



# Supporting 'Autonomy and Resistance'

The Brazil-Mozambique-South Africa  
native seed bank project

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# The Brazil-Mozambique-South Africa Native Seed Bank Project

**Countries:** South Africa, Mozambique

**Time Period:** 2011-2014

**Sector:** agriculture; food

**Primary Actors:** Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE), Brazil; Popular Peasant Movement (MPC), Brazil; Peasant Women's Movement (MMC), Brazil; UNAC (Mozambique); Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE), South Africa.

## Summary

This case study explores an innovative multi-stakeholder project led civil society in three countries: Brazil, Mozambique and South Africa. The “community native seeds banks in family farming areas” knowledge-sharing initiative is the first Brazilian South-South Cooperation (SSC) project to be delivered by social movements working in coalition with an NGO and two different government agencies. The project has the overall objective of contributing to the economic and organisational strengthening of family farming in South Africa and Mozambique. Guided by the concept of food sovereignty and practices of agroecology, the project promotes the exchange of experiences between family farmers, technicians and rural leaders to rescue, use and multiply native seeds, and establish community native seed banks.

The project was first propelled and mobilised by IBASE, an NGO known for its work in democracy, food sovereignty and alternative development models, with the support of the Presidency General Secretariat (SG-PR). The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) provides funding and overall management of the project. The Women's Peasant Movement (MMC) and the Popular Peasant Movement (MPC), both with extensive experience in establishing native seed banks and fairs in Brazil, are responsible for carrying out the capacity building with the support of two agronomists. African civil society partners, responsible for project implementation, include in Mozambique the national peasant movement organization UNAC and in South African six NGOs affiliated with TCOE (the Trust for Community Outreach and Education).

The Seed Bank project aimed to counter a dominant agribusiness model of development, presenting an agricultural development alternative that allowed farmers to choose their own agricultural practices and increase their autonomy.

Methodologically, the project is based on popular education and intercultural dialogue, ensuring mutual respect in regards to the diversity of knowledge and traditional wisdom existent in the different countries. Cooperation was facilitated through several dialogue and networking events, including the People's Dialogue (established in 2004), and in 2009, the “Africa-Brazil: Social Participation and International Cooperation” programme.

### Key lessons:

- **Drawing on traditional practice:** easy adaptation of the Brazilian experience is due to the fact that the process of rescuing native seeds is based on respecting and remembering the traditional practices of farmers. Additionally, it articulates the knowledge of the farmers with technical agronomical aspects, taking also into account the knowledge and capacity of the farmers who attended the courses.
- **Mutual learning and dialogue:** the civil society partners already shared a similar ideological background, which was crucial to the project's success. The People's Dialogue helped build trust and common understanding amongst the partners, and mutual respect and listening was a central part of participant training sessions, fostering intercultural understanding. The need for humility and "historical patience" is paramount to ensure equal partnerships.
- **Working with governments:** government buy-in and support, with civil society autonomy regarding the context and approach of the courses, was essential. However a culture of distrust for civil society within governments in South Africa and Mozambique proved a stumbling block. Partners had to constantly convince government officials of the project merits and bureaucratic complexity of involving various government agencies often had negative impacts in the fulfilment of project activities.
- **Political and strategic aspects:** a crucial part of the courses focused on the MMC, MCP and IBASE's experience around political mobilisation, emphasising that development is a political and not merely technical effort. Partners believe that sustainable and inclusive development can only be achieved by creating alliances and coalitions, as well as increasing people's political consciousness and autonomy.

