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Mutual Learning for Change: An Assessment of the SIA Programme of the Rising Powers Programme

Shandana Khan Mohmand and Tamlyn Munslow

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Abbreviations

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CSO	civil society organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
Fiocruz	Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation – attached to the Brazilian Ministry of Health)
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RIS	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
SIA	Senior International Associates
STEPS	Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability
UK	United Kingdom

1 Introduction

The Senior International Associates (SIA) programme is part of the Rising Powers in International Development programme at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), under which senior policy actors in the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), specifically India, China and Brazil, have come to IDS to advance mutual learning since 2012. This assessment seeks to understand how mutual learning has occurred, what this has looked like in practice, and the activities that both the SIAs and wider programme staff at IDS have been involved in as a result of the programme. A core concern of the assessment is to move beyond the counting and listing of outputs – the number of IDS Policy Briefings and Evidence Reports produced as a result of the programme – to instead understand the less tangible and visible outcomes of this programme, such as dialogues that have occurred over the past three years, discourses that may have emerged as a result, and networks that have been formed through the work of these SIAs.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a short assessment that seeks to demonstrate the contribution of the SIA programme to outcomes around emerging networks that support the United Kingdom (UK) Government and other actors to engage more effectively with the rising powers. As stated earlier, of particular interest to us are contributions that this programme may have made in terms of the development of relationships and networks that will allow policymakers from the rising powers, from developing countries, and from the Department for International Development (DFID) to interact and engage more effectively around key development issues.

1.1 Methods and findings

Programmes such as the SIA do not readily lend themselves to conventional approaches to assessment and impact evaluation. The SIA programme advances a process of mutual learning in order to achieve its outcomes. Both the process (mutual learning) and the intended outcomes (networks, relationships, discourses, narratives) are difficult to measure, often intangible and even sometimes invisible. A large part of the assessment thus needs to define and specify key events, actors and processes that may be involved with the achievement of the desired outcomes.

We therefore need a method that can reveal as much information as possible about the process of mutual learning, but which will allow us to do so in an incremental manner as we build the details of the process that may have been involved, and the outcomes that may have been achieved. Process tracing is an ideal method for this scenario, especially its ‘tracing forward’ variant that allows the careful building of causal links from an initial set of conditions and a hypothesis (the theory of change, in this case), to the intended outcomes.

Process tracing is a tool for assessing causal inference and helps the researcher to adjudicate among alternative explanations for an outcome (Bennett 2010). We use evidence that ‘deals with the content of empirical material, such as meetings’ and trace evidence ‘whose mere existence provides proof that a part of a hypothesised mechanism exists’ (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 100), to assess the relative contribution of programme activities towards the goal. Process-tracing methods thus use mechanisms to explain the occurrence of a particular outcome, which is updated with evidence to increase our belief in its occurrence. There is no clear consensus within the literature on what exactly a mechanism is (Shaffer 2014), but it can refer to a number of ‘parts’ composed of *entities* (e.g. people, organisations, systems) that engage in *activities* (e.g. protesting, advocacy, lobbying), where

each part of the mechanism is *necessary* to give rise to the subsequent part (Beach and Pedersen 2013).

In order to establish this mechanism, we use four main sources of evidence here:

- outputs produced under the programme, funded by the DFID Accountable Grant;
- workshop reports from events funded by the DFID Accountable Grant;
- primary data from interviews with programme staff and the Senior International Associates;
- web scanning and profiling of the Senior International Associates and development concepts used in the Rising Powers programme.

The main findings of this assessment are that we have good and strong evidence to support the programme's contribution to the systematisation and exchange of knowledge on the developmental experience of the rising power countries in the areas of energy, the health sector, and development cooperation. While the programme has made good advances in this area, and its activities and outputs can be linked to its stated outcomes, the evidence is less visible and less convincing in support of the programme's contribution to the integration of development innovations into global strategies. This may be due to the fact that knowledge exchange is often based on reciprocity and informal dialogue, which are difficult to observe. As a methodology, process tracing is constrained by the need for observable pieces of evidence to construct causal mechanisms, and requires greater time and effort to draw out and construct less visible pieces of evidence.

1.2 Plan

This study proceeds as follows: in Section 2 we provide details of the SIA programme and its theory of change. In Section 3 we profile the SIAs who have participated in the programme. Section 4 describes the main activities and outputs of the programme, while in Section 5 we aggregate the available evidence to construct a causal mechanism from these outputs to the observable outcomes of the SIA programme. We conclude in Section 6.

2 Programme background

2.1 Programme description

The Rising Powers in International Development programme created a network of Senior International Associates from emerging powers to synthesise lessons and convene international events on effective development policy implementation experiences, as well as to build capacity in UK and emerging powers institutions to use these experiences in training a new generation of development workers. SIAs are opinion leaders and champions of their particular sector and development issue. They are influential in spreading either positive or negative information about an innovation (Bloom 2013b).

2.2 Initial conditions and assumptions

The SIA programme was based on a set of assumptions. The most important of these is that efforts to build mutual understanding among the rising power countries themselves and with 'traditional donors' have been limited by the lack of effective communication and exchanges of ideas between senior development thinkers and research and training institutions in these countries. While there is increasing interest in triangular development cooperation,¹ the effectiveness of these efforts has been constrained by a lack of capacity of policy analysts within the rising power countries to draw out practical lessons applicable to similar countries and to transmit their learning to their counterparts in these countries.

The importance of engaging with the rising powers was emphasised by the Secretary of State for International Development in his February 2011 Chatham House speech when he emphasised the need to 'cement relationships with think tanks, academics and NGOs [non-governmental organisations] in the emerging powers' (DFID 2011). This was followed up by the inclusion of the BRICS in the Global Development Partnerships Programme² mandate and subsequent agreements in the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, whose final declaration saw a range of commitments that seemed to hold genuine promise for efforts to make the rhetoric of mutual learning and multi-stakeholder partnership a reality (Shankland and Constantine 2014). Numerous policymakers, academics and commentators have identified the challenge of engagement between established and emerging donors. The need for it is based on the assumption that strengthening such engagement provides a channel for the UK to support a more productive analysis of the emerging powers' policy implementation experiences (going beyond asking *what* has worked to examine *how* and *why*), thereby enhancing the effectiveness of South-South and triangular development cooperation with low-income countries.

The goal of the SIA programme, therefore, is to provide policymakers in low-income countries and in donor agencies with access to systematic learning from potentially important development experiences of the emerging powers and to contribute to the building of mutual understanding about development approaches between policy analysts in the emerging powers, low-income countries and in agencies of the 'traditional donors'. To achieve this goal, the programme invites highly experienced policymakers and analysts to review

¹ Triangular development cooperation is referred to as collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organisations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, and management and technological systems as well as other forms of support (IFAD 2014).

