

EVIDENCE REPORT

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Rising Powers in International Development

The BRICS Countries and the Changing Nature of the International Development Policy Landscape: IDS Rising Powers in International Development Advisory Council Discussion

Rising Powers in International Development (RPID) Programme, IDS

October 2013

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1 Introduction

This document presents a summary of a discussion held on 4 December, 2012, between six members of the Advisory Council of the IDS Rising Powers in International Development (RPID) programme (see list of participants in Annex). The discussion was held in the DFID offices in London. The aim was to use Council members' expertise to map the global policy landscape in relation to a number of key topic areas affecting the BRICS countries.

The discussion formed part of a day of meetings between IDS staff, Advisory Council members, and DFID staff with the aims of:

- Discussing preliminary results of scoping studies by IDS staff;
- Continuing to facilitate the sharing and learning of experiences in international development and policy, from and amongst the BRICS;
- Obtaining feedback from the expert Advisory Council on the IDS RPID programme.

2 Agenda

The following agenda was discussed:

- Views of the BRICS, G20 and G8 groupings in relation to the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals, the UN Global Partnership for Development, and climate change;
- Planning for Advisory Council engagement in activities around the South Africa BRICS Summit 2013.

3 Key discussion points

1. The UN Global Partnership for Development, which is expected to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ending in 2015, was discussed with relation to policy views in the BRICS countries. The post-2015 discourse was not seen to command high-level attention in China and India for a number of reasons. First, the Global Partnership discussion is premised on the idea of viewing the world as a single coherent unit – a view that does not represent the Chinese or Indian positions. Some NGOs, like the South Centre, have also expressed disagreements with this view. Second, India – while increasingly willing to align itself with alternative groupings like the BRICS and ASEAN plus – continues to view decisions over government spending on international development as a domestic matter. Third, China and India consider the Global Partnership discussion to have been initiated from outside the BRICS countries, with therefore little internal traction.

2. Brazil's position on the Global Partnership was also discussed. Brazil has been proud to meet its MDGs, but it was observed that enthusiasm over the Global Partnership debate may be as lacking in Brazil as it is in India and China. Two key reasons were suggested for this. First, the UN agencies may not have conducted this debate in an attractive environment, perhaps doing too little to allay concerns that the focus will not fall on box-ticking exercises. Second, Chinese economic deceleration is likely to have a strong effect on Brazil. Without strong economic performance Brazil will become less concerned with international affairs, focusing instead on domestic action. Brazil's GDP growth rate was recently projected downwards to 1.5 per cent, which is much weaker than the expected 4 per cent. Such disappointing results will weaken Brazil's attitude to international development. It is likely that this generalises across the BRICS.
3. Some smaller non-BRICS states have been more enthusiastic about the post-2015 agenda. Latvia, which will host the EU Presidency in 2015, has established a group in its Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work on this agenda. It was also observed that many NGOs have been organised along these lines at the UN. A number of issues, including income inequality and questions over distribution, have not been addressed by the MDGs. It was pointed out that some MDGs have not been met, such as those on child mortality, while others, such as those on poverty, have only been met through China's contribution.
4. A number of potential opportunities for the BRICS countries in shaping the Global Partnership agenda were highlighted. First, they could help include a focus on economic infrastructure as a concomitant to the social agenda. Second, they could request that policy transfer does not travel in one direction – for example, by identifying areas of progressive social policy in the South which might be adopted in the North. Third, they could play a prominent role in re-enabling the financing of multilateralism, especially in the global health sector.
5. The present separation between the development and climate change agendas was seen as untenable, as some aid agencies have been arguing. The Korean Development Institute (KDI), with its partners, has been constructing its own set of goals to be presented to the G20, exploring how multiple processes can be joined up without creating a new agency. Global Partnerships – which bring official and emerging donors together with NGOs, business, parliaments, and philanthropists – were seen to have created a complicated situation. This situation underlines the validity of the mandate of the Advisory Council, which was formed in part to examine how development actors might be brought together.
6. It was argued that there is a pressing need to clarify the global development architecture and our understanding of what is taking place globally. A potential role for the Council might be to enable understanding of conflicting and disconnected initiatives that are reflecting different approaches, interests and motivations. A systematic understanding of global change – that recognises the strong differences between initiatives in terms of their starting points, historical legacies and political stances – is needed. A lack of understanding of where development action is taking place and where responsibility lies was suggested as a major failing of the last 20 years. It was suggested that the question: 'What do we bring to a new development model?' would also merit attention from the Council.

Annex 1

Advisory Council Members, Present

Richard Manning: President of the Advisory Council; Former Director-General for DFID; former Chair of the OECD DAC; Chair of the IDS Board of Trustees

Gabriele Köhler: IDS Visiting Fellow; former UN official

Li Xiaoyun: Professor at the China Agricultural University, Director of the China-DAC Study Group

Rajesh Tandon: Founder-President of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA); Member of the IDS Board of Trustees

Richard Carey: Former Director, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD; and former co-chair China-DAC Study Group; Member of the IDS Board of Trustees

Rômulo Paes de Sousa: IDS Senior International Associate; former Vice-Minister for Social Development, Government of Brazil

Advisory Council Members, Apologies

KY Amoako: Founder-President of the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET); former Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); former member of the World Bank Institute's Advisory Council

Merle Lipton: Associate Fellow, Chatham House Africa Programme; Visiting Research Fellow, King's College London

Nora Lustig: Professor at Tulane University; Fellow at the Center for Global Development; Co-founder and president of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA); Member of the IDS Board of Trustees

IDS staff present

Alex Shankland: IDS Fellow and Co-Convenor of Rising Powers in International Development Programme

Frances Seballos: Partnership Learning Officer

Stacey Townsend: Research Administrator, Globalisation team

Musab Younis: Research Officer, Rising Powers in International Development Programme



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