



The Role of the IBSA Fund in Foreign Aid Policies of IBSA and BRICS Member States

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Abstract: The IBSA Fund, which marks its 20th anniversary in 2024, has extended South-South cooperation to 34 states since its establishment in 2004. This article aims to compare the recipients of bilateral development assistance from IBSA members with IBSA Fund projects' partners. The objective is to discern the motivations behind the selection of the Fund's project partners, assess the influence of member states on partner selection, and explore the potential benefits of including Russia and China (both BRICS and New Development Bank participants) as members. The authors analyze the structure, mechanisms, and priorities of IBSA projects, juxtaposing them with New Development Bank projects to highlight key differences and assess shortcomings. The research draws on releases and reports from development agencies, AidData databases, and online databases detailing cooperation projects of all IBSA members and the IBSA Fund. The analysis reveals that the IBSA Fund serves as an additional tool for member states in development cooperation, driven by shared opportunities and responsibilities. Partner selection appears largely motivated by the national interests of IBSA states. While both the IBSA Fund and New Development Bank espouse similar development principles, goals, and narratives, they exhibit differences in terms of development cooperation modalities, emphasis on loans versus grants, project geography, and priorities. As this makes closer cooperation between the two entities unreasonable, Russia and China, whose development assistance priorities largely align with those of the IBSA members, could still be included in the IBSA Fund mechanism, particularly if additional funding is required.

Keywords: IBSA Fund, BRICS, humanitarian diplomacy, South-South cooperation, development assistance

The international community is experiencing a discernible shift towards the *humanitarianization* of international relations, characterized by heightened engagement in humanitarian endeavors and an amplified utilization of humanitarian principles to serve political interests of states (Lebedeva 2021). This trend is evidenced by the increasing participation of numerous states as prominent actors in humanitar-

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ian endeavors, signifying a noteworthy transformation in the field since 1989 (Barnett 2011; Kuznetsov 2022). Notably, BRICS countries are actively involved in humanitarian diplomacy, aligning with this global trend.

The available empirical evidence concerning the humanitarian activities carried out by BRICS states substantiates this assertion. However, a notable challenge in accurately gauging the full extent of BRICS' engagement arises from significant data limitations, primarily due to the underreporting of humanitarian activities by most emerging donors to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Upon scrutinizing additional data sources beyond OECD statistics, it becomes apparent that China alone had supported over 4000 projects by 2012, representing an expenditure of \$350 billion dedicated to humanitarian initiatives¹. This pattern is reinforced by donor influence metrics, with China securing the 8th position in the 2020 AidData survey covering states, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Particularly noteworthy is China's ascent to the 3rd place in the rankings when only states are considered. Furthermore, as BRICS nations continue to pursue humanitarian endeavors, the 2020 rankings position South Africa at 33rd, Brazil at 45th, Russia at 49th, and India at 51st in terms of their humanitarian contributions².

BRICS nations actively participate in the realm of international aid through both bilateral and multilateral avenues, exemplified by the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB). However, the New Development Bank is not the sole institution operating within BRICS states; the India–Brazil–South Africa Facility Fund for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund) also holds significant importance. Emerging from an initiative proposed by India, Brazil, and South Africa in 2004, the IBSA Fund commenced its operations in 2006, predating the full integration of these three states into BRICS. Nonetheless, given the integral role of these countries within BRICS, scholarly discourse frequently examines the Fund within the context of BRICS activities, as highlighted by certain researchers (Stuenkel 2014).

The initial objective of the Fund was to identify projects that are both replicable and scalable, capable of being disseminated to developing countries based on demand, as exemplars of best practices in addressing poverty and hunger³ — the primary social challenges faced by the participating states.

In 2024, the IBSA Fund commemorates its 20th anniversary. Administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since its inception, the fund operates on a demand-driven approach (Stuenkel 2014). By 2022, after more than 15 years of operation, the IBSA Fund reported the completion of 29 development projects, with

¹ Wang C. 2018. Five countries that provide the largest foreign aid. *The Borgen Project*. 14.03.2018. URL: <https://borgenproject.org/five-countries-that-give-the-largest-foreign-aid/> (accessed 20.02.2024).

² AidData. 2022. Listening to leaders 2021: A report card for development partners in an era of contested cooperation. *AidData*. URL: <https://www.aiddata.org/listening-to-leaders-2021> (accessed 20.02.2024).

³ IBSA Fund. *IBSA Forum*. URL: https://www.ibsa-trilateral.org/ibsa_fund.html (accessed 20.02.2024).

6 projects ongoing and 7 projects in the preparation phase⁴. Its overarching objective remains steadfast: to alleviate poverty and foster social development. Geographically, the Fund targets “Asian, South American, and African developing countries”⁵ for its initiatives. Functioning in close collaboration with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), the Fund assists in the implementation of South-South cooperation (SSC) projects, thereby emerging as a pivotal actor within the SSC framework. With an aim to expand its network of development partners, the Fund persistently advances its projects. Recognized as a pivotal tool for enhancing cooperation among states, it should be regarded as an integral component of the IBSA Dialogue Forum.

