

From Shared Aspirations to Shaping Futures: Evolving Modalities of the Global Development Compact

Atul Kaushik and Sanim Hussain



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समुद्री अर्थव्यवस्था व संयोजन केंद्र





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Abstract: Moving away from the traditional donor-recipient development model, the Global Development Compact (GDC) proposed by the Indian Prime Minister during the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit in August 2024 is an innovative South-South Cooperation (SSC) framework that advances human-centric and demand-driven partnerships grounded in mutual benefit, solidarity, shared responsibility and non-conditionality. Anchored in five core modalities of capacity building for sustainable development, trade for development, technology sharing, project specific concessional finance, and grants, GDC seeks to empower the Global South countries to pursue self-reliance. This paper examines experiences from Laos, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nepal to illustrate how India operationalizes a combination of these modalities to support national ownership, build institutional capacity, and foster inclusive economic growth. The paper also stresses the pressing need for a robust, SSC-specific Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to systematically assess outcomes. The authors contribute to the discourse on development cooperation by examining how GDC can effectively transform shared aspirations into shaped future for a resilient Global South and propose a research agenda to develop multi-layered evaluation tools that incorporate both qualitative and quantitative metrics, thereby ensuring that the Compact's evolving modalities deliver not only tangible but also measurable development outcomes.

Keywords: South-South Cooperation, Global Development Compact, Sustainable Development Goals, Triangular Cooperation, Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.

1. Introduction

The global development landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by shifting power dynamics, the rise of emerging economies, and the universal vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Traditional paradigms of development cooperation, rooted

in a North-South, donor-recipient framework marked by asymmetrical power relations are increasingly being challenged (Chaturvedi, 2016b). In their place, a more inclusive, horizontal, and pluralistic model, anchored in the principles of South-South Cooperation (SSC) has gained prominence. This shift reframes development not as charity but as a shared, mutual process of growth, learning, and capacity-building among countries of the Global South (Chaturvedi et al., 2021).

Central to this transformation is the emergence of the “Development Compact”, a theoretical and operational framework within SSC articulated by Chaturvedi (2016), which marks a shift from traditional aid to partnerships based on mutual interest and self-reliance. It integrates five core modalities - capacity building, trade and investment, technology transfer, concessional development finance, and grants for infrastructure projects deployed coherently to achieve sustainable development. It adopts project-based, demand-driven approaches that respect sovereignty, national ownership, and non-conditionality. The Compact seeks to empower partner countries to move beyond dependence and achieve collective self-reliance through horizontal, inclusive cooperation.¹

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further legitimizes and amplifies the relevance of SSC. The SDGs call for inclusive, equitable, and nationally sensitive partnerships, principles deeply ingrained in the ethos of the Development Compact (United Nations, 2015). India’s development cooperation programmes, such as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), Lines of Credit (LoCs), and various capacity-building initiatives across Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean, exemplify the operationalization of this model. India’s approach emphasizes skill development, institution-building, regional trade promotion, and sustainable infrastructure, thereby promoting self-reliance over dependency (Chaturvedi & Mulakala, 2016).

The growing relevance of SSC was highlighted during the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, hosted virtually by India on 17 August 2024 under the theme “*An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future.*” Drawing participation from 123 developing countries, the Summit

reinforced the Global South's collective vision for achieving SDGs and advancing human-centric, inclusive development. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposal for a comprehensive Global Development Compact (hereafter, the Compact), emphasizing Trade for Development, Capacity Building for Sustainable Growth, Technology Sharing, and Project-Specific Concessional Finance echoed the core tenets of SSC. He also emphasized the need for resilient multilateralism, equitable access to finance and technology, and reforms in global governance to better address contemporary challenges (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2024).

The Summit highlighted the urgent need for reforming global governance structures, addressing the inadequacies of existing multilateral institutions, and fostering a new development paradigm prioritizing resilience, stability, and growth. It reinforced calls for democratizing technology access, bridging digital divides, ensuring climate justice, and empowering youth and women for inclusive development. India's announcements of new initiatives such as funds for trade promotion and capacity building, support for affordable medicines, natural farming practices, and contributions to global SDG stimulus efforts demonstrate a concrete commitment to advancing SSC.

