

UNDP-CAITEC Informal Discussion Series on Development Cooperation

Global Development Cooperation in Transition

SUMMARY NOTE

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INTRODUCTION

Many partner countries are becoming providers of development cooperation. Those countries in transition are adopting different approaches in contributing to global development. As such, international development entities are also adjusting their strategies to support countries' collaborative efforts.

China is a case in point. China has been at both the receiving and providing end of development cooperation for decades. Examining China's experience of working with traditional providers can reveal what has changed in China's development partnerships during its transition, unfolding China's role as an important contributor in today's global development cooperation. Furthermore, sharing insights of China's experience may also help bridge silos of understanding between traditional providers and China, as well as other emerging providers, enhancing future collaborative global development cooperation efforts.

To further collective efforts toward achievement of the 2030 Agenda, UNDP China and the China Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC) co-hosted a series of informal discussions about the future of global development cooperation, under Chatham House rules. The aim was to facilitate the exchange of countries' best practices and further identify common denominators for future collaborative development efforts. The series of discussions was supported by the Embassy of Switzerland in China.

On 26 October 2021, 12 development professionals from the government, research institutions, think tanks of China and other countries, and international organizations came together for the second discussion in the series. This discussion built on past consultations, including [2014 workshop for 11 SSC providers](#), the [2016 dialogue on South South Cooperation \(SSC\) in Beijing](#), and [the 2019 informal policy roundtable in Seoul](#), and [the first informal discussion of this series in 2020](#).

The participants shared valuable insights and knowledge, which have been distilled into this summary note and will feed into future knowledge products under this initiative. This summary note follows the same structure and sequence of questions posed to the panelists. It solely reflects the perspectives collected during the discussion and should not be viewed as the expression of views by any government or organization, including UNDP or CAITEC. The list of participants can be found in the Annex.

I. Global development cooperation in the transition era: views in China

1. What are the most important lessons learned from China being both a provider and recipient of development assistance?

1950 After the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, China started to receive aid from the former Soviet Union and other countries. China also began to provide material assistance to North Korea and Vietnam, marking the beginning of China's history as a foreign assistance provider.

1971 China returned to the United Nations.

1978 China started to implement the reform and opening-up strategy.

1979 The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) became the first multilateral development partner to establish an office in China.

2010 China is classified as an upper-middle-income country by the World Bank.

2019 China's per capita Gross National Income (GNI) exceeds \$10,000.

2020 China's 70th Anniversary of Foreign Assistance

- **Partner countries should hold development ownership**

China has always held development ownership in receiving development assistance. In other words, China has brought in international development assistance (i.e., funds, equipment, technologies, management methods, concepts, and experience) based on its own well considered national development needs.

For example, since 1979, China's development strategies have always been at the center of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Country Programme Documents (CPD). Policy blueprints, such as the Five-Year Plan, and priorities at different development stages are among China's strategic development focuses referred to by the CPDs. Traditional provider countries' bilateral assistance plans with China are also anchored on China's own development agenda.

“Do not give to others what you do not want,” says an old Chinese proverb. Given what China learned in receiving development assistance, this philosophy is guiding China’s current development cooperation.

Partner countries’ holding development ownership can facilitate mobilizing domestic actors to explore, bring in, and utilize international development assistance, helping achieve the greatest possible benefits from advanced technologies, skills, and funding.

Take, for example, China’s renewable energy development. International development assistance in this field was provided by several countries and international organizations, including Denmark, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Canada, the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility, and UNDP. On the ground, exchanges and collaborations took various forms. For instance, local governments formulated collaboration programs. Enterprises and research institutions brought technologies into the country by participating in joint research, ventures, or signing purchase deals; then, they piloted projects and further market promotion followed. As initiatives were scaled up, more enterprises, research institutions, and civil organizations were able to participate in localizing and improving the technologies. This is how the technical foundation for China’s renewable energy development was established, alongside improving local capacities.

- **A better general understanding of partner countries’ mindset, feelings, and practical needs**

In receiving development assistance, China gained a deeper understanding of assistance relations from the partner country standpoint, also learned about the work and expertise of different provider countries and international agencies. “Do not give to others what you do not want,” says an old Chinese proverb. Given what China learned in receiving development assistance, this philosophy is guiding China’s current development cooperation.

Participants noted two different phases of China’s development recipient history since 1950, based on different providers - the former Soviet Union and developed countries. Development assistance from the former Soviet Union supported the construction of technological infrastructure, industrial facilities and large-scale production, resulting in China’s increased productivity. Development assistance

These changes reflected China's economic growth and increased development capacity supported by international development assistance.

from developed countries supported China's socialist market economy development through, for instance, diversifying funding mechanisms that drove market building.

- **The practices of receiving and providing development assistance influence each other**

In 1978, China started receiving more development assistance from developed countries and international organizations. This was driven by both internal and external factors. On the one hand, exploring and receiving international assistance could support the domestic social modernization agenda. On the other hand, since China returned to the UN in 1971, it had more opportunities to collaborate with bilateral and multilateral actors, such as the UN and development banks.

At the same time, China's development assistance concepts and practices began to change. Provision of one-way foreign assistance gradually shifted to more diversified and mutually beneficial cooperation. These changes reflected China's economic growth and increased development capacity supported by international development assistance. These development experiences and achievements provided a solid foundation for China to increase the scope of its development assistance and make advances in substance and approach.

Here are two examples.

In early 1980, China started piloting Special Economic Zones (SEZs). To support China in understanding and learning from other countries' experiences, UNDP organized its first development program on SEZs in China. Between September and November 1980, as a part of the program, a group of Chinese government officials visited six countries' export processing zones (free trade zones, border industrial zones). Subsequently, in August 1998, China started to organize its first training program for government officials from African countries. A foreign assistance training system based on two elements was created, consisting of technical training

The experience gained in receiving assistance can become valuable inputs to support China in its practices of extending development cooperation assistance.

and an academy program for officials. This approach of ‘teaching people how to fish rather than giving them fish’ can hardly be disconnected from Jiang’s participation in the UNDP SEZ program in the 1980s.

For a long time, China has prioritised support to infrastructure and providing materials/equipment in its development assistance. But China has also been learning from traditional providers and international development actors, including the United Nations agencies. For instance, China gained a deeper understanding of the importance of capacity building through partnership with UNDP. The fact that China gradually enhanced its human capacity training programs in development assistance is in part driven by China’s participation in UNDP’s Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) program. Subsequently, China has applied this approach to its South-South cooperation with other developing countries. In recent years, China provided tens of thousands of training opportunities for developing countries annually, including short-term training and long-term degree programs.

- **Strengthened communication and interactions are needed between departments providing and receiving development assistance**

In China, although there is a certain degree of interlinkage between departments providing and receiving foreign assistance, the two systems remain relatively disjointed in their work.

Participants suggested that the two could strengthen communication and interaction. In doing so, the experience gained in receiving assistance can become valuable inputs to support China in its practices of extending development cooperation assistance. This would also help China develop a comprehensive view of its experience in development cooperation, understand the changes and innovations in modalities and practices in a more systemic way, and shed light on its comparative advantages.

- **Multi-sectoral coordination within partner countries is important**

When international development cooperation is targeted at responding to global public health issues such as AIDS and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, its effectiveness particularly depends on multi-sectoral coordination within the partner country. For instance, in the case of UNAIDS's partnership with countries, most set up a coordination committee in the host country. China's public health coordination committee is led by the Vice Premier and involves officials from 45 government entities, including line ministries, vice governors from relevant provinces, and vice mayors of municipalities. This coordination mechanism ensures sufficient policy responses and resource mobilization. In view of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, it is essential to learn and adopt this approach.

Responding to global public health issues such as AIDS and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, its effectiveness particularly depends on multi-sectoral coordination within the partner country.

