

REPORT

International Expert Meeting on the Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation

11-13 July 2023

Brasilia, Brazil

All Speakers' presentations can be found [here](#).

Thursday, 11 July

Opening

The meeting was opened by **President Ms. Luciana Mendes Santos Servo** of the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and **Ambassador Ms. Luiza Lopes** of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), **Ms. Fabiola Soto Narváez**, Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID) and **Ms. Anu Peltola**, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The opening underlined the importance of data on South-South Cooperation (SSC) for more effective international cooperation policies, building strategic partnerships and managing SSC flows to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Session 1: Setting the scene

The session discussed global SSC policies, history, and background of the voluntary 'Conceptual Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation', as well as presented an application of the Framework using national data from Brazil. It introduced the global efforts by the UN system, in particular UNCTAD, UN Office on South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and the UN Regional Commissions, to support countries in measuring SSC, including a description of the planned activities of the [UN Development Account project](#) on "Quantifying SSC to mobilize funds for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" to be carried out in 2023-2026. The session also showed the broad interest of Southern countries to measure SSC, as revealed by a global UNCTAD survey.

The session was moderated by **Mr. Christian Daniel Castaneda Cuevas**, AMEXCID, and presentations were made by **Ms. Sumeeta Banerji**, UNOSSC; **Mr. Rachid Bouhia**, UNCTAD and **Mr. Sukhbir Singh**, Chair of the previous subgroup on measuring South-South cooperation under the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs); **Mr. Marcio Correa**, ABC Brazil; **Ms. Cristina Sydow**, IPEA Brazil; **Ms. Amandine Rushenguziminega**, UNCTAD; **Mr. David Boko**, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); **Mr. Alfonso Zeron**, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); **Mr. Jan Smit**, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); and **Ms. Wafa About Hosn**, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Highlights from the discussion:

- The Conceptual Framework was welcomed as a voluntary tool to help countries account for SSC flows and report to SDG indicator 17.3.1 on 'mobilizing additional sources of financing for developing countries from multiple sources'.
- Participants considered the Conceptual Framework as a milestone in the history of SSC, as it has been created and agreed upon by Southern countries to account for their mutual solidarity and enhance its visibility among other development support.

- Member States considered measurement of SSC flows important for the accountability towards the civil society and the public, and to inform decision makers. SSC data are also crucial for better management of support for the 2030 Agenda.
- Countries welcomed UNCTAD's custodianship to enable the reporting of data on South-South cooperation to SDG indicator 17.3.1 in the future and to support Southern countries in enhancing their capacity, jointly with interested partners, to collect and report data.
- The participants thanked the experts who participated in the subgroup to measure SSC under the UN Statistical Commission, India as its chair, and members from Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Ghana, Mexico, South Africa, and Tanzania who tested the early framework to refine it prior to the endorsement of the indicator methodology by the UN Statistical Commission. Contributions of the Russian Federation and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as observers was appreciated.
- Brazil's experience was appreciated as an example of effective coordination of national and subnational work to quantify SSC flows and how to fill the Framework with national data. Brazil also presented their Observatory of International Development Cooperation platform. For more information, see: <https://ocid.ibict.br>
- Countries were pleased with the way in which measurement of SSC had mobilized collaborative efforts within the UN system to support member States, benefitting in particular from the role of the UNOSSC to coordinate work via its inter-agency mechanisms on SSC.

Conclusions and follow-up:

- Pilot countries commended pioneering countries for the established mechanisms for collecting data and measuring SSC and expressed their interest in experience sharing.
- Participating countries asked for the development of a Practical Manual on collecting data for the SSC Framework, quality assurance, the roles of national authorities in measuring SSC, and ways to encourage inter-agency collaboration, including on the roles of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and Development Cooperation Agencies.
- Member States underlined the importance of testing the voluntary Framework in diverse countries and requested the UN system and partners to come together to enable strong support to the efforts of interested countries to measure SSC and report data to the SDG indicator.
- High quality data on SSC requires data sharing among government agencies. Disclosure and data confidentiality rules may pose challenges in data sharing and should be discussed in the Practical Manual for pilots and all other interested countries.

