

**Inception Document**

**Network of Southern Think-Tanks (NeST)**

**Beijing, 29 November 2014**

## **Background**

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Though existent for decades as one of the components of international development cooperation, South-South Cooperation (SSC) has been growing in prominence due to a rise in both quantum, geographical reach as well as diversity in approaches and delivery of new forms of development partnerships.

This has largely occurred over the last decade against a background of declining aid flows from North-South Cooperation, as result of the global financial crises and efforts by traditional donors to share global development responsibilities with the new emerging economies. While Northern donors have pushed for the inclusion of new development partners in the DAC-led systems, this has been met with resistance by the Southern partners who are not interested in conforming to global regimes which they did not create and which they feel are inappropriate for their specific types of cooperation.

There is nevertheless a growing consensus among partners that South-South Cooperation is often poorly understood and that much knowledge and evidence gaps persist with regard to such cooperation. This often results from data limitations and weak information management systems around South-South Cooperation. Demands for accountability and more impactful development programming are also increasingly coming from citizens, tax-payers and civil society of emerging economies, as well as from the mutual benefitting sides of South-South Cooperation. While North-South cooperation has had a narrative that has evolved for 50 years, South-South Cooperation needs a platform for the exchange and systematization of knowledge and the development of a common narrative among South-South partners. Knowledge endogenously generated in the South can assist in the consolidation of a stronger common position among Southern partners at the various global policy fora that can interact with the dominant OECD-DAC discourse.

Following the consensus reached on many of these issues at the High Level Conference of Southern Providers in Delhi (March 2013), the establishment of the subsequent Core Group on South-South Cooperation within the UNDCF (June, 2013), on the fringes of the 1<sup>st</sup> High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in Mexico (April, 2014), the Network of Southern Think-Tanks (NeST) was thus established.

## Objective

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The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks to collaboratively generate, systematize, consolidate and share knowledge on South-South Cooperation (SSC) approaches in international development.

## Work-Plan

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Outcomes	Activities	Deliverables	Responsible parties
<b>1. Development of a SSC analytical framework – definitions, criteria, indicators, methodologies to assess quantity, quality and impact of SSC</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Technical workshop for development of framework <sup>1</sup>	Preliminary draft concept note on SSC analytical/evaluation framework.	Global NeST
	Field testing of framework / data gathering & analysis	# research reports / papers from different case studies	National & regional NeST chapters
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Workshop for sharing of diverse	Final concept document for SSC	Global NeST

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<sup>1</sup> Participants will be Southern academics and experts with strong knowledge of South-South Cooperation, with technical expertise in statistics, economics, M&E and indicator development, and with close links to Southern policy-makers. They will come from think-tanks and institutes from both emerging economies as well as from low-income developing countries.

	experiences and findings	analytical/evaluation framework	
<b>2. Evidence-building and knowledge generation in SSC</b>	Various case studies, field research, and analytical exercises of different SSC agencies, approaches, and country contexts.	# research reports / discussion papers from different case studies	National & regional NeST chapters
<b>3. Capacity-development in SSC management</b>	Training of practitioners and policy-makers in SSC concepts, models and approaches to design, management, M&E of SSC	SSC Curricula Training Courses and Academic Degree Programmes	National & Regional NeST chapters
<b>4. Improving access and quality of data on SSC</b>	Strengthening statistical and information management systems	Interactive SSC database and global information repository.	Global NeST
		Tailored technical assistance to Southern development agencies.	National & Regional NeST chapters
<b>5. Knowledge sharing on SSC</b>	Various communication and dissemination initiatives	Newsletter	Global NeST
		Website	
		Academic Journal	
<b>6. Policy support and outreach</b>	Policy inputs for Southern governments and multilateral fora	Policy Briefs	National & Regional NeST chapters
		Side-events in global & regional policy fora	Global NeST

## **NeST Governance**

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### **Requirements for NeST membership**

NeST members will include think-tanks, research institutes, universities, NGOs and networks from the South who are engaged in research, policy debate and analysis of south-south cooperation and international development cooperation.

Other parties will be welcomed as ‘observers’.

Fees will possibly be charged to both members (small amount) and observers. This can assist in limiting numbers, formalising membership, ensuring commitments and generating some revenue for NeST core operations. The issue of fees will be discussed further with broader stakeholders.

### **Executive Core Group**

From the broader NeST membership, a 5 people core group will be appointed to coordinate, guide and manage the affairs of the network. The core group will be appointed for a 3-year term and may rotate in membership. At any point in time, the group needs to have:

- At least one member from each continent (Africa, Latin America, Asia-Pacific)
- At least one member from each of the developmental sub-grouping (emerging economies, middle-income countries, least-developed countries)

The current NeST executive group is constituted by RIS (India), CAU (China), IPEA (Brazil), SAIIA/WSG (South Africa) and a think-tank from an African low income country (tbc)

### **Advisory Group** (only indicative list of agencies)

A parallel Advisory Group to the NeST Executive Group will be formed which will be made up of voluntary members from:

- Multilateral and regional institutions (ie. AU-NEPAD, UNDP, UN-DESA, UNCTAD, etc.)
- Southern Development Agencies (ie. SADPA, DPA, ABC, MOFCoM, etc.)

## **NeST Secretariat**

The NeST will have a virtual secretariat that will be based at the RIS (India), which will be responsible for communication, information management (website, newsletter, etc.), and basic operations and network managements functions.

## **Resource-mobilization Strategy**

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Some of the NeST activities (ie. research case studies, training courses, publications and technical assistance for national institutions) are regional and national in nature (see work plan above) and thus the fund-raising for these initiatives will be led by the individual NeST members or national/regional chapters through their respective funders.

Other costs will be incurred by NeST for its global activities, such as network operational costs (Core Group meetings, communications, secretariat, etc.), annual conferences & workshops, knowledge management initiatives (website, newsletter, database, academic journal, etc.) and some special commissioned research projects.

RIS will cover basic costs to run the NeST secretariat.

A small amount of funding will be raised through NeST membership and observer fees.

Funding to run NeST core operations and programming will be sought for an initial 3-year period, with possible future extensions. In-line with the decision of the first NeST meeting in Mexico City (2014), funding will be first sought from Southern governments, foundations and other Southern sources. As the second best alternative option, funding will be sought through multilateral institutions (ie. UN system).

NeST will remain an independent network with a strong Southern orientation, and a clear agenda and direction. Funding to NeST operations and activities, should therefore not come with any conditions or strings attached or expectations of interference and influence from the donor on the direction and work of the group. Appropriate channels such as the advisory group will be put into place to allow NeST to interface with other institutions, partners and broader policy processes.

The above NeST inception document was adopted in Beijing (China) on the 29 November 2014 by the members of the NeST Core Team:

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