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# **Brazil’s Development Cooperation in Africa: A New Model?**

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## 1. Introduction

While Brazil has engaged in international cooperation for development since the early seventies, it was only after 2003 that the country began to be treated as an “emerging donor”, and that such cooperation grew significantly in both volume of resources and in geographical reach. Concurrently, Brazil has increased its political and economic presence in Africa, and the region has become the second most important regional partner of its international development cooperation.

Although Brazil’s forays into Africa are still much more restricted than those of China and India, the country enjoys comparative advantages such as closer historical and cultural ties with the region. Brazil also shares development challenges with many African countries as a result of similar climate, environmental, linguistic and social conditions.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, it seeks to map Brazilian development cooperation in Africa and; second, to explore the question of whether and to what extent such cooperation offers a new and sustainable model. It is argued that such purported

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Brazilian model differs not only from the international development cooperation of member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Aid Committee (DAC) – the so-called “traditional donors” – but also from that of other emerging countries.

The following three sections of the paper are essentially descriptive; the final two sections are mostly analytical and aim to answer the question posed at its title as well as to look into questions of sustainability of the alleged Brazilian development cooperation model in Africa. The second section presents aggregate data on the growing significance of Brazilian international development cooperation and discusses its main guiding principles as explicitly defended in governmental discourse. This section makes clear that “emerging donor” is a misnomer for Brazil, both because the country has been engaging in international development cooperation for many decades (and is therefore not “emerging”) and because treating it as a “donor” is antithetical to the principles of this cooperation.

The third section presents evidence of Brazil’s increasing political and economic presence in the African continent during the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The fourth section seeks to map Brazil’s development cooperation in Africa, presenting data on its relative regional position, its evolution during the last decade and its distribution across countries.

The fifth section addresses the question of whether and to what extent Brazilian development cooperation in Africa offers a distinctive model in practice (and not just in rhetoric). In particular, the argumentation is based on the intangible nature of such cooperation, on the multiple channels used for dispensing it and the partnerships established, on the humanitarian and social development issue-areas in which it concentrates, and on the externalization of so-called “best-practices”.

The sixth section seeks to point out the main challenges confronting the Brazilian development cooperation model in Africa and the implications of such model for policy and research on development cooperation more broadly. I argue that most of such challenges derive from institutional fragmentation and lack of central coordination and planning. I further argue that the transfer of best-practices oftentimes overstates similarities between Brazil and Africa, requires more knowledge in Brazil about Africa, and should not overlook domestic political processes that made these best-practices possible in the first place.

## 2. Brazil as an “Emerging Donor”?

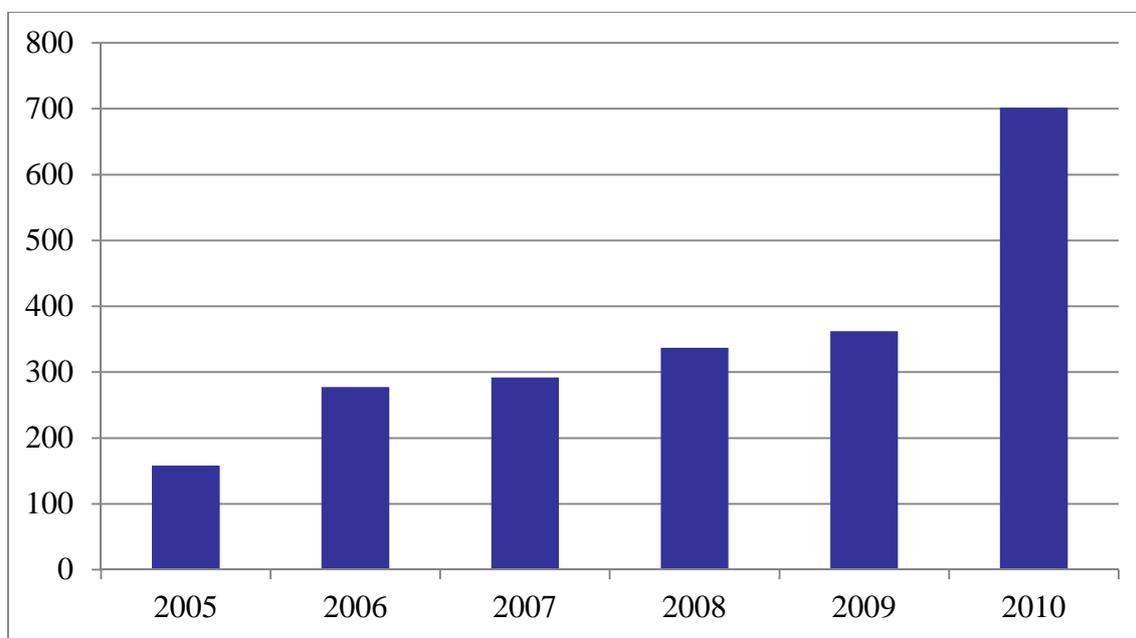
### *2.1 Origins and recent growth of Brazilian international development cooperation*

