

Summary Paper 5: SOUTH AFRICA

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Project Background

Most DAC¹ donor governments and development NGOs have a strong interest in the public face of foreign aid and international development. Key issues include:

- Do people think foreign aid is a legitimate expenditure of taxpayer money?
- How much foreign aid do people believe is given, and to whom, in which countries?
- How effective do people think aid is in humanitarian crises, or for poverty reduction, enhancing human development or contributing to security?
- Do people believe that foreign aid provides value for money?
- What purposes do people believe foreign aid serves: moral, humanitarian, developmental, security, commercial and/or geopolitical?

DAC donor governments have to convince an array of taxpayers, voters, parliamentarians, journalists and civil society watchdogs that ODA is a just and effective expenditure. Interest in the public face of development has led to investment in a large number of national and cross-national surveys of how people perceive 'development' and how they understand the 'less developed' world more generally. Critics suggest that we need to be cautious about what these surveys actually measure, e.g., knowledge about development or commitment to aid expenditure. There are also doubts about the validity of cross-national data.

However, to date there has been little or no analysis of what various publics within the range of 'non-DAC' countries think about their foreign aid/development cooperation activities. In this project, we researched the public face of development in **China, India, Poland, Russia and South Africa**. These diverse 'southern' and 'eastern' development partners have a range of historical and contemporary development cooperation policies and practices. In each case, we examined the extent of public awareness of their official development cooperation policies and activities; how this and perceptions of the purpose and legitimacy of development cooperation varied between different segments of the public; and whether or not official development actors and agencies sought to engage with the public.

Research conduct and methodologies

Given the size of this project it was not feasible to conduct large surveys. In Poland and Russia we were able to draw upon existing surveys, but none to date exist in China, India or South Africa. We conducted interviews with government officials; academics and think tank personnel; development NGO workers; private sector interests; and journalists and editors. The balance varied between country settings because of context; for example, in Poland the very heavy involvement of NGOs contrasted to China and India, and shaped our choice of respondents. The second shared approach was print and Internet media analysis. Given the scale of the project and the very different country contexts, this was not standardized across the case studies, but shaped to the circumstances of each one. The project has benefited enormously from the discussions we have had across our five case study countries, but it was not designed to be formally comparative. All of our respondents were interviewed with informed consent, and anonymity was guaranteed unless otherwise agreed.

Full project details can be found at:

<http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/foreignaidperceptions/>

This website also has details of longer academic papers

¹The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) comprises 23 industrialised countries plus the European Union. All are western other than Japan, and since 2010, South Korea.

South Africa's development cooperation at a glance

History: It has been seventeen years since South Africa made the transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy, yet the legacy continues to shape current economic, political and social development. A vast economic disparity exists amongst the population, and the government faces an uphill struggle in extending opportunities to all and improving the delivery of public services. Although South Africa has made relatively good progress in advancing some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), poverty and inequality continue to persist. South Africa's transition to democracy in the mid-1990s helped shape its foreign policy, with development assistance primarily targeting other African nations. After the country's first democratic elections in 1994, aid became untied and by 2000 South Africa's Development Assistant Program was replaced by the African Renaissance Fund (ARF). The ARF stated that South Africa's development assistance would focus predominantly on African countries and would emphasise the promotion of democracy, humanitarian assistance, conflict prevention and resolution, and good governance.

Institutions: Currently aid is still administered through the ARF, which is managed by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). However, the ARF comprises only a fraction of South African development assistance, the remainder coming from other government ministries in various forms, such as peacekeeping and currency support. In 2011, the ARF will be collapsed into the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA), which will bring together all the different forms of development assistance under one umbrella. The role of SADPA is to provide a vehicle for the transfer of development assistance from South Africa to its development partners primarily in Southern Africa, as outlined in May 2011 by Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, DIRCO Foreign Minister: "(the) South African Development Agency... intends to drive a development partnership programme in order to build innovative, proactive and sustainable partnerships to advance African development. DIRCO is currently finalizing a Bill, and we envisage that SADPA will be operational during the last quarter of 2011." (South African Government Information)

Modalities: South Africa is in the position of being an aid recipient as well as an aid donor. The South African economy, unlike many other African economies, is not dependent on aid (receiving less than 0.3 percent of its GDP in the form of aid). South Africa's role as a donor goes back to the apartheid period, when aid was primarily focused on neighbouring countries, though frequently used politically to destabilize opposition to the apartheid state. During the period of Thabo Mbeki's presidency, he created the African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund (Act No 51 of 2000) (generally called the African Renaissance Fund, or ARF). Currently aid is still administered through the ARF and while the fund provides development assistance to other countries, the establishment of a new South African state agency suggests greater government control and a tighter strategic focus. Thus, the creation of SADPA is a move towards both consolidating development assistance as well as making closer links between development assistance and South Africa's national interests.