### Key Successes

- **Mutual mobilisation and activism:** while not an intended outcome from the project, the cooperation between social movements in Brazil and African counterparts had an 'inspirational factor', creating ripple effects of increasing political activism and adaptation of their rural extension approaches. The strengthening of relationships between movements has also been a key outcome, improving mutual perceptions on their commonalities, as well as broader consciousness on the importance of native seeds.
- **Mobilisation of women's movements:** the use of women's seminars and sharing of experiences from MMC mobilised the creation of a women's movement within UNAC in Mozambique and the establishment of the Rural Women's Assembly, led by TCOE. The Assembly is currently active in 8 countries in Southern Africa and more than 7000 rural women have participated in their regional activities.
- **Piloting new approaches and relationships:** As well as being the first time ABC supported a project that was developed and implemented by civil society and the first partnership between UNAC and the Mozambique government; this initiative was also the first time farmers in South Africa and Mozambique learned about techniques to rescue and multiply native seeds.

# Supporting ‘autonomy and resistance’:

## The Brazil-Mozambique-South Africa native seed bank project

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The international development cooperation architecture has changed dramatically over the last decade. This context represents a window of opportunity to revise its policies and practices to build more just, equitable and sustainable societies and to contribute to an international system committed to socio-cultural diversity. The proliferation of cooperation providers and approaches brought about new debates, and challenged old consensus, on how to improve its effectiveness. Additionally, traditional development models have been increasingly challenged due to the current financial, food and climate crises, thus questioning the capacity of such models to generate sustainable and inclusive development. The influence of emerging countries such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is also rapidly increasing, including their role as providers of South-South Cooperation (SSC).

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Brazilian SSC has been gaining increased attention in the last years. This has been a result of the international recognition of the development trajectory of Brazil, which has seen economic growth accompanied by poverty reduction and social inclusion. However, national and international debates have been mainly focused on government-to-government initiatives. Nonetheless, many of the policies and initiatives being shared through Brazilian SSC have been the result of social struggles and political processes that had civil society as a key actor. Moreover, civil society organisations and social movements have been engaging in international cooperation for decades, as recipients and providers. The rich experience accumulated can greatly contribute to current debates on development effectiveness.

This case study explores an innovative multi-stakeholder project led by social movements and organisations in three countries: Brazil, Mozambique, and South Africa. The “community native seed banks in family farming areas” knowledge-sharing initiative is the first Brazilian SSC project to be delivered by social movement organisations working in coalition with an NGO and two different government agencies. The project has the overall objective of contributing to the economic and organisational strengthening of family farming in South Africa and Mozambique.

Guided by the concept of food sovereignty and the practice of agroecology, the project promotes the exchange of experiences between family farmers, technicians and rural leaders to build the capacity for rescuing, multiplying, stocking and using native seeds, as well as establishing community native seed banks and fairs. It seeks to support both agricultural biodiversity (through the preservation of seed varieties adapted to different agro-climatic contexts) and cultural diversity (through valuing the identities and knowledge of rural communities), as well as promoting income-generation and resilient rural livelihoods.

It was firstly propelled and continuously mobilised by IBASE (the Institute of Social and Economic Analysis), a leading Rio-based NGO with the support Presidency General Secretariat (SG-PR, in Portuguese).<sup>2</sup> The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC, in Portuguese), as project coordinator, provides funding for the Popular Peasant Movement (MPC) and Peasant Women’s Movement (MMC), two Brazilian social movement organisations linked to the transnational peasant movement Via Campesina. MPC and MMC have experience and proven results in establishing community seed banks and organizing seed fairs in the Brazilian states of Santa Catarina and Goiás. IBASE has been a leading NGO, since the 80s, in national and international debates around radicalisation of democracy, hunger, food sovereignty and alternative development models. African civil society partners, responsible for project implementation, include in Mozambique the national peasant movement organization UNAC and in South African six NGOs affiliated with TCOE (the Trust for Community Outreach and Education). The South African Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the Mozambican Ministries of Agriculture and Planning and Development are the government counterparts responsible to support project’s logistic, such as transport and accommodation.

Although the dialogue amongst partners has a longer history, the project started in 2011 and is due to finish this year. Therefore, the case study is an initial reflection on: what has happened to so far; the principles and concepts in which the project is based; the emerging lessons, results and challenges; as well as relate the experience to the Busan principles and put forward recommendations for

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<sup>2</sup> The Presidency’s General Secretariat was established in 2003 and is responsible for federal government’s relations with civil society. Its International Affairs Advisory Department aims to foster citizen participation in Brazilian international agendas, such as meetings and seminars about social integration (Mercosul and CPLP), Mercosul Social e Participativo or consultations with civil society (i.e. Rio +20 and UNDP’s Beyond 2015).



development cooperation. It is based on interviews with IBASE, MMC, SR-PR, ABC and UNAC, as well as review of project documentation and relevant reports produced by partner organisations. It is important to note that, as the project is still in its implementation phase, a rigorous analysis of results has not been possible. Some of the words used to describe the principles and lessons learned are not used in English with the same meaning as in Portuguese. They were, however, written with a literal translation, as part of the importance of SSC is bringing about new narratives.

## **1. Setting a solid foundation for horizontal cooperation**

The social movements, civil society network and NGO involved in this project had a long history of engagement before the project was developed. It was through their participation and networking in the World Social Forum (WSF) that their relationship was built, based on similar ideological background. In 2004 the People's Dialogue was established, led by IBASE, with the objective of bringing Latin American and African civil society organisations and movements together to “discuss and promote activities to strengthen the foundations for changes towards new models of development and democratic processes to confront the capitalist system, while incorporating aspects related to the organisational experiences and struggles, as well as ethnic, cultural, political and gender diversity”<sup>3</sup>. The Dialogue was an important space to bridge cultural differences, allowing the actors to better understand each other and seek commonalities of interests and challenges they faced. It was also in this space that some of the approaches used in this project were developed,

In February 2009 the “Africa-Brazil: Social Participation and International Cooperation” program was organized with the participation of an 11 country African delegation. The objectives of the visit included (i) the participation of the African delegation in the WSF and the Local Authorities Forum that took place previously in Belem; (ii) public policy experience's exchange between Brazil and African countries; (iii) exchange between Brazilian and African civil society organizations, local governments and trade unions; (iv) identify potential cooperation projects to be developed with civil society organizations. The event was coordinated by SG-PR, in partnership with ABC and the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality Policies. IBASE was responsible for mobilising and inviting civil society representatives. The meeting was the starting point of the project, as the civil society working group developed recommendations and areas of mutual interests, including food sovereignty and sustainable environment.

The SG-PR had a decisive role in mediating the demand elaborated by the civil society partners with ABC. This was the first, and only, time ABC took on board a project brought by civil society, and not a governmental demand. The SG-PR hoped this would be a pilot project, which could be later replicated to ensure civil society was part and parcel of official SSC. Unfortunately, these efforts have not led an increase of participation of civil society in Brazilian SSC so far.

A prospecting mission was organised to better understand the partners' realities before finalising the project proposal. A Brazilian delegation that included representatives from ABC, SG-PR, IBASE, MMC and MPC, went to Namibia<sup>4</sup>, South Africa and Mozambique to visit the partners and potential beneficiaries, discuss the initiative with government officials and reflect on the specificities of each context

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<sup>3</sup> See: [www.dialogodospovos.org](http://www.dialogodospovos.org)

<sup>4</sup> Namibia was initially the third partner which joined the first proposal, but at the end the government did not accept the project.

before the proposal and methodology was developed. In South Africa the delegation met with government officials from different levels, national regional and municipal. The Brazilian embassies in the countries were essential to coordinate with government and ensure buy-in to the initiative.

**Figure 1 – Project Phases**



Source: Own elaboration based on project documentation and interviews

## 2. Building blocks: concepts and approaches

The project's conceptual framework combines four main pillars that guide and embed practices politically and methodologically, used and developed by MMC, MPC and IBASE. Principles of food Sovereignty and agroecology express partners' world vision and frame the overall objectives to be obtained, while popular education and intercultural translation set the ground for how to obtain them.