Brazil's first initiatives in South-South development cooperation date to the 70s and consisted of technical training programs for skilled workers and human resources of Latin-American and African Portuguese-speaking countries. By the end of the 70s, in the context of the United Nations' Buenos Aires Action Plan in Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries (1978), South-South development cooperation gains prominence in Brazilian diplomatic discourse and foreign policy.

Nevertheless, the most significant expansion of Brazilian international development cooperation occurs only during the first mandate of President Lula, which began in 2003. In the course of this mandate, the number of partner beneficiary countries rose from 21 to 56, 35 of which are located in Africa. According to data from IPEA (2010 and forthcoming), the volume of resources destined to Brazilian international development cooperation more than tripled during the Lula government: from US\$ 158,1 million in 2005 to US\$ 701,4 million in 2010. The yearly evolution of such cooperation throughout this period is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

**Evolution of Total Brazilian International Development Cooperation,  
2005-2010 (US\$ millions)**



Source: IPEA (2010) and forthcoming.

*2.2 Guiding principles of Brazilian development cooperation*

Crucially, Brazil rejects the terms “aid”, “donor” and “recipient” – traditionally associated with DAC/OECD countries – to describe its development activities abroad. Similarly to India and other emerging countries, Brazil prefers to describe such activities as “cooperation” and treats itself and others involved in them as “partners”. This terminology has important political underpinnings and stresses the differences between an ostensible model of South-South development cooperation and the DAC/OECD model of development aid. In addition, it also underscores the adoption of several guiding principles championed by Brazil’s international development cooperation. They are briefly presented below.

- **Common heritage.** Brazil emphasizes a common heritage of Southern countries, derived from the experiences of colonialism, imperialism and peripheral position in the world system, and reflected in shared cultural and historical affinities. Particularly in relation to Africa, a “natural partnership” (IPEA and WORLD BANK, 2011: 1) is identified, and geographical and

historical ties are emphasized. In particular, the slave trade brought to Brazil from Africa several linguistic, religious, gastronomic and other elements that helped to shape and define the country's culture and identity. In addition, currently Brazil has the largest black population after Nigeria. Similarities in climate, environmental, urban and social conditions also mean that Brazil and Africa face similar development challenges and that Brazil is therefore better equipped to engage in development cooperation in the region than DAC/OECD countries or even other emerging countries.

- **Partnership and horizontality.** Brazil defends these principles as the foundation of an international development cooperation model based on the exchange between equals. The paternalism of vertical and hierarchical development aid schemes is rejected in favor of a relationship that has no impositions or conditionalities. This is closely related and leads to the additional principle of a **demand-driven approach** to development cooperation, whereby Brazil does not decide which development goals should be pursued in partner countries, nor how such goals should be pursued. Rather, it only responds to the needs of partners that make such decisions for themselves.
- **Mutual benefits.** Brazil strongly believes that a truly cooperative and horizontal partnership for development will produce mutual benefits and responsibilities in “win-win” situations. In other words, Brazilian international development cooperation consists of two-way relationships, unlike DAC/OECDE one-way donor-recipient relationships where the donor has nothing to receive and the recipient nothing to give. These principles also mean “both sides of a partnership being active rather than spectators or witnesses as Lula has put it” (ISELIUS and OLSSON, 2012: 34).
- **Respect for sovereignty and non-intervention.** This principle can be seen as a cornerstone of Brazilian diplomacy. As a country that, like so many others in the developing world, has endured the experience of colonialism and of several foreign interventions, Brazil is particularly sensitive and attentive to the risks of sovereignty violations, especially in a context of political or economic power asymmetries.
- **Non-conditionality.** Brazilian development cooperation rejects the governance, human rights, environmental and social conditionality