Literature review

The IBSA Dialogue Forum has been extensively examined in academic literature. Stuenkel (2014) delves into the organization’s history, particularly in relation to the rise of emerging powers. Husar (2016) scrutinizes the internal dynamics of foreign policy discourses within the Forum, shedding light on existing tensions. Kuznetsov (2020; 2023) analyzes the IBSA Forum, along with BRICS, through the lens of transregionalism, highlighting the capacity for powerful states from diverse regions to forge common political, economic, and humanitarian spaces, pooling resources to achieve shared political objectives. Additionally, a body of research focuses on the material interests of IBSA members across various policy domains and explores potential avenues for future cooperation (Vaz 2006; Villares 2006; Tokatlian 2007; RIS 2008; Flandes 2009; Stuenkel 2014). Some scholars elucidate countries’ interest in IBSA by framing them as emerging development donors (Manning 2006; de la Fontaine 2013)⁶. Moreover, the literature underscores the role of IBSA in revitalizing South-South cooperation (RIS 2008). Husar (2016) contends that sectoral SSC and the IBSA Fund represent two of the four operational dimensions of the Forum.

Regarding the Fund’s role in international politics, Maihold⁷ emphasize its role in bolstering the reputations of sponsoring nations and caution against viewing it in isolation from broader foreign policy strategies. Simplicio and Jardim (2021) provide insights into the operational mechanics of the IBSA Fund. Other scholarly investigations delve into the trajectory of official development cooperation (Chanana 2009)⁸.

⁴ IBSA Fund Annual Report 2022. 2023. *UNOSSC*. URL: <https://unsouthsouth.org/2022/11/20/ibsa-fund-annual-report-2022/> (accessed 20.02.2024).

⁵ 1st IBSA Summit Meeting, Joint Declaration. 2006. *IBSA Forum*. URL: https://www.ibsa-trilateral.org/images/1st_summit_declaration.pdf (accessed 20.02.2024).

⁶ See also: Rowlands D. 2008. *Emerging donors in international development assistance: a synthesis report*. International Development Research Centre. URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10625/57509> (accessed 20.02.2024).

⁷ Kochskämper E., Maihold G., Müller S. 2010. Brasilien und Mexiko als “emerging donors” in Haiti. *SWP-Aktuell* 2010/A 39, 15.05.2010. URL: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/emerging-donors-brasilien-und-mexiko> (accessed 20.02.2024).

⁸ See also: Vaz A.C., Inoue C.Y.A. 2007. *Emerging Donors in International Development Assistance: The Brazil Case*. International Development Research Centre. URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10625/57513> (accessed 20.02.2024).

Husar (2016) contextualizes development policies within the leadership dynamics of participating countries, elucidating each national administration's approach to development cooperation. These shifts in discourse give rise to the so-called divergences in cooperation between nations.

Given the intrinsic link between foreign development policies and broader foreign policy strategies, it is imperative to scrutinize countries' approaches to these policies. Several studies examine national foreign policies in conjunction with development cooperation agencies. Reis da Silva and Pérez (2019) analyze the evolution of Brazil's international posture and its stance towards IBSA and BRICS over three administrations, highlighting the correlation between stagnating international cooperation and the political orientation of the president. Burges (2014), Borzova (2015), and de Renzio and Seifert (2014) offer their perspectives on Brazilian development policy. Dreher et al. (2011) compare the priorities of new donor development agencies, discussing the main mission and priorities of the Agencia Brasileira de Cooperacao (ABC) and elucidating Brazil's attitude towards the international development system. They also provide data on the number of recipient countries of Brazilian aid in 2001 and from 2004 to 2008, which totaled 48 states. Hall (2018) provides an overview of Brazilian development policy in Africa, while Pinto (2020) examines Brazilian international development assistance. Paulo and Reisen (2010) delve into Indian development aid policy, highlighting the challenges of analysis and emphasizing India's reluctance to join the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Sato et al. (2011) explore Indian development assistance in Cambodia, while Bhattacharya and Rashmin (2020) assess the loans provided by the EXIM Bank and evaluate grant elements. Prakash (2023) analyzes India's aid to the Pacific, and Mol et al. (2022) investigate Indian health diplomacy in Africa. Habib (2009) explores South African foreign policy, and Appe (2017) examines the reasons why countries' development agencies favor trilateral cooperation. Dal and Dipama (2019) study the policies of IBSA countries' development agencies, examining estimates of development assistance and how they disburse assistance through multilateral channels.

Stuenkel (2014) compares the funding allocations of IBSA with those of established development institutions, noting that the resources allocated by IBSA are comparatively modest. Consequently, as highlighted by Stuenkel, interviews conducted in 2013 with civil society activists cast doubt on the effectiveness of the Fund, attributing limitations in project scope to insufficient funding.

Given that IBSA member states also belong to BRICS, numerous research articles delve into BRICS' development policy. Guo, Sun, and Demidov (2020) conducted a comprehensive review of BRICS' endeavors in international development. Deych (2015) specifically examines BRICS' development activities in Africa, while Abdenur et al. (2014) analyze BRICS' SSC policy in the South Atlantic region. Arkhangelskaya (2012) delineates the divergent roles of BRICS and IBSA, noting that BRICS prioritizes economic prowess while IBSA emphasizes SSC. De Arruda and Slinsby argue that the ascent of BRICS could prompt IBSA to focus more on the dimension of development

cooperation⁹. Puppim de Oliveira and Jing (2019) elucidate the evolution of BRICS' role in international development assistance, whereas Jing et al. (2019) highlight a trend towards amalgamating grants, technical cooperation, loans, and investments within BRICS initiatives. Alden and le Pere (2023) investigate the interconnection between the IBSA Fund and the NDB, stressing the shared principles underpinning both institutions and characterizing the NDB as a derivative, or "the spin-off", of IBSA.

The NDB and its operations have been extensively examined in academic literature. Scholars focus on the innovations introduced by the NDB as a multilateral development bank and conduct comparative analyses with other established institutions (Suchodolsk, Demeulemeester 2018). Regarding the NDB's role within BRICS, Tulebekov and Nechaeva (2020) characterize the bank as an integrating mechanism. Additionally, the expansion of the NDB's membership is evaluated by Cooper and Cannon (2023).