Session 2: Data in the Framework

The session discussed the first countries' experiences and challenges in fitting data to the voluntary 'Conceptual Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation'. The session was moderated by **Mr. Alfonso Zeron**, ECLAC, and presentations were made by **Mr. Christian Daniel Castaneda Cuevas**, AMEXCID; **Ms. Myriam Mercedes Escallon Santamaria**, Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation; **Ms. Noraliza Mohamad Ali**, Department of Statistics of Malaysia; and **Mr. Dominic Odoom**, Ghana Statistical Services.

Highlights from the discussion:

- An example of the International Development Cooperation Law in Mexico was discussed, and its ability to mandate cooperation in various modalities. Mexico has developed a platform for reporting of data on SSC. One of the challenges identified relates to reporting triangular cooperation and the absence of a regional modality for reporting.

- In Colombia, for instance inter-agency cooperation is seen as important but, the NSO of Colombia, DANE, is not yet involved in the collection of SSC data. Resource constraints were identified as a challenge for inter-agency cooperation.
- The NSO of Malaysia has an established SDG indicator framework governance structure, including a national SDG council chaired by the Prime Minister, a steering committee chaired by the Minister of Economy, and thematic committees by sector, including a working group on SDG 17 chaired by the Chief Statistician. Future work on SDG 17.3.1 and SSC measurement will fall within the latter group.
- One of the challenges in measuring SSC is accessing information held by others, as the data are fragmented across agencies. Ghana, for instance, is currently identifying ministries who collect data on SSC as part of their activities.
- Speakers highlighted as challenges the unstructured or inconsistent status of administrative data across government, the lack of data granularity, unclear metadata, and low awareness of the importance of measuring SSC.
- Countries underlined the importance of applying the Framework consistently across countries as the agreed means for structuring SSC data and for its reporting and analysis, thus enabling international comparability.

Conclusions and follow-up:

- Speakers highlighted the many challenges in identifying resources required for this undertaking and requested for capacity support by the UNCTAD and partnering UN entities.
- Southern countries are diverse and have differentiated capacities, legal frameworks, interests, resources, and partner demands, and therefore, it will be important to ensure that the Framework is comprehensive, flexible, and relevant to account for all regional and national differences of SSC, including its human, financial and technical aspects. It was also noted that the Framework enables the incorporation of non-public stakeholders from the provider side.
- It was noted that the Framework measures SSC outflows as in costs incurred to the reporting country, and it could be expanded in the future to account for inflows as well.
- Suggestions for coding and classification improvements within the Framework were discussed, including considering eliminating the column where external links are provided.
- In some countries, the NSO has been asked to take a data stewardship role in the government. This could facilitate common approaches and systematic work with administrative and other data held by different government agencies and enable data sharing agreements.
- Countries asked for a stepwise timetable for pilots to test the Framework and for reporting of data considering the different stages of developing SSC data collection and reporting.

Wednesday, 12 July

Session 3: Regional perspectives

The session discussed regional perspectives to measuring SSC and collecting and analyzing related data and shared the experience of regional organizations. The Session was moderated by **Ms. Sumeeta Banerji**, UNOSSC, and presentations were made by **Mr. Sameh Hussein**, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB); **Mr. Martin Rivero**, Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), and **Ms. Marian Urbina**, Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO).

Highlights from the discussion:

- IsDB discussed its framework and approach for national SSC ecosystems. Participants welcomed this as a good starting point for developing the necessary inter-agency cooperation that will be needed also for the measurement of SSC. The IsDB framework considers among

other elements political will, national SSC strategy, information bases, connected actors, agency, financing mechanism, and performance management. ISDB is also developing an SSC index to support maturity assessments and enhancements at the national levels. Several tools and guiding notes are available on [IsDB online Academy for SSC](#).

