

Emerging Economies and the UN Development System

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Brazil, China, India, and South Africa, along with other emerging economies, have views on the UN development system that are distinct from both lower-income countries in the global South and higher-income countries in the North. A new survey reveals that emerging economies want more influence in the UN and a reformed development system. Reflecting their support for South-South cooperation, emerging economies are positive about the UN's role in regional cooperation.

The rise of these countries also implies the need for major adjustments in the system including reducing its physical presence and programs in middle- and upper-middle income countries where its traditional development cooperation services are becoming redundant. This reorientation would allow a reallocation of UN resources to low-income and fragile states.

This Briefing first discusses how people in four emerging economy countries (EECs)—Brazil, China (including Hong Kong), India, and South Africa (BICS)—perceive the UN development system (UNDS). Two viewpoints are examined: those of individual governments; and those of respondents to a perceptions survey of the UNDS, drawn from government, civil society, private sector and other international public organizations.

The Briefing then reproduces the findings of a recent FUNDS survey for a group of 14 EECs, including the BICS. (see Box 1 and Table 3.)

BICS AND THE UNDS, GOVERNMENT APPROACHES

In June 2013, China's candidate was easily elected as the new director-general of the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna against six other candidates. In his acceptance speech he thanked his government for their support. He is the third Chinese national to head a UN entity, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). China is putting forward other candidates to replace retiring UN agency heads. In 2012, a Brazilian was elected to lead the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and there is a new Brazilian head of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Box 1. FUNDS Survey of 14 Emerging Economy Countries

In 2012-13, the FUNDS project undertook its second global survey of perceptions of the UNDS, receiving a total of 3,650 responses from 156 countries and across six different occupational categories (government, private sector, NGOs, academics, international public organizations and UN). Early in 2013, additional efforts (including translations) were made to elicit more responses from the BICS, and these views were singled out for separate analysis and also combined with responses from 10 other emerging countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, South Korea, Thailand and Turkey) to yield collective views of EECs. The findings of the survey provided new insights into the nature of the changing relationship between emerging market economies and the UN development system.

China and Brazil are two of the emerging economy countries that appear to want to put their mark on international organizations. Funding is one means of influence. In 2010, the “assessed contributions” to the UN’s core budget were raised for several EECs (see Table 1), resulting in non-trivial increases for Brazil and China. In addition, the EEC’s contributions to the core budgets of the UN specialized agencies have also risen, and they provide non-core resources to many of the UN development organizations. Brazil contributes more than \$100 million per year in “local resources” to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which uses the funds to provide a range of consultancy and other services to the country.

Table 1: Annual Assessed Contributions to the UN for BICS, 2009-12

	2009		2010-12		Increase (\$mn.)
	% Share	Amount (\$mn.)	% Share	Amount (\$mn.)	
Brazil	0.876	23.8	1.611	41.6	17.8
China	2.667	72.5	3.189	82.4	9.9
India	0.450	12.2	0.534	13.8	1.6
South Africa	0.290	7.9	0.385	9.9	2.0

UN documents ST/ADM/SER.B/853 and ST/ADM/SER.B/755

The BICs have also been establishing direct partnerships with the UN. Both China and Brazil partner with the UN development system in sponsoring global and regional centers of excellence. Brazil established an “international poverty centre” with UNDP in Brasilia in 2004; and in 2013 set up the Rio+Centre with UNDP to undertake research on sustainable development goals (following its hosting of the 2012 conference). China also established an international poverty center with UNDP in Beijing, a year after Brasilia’s. As an affirmation of its support for UNIDO, China also co-sponsors within its own territory no fewer than six out of ten of that organization’s international technology centers, which are used in part to showcase Chinese technologies to the rest of the developing world. One of these China-based organizations is called the UNIDO Centre for South-South Industrial Cooperation (UCSSIC) and there is a similar one based in New Delhi. India is also host to other global and regional centers in partnership with the UNDS, including the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Transfer of Technologies (APCTT) with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the International Centre for Human Development (with UNDP). Among other EECs, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, and Mexico also play host to international centers of excellence with organizations of the UNDS.

Partnerships of this kind with the UNDS are not new. Brazil’s use of UNDP as a local contractor, for example, dates back at least two decades. However, in recent years the phenomenon has expanded steadily, and manifests two closely related features: a willingness to provide the major share of the resources in any joint venture with the UN; and the use of these partnerships as platforms for bilateral “South-South” assistance. These growing relationships resemble those which the traditional donor governments have maintained

for many years with the organizations of the UNDS, using the system in part as a platform for their own development interests.

BICS AND THE UNDS, ASK THE PEOPLE

But how much is this increasing official engagement with the UNDS reflected in public attitudes? The survey discussed here sought opinions on the degree of confidence which publics in the BICS have in the UNDS. Key findings:

- People in the BICS countries are more confident than those in high-income countries about the UN’s ability to meet both development and organizational challenges;
- The greatest organizational challenge for the development UN is sufficiency of funding;
- There are wide variations in perceptions of the UN’s impact across its different peacekeeping and development functions; and
- Health and regional cooperation are judged to be two of the most effective areas of the UN development system.

The BICS respondents display a broadly positive level of confidence in the ability of the UNDS to handle both development and organizational challenges (see Figures 1 and 2). China is somewhat less confident than the other three about the UNDS meeting new development challenges, but more confident than those in high-income countries. South Africa is less confident than the others about organizational challenges—well below the confidence of low income countries, but still well above the levels of high-income countries.

When six different organizational challenges are examined in more detail, the contrasts of perception are greater (see Figure 3). The need for financial resources is perceived by all four countries as the greatest current challenge of the system. Internal organizational structures are seen as a much greater challenge by Brazil and India than by China. Access to competencies via the UN is perceived as a greater challenge by Brazil and India than by China and South Africa, which both reflect views closer to those of high-income countries. Brazil and China, also reflecting the views of high-income countries, find ineffectiveness of the UNDS to be a greater concern than for India and South Africa.

The survey asked respondents for perceptions of the UN’s impact in peacekeeping as well as six development functions (see Figure 4). All four BICS are positive about the impact of the UN in setting global standards and in fielding peace operations. When it comes to technical assistance, however, South Africa and China are markedly less positive than India and Brazil and also have less sanguine perceptions than high-income countries. China is less positive than the other three about the UN’s research and analysis, and Brazil less positive about its advocacy role.

The survey asked respondents for their perceptions of UNDS effectiveness in terms of both development domain, and individual organization. In both cases, the responses are highly varied among the four countries (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 1: The UN Development System's Overall Ability to Handle New Development Challenges

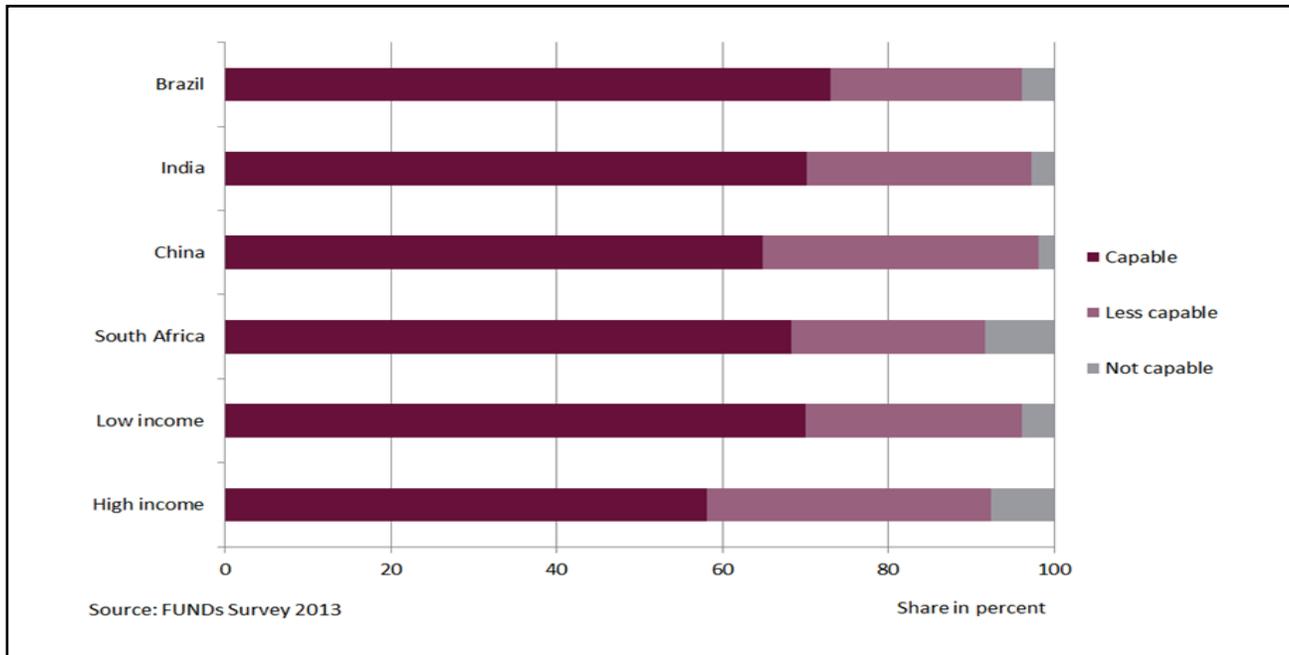


Figure 2: The UN Development System's Ability to Handle New Organizational Challenges