The current body of academic literature extensively explores the activities of the IBSA Fund and the development agencies of IBSA member states. However, there exists a gap in understanding the positioning of IBSA Fund activities within national development policies. At times, the IBSA Fund is perceived as an independent policy of IBSA member states due to its limited funding and non-transparent reporting practices. Nevertheless, it is essential to analyze the IBSA Fund within the broader framework of national development and foreign policies. Another gap in the literature pertains to the connection between the New Development Bank (NDB) and the IBSA Fund. This area of study would investigate how the IBSA Fund could be integrated into the existing institutional architecture of BRICS.

This article addresses the aforementioned gaps by elucidating the nexus between national development and foreign policies and the activities of the IBSA Fund, while also exploring how the Fund can be seamlessly integrated into the existing BRICS structure without compromising its effectiveness. To achieve this objective, the study delves into the following issues: (1) it seeks to uncover the primary motivations guiding the selection of project partners for the IBSA Fund, while also examining the potential presence of influential actors within the Fund and assessing the alignment of the Fund's interests with the development priorities of Russia and China; and (2) it evaluates the current policies of the NDB and endeavors to propose a possible way to revise the BRICS institutional framework in the field of development.

⁹ De Arruda P.L., Slingsby A.K. 2014. Social Programmes and Job Promotion for the BRICS Youth. *International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth*, Working Paper no. 130. URL: https://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/eng/WP130_Social_Programmes_And_Job_Promotion_For_The_Brics_Youth.pdf (accessed 20.02.2024).

Methodology

In order to investigate the primary factors influencing the selection of project partners for the IBSA Fund, an analysis was conducted encompassing both IBSA Fund projects and national development initiatives. The study focuses on India, Brazil, and South Africa, and further extends its examination to include Russia and China, exploring their connections with key IBSA Fund partners.

The primary methodology employed in this study involves data analysis, which draws upon information from a variety of sources. Data concerning the activities of the IBSA Fund was collected from official reports and press releases issued by the Fund. Indian development cooperation efforts were examined using the India Development Finance Dataset, Version 1.0 (Asmus-Bluhm et al. 2024), as well as outcome budget documents from the Ministry of External Affairs and data on Line of Credits from the Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank), supplemented by Exim Bank's press releases. Brazilian activities were tracked utilizing the Brazil South-South Cooperation Dataset¹⁰ and the ABC Project Database¹¹. South African activity was analyzed through the AidData Core Research Release, Version 3.1 (Tierney 2011), along with relevant press releases. Additionally, the AidData Core Research Release, Version 3.1, was consulted to fill in any missing information regarding Brazilian and Indian development activity. Russian and Chinese humanitarian activities were monitored using the Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset and respective press releases. The analysis covered the period from 2004 to 2023, depending on the availability of materials.

The study focused on three primary objectives: 1) identifying all partners involved in development projects; 2) analyzing projects of interest to all IBSA member states; 3) comparing major partners with Russian and Chinese humanitarian interests. The first stage involved compiling a comprehensive list of all partners engaged with the IBSA Fund. For each project, this list included sector (coded according to DAC Guidelines¹²), relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), project name, years, budget, and status. Subsequently, this list was cross-referenced with national development policies to ascertain whether IBSA countries had undertaken solo projects or activities in partner countries. In the second stage, the list was organized based on donor engagement in partner states. Countries that collaborated with all three IBSA states

¹⁰ Brazil's South-South Cooperation, 2005–2011. 2012. *AidData*. URL: <https://www.aiddata.org/data/brazils-south-south-cooperation-2005-2011> (accessed 20.02.2024).

¹¹ Pesquisa de Projetos. *Agência Brasileira de Cooperação*. URL: <http://www.abc.gov.br/Projetos/pesquisa> (accessed 20.02.2024).

¹² OECD. 2022. DAC list of ODA recipients, effective for reporting on 2022 and 2023 flows. *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*. URL: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2022-23-flows.pdf> (accessed 20.02.2024).

separately, in addition to the IBSA Fund, were categorized as “major partners.” Finally, the third stage involved comparing the “major partners” list with the development and cooperation partners of Russia and China. The second and third stages were merged, and the results below are presented qualitatively, focusing on states that garnered attention from all BRICS member countries.

Results

To address the first issue, a comprehensive list of partners involved in all IBSA development projects was compiled (see Table 1). Additionally, projects that were planned but not yet implemented were included in the list. Over the span of nearly 20 years, IBSA has devised plans for 41 projects across 34 countries¹³. Presently, 32 projects have been completed, with 2 projects currently in progress and 8 projects in the preparation stage. Given that 34 projects have been launched, the average number of IBSA Fund projects per year stands at a modest 1.8. This observation indicates that the Fund engages in relatively limited activity, further corroborated by the project budgets, with only one project allocated more than \$2 million. This confirms Stuenkel’s point (2014), who noted the small scale of the projects.

Table 1. The list of all the IBSA Fund projects (as of September 2023)

Country	Sectors and SDGs	Name of the project	Year	Budget	Status
Angola	Water SDG 3, 6, 9	Improvement of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Waste Management Services through Trilateral South-South Cooperation	2022-2024	\$974,000	in progress
Benin	Energy SDG 5, 8, 9	Promotion of Local Salt Project (ProSel)	2022-2024	\$1,000,000	in progress
Benin	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use		\$2,000,000	in preparation
Bolivia	Agriculture SDG 2, 6, 17	Increased Access to Water, Improved Livestock Production and Post-drought Food Security	2018-2021	\$500,000	completed
Burundi	Health SDG 3, 5, 17	Strengthening Infrastructure and Capacity to Combat HIV/AIDS	2010-2012	\$1,145,630	completed
Cabo Verde	Water SDG 2, 6	Delivering safe drinking water	2009-2014	\$1,712,000	completed
Cabo Verde	Health SDG 3, 9	Refurbishment of Health-care Infrastructure (Small Grant Project)	2008	\$37,065	completed
Cambodia	Youth SDG 3, 4, 17	Empowering Children and Adolescents with Special Needs and Their Families	2010-2014	\$1,069,721	completed

¹³ Though the 2022 IBSA Fund report mentions 42 projects and 36 countries, there is no evidence in the report that any other project exists. It can be possible that 2 phases of a project in Guinea-Bissau are treated as two different projects. As they are reported on one page in the IBSA Report, it was decided to combine them as one project. However, there is no explanation why IBSA would report 36 countries. There is no evidence that there are two more countries involved in any projects.

Cambodia	Youth SDG 4, 8, 17	Poverty Reduction among Youth – Development of Youth Volunteers’	2017-2020	\$961,200	completed
Comoros	Agriculture SDG 2, 12, 15, 17	Enhancing Agricultural Capacity	2017-2020	\$1,800,000	completed
Eswatini	Health SDG 3, 6, 16	Addressing the Water, Health and Poverty Nexus through WASH initiatives for COVID-19 and Climate Change responses in Eswatini	2022-2024	\$999,350	in progress
Fiji	Women SDG 3, 5, 13, 17	Empowering Rural Women – Scaling Up the Rocket-stove Project	2017-2022	\$275,525	completed
Fiji	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	in preparation
The Gambia	Agriculture SDG 1, 2	Enhanced Vegetable Production and Processing Project for Rural Women and Youth in the Gambia	none	\$1,967,126	in preparation
Grenada	Health SDG 3, 4, 17	National Health Insurance Scheme Support Project	2017-2019	\$742,925	completed
Guinea-Bissau	Agriculture SDG 2, 4, 7, 17	I. Development of Agriculture and Small-animal Herding II. Agricultural Development Services to Rural Communities	I – 2005-2007 II – 2009-2011	\$1,328,750: I - \$498,750 II - \$830,000	completed
Guinea-Bissau	Agriculture SDG 1, 2, 4	Support for Lowland Rehabilitation and for Agricultural and Livestock Processing	2011-2015	\$1,550,000	completed
Guinea-Bissau	Energy SDG 4, 7	Rural Electrification through Solar-energy Systems	2011-2015	\$596,305	completed
Guyana	Waste SDG 6, 11, 12	Solid Waste Management Improvement Project	2014-2018	\$1,093,260	completed
Haiti	Waste SDG 1, 11, 16	Collection of Solid Waste as a Tool to Reduce Violence	I – 2006-2007 II – 2007-2011	\$2,843,429	completed
Haiti	Youth SDG 1, 4, 8, 16	Promote the Socioeconomic Integration of Vulnerable Children and Youth	2015-2017	\$1,601,657	completed
Kiribati	Agriculture SDG 2, 5, 17	Enhancing Inclusive Sustainable Economic Development through Coconut-sector Development	2018-2020	\$315,000	completed
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Agriculture SDG 2, 15	Support to Integrated Irrigated Agriculture in Two Districts in Bolikhamxay	2012-2015	\$1,323,000	completed
Lesotho	Agriculture SDG 1, 2, 8, 13	Alleviating Poverty through Expansion of Deciduous Fruit Production in Lesotho	none	\$950,000	in preparation
Malawi	Youth SDG 4, 5, 17	Eliminating Child Marriages in Malawi and Zambia and Offering Scholarships to Child-marriage Survivors – Pilot Project	2019-2020	\$1,000,000	completed
Mali	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	in preparation
Mozambique	Water SDG 3, 5, 6	Resilient Multifunctional Water Supply Systems for Machubo Administrative Post, Marracuene District	none	\$993,600	in preparation
Niger	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	in preparation

