

The roots of South-South cooperation (SSC) go as far back as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) Conference in 1978, and even further to the Bandung Conference (1955). However, consensus among the Southern countries on the need for assessment and evaluation systems as well as procedures has emerged only more recently. Indeed, while the demand for evidence on SSC impacts was already pointed in the BAPA (recommendations 3, 4 and 5), the more recent consensus around the need for assessment and evaluation as regular practices has showed both in multilateral fora and country-led initiatives. In line with BAPA's concerns on the role of institutions (national, regional and multilateral), the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation "encourage[d] developing countries to develop country-led systems to evaluate and assess the quality and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes [...] while bearing in mind the specific principles and unique characteristics of South-South cooperation".¹

While the SSC space overall shows lack of robust assessment and evaluation systems, many SSC partners (SSCP) are already engaged in evaluating their projects and programmes, and designing their evaluation systems. For many reasons, SSCP are engaging in the creation of such systems. First, there is a common understanding that assessment and evaluation systems can improve delivering processes and enhance SSC results. Second, there is growing concern with the specific contribution made by SSC in achieving internationally agreed goals and targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Evidence provided by systematic assessments would give visibility to SSC practices and distinguish them from other development initiatives (Paths, 2017). Finally, many SSCP recognize that assessment and evaluation systems may provide lessons to be shared, enabling a more favorable environment for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As discussed below, these experiences very often emphasize processes instead of results, and focus on activities or outputs instead of results or outcomes. Beyond the scarcity of resources to support far-reaching evaluations, development agencies in the South are striving to elaborate their own conceptual systems and methodological toolboxes with which they would be able to observe the specificity and variety of their practices. Beyond the Ibero-American countries, however, there is little movement towards the establishment of a shared set of evaluation procedures and standards, which many governments of the South see as undesirable.²

¹ A/RES/ 64/222. Paragraph 20(c).

² BRICS Policy Center (2017). *Paths for Developing South-South-Cooperation, Monitoring and Evaluations Systems*. BPC Paper Series. Available from <http://bricspolicycenter.org/homolog/publicacoes/interna/7248?tipo=BPC%20Paper>.

This brief seeks to identify approaches to SSC results assessment led or supported by Governments of the South. It explores how some Southern partners are conducting initiatives to assess the results of SSC and whether and how these initiatives are affecting the way they conduct their SSC. Finally, the brief reflects upon the potential of such initiatives to foster the contribution of South-South cooperation to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

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United Nations Department of
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South-led Approaches to results assessment

Trends and Challenges

Assessments or evaluations of international development cooperation can enable partners to learn about their own practices, support the policy development process, and foster accountability. Even though the number of assessment and evaluation experiences among partners in the Global South is minimal, it is possible to perceive a growing attention to impact assessment. Furthermore, some assessment practices, as described below, are noteworthy.

A report prepared for the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC) shows that many countries in the Global South assess “performance at the output level, i.e., the timely completion of the planned activities on budget” (p. 1). Besides, even when evaluations are conducted, they are frequently neither well documented and validated nor publicized. Another report, just released by the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, discloses the fact that from 2010 to 2015, the Thailand International Cooperation Agency and the government of Timor-Leste implemented a programme of a model village. According to this report, a project of skills development, under the “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, “achieved impressive results: ‘productivity and quality increased while household incomes rose – from \$200 per month at the beginning of the project to \$2,000 per month at the end’” (p. 57). Even not knowing how TICA has conducted the evaluation, it is possible to infer that the impact of the project on the household income was assessed.