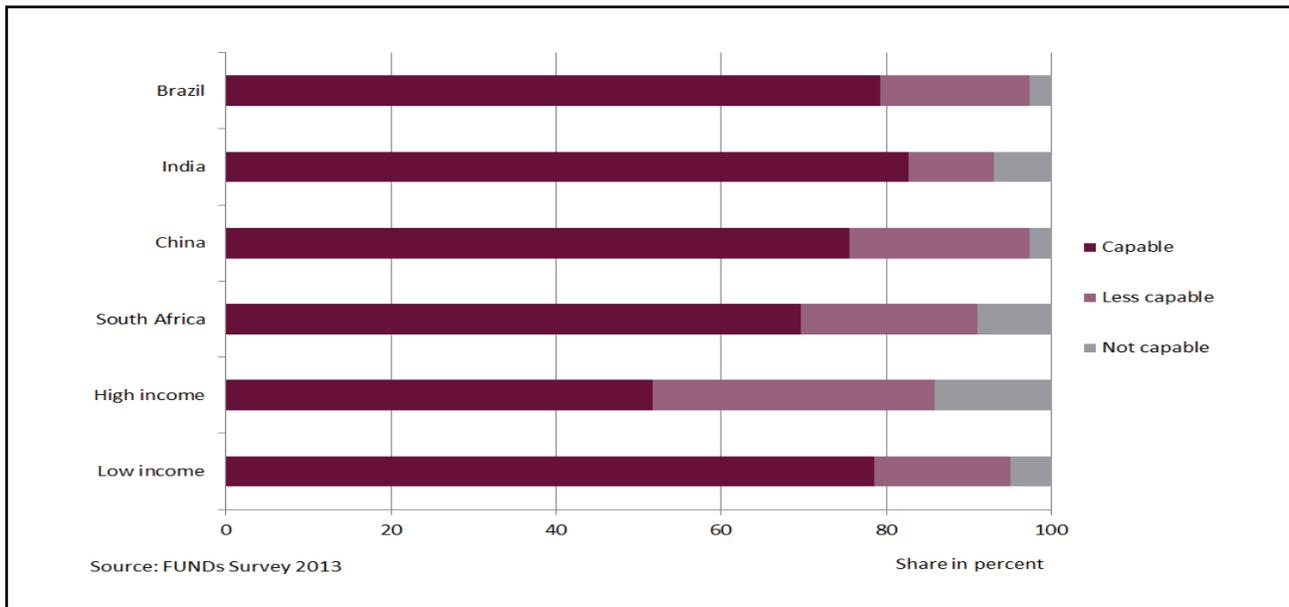


Figure 3: Specific Organizational Challenges Facing UNDS

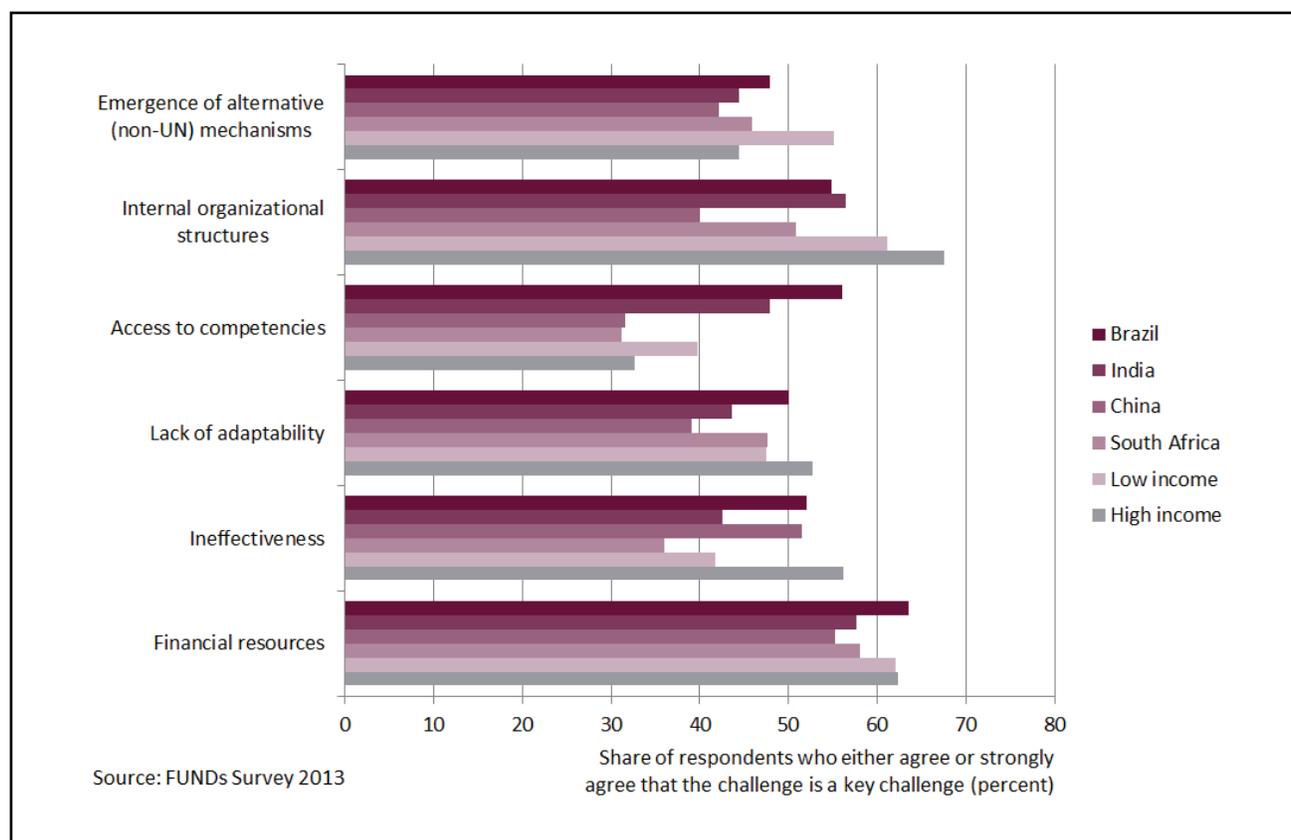


Figure 4: Importance of UN Impact by Development Function

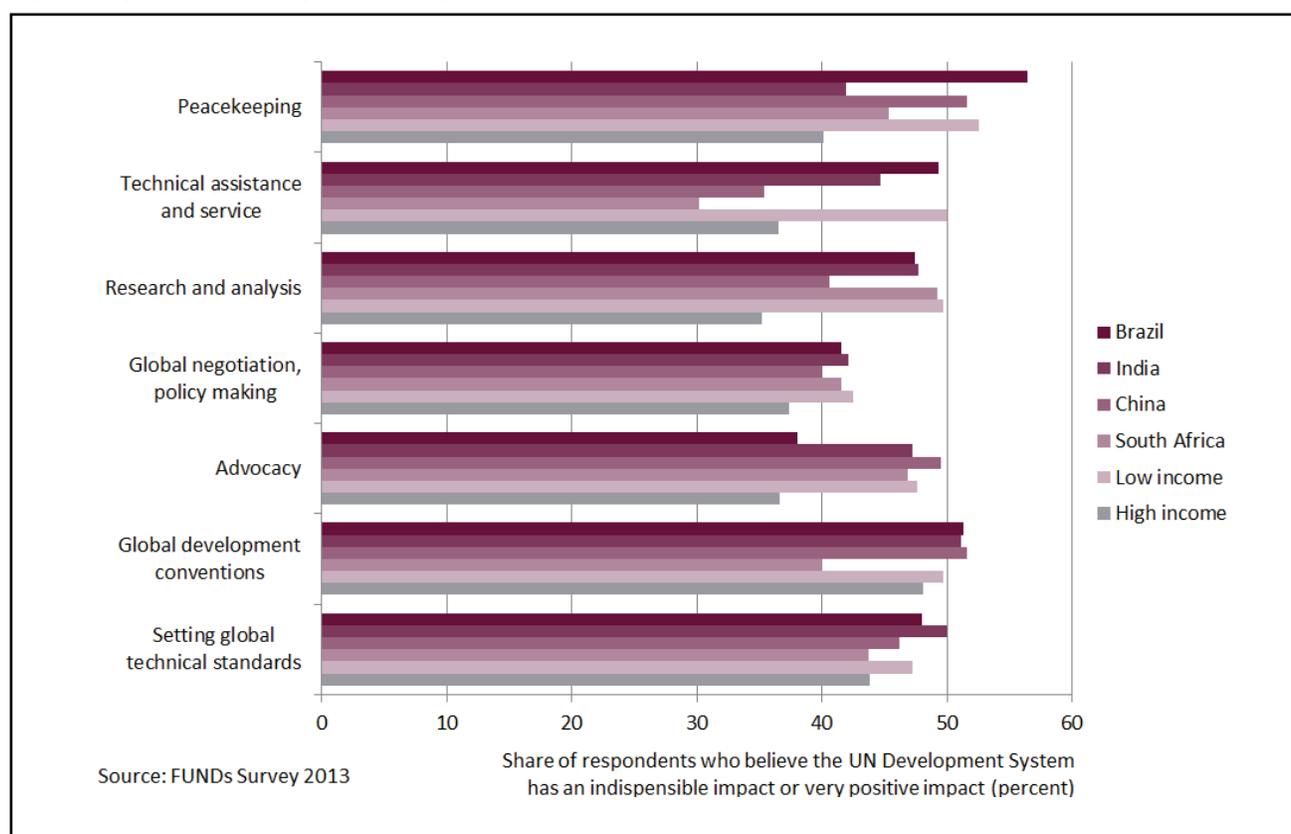
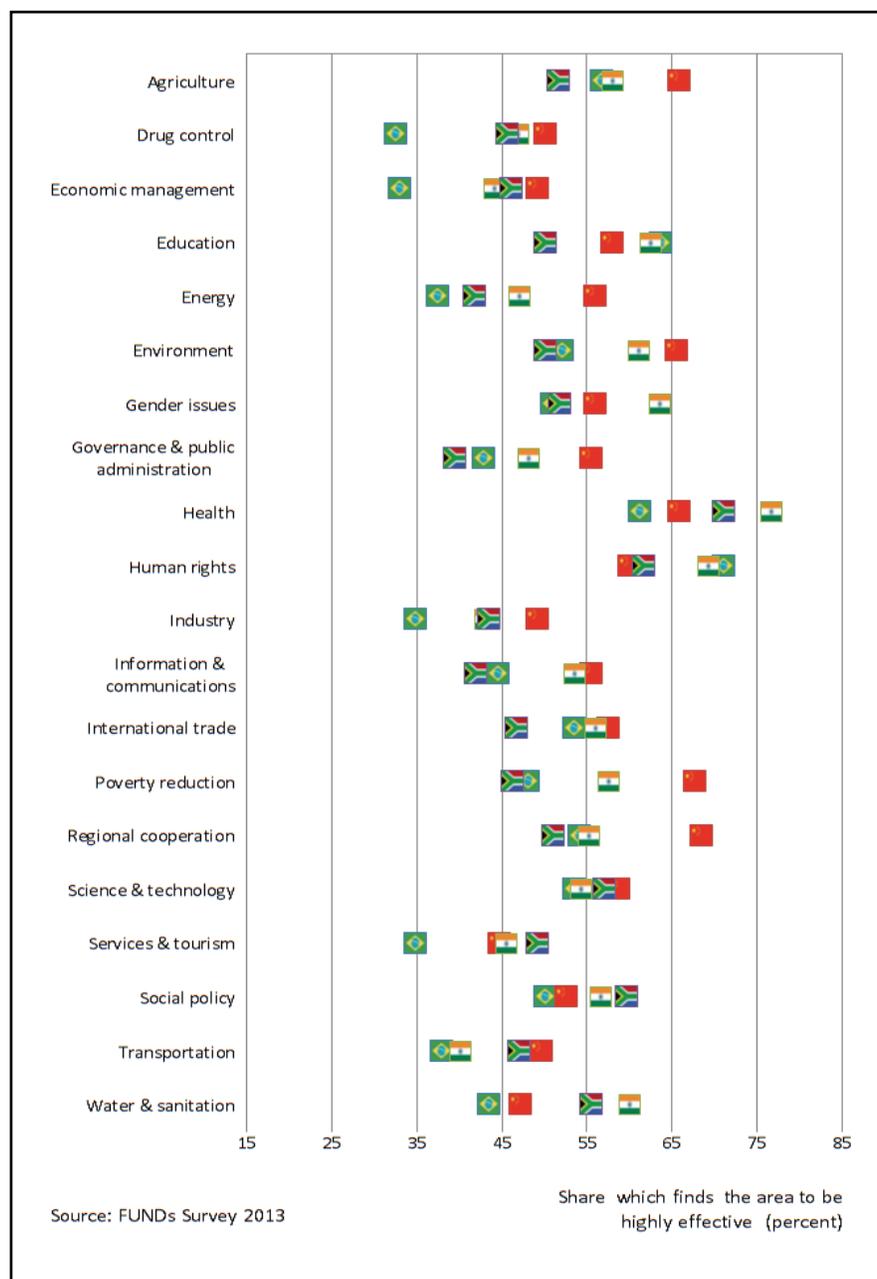


Figure 5: Perceptions of UNDS Effectiveness by Development Area



Health is considered by all BICS as an especially effective UN area. China considers the UN also to be effective in the areas of agriculture, environment, poverty reduction, and regional cooperation. Indian respondents consider health and human rights to be the most effective activities. South Africans also rate the UN quite highly in human rights, science and technology, and social policy. Brazil finds the UN somewhat less effective overall, and especially in drug control, economic management, industry, and services and tourism.

When it comes to individual UN organizations, Brazil finds FAO, UNICEF, and WHO to be the most relevant. The high ranking of

FAO is almost certainly influenced by the fact that the organization has a new Brazilian director-general. India and South Africa find UNICEF and WHO to be especially effective. Probably because of less familiarity with individual organizations, Chinese respondents give most organizations lower effectiveness scores but ranked FAO, WHO, and UNICEF in their top five. The most surprising contrast with the rest of the sample (high- and low-income countries alike) is the appearance of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)—an organization with a policy not an operational presence—as one of the top five most relevant UN organizations in all four BICS.

