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How does Brazil quantify Brazilian Cooperation for International Development?

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1 The SDGs and the assessment of international cooperation

In September 2015, Heads of State and of Government, as well as High Representatives of the United Nations (UN), gathered at the UN Headquarters to celebrate the Organisation's 70th anniversary and define a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda includes 17 goals and 169 targets, covering the three dimensions of sustainable development—economic, social and environmental.

It became necessary to build an international statistical framework to monitor the resources—both public and private—mobilised for interventions in support of sustainable development. To this end, the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) is an initiative developed by an international group of experts from developed and developing countries, as well as multilateral organisations. The secretarial work of this initiative fell under the purview of a specific group of technicians from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

TOSSD data are furnished by bilateral providers (countries traditionally involved in the transfer of resources and developing countries with international cooperation activities), private agents, and multilateral providers (international financing institutions, United Nations agencies and other multilateral organisations).

2 The Brazilian experience in assessing cooperation for development

Brazil systematically disseminates data regarding its contribution to international cooperation for development (ICD) in reports titled COBRADI (Brazilian Cooperation for International Development), produced by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea) on request by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The six COBRADI reports produced by Ipea so far encompass 15 years of Brazilian participation in ICD (2005-2020).

Brazilian expenditures have not increased in a linear manner. Since 2005, when the mapping began, they peaked in 2013 and 2014, with annual variations of 80 per cent or more in USD values and decreased systematically from that point forward. The year 2020 is certainly a unique element in this series, due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic response.

COBRADI is a pioneering initiative in Brazil, requiring the development of a specific methodology to quantify direct and indirect expenditures with activities considered as international cooperation.

From the beginning, the gathering of data regarding indirect expenditures has been carried out in close collaboration with every institution of the Federal Executive branch that develops cooperation activities in favour of other countries. These data are computed on a technical per-hour basis: expenditures corresponding exclusively to activities carried out by Brazilian public agents in each international cooperation project, assuming an eight-hour workday.

The main sources of data are the ABC and the Secretariat for International Economic Affairs (*Secretaria de Assuntos Internacionais*—SAIN) of the Ministry of the Economy. In addition, there are activities carried out directly by other public institutions. In these cases, direct contact must be established to obtain data regarding expenditures with international cooperation—which depends on the goodwill of the technicians charged with the theme in the various institutions to provide the necessary information that will integrate the COBRADI reports.

3 What do the COBRADI data say about Brazilian cooperation for international development?

In addition to computing expenditures, the COBRADI reports also try to describe and characterise the country's cooperation initiatives. In broad terms, cooperation provided by Brazil can be subdivided into three modalities. 1) South-South cooperation for bilateral development is carried out directly between Brazil and another developing country. 2) Trilateral cooperation can occur: (i) between Brazil and two developing countries; (ii) between Brazil, one developed country and one developing country; and (iii) between Brazil,

an international organisation and a developing country, when it is carried out under the framework of regional/subregional arrangements or organisations. Finally, 3) decentralised South-South cooperation occurs between Brazilian subnational bodies and the subnational bodies of another developing country.

Cooperation is formalised through a Technical Cooperation Agreement between one or more countries, or under the framework of a Basic Agreement with an international organisation. Based on a general legal framework, Supplementary Adjustments or Executive Programmes are proposed. From an operational point of view, the administrative-financial implementation can be carried out: (i) directly through the Government of Brazil, with own resources; (ii) in parallel between the Government of Brazil and a partner entity, with shared resources; or (iii) in a decentralised manner to a partner entity, with own or shared resources.

Based on the knowledge produced in the six editions of the COBRADI reports, the main components of Brazilian international cooperation (in terms of resources) are contributions to international organisations (including international courts) and capital transfers to banks (the World Bank, the Inter-American Development bank, the New Development Bank, the Development Bank of Latin America, and the African Development Bank, among others). This set of multilateral initiatives absorbs 3/4^{ths} or even more of all resources every year, a significant share of which refers to contributions to agencies of the United Nations System.

Technical cooperation—the most significant among all modes of cooperation carried out by Brazil—is mostly bilateral and channelled through the ABC. This type of cooperation is mainly focused on other Latin American countries, followed by countries in sub-Saharan Africa, especially those with lower per capita incomes. However, it can also include eventual activities with high-income countries in North America, Western Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, which gives it a universal character regarding the geographical concentration of activities: over 100 countries record some type of cooperation with Brazil.

Therefore, although Brazilian technical cooperation is of a mainly South-South nature, it also includes a South-North dimension.

The onset of catastrophic events in some countries, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to an increased volume of resources dedicated to humanitarian cooperation, although the relative share of this modality in total Brazilian expenditures with international cooperation is relatively low—less than 10 per cent.

The main beneficiaries of humanitarian cooperation are countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa—which is expected, given Brazil's commitment to rapprochement with its neighbours and its historical linkages to the African continent. Shipments of medicines and food, vaccines, equipment and support personnel to deal with extreme adverse situations are the main endeavours in this cooperation modality.

