



Background

Read more about the history of SID in our anniversary document (1997) [[PDF 2200Kb](#)].

The History of SID

The Society for International Development began as an association of development professionals from many countries meeting in Washington DC in the late 1950s to exchange information and experience on what makes international development happen. The founder members were practitioners and policy advisers who were seeking independent spaces to discuss alternative ideas and strategies for development. The idea rapidly caught on and the network expanded to encompass Chapters on all 5 continents within 5 years.

Since its inception, SID has consistently been at the forefront of shaping the theory and practice of development around the world. Its long and continuous service to the development community has created an institution with significant depth, name, recognition and credibility.

Some of the milestones along the way have been:

In the late 1960s SID helped to shift the focus of development attention away from economic growth as the main index of progress to look more closely at what was happening to the poor in terms of equity and income.

In the 1970s SID examined the growing interdependence among nations and supported calls for more equitable global institutional arrangements. SID's North-South Roundtables established in 1979 aimed to bring together key policymakers, academics and analysts to discuss global issues free of the constraints and formalities of the official fora. Proposals resulting from the Roundtables influenced the preparatory processes for the first North-South Summit in Cancun in 1981, contributed to the founding of the South Commission under Julius Nyerere, gave impetus to the idea for a World Summit on Human Development (the Social Summit held in Copenhagen in 1995), and resulted in the idea of producing an annual Human Development Report (taken up by UNDP in the late 1980s).

In the 1980s SID was a pioneer in its studies of alternative development strategies, including efforts to pool experiences and learn from people-oriented movements at the local level. From the 1980s onwards SID's research and networking on women in development (SID-WID) has played a key role in the integration and promotion of gender into mainstream development thinking and practice.

In the 1990s SID was at the forefront in shifting the focus of development policy from territorial to individual security, involving parliamentarians and civil society in a definition of 'global human security' priorities and strategies. At the same time SID explored new paths of social change towards social justice from the perspective of how people in conditions of poverty sustain their livelihoods.

Since 2000 SID has promoted participation and dialogue between various development actors - governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the public - in order to consolidate and expand democratic spaces and to contribute to

the rethinking and reform of societies, states and markets, at local and international level, as well as the 'rearchitecturing' of the multilateral system.

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Society for International Development, Via Panisperna 207, 00184 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 487 2172; Fax: +39 06 487 2170; [Send us an email](#)
[Site map](#)