

Interview with Professor Sachin Chaturvedi

Sachin Chaturvedi*

Development Cooperation Review (DCR): Welcome to our special series by RIS from the Conference on Triangular Cooperation in the Global South taking place in New Delhi, and I'm delighted to be joined by Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, one of the most influential voices to give us development cooperation policy. So, let's begin with the conference. What were the main takeaways for you today?

Professor Sachin Chaturvedi (SC):

The good idea about the conference, was around three broad conceptual frameworks that we have followed. The first and foremost is the growing fragmentation at the global level that we see, the disruptions that we see, the polarization that we see. So, the idea was to have north and south work together, though we come from a global South perspective - for almost forty years RIS has been focusing on the global south, its relevance, its ambit and mandate within which it should work. But now we realise that it is important for the Global

South to also provide support, helping hand, to the North, and this needs a bit of depolarization, and some effort to bring in north and south together.

The idea of triangular cooperation of north and South working together for the betterment of both and the other partners in the development trajectory where they are almost in the emerging markets. So, these two ideas strengthened it. Two more ideas that guided us in this conference, which we discussed today is not to make the conference only an exchange of ideas, but how do we turn those ideas into action? So, action labs were planned ideas and these action labs actually provided practical inputs to those who are going to take the ideas to the ground. And there the idea of connecting agriculture with entrepreneurship connecting health with the practical challenges that are there solutions.

So, Dakshin is mandated to get on to these tasks. We also had a network of think tank NeST (Network of Southern Think Tanks). We also had the University

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Connect. So it gets into pedagogy and gets into the practical lessons. So all the four stakeholders were there in the room and today's takeaways are largely around these four points.

DCR: You've been instrumental in shaping these platforms, such as the Delhi Process, and NeST. How do these initiatives influence the discourse and practice in South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in recent years. And am I allowed to put those two forms of cooperation in the same sentence, SSC and Triangular?

SC: Definitely. There are some people who think that purity of South-South gets diluted if you think of triangular in the same way. In my own personal view, I feel that north-south, South-South and triangular cooperation this should be part of the same sentence because we need to show pragmatism. As we heard today, Abhay Karandikar said the Global South has more confidence now, and this confidence is not going to be influenced by using any phrase in the same set of lexica that we need. And from that perspective, north-south cooperation, South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation are a natural progression that the Global South should seek. Here, the idea probably would be to see that the practical contours go out in terms of finding some sort of reality check, and what is happening is to "de-silos" this - the idea of north-south into one silo, South-South into another silo and the triangular into the third one. These silos are not going to help the world. We are here to fight the

fragmentation; we cannot create more walls; we have to overcome them.

DCR: Having pioneered these platforms, how do you envision the next phase of institutional innovation in triangular cooperation and simultaneously uphold local ownership while scaling impact across diverse contexts in the Global South?

SC: Today, we signed this agreement with ICRISAT, which yet to have been the part of the CGIAR, the northern-led institution of frameworks. The Global South has to make more coming out from their collective efforts to have institutional frameworks. Dakshin and ICRISAT partnership create a joint centre for advancing India's development experience in agriculture with the Global South, collecting their experiences to collate and evolve a practical framework for agriculture knowledge exchange among Global South countries, give you the practical guardrail for agriculture innovation system, technology diffusion, to move forward, and that gives you the actual trajectory within which agriculture productivity, food security, nutritional security, etc. maybe adequately addressed by the countries who are engaged.

DCR: In the context of the Global South's evolving economic landscape, what strategies do you recommend for countries to effectively engage in triangular cooperation without compromising their development priorities?

SC: The Global South's cooperation is free from conditionalities, and that's the beauty of their retaining their decision-making space, the policy space. And here their own priorities are the top priorities. They are the ones where global south's engagement would be subject to the whole idea of demand-driven approach. So, the demand approach driven nature of the engagement of the global South may help them retain their priorities as the top priority.

DCR: For a Development Finance 2.0 model, one that r-orientes finance, not just around creditworthiness, but also around metrics such as sustainability, local innovation and inclusion and what role should India play, as it also becomes a beacon of hope for many in the global south, in spearheading this shift within south south and triangular cooperation frameworks?

SC: This is nothing more than the idea that Prime Minister Modi has talked about in his address at the Voice of the Global South Summit. He described this summit as a Global Development Compact and the Global Development Compact is largely an idea where the Global South brings in harmony between the five modalities that they usually engage with. For instance, they provide concessional finance – credit creation. If you are pushing countries against the wall, they do not have the capacity to return the money, so you have to create capacity; you need to transfer technology; you need to create some elements to give them grants

so that they don't just depend on your credit, on your loan; and you give them market access.

For instance, when Ethiopia thought of reviving their sugar industry. They approached India, because the Dutch had established sugar processing units in the early 60s there. Over the years, the sugar cane lost its productivity, sugar processing machines became outdated, and they were not able to compete. So, in 2011, they requested help from India, that provided fresh sugarcane germplasm for better productivity. India gave them new sugar processing units. India also provided packaging for export to Europe, because they were environmentally compatible with the way European consumers wanted it. But in fact, they were the issues in terms of how duty free, quota free access gives them scope for exporting their sugar.

So, the full range of five modalities of; technology; of trade access; of capacity building of the scientists to absorb new germplasm in their agricultural system; also the necessary credit for the transformation of the sector – they provided the support. And this is something which is going to be extremely relevant in terms of how all five modalities are to be combined. These are to be the command and the force.

DCR: As someone deeply invested in institutionalizing knowledge and youth engagement, how can the University Connect Hub and similar platforms help equip the next generation to think in terms of triangular cooperation and not just as a modality, but as a mindset, to help shift attitudes globally.

SC: That's important because as you know, 65 per cent of the Indian population is under 35 years old. So, we are a relatively young country, and this youth has to be exposed to the idea of global responsibility and not just thinking of running after the US and Europe. Those powers are creating the space for the rise of the Global South. With the rise of the global south, and the rising global influence of India, we also have to be responsible. So, triangular cooperation,

cooperation among developing countries of the Global South, has to be brought to the universities through the University Connect programme to educate them on global responsibility. That's the idea of bringing triangular cooperation and the Global South to the curriculum, to the education and exposure, and also connecting them with this wider "One family" idea of the world.

DCR: Thank you very much.