- SEGIB has been collecting and reporting data on SSC initiatives since 2007 and publishing the biennial Report of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. It provides a consolidated regional information system to gather data, carries out data processing, validation, and analysis, and provides reports and data visualizations. The lessons learned underline the importance of having common definitions of what is measured, ensuring adherence to the principle of horizontality and equality, building trust and national ownership, and sharing good practices to continuously enhance and maintain countries' capacity. From the practical perspective, it will be important to cross-check data for quality, and building political consensus among heads of Development Cooperation Agencies is as important as technical work among statisticians.
- PAHO facilitates knowledge and information sharing and supports the exchange of good practices for health development. It facilitates the development of methodologies to assess the impact of cooperation among countries for health development and documents the results. The support provided by PAHO is reported to its Member States to advance evidence-based policy for health.
- Participants emphasized the key role of regional and sectoral mechanisms in the global conversation on measuring SSC.
- The presentations spurred a discussion on whether efforts could be made to expand the measurement of SSC flows to the assessment of impact and value of SSC activities in the future. It was noted that this was beyond the scope of the Conceptual Framework and SDG indicator 17.3.1 but could be discussed in the future.

Conclusions and follow-up:

- Countries and organizations welcomed UNCTAD's custodianship of the voluntary Conceptual Framework as a channel to bring conceptual and methodological issues for consideration among a broader group of countries and across regions.
- Countries asked UNCTAD to map existing regional and international data collection initiatives and assess their links with the Conceptual Framework to promote synergies and harmonization of efforts.
- Countries asked UNCTAD, as the SDG indicator custodian in charge of SSC flows, to seek resources to enable regular data collection and reporting, and to provide tools, information systems, guidelines, and training courses as well as continuous capacity building support and platforms for methodological collaboration. Countries should be empowered to lead this process, including with support for developing national data systems, and for collecting and submitting their data to the Conceptual Framework and the SDG indicator.
- Countries expressed interest in learning more about sectoral approaches to SSC data. Learning from sectorial good practices could give countries a fast start to expand and adjust these practices to other sectors.
- Countries welcomed support by UN entities, including UNOSSC to integrate reporting of SSC data in the analysis presented in Voluntary National Reports (VNRs). VNRs could also inform the process of data reporting of countries with active SSC policies and activities.
- Participants noted that the many good practices presented in this session should be considered in the Practical Manual on the Conceptual Framework, such as the IsDB approach for establishing and strengthening national SSC ecosystems.

Session 4: Assessing data gaps and planning for measurement

The session was moderated by **Mr. Jan Smit**, ESCAP, and presentations were made by **Ms. Nada Tawfik**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt; **Mr. Juan Manuel Escalante Davila**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, Ecuador; **Ms. Anastasia Johannes**, Namibia Statistics Agency; and **Mr. Juan Ignacio Roccatagliata Beguiristain**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, and **Mr. Santiago Galas**, International Cooperation Agency, Argentina.

Highlights from the discussion:

- The Ministry of International Cooperation (MoIC) of Egypt is implementing a South-South and Triangular Cooperation Economic Strategy incorporating several modalities, such as: knowledge sharing platforms; conferences and fora; technical cooperation; publications; and financing. MoIC's development cooperation information management system collects data about the entire results chain related to SSC.
- The Argentine Fund for International Cooperation has supported more than 10,000 actions and cooperation projects with more than 80 countries. Currently, the agribusiness sector is the focus of activities.
- In Ecuador, there is a mandatory registration, for information purposes, of actions, programs and projects executed by the public sector. This allows the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility to have updated data on international cooperation, but lack of resources limits data collection and reporting.
- Namibia shared their plans in the short and medium term in the collection of SSC data. They proposed that the Conceptual Framework be accompanied with defined concepts and metadata to support data collection and validation.

Conclusions and follow-up:

- Participants noted the important role of SSC to support progress towards SDGs especially in areas where progress is lacking behind, and to support countries most in need.
- Member States welcomed the planned testing of the Framework in different national environments and called for support by UNCTAD and the UN Regional Commissions in collaboration with the UNOSSC to enable a country-led process to fill data gaps.
- Member States underlined the importance of strengthening the capacity of Southern countries to enable measurement of SSC and reporting of more balanced data on development support to SDG indicator 17.3.1. Work should be started without a delay in all regions.
- Several opportunities were identified to address data gaps, such as leveraging new technology for data collection, strengthening human capital, and identifying a team of focal points across agencies to pool data and expertise. The requested Practical Manual could support pilot and other interested countries to undertake the effort with lower initial investment.
- Participants noted that while the Conceptual Framework goes beyond the reporting requirements for SDG indicator 17.3.1, it provides a core data basis that can set the grounds for interested countries to go beyond towards assessing the impact of SSC for national needs.