Yet, the Compact also faces challenges. Variations in capacities among Southern partners, internal asymmetries, and evolving global crises from conflicts to pandemics to climate change to tariffs demand continuous innovation and contextual responsiveness in cooperation modalities. Against this backdrop, two central research questions guide this paper:

- Has the Development Compact delivered better outcomes than traditional models of development cooperation?
- In what ways must the Development Compact evolve to help partner countries achieve their socio-economic development goals, including Agenda 2030, SDGs, and climate resilience?

This paper seeks to critically explore the theoretical foundations, empirical applications, institutional frameworks, and policy innovations

of the Compact to address these questions. Through an analysis of India's practices, it aims to offer actionable recommendations for strengthening SSC-driven partnerships. This paper is an attempt to contribute to a deeper understanding of how shared aspirations among nations of the Global South can be transformed into shaped futures through solidarity-based, inclusive, and context-sensitive development cooperation.

The next Section of the paper undertakes a brief literature review and sets out the pathway leading to the Compact. Section 3 details some evidence of Indian SSC and the Compact modalities in a few partner countries through case studies to illustrate the benefits of using multiple modalities. Section 4 traces the evolution of the Compact by combining disparate modalities into wholesome development partnerships. Section 5 examines some of the outcomes of the Compact in comparison to traditional SSC. Section 6 discusses some evolving trends in development cooperation that must be factored into the effort to ensure that the Compact stays relevant. Section 7 reflects on the required reporting frameworks, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning from a Global South perspective. This structure aligns with India's priorities as recorded in the Chair's Summary of the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2024).

2. Literature Review

The Bandung Conference of 1955 is widely seen as the founding moment of a South–South development ethos. Its Final Communiqué explicitly called for “self-determination, national and collective self-reliance, solidarity, mutual benefit and respect for national sovereignty” among newly independent states. From this “Bandung spirit” arose the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM - 1961) and the G-77 (1964), which institutionalized political non-alignment and collective economic advancement for the Third World. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, NAM and the G-77 pressed for technical cooperation, preferential trade, and a New International Economic Order reflecting structuralist critiques of North–South dependency. However, global shocks soon tested these ideals: the 1970s food and oil crises exposed deep Southern

vulnerabilities, and the 1980s debt crisis plus structural-adjustment policies eroded earlier solidarities (Villani, 2018). In this context, in 1980s, many Global South economies turned to IMF-led Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) for stabilization, critics soon noted that these often proved to have more adverse consequences than the initial problem itself. This experience spurred talk of a new ‘social compact’ that would prioritize inclusive development over austerity. Economists like Mahbub-ul-Haq argued that countries of the South needed to unite their economic, diplomatic and intellectual resources to advance domestic growth and South–South trade (Haq, 1980). Within a year, Arturo Goetz (1981) cautioned that the idea of a unified “South” was largely a myth and that South–South cooperation must mature beyond slogans. These debates laid the groundwork for rethinking North–South aid as mutual agreements rather than one-sided conditionality. In 1989, for example, OECD Development Centre chief Thorvald Stoltenberg proposed ‘development contracts’ to align short-term stabilization with medium-term growth plans (Adams, 1991).

Building on these ideas, economist Arjun Sengupta (1993)² explicitly formulated a ‘development compact’ rooted in the right to development. He suggested formal agreements between industrialized and developing countries in which the latter would undertake bold reforms (minimizing social costs) while donor nations committed sufficient resources for development. Sengupta insisted the compact be based on *mutuality of obligation* and *reciprocity of conditionality*: developed countries would supply needed assistance and capacity-building, and in return developing countries would improve governance and carry out agreed reforms. The UNDP’s 2003 Human Development Report similarly defined a development compact as “a system of shared responsibility” where developing countries could *pitch for* more aid and market access in exchange for better accountability (UNDP, 2003).

The *new* development compact operates “between actors of the South” and on SSC principles of mutual gain, non-interference in internal affairs, absence of conditionalities, collective self-reliance,

capacity-building and institutional strengthening (Chaturvedi, 2016a). This marks a crucial shift from the traditional North-South aid model to a more comprehensive and inclusive SSC framework. Rather than relying on conditional loans or SAPs, the modern compact reimagines aid as multidimensional cooperation across five key modalities: trade and investment, technology transfer, skills development, Lines of Credit (LoCs), and grants. These components are integrated through flexible financing mechanisms tailored to the needs of partner countries, promoting policy coherence to ensure assistance does not undermine sectors like health, education, or employment. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in implementation by enhancing transparency, ensuring cost-effectiveness, and bridging political gaps that often limit diplomatic engagement (Chaturvedi, 2016b).