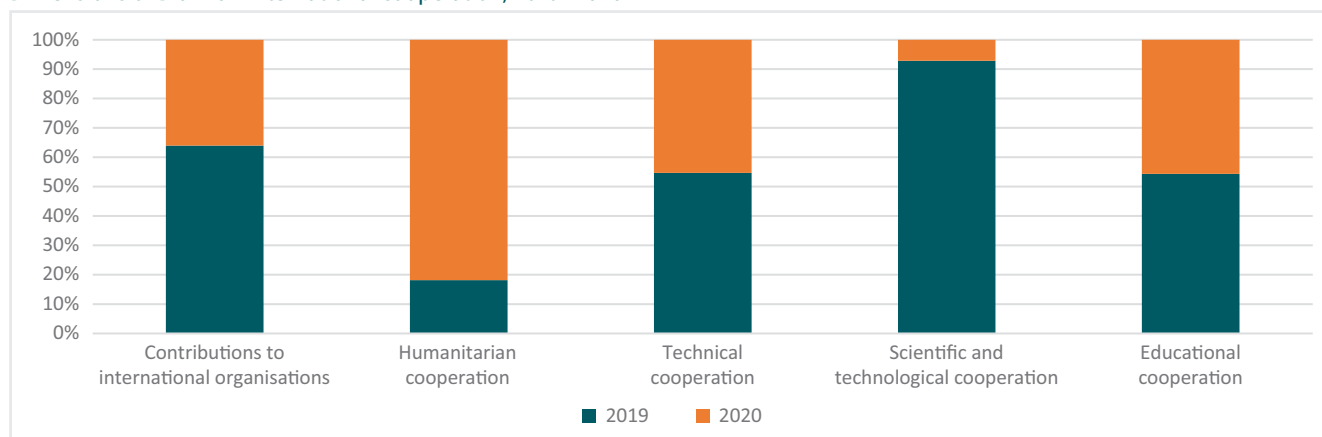
Also included in the country's international cooperation activities is its participation in peacekeeping missions coordinated by the United Nations. Over the years, Brazil has participated in a significant number of these missions across various global regions. Most recently, Brazilian Armed Forces provided the backbone for the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti.

According to the latest survey carried out by Ipea for 2019–2020, the federal government spent approximately USD1 billion on Brazilian international cooperation, 63 per cent of which were spent in 2019 alone. Reasons for the retraction since then include limitations—especially regarding the free movement of experts—imposed by the pandemic response.

Around 94 per cent of the expenditures during the period 2019–2020 were contributions to international organisations, funds and development banks, international courts, and peacekeeping operations. Of the total destined to international organisations, 47 per cent of the resources were capital contributions to regional banks, such as the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), the Development Bank of Latin America (*Corporação Andina de Fomento*—CAF) and the Structural Convergence Fund (FOCEM) of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), among others.

When analysing Brazilian international cooperation disregarding contributions to international organisations, it is clear that humanitarian and technical cooperation are the two most significant axes in terms of expenditures.

FIGURE
Dimensions of Brazilian international cooperation, 2019–2020



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from ABC, ANA, CONAB, CAPES, CNPQ, EMBRAPA, ENAP, IBGE, INCA, MAPA, MC, MCTI, MEC, MRE, MS and SAIN/ME.

Technical cooperation is the broadest and most diverse axis of Brazilian Cooperation for International Development. The country has stood out as a relevant actor, especially regarding cooperation between developing countries.

International scientific and technological cooperation is based on promoting advances in knowledge and seeking to promote synergies to innovate and meet developmental challenges. Thus, it allows the country to access leading-edge scientific and technological knowledge, while affording it a central role in their production and dissemination. Finally, Brazilian educational cooperation is carried out by the training of foreign personnel through grants and vacancies in the country's educational institutions across various levels.

Comparing data from 2019 and 2020 as illustrated in the figure, humanitarian cooperation was the only type of cooperation that registered an increase in expenditures. All others registered a drop, especially scientific and technological cooperation, which fell 92 per cent from one year to the next. Contributions to international organisations decreased by about 46 per cent, technical cooperation decreased by 18 per cent and educational cooperation decreased by 12.5 per cent.

4 Alignment between the COBRADI reports and the TOSSD methodology

The COBRADI 2019-2020 report differs from previous editions due to three factors: it comprised very peculiar circumstances (given the COVID-19 pandemic), adopted the TOSSD methodology and presented a study about the impacts of the pandemic on international cooperation.

Based on 71 responses to 123 survey forms sent to various federal government agencies, it was possible to quantitatively detect that there were changes in the organisational priorities of most sectors dedicated to international cooperation, with an increase in the digitalisation of works and proposals for new cooperation projects, especially in healthcare institutions, reflecting the negative effects of the pandemic.

The next COBRADI reports will be prepared annually. Other changes include the construction of a homogenous database, focusing on its ease-of-use by researchers; the preparation of a data-collection instrument to facilitate the filling out of required information; the explicit association of various activities to the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda; the preparation of an educational video to help fill out the spreadsheets; and an increase in the number of contacted institutions, including some entities at the subnational level, among other developments.

The collected data are shared with the TOSSD workforce secretariat and with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which is helping compose a methodology and common statistics to quantify South-South cooperation. There is a great effort to adjust the parameters adopted by the TOSSD to include aspects that are typical of international development provided by developing economies, which will contribute to the measurement of the common plan embodied by the 2030 Agenda.

These initiatives will help deepen the knowledge about Brazil's international cooperation, allowing for a more direct comparison against similar endeavours in other countries.

Reference:

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