



## FIDC Regional Consultation at Jaipur

The Third Regional Consultation was organised by the Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC) on 22 and 23 December 2015 at Jaipur, Rajasthan. It brought together civil society organisations (CSOs) of the Western region of the country, members of the academic community and policymakers to discuss India's Development Cooperation and South-South Cooperation (SSC).

### Background of India's Development Cooperation

At the inaugural session, Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS made the welcome remarks. Mr. A.K. Sahu, Joint Secretary (DPA II), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India delivered the inaugural address. Professor V.S. Vyas, Professor Emeritus, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur delivered the keynote address. Dr. Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay, Director, PRIA and convener of the FIDC Working Group on CSOs extended the vote of thanks.

Mr. Sahu in his inaugural address underlined that since Independence, India has performed extremely well in several areas including in new technologies, such as biotechnology, ICT, genetic engineering. India in its early years of independence realised the need of capacity building in fellow developing and newly

decolonised countries. India addressed this challenge by launching fellowship programmes in the early 1950s which has now reached an impressive figure of 15000 scholarships per year in 2015, starting with a small number of seven scholarships. In 1964, these scholarships were formalised to be a part of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. At present, under ITEC, India engages with 161 countries through 52 institutions, covering more than 250 courses. Apart from capacity building, India's development cooperation is also manifested through the modalities of lines of credit, grants and disaster relief.

The importance of CSOs in the development context within India and in other developing countries was also discussed. In this context, he mentioned that India considers CSOs as an important stakeholder in furtherance of its development cooperation and that Indian government is committed to leveraging their strengths and experiences in advancing development partnership across different countries. Here, the role of platforms like FIDC assumes special significance for getting feedback on the Indian programmes as it may help in consolidating the development cooperation linkages across various countries in different regions. Mr. Sahu also contextualised international policies on development aid.

FIDC Policy Briefs are prepared on specific policy issues for the policymakers. This Policy Brief has been prepared by the team led by Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, and comprising of Prof. Milindo Chakrabarti, Visiting Fellow and Mr. Pratyush, Research Assistant, RIS.

The historical promise of North-South development aid to the tune of 0.7 per cent of GNI, as agreed in the Pearson Commission Report, has not been fulfilled by the DAC members. South-South Cooperation (SSC) has emerged as complementary to North-South Cooperation (NSC) with India as one of its major proponents. India has its own development narrative and must not be seen as a donor under the Western definition. However, in India some of the fundamental issues including poverty alleviation, reduction in child mortality and other social ills still persist, leading to several exclusions ultimately resulting in increased inequalities.

### **SSC in Agriculture**

In his keynote address Professor Vyas focused on 'Agriculture and South-South Cooperation'. He underlined that India had a rather satisfactory rate of growth in agriculture and expressed his happiness over agriculture and rural development being the focus areas of the Indian government. In this process, India has benefitted from the experiences of several developing countries. However, an area where significant cooperation between India and other countries of the South has been of critical importance is genetic research in wheat and rice that made the Green Revolution possible. He also pointed out contributions of other Southern countries like Mexico in wheat and the Philippines in rice. Today, he emphasised, India is in a position to contribute in many areas of agriculture development.

It is generally assumed that as agriculture is dependent on local conditions and environment it leads to negation of international cooperation. However, there are a number of areas where international cooperation could be mutually beneficial

for the countries. Such cooperation in the agriculture field can be observed in the areas of post-harvest technology, organic farming, integrated pest control, energy management, water harvesting technology, frontier technologies like tissue culture, application of IT in farming and institutional innovation in credit and marketing. Special emphasis should be given on the contribution of IT in agriculture in not only educating the farmers on new farming techniques but also on carrying out cash transaction through mobile technology as has been done in Kenya. It was highlighted that in the field of agriculture, a mere transfer of technology will not go a long way in solving the issues; therefore, institutional support is also required. It was emphasised that India has significant experience in these areas through dedicated institutional programmes. Therefore, India can contribute significantly in the areas of determination of agricultural prices, buffer stock and procurement.

### **Role of CSOs**

As mentioned above, the role of CSOs with proven abilities in development projects was also discussed in the consultation. It was pointed out that the Indian government and international institutions are working in these areas, but the role of CSOs in them is irreplaceable. CSOs contribute in the area of innovation at the local level, apart from showcasing their expertise in the project implementation arena. The government comes up with policies for implementation on national level, but many times it is found that the local conditions differ from region to region. It is here that the CSOs must accept the responsibility of carrying out innovation at the local level to make the programmes successful. Secondly, CSOs must also have the ability to adapt themselves to the local conditions and

communicate the adaptation to the concerned authorities. Advocacy and extension is the third area where CSOs must act. Spreading the knowledge of a government policy amongst the wider populace is extremely important for the success of the programmes and CSOs play an active role in this regard. Protest and constructive criticism of the policies and programmes is the fourth area where the role of CSOs becomes significant. It was stressed that instead of government or private sector, only CSOs can take up the mantle in these areas. It was also pointed out that cooperation of the government, policymakers and concerned authorities is of paramount importance for earnest and sincere CSOs to prosper and assist them in the success of the programmes and policies.