² As part of DFID's Global Development Partnerships Programme, the DFID-Brazil programme 'Building Brazil's Development Impact in Low Income Countries' (BBDI-LICs) aims to increase the impact of Brazil's development cooperation in low-income countries. The business case was approved in July 2012, providing up to £6m until 31 March 2016, and the first project grant agreements were signed in July 2013. This programme builds on a previous programme, 'Brazil's Global Development Partnership Programme' (for more, see DFID 2014).

important development experiences from their countries, as Senior International Associates, creating new opportunities for mutual learning (Bloom 2013b). Through their time as SIAs, they work closely with IDS Research Fellows to develop frameworks and identify lessons for other countries, present their findings to an international audience and produce compelling reports for publication (*ibid.*).

2.3 Theory of change

Since 2010, the Rising Powers programme has sought to engage with policy 'elites' to bridge the policy-academia divide by partnering with individuals who are as close as possible to innovative development solutions, either because they work within government or because they are senior policy analysts. This creates the space for reflection of 'untold stories' and the politics and practicalities of implementing innovative development strategies in the contexts of Brazil, India and China. Also, this process provides DFID with new entry points and institutional relationships that would not be as strong without the programme.

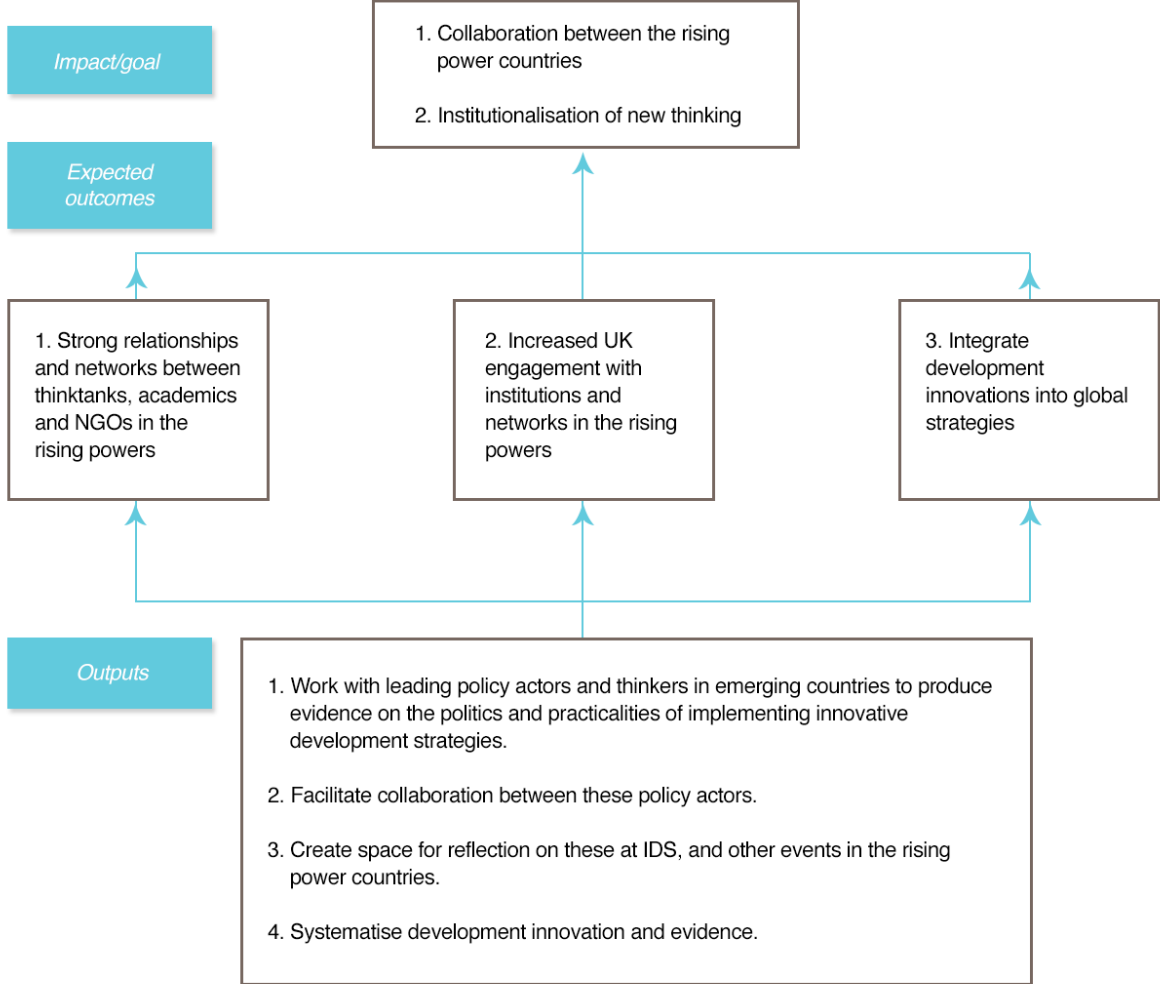
The entire programme is centred around the process of mutual learning, which is about institutionalisation of new thinking – how this happens, who is involved, when and why the interactions take place. Mutual learning is a process rather than a concept, as lessons from recent development innovations in the BRICS countries have not yet been fully systematised or integrated into global understanding of strategies for effective development. Mutual learning involves building a mutual understanding of what factors contribute to sustainable (and shared) development goals by cementing the relations between thinktanks, academics and NGOs in the rising powers, and allowing for increased UK engagement with these. Programme staff explained that:

The potential for new partnerships between CSOs [civil society organisations] and think-tanks across North and South is not only significant because the mutual understanding built up through such partnerships may help to overcome the mistrust that marks so many relationships in the new multi-polar world of development cooperation, but it is also important because of the nature of the development challenges and goals that the world is likely to set for itself in the post-2015 period. (Shankland and Constantine 2014: 113)

Within this process, IDS is intended to be a broker, a convenor, and a space within which impartial and credible knowledge and learning can be shared, and effective collaboration can be facilitated. Effective collaboration is based on mutual understanding, but building such mutual understanding is a big challenge for people from countries with different languages, administrative cultures and historical legacies (Bloom *et al.* 2014). This is IDS' challenge too – to take on the role of broker to advance mutual learning so that effective collaboration between rising power countries can be achieved around certain developmental goals. In many cases the experiences of the rising powers have challenged conventional wisdom on inclusive development. The value of the SIA programme is its potential not only to systematise these development innovations, but also to integrate them into global strategies, especially through the 'informal' relations and networks that are facilitated by the programme.

More explicitly, collaborating with the SIAs is especially valuable because of the wider networks that they work with within policy circles in their respective countries. They interact regularly with senior policy actors, and are involved with the work of government departments. They are, therefore, in a strategic position to share the language around mutual learning. It is these relations that are difficult to capture when only assessing the programme in terms of its outputs and activities. For this reason, interviews with programme staff and SIAs, as well as web-scanning methods have been used to trace outcomes to the work undertaken in the programme.

Figure 2.1 The SIA programme theory of change



3 Profiles of the Senior International Associates

3.1 Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa

Rômulo Paes de Sousa is Director of the Rio+ World Centre for Sustainable Development (United Nations Development Programme), launched in June 2013, and was previously Vice Minister for Social Development and the Fight Against Hunger in Brazil. As an epidemiologist specialising in health inequalities and social policy evaluation, he has had a distinguished career as a policymaker in Brazil and has made some important contributions to academic debates around health inequalities, social development and social policy monitoring and evaluation in Brazil.