Session 5: Setting up the institutional environment

The session was moderated by **Mr. David Boko**, ECA, and presentations were made by **Mr. Oga Simon Ode**, National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria; **Mr. Mohammad Mahmoud Mohammad Khalaf**, Department of Statistics, Jordan; **Ms. Pauline Rachel Wangechi Kamau**, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics; and **Mr. Luis Francisco Calle Rosasco**, National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, Peru.

Highlights from the discussion:

- Conducive institutional settings are an important precondition to successful adoption and implementation of the framework for SSC measurement.
- Strong involvement of Development Cooperation Agencies is key as they have a policy interest on the measurement of SSC, needed to justify and facilitate the conduct of SSC activities.
- Countries at the early stages of applying the Conceptual Framework would benefit from examples of different inter-institutional arrangements and data sharing mechanisms required for an efficient compilation and reporting of the SSC data.
- The institutional setting should build on the collaboration of the NSO on statistical matters and the Development Cooperation Agency on substantive questions.

Conclusions and follow-up:

- Participants requested that the Manual consider the benefits of measuring SSC, who to be involved in the effort and which entity could be the national custodian of SSC data. It should also discuss cooperation mechanisms and information systems to be put in place.
- Future work should factor in approaches that promote collaboration between the NSO and the Development Cooperation Agency of each country. There is also a need to sensitize stakeholders to engage in data sharing and measurement of SSC.
- While NSOs are not always involved in measuring SSC, their strong mandate in data collection, methodological knowledge, and role as the coordinator of the National Statistical System and of the reporting of data on SDGs, can be beneficial. The Development Cooperation Agencies have the substantive knowledge that is key to reporting policy relevant and high-quality data.

Thursday, 13 July

Session 6: Organizing international and regional work

The session was moderated by **Ms. Nada Tawfik**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt, and presentations were made by **Mr. David Boko**, ECA; **Mr. Alfonso Zeron**, ECLAC; **Mr. Jan Smit**, ESCAP; **Ms. Wafa Aboul Hosn**, ESCWA; and **Mr. Rachid Bouhia**, UNCTAD.

Highlights from the discussion:

- The UN Regional Commissions shared their plans to launch activities in the joint UN Development Account project, considering regional needs. Regional activities will start with awareness raising in relevant regional events.
- Most UN Regional Commissions were in the process of confirming pilot countries to be supported by a national or regional consultant, and national training on SSC data collection.
- Regional activities will benefit from the Practical Manual and other guidelines to be prepared for all interested countries.
- The second expert meeting to be held in spring 2024, to continue from the outcomes of this meeting, will discuss tools for pilots and the steps to be taken, such as mapping of agencies to be involved in SSC activities at the country level, assessing data availability and gaps, and making a work plan for data collection, review and verification, and reporting.
- Inter-regional workshops are foreseen for sharing of experience and to ensure globally harmonized approaches. Pilot countries may also benefit from study tours to a country that has already established national data collection and/or reporting.

Conclusions and follow-up:

- Member States asked UNCTAD to ensure international harmonization of methodologies by providing opportunities for the exchange of practices and for agreeing on common methodologies between countries from across regions.
- UNCTAD was asked to lead the development of e-learning course contents jointly with interested countries and organizations. While such courses could also be provided by regional actors, such as the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), it will be important to align them with the Conceptual Framework. Such training modules could be integrated into relevant wider training initiatives, including by the UNOSSC.
- Member States noted the insufficiency of the UN Development Account project budget that can only support 2 pilot countries per region. UNCTAD encouraged all interested countries to express their interest in receiving support for SSC data collection and reporting and called on partners and donors to help enable more countries to benefit from the capacity building.
- Participants noted the importance of building on existing mechanisms, practices, data and tools, and fostering synergies between ongoing initiatives and efforts. This also applies to connecting with existing venues that discuss SSC.
- Globally, the UN inter-agency coordination mechanism on SSC, hosted by UNOSSC, will provide an opportunity to harmonize UN efforts and leverage available resources for SSC measurement. It will be important to engage the UN Resident Coordinator Offices, especially to bring national agencies together to roll out the Framework.