Palau	Education SDG 4, 6, 11	Palau Education Revitalization Project	none	\$668,035	in preparation
Republic of the Congo	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	in preparation
Republic of the Congo	Agriculture SDG 2, 17	Enhancing Smallholder Farmers' Access to Local Markets through South-South Cooperation	none	\$996,450	in preparation
Saint Lucia	Poverty SDG 1, 9	Poverty Reduction through Livestock Development	2015-2018	\$1,291,100	completed
Senegal	Agriculture SDG 2, 13, 15	Restoration and Monitoring of Degraded Land in the Groundnut Basin of the Saloum Delta in Senegal	2022-2024	\$1,000,000	in preparation
Senegal	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	In preparation
Sierra Leone	Human Development SDG 16, 17	Leadership Development and Capacity-building for Human Development and Poverty Reduction	2011-2013	\$1,000,000	completed
Sierra Leone	Development SDG 1, 5, 17	Digital Financial Services	2018-2021	\$1,000,000	completed
South Sudan	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	In preparation
State of Palestine	Health SDG 3	Supporting Programme Opportunities in Recreational and Team Sports	2008-2011	\$1,065,000	completed
State of Palestine	Health SDG 3, 10	Construction and Equipping of a Centre for Persons with Severe Intellectual Disabilities	2012-2016	\$1,250,000	completed
State of Palestine	Health SDG 3	Rehabilitation of the Cultural and Hospital Centre	I – 2012-2013 II – 2014-2016	\$1,644,700: I – \$1,000,000 II – \$644,700	completed
State of Palestine	Health SDG 3	Reconstruction of Atta Habib Medical Centre in Gaza City	2015-2017	\$1,000,000	completed
Sudan	Youth SDG 4, 8	Creation of Job Opportunities for Youth in Sudan through Labour-intensive Work Opportunities	2014-2017	\$1,300,000	completed
Sudan	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	In preparation
Timor-Leste	Agriculture SDG 2	Conservation Agriculture, Permaculture and Sustainable Fisheries Management	2015-2018	\$1,428,772	completed
Togo	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	In preparation
Uganda	Energy SDG 1, 2, 7	Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use	none	\$2,000,000	In preparation
Uganda	Agriculture SDG 2, 5, 17	Karamoja Greenbelts' Women-led Large-scale Farming of Cereals, Legumes and Oilseed	none	\$1,000,000	In preparation
Viet Nam	Agriculture SDG 1, 2	Establishment of a Rice-seed Production Hub in Hoa Tien	2012-2014	\$529,537	completed
Viet Nam	Health SDG 3, 4	An Innovative e-Learning Approach for Health	2015-2018	\$990,000	completed
Zambia	Agriculture SDG 4, 5, 17	Eliminating Child Marriages in Malawi and Zambia and Offering Scholarships to Child-marriage Survivors – Pilot Project	2019-2020	\$1,000,000	completed

Zambia	Agriculture SDG 1, 2	Leveraging Zambia's Agro-industry Potential in Rural Areas through Enhanced Soya Bean Production and Processing	2018-2022	\$1,714,680	completed
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Source: compiled by the authors based on the IBSA Fund data (see note 4).

Table 3 illustrates the most notable partners for the IBSA Fund, including:

- Palestine (4 projects);
- Guinea-Bissau (3 projects);
- Benin, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Fiji, Haiti, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Viet Nam, Zambia (2 projects).

The selection of states for IBSA Fund projects may be attributed to several factors. Firstly, all of these states are included in the DAC OECD List of ODA Recipients. Notably, the list designates Palestine as “West Bank and Gaza Strip” due to its partial recognition status. Additionally, among the 15 states that received funding for more than one project from the IBSA Fund, 10 (67%) are classified by the OECD as Least Developed Countries. Among the remaining 5 states, only Fiji is categorized as an upper middle-income country.

As the IBSA Fund continues to cultivate stable relationships with the aforementioned states, it is imperative to consider the unique characteristics and circumstances of each country accurately.

In terms of sectors and SDGs, the most prioritized areas are Agriculture (15 projects), Energy (11), and Health (10) (see Figure 1).

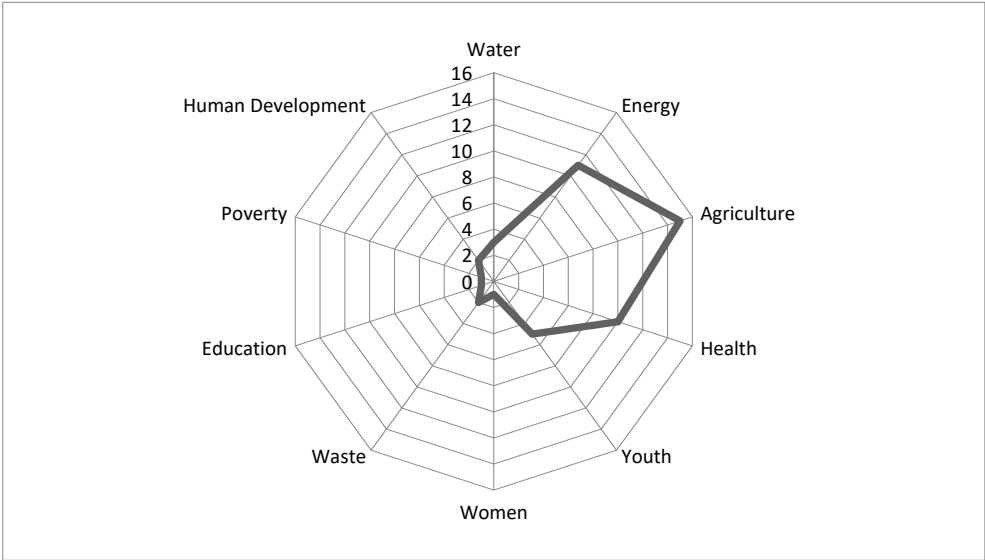


Figure 1. The fields of IBSA Fund Projects (number of projects)

Source: compiled by the authors based on the IBSA Fund data (see note 4).

