,

Colombia, Qatar and others; Colombia emphasized South-South data as key in affirming the Global South's leadership in shaping a more inclusive global development path, and benefitting from the transformative power of the Global South.