Session 7: SDG Indicator 17.3.1 and related frameworks

The session was moderated by **Ms. Myriam Mercedes Escallon Santamaria**, Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation, and presentations were made by **Mr. Matthias Reister**, UN Statistics Division (UNSD); **Ms. Anu Peltola**, UNCTAD; and **Mr. Camilo Gamba Gamba**, **Ms. Valérie Gaveau**, and **Ms. Marisa Berbegal**, OECD.

Highlights from the discussion:

- UNCTAD and OECD presented their plans on coordinated reporting of data to SDG indicator 17.3.1. UNCTAD will report data on South-South Cooperation, as mandated by the UN Statistical Commission. OECD will report data based on the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) framework for other elements than South-South Cooperation. Both underlying frameworks are broader than the SDG indicator and will feed data covering the globally agreed elements of the SDG indicator only.
- UNSD presented the elements of the SDG indicator and reiterated on the importance of reporting data on SSC to ensure SDG indicator 17.3.1 will become a universal measure of development support. UNSD informed the expert meeting of the 2025 review of the SDG indicator framework which aims to remove or replace indicators without data or where countries have notable challenges in reporting.
- Member States discussed the need and potential to include in-kind SSC flows as an element of the SDG indicator in the future. It was noted that such extensions could be discussed when countries have started reporting such data to UNCTAD.
- OECD requested Southern countries to ensure interoperability and alignment of the Conceptual Framework on Measuring South-South Cooperation with classifications and definitions agreed by their membership and used for TOSSD for several years. The OECD listed 16 Southern countries that report data to TOSSD to highlight some potentially duplicated reporting when data are collected based on Southern countries' own separate Frameworks.

Conclusions and follow-up:

- Member States underlined the need to pursue early reporting of SSC data to UNCTAD to inform the global SDG indicator. Three countries expressed their readiness to report data by early 2024 in time for the next global data collection for the UNSD Global SDGs Indicators Database. Several others expressed their willingness to do so as soon as possible and start working in that direction without a delay.
- Countries noted the importance of ensuring sufficient resources for UNCTAD to support reporting of data on SSC as a custodian and secure the universal nature of SDG indicator 17.3.1 ahead of the 2025 review of the SDG indicator framework.
- Earlier, the indicator methodology was changed as a result of the 2020 review since data on SSC did not exist. Now, however, an agreed Framework developed by the South for the South exists to enable such data reporting.
- UNCTAD and the OECD expressed their intention to continue the coordination of work to ensure there is no overlaps in global reporting for the SDG indicator.
- Member States requested UNCTAD to promote capacity building approaches and develop information systems and tools that help countries develop national data ecosystems that allow reporting for multiple purposes, as relevant for and decided by each country.

Next steps:

- Countries requested a platform for interregional exchange and to develop a community of practice on SSC data. As of now, such materials are shared at the [UNCTAD project webpage](#).
- Countries agreed to form an informal sounding board for the refinement and discussions of methodologies, including potential alignment with other frameworks, noting, however, that such decisions will be taken in a Southern country-led process. These decisions will reflect on the realities of the global South only, including the particularities and diversity of its modalities of cooperation, and their needs considering available data, statistical practices, and structures already existing, aiming to minimize reporting burden.
- The drafting of the Practical Manual will be led by Southern countries and will provide an opportunity to make initial methodology decisions to be tested in the pilots. UNCTAD will share a draft Manual for comments and feedback of all interested countries and international organizations, to be discussed at the second expert meeting.
- UNCTAD welcomed member States to test the Framework also with partial data that might be available in the country, e.g., covering some sector or modality. Partial data could also be reported to the Global SDGs Indicators Database to reflect progress of work.
- The 2nd Expert meeting on data collection tools is likely to take place in April-May 2024.
- The medium-term goal is for as many countries as possible to report data on SSC to the SDG indicator by 2030, noting that the voluntary Conceptual Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation has intrinsic value beyond 2030.