Thus, onus also lies with the CSOs to increase their effectiveness in the development sector. In this regard, it was categorically mentioned that CSOs should only contribute in the areas where they have a distinct expertise. This point bears greater significance for SSC because the credibility of India gets reflected directly through the credibility of its different stakeholders. Development activities should begin with a full acquaintance with local environment, both social as well as physical, and with a sense of responsibility and respect for the partners. It was elaborated further that the CSOs must carry out the development work in the countries of the South with a sense of humility – a quality lacking in Western countries' engagement with developing countries.

The key issues that emerged during the two-day consultation are extremely important for developing an Indian narrative on South-South Cooperation. Some of the actionable points for different stakeholders are discussed below.

## **Role of the Academia**

It was discussed during the consultation that that the academic community should consider undertaking specific case studies for understanding successful civil society experiments and also those of failures. This, in a larger context, would help in drawing necessary insights for various development experiments. While doing so, a matrix may also be considered, which may have sectoral interventions on one side and engagement of CSOs on the other. This matrix may help in selecting probable partners for possible development interventions. Collective action and research under various projects may help in drawing academia closer to civil society organisations for the better understanding of the changes and variations in the policy and, of course, in the funding patterns. This would have a long lasting impact and would help in understanding the triangle of policy making, systemic changes and evidence collection.

It was also suggested that some of the issues that may be captured in form of case studies are the inclusion of specific nutrients like zinc in rice. Academic institutions in partnership with CSOs, who have worked in South Asia Peace corridor and have participated in the government led policy initiatives, may also be involved in the case studies. In the case of Rajasthan, programmes such as Lok Jumbish (People's Movement), Shiksha Karmi (Education Worker), Balika Shivirs (Girls' Education Camp), etc., are worth documenting where CSOs have played a vital role.

## **Scope for Policy Responses**

The deliberations at the Consultation Meeting also called for creating and sustaining for flourishing of the CSOs. For this, it is important to pay greater attention to facilitating the process of

globalisation of the CSOs. This is an unfinished agenda, which is adversely affecting India's policy objectives and at the same time also undermining the potentials and capabilities of Indian CSOs. There are several policy responses that are required for facilitating such a role; for instance, registration of CSOs should be centralised. Instead of confining them to specific pockets in different states, they should be allowed to work anywhere by fulfilling the accounting responsibilities and meeting specifications for book-keeping. At present, there are various restrictions and control mechanisms imposed on the Indian CSOs who want to work outside India. These need to be liberalised, rationalised and synchronised. In this context, necessary collaboration between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Foreign Regional Registration Offices (FRRO), Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and Income Tax Department may be envisaged. To make it rational, CSOs may be given a unique code number as their identity to track financial and other regulatory requirements may be necessary. Another actionable response propounded was that good and credible CSOs should be encouraged to work outside India, provided they are well acquainted with the background and legal systems of the partner countries. In such special cases the Income Tax Department may give additional incentive over and above what is available under section 80G or 35AC or 10(23) for CSOs working outside national boundaries.

However, it was also cautioned that CSOs should not oversell themselves without realising their limitations. Some of the organisations like PRATHAM have come up with modalities to review

education policy, which are useful irrespective of geographical location. In fact, PRATHAM created capacities across Pakistan, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Mali, Senegal, Mexico and Nigeria, where ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) has been launched as a primary instrument for assessing efficacy of policies in the education sector. These kinds of sectoral collaborations are extremely important. In fact, they also provide avenues for CSOs to cooperate with each other, which may become an important part of India's soft power diplomacy.

### **FIDC/DPA**

Another dimension that came up for discussion relate to clarity on the way forward, particularly in the context of identifying instruments for facilitating academia in CSO linkages. In this context, there is need to develop a framework for evaluation that may juxtapose Indian ethos and ideas with DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, efficacy, and impact. It was cautioned that development is a slow process; hence no quick solutions would work.