traditionally associated with DAC/OECD development aid. Such conditionality is considered incompatible with the principles of partnership and horizontality and with a demand-driven approach to development cooperation, as well as with the respect for sovereignty.

### 3. Brazil's Growing Presence in Africa

Early in his first term President Lula treated Africa as a priority in Brazil's foreign policy and particularly in its effort to diversify the country's South-South partnerships. As a result, the number of Brazilian embassies in Africa more than doubled since 2003, from 18 to 37, surpassing the number of African embassies of the United Kingdom, the region's most important colonial power. The number of African embassies in Brasilia also more than doubled (16 to 34) and is now superior to that in any other capital of the Western Hemisphere except Washington D.C. Accordingly, President Lula made 12 trips to Africa, visiting 21 countries; and as Brazil's Foreign Minister (2003-2010), Celso Amorim made 67 official visits to African countries. Since 2003, Brazil received 47 visits of African leaders from 27 nations (STUENKEL, 2013: 30-31).

Brazil's economic ties with Africa have also been significantly enhanced. Trade has increased to US\$ 20 billion, climbing back to the peak of 6% of the country's overall trade (STUENKEL, 2013: 31). Furthermore, Brazilian companies currently invest in 19 African countries. The most important recipient of Brazilian investments is Angola, followed by Mozambique, Libya and South Africa; and the most important investment sectors construction, oil, and mining (CABRAL, 2011: 4; 20). Finally, the Brazilian National Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES) has also significantly increased the resources used to finance companies investing in Africa from R\$ 477 million in 2008 to R\$ 649 million in 2009.

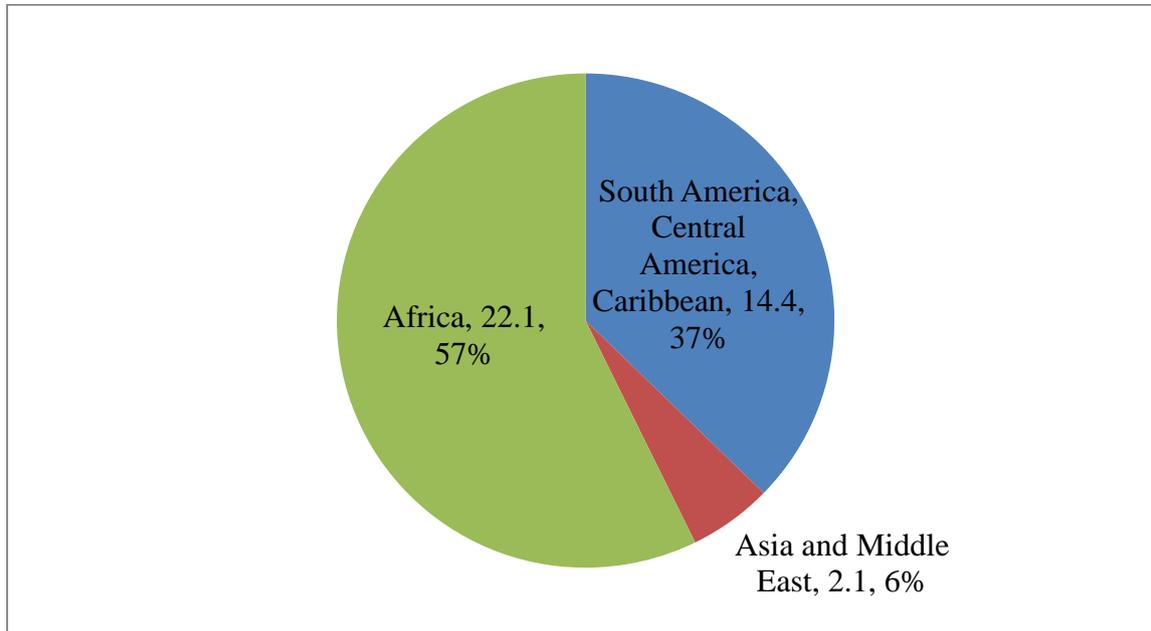
#### 4. Brazilian development cooperation in Africa

