Building Southern Partnerships for Action against Climate Change

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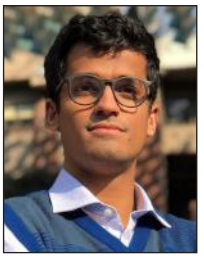

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Today, developing countries are facing the dual challenge of combating climate change and achieving economic growth at the same time. Technological advancement and economic growth go hand in hand. Developing economies lack the technological sophistication required to deal with this dual challenge. The historic Paris Agreement has created tremendous possibilities to collectively deal with the challenge of tackling climate change. United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) enlists provisions for development and transfer of technology in article 4.5 and 4.7. Article 4.5 states that "*the developed countries and other developed countries in Annex II*[1] *shall take all practicable steps to promote, facilitate and finance, as appropriate, the transfer of or access to environmentally sound technologies and know how to other Parties, particularly developing country Parties, to enable them to implement the provision of the Convention.*" Article 4.7 underlines the dependence of effective implementation of convention commitments by the developing countries on the availability of financial resources and transfer of technologies. These countries exhibit limited capacities in finance, knowledge, skills, technology and institutional arrangements. Therefore, the greatest challenges today lie in the constrained capacity for implementation of the recommendations of the Paris Agreement.

There are no solutions that are universally applicable to some of the crucial problems of mitigation and adaptation. Trying to import solutions from developed countries directly in developing countries have not been particularly successful as we will see in latter sections. However, the developing countries among themselves share similar context in their financial, technological, and human resource capacities. Emerging

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[1] As per UNFCCC classification 43 countries/parties are classified as 'industrialized (developed) countries' and 'economies in transition' are listed in Annex I. Of the parties included in Annex I, 24 are also listed in Annex II, including EU. These parties are members of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

economies share structural similarities and thus their problem statements are similar and starkly different from developed nations. Even though developmental priorities of these countries are broadly aligned, certain degree of heterogeneity in the local circumstances exists. Countries have addressed the shared challenges in their individual capacities. Example of rice husk gasification technology can be used for illustration of this heterogeneity within countries with similar local contexts. China is the leader in the above-mentioned technology.[2] However, dealing with rice husk is a challenge for many developing countries, including India, where this issue attracted a lot of attention recently as slash and burn practices currently employed in paddy fields resulted in unforeseen levels of air pollution in the national capital of New Delhi. Rice husk gasification technology currently available in India is not advanced whereas adopting Chinese technology is not economical.[3] South-South cooperation presents an opportunity for these countries to lean on each other for their respective strengths and to collectively solve the problems most pertinent to their shared local context. South-South cooperation has gained significant traction lately on global stage. In 2016, the Secretary General of the United Nations launched the Southern Climate Partnership Incubator (SCPI) to promote collaboration in the Global South in the areas of renewable energy, smart cities, climate resilience, and big data applications.[4]

Following three sections highlight three different aspects of South-South cooperation and its benefits in development and adoption of climate relevant technologies. These three aspects are mutually interlinked and thus the examples used to illustrate one aspect have relevance to other aspects as well.

a) South-South cooperation allows developing countries to focus on common prioritized problems

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by the developing countries show synergies between actions against climate change and policies to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as decided in the 2030 agenda. Governments plan to adopt measures that integrate climate objectives in their development objectives by choosing less carbon intensive path to their economic and social development. Last year, SCPI launched a report titled 'Catalysing the Implementation of NDCs in the Context of the 2030 Agenda through South-South Cooperation'.[5] The report conducted comprehensive analysis of NDCs of all developing countries and found substantial links between NDCs and SDGs. 10 out of 17 SDGs have linkages with more than 75% of the developing countries' NDCs. Out of the remaining 7, three have linkages with more than 50% of the countries' NDCs. The important SDGs connected to NDCs are 'Affordable and Clean Energy', 'Zero Hunger',

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2 http://www.tifac.org.in/index.php/8-publication/141-technologies-for-use-of-rice-husk-as-a-source-of-energy-in-rural-areas-environment?showall=1

3 Based on consultation with scientists working in this field at IISc.

4 SCPI Launch: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/04/scpi-launch/

5 Report available at: https://unfccc.int/files/resource_materials/application/pdf/ssc_ndc_report.pdf

'Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure', 'Life on Land', 'Sustainable Cities and Communities', and 'Clean Water and Sanitation'. These areas have tremendous scope for South-South cooperation as all the developing countries are working towards solutions in their own limited capacity on these common priority areas. Climate Technology Centre & Network (CTCN), the implementation arm of Technology Mechanism set up under the UNFCCC, facilitates transfer of climate relevant technologies when requested by developing countries. Out of 200 Technical Assistant Requests made to CTCN so far, 24 have been completed/ implemented.[6] In these 24 projects, categories with maximum number of requests are 'Capacity Building', 'Industrial Upgrade', and 'Water'. After the top three, 'Food Security', 'Waste Management', 'Flood Management' have attracted most number of projects. India recently signed a new partnership agreement with Nepal to work on agricultural science and technology which will try to address issues such as climate resilience, agro forestry, soil health, etc. This agreement exemplifies Southern cooperation on priority areas.

b) South-South cooperation enables deployment of solutions sensitive to local context of developing countries