As a Senior International Associate on the Rising Powers programme, de Sousa has promoted pioneering approaches to: (1) evaluating the social protection policies of Brazil's Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management, and (2) effective monitoring and evaluation systems for designing and implementing healthcare in Brazil (de Sousa 2013). He has shared these findings with the Second Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Beijing (2012), the Policy Network Agenda Johannesburg (2013), and the DFID Global Partnerships Department (2012/13) (Bloom 2013a). In 2014, he was chair at the event 'BRICS and the Green Transformation: Mutual Learning for Sustainability', held in Rio de Janeiro on 20 March 2014.

3.2 Professor Xiulan Zhang

Xiulan Zhang is Professor and Director of the Institute of Social Development and Public Policy at Beijing Normal University. She has a wealth of experience as an analyst of Chinese social and health policy as: the national lead expert in social assistance; a member of the Academic Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Civil Affairs; a member of the Academic Advisory Committee of the National Aging Association; the Director of Social Safety Net Research Base of the Ministry of Education; and the Vice-President of the National Social Policy Association in China.

As a Senior International Associate, Zhang has promoted lessons from China's rural health reforms with policy actors and policy analysts, including DFID advisers, participants at the Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Beijing in 2012, and to senior Chinese health policymakers (Bloom 2013b). She is also a member of the IDS Board, part of the School for Public Policy in Beijing, and a close contact of the STEPS Centre (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) at IDS, where she has been influential in the establishment of the STEPS China Sustainability Hub. In April 2015, she was keynote speaker at the inauguration of the Centre, cementing Beijing universities' involvement and participation that will see young researchers from Beijing engaging with IDS as part of their programme.

3.3 Professor Ambuj Sagar

Ambuj Sagar is the Vipula and Mahesh Chaturvedi Professor of Policy Studies at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. He currently advises and consults with agencies of the Indian government and several multilateral and bilateral organisations. He is a member of the Indian Government's Expert Committee on Low-Carbon Strategies for Inclusive Growth and the US-India Track-II Dialogue on Climate Change, as well as other advisory groups in the Indian Government.

As a Senior International Associate, Sagar has worked closely with Professor Hubert Schmitz, a Fellow at IDS, to bring together positive lessons from the BRICS' own experience in furthering the green transformation. He also contributed to the event 'BRICS and the Green Transformation: Mutual Learning for Sustainability', held in Rio de Janeiro in March 2014 (Sagar 2014). He is an influential thinker in the field of energy innovation policy and strategies, climate change policy, and capacity development for the environment.

3.4 Dr Sachin Chaturvedi

Sachin Chaturvedi is Director General at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a New Delhi-based autonomous thinktank, and was previously a Global Justice Fellow at the MacMillan Center for International Affairs, Yale University. He has a longstanding career, having served as Visiting Professor at several institutes and as consultant at many organisations, including the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

As a Senior International Associate, Chaturvedi has been influential in co-authoring the IDS Policy Briefing *Learning from India's Development Cooperation*, the most downloaded Policy Briefing on the Senior International Associates programme (1,735 downloads in the first six months and 2,184 to date). He has also presented the State of the Debate country study findings in India, with IDS Fellow Dr Anuradha Joshi. This high-level roundtable event was co-hosted by the Future International Cooperation Policy Network (FICPN) and the BRICS Policy Center. Members of the FICPN presented the Rising Powers in International Development State of the Debate studies and led discussions exploring the implications of these findings for global development cooperation policy.

3.5 Dr José Luiz Telles

José Luiz Telles is Director of Fiocruz (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation), Brazil's leading public thinktank. Fiocruz is engaged in health sector development cooperation in Africa and works to strengthen national health institutions to increase their autonomy and effectiveness. He is currently also a visiting scholar at the University of Lisbon and before that served as a senior official in the Ministry of Health in Brazil. He specialises in structuring cooperation on health in Africa. Telles is the newest member of the SIA scheme and brings four years' experience of health cooperation in Mozambique to help inform and structure the programme's work on health policy and international cooperation between Brazil and Africa.

4 Programme activities and outputs

4.1 Planned activities towards goals

The intended activities of the SIA programme were as follows:

- One or more SIAs were to be selected each year between 2012 and 2016 on the basis of their experience as a high-level policymaker or provider of policy advice and as a researcher or policy analyst. Their primary responsibility was to produce a high-level policy-oriented analysis of a major development experience of an emerging power, with the aim of ensuring that lessons from these experiences are taken into account in new thinking about development approaches by low-income countries.
- In most cases, the associates would spend a period of time at IDS to work with one or more IDS Fellows to produce a document that enables policymakers and policy analysts from other countries to grasp the essential lessons from their experience. The document was to clearly describe what worked and why, and provide practical suggestions for policymakers in low-income countries, the emerging powers and the UK.
- The SIAs would participate in international meetings that would provide opportunities to exchange ideas and lessons from the development experiences of the different rising powers and to receive comments from leading development thinkers from low-income countries.
- The SIA and their IDS collaborator would also produce a high-quality Evidence Report and Policy Briefing with support from IDS Knowledge Services.

The tables below use programme documentation to provide details of the work that each SIA undertook in keeping with these plans, setting out the main activities and events that have been undertaken since the start of the programme in 2012. Table 4.1 sets out the main outputs that were achieved in each year. Table 4.2 sets out the activities that the SIAs were involved in. These activities support both the production and dissemination of the outputs listed in Table 4.1. The outputs and activities are monitored in terms of accessibility, availability and usefulness.³

The programme has consistently overachieved in terms of planned outputs. In Year 1 the programme achieved its stated outputs, along with an additional Policy Briefing. In the subsequent years, the programme similarly performed well and achieved its target outputs, and was even able to publish additional Evidence Reports in these years. At least one of the SIAs has also attended events to present findings, hold discussions on their country's developmental experience, and build on existing networks. Overall, the programme has performed well in terms of the achievements of its planned activities and target outputs.

In Section 5 we connect these activities and outputs to outcomes in order to document and assess the extent to which the programme has advanced towards its intended impact as a result of these.

³ The DFID Accountable Grant monitors each output for downloads, citations and shares, and evaluates events against a Likert scale for usefulness and quality. Each SENTINEL output (key or critical outputs allocated across Accountable Grant Themes per year) is scored against a target of 500 downloads in the first six months, and three activities per year are scored against a 75 per cent rating of usefulness.