In 2010 Brazil's development cooperation in Africa amounted to US\$ 30,4 million, and represented 22% of total Brazilian international development cooperation (IPEA, forthcoming). These figures position Africa as the second most important partner region in Brazil's international development cooperation, after Latin America. Moreover, regionally Africa is the major partner in Brazilian international technical cooperation (see Figure 2). Finally, Brazilian technical cooperation in Africa has increased substantially since the beginning of the first term of President Lula – particularly after 2005 and from 2009 to 2010 – and even in the aftermath of the global financial crisis which began in 2008 (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2**

#### **Regional Distribution of Brazilian Technical Cooperation, 2010**

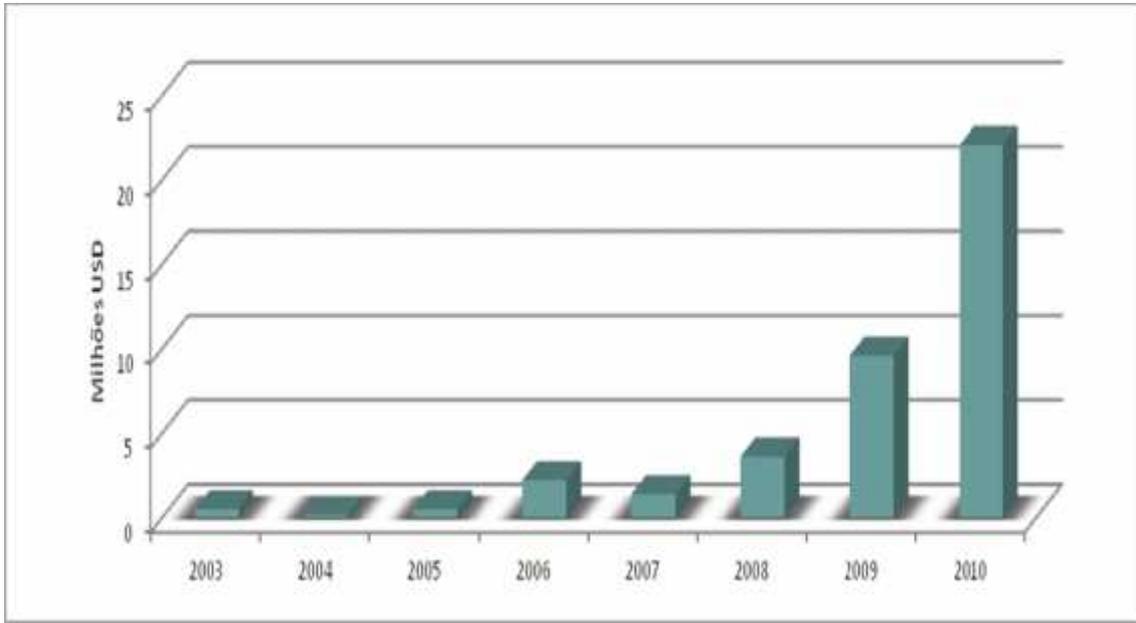
**(US\$ millions and %)**



Source: Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC).