The Technical Mechanism established under UNFCCC has undertaken consistent efforts to transfer environmentally sound technology from developed nations to developing ones. Additionally, technology finds its way to these countries through day-to-day business activity. However, it has been often observed that importing solutions from the Global North hasn't been very successful.[7,8] Bio-power and waste management is a sector that is very sensitive to regional circumstances. Sweden and Denmark are among the leaders in the technology related to this domain. However, directly importing their technology to India has not been very fruitful. One of the reasons behind this is starkly different fuel composition. Technological rigor is necessary in understanding the fuel scenario in developing countries before deploying solutions. Another fuel related difficulty in developing countries arises due to high transaction costs. This makes many technologies that are used in the Western world, commercially not viable in India. India is a populous country and thus if a bio/waste power project is to be set up near the source (like a densely populated region) then one might be constrained on space. Thus, large scale plants may not be feasible in India and other developing countries. While achieving scale economies are important, we cannot say that large scale operations are the best way of going about things. Both Waste-to-energy and bio power are advocated because they are decentralised and can be set up with a small base of operations. India and other developing countries, many of which have higher than average population density can collaborate to develop technologies

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6 List of projects available at: https://www.ctc-n.org/network/ta-implementations

7 Based on discussion with industry stakeholders

8 Tim Forsyth, 2005, '*Partnerships for Technology Transfer: How can investors and communities build renewable energy in Asia?'*, Chatham House, available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/4771/1/Partnerships_for_technology_transfer.pdf

that are suitable for their fuel mix and economical at the scale most suitable for them.

c) South-South cooperation facilitates capacity building in developing countries to take action against climate change

Even though climate relevant technologies are finding their way to emerging economies, there is no approach that builds the capacities in these economies to develop sustainable technologies on their own. Most of the technology transfer is through transfer of hardware which does not necessarily facilitate transfer of know-how. This is most evident in the case of solar PV technologies as the intellectual property is concentrated in select few countries like U.S., and Germany. The Global South should collaborate in a way that engages their systems of innovation to find solutions to common problems. This will build capacity in countries to understand their regional needs and come up with solutions. Development of national capacity to absorb new technology helps move away from the paradigm of 'technology transfer' and towards 'technology cooperation'.

According to the report by SCPI, many countries have expressed their willingness for more active South-South cooperation. India's NDC states that it will continue to support the transfer of technologies to other developing countries and calls for more bilateral cooperative initiatives.[9] In 2017, India pledged to contribute USD 100 million to India-UN Development Partnership Fund which is managed by United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation. This fund is meant to support Southern-owned and led, demand driven, sustainable developmental projects in developing countries.[10] Brazil in its NDC has committed to increase cooperation with other developing countries in the areas of forest monitoring systems, low-emission and climate resilient agricultural practices, restoration and reforestation among others.[11] Brazil aims to support other Portuguese-speaking countries specifically in these domains. At COP-22, China co-hosted a high-level forum on South-South cooperation. In 2014, China had announced a $3.1 billion South-South Climate Change Fund.[12] Korea in its biennial update report has mentioned technology development and transfer assistance projects it has undertaken in other developing countries in Asia and Central America.[13] Projects in Asia lie in the domain of adaptation which is a major concern among developing countries.

South-South cooperation and multilateral partnerships (involving more than two countries) can also include North-South cooperation in

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9 India NDC available at: http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/India%20First/INDIA%20INDC%20TO%20UNFCCC.pdf

10 Business Standard: http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-contributes-1-mn-to-un-development-partnership-fund-118020300002_1.html

11 Brazil NDC available at: http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Brazil/1/BRAZIL%20iNDC%20english%20FINAL.pdf

12 UNDP News Centre: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/speeches/2017/south-south-cooperation-on-climate-change.html

13 Table 4.3 in Korea BUR, available here: https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/natc/rkorbur1.pdf

technological or financial capacity. In fact, many of the triangular partnerships (as documented by OECD) involve developed nations working with other developing countries.[14] This arrangement benefits all parties as developing countries leverage on developed countries' capabilities and south-south cooperation and the better understanding of local context increases the likelihood of success of the project and thereby returns on investment for the developed nation partners. Out of 24 projects implemented by CTCN, many serve as examples of such triangular cooperation. 'Identification and prioritization of technologies to address water scarcity and climate change impacts in Namibia' implemented by 'Council for Scientific and Industrial Research' based in South Africa with help of Denmark Technical University is an appropriate example of triangular cooperation on a challenge that demands coherence between SDG policies and action against climate change. South-South cooperation for action against climate change is an avenue of tremendous potential and we hope that it continues the momentum that it has gained recently in the international discourse.

Upcoming Events of Interest

Workshop on India-EU Development Cooperation and Way Forward

Workshop on India-EU Development Cooperation and Way Forward is being organised by Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and EU in India. The European Union's development cooperation with India has a successful track record, spanning several decades, dating back to the early 1960s. Major focus areas have included poverty alleviation, education, health and rural development. In 2005, the India-EU relationship was upgraded to a Strategic Partnership, boosting political, economic and sectoral cooperation. A decade later, following India's phenomenal developmental progress, EU decided to end its traditional type of aid assistance to India in 2014. Since then, the India-EU relations have transitioned and evolved into a more meaningful partnership. Specific outcome of this workshop would be a set of recommendations to EU and India on the following:

- Innovative models of development, best practices, successes & synergies that can be replicated, taken forward through future India-EU bilateral/trilateral/regional development cooperation.
- Potential areas of collaboration/ thematic sectors for India-EU development cooperation.
- Scope for triangular cooperation & possible third countries/regions that could be considered for future India-EU development cooperation.
- Recommendations on way forward and additional steps to feed into the India-EU dialogue process.

[14] OECD Repository of triangular partnerships *Last accessed on 5th May 2018*: http://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm