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## Emerging Powers and Peacebuilding Financing: Recommendations for Finding Common Ground

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There is currently a North-South gap in discussions on peacebuilding financing, despite the fact that emerging powers are playing an increasingly important role in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Now is the moment to create opportunities for mutual engagement, coordination, and learning. This paper explores such opportunities, with a focus on Africa.

Peacebuilding is a challenging enterprise. Seventeen years after creating the United Nations (UN) peacebuilding architecture, the international community is still grappling with making peacebuilding more effective. The 2016 twin resolutions on sustaining peace by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council pointed attention to some of these challenges. These resolutions acknowledge that peacebuilding is more than just an activity. It is a mix of activities, processes, and goals.

Over the years, the international community has engaged in financing peacebuilding activities and processes through a trial-and-error approach, often leading to uneven results. Financing mechanisms for effective peacebuilding remain largely incoherent, siloed, unpredictable, unsustainable, and competitive.

Much of the discussions around peacebuilding financing have focused on approaches borrowed from development assistance initiatives. North-South cooperation has long dominated this discourse, particularly around development partnerships. Countries from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have primarily focused on the narrower concept of official development assistance (ODA), which provides direct financial aid to recipient states, including to peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Like the Global Partnership for Effective

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<sup>1</sup> DAC members are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

## India

Through the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Technical and Economic Programme, and the EXIM Bank, India has increasingly focused on development assistance composed of various elements including skills and knowledge transfer, infrastructural development, education, and healthcare, alongside the provision of grants, lines of credit, and tied bilateral trade and development. Since 2002, over \$11 billion has been extended to Africa specifically in the form of nonconditional lines of credit and grants.

India does not have a focused peacebuilding-oriented strategy for the continent but has bilateral security cooperation arrangements with a number of African states and is also one of the largest troop contributing countries to UN peacekeeping operations (the largest of which operate across Africa). India has further focused on deepening its security engagements with African partners in three other critical areas including military training, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance.

Development Cooperation (Busan), most global cooperation frameworks also focus on North-South arrangements.

A fundamental gap in ongoing discussions relates to how non-DAC countries finance their peacebuilding engagements. These countries, often represented by emerging powers, have nurtured engagements with fragile and conflict-affected states for decades. The experiences of these emerging powers have led to the development of various mechanisms to support countries emerging from conflict.

This policy brief analyzes the distinctive characteristics of emerging powers in relation to peacebuilding financing processes, and it provides recommendations on how to better contribute to global discussions on adequate peacebuilding financing, focusing on Africa.

### Emerging powers and peacebuilding: old wine in a new bottle or a different drink altogether?

Peacebuilding financing and development assistance, especially at a bilateral level, are often defined based on concepts and parameters designed by DAC members. The OECD, for instance, defines ODA “as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Loans and credits for military purposes are excluded. Aid may be provided bilaterally, from donor to recipient, or channeled through a multilateral development agency such as the UN or the World Bank.”<sup>2</sup>

As a definition, ODA is a valuable starting point to understand how countries traditionally engage with peacebuilding financing, which is premised on a sense of intentionality towards reducing the risks of conflict re-emerging and the ability of societies to sustain peace. In reality, however, ODA initiatives can be seen as restrictive, given their particular focus on how direct financial flows are understood. Accordingly, this traditional view does not fully capture or represent how non-DAC countries engage with similar processes and initiatives.

DAC countries often view emerging powers with suspicion, arguing they tend to follow their own rules, overtly motivated by their respective self-interests.<sup>3</sup> As a result, many emerging powers sit (often deliberately) at the margins of peacebuilding financing discussions.

Traditional OECD-DAC approaches base their investments on direct transfers of financial assistance. In 2018, for instance, DAC members gave over USD 60

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<sup>2</sup> OECD, “Official Development Assistance (ODA)—Net ODA—OECD Data,” accessed May 25, 2021, [data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm](https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Finn Ole Semrau and Rainer Thiele, “Brazil’s Development Cooperation: Following in China’s and India’s Footsteps?” *Journal of International Development* 29, no. 3 (2017): 287–307.