**Figure 3**

**Brazilian Technical Cooperation in Africa, 2003-2010 (US\$ million)**

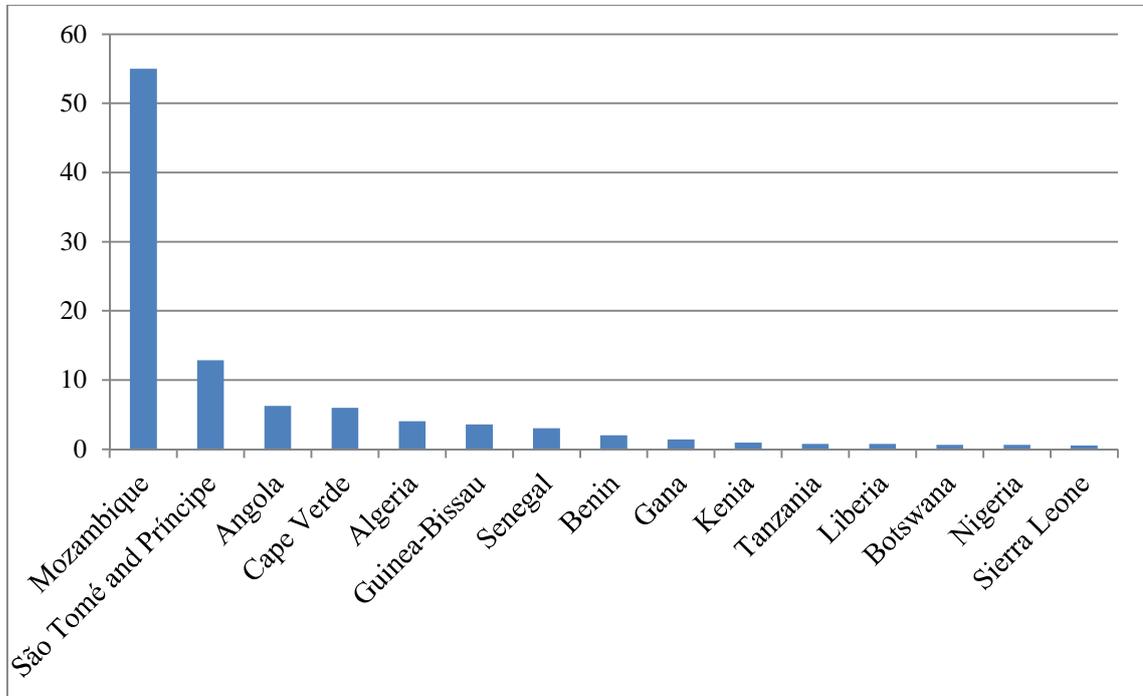


Source: Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC).

Looking within Africa, Figure 4 shows the distribution of Brazilian technical bilateral and trilateral cooperation in 2011 among the top 15 partner countries in the region. Two considerations stand out from this Figure: (1) Mozambique is by far the most important African partner of Brazilian development cooperation; and (2) of the six top partners of Brazilian development cooperation in Africa, five are Portuguese-speaking countries, Algeria being the exception. These considerations provide empirical support to the common heritage principle discussed in section 2.2 by suggesting that language and a shared colonial power, two factors that arguably help to determine national culture, are key elements of Brazilian international development cooperation.

**Figure 4**

**15 Most Important Partner Countries of Brazilian Technical Bilateral and Trilateral Cooperation in Africa, 2011 (US\$ millions)**



Source: Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC).

5. A distinctive model of development cooperation in Africa?

Section 2.2 spells out how the principled discourse permeating Brazilian international development cooperation seeks to distinguish it from traditional DAC/OECD foreign development aid. Do such distinctions hold in practice in Africa? What evidences beyond rhetoric are available regarding the supposed existence and exceptionality of a Brazilian model of development cooperation in the region? And if we can speak of such a model, does it differ from the international development cooperation offered by other emerging countries as well as from the DAC/OECD model? How so? Though it is not possible to offer definitive answers to these questions, I argue below that there is indeed a distinctive Brazilian model of development cooperation, partly defined by its transfer of intangible goods, its diverse

instruments and execution channels, the development issue areas in which it concentrates, and the externalization of domestic best-practices.

First, an important caveat is in order. A large portion of Brazilian development cooperation, especially in Africa, consists of technical cooperation. By its very nature, this kind of cooperation involves the transfer of intangible assets such as knowledge, technology and skills. As a result, the economic and social value of technical cooperation cannot be easily measured or quantified, and certainly cannot be captured simply by looking at the travel expenses of experts. Indeed, the generation of such new knowledge, technology and skills took place over the course of decades and involved much higher sums invested and research and development by Brazilian institutions. More generally, Brazilian international development cooperation does not involve financial transfers and, therefore, cannot be measured or assessed using the same indicators as DAC/OECD foreign development aid<sup>2</sup>.