At India's 3rd Voice of the Global South Summit (August 2024), Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the term '**Global Development Compact**', building on India's own growth story and SSC experience (NDTV, 2024). He described it as a *comprehensive, human-centric* and *multi-dimensional* partnership framework (Business Standard, 2024). Crucially, Modi pledged that this Compact "will not burden the needy countries with debt in the name of development finance" (NDTV, 2024). In practice, the Compact bundles the SSC modalities above into one umbrella. The official Summit summary explicitly lists the four core elements - *trade for development; capacity building for sustainable growth; technology sharing; and project-specific concessional finance and grants*" (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2024) echoing the modalities identified earlier.

Alongside the announcement, India committed new initiatives. For example, Prime Minister Modi announced a special US\$2.5 million trade fund and a US\$1 million capacity-building fund for Global South partners (MEA, 2024). India also offered to expand access to affordable generic medicines and share agricultural technologies with other developing countries. In sum, the 2024 proposals operationalize the Global Development Compact by blending India's growth journey with the broader SSC principles of mutual benefit, multi-sector action, and

shared development priorities (*Business Standard*, 2024). This marks a shift from traditional aid models to a *human-centric*, partnership-driven framework for the Global South.

Experts note that evolving SSC requires broad-based participation and knowledge exchange. In the Delhi Process - a series of RIS-organized conferences on SSC, delegates have emphasized including voices from the “South of the South,” i.e., the most vulnerable developing countries, to democratize the conversation. This reflects a wider call for knowledge partnerships- networks linking Southern governments, research institutes, and civil society so that local experiences and solutions inform policy. As the study notes, removing the gap between policy “process actors” and local “knowledge actors” is essential for more effective cooperation (Centre for Global Development, 2021).

In practice, these ideas push SSC toward a multidimensional development partnership. The focus is not only on funding and projects but also on co-producing knowledge such as joint research on climate resilience, sharing best practices, and coordinating policies. For instance, RIS dialogues have explored formalizing South–South technology hubs and educational exchanges as “knowledge partnerships”. These efforts complement the Compact’s technical modalities by ensuring all partners learn from each other. In short, current SSC discourse as reflected in forums like the Delhi Process stresses inclusivity, mutual learning, and co-ownership, further evolving SSC beyond one-dimensional aid (Chaturvedi, 2016a).

Today’s **Global Development Compact** as championed by India brings together trade, technology, finance, capacity-building and grants under a human-centric, inclusive agenda. By foregrounding equal partnership and knowledge-sharing, it aims to “*shape futures*” through solidarity rather than debt. These developments reflect a broader consensus and resilient growth in the Global South requires multidimensional cooperation built on shared aspirations and responsibilities (*Business Standard*, 2024)

3. Experiences of Integration of Development Modalities for South-South Partnerships

South-South partnerships today blend trade, investment, technology transfer, capacity building, concessional finance and grants into a single development strategy, grounded in SSC principles - equality, respect for sovereignty, non-conditionality and mutual benefit and designed to promote self-reliance rather than dependency. In practice, this means countries negotiate aid and investment packages jointly and tailor them to national needs. The examples discussed below demonstrate these contours of the partnerships.

3.1 Lao and Cambodia

India's support for the Lao-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre (LIEDC) established in 2004 under the ASEAN Initiative for ASEAN Integration (RIS, 2022) and the Cambodia-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre (CIEDC) exemplify a holistic development compact. In Laos, India funded the Centre's infrastructure including a US\$50,000 grant as a Quick Impact Project under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation framework, which supported the construction of a LIEDC dormitory (Lao News Agency, 2022). Additionally, India provided technical assistance, capacity building, and equipment through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme and also provided support to the Centre by donating computers, laptops, and projectors in 2018 (RIS, 2022). A critical partner in this initiative was the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), a premier institution based in Ahmedabad, which played a central role in designing and delivering a three-month entrepreneurship curriculum focusing on motivation, business planning, technology exposure and SME skills for Lao trainees (CUTS, 2007). The Centre is now managed by Lao institutions and reports to their Department of SME Promotion under the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (Ounalom, V. 2024). This partnership has resulted in tangible deliverables, including the training of hundreds of Lao entrepreneurs in SME creation, and has fostered

national ownership. A Lao minister described LIEDC as a visible symbol of Lao-India cooperation that has helped trainees to be better positioned to start their own businesses (Lao News Agency). These combined inputs such as grants, resources, intensive capacity-building, and technical assistance were provided at the request of the Lao government. For example, recent Quick Impact Projects include a 5-room dormitory at the Lao-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre (LIEDC), funded at US\$50,000 under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation framework and handed over in June 2022 a typical “grant-plus-capability” input. (Lao News Agency, 2022)

