

Brazil as a new international development actor, South-South cooperation and the IBSA initiative

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I. Introduction	1
II. Brazil – a new actor in the international development system between North and South.....	1
III. Brazilians development engagement in Latin America and Africa.....	3
IV. The IBSA initiative – an example of a new form of South-South relations	4
V. Conclusions and Outlook.....	4

I. Introduction

Brazil's position in the global system is marked by different factors: Being aware of its hybrid position between the North and the South, and the external perceptions that identifies Brazil as an important and crucial country for the regional stability and development (concept anchor country launched for example by the German Development Agency), Brazil projects its global identity as a “voice” for the developing world in crucial international debates. In this context, Brazil refuses to be seen as a donor, but identifies itself as a partner for development.

Although it has less economic, demographic and territorial resources than other emerging actors, like China and India, Brazil is an interesting partner for a triangular development cooperation projects as it shares key values with the EU and countries like Canada (for example, in the fields of democracy, human rights and its approach to multilateralism). It also has special know-how due to its domestic experiences in combating underdevelopment, hunger and health problems, and it has the added value of local, historical (postcolonial) and cultural “nearness” to the developing world, especially SA, the Caribbean and Lusophone countries in Africa and Asia.

II. Brazil – a new actor in the international development system between North and South

In recent years Brazil has been gaining importance and influence in different areas of the international arena. Its economy has risen to the rank of 10th in the world¹ with a growth rate of 5.3% in 2007.² It is the biggest economy in South America, representing half of total South American GDP, and the sixth-largest investor in the group of developing countries, with important multinational companies like Petrobras and Companhia Vale do Rio Doce operating worldwide. Although its demographic, geographic and economic power is not as impressive as that of China or India, it is an important, active and participative emerging Southern power in crucial institutions in the global arena, and a key player in South America.

¹ (IMF/Worldbank data 2007/2006)

² (IADB/CEPAL)

The foreign policy of Brazil is characterised, since the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government in the 1990s followed by the Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva administration in 2002, by three important pillars:

- Promotion of regional integration with the intention of achieving economic and social development. Peace and stability in its neighbourhood has also been an important objective since the Cardoso Government in the 1990, followed by the Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva administration.
- Support and promotion of multilateralism on a global level, being actively engaged in international organisations such as the UN and its different agencies, the WTO and participating in meetings and summits of the OECD as a so-called “outreach country” in the context of the Heiligendamm-Process.
- Promotion of South-South cooperation, as reflected in initiatives like the Brazil-Africa Forum, regular meetings with Arab countries, increasing numbers of Brazilian embassies in African countries, and the launch of the dialogue forum IBSA, an alliance between the southern powers India, Brazil and South Africa.

Brazil’s ambiguous role, being an important emerging southern country which is part of the developing world (having low levels of human development, high poverty, etc.) and one of the key players in the international system, is very interesting, especially with regard to its role as an increasingly important development cooperation agent.

This hybrid position is reflected in the institutional development. The Brazilian Agency for Development Cooperation (Agencia Brasileira de Cooperação, ABC) was created in 1987 as part of a foundation (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, FUNAG) linked to the Foreign Ministry with the aim of improving the management and the coordination of ODA received by Brazil from bilateral and multilateral donors as well as Non-Governmental-Organizations. Only over the last decade, since its integration into the Foreign Ministry, the Agency has increasingly become also a development provider and actor in the international aid and development system. This important experience of Brazil in terms of administrating incoming aid in order to improve its positive impact and results in the country, could be an interesting example in the context of the ownership debate in international development and aid relations.

In general terms, Brazil’s development cooperation is part of the broader South-South cooperation approach. The general aims of Brazilian partnerships for development are to improve the livelihood of citizens, achieve sustainable growth and social development through transferring know-how and technological expertise, strengthen institutional structures and provide advisory services and capacity-building measures. According to official declarations, Brazil’s ODA is not conditioned to profits for its enterprises and commerce, nor to political criteria, but is instead free of conditions.

Furthermore, there are also some non-governmental foundations and organizations engaged in concrete projects of international development cooperation. An interesting example in this context is Viva Rio’s projects to combat youth violence in the shanty towns of Haiti. Nevertheless, Brazil has still a very small representation of NGO’s in the international development context and is looking forward to improve this in order to engage more and more civil society actors in this area.