International organizations have reinforced this trend towards increased monitoring accountability, either fostering intergovernmental exchange processes or offering technical support for SSCP. Among many contributions made by multilateral and regional institutions, the works of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), and the UNOSSC on SSC are exemplary.³ UNOSSC's activities range from policy and intergovernmental support, over partnership-building, to the management of SSC trust funds. Regarding the assessment and evaluation of SSC, this office has played an important role in sharing experiences among SSCP and identifying good practices in SSC and triangular cooperation (TrC). The DCF creates opportunities for knowledge exchange between DAC countries and SSCP, while at the same time providing analytical support for policy dialogues on key issues affecting development cooperation partners. Finally, the Ibero-American Summit established in 2008 the Program to Strengthen South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS), aiming to improve member countries' SSC by facilitating dialogues among governments and providing technical support to strengthen national capacities for SSC, such as quantification and assessment. One of SEGIB's main outputs on SSC is its annual Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America. These reports offer a general account of SSC at the Ibero-American space and elaborate on qualitative analyses of SSC flows. While they do not address individual projects, they focus on general trends and aggregated data aiming at assessing aspects related to efficiency and governance of SSC practices. A process of continuous consultation allowed SEGIB to build a set of indicators upon the data reported by SSCP as described in table 1. Furthermore, using aggregated data, SEGIB is able to map capacities and needs for SSC at the Ibero-American space. Such exercise, in consistence with UNOSSC's efforts to identify Southern development solutions, was further developed by development agencies in the region (such as the AMEXCID, the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation) and may provide significant information for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

³ Efforts made by independent think-tanks aiming at fostering policy dialogues and elaborating on specific methodologies for the assessment of SSC are also noteworthy. A non-exhaustive list of such initiatives includes (i) the methodology developed by the African Chapter of the Network of Southern Think-Tanks, and (ii) the policy dialogues conducted by the BRICS Policy Center and the South-South Cooperation Research and Policy Centre (Articulação Sul) in collaboration with Brazilian Agency of Cooperation (ABC), which resulted in a roadmap for developing SSC monitoring and evaluation systems. See (i) Network of Southern Think-Tanks, Africa Chapter (2015). *Developing a conceptual Framework for South-South Cooperation*. Working document. Available from <http://www.saiia.org.za/general-publications/891-developing-a-conceptual-framework-for-south-south-co-operation/file>. and (ii) BRICS Policy Center, South-South Cooperation Research and Policy and Brazilian Agency of Cooperation (2017). *Paths for developing South-South cooperation, monitoring and evaluation systems*. Available from <http://www.abc.gov.br/imprensa/mostrarConteudo/724>.

TABLE 1: SEGIB's approach to efficiency and governance assessment

Governance / Horizontality	Share borne by each participating partner of the same two cost data items (executed or budgeted)
Efficiency	The ratio between the budgeted and executed costs per project (or action) The average time lapse between the approval of initiatives and their commencement

Source: Secretaria General Iberoamericana (2016). *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America*. Available from <http://segib.org/wp-content/uploads/Report-SSC-2016-EN1.pdf>.

A number of governments of the South, such as Brazil, China and Mexico, are currently designing their assessment systems for their development cooperation, following different paths. While overall results assessment remains largely an ad hoc activity for the development cooperation agencies in the South, three trends can be observed.

First, the establishment of assessment systems appears to be part of a broader process of institutionalization of SSC within the structures of the respective states. Indeed, the design of strategies for building assessment systems concurs with the institutionalization of coordination mechanisms and legal frameworks, as the cases of China, India, Mexico, Thailand and others demonstrate.

Second, the establishment of assessment systems takes place along the consolidation of innovative approaches and modalities of SSC, such as structuring cooperation or trilateral cooperation in Brazil⁴ and the development compact in India⁵. While building their own SSC delivery structures, partners of the South are also designing assessment strategies. In both cases, the main challenge is to create systems and design strategies consistent with SSC principles.

Third, many of the experiences, either executed and commissioned by governments, or conducted by think tanks, are moving towards the establishment of strategies, frameworks and methodologies consistent with the principles of SSC. These principles have been established in the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and include (i) respect for national sovereignty, (ii) national ownership and independence; (iii) horizontality (equality); (iv) non-conditionality; (v) noninterference in domestic affairs; and (vi) mutual benefits.

The three trends observed in turn suggest a shared emphasis by Southern partners on the importance of processes. Indeed, the ways South-South partnerships are established may not only impact results, but are themselves a result to be assessed. For many Southern partners, processes and results are intertwined. This has both conceptual and methodological consequences.

Selected South-led approaches

This section identifies three significant evaluation experiences conducted either by governments (Brazil and Mexico) or by independent agents in the South (China). The case studies were analyzed considering four dimensions: (i) goals and scope; (ii) evaluation procedures; (iii) attention to SSC principles; and (iv) contributions to SSC results assessment. The first three dimensions present the core features of evaluation systems, while the fourth dimension seeks to identify potential lessons from the cases under analysis to assess the results of SSC.