### Food Sovereignty

As the Peoples' Food Sovereignty Statement advocates "food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets, and; to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See: [http://www.nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/Peoples\\_Food\\_Sovereignty\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/Peoples_Food_Sovereignty_Statement.pdf)

It is important to note that food sovereignty goes beyond the concept of food security, since the first prioritizes farmers, at the household or collective level, as well as diversified and agro-ecologically based production systems and local markets. The former does not include discussions on where or how that food is produced or traded. Food Sovereignty as a concept is intrinsically linked with the critiques of current economic policies which favour agribusiness, causing problems of market speculation and food price volatility, and often increasing food insecurity. Food Sovereignty also refers to the redistribution and equitable access to productive resources, including agrarian reform and protecting seeds from patents.

### **Agro-ecology**

The discipline of Agro-ecology combines the promotion of peasants and family agriculture with ecological concerns, as it provides principles for how to manage sustainable agro-ecosystems such that they: (is) combine production with natural resource conservation and ecological sustainability, (ii) are culturally sensitive, socially just and economically viable, (iii) guarantee food and nutritional security.

To put agro-ecology into practice, multiple and interdisciplinary strategies are required, such as the strengthening of farmers organization, mobilization and partnerships to reinforce the effects of their actions; the promotion of farmers' autonomy and agency; the respect and promotion of different gender or age perspectives; the provision of continuous training to raise producers' education levels; and influencing public policy formulation. Above all, agro-ecology requires a deeper understanding of the complex long-term relationship between natural resources, people and their environment, where agriculture must be conceived as an ecological system as well as a human dominated socio-economic system.

### **Popular education**

A key aspect of the project is that its knowledge exchange is based on popular education. Popular education methodology differs from most technical cooperation projects, in which one has the knowledge to be shared and the other is the "recipient". Popular education values prior/traditional knowledge, learning-by-doing and construction of knowledge based on the cultural, social and political realities of those involved. It blurs the lines between teacher and student, stimulating horizontal dialogue and exchange. It is grounded on the notion of class, political struggle and social transformation. Cinnelli explains that it builds new identities, individual and collective, and other practices of cultivation and conservation of seeds (2012: 15). Justina, an MMC leader emphasises that:

"Popular Education does not require a person with university degree, but takes place among people themselves, from knowledge they transmit to each another, from shared experiences. In the workshops, women exchange knowledge among themselves. Of course there is someone responsible for the workshop that has the knowledge, but she is a popular educator, that brings knowledge to the others, and so it becomes an exchange, an education that takes place among women." (*Ibid* p.42)

### **Intercultural dialogue**

Intercultural dialogue methodology aims to facilitate the exchange and formulation of knowledge and action based on the differences, diversity and complementarity of participants engaged in the political process that strengthens social movements and social struggles.

Intercultural dialogue is inspired by the concept of intercultural translation, which



finds reciprocal understanding between diverse experiences, providing a horizontal dialogue among diverse forms of knowledge, either between different cultures or different forms of knowledge. Awareness of the incompleteness of one's culture motivates further dialogue, as it is assumed that cultures can be enriched through exchange and confrontation with other cultures

### 3. Emerging lessons

The Seed Bank project is ground-breaking in many ways. It is the first time ABC supported a project that was developed and implemented by civil society; it is the first partnership between UNAC and the Mozambique's government and, most importantly, the first time peasants in Mozambique and South Africa learned about techniques to rescue and multiply native seeds. In the case of Mozambique, peasants obviously used native seeds but depended mainly on hybrid seeds that came from South Africa. The importance of preserving and multiplying native seeds, as well as the technical aspects to do it, was unknown to UNAC. In South Africa the situation the initial context was very different. Due to the breakdown smallholder agriculture during the Apartheid period, farmers lost part of their farming practices and knowledge. The project is contributing to the resurgence of their traditional wisdom.