Apart from concrete programmes coordinated by the ABC (and the Foreign Ministry) and the investments in developing countries guided by the Finance Ministry, Brazil's government also promotes the interests of developing countries, including naturally its own, in the international arena: one example of this is the so-called "Lula Group" launching "Action against Hunger and Poverty" together with Algeria, Chile, France, Germany and Spain in order to develop alternative financing instruments for sustainable development and to achieve the MDGs.

Although Brazil remains a net recipient of ODA in financial terms (its main donors are Japan, Germany, France and the US, which support programmes mainly in the social area like "Zero Hunger"), it is perceived more and more as a key player and "anchor country" in Latin America and to some extent also in Africa.

III. Brazilians development engagement in Latin America and Africa

Brazilian development promotion in South America is divided into regional integration projects and bilateral development programmes. The former include, for example, the Mercosur Fund for financing projects to overcome asymmetries in the Mercosur states, along with support for smaller countries, Brazil's engagement in the Interamerican Development Bank and the recently launched UNASUR (Union of South American Nations).

Of the bilateral ODA, 38% goes to LAC, mainly to Paraguay and the Andean Region. The projects are oriented towards infrastructure improvement, and the education ("Bolsa Escola" and literacy programmes) and health (mainly projects for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment) sectors. Many of these bilateral development cooperation projects are based in domestic experiences like programmes to combat hunger and poverty and improve access to education and health systems.

An interesting case of Brazilian development cooperation in the Caribbean region is Haiti, where the link between security and development is an important key issue. Brazil and Canada, who is a crucial donor in Haiti, have signed several agreements to cooperate in the country's education, health (immunization programmes) and social development sectors. Brazil contributes, apart from providing financial support, with its expertise in combating urban violence, providing support for basic education and developing programmes for the treatment and prevention of epidemics like AIDS, while also providing crucial know-how and technical personnel. The Brazilian Embassy has an important role in coordinating and supervising the development programmes in the urban and rural areas in Haiti.

Another third of Brazil's bilateral ODA goes to Lusophone Africa, where Brazil is mainly engaged in projects providing social development and knowledge for improvements in the agriculture sector. Direct investments in the mining sector, in particular in Mozambique, are also increasing, however. While cultural and historical links with the Lusophone countries give Brazil an advantage when compared with China, it remains a relatively small and insignificant development actor on the African continent. In its intention to become an important global player, the support of the African countries is crucial for Brazil. By engaging in Africa, Brazil also hopes to boost its image as a "good emerging power" which cares about the poorest - it's African "brothers and sisters".

IV. The IBSA initiative – an example of a new form of South-South relations

On regard of the IBSA dialogue forum, this is an interesting case of South-South cooperation among three emerging powers, and its impact on the development system.

The IBSA initiative was launched in June 2003 with the aim of increasing trilateral cooperation in key areas such as energy and trade, and achieving greater impact by uniting their voices in the global arena. While the three countries have more differences than similarities, the factors that unite them are shared values and interests in the global arena, such as democracy, human rights, support for international law and multilateralism, and the promotion of peace and stability. Recently the IBSA dialogue forum launched the IBSA Facility for Development cooperation in the context of the UNDP programme for South-South cooperation. The fund has the financial support of the UNDP and is currently realizing two main projects: waste collection in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and agricultural assistance in Guinea Bissau. Further projects, for example in Palestinian territories are under discussion.

V. Conclusions and Outlook

To conclude, I would like to present a series of points for discussion about the role of Brazil in the international aid system and its significance for countries and organizations such as Canada, Spain and the European Union:

Although still small in quantitative terms, Brazil is an interesting new donor because:

- It shares values with traditional donors.
- Is in a hybrid position between the developing and the developed worlds, understanding and being respected by both sides.
- Has an added value in terms of its domestic experiences of development (combating hunger, the education sector, the health sector, and agriculture and energy) which can be exported to developing countries.
- Is interested in triangular development projects with OECD donors (for example Canada in Haiti, etc.) and this potential should be explored.
- Has a crucial impact in the agriculture and energy sectors because it is the most important bio fuels exporter in the world, giving it a special role which should not be underestimated.

For Northern and Southern policy makers, researchers and practitioners it is and it will be important to follow the development of countries as Brazil, that, with its active participation in international agenda setting in the different areas, in particular development cooperation, mixing national interests with global values, are changing the international architecture of power in a way that was unpredictable only few years ago.