2. What would be the main impacts of several countries taking up the role of both provider and recipient of development cooperation?

It is gradually becoming primarily a provider, moving away from its dual role of being both a provider and recipient.

- **Countries in transition are likely to experience changes in the volume and focus of international development cooperation**

To take China as an example, given China's rapid economic development and the limited resources in global development cooperation, the volume of international development assistance, including funding, received by China has been shrinking in recent years. Increasingly, development assistance is leaving China and moving to low-income countries. This pattern is echoed by the use of UN core resources, of which more than 80% would be allocated to the least-developed and low-income countries, with middle- and higher-income countries receiving only about 10% each of the core resources.

At the same time, China is investing more in its development. Take China's AIDS prevention and treatment funding as an example. In 2007, total funding for AIDS prevention and treatment was 2.16 billion RMB; international contributions accounted for 30%. In 2013, total funding was 2.87 billion RMB, but the international segment dropped to 8%. In 2020, while funding reached 8.86 billion RMB, the funding from international organizations accounted for less than 0.1%.

The geographic distribution of development assistance programmes in China is also changing, moving from covering all provinces to concentrating on the central and western regions. The programmes focuses have also shifted from providing hardware and equipment (e.g., computers) to policy consultation.

Participants noted that these trends indicate a shift in China's role in international development cooperation: it is gradually becoming primarily a provider, moving away from its dual role of being both a provider and recipient.

Emerging and developing countries' voices in the global governance system are enhanced and more attention is drawn to their specific perspectives and needs.

- **Countries in transition need more innovative development funding mechanisms**

In the case of China, in addition to existing financial resources, increasing funds from Chinese local governments, enterprises, and NGOs would be helpful to ensure the effectiveness of China's future development cooperation. Some of China's South-South cooperation projects have already shown more diverse funding mechanisms.

- **Consolidating domestic development cooperation departments and talents**

For a long time, different ministries and departments have taken part in China's development cooperation practice. After China's foreign aid management system reform in 2018, the country started to pull together domestic development departments and talents. A similar case can be found in Romania. Since 2013, with the support of development partners such as UNDP, Romania established its development cooperation agency - Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation (RoAid).

- **Increased contributions to international development cooperation**

Participants noted that, increasingly, China has contributed to the progression of global development cooperation by distilling insights from its development history and development assistance experience.

Participants also mentioned that, in recent years, traditional providers and academics have been paying increasing attention to Chinese development cooperation modalities and philosophy. China gradually brought about changes in several traditional providers' practices. For example, infrastructure has become more emphasized in some countries' development assistance.

According to participants' opinions, as more countries with experience of receiving development assistance, such as China, join international development cooperation efforts, emerging and

developing countries' voices in the global governance system are enhanced and more attention is drawn to their specific perspectives and needs.

3. What is the impact on China's development cooperation with traditional providers?

- **Building new collaboration forms and areas based on past bilateral aid relations**

Raised by the participants, as China has become an important provider of development cooperation, the cooperation between China and traditional provider countries has gradually shifted from bilateral to global-level cooperation, supporting the flow of talent, funding, and technology.

For example, after Germany closed all bilateral aid programs in China in 2009, to create a new starting point for Sino-German development cooperation, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Chinese Ministry of Commerce jointly established the Sino-German Center for Sustainable Development in 2017. The Center mainly focuses on three areas of work: Sino-German Dialogue on development cooperation, trilateral cooperation projects that aim to support other developing countries and promoting development partnerships with the private sector.

China and Japan's cooperation is another example. Many of Japan's past development projects have been integrated into the daily lives of Chinese people. Such cases include the Beijing Capital Airport, Beijing's subways, China-Japan Friendship Hospital, and similar cases in other cities. The China-Japan Friendship Hospital, which provides a platform for technical exchanges between two countries, has been an anchor - supporting hospitals in China's central and western regions. This innovative form of cooperation may be applied to future international development cooperation as well. For example, given the solid technical cooperation ties established by the China-Japan Friendship Hospital, China and Japan can

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Similar to the traditional bilateral provider countries mentioned above, multilateral development agencies are also changing their strategy in China.

collaboratively support other countries' health sector development.