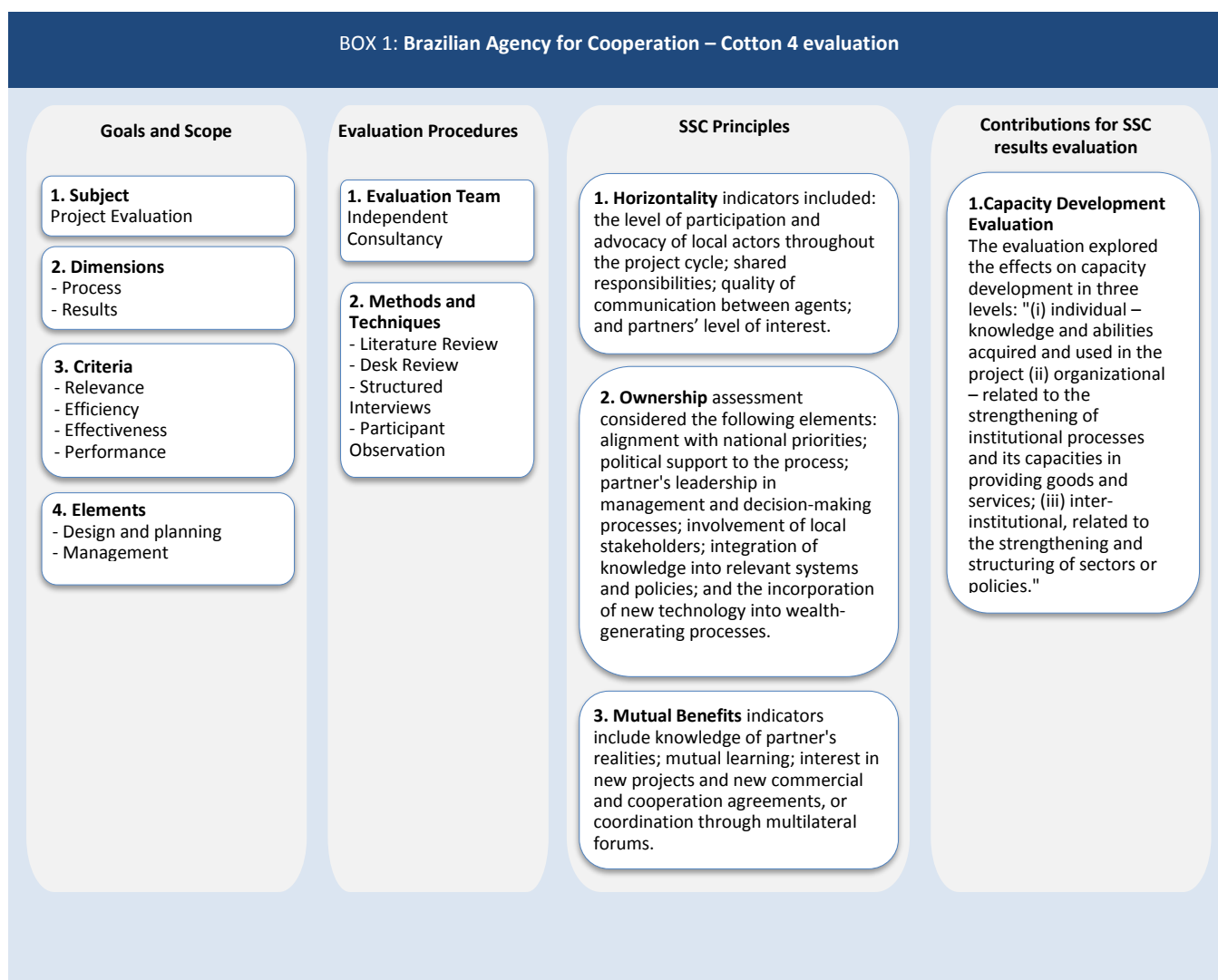
⁴ The concept of "structuring cooperation" was developed within the health sector in Brazil. While focusing on capacity building, structuring cooperation tries to integrate "human resource development with organizational and institutional development" and to break "with the traditional passive transfer of knowledge and technology" (Almeida et al. 2010, p. 23). Trilateral cooperation is a modality put forward by the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC). ABC describes it as a complementary modality to SSC. It may involve different stakeholders (public, private and SCOs) and must follow SSC principles. A trilateral partnership seeks to explore the value-added and the comparative advantages of each partner, emphasizing horizontality as a way to ensure "the effective participation of all partners, both in their political and strategic dimension, as well as in the technical and operational management system." Hence, trilateral partnerships require specific governance and management mechanisms in order to build up "shared spaces, which would allow for adequate political and joint reflection on the partnership itself." (ABC 2017, p. 11).