This section will unpack the lessons learned so far: what worked well, some of the challenges faced, as well as the perceived results. Without the circumstances as described above, many of the results and learning of this project would not have happened. In contrast to other issues that have many donors and organisations working on them, members of UNAC and TCOE would not have accumulated the knowledge and awareness of cooperative farmer strategies and native seeds without this cooperation project.

#### What worked well

Interviewees emphasised the importance of the various moments of engagement, starting with the Peoples' Dialogue, in **slowly building trust and common understanding** amongst partners. Moreover, civil society partners shared a **similar ideological background**. This was seen as the foundation that allowed the project to be successful. The inclusion of **context analysis** (i.e. global trends in agricultural development and consequences to family farming) in the trainings was paramount to link the local realities and challenges to global issues - such as the green revolution and the competing agricultural development models, creating a sense of solidarity between movements and a better understanding of the structures they were mobilising against. The context discussed during courses has given more evidence to and understanding of their political demands.

An interesting aspect of this initiative is the apparent **easy adaptation** of the approach being shared by the Brazilian partners. This is partially due to the fact that the process of rescuing native seeds is based on **respecting and remembering the traditional practices of farmers**. The reflection is how these practices can be improved, or the seeds can be improved, without changing the traditional practice per se. Thus, it articulates the knowledge of the farmers with technical agronomical knowledge of soil, climate, and reproduction of plants and production of native seeds. The fact that the farmers involved have **strong embedded, but not commercial, interest** in making the project work is also seen as a factor to the project's success. For instance, it was mentioned that other SSC projects that involve training of government staff may not be as sustainable due to turnover rates.

As **cultural, social and political differences were taken into consideration from the onset**, through a workshop to jointly define the methodology; potential adaptation problems were constantly being reflected on. Moema from IBASE explained “*there is respect for the history and accumulated knowledge, we share what we know and the partners can analyse what interests them, we do not take a blue-print approach. There is **freedom of ‘apropriação’ through inspiration and not imposition***”. “Apropriação” could be translated as ownership but, as the way it was used by interviewees differs from current mainstream discourse, we will use the Portuguese word.

In practice, the courses involved group work to allow participants to share and reflect on their contexts and practices. These sessions were followed by presentations of MMC and MCP experience, sharing what they have learned in terms of best instruments and the results they achieved. It is important to note that a crucial part of the courses were focused on **political and strategic aspects** of the MMC, MCP and IBASE’s experience. The consultants hired also presented more technical issues around rescuing and multiplication of traditional seeds. **Listening and respecting everyone’s experience and knowledge is a cornerstone of their trainings.**

Moreover, the social movements and agronomists involved in the courses had **first-hand experience** of the issue, and have had positive results with seed banks in Brazil. Although two agronomists carried out part of the training, these had strong background in working with social movements in Brazil and the trainings were mainly seen as **peasant-to-peasant exchanges** and, thus, allowed for mutual learning. This was also seen as the result of the dialogue and exchange of knowledge methodology (popular education and intercultural dialogue) that ensured a **more egalitarian relationship**.

**Government buy-in and support** without interfering with the leadership of the movements in creating the curriculum and methodology of courses was also mentioned as essential. In the case of the Brazilian government, the SG-PR was key to ensuring the initiative happened, both negotiating with ABC but also constantly liaising with all the partners. On the other hand, IBASE’s role was emphasised in liaising with the various civil society partners and keeping the pressure throughout the implementation to ensure the bureaucratic complexity (see below) did not bring the project to a haul. The role of the embassies in the negotiation of the process was also crucial. Nevertheless, commitment during negotiations did not lead necessary to active support during implementation, as it will be discussed below. In the case of Mozambique, although there have been challenges regarding government support, UNAC sees this project as **strengthening their relationship**, as it was the first project of this kind. Thus, even if there is still conflict, the lessons learned in the project could be the basis for future ones.