China and the European Union (EU) are also forming new partnerships. The EU has long been a major provider of development assistance to China, with projects primarily focused on health, environment, and education. In the past few years, while there is still significant cooperation between China and the EU, the focus has shifted to responding to global challenges that are of mutual interest and concern, including climate change, energy transition, and trade relations.

- **The shifting strategy of multilateral development agencies**

Similar to the traditional bilateral provider countries mentioned above, multilateral development agencies are also changing their strategy in China. Several are making increased contributions in policy exchange and advocacy, capacity building, and technical cooperation. For example, with China's lessons and experience in rural development, some institutions have established knowledge exchange platforms for China and other developing countries through South-South cooperation.

Through summarizing UN agencies' experience in transition countries, participants presented two potential strategies that multilateral development agencies in China might adopt in the future.

The first strategy is to close all domestic development assistance programmes, and shift to (1) promoting common global-level development agendas and knowledge exchanges based on the understanding of transition countries' development experience and policies; (2) creating joint development trust funds or thematic funds with transition countries' governments that can extend funding support to other partner countries; and (3) promoting a challenge fund model (i.e., the Polish Challenge Fund) that encourages the participation of transition countries' private sector, research institutions and civil society in international development cooperation.

International development actors in China would draw on these existing resources and strengths in future collaboration with China and other countries, supporting achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the global level.

The second strategy is to strengthen international development cooperation while retaining some domestic development assistance programmes. The focus of the latter becomes, for instance, supporting transition countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); improving host countries' capacity in providing bilateral development assistance, including establishing legal and institutional frameworks, statistical tools, building human capacity, and providing inputs to working plans; and promoting local private sector participation in development cooperation.

Looking back, past development assistance from international multilateral institutions was of great value. In the past 42 years, the China-UNDP partnership has brought in international experience, technologies, and funds that supported domestic development priorities, including the development of the western region in the 1990s and the overall building of a moderately prosperous society in the early 21st century. The partnership also accelerated the progressions of key thematic areas, such as poverty reduction and governance for market economy reform. In these areas, international development actors have gained an adequate understanding of China's domestic development resources and experience, and built up institutional memory with many government departments.

Participants expressed the hope that international development actors in China would draw on these existing resources and strengths in future collaboration with China and other countries, supporting achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the global level.

4. As more countries become providers, what areas do you think can be usefully coordinated among provider countries to raise development cooperation effectiveness and efficiency?

...to integrate global development challenges, such as public health issues, climate change and food security, into providers' development cooperation strategies, as well as partner countries' context-specific strategies.

- **Focusing on common domestic development challenges**

With less than ten years to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, developing countries urgently need policy advice and technical support in different areas, such as measuring multidimensional poverty and reaching carbon neutrality. China has achieved impressive economic development, but still faces domestic challenges such as uneven development, inequality, aging, and rural revitalization. Similar challenges also manifest themselves in other countries. Focusing on common development challenges across countries may lead to more coordinated development efforts at the international level.

- **Integrating global challenges in the design of development cooperation strategy**

One topic worth looking into for all provider countries is how to integrate global development challenges, such as public health issues, climate change and food security, into providers' development cooperation strategies, as well as partner countries' context-specific strategies.

Countries also face other collective challenges, such as how to increase total available funding for international development cooperation to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Given the additional constraints posed by COVID-19, countries need to consider how to allocate and use the limited resources more wisely and efficiently. This refers not only to financial resources, but also domestic social resources and international resources that can contribute to sustainable development.

The effectiveness of development cooperation often does not depend on the successful transfer of grants and funding, but on the transformative capacity of the partner countries.