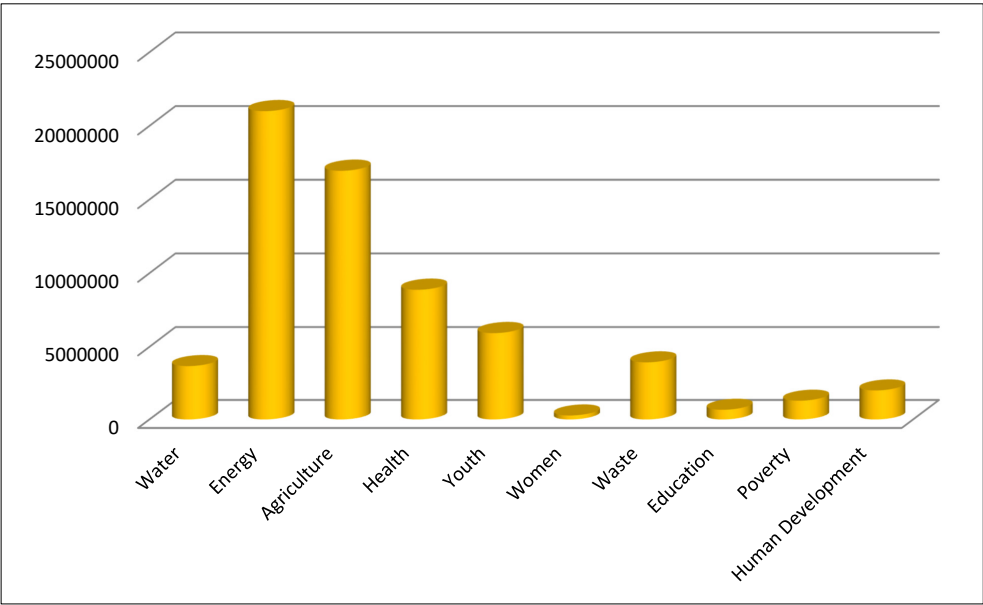


Figure 2. Budget of IBSA Fund Projects in US\$ by field
Source: compiled by the authors based on the IBSA Fund data (see note 4).

The comprehensive list of all partners offered insight into the array of partnering states, enabling a further comparison with the foreign development policies of India, Brazil, and South Africa. This list, with significant partners denoted by an asterisk, was juxtaposed with development policies of individual states (see Table 2), yielding valuable insights into the selection of project partners for the Fund.

Table 2. Projects of BRICS states in IBSA Fund partner states

Country	India's projects in the country	Brazil's projects in the country	South Africa's projects in the country	Russia's projects in the country	China's projects in the country
Angola	+	+	-	+	+
Benin*	+	+	-	-	+
Bolivia	+	+	-	-	+
Burundi	+	+	+	-	+
Cabo Verde*	+	+	-	-	+
Cambodia*	+	-	-	-	+
Comoros	+	+	+	-	+
Eswatini	+	+	+	-	-
Fiji*	+	+	-	+	+
The Gambia	+	+	-	-	+
Grenada	+	+	-	-	+
Guinea-Bissau**	+	+	+	-	+
Guyana	+	+	-	-	+
Haiti*	+	+	-	-	+

Kiribati	+	-	-	-	-
Lao People's Democratic Republic	+	-	-	-	+
Lesotho	+	+	+	-	+
Malawi	+	+	+	-	+
Mali	+	+	+	+	+
Mozambique	+	+	+	+	+
Niger	+	+	+	-	+
Palau	+	-	-	-	+
Republic of the Congo*	+	+	+	-	+
Saint Lucia	+	+	-	-	+
Senegal*	+	+	-	-	+
Sierra Leone*	+	+	+	-	+
South Sudan*	+	-	+	-	+
State of Palestine***	+	+	+	+	-
Sudan*	+	+	+	-	+
Timor-Leste	+	+	-	-	+
Togo	+	+	-	-	+
Uganda*	+	+	+	-	+
Viet Nam*	+	+	-	-	+
Zambia*	+	+	+	-	+

Note:

- * — states that were partners of IBSA Fund in 2 projects
- ** — states that were partners of IBSA Fund in 3 projects
- *** — states that were partners of IBSA Fund in 4 projects

Source: compiled by the authors.

First and foremost, each partner of the IBSA Fund has participated in at least one project with one of the IBSA member states, indicating that the Fund's activities are intricately linked to its member states. Therefore, it cannot be viewed as operating independently from their agendas or as merely an extension of their existing development policies. Given its constrained budget, the IBSA Fund serves as an additional tool to advance the foreign policy objectives of its member states. However, it is crucial to note that the initiation of a project through the IBSA Fund follows a specific process: a member state identifies potential partners and submits proposals to national governments, which, upon approval, may be developed into concept papers. It is recommended that each IBSA country submits at least one concept paper annually. Stuenkel (2014) highlights the importance of a request from a potential partner state, as revealed in interviews with IBSA officials. This suggests that initiatives can originate from partners rather than solely from IBSA states. However, both factors contribute to partners' consistent engagement in projects with an IBSA state. When selecting potential partners, IBSA Fund members can nominate their bilateral partners as candidates for projects. When a developing state initiates a project, its decision

to involve the IBSA Fund may stem from its established relationship with one or more IBSA members. Consequently, the trust in IBSA members built through bilateral or trilateral projects motivates states to explore project opportunities within the IBSA framework.

Secondly, it turns out that all IBSA Fund partner states have engaged in development cooperation with India. The analysis shows a strong involvement of India with all the states. Notably, four states (Cambodia, Kiribati, Laos, and Palau) have exclusively partnered with India among all IBSA Fund members. This phenomenon can be attributed to three factors. Firstly, India exhibits a more proactive development policy compared to the other two states, particularly across all the IBSA Fund priority regions (while Brazil prioritizes mostly countries in Latin America and the Caribbean). Secondly, India generally demonstrates greater activity in the Southeast Asian and Indo-Pacific regions. Lastly, there is a lack of readily available information regarding South African development policy due to the absence of a formal reporting mechanism. Consequently, information obtained from the African Renaissance Fund and media sources may be limited in terms of fully documenting all ongoing projects.

This leads to *the third insight*: South Africa has a smaller number of projects with IBSA Fund partners compared to India and Brazil. This can be attributed to the previously mentioned lack of information regarding its development aid activities.