Similarly, in Cambodia, the CIEDC now renamed as the National Institute of Entrepreneurship & Innovation was launched in 2006 as a collaborative training institution under Cambodia’s Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. The Cambodian government provided land, buildings, and initial operating funds, while India contributed the technical package: Khmer faculty were trained at EDII (USAID, 2006). The Indian Mission continues to support the Centre through literature, Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scholarships, and training slots (Mekong-Ganga Cooperation). These combined modalities enabled the delivery of a flagship six-week enterprise development program for Cambodian youth and SMEs. Since the institution is run by Cambodia’s government and was created through a bilateral initiative, its implementation has been demand-driven and nationally owned, reflecting the principles of South-South Cooperation. The institution shared governance structure as a joint venture between the two governments ensured mutual benefit (USAID. 2006). Also, India’s Centre of Excellence for Software Development and Training (CESDT) at Cambodia’s Academy of Digital Technology (approx. US\$1.2 million via the ASEAN-India fund) and earlier entrepreneurship/English-training centres illustrate sustained capacity-building alongside technology transfer (Mekong-Ganga Cooperation).

In both the Lao and Cambodia cases, the concerted use of finance, technology transfer, and advisory support has produced tangible outcomes

such as entrepreneurship skills development and new SME ventures while reinforcing the values of South- South Cooperation.

3.2 Mozambique

The India-Mozambique solar technology initiative exemplifies South–South Cooperation (SSC) through a Development Compact involving technology transfer, concessional development finance, capacity-building, and trade promotion. A US\$13 million Line of Credit (LoC) under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) scheme supported Mozambique’s first solar panel factory. Indian public sector enterprises, notably Central Electronics Ltd. (CEL), provided technical expertise, transferred Photovoltaic (PV) production technology, and trained 17 Mozambican engineers (FUNAE, 2012). Completed ahead of schedule in 2013, the factory received TÜV certification, enabling exports and reducing Mozambique’s US\$5-6 million annual solar panel import bill (ALER, 2017). In 2016, the plant produced over 10,000 panels, supporting rural electrification for villages, schools, and hospitals (Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 2016). Though no grant was involved, the concessional LoC emphasized mutual benefit and sustainability. The initiative created 780 jobs and addressed local capacity deficits. Despite market competition and concerns like groundwater depletion from solar irrigation, the project enhanced technical self-reliance and clean energy adoption. Therefore, Mozambique’s solar PV module assembly factory includes concessional finance, technology transfer and local jobs. (FUNAE, 2012; ALER, 2017). This SSC model values evolving, demand-driven support over rigid pre-set outcomes, reflecting dynamic cooperation principles (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation & United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

3.3 Ethiopia

Ethiopia’s sugar sector exemplifies a South-South development compact. Under the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), Ethiopia collaborated with India through a US\$ 640 million Line of Credit (LoC) to expand

and modernize three major sugar factories - Wonji/Shoa, Finchaa, and Tendaho, between 2007 and 2012. These investments aimed to boost sugar production to 2.25 million tonnes, ethanol output to 304,000 m³, and generate 607 MWe of electricity. Indian companies such as Uttam Sucrotech International and Overseas Infrastructure Alliance (OIA) were involved in implementing these projects, facilitating significant technology transfer (Chaturvedi, 2016b).

Additionally, infrastructure support was integrated through a US\$ 300 million railway link to Djibouti, enhancing export potential and trade logistics. The project also reflects inclusive development aims, targeting the creation of 200,000 jobs and enhanced rural livelihoods. Additionally, the National Sugar Institute (NSI) of India signed an MoU with Ethiopia's Sugar Corporation (ESC) to establish ten new sugar factories and a hi-tech sugar institute, providing technical expertise and manpower training tailored to local climatic conditions. (Press Trust of India, 2017) Indian **lines of credit** supported Ethiopia's sugar sector expansion and cogeneration capacity (e.g., Wonji-Shoa/Fincha/Omo-Kuraz phases), illustrating how concessional finance plus technical services underpin industrialisation (Press Trust of India, 2017; Chaturvedi, 2016). Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate a coherent SSC development compact, combining concessional finance, technology transfer, capacity building, and infrastructure development to achieve sustainable and sovereign industrial growth.