- **Understanding how to turn development assistance into endogenous development capacity**

It is important to distill emerging provider countries' experience in transition, specifically on how these countries turned long-term assistance into endogenous development capacity, which then supported their development cooperation with other countries. The effectiveness of development cooperation often does not depend on the successful transfer of grants and funding, but on the transformative capacity of the partner countries.

China's experience in receiving development assistance over the years has emphasized that the governance capacity and development capability of the partner country are the key to ensuring the country's long-term growth.

For example, in technology transfer projects, the partner country's ability to absorb the technology is particularly important - that is, adapting the technology to the local context, leveraging local advantages, then applying and improving the technology. At the same time, the partner country would formulate supportive regulations, train its own research body, make innovation attempts based on what was learned, and gradually shape its own technology development path.

Participants also suggested that countries can leverage their experienced national development professionals who have long worked on localizing assistance. For example, through more systematic reviews, exchanges and studies, China can collect its best practices of using international development assistance to support its national and sectoral development. These experiences can serve as reference points in advancing China's international development cooperation in the New Era. They would also be helpful for other countries to understand and learn from China's practices and help improve the overall effectiveness of development cooperation at the international level.

China could enhance information sharing and technical cooperation with other provider countries to offer health products to other countries in need... can bring their comparative advantages and complement each other.

- **Policy exchanges and cooperation**

Countries are encouraged to conduct exchanges and cooperation on policies, which can help create an enabling environment for international development cooperation. Supportive policies, such as creating an open investment environment and formulating relevant legislation, are essential to improving the effectiveness of development cooperation.

- **Enhancing access to essential public goods such as healthcare products**

Health is a common development theme. Improving access to health care products is a crucial development need, which is raised by many least-developed countries (LDCs). Medicines and protective products such as testing kits, masks, and condoms are typical public health products. Over the past few decades, China has significantly improved its manufacturing capacity for healthcare products. Many medicines are produced domestically, and the country has become self-sufficient in them. Given that global public health products are required to meet certain international standards, China could enhance information sharing and technical cooperation with other provider countries to offer health products to other countries in need. In doing so, provider countries, including China, can bring their comparative advantages and complement each other in providing necessary public goods for development.

- **Supporting more actors to participate in global development cooperation**

Development partnerships are no longer limited to government-to-government partnerships. Social organizations, unions and the private sector will play greater roles. As mentioned by participants, China's newly proposed Global Development Initiative (GDI) also calls for mobilizing a wider range of actors to participate in development cooperation. Under the Initiative, participants suggested setting themes such as pandemic response, enterprises' participation in global supply chains, and sharing best practices and cases of Chinese private and civil actors' contribution to global development.

II. Steps toward an optimal development cooperation model in the transition era

1. What global development cooperation principles will work from your perspective in the transition era?

Inclusive partnership should be a fundamental principle for all stages of development cooperation relationships

- **Respecting development ownership**

Country ownership means partner countries take the lead in their own development processes. Provider countries should work together and align with partner countries' domestic development strategies. It is crucial that providers support the partner country's own system without creating parallel development structures. This helps ensure that partner countries can rely on their own development capacity sustainably in the future.

From the perspective of participants, China usually regards governments as legitimate development assistance recipients. Based on the principle of respecting countries' sovereignty, China generally does not prescribe partner countries the specific areas for use of development funds. This is very similar to the principles of many traditional provider countries, such as advocating for country ownership. For example, when OECD DAC members provide budget support, they will discuss with the partner country about budget policies and channels, but will not determine specific areas for funds to be spent.

- **Inclusive partnership**

Inclusive partnerships mean that development cooperation should be open to actors beyond governments. Local governments, community-based organizations, civil society organisations, the private sector, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and other associations should be given opportunities to

It is in every development actors' interest to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of development assistance through collaborative efforts.

participate. Participating actors should hold mutual respect for and good faith in each other, which is key to inclusiveness. Inclusive partnership should be a fundamental principle for all stages of development cooperation relationships, from discussion and design, to implementing international development cooperation projects on the ground.

- **Demand-driven**

For many new development cooperation providers, supply-driven support must be avoided. Instead, providers should consider how to better align assistance with the partner countries' context in order to be of use. This requires in-depth analysis and understanding of both supply and demand sides, where the development actors involved should also constantly adjust and improve their practices.

- **Result-oriented**

In general, development cooperation actors, including traditional or new development cooperation providers, international multilateral institutions, and partner countries, have reached one key consensus: result-oriented assistance should be one of the fundamental guiding principles in development cooperation.

Results help understand what is achieved on the ground in the given development partnership. Results can measure whether the partnerships meet the development objectives they are expected to. These results should be comparable across different programs and different countries. With this information, countries can improve future development cooperation and its effectiveness from a practical viewpoint.

- **Collaboration awareness**

The world is currently facing twin challenges: the environmental challenge, including climate change and biodiversity loss, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, many long-standing global challenges remain. No country can effectively address them unilaterally. Solutions are embedded in collaboration

Improving transparency takes time. In this respect, specialized research institutions can do more to support countries' efforts.

– all actors should join hands in an inclusive manner. It is in every development actors' interest to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of development assistance through collaborative efforts.

South-South cooperation countries and OECD DAC member countries are committed to the same global development objectives. Participants emphasized the need for two sides to form a coherent whole. Both sides have gained an understanding of each other through past aid relations, upon which further collaboration can be built. The two sides follow different paradigms, but neither of these approaches is superior to the other across all countries and circumstances. All countries - recipients and providers alike, will benefit more from development cooperation once both sides enhance coordination and cooperation, allowing for the achievement of more in addressing global challenges with limited time and resources.

- **Transparency**

Traditional provider countries emphasize the importance of transparency in development cooperation. Transparency and mutual accountability are critical for countries that provide long-term development cooperation. For example, under the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), the EU updates data on development spending every month on its website. Such initiatives help provider countries' taxpayers better understand what their governments are contributing to through development partnerships. They also encourage conversations among provider countries' government departments, media, and citizens around the effectiveness of development cooperation. This will allow stronger capacity and effectiveness of future development cooperation.

China is gradually making progress in development cooperation transparency. In October 2021, the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) issued its first press release to the public and provided answers on China's approaches to development assistance management. Improving transparency takes time. In this respect, specialized research institutions can do more to support countries' efforts.

2. Are there gains from engaging other development assistance providers in the same country; and if so, at what level?

How to build consensus at the technical and working level with increased co-funding opportunities is a topic worth looking into.

- **Co-funding**

Reaching cooperation among different types of development actors, as well as consensus at the working level, requires time and effort. Co-funding large projects might be a good starting point, serving as the basis for more sophisticated collaboration in the future.

Co-funded initiatives already exist. Since large-scale projects (e.g., wind farms) often consist of many different needs (e.g., technology, items, financing, etc.), the needs by themselves can create space for different development actors (including South-South cooperation countries, OECD DAC member countries, multilateral institutions, development and commercial banks, etc.). Through good coordination, actors can draw clear boundaries between different needs. This helps reduce the time needed to negotiate and coordinate back-and-forth at different working levels. But at the same time, co-funding alone cannot bring about sufficient technical-level communications. How to build consensus at the technical and working level with increased co-funding opportunities is a topic worth looking into.

- **Joint capacity building**

Capacity building is a priority in global development cooperation. There are different levels of capacity building, including systems, institutions and people at macro, meso and micro level. Joint capacity building can enhance the flow of human resources at different levels, creating synergies among people for future collaborative global development cooperation. Through activities including, but not limited to, technical training, knowledge exchange, and field trips, development partners can get to know each other better and share some common understandings of international development trends, which will help

China could work with international multilateral institutions in more innovative ways, blending two sides' comparative advantages through working together at different project stages, such as design, implementation, and evaluation.

increase the efficiency of countries' own development and explore international collaboration potential.

- **Coordination through multilateral platforms**

In the long run, participants suggested countries can foster cooperation through multilateral platforms such as the UN. These have established long-term mutual understanding and trust with countries, and facilitate the creation of synergies between countries. Fostering cooperation through multilateral platforms such as the UN can also demonstrate countries' support for multilateralism. Multilateral institutions hold global networks and resources, and extensive expertise in areas such as capacity building. These advantages need to be further leveraged in promoting future global development cooperation.

The role of multilateral institutions as coordination platforms for development cooperation is being explored. China's South-South Cooperation Fund is a welcome effort. Nevertheless, most of China's international development cooperation remains bilateral. Beyond coordination, participants suggested that China could work with international multilateral institutions in more innovative ways, blending two sides' comparative advantages through working together at different project stages, such as design, implementation, and evaluation. In doing so, China's practices can also add to the richness of development cooperation under the multilateral system.

3. Following up on the above, what are the foreseeable challenges in the short- and long-term?

- **Ensuring that all actors share a common understanding of important concepts**

Due to language differences, distinctive philosophies and knowledge systems, there are gaps in the understanding of critical development concepts by different actors. This poses a long-term challenge to achieving effective collaboration.

For instance, in past bilateral aid relationships, providers, implementers, and recipients shared common, relatively clear definitions and boundaries. Now, as multi-stakeholder development partnerships are being increasingly emphasized, all actors involved need to have a common understanding of, for instance, what partnership means. Similarly, when referring to the principle of demand-driven development cooperation, there is a lot of room to think about what the demand is. This requires deep and precise analysis.

- **Defining China's positioning in international development cooperation**

Participants noted that, China's development cooperation always adheres to South-South principles, it is "poor countries helping each other". However, with China's focus shifting towards being a provider, there is a need to figure out the position of China within global development partnerships. In this respect, domestic research institutions and academics should advance such discussions and analyses. This directly concerns China's future development cooperation principles.

- **Geopolitics**

Participants regarded the current geopolitical context as a long-term challenge. Geopolitics not only affect development cooperation, but other areas too, such as international trade relations. Collaborative

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Countries' contributions to global development cooperation should be clearly acknowledged and made visible. In this regard, ensuring data transparency and regular communication with the public may offer some solutions.

global development cooperation requires more communication among all countries, including China. Geopolitical factors have been making communication more difficult.

That said, participants stressed that most development cooperation does not concern commercial competitive positioning of companies or industries, such as confidential insights, nor does it try to overturn any national policies. Instead, projects revolve around respecting and supporting the development of partner countries. In today's geopolitical context, it is critical to get all parties to build consensus on this basis of cooperation and work together.

- **Increasing the visibility of all providers' contributions**

Given the geopolitical realities, many development cooperation providers find it difficult to work together, fearing that their own contributions may be less valued and less visible in collaborations. Countries' contributions to global development cooperation should be clearly acknowledged and made visible. In this regard, ensuring data transparency and regular communication with the public may offer some solutions.

- **Overcoming suspicion**

Suspicion or mistrust is another challenge that makes cooperation difficult. Participants pointed out that many traditional provider countries have mentioned on various occasions that there is still a lack of clarity on how China conducts development cooperation, and what kind of programs are conducted in which countries. To overcome the suspicion caused by ambiguous information, countries are recommended to strengthen the use of existing international platforms as well as informal occasions for communications, to reduce mistrust and increase mutual understanding.

4. What would be the initial set of steps to enhance coordination/cooperation for SDG?

- **Engaging in each other's discussions on development cooperation principles**

Traditional provider countries' principles, such as the Busan Principles, were designed to facilitate development cooperation and guide member countries' practices, rather than standardizing how countries should operate. The Principles can be interpreted differently in different contexts by different actors. They also evolve over time. When specific principles create problems, countries would consider re-examining, modifying, and refining those principles.