### **Stumbling blocks**

Although the multi-country and multi-stakeholder character of this project is seen as positive and innovative, in practice it brings a **bureaucratic complexity** that often had negative impacts on the fulfilment of project activities. Interviewees have raised **challenges in coordination and communication** as affecting the project. For instance, agreeing on dates for the visits has been no simple task, often leading a **mismatch between project activities and the agricultural calendar**. There was a one-year gap between visits in 2013 and 2014. In the last visit in 2014 participants planted new seeds and they were supposed to be harvest in the next visit, which was not possible. As a result, the learning-by-doing aspect of this project has been compromised. Timing differences between government bureaucracy and the

dynamics of the civil society partners involved, who want to get things done quickly, were also emphasised.

**Communication and logistical issues**, such as language difference, lack of translation, transport and adequate infrastructure have also posed difficulties. Twice the Brazilian delegation arrived in Mozambique to find out the government did not provide infrastructure and transport for participants, and as a result the training did not happen. Government stated that their main impediment has been budgetary. Moreover, the **lack of systematic visits** also means that the follow-up courses often have to go over the last material, as farmers may have already forgotten part of the curriculum.

Another issue raised is that the **constant change of government focal points** to the project requires project staff to continually keep “convincing” new people need on the merits of the project. In South Africa, a hand-out discourse, stressing the farmers should be glad that the government is providing the support to trainings, often permeated the attitude of some government officials involved. That underlines that the recognition of civil society’s role in development has not been entirely taken on board. Hence, the **initial buy-in did not lead to unreserved implementation support**. Government mistrust of civil society often prevails.

There is a serious **ideological dispute** between agricultural development models within the countries involved in the seed bank project. While the perception amongst interviewees is that their governments support and promote large-scale agriculture, civil society partners are explicitly resisting the agribusiness export-led model and searching for alternatives. In the case of Mozambique this dispute has been even stronger as the result of another Brazilian SSC project, the ProSavana<sup>6</sup>.

Although there is an overall feeling that the adaptation of practices has not been a challenge, there were a number of **contextual differences raised**. These include: the mobilisation of rural movements in the African partners’ countries was significantly different than the Brazilian reality (i.e. the lack of a peasant movement with national reach in South Africa); lack of dialogue between technical and popular knowledge (e.g. in Brazil agro-ecology has been based on this interchange) and technical support; quality of dialogue and interactions with government; and levels of suspicion and hierarchy between government and civil society..

Finally, **gender** work was also raised as something to be strengthened in future projects. Though they organised a seminar just with women, leaders of MMC felt that this should have been a continuous practice to ensure women did in fact took leadership of process. Nevertheless, it was recognised that the seed bank project is not expected, or have the ambition, to change gender relations but to share the experience and history of mobilisation and social struggle of the women in MMC and of Brazil more broadly.

## Perceived results

In this section we will share some of the results the project had so far, though it is important to state that the initiative is still being implemented and the seed banks and fairs have not been created. We would like to point out that the “perceived results” are based on what interviewees found as positive outcomes of the project, even if

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<sup>6</sup> ProSavana is focused on the agricultural development of Mozambique’s tropical savannah, based on the experiences of the Brazil’s *Cerrado* development, which is said to hold lessons for Mozambique due to a number of geographical and conceptual similarities between the two regions. Technical cooperation in the case of ProSavana is accompanied by private sector investment initiatives through the Nacala Fund. The aim is to attract private investment to promote the development of agribusiness and food production in the Nacala region.

they were not predicted or commonly seen as impact indicators. The latter has implications for development cooperation monitoring and evaluation, as explored in section four.

One key message from interviewees is that the “**inspirational factor**” led to results considered extremely important but not included in the project proposal. That is, the trajectory and experience of Brazilian social movements had ripple effects in their counterparts in Africa. For example, it led to **increased political activism** of UNAC not only in regards to their engagement with government but also internationally through stronger links to Via Campesina. UNAC also **changed their approach towards rural extension**, inspired by what they perceived as a strong level of solidarity and “volunteerism” within Brazilian movements. Thus, as before those working in rural extension were usually linked to a project and received some sort of benefit (not necessary financial), they have now created a network of “multipliers” so that people from the same community can train their peers.

Another exciting outcome has been the **mobilisation of women’s movements**. This was a result of the women’s seminar that was organised but also the sharing of experiences from MMC. Based on what they saw and learned, peasant women from Mozambique created a women’s’ movements within UNAC. Also inspired by the project, TCOE was one of the lead organisations in establishing the **Rural Women’s Assembly**, which is currently active in South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi. A TCOE report (2012) emphasises that the Assembly’s main achievements have been encouraging local and self-organised activities in these countries. Moreover, more than 7000 rural women participated in the Assembly’s activities in the region. They have also been gaining profile and experience in issues such as climate change and climate justice

The strengthening of relationships between the movements was a key result raised by interviewees, as it **allowed a broader coalition** in their common fight/resistance against the agribusiness agricultural development model. For instance, UNAC mentioned that the project **improved each other’s perception** on the universality of their struggle and allowed them to better understand the political aspect of food sovereignty and its relationship with preservation and use of native seeds. Although TCOE worked on similar issues beforehand, it was through the engagement with MMC and MPC that they became more conscious of the importance of native seeds. As a result, they carried out a study to understand the impacts of large-scale production and GMOs in Eastern Cape to guide their policy influencing work.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the main result the project is trying to achieve is the **autonomy of farmers, food sovereignty and sustainable agricultural practices**. The bank seed and fairs are hoped to decrease the market dependency of this farmers and, although initially improve their food for subsistence; the experience in Brazil is that it later lead to increased income through trading the excess of production. After the initial purchase of seeds for the establishment of the banks, seeds are lent to various farmers who start producing using and multiplying them and then seeds are lent to others. Thus, it has a snowball effect.

Though the project still needs to be evaluated to be able to demonstrate how many seeds have been rescued and the impact of the project in various communities, a TCOE report points that that in various areas where the project has been implemented, producers have been working with several types of traditional seeds and 8 nurseries have been established (TOEC, 2012). In Mozambique, the lasted project visit has collected a list of varieties that have been rescued and multiplied.

## 4. Busan principles into practice

This session explores how Busan principles were exercised in the Seed Bank project. The study found that although interviewees use the same concepts, for instance ownership, they have a very different understanding of what they mean. This aspect will be further explored in the conclusion by proposing a set of principles more aligned with their perspectives.

*Ownership: “countries should define the development model they want to implement”*

The study shows that the idea of a “chosen development model” is problematic. As demonstrated, there are two agriculture development models in dispute. The civil society partners see themselves as creating “resistance” to the agribusiness model. As there are various forces and interests that influence policy-making, public debate and participation is essential to ensure the voices of different interests groups are taken into consideration, especially the most marginalised. Democratic ownership might therefore be a more useful principle, as it encompasses the idea of different actors working together to design and implement development policies to ensure inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

*Focus on results: “having sustainable impacts should be the driving force”.*

It can be said that the project main focus is to ensure sustainability. Firstly, the goal of the project is to promote sustainable agricultural practices, both in terms of the farmers being less market dependent and ensuring ecological sustainability. Secondly, the methodology used - training the trainers that have a strong embedded interest in continuing the work beyond the project timeframe – hopes to have a multiplier effect. As an interviewee said *“the project is itself a seed, as the approach is constantly being multiplied”*

The conceptual framework and declared objectives of the project highlights other concerns, such as the valorisation of the peasant identity and their autonomy, increased awareness of global context and greater diversity on food production. In this respect, the usefulness of a results-based-management approach to understanding the impact and sustainability of the initiative can be questioned. How far do current monitoring and evaluation approaches can capture the perceived results described above? What are other ways of measuring that are more suited for this type of project?

*Partnership: “of all actors respecting their diversity”*

The Seed Bank Project is indeed an example of different actors working together and, in theory, respecting their diversity and expertise. However, their involvement does not necessarily lead to equal partnerships between civil society and government. Justina from MMC emphasised “the need of humility and historical patience”, to ensure different backgrounds and historic moments are respected and a certain level of equality can be established.