3.3 Nepal

The East-West Highway (Mahendra Rajmarga) project in Nepal exemplifies a comprehensive development compact with India. India funded over 800 km of the 1,024 km highway through grants under the "Ten Crore Aid Programme," contributing significantly to Nepal's infrastructure. Capacity building was integral, with Nepalese officials trained in planning and engineering, and support extended to institutions like Tribhuvan University. India also transferred critical technology and engineering expertise, managing surveys, designs, and implementation through the Indian Cooperation Mission (ICM). While much funding

was grant-based, India had earlier extended loans, later converted to grants and increased standby credit limits from ₹150 million in 1987 to ₹500 million by 1992, indirectly supporting infrastructure-linked sectors. The highway greatly boosted trade and investment by connecting Nepal's east and west and enhancing access to Indian markets under the 1971 India-Nepal Trade and Transit Treaty. Dr. S.K. Singh's 1973 study highlighted its transformative impact on urbanisation, land value, and regional commerce. The project remains a model of South-South cooperation, demonstrating India's long-term commitment to Nepal's development through a multidimensional and mutually beneficial approach (Chaturvedi, 2016).

Across these cases, the **outcomes** have reinforced sustainable development and self-reliance. One analysis observes that learning from peer countries builds capacity more effectively than top-down aid from the North, because similar development contexts and shared problem-solving create more relevant lessons. In sum, multi-modality SSC partnerships leverage the strengths of all parties, embedding development aid within horizontal, win-win frameworks that pave self-reliant growth for the Global South (ECOSOC).

Country & Project	Capacity Building	Trade & Investment	Technology Transfer	Concessional Finance	Grants
Laos – LIEDC	✔ Yes	✗ No	✔ Yes	✗ No	✔ Yes
Cambodia – CIEDC (now NIEI)	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✗ No	✗ No
Mozambique – Solar Panel Factory	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✗ No
Ethiopia – Sugar Sector Modernisation	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	✗ No

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Country & Project	Capacity Building	Trade & Investment	Technology Transfer	Concessional Finance	Grants
Nepal – East-West Highway (Mahendra Rajmarga)	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes (earlier loan)	✓ Yes

4. Evolution of the Development Compact

The **Compact** represents a positive evolution of the traditional SSC. Where past SSC largely operated through discrete modalities (trade and investment, capacity-building, technology transfer, concessional finance, or grants), the Compact seeks a more **coherent, integrated approach** rooted in the development priorities of partner countries. As Prime Minister Modi explained at the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (August 2024), the Compact is “based on India’s development journey and experiences of development partnership,” and is explicitly **human-centric, multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral**. Rather than a loose collection of projects, the Compact unites the five classic modalities into a unified strategy. In Modi’s words, under the new Compact “we will focus on trade for development, capacity building for sustainable growth, technology sharing, project-specific concessional finance and grants” (The Statesman, 2024). This represents an evolution beyond the older model in which each modality stood alone to a **synergistic framework** in which all elements work together for the partner’s development where the Compact’s modalities are intersubstitutable in implementation. As one RIS analyst observed, the Compact is meant to be transformative and to bring greater Global South solidarity, with countries supporting one another primarily through *leveraging trade for development, concessional finance, grants, capacity building, and technology sharing in a harmonious manner* (RIS, 2024).

4.1 Beyond Traditional Modalities

In earlier SSC, the five modalities often operated in isolation. India's development assistance has long included these instruments, but in practice they were managed as separate lines of credit, grants or projects. The new Compact rearticulates them in ways that emphasize overall **development outcomes**.

Trade for Development: Trade is reframed as “**Trade for Development**”, linking export support to local industrialization. Local industrialization can benefit more from efforts to improve trade relations between partners that include developing capacity to use the increased trade for industrialization. Under the Compact, the emphasis is not just on expanding trade, but on trade as a driver of broad economic development. For example, India announced a dedicated US\$ 2.5 million **trade promotion fund** and a US\$ 1 million **trade policy training fund** to help Global South countries boost exports and negotiate trade deals (RIS, 2024). As Modi put it, trade is one modality of the Compact designed to drive GDP growth and jobs (MEA, 2024). This reflects a deliberate move towards using trade as a mechanism to meet SDGs, especially through local value addition and skills development.