⁵ The new development compact is an exchange between southern partners aiming at promoting economic development. Underpinned by SSC principles, such as mutual benefits, non-interference, and unconditionality, the development compact comprises "five different levels, namely, trade and investment; technology; skills upgrade; LoCs and finally, grants" (Chaturvedi 2016, p. 1).

1. Brazil

The Brazilian Agency of Cooperation (ABC), attached to the Ministry of External Relations, is the institution mandated to guide Brazil's development cooperation policies and activities. In 2013, ABC released its Manual of South-South Technical Cooperation Management. The manual sets the methodological framework for SSC. Furthermore, it is a comprehensive document covering design, management, monitoring, and evaluation of SSC activities. It considers evaluation as a crucial element in the lifecycle of any South-South Technical Cooperation initiatives. Accordingly, the evaluation should achieve three purposes: "(i) performance measurement and assessment of efficiency, effectiveness and the potential for sustainability of the initiative; (ii) quality assessment of initiative design, planning, management, coordination and implementation; and, (iii) provide lessons learned and recommendations to improve Brazilian South-South Technical Cooperation." (p. 119). Since the publication of the manual, ABC has conducted some evaluations and is currently formulating its strategy towards the institutionalization of its own monitoring and evaluation system. The first experiment under the framework established by the manual was the evaluation of the Cotton 4 Project (presented below in Box 2). The external evaluation, conducted by a consultant team, comprised three dimensions: (i) process; (ii) results; and, (iii) the applicability of SSC principles.⁶