### **Evaluation and Sectoral Linkages**

The Jaipur Consultation had three parallel sessions focusing on sectoral evaluation concerns which laid emphasis on transitioning from the project based evaluation to programme based evaluation. The first session on Natural Resource Management (NRM) was chaired by Dr. Indira Khurana, IPE Global, Delhi.

While summarising the key points in the working group, Dr. Khurana mentioned that NRM is a huge sector involving

resources like water, land, grasslands and forests and it covers an expansive physical area. Community and CSO partnership in this regard under the rubric of SSC should be based on the principles of equity and mutual learning with a strong bond of trust. Therefore, there is need for encouraging community planning with due possibilities for modifications in traditionally decided framework and the community as a whole must be encouraged to own up the intervention. Since the NRM projects take time to show results, evaluation can be conducted in phases: at design stage, during mid-term and at the end-term. This would also allow for corrections during the implementation process. In other words, it creates space for incorporating the learning into subsequent programming. Owing to the mutuality of natural resources, the evaluation process must capture various components. Any attempt to address one natural resource – forests, for example – will affect other resources as well, such as land, water and grasslands. The evaluation criteria should also capture changes in these resources. Evaluation mechanism for NRM must also have a strong focus on conflict resolution as most of the communities are not homogeneous and interests of some may overpower the interests of others. Effect on gender and marginalised groups needs to be captured well. Incorporation of qualitative and quantitative indicators is also important in the evaluation process. Linkages of national and international policies with the policies on NRM must be coordinated to avoid conflicting situations.

In the second working group on Rural Development, Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO of VANI, New Delhi mentioned that in the evaluation process, trust and ownership

are extremely important for drawing right inferences and also how local area's sensibilities must be heeded. Apart from factoring various indicators, as may be decided from time to time, it would also be relevant to capture process documentation, which should give ideas about the dynamics of changing responses while a project is evolving. To negate the coordination failure, volunteers and ground level personnel must also be trained from the perspective of evaluation. Flexibility must also be ensured in the evaluation process when a broad based evaluation technique is adopted with the option of incorporating changes based on local conditions on a case to case basis. During the process, informal learning is possible and there should be space for this.

The third working group was chaired by Professor T.C. James, Visiting Fellow, RIS, where evaluation of health and education projects was discussed. It was pointed out that planning, monitoring and evaluation must go in unison with simultaneous involvement of all the stakeholders at every level. This group reiterated the usefulness of involving the community in the evaluation process. The group emphasised that the horizontal (across various sectors) and vertical linkages in project implementation should be brought out clearly in the evaluation along with qualitative and quantitative aspects. A compendium of successful examples of community interventions made in India and also abroad by India should be brought out. This would contribute to better development partnership interventions in the future. India should highlight its experiences with community level interventions to other countries so that they could learn from the same and adapt the best practices to make various programmes successful.

## Way Forward

In the concluding session, it was pointed out that experience with incoming assistance should be leveraged for India's external engagements. Similarly, necessary lessons from SSC may also be learnt for required course correction. For instance, while laying out railway track in Ethiopia, China used gauge tracks, for which parts and components were only available with China. These kinds of limitations should be discussed and commented upon when South-South Cooperation is being discussed. Also,

the CSO representatives voiced their concerns that ground knowledge gained by them is not being duly absorbed by the policymakers. This, the members of the consultation emphasised, could happen only when there is deeper engagement among all stakeholders on issues related to the challenges of development, rather than a superficial engagement. The regional consultation in Jaipur ended with a resolve to take forward the work programme of RIS/FIDC to other regional centers of India as well.

## Forum for Indian Development Cooperation

The Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC) is a platform launched to explore various facets of Indian development cooperation policy with its partner countries. The objective is to encourage debate and analytical research on all the broad constituents of India's development partnership spectrum in order to bolster policy making process in this field of critical importance. Thrust of the forum would be to substantially contribute in facilitating an informed debate on policy framework of India and other developing countries.

The FIDC would also try to follow broad trends in South-South cooperation and analyse contributions and impact of Indian policies. The Forum will establish dialogue with the relevant government agencies and academia with a focus on South-South cooperation. The FIDC would also establish linkages and dialogue with international agencies, experts from the partner countries and advanced countries with a view to meet its comprehensive multi-faceted objectives. The FIDC is housed in RIS, New Delhi.

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*Strengthening Indian development cooperation policy towards promoting South-South cooperation*

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**RIS**  
Research and Information System  
for Developing Countries

Core IV-B, Fourth Floor, India Habitat Centre  
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003, India  
Ph.: +91-11-24682177-80, Fax: +91-11-24682173-74  
E-mail: [fidc@ris.org.in](mailto:fidc@ris.org.in)  
Website: <http://fidc.ris.org.in>