*Transparency and shared responsibility: “cooperation must be transparent and accountable to all citizens”*

There is no systematic and comprehensive information about the project publicly accessible online, though there is some basic information on the project available on ABC’s website. However, both the government and civil society partners have shared all the project documentation with the research team. The lack of publicly available

documents can be seen as a result of the absence of an institutionalised information system and has an impact on how far Brazilian SSC is accountable to their citizens.

## 5. Conclusion: lessons for effective development cooperation

The transnational crisis – financial, food, climate and fuel – brought new challenges to development cooperation efforts and led to the questioning of how far traditional development models are able to generate sustainable social inclusion in the South. This reality reinforces the importance of international development cooperation not only as a field of action but, also, as a dynamic space for political debate. In this context, civil society and Middle Income Countries have triggered significant changes in the global economic, political and security agenda. Initiatives such as the Seed Bank project offer “social technologies” that respond to some of the development problems we are facing. Moreover, they dispute traditional models and approaches, hoping to build new consensus and ensure the interests and perspectives of the most marginalised and excluded influence policy and practices.

Even though many of the characteristics of this project are very unique – from the focus on native seeds to the ideological standpoint of civil society partners – the lessons learned can be generalised to development cooperation efforts more broadly. Firstly, the approach itself to rescuing and multiplying seeds, which has had extremely positive results in Brazil, and its links to food sovereignty can be easily adapted to very different environments and require small amounts of funding. Secondly, the methodology used for the knowledge exchange seems to offer a number “best practices” that may help to ensure more horizontal partnership and mutual learning. Finally, the political and more strategically aspect of the project reinforces the argument that development is not a technical but a political effort. Below are four principles that emerged as the pillars of this project and can contribute to development effectiveness debates:

- **Intercultural dialogue:** all development partners should have mutual respect in regards to the diversity of knowledge and traditional wisdom existent in society to promote social, including gender, equity and sustainable development.
- **“Apropriação”:** development efforts should allow for freedom of “apropriação” of policies and practices by partners, encouraging dissemination by inspiration and active participation of stakeholders.
- **Autonomy:** sustainable impacts depend on ensuring governments and citizens have increased self-reliance and political consciousness, so that they are protagonists of their own development.
- **Political mobilisation:** sustainable development can only be attained and sustained by creating alliances and coalitions, in government and in society.

These principles represent a very different worldview and focus than the ones developed through the aid effectiveness processes, which were mainly led by the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee. To ensure the development cooperation architecture is committed to socio-cultural diversity, and thus have more legitimacy in the eyes of the many actors currently involved in international development efforts, a more structured and horizontal dialogue between different perspectives is crucial.



## 6. People Interviewed

Moema Miranda, director, IBASE

Justina Cima, leader, MMC

Catiane Cinelli, leader, MMC

Fabio Tagliari, project analyst, ABC

Maria Cristina Sampaio Lopes, International Relations Advisor, SG-PR

Bartolomeu Antonio, leader, UNAC

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## Role of Civil Society in South-South Cooperation

This case study report was produced as part of a project highlighting how civil society organisations (CSOs) contribute to the roles middle income countries play not just as recipients of aid, but also as innovators and providers of development cooperation. The project drew on a review of available literature, evidence from BRICS countries and Mexico collected by the IDS Rising Powers in International Development programme, and four case studies. These case studies, undertaken by number of partners and organisations including Articulação SUL, PRIA and Shack/Slum Dwellers International, illustrate the role of civil society organisations cooperating across a range of contexts. These include fragile and post-disaster situations, as well as cooperation between middle and low income countries. The case studies examine CSOs' international roles in providing services, promoting social accountability, supporting post-disaster reconstruction and sharing rural and urban development knowledge that derives from their own domestic experiences.

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