Fourthly, there are 15 states (44% of all IBSA Fund partners) that maintain a development cooperation relationship with each individual IBSA member state. Interestingly, the number of partners with more than one project with IBSA is also 15, although the two lists of states are not identical. Only 7 countries (highlighted in light grey), or 47% of significant partners, have bilateral projects with all member states and are involved in more than one IBSA Fund project. Out of 8 remaining countries with 2+ projects with IBSA Fund, only Cambodia (in italics) has a partnership with just one state, namely India. The other 7 states (highlighted in dark grey), have bilateral development projects with two IBSA states. This shows that being significant for all three states in terms of strategical interests does not necessarily result in attracting more funds from the IBSA Fund. Of the 15 states deemed significant for all three member states, 8 states never had more than one project with the Fund. The project launch procedure described above could be considered as a potential reason for this phenomenon.

Taking all insights into account, several conclusions might be drawn.

(1) The IBSA Fund serves as an additional instrument in the foreign policy arsenal of IBSA states. Consequently, the selection of project partners is primarily driven by the interests of IBSA states. However, the execution of projects is contingent upon the establishment of stable relations between partners and IBSA members, as well as partners' trust in the IBSA initiative.

(2) Despite India's bilateral engagement with all partners, the procedural aspects and other findings do not necessarily suggest that India dominates in terms of the selection of project partners.

These findings raise the question of potentially incorporating Russia and China into the operations of the IBSA Fund. Upon scrutinizing their policies, it was observed that only 4 partner states of the Fund (12%) had projects involving both countries: Angola, Fiji, Mali, and Mozambique. However, the study illustrates that recipient states are not necessarily required to maintain stable connections with all member states to participate in a Fund project. In the instances of Mali and Mozambique (highlighted in bold), these two states were discovered to have partnerships with all BRICS countries.

(3) This implies that it is viable to engage Russia and China in IBSA Fund activities should additional funding be necessary.

It is essential to scrutinize the interactions among countries within the New Development Bank (NDB) and assess the feasibility of incorporating IBSA Fund activities into the NDB framework. Several parallels exist between the two institutions. Firstly, they both embody a developmental ethos, guided by shared principles and objectives, which are expressed through common terminology ("partnerships"), standards, and a commitment to sustainable development. Secondly, all member states of both institutions are regarded as equal and bear equivalent responsibilities (Alden, le Pere 2023).

However, disparities in their operations present significant hurdles to envisioning the integration of the Fund into the NDB.

Firstly, the terms of development cooperation differ markedly. While the IBSA Fund focuses on providing grants, the NDB primarily offers loans (Alden, le Pere 2023). The presence of a grant element is particularly appealing to governments of developing nations, especially as 18 of the countries partnering with the IBSA Fund are low-income nations burdened with heavy debt and lacking adequate resources to repay loans (see Table 3). With an addition of one country with an interim status, they constitute 55.9% of all the Fund's partners. Secondly, the NDB primarily concentrates on serving its member states, whereas the IBSA Fund engages with external states. Thirdly, the NDB operates within a more structured and regulated framework (Alden, le Pere 2023). Fourthly, the NDB has expanded its membership to include Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, resulting in further divergence between NDB and IBSA membership (Cooper, Cannon 2023).

Table 3. The IBSA Fund project partners and their position on the list of heavily indebted poor countries

Country	IMF heavily indebted poor country status (as of 2023)
Angola	-
Benin*	+
Bolivia	+
Burundi	+
Cabo Verde*	-
Cambodia*	-
Comoros	+
Eswatini	-
Fiji*	-
The Gambia	+

Grenada	-
Guinea-Bissau**	+
Guyana	+
Haiti*	+
Kiribati	-
Lao People's Democratic Republic	-
Lesotho	-
Malawi	+
Mali	+
Mozambique	+
Niger	+
Palau	-
Republic of the Congo*	+
Saint Lucia	-
Senegal*	+
Sierra Leone*	+
South Sudan*	-
State of Palestine***	-
Sudan*	<i>Interim status</i>
Timor-Leste	-
Togo	+
Uganda*	+
Viet Nam*	-
Zambia*	+

Note:

* — states that were partners of IBSA Fund in 2 projects

** — states that were partners of IBSA Fund in 3 projects

*** — states that were partners of IBSA Fund in 4 projects

Source: compiled by the authors based on the IMF data¹⁴.

Upon examining the differences, it becomes evident that integrating the IBSA Fund into the NDB would pose significant challenges. Such a decision would necessitate the inclusion of more than just Russia and China, given that the NDB currently comprises eight members. This expansion could potentially disrupt development coordination, as membership would almost triple, introducing complexities in managing the diverse interests and priorities of the expanded membership. Furthermore, integrating the IBSA Fund into the NDB could restrict the pool of potential partners, as many states may not have the financial capacity to engage in projects financed through loans. Moreover, the unity of the two institutions may lead to an imbalance, with member states directing funds primarily towards fellow members, thereby potentially marginalizing external partners.

¹⁴ Debt relief under the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative. *International Monetary Fund*. 2023. URL: <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2023/Debt-relief-under-the-heavily-indebted-poor-countries-initiative-HIPC> (accessed 12.08.2023).

Therefore, (4) if Russia and China are to be involved in IBSA Fund, it should be preserved as an independent entity. Merging it with the NDB could result in a decrease in the number of projects undertaken with developing states, thereby undermining efforts to address pressing developmental challenges.