Capacity Building for Sustainable Growth: India's capacity-building efforts now prioritize sustainable growth, focusing on skills and institutional strengthening in clean energy, digital technology, climate adaptation including climate resilient agriculture and many more. Programmes like ITEC are aligned with partner-defined goals, significantly expanding training opportunities. For example, Ethiopia's slots rose from 25 in 2007-08 to 250 in 2016-17, supporting sustainable development through targeted technical and human-resource training (Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2018)

Technology Sharing: Instead of piecemeal transfer, this modality targets critical innovations. India is sharing IT solutions (e-government platforms), agricultural best practices (sustainable farming), and pharmaceutical know-how (generic drugs and regulator training). For instance, India is partnering with Global South nations to make essential

medicines affordable, and training their drug regulators – concrete actions tied to health-related SDGs (The Statesman, 2024). Similarly, India’s decades-old Pan-Africa E-Network (telemedicine and tele-education) in Ethiopia and other countries exemplifies sharing digital health and education technology to improve livelihoods (Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2018).

Project-Specific Concessional Finance: India continues to use EXIM Bank lines of credit, but now with greater targeting. For example- a line of credit of US\$ 640 million is being used to revive Ethiopia’s sugar industry, and dozens of projects in agriculture, transport, and power sectors in Africa and Asia have been financed at low interest (Chaturvedi, 2016b). Under the Compact, loans are explicitly tied to SDG-related projects and caution is taken to avoid debt distress - “will not burden the needy countries with debt”, - Modi affirmed (Press Trust of India, 2024). The emphasis on project-specific initiatives also lends aid greater transparency and alignment with each partner’s plan.

Grants: Grants remain an important modality but are framed as responsive aid. India’s recent grants have often been in-kind or emergency relief for crises that hit the South. Examples include India’s post-cyclone Idai relief to Mozambique (rescue by Navy ships, delivery of rice and medical kits) and large agricultural grants (US\$10 million in 2016 to help Mozambique buy wheat after a drought) (Dakshin website). These grants are integrated into the Compact as part of a broader package: they complement loans and trade by addressing immediate needs or public-good gaps (e.g., healthcare equipment, training scholarships).

Each of these updated modalities carries forward an SSC tradition but with new emphases on **integration and mutual development**. As one RIS analyst noted, the Compact’s modalities are interdependent and meant to work in tandem (RIS, 2024). For instance, a road financed by concessional loan may be built by an Indian company (linking trade and local industry), with grant-funded training of engineers and an Indian-provided traffic management technology illustrating the multisectoral approach.

5. Outcomes Compared to Traditional Cooperation

India's idea of the Compact represents a significant shift from traditional, donor-recipient models of development cooperation. This section evaluates the early evidence of the Compact's effectiveness across five key dimensions: capacity building, mutual benefit, debt sustainability, climate resilience, and Agenda 2030 alignment. Drawing on examples from countries such as Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nepal, it compares these outcomes with those of conventional aid models and highlights the emerging advantages of India's distinctive development cooperation strategy.

- **Capacity Building:** India's emphasis on training and human resources development is yielding tangible results. For example, in Ethiopia the long-running ITEC programme has built a large cadre of locally trained professionals (engineers, administrators) apart from skill-based training of security personnel (Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2018). In Mozambique, India has used grants to train police officers in Indian forensic and counter-insurgency technique, and provided medical equipment to upgrade clinics (Dakshin). These investments leave lasting knowledge in partner countries, beyond the life of any single project. In contrast, many traditional donors still focus heavily on funding projects with foreign firms or short-term experts, rather than developing local skills.
- **Mutual Benefit and Local Value:** The Compact explicitly seeks *win-win* outcomes. Indian companies often execute the financed projects, creating business opportunities for both sides. For example, under a 2010 grant to Mozambique, India provided anti-riot vehicles purchased from local subsidiaries of Mahindra and Tata (Dakshin). This not only met Mozambique's security needs but supported Indian industry abroad. Such linkages foster local employment (in partners) and markets for Indian goods, building economic collaborations of mutual benefit. In comparison, traditional aid can sometimes create dependency: donor governments may import consultants and equipment into the partner country without engaging local firms.