BOX 1: Brazilian Agency for Cooperation – Cotton 4 evaluation

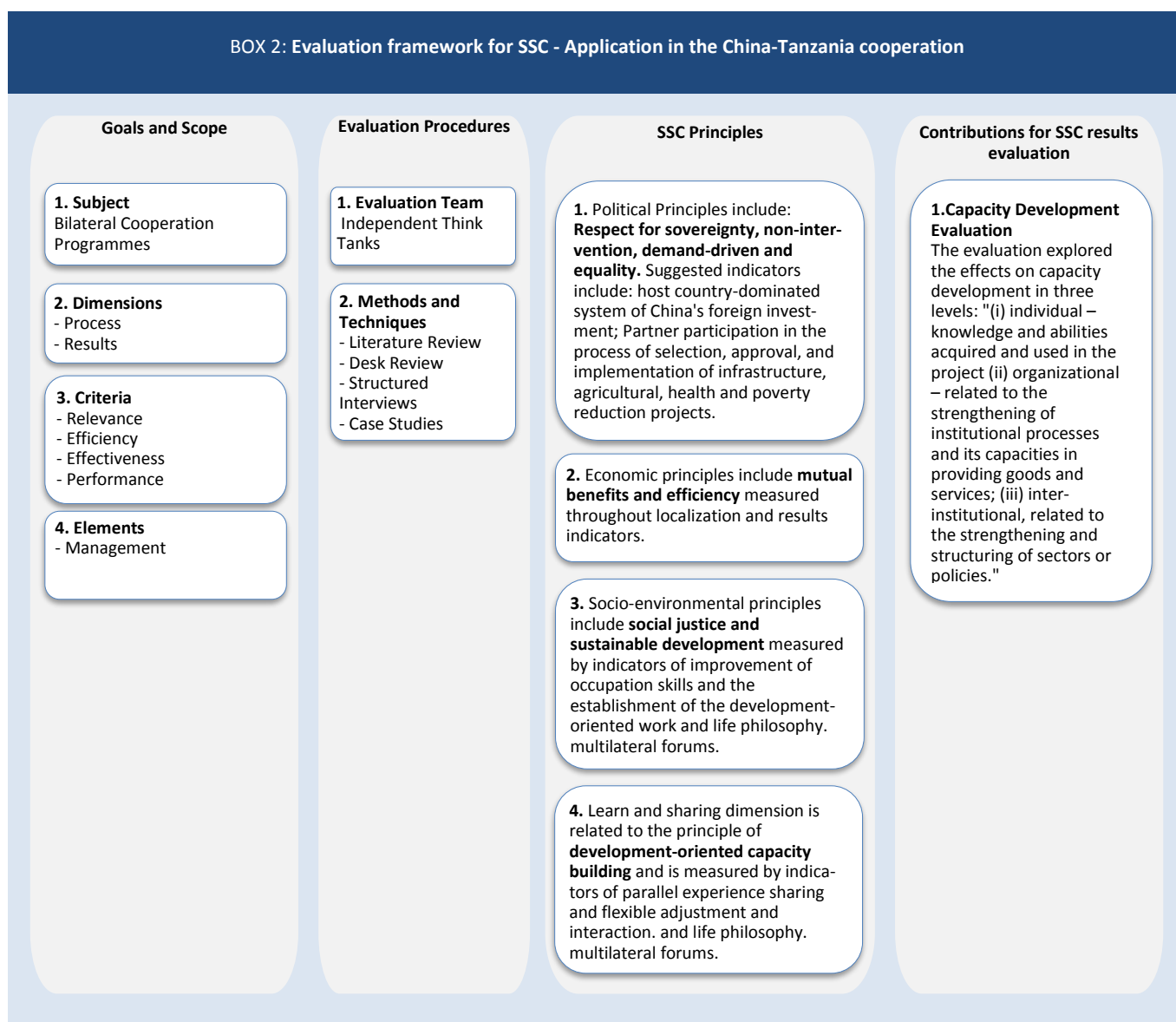


⁶ The Cotton 4 evaluation was commissioned by ABC and conducted by Plan Políticas Públicas and Centro de Estudos e Articulação da Cooperação Sul-Sul.

2. China

Between 2016 and 2017, China Agricultural University conducted a comprehensive evaluation of China's SSC with Tanzania. The evaluation (presented below in Box 3) was based on case studies and included five sectors: investment, infrastructure construction, agricultural technology transfer, medical service and public health, as well as community-based poverty reduction. This represented one out of a number of experiments conducted by independent think tanks following evaluation-related initiatives by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), which is mandated to design, execute and propose regulations of development cooperation activities (foreign aid). Updated policies and regulations of MOFCOM regarding development cooperation can be either found in the "White Paper on China's Foreign Aid" or the release of specific regulations. In 2014, the debates on monitoring and evaluation gained a new momentum when MOFCOM issued its "Measures for the Administration of Foreign Aid", announcing the implementation of an evaluation system. At a briefing section conducted in December 2014, the Assistant Minister Zhang Xiangchen contextualized the document as a part of a broader movement towards the reform of "foreign aid administration system." The deputy ministry moreover asserted that "we have shifted the focus of administration to macro policy study, building of laws and regulations and approval and evaluation of projects, especially strengthening the national policy management and mid- and long-term planning of foreign aid". In 2015, the "Circular on Foreign Technical Assistance Projects Management" also recognized the need of an evaluation system.

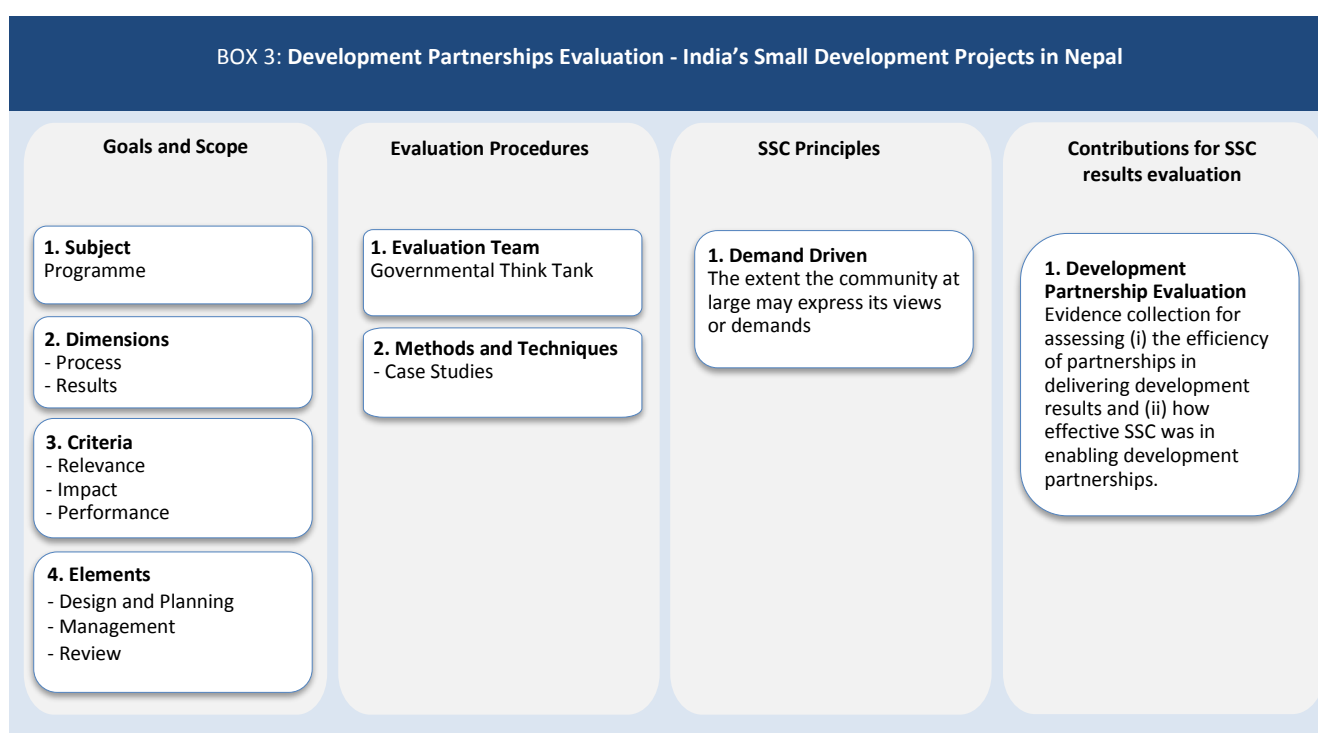
BOX 2: Evaluation framework for SSC - Application in the China-Tanzania cooperation



3. India

The absence of an impact assessment for its projects is often seen as a significant constraint for India's SSC.⁷ To this date, India Development Partnership (a division within the Ministry of External Affairs established in 2012 to coordinate India's SSC) does not have an overarching assessment system. Nevertheless, official think-tanks like the "Research and Information System for Developing Countries" (RIS) have conducted limited case studies, trying to develop a methodological toolkit and analytical framework for SSC impact assessment. In 2013, the RIS conducted an assessment of India's Small Development Projects (SDPs) in Nepal. While studying the SDP programme in Nepal, the evaluation team focused on the need to assess development partnerships both as a process but also as an outcome. Hence, the evaluation of development partnerships would provide evidence not only of how SSCP are following SSC principles, but also of how efficient these horizontal partnerships are for achieving development results. Furthermore, when quality partnerships themselves are seen as positive outcomes, enhancing social capital and empowering local communities, a results evaluation would then consider the effectiveness of SSC in promoting these partnerships.

BOX 3: Development Partnerships Evaluation - India's Small Development Projects in Nepal