Table 4.1 Senior International Associates outputs

Programme year ⁴	Planned	Achieved
2012/13	<p>2 Senior International Associates</p> <p>2 Experience Reviews</p> <p>2 IDS Policy Briefings</p>	<p>Senior International Associates Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa and Professor Xiulan Zhang</p> <p>Experience reviews/Evidence Reports Bloom, G. (2013a) <i>Senior Development Fellowship Report (Rômulo Paes de Sousa)</i>, IDS Evidence Report 19, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 161, 12 August 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/123456789/2873/1/ER19%20Final%20Online.pdf – downloads in first six months (98) and current (144)</p> <p>Bloom, G. (2013b) <i>Senior Development Fellowship Report (Zhang Xiulan)</i>, IDS Evidence Report 20, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 162, 12 August 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/2874/ER20%20Final%20Online.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (88) and current (138)</p> <p>IDS Policy Briefings de Sousa, R.P. (2013) 'Evaluating Social Protection Policies: Lessons from Brazil', <i>IDS Policy Briefing</i> 34, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 142, 29 April 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/3140/PB%2334_SPP_Brazil_ID142_FINAL_web.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (674) and current (984)</p> <p>Zhang, X. (2013) 'Evaluating Experimental Policymaking: Lessons from China's Rural Health Reforms', <i>IDS Policy Briefing</i> 46, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 516, 24 October 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/3144/PB46%20Final%20Web.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (290) and current (386)</p>
2013/14	<p>1 Senior International Associate</p> <p>2 Experience Reviews</p>	<p>Senior International Associate Professor Ambuj Sagar</p> <p>Experience reviews/Evidence Reports Sagar, A. (2014) <i>Senior International Associate Report (Ambuj Sagar): Meeting Multiple Energy Challenges: Lessons from India</i>, IDS Evidence Report 93, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 163, 27 August 2014. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/4308/ER93%20Senior%20International%20Associate%20Report%20(Ambuj%20Sagar)%20Meeting%20Multiple%20Energy%20Challenges%20Lessons%20from%20India.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (83) and current (98)</p>

⁴ The outputs are assessed for programme years 1, 2 and 3; however, some Year 3 outputs are pending publication and are therefore not listed here. Outputs planned for delivery in Year 4 are not yet available.

	2 IDS Policy Briefings	<p>Chaturvedi, S.; Chenoy, A.; Chopra, D.; Joshi, A. and Lagdhiyan, K.H. (2014) <i>Indian Development Cooperation: the State of the Debate</i>, IDS Evidence Report 95, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 146, 10 September 2014. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/4381/ER95%20Indian%20Development%20Cooperation%20The%20State%20of%20the%20Debate.pdf;jsessionid=8296EB8914D753C23564DA3CB1098E9E?sequence= – downloads in first six months (791) and current (936)</p> <p>Chaudhary, A.; Narain, A.; Krishna, C. and Sagar, A. (2014) <i>Who Shapes Climate Action in India? Insights from the Wind and Solar Energy Sectors</i>, IDS Evidence Report 56, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 183, 3 March 2014. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/3537/ER56.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (260) and current (1,285)</p> <p>IDS Policy Briefings</p> <p>Chaturvedi, S.; Chenoy, A.; Chopra, D.; Joshi, A. and Lagdhiyan, K.H. (2014) 'Learning from India's Development Cooperation', <i>IDS Policy Briefing</i> 70, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 148, 16 July 2014. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/4198/AD_ID148_PB;jsessionid=AA72FAD732FAA2D0DBDDC56125252E33?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (1,735) and current (2,184)</p> <p>Bloom, G.; Paes de Sousa, R.; Pillay, Y.; Xiulan, Z. and Constantine, J. (2014) 'Building Mutual Understanding for Effective Development', <i>IDS Policy Briefing</i> 66, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 181, 2 June 2014. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/3958/PB66%20Building%20Mutual%20Understanding%20for%20Effective%20Development.pdf;jsessionid=C4807D9DEAFC3E65D3C562E9DB1B3CB6?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (1,551) and current (2,313)</p>
2014/15	1 Senior International Associate 1 Experience Review 1 IDS Policy Briefing	<p>Senior International Associate Dr José Luiz Telles and Dr Sachin Chaturvedi</p> <p>In progress at the time of the assessment</p>

Table 4.2 Senior International Associates activities⁵

Event	Senior International Associates attending	Event report
DFID Learning Event (2012)	Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa, Professor Xiulan Zhang and Dr Sachin Chaturvedi	Constantine, J. (2013) <i>Learning Event on the Rising Powers for DFID Advisors, April–May 2012</i> , IDS Evidence Report 40, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 177, 8 November 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/3193/ER40%20Final%20Online.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (127) and current (187)
Learning Event (2012)	Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa	Rising Powers (2012) <i>Learning from the Experiences of Brazil and China in Health Systems Development: Meeting Report</i> , Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 500 – unpublished
DFID Learning Event (2012)	Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa	Rising Powers (2013) <i>DFID-IDS Learning Event Report, December 2012: Understanding Health, Social Policy and Civil Society in the BRICS Countries</i> , IDS Evidence Report 33, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 178, 25 October 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/3145/ER33%20Final%20Online.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (112) and current (226)
Advisory Council meeting (2013)	Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa, Professor Xiulan Zhang and Dr Sachin Chaturvedi	Younis, M. (2013) <i>Rising Powers in International Development: Building an Agenda for Collaboration</i> , IDS Evidence Report 37, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 194, 6 November 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/3178/ER37%20Final%20Online.pdf?sequence=3 – downloads in first six months (174) and current (286)
Advisory Council meeting (2013)	Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa	Younis, M. (2013) <i>Policy Network Agenda Johannesburg, 20 March 2013: IDS Rising Powers in International Development Advisory Council Discussion</i> , IDS Evidence Report 11, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 351, 12 July 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/2816/ER11%20Final%20Online.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (107) and current (148)
Series of events held by IDS and partners in South Africa (2013)	Dr Sachin Chaturvedi	Younis, M. (2013) <i>IDS South Africa Events: Report from the Series of Events Held by IDS and Partners in Johannesburg Preceding the 5th BRICS Summit in March 2013</i> , IDS Evidence Report 24, Brighton: IDS, Output ID: 514, 4 September 2013. See more at: http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/2948/ER24%20Final%20Online.pdf?sequence=1 – downloads in first six months (143) and current (234)

⁵ Event reports are also published under the IDS open access policy. OpenDocs is an e-repository of development research that allows unrestricted access via the internet. All Accountable Grant outputs are permanently accessible to all internet users via OpenDocs.

<p>Research workshop: synthesising the State of the Debate country studies (2014)</p>	<p>Dr Sachin Chaturvedi</p>	<p>The Future International Cooperation Policy Network took place on 17–21 March in Rio de Janeiro, gathering researchers and policy experts from IDS and around the globe. The IDS Rising Powers in International Development programme co-hosted the programme of events with partners Articulação SUL, BRICS Policy Center and the Rio+ World Centre for Sustainable Development. See more at: www.ids.ac.uk/news/debating-development-cooperation-the-future-international-cooperation-policy-network-rio-de-janeiro-2014</p>
<p>BRICS and the Green Transformation: Mutual Learning for Sustainability (2014)</p>	<p>Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa and Professor Ambuj Sagar</p>	<p>Held in March 2014, this was a side event to the BRICS Academic Forum which took place in the same week, ahead of the BRICS Summit in Brazil in July. The event was hosted by Rio+, the United Nations World Centre for Sustainable Development, IDS and the STEPS Centre and was chaired by Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa with a presentation on meeting multiple energy challenges in India by Professor Ambuj Sagar. See more at: www.ids.ac.uk/news/brics-and-the-green-transformation-will-mutual-learning-help-achieve-sustainability</p>
<p>State of the Debate in India: Chatham House presentation (2014)</p>	<p>Presentation made on behalf of Dr Sachin Chaturvedi</p>	<p>This presentation was made at Chatham House on 14 October 2014 by Dr Emma Mawdsley. She presented evidence from the programme on how India engages with international development. See more at: www.ids.ac.uk/risingpowers</p>
<p>Launch of the STEPS China Sustainability Hub (2015)</p>	<p>Dr Rômulo Paes de Sousa, Professor Xiulan Zhang and Dr Sachin Chaturvedi</p>	<p>Beijing Normal University's Institute of Social Development and Public Policy and the STEPS Centre have worked together with other partners in China to create a Sustainability Hub which was launched at an international conference on Pathways to Sustainability in a Changing China on 20–21 April 2015. See more at: http://steps-centre.org/about/global/</p>

5 Tracing programme impact

The DFID Accountable Grant is meant to synthesise, produce and disseminate evidence in key policy areas so that policy processes can be more evidence based. An obvious question arises: How should impact in relation to policy research be understood and demonstrated? The Accountable Grant uses a model that posits five dimensions of policy change: in how policy problems are framed; in policy agendas; in policy content; in resource allocation; and in how policy is implemented (Sumner *et al.* 2011). The proposition underlying the Impact Innovation stream of the Accountable Grant is that conventional approaches to impact assessment are not necessarily appropriate when the objective is to demonstrate impact on policy. Also, the policy areas that the Accountable Grant addresses pose particular challenges to the use of these conventional approaches.

As discussed earlier, the purpose of the Accountable Grant intervention assessments is to explore new or alternative methods to assess impact on policy processes. Here we understand impact as:

[Assessment of] the *contribution* of an intervention towards some outcome or goal. The contribution may be intended or unintended, positive or negative, long-term or short-term... [and] attempt to identify a clear link between causes and effects. (Centre for Development Impact)⁶

Specifically, the intervention assessments are meant to use some of the interventions undertaken as part of the Accountable Grant to explore what policy impact looks like and how it might be assessed.

In the case of the SIA programme intervention this is a fairly difficult task, both because the programme is still in the process of implementation – with some SIAs not having taken up their full fellowship yet – and because the type of outcomes and impact the programme seeks to achieve can take a long time to become obvious or visible. In this section, we make a preliminary attempt to understand some of the contribution of this intervention towards the institutionalisation of new thinking, using a variant of process tracing.

We undertake the following process. First, we identify the intended policy impact as determined by the programme's theory of change. This gives us the change that the programme sought to achieve. Next, we detail the intended outcomes of the programme that would be expected to contribute to this intended change. Once these are clearly outlined, we turn to look at the outputs and activities of this programme, to determine their role in the process of mutual learning, and in order to assess whether these can be linked to the expected outcomes within a clear chain, or mechanism, of causes and effects. Specifically, we will seek to determine whether these outputs and activities were necessary for the intended outcomes.

5.1 Intended policy impact

As stated earlier, of particular interest to us are contributions that this programme may have made in terms of the development of relationships and networks that will allow policymakers from the rising powers, from developing countries, and from DFID to interact and engage more effectively around key development issues. In particular, the programme aims at two main policy impacts. First, it seeks to facilitate greater collaboration and learning between

⁶ Centre for Development Impact (CDI) working definition of impact. Presentation by Chris Barnett introducing the CDI at the IDS Annual Review, July 2013.

rising power countries on effective development in specific sectors, such as agriculture, energy, or the health and social sectors. Second, it seeks to institutionalise new thinking within policy circles in these countries and in the UK as a direct result of the process of mutual learning and increased collaboration.

These two policy impacts are closely connected and follow from one another, and together they could address all five dimensions of policy change posited under the Accountable Grant model, from the framing of policy problems to how policy is implemented. In particular, however, the programme has the greatest potential to affect change in how policy problems are framed and in how policy agendas and priorities are set. The exchange with and between the SIAs is aimed to inform these two areas of policy change.

5.2 Expected outcomes to meet intended impact

The theory of change provides us with the expected outcomes, which we discuss in some detail in this section. After this, in Section 5.3 our investigative effort focuses on matching these with the actual outcomes of the programme since 2012. This is part of the process-tracing exercise that we conduct in this paper, tracing forward from our initial conditions and assumptions to assess the extent to which the observed sequence of events and activities have held to the theory of change, and the outcomes – both positive and negative – that have been achieved as a result.

The outputs and activities undertaken as part of the SIA programme were designed to support the achievement of three expected outcomes: (a) strong formal and informal relationships and networks between thinktanks, academics and NGOs in the rising powers, achieved largely in the form of links between SIAs and senior policy actors in their countries; (b) increased UK engagement with these institutions and networks in the rising powers, again through both formal and informal links; and (c) integration of development innovations in rising power countries into global strategies, especially through the ‘informal’ relations and networks facilitated by the programme.

While collecting evidence to demonstrate change along the first two outcomes is a relatively straightforward task, demonstrating progress in global strategy presents a greater challenge. Also, tracing change in informal networks and relationships is difficult with process tracing, given the methodology’s need for fairly visible pieces of evidence. In the next section we look at the available evidence to assess the extent to which the programme has moved towards each of these outcomes, and the extent to which we are able to assess this change.

5.3 Evidence of outcomes

The development experiences of the rising powers have challenged conventional wisdom on inclusive development across a number of thematic areas. The envisioned value of the SIA programme is not only to systematise these development innovations, but also to facilitate their integration into global strategies, especially through the ‘informal’ relations and networks that are facilitated by the programme. We therefore look at both the process of systematisation and its integration – through both formal and informal relations and networks – of this experience in assessing the progress of the programme to date.

The aim of the systematisation process was to generate systematic learning from a review of the developmental experience of the rising power countries. It included the production of a number of Evidence Reports and Policy Briefings by the SIAs that document how Brazil, China and India have done things differently in the areas of health, energy policy and development cooperation, and what other countries may hope to learn from such innovations. Part of the rationale for this is the need to fill a knowledge-sharing gap that exists between traditional donors and the rising powers, and part of it is based on the

realisation that scholars and policy actors in these countries have not previously given high priority to studies aimed at generating lessons for their counterparts in other countries. On the other hand, the aim of the integration process was to use the contacts of the SIAs within policy circles in their countries, along with their informal links with networks of policy actors, to transfer evidence on innovations and learning from these experiences across the wider networks.

In Section 4 we outlined and discussed the various activities that were undertaken by the SIAs and by members of IDS staff to achieve these outcomes. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 demonstrate clearly that the programme has performed well in terms of achieving its planned activities and outputs. Here we present some evidence on the extent to which these activities and outputs have cumulatively moved forward towards outcomes across each of the three areas identified earlier. Throughout, our focus remains on the role that these activities and outputs play in the process of mutual learning as we assess whether they can be linked to the expected outcomes along a clear pathway, or mechanism, of change.

5.3.1 Mechanisms of change

We construct mechanisms of change to connect our initial conditions to the stated outcomes by borrowing from the process-tracing method. However, given the fact that the project is ongoing and that this is not a full assessment, we adapt the methodology to fit our requirements. We do not attempt to establish or attribute causality, considering instead the contributions of the programme's activities to the stated outcomes. Also, there are severe limitations of data and evidence – a combination of a number of factors, including: the limited number of interactive activities to date within the programme, the short time that has lapsed since the start of the programme, the type of informal outcomes that it sought to achieve, and the short time span of the intervention assessment. Nevertheless, we apply a variant of the methodology and find that a causal mechanism can be constructed.

We consider each part of the sequence carefully to link it to the subsequent part, until we get from the initial condition to the intended outcome, as hypothesised in the theory of change. Despite the fact that we are not carrying out a full causal exercise here (for reasons discussed above), we construct a mechanism that helps us connect the activities of the SIAs to the observed outcomes – the creation of relationships and networks, greater UK engagement within these, and the integration of development innovations in global strategies – to show that each part of the chain was necessary to give rise to the subsequent part. This is summarised in Figure 5.1, below.

Initial conditions

As our original condition and starting point, we return to the two assumptions on which the programme was based – the fact that there exists a knowledge-sharing gap between traditional donors and the rising powers, and that scholars and policy actors in the rising power countries have not previously given high priority to studies aimed at generating lessons for their counterparts in other countries.

Actors and entities

After this, we consider the actors and entities responsible for the programme's outcomes and impact, and their experiences within it. Quite obviously these are the five SIAs themselves, along with associated IDS Fellows and programme staff. The programme envisages the contributions of the SIAs in individual terms, in that each SIA is expected to work with an IDS Fellow to analyse and systematise the developmental innovations of their country in order to facilitate knowledge sharing and learning with other middle- and low-income countries. The programme achieved its targets in this area by bringing in senior and influential associates

from Brazil, India and China to work within the programme. However, there are two observed limitations here, for which evidence was collected through interviews with the SIAs.⁷

First, there is great variation in the extent to which the SIAs have been involved with the programme. While two SIAs (de Sousa and Zhang) have been very deeply engaged with all the activities, others have had more limited interaction. Chaturvedi has yet to take up a residency at IDS, Telles has visited only for a short time, while Sagar has engaged mainly through emails, phone conversations and one international event. This is mainly because of their busy schedules and commitments within their own institutions. Most SIAs suggested in the interviews that the programme could have been more effective had it scheduled the engagement with and between SIAs in more creative ways that would not require too much time spent at IDS itself; one particular SIA felt that they were unable to build relations with other associates because of the programme design. This could include, for example, multiple short working group sessions in each of the rising power countries. Based on this, and not surprisingly, the outcomes are stronger and more positive for those that had a deeper engagement with the programme (de Sousa and Zhang), and less for those that had not. The latter group explained that their limited engagement with the programme made it difficult for them to connect or attribute their subsequent work to the programme in a meaningful way.

Second, it was interesting that all SIAs believed that the programme's effectiveness would have been enhanced by greater concentration on the SIAs' face-to-face engagement with one another, rather than just with IDS staff. They suggested that a joint workshop between them at IDS, or a week in which they could all come together for joint conversations in their own countries was a very attractive prospect, and may have been more effective in fostering mutual learning and understanding. Those that had spent time working directly with each other clearly outlined this as the main value of the programme. Some even suggested that a more collective effort – such as the constitution of a joint task force for policy change in the area of health; or a senior experts group to provide policy advice to governments in their own countries, to DFID for its work in low-income countries, and eventually maybe even directly to governments in low-income countries – would have had greater impact. One SIA even suggested that while time has not permitted greater engagement with IDS yet, the prospect of interacting with policy actors from the rising power countries would have provided enough incentive to pull out some time from his regular commitments.

Having said this, almost all SIAs acknowledged the contribution that their time at IDS had made to the fostering of new thinking in their work. Interestingly, those who had not yet spent time at IDS expressed an interest in being able to take up the opportunity soon (preferably with another SIA). In other words, there was clear acknowledgement of the fact that the outcomes of the programme were heavily dependent on the working arrangements envisioned by the programme – in terms of the selection of the SIAs who would take on the task of reflection and systematisation of their experiences, the detailed engagement developed between these SIAs and IDS staff, and the contribution of time spent at IDS itself.

Contributions to outcomes

We have already provided details of the various activities and outputs undertaken by the programme. Here we connect some of these to the achieved outcomes listed earlier in order to assess the contribution of the programme to these outcomes.

⁷ Interviews were conducted with each of the SIAs except for Sachin Chaturvedi, who has yet to take up his time as an SIA at IDS.

Outcome A: Networks

Many of the outputs produced under the programme were developed in collaboration with one or more SIAs and IDS Fellows. Zhang, de Sousa, Chaturvedi and Sagar each collaborated with IDS Fellows to produce Evidence Reports in each of their thematic areas. For example, both Zhang and de Sousa put forward lessons from their countries which were later drawn upon at the Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Beijing in 2012; by senior Chinese health policymakers in 2013; at the Policy Network Agenda event in Johannesburg in 2013; and at the DFID Global Partnerships Department in 2012/13 (Bloom 2013a). Chaturvedi worked with IDS Fellows in the Governance Cluster and Dr Anuradha Chenoy of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) to produce a study promoting lessons from India's development cooperation, the result of which was an IDS Policy Briefing that gained 1,735 downloads in the first six months of publication.

The SIAs' contacts outside of the programme have contributed to the dissemination of ideas. The study insights of Chaturvedi *et al.* (2014) were disseminated across multi-stakeholder platforms. For example, in March 2014, the findings were shared with the Future International Cooperation Policy Network in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the Rising Powers in International Development programme hosted a series of research meetings to synthesise the main findings and results from five IDS State of the Debate country studies (see Table 4.2). This dissemination effort is partly due to Chaturvedi's role in the setting up of the Forum for Indian Development Cooperation in January 2013 as part of his work with RIS. Programme staff have praised the meetings as:

An opportunity to present our findings, to share discussion and research on the rising powers with partners in the BRICS... What we saw at Rio was that despite common threads and ideals of South-South Cooperation, there is still a lot of mutual learning to be generated between the BRICS, and they are keen to learn from each others' experiences.
(IDS 2014b)

De Sousa's involvement as one of the coordinators of the Inequalities Observatory of the National School of Public Health meant that in April 2013 he and Telles helped set up preparatory meetings for the initiative between the Fiocruz Africa office in Mozambique and head office in Rio de Janeiro (Bloom 2013a). Both SIAs have also been able to work through Fiocruz to link with CSOs, thinktanks and other academic actors in Brazil and from the global North (Shankland and Constantine 2014). Sagar also presented his findings on meeting India's energy challenges in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at a high-level panel co-hosted by the Rio+ World Centre for Sustainable Development and IDS Rising Powers in International Development programme to explore mutual learning around 'BRICS and the Green Transformation'. The panel was chaired by de Sousa, who commented that 'the "Green" Agenda cannot be ignored in our work and we recognise that Brazil, China, India and South Africa share issues in common in this context and also have approached the issue differently' (IDS 2014a). The idea of mutual learning is fairly obvious and evident in these exchanges.

While it was expected that the programme would have access to wider networks of actors than would otherwise be the case because of the links that the SIAs have with policymakers and their respective organisations, there is evidence to support additional outcomes having emerged as a result of the work. For example, through partnership with Professor Zhang, Beijing universities' involvement and participation in the STEPS Centre has meant that young researchers from Beijing are given grants to study at IDS as part of their programme. While similar models do exist of this type of academic exchange, this is the first of its kind to be established by IDS and the inauguration of the STEPS China Sustainability Hub in 2015 is considered to be a step forward for mutual learning and exchange.

There is also evidence of the central role and contribution of the programme (and of IDS) to achieving some of these outcomes, essentially by facilitating the systematisation of knowledge, largely by providing space and time for the SIAs to reflect on their own experiences. For example, as Telles explained, Brazil's engagement in Mozambique provides a great case study for understanding Brazil's international aid cooperation, but there is little analysis or systematisation of these experiences and findings, even though this stands to influence the discourse within the Brazilian Government on restructuring its international cooperation policy. Programmes such as the SIA provide essential space within which such reflection and exchange of ideas can take place. Telles clearly underscored the value of this programme and hoped that he could engage further within it. Similarly, Zhang attributed some of the innovative elements of her work to her participation in the SIA programme, and to the interaction with her Brazilian counterparts in particular.

Overall, the interviews make evident the fact that the programme's activities and outputs are clearly linked to the production and systematisation of important evidence on the developmental experience of the rising power countries, and to the development of events and some collaboration around these. Our evidence on the informal networks that may have developed around these is not very strong yet. However, as the discussion of our third outcome below will demonstrate, the SIAs have managed to use their positions as influential policy actors in their countries to disseminate some of these ideas through their existing networks and associate institutions.

Outcome B: Engagement

With regards to developing UK engagement with institutions in the rising power countries, the programme has mediated information exchange between DFID country offices in South Africa, India, China and Brazil. In 2012, there were three DFID learning events and throughout 2013 the SIAs took various opportunities to present their findings to DFID technical leads. Additionally, in interviews with de Sousa and Zhang, they noted their joint interaction with DFID Beijing to discuss connecting the experience of Brazil and China on health care and social protection. This even resulted in a large research grant (£6m) from DFID Beijing to the central government, which was considered a very important outcome of the engagement by the relevant SIA.

Interestingly, in the engagement between institutions in the UK and those in the rising power countries, almost all the SIAs called for a more academic approach, rather than a project-based one. This was for three main reasons. First, they pointed out that they found this approach far more attractive, and that it would induce them, or other policy actors like them, to make more time available for engaging with one another within academic discussions. Second, they suggested that engagement structured around joint research projects, comparative solutions and a planned set of publications might get SIAs to engage more and should really be the essence of the programme. Finally, they pointed out that an academic approach is perceived to be much less interventionist than a project-based one by middle-income countries in their engagement with traditional donors such as the UK, and this makes collaboration much more acceptable within certain policy circles.

Although there is strong evidence to support the fact that the programme led a number of activities and outputs that resulted in engagements between UK institutions and thinktanks, academia and policy actors in Brazil, China and India, there is far less evidence on whether these exchanges are sustained outside the programme, and if they have proliferated through informal networks to include a wider circle of CSOs. The interviews and web-scanning methods we used to collect evidence yielded little on this front.

Outcome C: Global strategies

Integrating development innovations into global strategies is a more complex outcome and certainly one that is difficult to observe or measure. While it is possible to show that the outputs have been structured in such a way as to inform IDS' work on health care, for example, or that working on the programme offers the chance for SIAs to 'step back' and reflect on many issues in a synoptic way, it is not possible to present evidence that proves the programme did this alone.

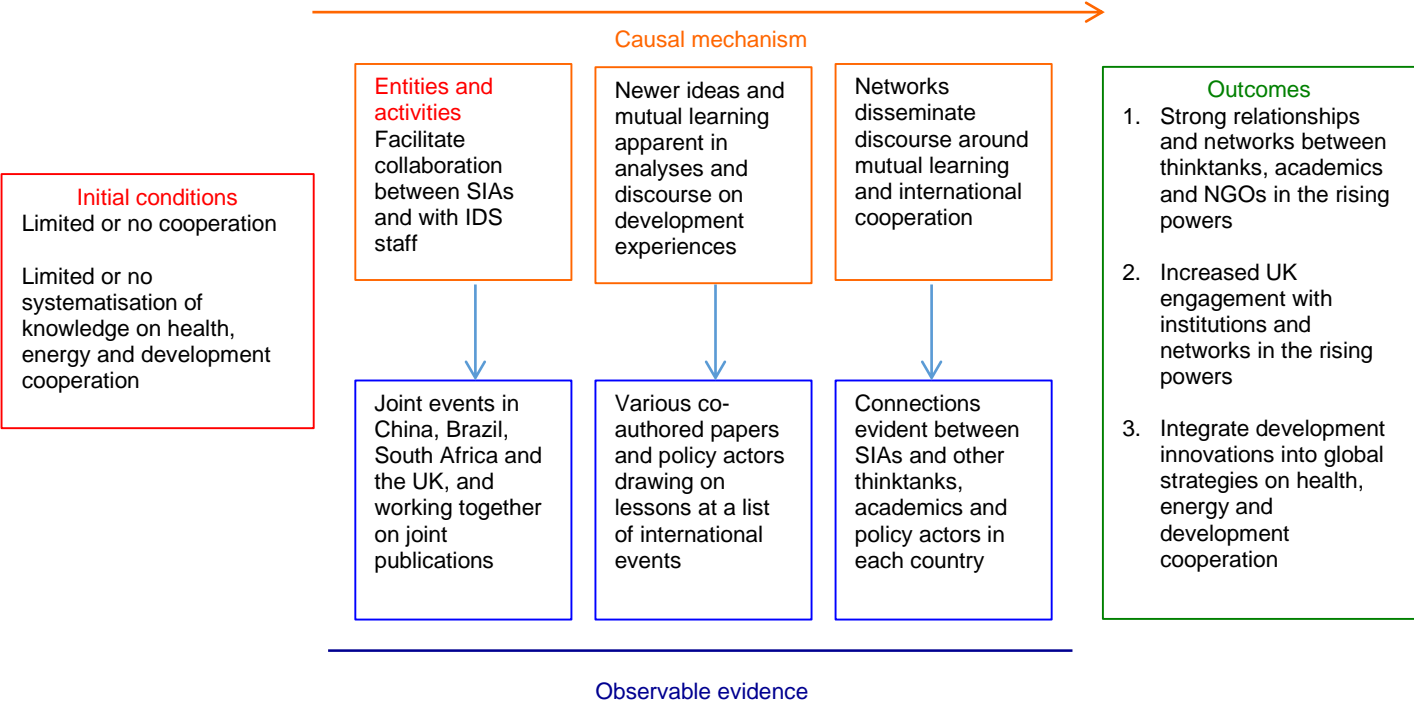
Some of the evidence that we were able to gather came from the interviews with the SIAs, in which both de Sousa and Sagar noted the value of considering comparative solutions that have moved them beyond specific sector reforms to consider systems and full policies using a more holistic approach. De Sousa referenced IDS' work on the post-2015 social protection framework⁸ and co-publication with Zhang as instrumental in shaping his understanding of social protection. He talked of having very little knowledge of common strategies for social protection prior to the SIA programme – especially the links between Chinese and Brazilian social protection policies. He noted that these similarities have influenced his thinking as Director of the World Centre for Sustainable Development at the United Nations Development Programme and he praised IDS for promoting a space for critical reflection among academics and those working in policy. Sagar also commented that the opportunity to reflect on energy policy in a synoptic way helped to consolidate his thinking in that area.

Telles has reviewed the experiences of Fiocruz in consolidating lessons from Brazil's health sector that are available to several African countries. The programme is also beginning to explore how the UK and other OECD countries can learn from social sector innovations in the rising powers (Bloom *et al.* 2014). In an interview, Telles notes not having any prior understanding of 'mutual learning' before joining IDS and talks about its application to the Fiocruz Centre for Cooperation as a concept that accounts for differences in understanding in international cooperation. Similarly, Zhang attributed her team's shift from being concerned with how to reform specific aspects of health care to a more holistic approach, in which they are leading on systems thinking on health systems and health-care reform in China, to her participation in the SIA programme.

Despite the fact that this is a difficult area in which to observe and measure change, the interviews do provide evidence to show that the programme has already made some early advances towards the integration of development innovations in national strategies in the rising power countries. The extent to which these have moved beyond the SIAs to wider policy circles within their countries, and indeed to policy circles in low-income countries is not clear and would be very difficult to measure.

⁸ See www.ids.ac.uk/publication/promoting-inclusive-social-protection-in-the-post-2015-framework (accessed 23 July 2015).

Figure 5.1 A causal mechanism explaining the process of mutual learning



5.4 Contribution of outcomes to impact

A question remains at this point: To what extent can the observed outcomes be attributed to the programme itself? In other words, would the observed outcomes have been achieved regardless of the activities and outputs of the current programme in terms of the creation and development of links, networks and collaborations and the institutionalisation of new concepts and ways of thinking about the developmental experience of the rising power countries?

As stated earlier, we understand impact as an assessment of contribution towards a stated goal, rather than the causation of that goal. The two main impacts that we are assessing here are greater collaboration between research institutions and CSOs in the rising power countries and the institutionalisation of new thinking in global strategies, especially in terms of affecting change in the framing of policy problems and in the setting of policy agendas. Although we have evidence that shows progress across both of these areas – stronger evidence exists for the first goal of collaboration than the second goal of institutionalisation – it is difficult to assess the programme’s full contribution at this stage. This is for two reasons: first, the programme is still ongoing and some of the SIAs have yet to fully contribute to the outcomes; and second, it will take a long time for the type of impact we aim to assess to become evident.

A further restraint here was the use of interviews as the primary tool for the collection of evidence. When asked about their own sense of the impact that they may have had on the process of mutual learning, and on IDS’ understanding of the experience of their countries, the SIAs were, not surprisingly, reluctant to attribute too much to their own contributions and activities. This has been noted in other cases too. Tansey (2007) notes that policy actors will often under-represent their role in political decision-making and ‘slant their accounts in order to portray a “careful, multidimensioned process of policymaking” to the public’ (George and Bennett 2005 in Tansey 2007: 767). This makes interviewing a less than reliable tool when speaking to the subject under question themselves, especially with senior policy actors.

We have used a number of strategies to mitigate this. First, we contextualised the respondents within these constraints and this context, and dealt accordingly with the information gained. Second, we supplemented these interviews with other sources of evidence. Finally, we added perspectives from interviews with related programme staff, so that we interviewed both sides – the participants and the institutional staff at IDS. However, we had limited access to other relevant actors in each country – both in terms of distance and time – who could have provided a fuller and more varied sense of the extent to which the SIAs have contributed to new ways of thinking in policy and scholarly circles within their countries. Of particular interest may have been staff in the organisations that the SIAs work in, since they may be able to provide evidence of the impact of their work from a related but slightly removed and, therefore, less modest voice.⁹ We would recommend that a wider pool of associates from within the informal networks created by the SIAs be interviewed at the end of the programme to provide a more complete assessment of the contribution of this programme, especially with regard to the institutionalisation of new thinking within policy circles.

⁹ This strategy may have been uncomfortable for the SIAs and was not explored as an option in the short timeframe of the assessment.

6 Conclusion

This intervention assessment was meant to use the SIA programme to explore what policy impact looks like and how it might be assessed. In this report we made a preliminary attempt to understand some of the contribution of this intervention towards the institutionalisation of new thinking. Part of our challenge was to understand the less tangible and visible outcomes of this programme, such as dialogues that have occurred over the past two years, discourses that may have emerged as a result, and networks that have been formed through the work of the SIAs. Of particular interest to us were contributions that this programme may have made in terms of the development of relationships and networks that could allow policymakers from the rising powers, from developing countries, and from DFID to interact and engage more effectively around key development issues.

Our aim was to assess the contribution of the intervention towards the intended outcomes. We used a variant of the process-tracing methodology to interrogate these outcomes and changes. This method was considered suitable because both the process we were aiming to trace (mutual learning) and the intended outcomes (networks, relationships, discourses, narratives) are difficult to measure, often intangible and even sometimes invisible. Although we were able to gain some important insights into the achievements of the programme using this methodology, we observed some serious limitations. First, process tracing requires that the processes and events that it seeks to assess be fairly visible and obvious, which was not the case with some components of the SIA programme. Second, it takes a long time for impact that is informal, a key aspect of this programme, to become obvious enough to be used as evidence within process tracing. Third, making evidence more visible in a reliable and consistent manner requires more time than was available for this assessment. Finally, assessing other causal pathways to the outcomes – a key aspect of process tracing – requires far more detailed research in order to see what else could have contributed to these changes, the possibilities of which are extensive within such a programme.

Nevertheless, we did find that there is good and strong evidence to support the programme's contribution to the systematisation and exchange of knowledge on the developmental experience of the rising power countries in the areas of energy, health sector and development cooperation. While the programme has made good advances in this area, and its activities and outputs can be linked to its stated outcomes, the evidence is less visible and less convincing in support of the programme's contribution to the integration of development innovations into global strategies. The integration of such strategies is a long process and tracing its occurrence is notoriously challenging. While there is evidence to suggest the evolution of common strategies around health, energy and international cooperation, there is less evidence to link this to emerging discourses around mutual learning. Overall, the SIA programme has moved closer to its outcomes but not yet to its larger intended impact. The programme has potential and requires more time with the SIAs and more space for them to interact, especially with each other, in order to achieve its full impact.

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Brighton BN1 9RE

T +44 (0)1273 606261

F +44 (0)1273 621202

E ids@ids.ac.uk

www.ids.ac.uk



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