Second, in contrast to the international cooperation offered by other emerging countries, executed almost entirely through bilateral channels, more than 50% of Brazilian development cooperation in 2010 is carried out multilaterally (IPEA, forthcoming), and a significant part of such cooperation is carried out trilaterally. The most important partners in Brazilian trilateral development cooperation are, according to the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), Japan and the International Labor Organization (ILO). Crucially, bilateral cooperation allows much greater control of the country conceding such cooperation over development activities being carried out than multilateral or trilateral cooperation, which lends empirical support to Brazilian claims of partnership and horizontality.

Third, Brazil prioritizes in Africa humanitarian cooperation (23% of total, according to IPEA), agriculture and social development issue-areas, notably health and education<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly, Figure 5 shows that agriculture (26%), health (22%) and education and professional training (14%) are the most important issue-areas addressed by Brazilian technical cooperation in Africa. This evidence suggests that Brazilian development cooperation in the region is not primarily driven by economic, commercial or investment interests, and also empirically supports the principles of partnership and horizontality.

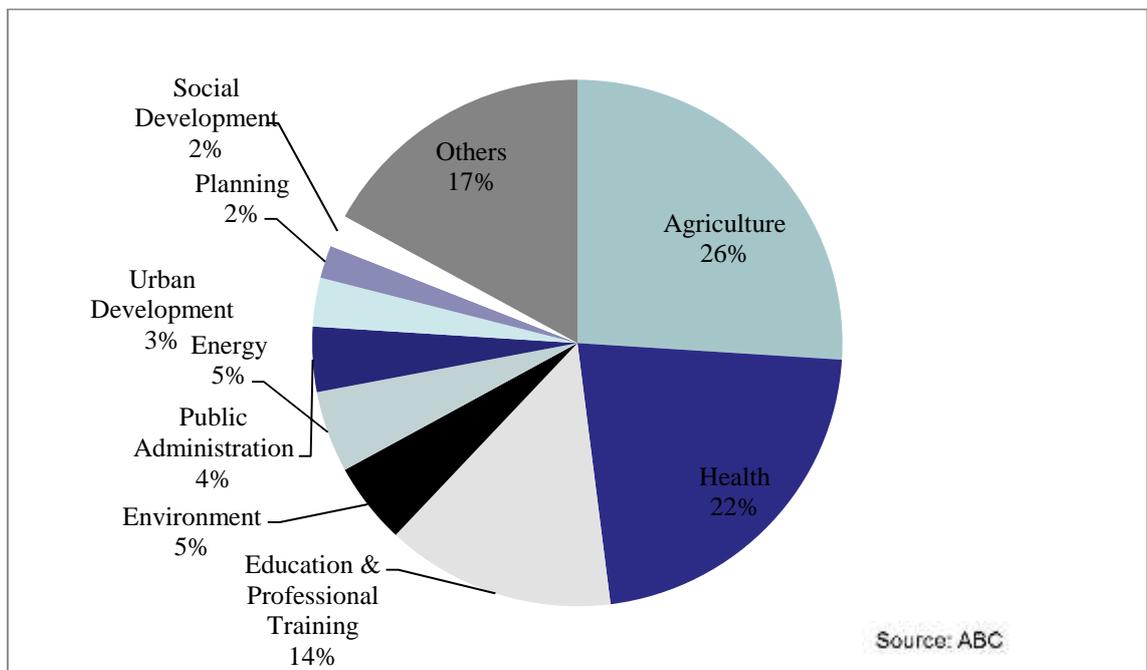
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<sup>2</sup> I thank my colleague João Brígido Bezerra Lima for bringing this insight to my attention.

<sup>3</sup> China and India, in contrast, concentrate their development cooperation in the region on infra-structure and energy.

**Figure 5**

**Brazilian Technical Cooperation in Africa, Development Issue Areas,  
2003-2010 (% of resources)**



Finally, Brazilian cooperation appears to systematically replicate domestic practices and conceptions regarding poverty, development and well-being to its African partners. A number of specific examples help to illustrate such pattern.