Table 2: UN Organizations Considered Most Relevant

Rank	Brazil	China	India	South Africa	High-Income Countries	Low-Income Countries
1	FAO	WFP	WHO	WHO	UNICEF	UNICEF
2	UNICEF	FAO	UNICEF	UNICEF	WHO	WHO
3	WHO	WHO	UNCTAD	UNCTAD	WFP	FOA
4	UNCTAD	UNICEF	WFP	ITC	FAO	WFP
5	UN Women	UNCTAD	UN Women	UNAIDS	ILO	UN-Habitat

Source: FUNDS Global Survey 2013

BICS AND REFORM

Opinions differed widely on the ongoing UN reform program at the country level, known as Delivering as One (DAO), in terms both of efficiency of the system and the quality of cooperation (see Figures 6 and 7).

The most notable pattern in the responses is the relative skepticism in China. Among the four countries, it is the least supportive—sometimes by a large margin—of all the major features of DAO (single UN leader, single office, single program, and single fund). It is also significantly more skeptical than the high- and low-income countries in the survey. There are at least two reasons that might be adduced for this skepticism. First, China has no current experience with DAO. Second, China probably does not perceive

the UNDS as a single system, because its individual ministries and other organs of state administration enjoy their own separate relationship with different UN organizations.

Of the other three countries, Indian respondents appears to be the most positive about DAO, which contrasts with the government’s official declared lack of enthusiasm for the initiative. Brazilians share with Indians their enthusiasm to have the World Bank included in any DAO UN program.

Respondents were asked to look five years ahead and rate the importance of 14 possible further reforms of the UNDS. The results are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 6: DAO as Efficiency Enhancer