Partners: As an aid recipient, South Africa has been receiving aid from various donors, the largest being the USA, the UK and the EU, which collectively account for 51% of all DAC bilateral and multilateral ODA between 1995 and 2007. However, South Africa is not an aid dependent country (Ramkolowan and Stern 2009). As an aid donor since 1994, a range of government ministries have been giving bilateral humanitarian aid to countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe. Additionally, South Africa has been contributing through multilateral channels such as the World Food Programme and troops through UN missions.

Recent debates: The recent debates around South African development assistance have been segmented. As we will see, there have been very few debates within South Africa about South African development assistance to other countries. This is understandable if we look at the pressing domestic issues preoccupying national political debates, such as large economic disparities and the challenges of providing and delivering public services. Almost 50% of the non-white population live below the national poverty line. While South Africa's richest are continuing to expand their wealth, negligible progress has been made in alleviating poverty and reducing the ballooning economic inequality. Yet, South Africa is clearly a country that is gaining entry and recognition in international forums. It was recently admitted entry into the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) group of countries; it is part of IBSA (The India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum); it is the only African country in the G20; and it has been elected to the UN Security Council. This is all on top of taking a leading role in southern African regional bodies such as SADC and NEPAD. South Africa, it seems, is having two different debates – one that involves domestic poverty, inequality and provision of basic services, and another that involves being a rising international power.

Figure 1.

HUMANITARIAN AID, 2009:

Given:	US\$1m
Received:	US\$7m
Total Aid, 2009:	
Given:	-
Received:	US\$1.1bn

HUMANITARIAN AID PER CITIZEN, 2009:

Given:	US\$0.03
Received:	US\$0.1
Total Aid Per Citizen, 2009:	
Given:	-
Received:	US\$22

FASTFACTS

- In 2008 South Africa received US\$1.1 billion in aid; 34% (US\$378.7 million) was from the United States.
- South Africa's humanitarian aid allocation is regionally focused on African countries; each year since 2000 an African country has been the top recipient.
- Between 2000 and 2009 Zimbabwe has been the largest recipient of humanitarian aid, at US\$24.9 million.
- All of South Africa's peace keeping operations are in Africa, with its largest troop contribution in 2009 – 1,173 – to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)

Source: <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/south-africa>

Project findings

What do the public know about South Africa's development cooperation?

Two 'faces' of South Africa: The domestic and international 'public faces of development' in South Africa are remarkably different. This is not surprising given the poverty and inequality that exists within South Africa, and the international aspirations of the South African state. Thus, for development assistance to be justified in this context, it must be framed not necessarily in humanitarian terms, but in those of national self-interest, which is the current approach of the South African government.

Who are 'the public(s)'

South Africa has always been an unequal country, currently with the second highest Gini coefficient (measurement of inequality within a country) in the world. When we speak of South African publics then, who exactly are we speaking of? One way to explore the different public discourses of development assistance was to examine how such discourses appeared in popular media, such as newspaper, broadcast media as well as online discussions. The study also explored different forms of segmentation of publics. Whilst race is still the primary division within South Africa, socio-economic divides are increasingly a key factor. In South Africa, newspapers and media outlets define publics through categories of LSM (Living Standard Measures). Significantly in this study, regardless of which method was used to segment publics, even between high and lower LSM categories, discourses of development assistance did not seem to appear in the public domain for any group.

Media analysis: The findings of this research to June 2011 show that there is virtually no mention of development assistance in the mainstream media, nor is there much discussion around the creation of the new SADPA agency. However, the impending creation of SADPA was widely reported in press overseas as a result of a South African government press release. Interviews with editors of all major South African newspapers revealed that SADPA was not a major news feature during this same period, and received virtually no coverage as an editorial or op-ed piece.

The weekly publication ANC Today, which is the newsletter through which ANC members and leadership can engage, makes no mention of the new agency with the exception of a broader discussion on the national interest of the government, after the National General Council meeting in September 2010. More broadly, there has also been very little domestic media debate concerning South African development assistance. However, there are daily discussions in the South African media around the role of development within the South African national context. While donor aid and development assistance as concepts are not predominant in public discourse in South Africa, at least as contained within the mainstream media, there do appear to be a number of other discourses of development and international relations that are prevalent. These include concerns about the developmental state, issues of service delivery, and more recently issues of national diplomatic and economic interest in international relations. What little mention there is of development assistance appears to be framed in the context of serving South Africa's national interests.

Wider observations and policy implications

While the South African government has been explicit about its aims to create SADPA, there is very little public discourse about South Africa as an aid donor within the country. The explanation frequently provided by interviewees is that South African publics are concerned about development issues within South Africa itself. Thus, development assistance has remained largely obscured by discourses of a domestic developmental agenda and South Africa's international relations interests. Development assistance has remained largely under-represented in the mainstream media outlets, and remains of peripheral importance within communities of policy lobbying outside of DIRCO. The investigation into public discourses of development assistance in South Africa has led to two primary conclusions:

- There is a great deal of internal concern about poverty and development within the South African state itself; and,
- There is an emerging concern about the relationship between development assistance, international stature, and the South African national interest.

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