Regarding Brazilian international cooperation in agriculture, the leading agency has been Embrapa, a state company that carries out agricultural and livestock research. Its programs offers a examples of practical application of the mutual benefits principle discussed in section 2.2. Indeed, much of the agricultural technological development conducted by Embrapa, which allowed the company to adapt the cultivation of several crops in different climates and types of soil, was based on genetic materials supplied by foreign research institutions (ARRAES, 2011). Perhaps most notably, Embrapa succeeded in promoting the cultivation of soy in the *cerrado* of Brazilian highlands. African savannas have similar climate and soil as the *cerrado*, and Embrapa has thus been transferring this technology to African countries. The ProSavana program, for instance, attempts to replicate the experience of the Brazilian highlands in the Nacala

Corredor in Mozambique in a trilateral cooperation that includes Japan (ALVES, 2013). This program, as others carried out by Embrapa, also exemplify how long-term investments in research and development can generate knowledge, skills and technology which are transferred abroad but this transfer itself does not involve large financial sums.

Fiocruz, a federal laboratory and health research center, has played a prominent role in Brazilian development cooperation in health. It began producing generic versions of antiretroviral drugs used in cocktail therapies to treat HIV/AIDS in 1997. Brazil was the first developing country to offer free and universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment, with highly cost-effective results in the fight against the epidemic, both in terms of declining death and morbidity rates and incidence of opportunistic infections as of longer survival rates and dramatically reduced hospitalization costs (MELLO E SOUZA, 2007: 49-54). Local generic production of antiretroviral drugs allowed the Brazilian Health Ministry to ensure the affordability of these drugs. Perhaps the most important project of Brazilian international development cooperation to date, the construction of a pharmaceutical factory in Mozambique involved 80 million euros and should generate an estimated capacity to produce 21 medicines, six of which are antiretrovirals, beginning in 2013. Mozambique has an estimated 1,5 million HIV positive people (CAMPOS, 2012). Like Embrapa's agricultural programs, Fiocruz' health programs involve long-term investments in innovations which generate intangible goods transferred overseas.

Other examples include educational projects carried out by SENAI, a governmental industrial apprenticeship network in Brazil responsible for setting up and administering seven vocational training centers in sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Guiné-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe and two in South Africa); as well as for providing training for trainers, managers and technical personnel. Bolsa Família, a highly successful conditional cash-transfer program, is an additional social policy originated in Brazil that is being adapted and replicated in African countries (IPEA and WORLD BANK, 2011: 63; 74).

## 6. Challenges to the Brazilian development cooperation model

Is the Brazilian model of development cooperation in Africa sustainable? What are the main challenges to the sustainability of this model? Many of such challenges are institutional in nature. For instance, Brazilian legislation is ill equipped to deal with governmental expenses related to international development cooperation and proscribes the financing of activities and the hiring of personnel abroad, which is done by means of a legal loophole using international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

More importantly, as other BRICS countries like India and China, Brazil still confronts considerable institutional fragmentation and lack of central planning and coordination in implementing its international development cooperation. Such cooperation is executed not only by ABC, subordinated to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, but also by several ministries, including the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Education and Social Development – to which Embrapa, Fiocruz, SENAI and the Bolsa Família Program are subordinated – as well as state companies, BNDES, and subnational entities.

This institutional fragmentation and the absence of a central agency capable of planning and coordinating diverse international development cooperation initiatives surely is at least in part a consequence of the application of the demand-driven principle. If African partners are deciding which development challenges should be addressed and how to address them, and Brazil is simply responding to these decisions, then Brazilian development cooperation in Africa will necessarily be *ad hoc* and decentralized.

Yet, such institutional fragmentation and incoordination may also result in redundancies and prevent synergies and joint efforts in development cooperation activities. It also may decrease transparency and undermine aggregate monitoring and evaluation efforts, as well as costs/benefit analyses, especially in the long-term. Finally, it may also lead to the simultaneous implementation of projects and programs based on diverging if not contending development views and ideologies, as noted by Lídia Cabral (2011: 32-33). A notable example comes from the comparison of the previously mentioned ProSavana program, which aims to promote large-scale modern export-oriented agriculture in Mozambique, and other projects that seek to promote family agriculture in the same country.