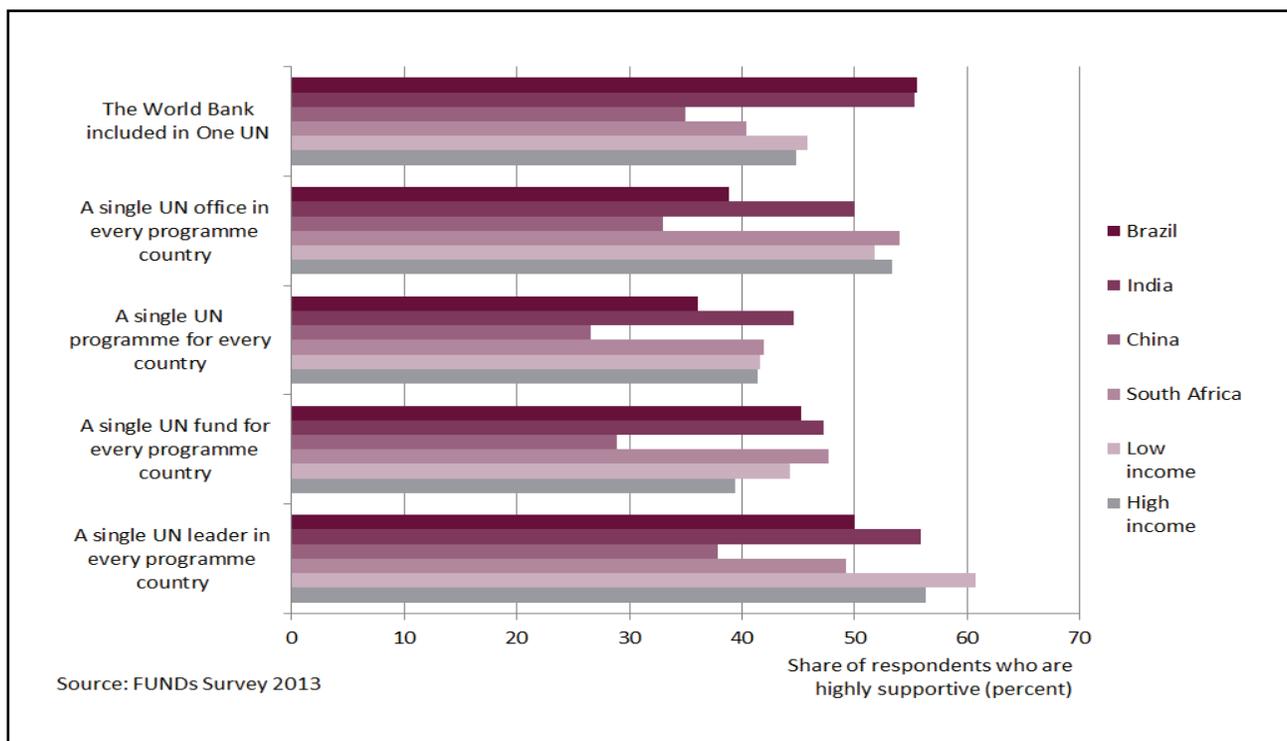


Figure 7: DAO as Quality Enhancer

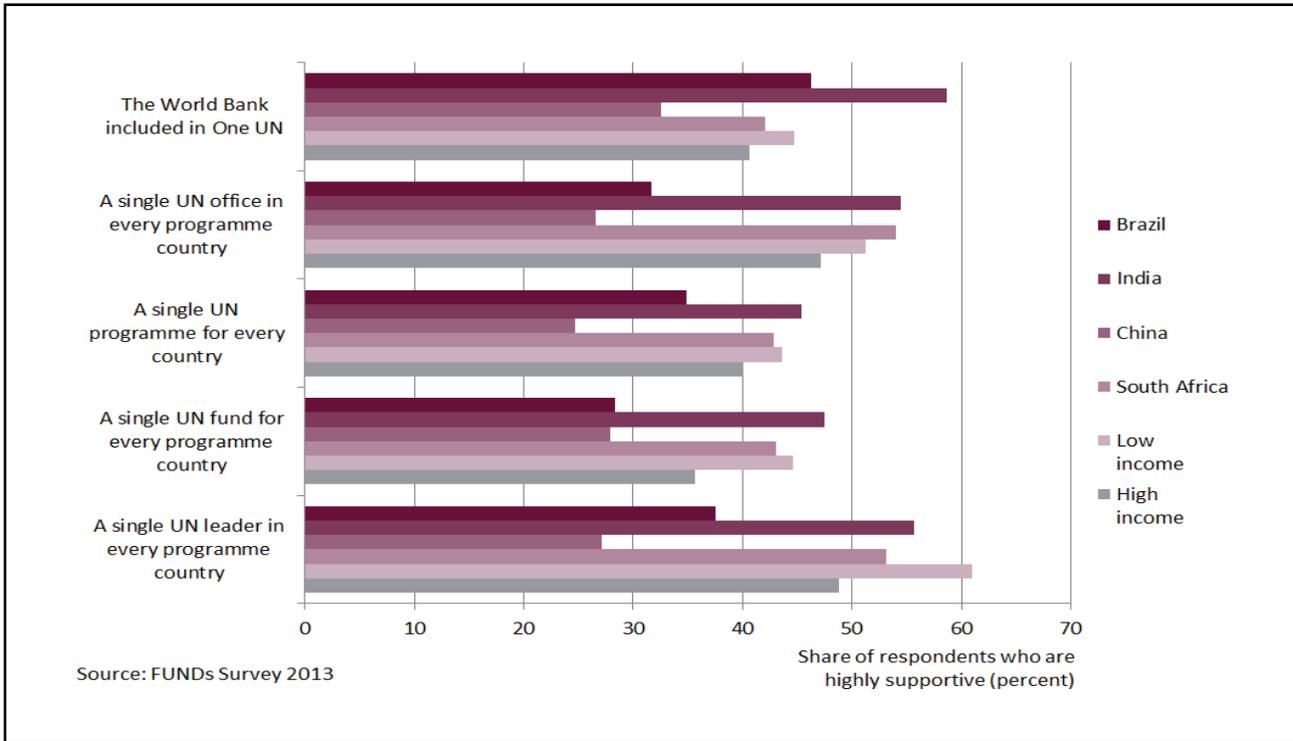


Figure 8: Support for Changes to the UNDS over the Next 5 Years

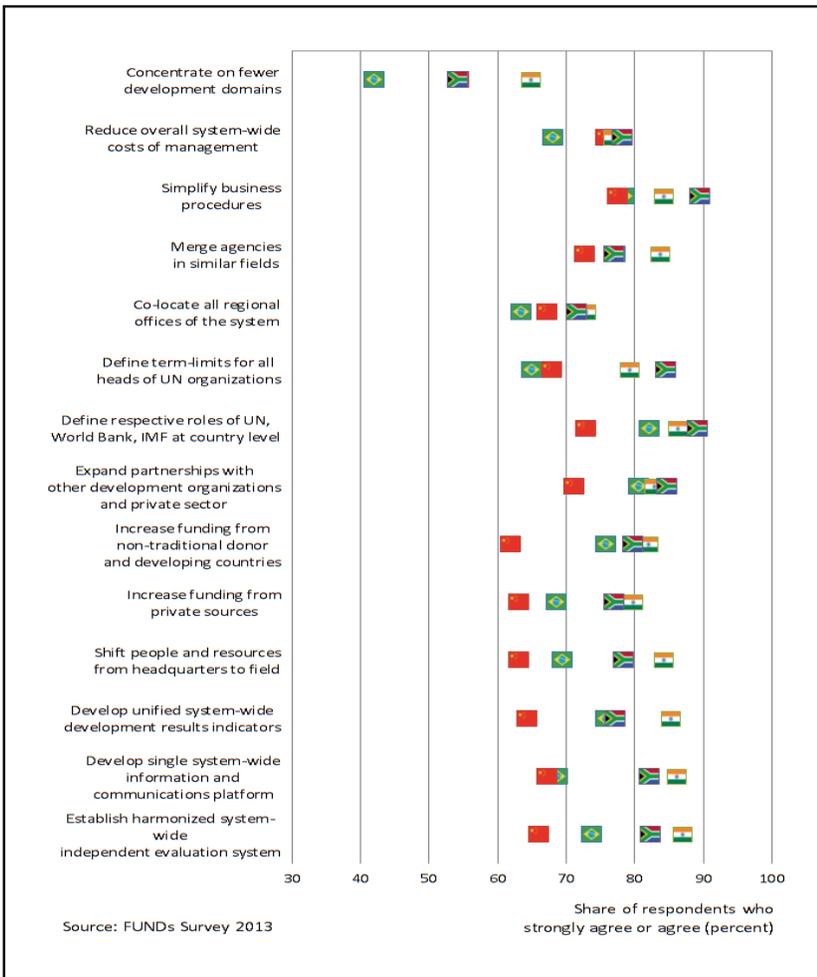
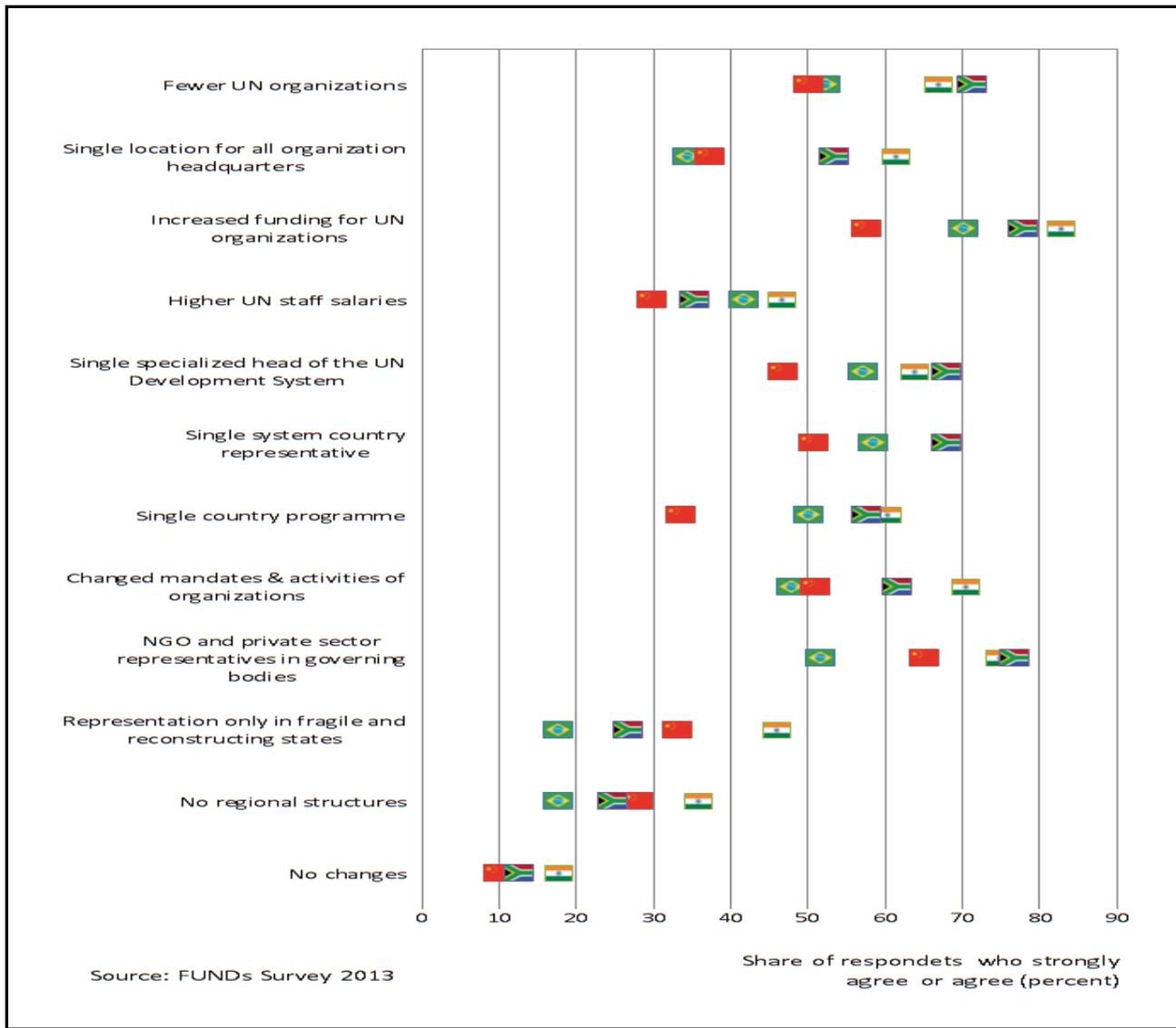