Similar discussions often take place within the OECD DAC member countries. The same happens when new provider countries join the DAC. New member countries would take the initiative to bring new components into the DAC Principles, based on their understanding of development cooperation and their strengths and characters.

Japan is an example. When Japan joined OECD DAC, it was the only Asian country member. Japan studied the ODA policy norms that are mainly established by western countries, and was subsequently proactively involved in reforming such international architecture. Based on its own domestic universal health development experience, Japan succeeded in including universal health coverage (UHC) in SDGs through its effective advocacy on various international platforms, including the DAC. Following this, several UHC indicators were developed to support data collection and analysis. UHC has become an important development theme of the OECD.

Participants stressed that they hoped more provider countries would join each other's discussions on principles despite different paradigms. Such participation would allow all providers to become familiar with the rationale underpinning different

The Principles can be interpreted differently in different contexts by different actors. They also evolve over time.

...development partners can consider working towards common as well as flexible principles, which can help guide future collaborative development efforts.

development principles, and create opportunities to bridge the differences in the principles in the future.

- **Strengthening common understanding at the conceptual level**

Development cooperation concepts of traditional provider countries and China share increasing commonalities. Many of the concepts mentioned, for example, in the White Paper on 'China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era' as well as the new 'Administrative Measures for Foreign Assistance' imply a similar logic as shown in some of the Busan Principles - although without necessarily using the same words and terms. Examples include result-orientation, enhancing evaluation, development-ownership, strengthening information sharing, cooperation with social organizations and the private sector, among others.

Based on these commonalities, provider countries can try to bridge different development concepts. Accordingly, development partners can consider working towards common as well as flexible principles, which can help guide future collaborative development efforts. In this regard, participants advocated for more constructive dialogues between the OECD DAC and China.

- **Continuing cooperation while forming conceptual consensus**

Reaching common consensus on high-level values, principles, terminologies, and concepts takes time. But time can no longer be wasted in responding to global challenges. Action is needed from the global development community, now. Any delayed action would cause exponential increases in both the costs and risks that countries are facing. Therefore, while making progress on reaching conceptual consensus, all development actors are encouraged to keep working together at the practical level. These step-by-step collective actions are viable short-term options and would contribute to globally coordinated action in the future.

Participants expressed the hope that China can be involved in provider countries' coordination and communication mechanisms when they are operating in the same partner countries.

- **Strengthening the exchange of basic research in development cooperation**

Academic and basic research serves as the basis for identifying partners, assessing development needs and countries' comparative advantages. Participants mentioned that in carrying out development cooperation, especially pertaining to policy areas and capacity building, the analysis provided by think-tanks and policy experts always helps pave the way at the initial stage and beyond.

In the future, research institutions and development experts are encouraged to provide knowledge-related global public goods, in areas such as international standards, rules of development cooperation practice, definitions of key development terms, and specific differences and commonalities among different countries' fundamental development philosophies. These can help promote mutual understanding between development partner countries, including China, bringing development actors closer to each other.

At the same time, as part of a longer-term effort, academic institutions should advance the training of development talents and further invest in research and analysis in the area of international development.

- **Joining providers' information-sharing mechanisms in partner countries**

China's experience and approach to development cooperation can be useful not only for South-South cooperation countries, but also for finding consensus with traditional provider countries.

Participants expressed the hope that China can be involved in provider countries' coordination and communication mechanisms when they are operating in the same partner countries. For example, as part of the OECD DAC outreach and validation efforts, some member countries would conduct consultations in partner countries using development partner coordination platforms, to inform the design and approach development assistance initiatives. These

consultations helped them learn about the project of other providers (e.g., the EU, UK and France) on the ground. The best coordination platforms, however, are not led by providers, but by the partner countries themselves. In such fora, countries, including both partner countries and providers, discuss what they know about the local context and how they can jointly support local development in line with their different comparative advantages. Such information exchanges help achieve synergies between different provider countries' projects, which could form the basis for enabling collaborative global development efforts.

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