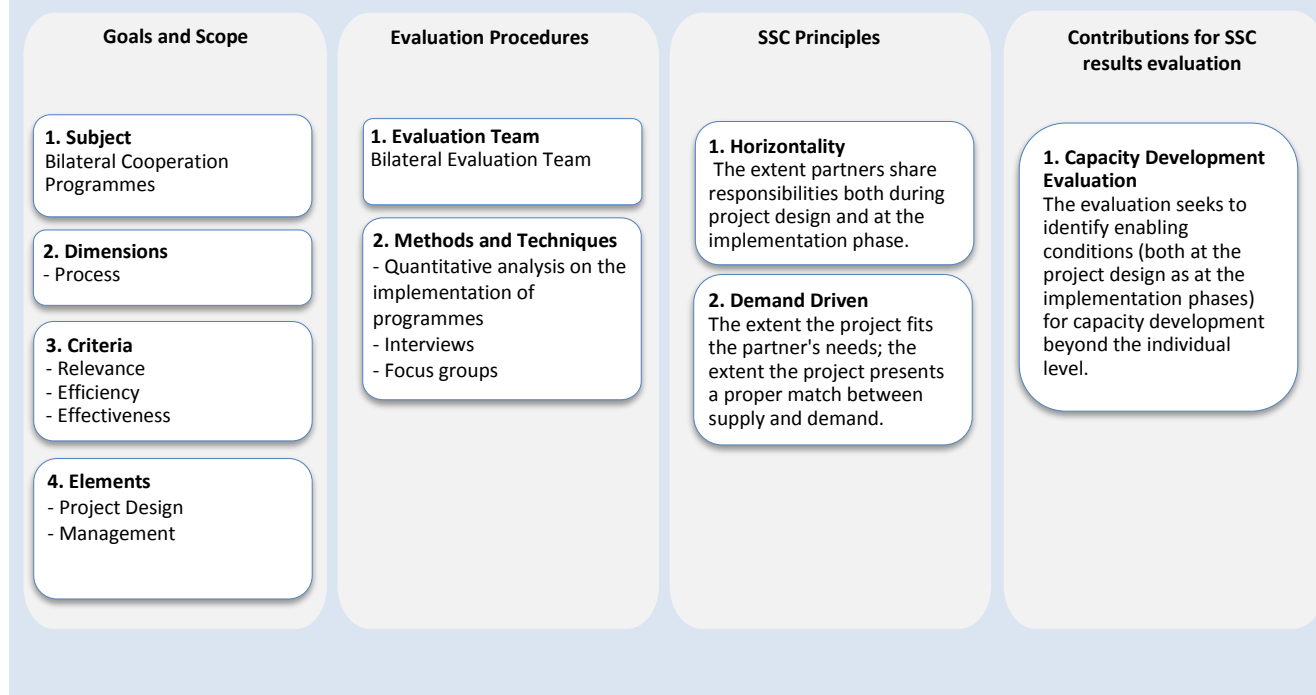


⁷ Chaturvedi, Sachin (2012). *India's development partnership: key policy shifts and institutional evolution*. Cambridge Review of International Affairs 25(4), p. 557-577.

4. Mexico

Development cooperation is one of the constitutional principles of Mexico's foreign policy. The Law of International Cooperation for Development, introduced in 2011, established the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID) as a unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, AMEXCID is mandated to design, implement and evaluate the International Development Cooperation Programme. The current 2014-2018 Programme follows the principles of Paris, including results-based management and mutual accountability.⁸ To this end, AMEXCID established in 2013 a unit responsible for planning and evaluation. While independent, it also plays a transversal role supporting AMEXCID's executive areas in the establishment of standard management tools and procedures. In 2014, AMEXCID outlined a strategy towards the institutionalization of an evaluation policy. As part of this effort, the agency conducted pilot evaluations and organized sessions for experience exchanges between partner agencies. The pilots were designed to evaluate management processes, quality of services and products, as well as relevance and results. The evaluation of the bilateral cooperation between México and Honduras, summarized below (Box 1), was the first exercise conducted by a bilateral team of experts. The evaluation focused on project design and management even though it has also identified and assessed some results. The official evaluation policy by AMEXCID is expected to be released soon.

BOX 4: AMEXCID - Evaluation of the bilateral cooperation between México and Honduras 2011-2015



⁸ At the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Paris on March 2005, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was adopted. The Declaration established five guiding principles for development aid, namely ownership, alignment, harmonization, management for results, and mutual accountability. OECD (2009). *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*. Available from <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>.

Lessons Learned

SSC has attracted growing attention both for its volumes and its perceived impact. Southern governments are setting up assessment and evaluation systems for SSC activities. There is a widespread perception that despite the challenges, such systems will generate information and knowledge necessary for enhancing their own practices. Likewise, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is a mounting concern on identifying SSC singularities and its specific contributions to the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. Southern governments often insist that, although intertwined, the measurement of costs and the attribution of values require two different approaches (SEGIB 2017, p. 87). To distinguish SSC from other development flows, SSCP must create specific tools allowing the attribution of value to their practices. Hence, assessment and evaluation systems would also give visibility and differentiate SSC as a unique contribution to developing countries to achieve the SDGs. Despite the different approaches adopted to assess and evaluate SSC, as the cases above suggest, common lessons can be learned from the national experiences.