There are several important limitations to the present research. There exists a substantial gap in available information. Some countries opt not to report their activities, potentially resulting in the omission of certain projects from the study. This issue is particularly pronounced in the cases of South Africa and Russia, as both lack a centralized agency responsible for reporting all ongoing and completed projects. Consequently, the multitude of institutions involved in the development policy of these countries complicates the task of collecting and organizing information on projects conducted by South Africa and Russia in partner states. As a result, the findings regarding the extent of South African and Russian involvement are compromised. In reality, these states may be more extensively engaged in development cooperation and could have ongoing projects with countries included in the study.

The lack of accessible information extends to the IBSA Fund itself. The Fund lacks a dedicated webpage providing updates on ongoing projects. Instead, researchers must rely on reports published on the UNOSSC website. This limitation hinders researchers from scrutinizing the effectiveness of the projects, as crucial details such as the selection process of projects (especially regarding the country proposing the project), the projected timeline, sub-contractor details, impact assessment reports, target beneficiaries, and overall project assessments are not readily available¹⁵.

It was not feasible within the scope of this study to quantify the number of projects undertaken by BRICS countries in each partnering state. Nevertheless, such data could potentially illuminate any discernible priorities among partners. Currently, the qualitative research indicates the simple existence of projects; however, this does not differentiate between countries with at least one shared project and with 30 shared projects. The quantification of projects is significant as it could unveil whether certain countries indeed received project opportunities that align with national priorities of the member states.

Despite the limitations of the study, it represents a novel endeavor by comparing the independent activities of IBSA members with the collective activities of the IBSA Fund. This comparison sheds light on previously unexplored aspects. Furthermore, the study underscores the existing gap in the literature and data concerning South African and Russian development aid policies. Additionally, it attempts to devise a method for assessing the coordination between bilateral and multilateral foreign aid activities in partner states.

¹⁵ Waisbich L.T. 2013. IBSA 10 years on. *Conectas*. URL: <https://www.conectas.org/en/noticias/ibsa-10-years-on/> (accessed 20.02.2024).

Concluding remarks

IBSA member states continue to execute projects through the IBSA Fund, with new projects currently under preparation. However, it has become evident that the activities of the IBSA Fund are intertwined with the foreign policies of its member states rather than existing as an independent initiative. Serving as a tool of foreign policy, the Fund implements its projects in countries that are of interest to the IBSA alliance. Still, this strategic approach facilitates the fulfillment of obligations, as evidenced by the willingness of partners to entrust their projects to the IBSA Fund. It is also important to note that the Fund's partners do require development assistance, as they are classified as least developed countries by the international community. Although India maintains stable partnerships with all IBSA partners, further research is needed to ascertain India's potential influence on the selection of countries for the Fund's projects.

There could be reasons for including Russia and China in the IBSA Fund mechanism to increase its funding. However, the prospects and potential implications of this expansion, as well as its effect on the decision-making process require comprehensive examination. Any such involvement should be within the existing framework of the IBSA Fund, avoiding any potential merger with the NDB, as it would shift the focus away from other developing nations exclusively towards member states.

In the context of humanitarization, humanitarian diplomacy is emerging as a pivotal tool for exerting influence, advancing soft power objectives, and mitigating the adverse impacts of global development disparities. The rise of new development funds tasked with facilitating an equitable allocation of resources for humanitarian aid and developmental initiatives underscores a significant trend, highlighting the increasingly polycentric nature not only of humanitarian efforts but also of the broader international relations framework.

The experiences of IBSA and BRICS, especially in the context of the latter's recent expansion, demonstrate the growing influence of developing nations in shaping development assistance policies. Therefore, broadening their collaboration presents new opportunities for both "new donors" and the broader developing world.

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Роль Фонда ИБСА в политике помощи развитию стран – членов ИБСА и БРИКС

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Московский государственный институт международных отношений (университет)

Фонд ИБСА (IBSA Fund), отмечающий своё 20-летие в 2024 г., с 2004 г. реализовал десятки проектов по линии Юг–Юг в 34 государствах. Деятельность данного трансрегионального объединения в условиях тренда гуманитаризации мировой политики представляет значительный исследовательский интерес. Цель статьи – путём анализа кейсов получения помощи в целях развития и сотрудничества по линии Юг–Юг в рамках ИБСА определить мотивацию выбора партнёров по проектам Фонда, влияние стран – членов группы на выбор реципиентов, а также возможные преимущества подключения к формату России и Китая как участников БРИКС и Нового банка развития. Авторы анализируют структуру, механизмы и приоритеты проектов ИБСА, сопоставляя их с проектами Нового банка развития, выявляют их ключевые особенности и оценивают сложившиеся различия и проблемы. Исследование опирается на релизы и отчёты агентств развития, базы данных AidData и электронные базы данных по сотрудничеству внутри группы ИБСА и её Фонда. В настоящее время Фонд ИБСА остаётся дополнительным инструментом сотрудничества государств – членов объединения в целях развития. Выбор партнёров по проекту во многом мотивирован национальными интересами государств ИБСА. В контексте возможного сотрудничества Фонда ИБСА и Нового банка развития оба учреждения разделяют «дух развития» и цели, основанные на принципах равноправного партнёрства и стандартах устойчивого развития. В то же время существует несколько принципиальных отличий в их деятельности: различные условия сотрудничества в целях развития, доля кредитов vs. грантов в структуре помощи, география проектов (значительно более широкая в случае Фонда ИБСА). Вместе с тем, учитывая схожесть интересов России и Китая со странами ИБСА в области политики помощи развитию, их подключение к деятельности Фонда становится возможным и может принести дополнительные преимущества, в том числе в части роста финансирования проектов.

Ключевые слова: Фонд ИБСА, БРИКС, гуманитарная дипломатия, сотрудничество Юг–Юг, помощь в целях развития

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