Figure 9: Support for Longer-term Changes to the UNDS



Again China is the outlier among the four BICS; and its respondents are the least supportive of all proposed changes, mostly by a wide margin. They are most negative on consolidation and unification of the system, and least negative on the streamlining of management. India and South Africa take a more radical view of the next five years. India most strongly favors several reforms. South Africa wants to see simplified business procedures and a clearer definition of the respective roles of the UN, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The country is host to several regional offices of the UN, and respondents would also like to see more co-location. Brazil lies somewhere between these more conservative and radical positions but is closer to the views of South Africa and India. However, it is least favorable to a concentration of the UN on fewer development domains.

The survey also sought opinions on changes in the UNDS up to 2025, in order to encourage more radical thinking. The publics in all four countries are against retaining the status quo. At the same time, they support increased funding for the UNDS (see Figure 9).

China is distinguished by a generally tame attitude to reform and is the least supportive of change on almost every count. India is the opposite and is the strongest supporter of a reduction of the UNDS field role in cutting out regional structures and confining the system to conflict-prone countries. India is also most favorably disposed to adjusting the mandates and activities of the UNDS organizations and having a single headquarters.

THE VIEWS OF UNDS FROM 14 EECs

Using capacity to change as a surrogate, the opinions of the general public in 14 EECs, taken as a whole, reveal slightly more optimism (and less skepticism) about the UNDS than the rest of the global sample, based on perceptions of the UN's capacity to change and face new challenges. Profiles of the EECs are found in Table 3 at the end of this Briefing.

When asked about the effectiveness of the UNDS in 20 different development domains, the EEC publics are more positive overall than the global sample (see Figure 10). The four most effective areas

are still judged to be health, human rights, education and gender. Other issues viewed positively include regional cooperation, international trade, science and technology, social policy, poverty reduction, economic management, industry, transportation, and services and tourism. The support for regional cooperation probably reflects a growing interest in South-South cooperation and it is notable that people in the EECs give a higher rating to all the UN regional commissions than the global sample.

Looking to the future, three particular challenges for the UNDS emerge, in the opinion of the EECs, with the levels of agreement shown in the pie-charts:

Challenge 1: Lack of Financial Resources for the UNDS

Associated with this challenge, the levels of agreement (percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree) on proposed future changes to the UNDS are as follows:

- merge agencies in similar fields (78 percent);
- increase funding from non-traditional donor and developing countries (78 percent);
- augment funding from private sources (77 percent);
- reduce overall system-wide costs of management (72 percent); and
- concentrate on fewer development domains (51 percent).