## South Africa

South Africa has, since 2000, primarily supported its bilateral peacebuilding efforts across Africa through its **African Renaissance and Cooperation Fund (ARF)**. The fund financed infrastructural projects in neighboring countries, electoral support processes, and strengthened governance and public institutions across the continent, among other projects. However, only 4 percent of all ARF disbursements have been allocated to peacebuilding-specific activities over the 2015–2020 period. Administrative challenges and the inability to establish a more comprehensive development agency that supplants many ARF functions are larger issues—but have also played a role in the relatively small amount allocated to peacebuilding.

billion to fragile contexts.<sup>4</sup> These figures confirm the increasing importance of supporting countries in a situation of fragility. Most of these contributions were not, however, related to peacebuilding initiatives, but were instead directed toward humanitarian relief or development efforts. By comparison, according to the OECD, non-DAC countries provided over USD 13 billion in ODA in 2018, representing 18 percent of the total contribution to fragile settings.<sup>5</sup>

The increasing amount of financing from non-DAC members, mainly from emerging powers, underscores the rise of new approaches to supporting fragile and conflict-affected countries in their peacebuilding efforts. Consequently, these new approaches have, to some extent, challenged the logic and approaches that have for many years anchored traditional models of development assistance cooperation. Peacebuilding is not, however, always clearly or explicitly referenced by emerging powers in their engagements in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Other modes of engagement in terms of development assistance (more broadly), coupled with investment promotion, capacity-building, and South-South solidarity are often drawn upon as the underlying motivations for such engagements. Moreover, it is seen that the provision of peacebuilding support by emerging powers (even when not explicitly mentioned) is grounded in a broader recognition of the intrinsic link between development and peace.

In short, there are a number of clear differences in the approaches adopted between DAC and non-DAC states in carrying out peacebuilding initiatives. One relates to the conception of “assistance.” Emerging powers generally conceptualize and seek to contribute to peacebuilding in more varied terms than traditional ODA-oriented approaches, by utilizing a mix of infrastructure development projects, developmental loans, in-kind support, and capacity-building interventions. Emerging powers, in particular, have come to incorporate elements of the conventional OECD definition of development assistance into their own initiatives in fragile states, while further adding other features. As Gabas and Rivier argue:

The public/private boundary in these [emerging] countries are very porous, and foreign direct investments (FDI) or other private investments are counted as contributions to development in the same way as donations. Since the emerging donors (sic) neither declare their aid nor pursue their quantitative commitments, according to DAC criteria, it is difficult to make numerical comparisons.<sup>6</sup>

It is also essential to emphasize the difficulty of comparing emerging states’ peacebuilding cooperation approaches to DAC countries. This is primarily due

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<sup>4</sup> Jean-Jacques Gabas and Vincent Ribier, “The Political Determinants of the Measure of Development Assistance,” *Revue Tiers Monde* 213, no. 1 (2013): 33–50, <https://doi.org/10.3917/rtm.213.0033>.

<sup>5</sup> OECD.

<sup>6</sup> Gabas and Ribier, “The Political Determinants of the Measure of Development Assistance.”

to the fact that their institutional infrastructure and policy frameworks are not compatible or comparable with traditional donors. Moreover, relevant statistics are not always available for specific peacebuilding support and development assistance. Accordingly, the amounts included in calculations of emerging powers' ODA contributions do not fully encapsulate the scale or breadth of their peacebuilding-oriented engagements in fragile and conflict-affected states.<sup>7</sup>

Another point of consideration relates to perceptions of emerging powers as emerging donors, which can be problematic. Many non-DAC countries, such as Brazil, India, China, South Africa, and Turkey, have been undertaking development assistance for decades.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, a useful way to understand development assistance (and, by extension, peacebuilding financing) in non-DAC contexts is through the extensive existing literature on South-South cooperation (SSC), which focuses on emerging powers in terms of their respective modalities, motivations, and values for engagement.<sup>9</sup> And a common thread that runs throughout this literature is the comparatively greater focus on the espoused principles of “equality and solidarity” by emerging powers in their engagements with other actors from the Global South.<sup>10</sup> This often stands in stark contrast to the more clientelist-oriented frameworks used to understand and explain development assistance approaches between the Global North and South. SSC discourse further maintains an underlying logic which views development cooperation against the “[imposition of] conditionalities based on unequal international relations and legacies of colonialism.”<sup>11</sup> However, these approaches also raise questions concerning whether these underlying principles are simply rhetorical.

## Analysis and Recommendations

### *Definitions matter*

Most discussions on good peacebuilding financing intertwine with definitions of development assistance led by OECD countries. The OECD's definition of development assistance is a valuable starting point for understanding how emerging powers engage with peacebuilding processes, despite the limited set of approaches. This definition particularly impacts how to understand direct

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<sup>7</sup> The paper chooses to focus on peacebuilding-oriented approaches, because among the emerging powers there is not a universal definition of peacebuilding, and the approach taken by most of them is to see peace promotion through the lens of humanitarian and development support.

<sup>8</sup> Sandra H Bry, “The Evolution of South-South Development Cooperation: Guiding Principles and Approaches,” *European Journal of Development Research* 29, no. 1 (2017): 160–75, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2015.85>.

<sup>9</sup> While the concept of “Global South” is loose, it often refers to developing countries, in opposition to the more developed economies. While Turkey is generally not considered to be part of the Global South, for the purposes of this study, it is included as some of its development approaches are more aligned to those of other countries of the Global South.

<sup>10</sup> Bry, “The Evolution of South-South Development Cooperation: Guiding Principles and Approaches,” 163.

<sup>11</sup> Kojo S. Amanor and Sérgio Chichava, “South-South Cooperation, Agribusiness, and African Agricultural Development: Brazil and China in Ghana and Mozambique,” *World Development* 81 (2016): 13–23, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.11.021>.

## China

Compared to the ODA flows of DAC countries, Chinese support (on grant equivalent and net disbursement basis) would be in the top 10 donors in the world, at approximately \$6.2 billion, according to one estimate.\*

China's development cooperation typically combines aid with investment, trade, and enhanced market access opportunities, constituting what is often referred to as the "Asian model" of development assistance. For China, peacebuilding support is about developing everyday commerce, trade, and finance. It includes a range of instruments including humanitarian assistance or disaster relief, training programs, and concessional loan projects that include higher technology exports or construction projects developed by Chinese companies and financed through China Eximbank with low, fixed-rate loans.

The Belt and Road Initiative is therefore a crucial driver of China's foreign assistance, including in fragile contexts. The funding of over USD 200 million over ten years to the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund in 2016 also exemplifies how they see the connection between peace and development.

\*Source: Naohiro Kitano and Yumiko Miyabayashi, "Estimating China's Foreign Aid: 2019-2020 Preliminary Figures," *JICA Ogata Research Institute Project* (Tokyo, 2020)

financial flows within the context of development assistance and how to monitor, evaluate, and report.

Emerging powers often seek peacebuilding within broader "development partnership" concepts. The intentionality of peacebuilding action is usually not present in emerging powers' engagements. Many do not utilize peacebuilding frameworks and goals as a starting point—engaging through the language of development instead. However, most acknowledge a direct linkage between development and peace.

This limited reference to peacebuilding occurs because they do not see it in isolation from other long-term development engagements. Therefore, their conception of peacebuilding generally aligns with the shared economic development imperatives for most emerging powers. For instance, countries like China and India have widely used lines of credit and loans within their development cooperation strategies. While controversial to an extent, these efforts are often justified by the pressing need for investment, following the mantra of "trade, not aid" to support long-term development and peace.

Countries like Brazil, China, India, South Africa, and Turkey are also active in global peacebuilding discussions. Brazil and South Africa have promoted multilateral responses to peacebuilding, including participating in the Peacebuilding Commission and specific country configurations.

**Recommendation:** Promoting a more **inclusive definition of peacebuilding financing** is critical to reducing the dissonance between DAC and non-DAC countries on what constitutes development cooperation and peacebuilding. More inclusive definitions and approaches to peacebuilding financing could help harmonize different modalities of peacebuilding support across DAC and non-DAC actors. Relevant global and regional intergovernmental actors, including the UN, the African Union, the European Union, and the OECD, should develop more coherent and harmonized definitions of what constitutes peacebuilding and development cooperation. Member states should champion common understandings and meanings of peacebuilding and development cooperation within multilateral structures like the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

While modalities and approaches may vary, a paradigm shift between the parties must occur to enable common peacebuilding goals, language, and frameworks. There is a possibility of **using the 2022 UN High-level Meeting on Peacebuilding Financing as a leverage point to catalyze cross-regional engagement on peacebuilding financing**. This can be done through permanent representative-level informal meetings (e.g., breakfast discussions) and expert-level exchanges. Discussions would initiate a process to find common ground across different approaches to peacebuilding cooperation

and (over time) could aim at delivering action-oriented recommendations that could be introduced into the UN system.

*Emerging powers are not always "emerging donors"*

Many emerging powers have had decades of experience providing support to African countries, making them far from “emerging” donors. Identifying emerging powers as emerging donors “probably says more about the positionality and assumptions of observers using the term than it says about the donor activity of any country and invites us to ignore significant differences among DAC donors as well as the shifting priorities within DAC itself.”<sup>12</sup>

Many emerging powers (e.g., Brazil, India, and South Africa) have embraced the idea of SSC within the context of development assistance and peacebuilding. The narrative pursued by these countries focuses more on partners rather than donors. The validity of this narrative is debatable but still a fundamental part of how emerging powers engage and see themselves.

This SSC-centric view has often allowed them to gain soft power influence among recipient countries, especially in ensuring an understanding of “cooperation among equals.” However, the larger the footprint of a donor country in terms of local presence (e.g., China and India), the more complex their relationships are to manage. This complexity occurs especially in terms of perceptions and, to an extent, their integration with other donors.

**Recommendation: DAC and non-DAC countries could better engage with one another to support common peacebuilding goals in conflict-affected states, recognizing one another’s practices, expertise, and legitimacy.** Meaningful peacebuilding engagement between DAC and non-DAC countries could ultimately lead to sustainable financing models with overlapping objectives. Member states should establish the necessary processes to strengthen dialogue and collaboration, including exchanging lessons on forms of peacebuilding and development cooperation in fragile and conflict-affected states.

The PBC could build on the recommendation above, go beyond dialogue on common frameworks for peacebuilding, and share knowledge and experiences about various forms of peacebuilding assistance. Think tanks, CSOs, and scholars representing the cross-regional groupings could immediately follow the high-level meeting on peacebuilding financing discussion to develop best practices and, over time, help monitor more joined-up approaches.

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<sup>12</sup> Patty A. Gray, “Russia as a Recruited Development Donor,” *European Journal of Development Research* 27, no. 2 (2015): 274, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2014.34>.

## Turkey

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) implements and oversees Turkish development assistance to Africa. The agency has dealt primarily with grants focusing on social and infrastructural projects, including healthcare, educational facilities, and humanitarian aid. Turkey has adopted a narrower and more technical approach to its assistance, and it has emerged in more recent times as an influential actor that straddles Western approaches to the provision of aid and the practices employed by emerging powers.

However, in contrast to other emerging powers (and DAC countries), Turkey's development assistance approaches have incorporated a religious dimension. All primary African recipients of Turkish aid are Muslim-majority nations, including Somalia, Sudan, Niger, Mauritania, and Senegal. Also, Somalia and Sudan maintain significant historical and cultural ties to Turkey back to the Ottoman period

### *Emerging powers cannot be all bundled together*

While emerging powers are present in supporting peacebuilding processes, their levels of interaction vary considerably from one another. China is undoubtedly the most influential emerging power in peacebuilding contexts in Africa, with a much larger development cooperation footprint across the continent and increasingly part of peacekeeping operations and as a political broker. India and Turkey have also maintained numerous engagements across the continent (however, Turkey has primarily focused on the Horn of Africa and East Africa as their point of interaction).

Despite their rich history of engagement, countries like Brazil and South Africa have declined in visibility and action in recent years, partially in line with their domestic constraints and capacity for more extensive funding arrangements.

However, while emerging powers often engage differently than DAC countries, they all have approaches resembling traditional development assistance. These can be great entry points to ensure greater coordination and complementarity while ensuring that the beneficiaries of such engagements benefit from the various DAC and non-DAC sources of support.

**Recommendation:** DAC countries should **avoid seeing emerging powers as one homogeneous group**. To successfully bring them to the conversation, **bilateral engagements must occur parallel to multilateral processes**.

In doing so, they can foster common understandings and approaches to peacebuilding and development cooperation. These bilateral efforts should take stock of emerging powers' underlying motivations and modalities in their respective peacebuilding engagements. Peacebuilding champions within DAC could lead this bilateral engagement by reaching out to emerging powers. This can be done at the government level and through people-to-people forums, including think tanks, CSOs, and academic exchanges.

### *Emerging powers' development cooperation lacks a common theory of change*

Many emerging powers view the conditionality tied to DAC countries' approaches toward aid with much suspicion. There is, however, something that emerging powers could learn from the DAC approach, particularly in terms of the long-term impact of their initiatives. Providing open support to emerging powers to develop more robust planning, monitoring, and evaluation skills may lead to better results—ensuring peacebuilding is not seen as a simple one-off transaction between countries.

Indeed, initiatives supported by emerging powers are commonly one-off efforts without longer-term considerations. While DAC countries focus on results and monitoring and evaluation tools, emerging powers seldom have robust mechanisms to evaluate results. This gap frequently leads recipient countries to

## The IBSA Fund

Established in 2004, the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Fund provides development assistance (and often peacebuilding support) to other developing countries. Despite being small, with an annual budget of around USD 3 million, it nonetheless illustrates the willingness of these countries to pursue new modes of cooperation in support of peacebuilding.

experience a piecemeal approach with a limited understanding of long-term results.

Several emerging powers have used trilateral cooperation arrangements to assist peacebuilding, including Brazil, China, India, and South Africa. Fostering initiatives like the small IBSA fund can allow further engagements between emerging powers and multilateral mechanisms through partnerships with organizations like the UN. These arrangements are also often developed with DAC countries and UN agencies, funds, and programs.

**Recommendation: DAC countries should proactively pursue trilateral cooperation arrangements with emerging powers to develop more robust planning, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks.** These arrangements can become mutually beneficial undertakings. Shared lessons and experiences could help both actors develop more impactful and sustainable approaches to peacebuilding and development cooperation in fragile and conflict-affected states.

### *Political and economic interests as part of the same approaches to peacebuilding*

One of the challenges of assessing the role of emerging powers in supporting peacebuilding relates to the fine line between their economic, political, and even security interests. Cross-cutting factors relating to influence, support, and prestige are generally present when assessing the role of emerging powers in supporting peacebuilding. These countries often present a narrative of needs-based engagement, limited conditionalities, and respect for sovereignty. Their self-interests play out more in practice, for example, where emerging powers' companies engage in specific projects funded by these countries. This links a development narrative to their economic diplomacy processes.

Recipient countries in Africa are hardly passive actors concerning the engagements of emerging powers. While some emerging powers have a more overt influence, many recipient countries see these countries as part of a broader environment—an assortment of external actors that play similar, complementary, or competing roles in their countries. This competition often called the “new scramble for Africa,” provides African states with more options to engage with DAC and non-DAC countries. Many emerging powers' limited conditionalities and funding flexibility make them more appealing to African governments in meeting their developmental and peacebuilding challenges. However, the practice of loans and grants tied to companies from the emerging powers themselves can challenge this narrative.

**Recommendation:** National stakeholders have understood and reacted to increasing geopolitical competition and polarization. If not carefully managed, ideological differences between the West and the “rest” could instrumentalize



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peacebuilding support, like during the Cold War. **Global and regional peacebuilding actors should make more efforts to agree on coordination mechanisms at the field level.** The multilateral players, mainly the UN, can provide a more neutral platform for this coordination. Therefore, the UN can play a stronger, more strategic role in implementing this coordination framework.

## Conclusion

As the financing landscape continues to shift, with emerging actors taking on more and more prominent roles in support to conflict-affected countries, there is an important opportunity for mutual engagement, coordination, and learning. This paper has tried to start to close the gap between North and South for discussions on peacebuilding financing. It shows that there is room to find common ground—but also that it is important for all stakeholders to meet each other in full view of one another’s constraints, interests, and priorities, if such dialogue is going to be successful.

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