1. The existence (or the lack) of monitoring, assessment, and evaluation systems have a cross-cutting impact on SSC practices. The absence of baselines and clear indicators of progress were a challenge faced by evaluation teams in all cases. Apart from the negative impact on the assessment and evaluation activities, it demonstrates that the lack of evaluation systems has important impacts on project designs. Furthermore, as the three cases have shown, one key issue related to SSC management is the ability to adapt activities to political or economic changes. Assessment and evaluation systems contribute to an adaptive management, strengthening SSC activities and their potential outcomes.
2. SSC monitoring, assessment and evaluation systems must reflect the interlinkage between processes and results. SSCP consider that development cooperation must enlarge policy spaces and enable endogenous development solutions. The ways SSC projects are conducted are as important as the results they are expected to achieve. Indeed, processes may be even considered a condition for the achievement of SSC ultimate goals. Hence, SSC evaluation systems should reflect the interconnectedness of processes and results in three dimensions:
 - a. Assessment and evaluation processes should be jointly conducted by SSCP. Monitoring and evaluation are learning processes that contribute to strengthening SSCP's capacities. Horizontal management process, including joint assessment practices, contribute to strengthening partnerships, enlarging policy spaces, adding new learning opportunities and potentializing endogenous innovations in developing countries.
 - b. While assessing processes, SSCP are addressing the quality of their partnerships as enabling conditions for local ownership and self-reliance. Underpinned by principles such as horizontality and demand-driven and mutual benefits, SSC partnerships may be considered as enablers for autonomous policy development in developing countries. Rather than being a flaw, as asserted by many critics, the emphasis on processes may be a germane addition to the ways development cooperation has been assessed. The assessment of outcomes related to SSC processes may reveal its added value and its specific contribution to the AAAA and the 2030 Agenda. SSCP are developing specific tools and indicators to assess processes as results. Indeed, all the three cases attested how SSCP attribute a strategic role to the impact of such processes. The cases pointed to different ways SSCP may assess processes and underscored how capacity development is valued as a key component of any partnership established between Southern countries.
 - c. Capacity Development is both a goal and a dimension to be evaluated. Capacity development was a key dimension addressed by the cases presented above. SSCP are designing different frameworks to evaluate the impact of their activities on local capacities. Despite the different approaches and attribution difficulties, SSCP are proposing indicators to evaluate impacts at the institutional level.

3. Monitoring, assessment, and evaluation systems are being built upon frameworks based on SSC principles. Despite the differences, SSCP are trying to establish frameworks and indicators based on SSC principles. Table 2 presents common indicators identified from the experiments discussed above. Beyond observing whether the principles are being followed, these indicators help to understand how SSC is delivered and the impact of management processes over results. As shown below, there is a substantial convergence with regards to indicators related to process evaluation. However, indicators for results evaluation are still either under-developed or subjected to different approaches by SSCP.

TABLE 2: Common indicators based on SSC principles	
Horizontality	The extent partners participate and share responsibilities during the project cycle Share borne by each participating partner of the same two cost data items (executed or budgeted)
Demand-driven	The extent the project fits the partner's needs The extent the project presents a proper match between partners The extent SSCP are able to adapt when facing changes
Mutual benefits/ownership	Integration of knowledge into relevant systems and policies Incorporation of new technology into wealth-generating processes
Efficiency	The ratio between the budgeted and executed costs per project (or action) The average time lapse between the approval of initiatives and their commencement

Source: Author's compilation.

4. Multilateral and regional institutions may play a key role facilitating the creation of common frameworks for assessment and evaluation. Taking into the account the variety of SSC practices and the need for preserving this burgeoning diversity of experiences across the global South, some agencies are facilitating political dialogues and offering technical support for Southern governments to share experiences and build consensus around common methodologies and indicators. Among many contributions made by multilateral and regional organizations, the SEGIB, the DCF and the UNOSSC work on SSC are worth noting. Respecting national traits, and distinct paces, these institutions are contributing to establishing a common ground among SSCP and a shared vocabulary on SSC. Moreover, their efforts to map capacities for SSC or development solutions as well as development needs is an effort that may contribute to scale up SSC activities and ultimately contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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