A second set of challenges to the Brazilian development cooperation model in Africa has to do precisely with the replicability of domestic best-practices. First, the common heritage principle is frequently exaggerated when applied to Africa. While there certainly are important similarities between Brazil and this region, evidenced especially in the example of Embrapa's development cooperation activities in Mozambique and elsewhere discussed in section 5, Africa is a highly diverse and complex continent. Moreover, the field of African studies has yet to be expanded and developed in Brazilian universities and research institutes (CABRAL, 2011: 34).

In addition, it is noteworthy that Brazilian best-practices are oftentimes the product of long-standing political struggles in which civil society groups have played a prominent role (CABRAL, 2011: 34-35). The example of generic antiretroviral production mentioned in section 5 is a case in point. Though in Brazil HIV/AIDS initially spread among relatively well-off gay groups, capable of politically organizing and mobilizing an articulated demand for free and universal antiretroviral treatment, in sub-Saharan Africa the epidemic has shown highest incidence among the disenfranchised poor. Furthermore, Brazil's health system is largely based on principles of gratuity, universality and integrality, defended by the so-called sanitary movement during the democratization process and incorporated into the 1988 Constitution. Notably, health is treated in Brazil as a right of citizenship and duty of the state (MELLO E SOUZA, 2007: 38-40). Hence, can Brazilian best-practices be simply replicated through governmental initiatives in countries that lack similarly organized and mobilized civil society groups and institutionally consolidated principles regarding healthcare? It is doubtful. In any case, the involvement of local civil society groups seems highly recommendable.

## 7. Conclusions

The objectives of this paper have been both descriptive and analytical. The descriptive objective has been to map Brazilian development cooperation in Africa across time, countries, and issue-areas and relative to other regions. I have argued at the outset that it is inappropriate to describe Brazil as an "emerging donor", both because the country has been engaging in international development cooperation since the 70s – even though such cooperation grows significantly only since 2003 – and because it sees

development cooperation as involving horizontal partnerships. The paper also shows how Africa has gained prominence in Brazilian foreign policy and, accordingly, became the main regional partner in Brazilian technical cooperation. The fact that the major African partners in Brazilian development cooperation are Portuguese-speaking countries confirms the applicability of the common heritage principle.

The second and analytical objective of this paper is to explore the question of whether and to what extent Brazil offers a distinctive model of development cooperation. Unlike other emerging countries, Brazil uses a wide range of channels to deliver such cooperation, including multilateral organizations and trilateral arrangements with OECD countries. Moreover, Brazil concentrates its cooperation in Africa on humanitarian and social development, principally agriculture, health, and education. In so doing, the country attempts to replicate in the region its so-called “best practices”, innovative national policies that were highly successful in the domestic realm. Such replication has benefited from the cultural, linguistic, social, climatic, environmental and epidemiological similarities between Brazil and Africa. It also most often than not involves the transfer of assets such as technology, knowledge and skills which result from long-term investments in research and development; and the value of these assets cannot be measured through the direct expenses associated with such transfer. These evidences corroborate the claims of partnership and horizontality regarding Brazilian international development cooperation and indicate that such cooperation does not seek primarily to serve Brazilian economic interests<sup>4</sup>.

However, in order to ensure the sustainability of Brazil’s development cooperation in Africa several challenges still need to be overcome, including the institutional and legal deficiencies of the country’s development cooperation agencies, their lack of central planning and coordination, and the need for deeper knowledge and understanding of the specific social, economic and political conditions of African partner countries, which do not always resemble those of Brazil.

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to argue that Brazil does not also use its development cooperation in Africa to promote its own trade and investment interests. Indeed, the operation of several Brazilian companies in the region, the promotion of ethanol as an energy source as well as the funding offered by BNDES – to the extent that it may be considered development cooperation – suggest otherwise. But, judging by the available evidence, these interests are not the main motivation of Brazilian international development cooperation.

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