Challenge 2: Ineffectiveness of the UNDS

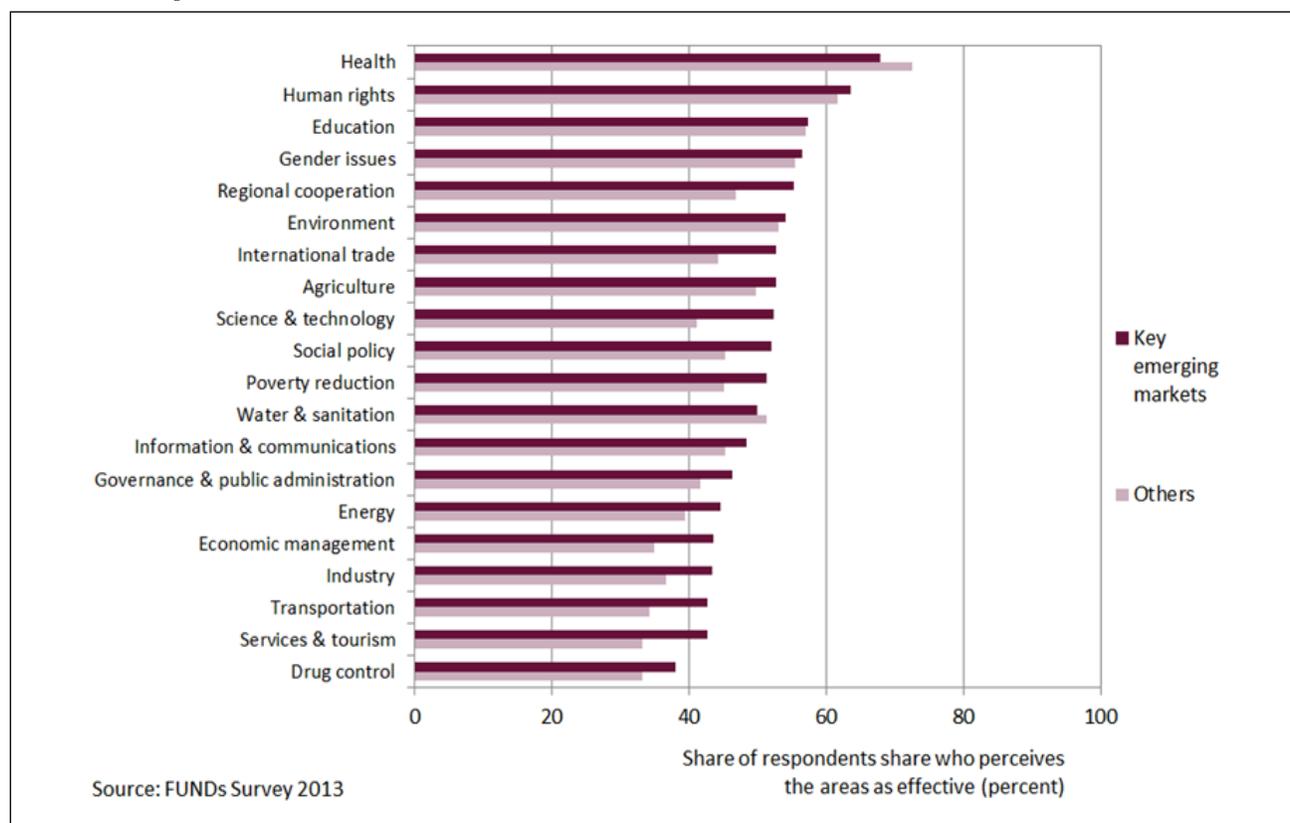
Associated with this challenge, those identified by the survey as “skeptics” agreed on proposed future changes to the UNDS. Over the next five years, these are:

- simplify business procedures (85 percent);
- establish harmonized system-wide independent evaluations (76 percent);
- develop single system-wide information and communications platform (75 percent);
- develop unified system-wide development results indicators (75 percent);

And in the longer-term:

- include NGO and private sector representatives in governing bodies (65 percent); and
- reduce the number of UN organizations (53 percent).

Figure 10: UN Development System Effectiveness by Development Domain



Challenge 3: Access to Competences of the UNDS

Associated with this challenge is agreement of the following, over the next five years:

- merge agencies in similar fields (78 percent);
 - shift people and resources from headquarters to field (74 percent);
- And in the longer-term:
- Make UN staff salaries more competitive (44 percent)

CONCLUSION

The BRICS are on the march. The five governments already hold annual summits, have their own web-sites and think-tanks, and have proposed their own multilateral development bank. Growing prosperity is thus prompting their own brand of mini-lateralism, even if there are many remaining geo-political differences among

them. A changing relationship with international organizations is inevitable although the nature of the relationship is specific to each country. As the EEC club is enlarged, we can expect more “multi-bi” partnerships.

The FUNDS surveys reveal more of what the general publics in four of the five countries think. Hearteningly for the United Nations, public opinion there is generally positive about its continuing relevance in a range of development domains while urging continuing reform. The findings of the surveys, however, imply that there is a growing challenge now facing the UN development system: it should scale down its bread-and-butter country presence and programs in middle- and upper-middle income countries where its traditional development cooperation services will become increasingly redundant. If it does so, it will permit a reallocation of resources to the tasks of building capacity in low-income and fragile states.

Table 3: Data on the 14 EECs Surveyed

	Human Development Index*	Gross Domestic Product (current US\$)	GDP per capita (current US\$)	Population
Argentina	0.811	\$446,044,143,596.27	\$10,951.58	40,728,738.00
Bolivia	0.675	\$23,948,670,608.86	\$2,319.61	10,324,445.00
Brazil	0.730	\$2,476,652,189,879.72	\$12,575.98	196,935,134.00
Chile	0.819	\$251,190,532,752.36	\$14,512.60	17,308,449.00
China	0.699	\$7,321,935,025,069.66	\$5,447.34	1,344,130,000.00
India	0.554	\$1,872,845,406,804.92	\$1,533.67	1,221,156,319.00
Indonesia	0.629	\$846,341,442,761.27	\$3,471.43	243,801,639.00
Korea, Rep	0.909	\$1,114,471,962,886.14	\$22,388.40	49,779,000.00
Malaysia	0.769	\$287,934,357,244.34	\$10,011.99	28,758,968.00
Mexico	0.775	\$1,158,146,656,760.66	\$9,702.87	119,361,233.00
Peru	0.741	\$176,925,330,376.77	\$5,974.20	29,614,887.00
South Africa	0.629	\$401,802,218,556.36	\$7,942.83	50,586,757.00
Thailand	0.690	\$345,672,232,115.63	\$5,192.12	66,576,332.00
Turkey	0.722	\$774,775,177,386.15	\$10,604.84	73,058,638.00

*Composite of Education, Life Expectancy, and Income

World Bank Development Indicators; <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx>

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