- **Debt and Sustainability:** A core strength of the Compact is its emphasis on debt-sensitive cooperation, in contrast to the debt distress concerns associated with some North-South or Belt and Road Initiative style lending. India's concessional Lines of Credit (LoCs) are extended at interest rates as low as 1.75% with long grace periods, and in many cases earlier loans have been converted into outright grants, as with Nepal's standby credit in the 1980s-90s (Chaturvedi 2016b). This reduces long-term fiscal burden while sustaining infrastructure investment. Empirical analyses show that India's grants and soft loans to Nepal, Mozambique, and other partners have avoided the debt-to-GDP spikes seen under Chinese financing in comparable countries (Banerjee 2024). Importantly, India's Chair's Summary at the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (August 2024) reiterated that the Compact "will not burden needy countries with debt in the name of development finance," embedding sustainability as a guiding principle (MEA, 2024). Further, India increasingly ties project financing to SDG-related priorities (renewable energy, connectivity, human capital), ensuring that loans generate productive assets and export revenues that help service debt rather than aggravating fiscal stress. The Ethiopian sugar sector LoC, for instance, included cogeneration capacity that generates electricity sales revenue, creating repayment flows (Press Trust of India, 2017). Analysts argue that such design makes the Compact self-sustaining, unlike conditional structural loans of the past, where austerity often undermined growth and repayment capacity (Chaturvedi 2016a).
- **Climate Resilience:** The Compact explicitly incorporates resilience. India is transferring technologies suited to climate adaptation (such as solar lanterns and drought-resistant crops) and providing disaster relief as part of cooperation. For example, 5,000 solar lanterns were part of a Mozambican police grant, extending lighting to rural areas. When cyclone Idai struck Mozambique in 2019, India sent three naval ships to rescue large number of peoples and deliver hundreds of tons of rice and medicine (Dakshin). These efforts not only provide immediate relief but help build community resilience. Moreover,

India shares its experiences on climate-smart agriculture³ (natural farming) and disaster-response organizations⁴, sending green tech for flooding⁵. Traditional aid often addresses climate as a separate sector whereas the Compact weaves it into each modality.

Agenda 2030 Alignment: By tying all activities to partner-defined goals, the Compact advances the SDGs more systematically. Its focus areas: trade-led growth, education, health, sustainable technologies map closely to numerous SDGs (e.g., Decent Work and Economic Growth, Quality Education, Good Health, Industry/Innovation). India has contributed to the UN's *SDG Stimulus* group for financing in the Global South (MEA, 2024). Additionally, India's sharing of *digital public infrastructure* (such as its Aadhaar-based ID and UPI payment systems) helps partner countries accelerate goals like financial inclusion and e-governance. Indeed, 12 countries (from Nepal and Sri Lanka to Ghana and Guyana) are now adopting Indian digital platforms for services (ET Telecom, 2024). This kind of knowledge and tech transfer is a direct enabler of the 2030 Agenda in low- and middle-income countries.

Overall, these outcomes suggest that the Compact is yielding **better results** than many conventional models. Global South leaders have echoed that sentiment: India's approach is seen as human-centric and participatory, leveraging trade and expertise rather than one-sided grants. The UN Secretary-General noted at the BAPA+40 South–South Cooperation Conference that *solutions from the South are delivering lasting results*, and that enhanced cooperation helps countries learn from each other and grow more quickly, close income gaps and build inclusive, resilient societies (United Nations, 2019). India's Compact embodies that spirit, and early cases indicate tangible progress in capacity, mutual benefit and resilience. This contrasts with traditional aid models, where funds were often tied to donor politics or limited by debt conditions.

6. Evolving Pathways

The Voice of Global South Summit itself acknowledged that additional innovations will be needed to keep the Compact relevant to modern

challenges. Five emerging trends are especially important in this endeavour:

- **Triangular Cooperation (TrC)** - It has emerged as a transformative modality within international development, enabling dynamic, multi-actor partnerships that transcend traditional North-South binaries. India, a pioneer in TrC since the 1950s, has reinvigorated this approach by combining its cost-effective innovations and local knowledge with the financial and technical strengths of Northern partners like Germany, Japan, and the US (Chaturvedi & Piefer Söyler, 2021). A notable example is the India-Germany-Ghana pilot project, which supports women- and youth- led bamboo enterprises in Ghana through skill development, enterprise training, and innovation hubs (GIZ, 2023; Kumar, 2025). Such initiatives reflect the value of co-designed, demand-driven collaboration, aligned with SDGs and rooted in local ownership (RIS Knowledge Forum, 2025). As OECD analysts argue, TrC offers an inclusive, flexible model that promotes shared responsibility and horizontally structured partnerships (OECD, 2019). To scale impact, pooling Indian grants with multilateral loans for climate-resilient infrastructure or green technologies can leverage synergies and broaden reach.
- **Blended Finance and Impact Funds:** Meeting the SDGs and climate targets requires far more money than public budgets can cover. India's Compact can benefit from **blended finance** mixing public, private and philanthropic capital as a key modality. Innovations like Social Impact Funds (SIFs) and Social Stock Exchanges (SSE) are being introduced.⁶ SIFs can function as **public-private-people partnerships**, pooling government funds with corporate and charitable contributions to de-risk projects (RIS, 2024). India has pledged US\$ 25 million to a Social Impact Fund aimed at fast-tracking digital infrastructure in developing countries. At a Summit in 2024, commentators highlighted how SIFs and SSEs (which facilitate investment in certified social enterprises) could be expanded to finance community projects in health, education, clean energy and gender equality (RIS, 2024). Embedding such blended

finance mechanisms into the Compact would mobilize new capital flows and private sector innovation, making projects more sustainable and scalable.

- **Knowledge Networks and Think-Tank Platforms:** To disseminate best practices, India has established knowledge-sharing initiatives (e.g., *DAKSHIN: Global South Centre of Excellence*). Such networks connect academics, practitioners and officials across countries. As one RIS analyst noted that DAKSHIN promotes digital solutions and fosters knowledge sharing, capacity building and skilling to strengthen the Global South (Kaushik, 2024). Another notable platform is the **ASEAN-India Centre (AIC)**, established at RIS following the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit 2012. Inaugurated in 2013, AIC serves as a resource hub to bridge knowledge gaps and enhance ASEAN-India cooperation. It supports the realization of the ASEAN Community across political-security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars. The AIC conducts policy research, facilitates networking with ASEAN think-tanks, and contributes to the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership (AISP) and Plan of Action (POA). Expanding these networks, perhaps via regional hubs or global online platforms will help countries learn from each other's successes. Together, platforms like DAKSHIN and AIC offer blueprints for **triangular knowledge partnerships**, enabling innovative collaboration in emerging sectors like AI in agriculture and solar irrigation. (ASEAN-India Centre, n.d.)
- **Digital Public Infrastructure:** India's experience in creating *Digital Public Goods* (DPG) has been applauded worldwide (Sanchez-Cacicedo, 2024). Indian digital platforms (Aadhaar ID, UPI payments, e-procurement, Digi Locker, etc.) are increasingly seen as replicable models. To that end, India has begun sharing DPI with willing countries. By late 2024, about a dozen nations (from Bhutan and Nepal to Rwanda and Guyana) were deploying Indian payment and ID systems. India-UNDP partnerships are helping countries build their own digital stacks for service delivery. Going forward, the Compact could formally include **DPI sharing** as a modality: for instance, deploying Indian e-health or e-agriculture

platforms in partner health systems. This would boost SDG progress (e.g., health, financial inclusion) at minimal cost and high efficiency (ET Telecom, 2024).

- **Resilient Governance Systems:** Finally, many Global South countries need stronger institutions for disaster management, public finance etc., to achieve development goals. The Compact should therefore support **governance capacity** (anti-corruption, fiscal management, social accountability). India is helping in some ways (e.g., training legislators, sharing e-governance practices), but this can be scaled up. For example, India could facilitate peer-to-peer parliamentary dialogues, or support digital records systems to make public procurement more transparent. Resilient governance also means building networks like the International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, Global Biofuels Alliance and International Big Cat Alliance, where India plays a lead role. By embedding institutional support within development projects rather than assuming such capacity already exists, the Compact can leave partners with stronger, more resilient states.

These evolving modalities address contemporary gaps. Triangular and blended approaches bring in new resources; digital public goods and knowledge networks spread innovation; and governance support ensures that growth is inclusive and sustainable. Already, India's Compact is aligning with global calls for innovation: as the UN Secretary-General noted, the South must adapt cooperation to "the planet's evolving realities including climate change" (United Nations, 2019). The Modi-proposed Compact, with its emphasis on multi-dimensional partnerships, is a step in that direction.

7. Future Directions

As the SSC modalities evolve, there remains a conspicuous gap in evaluating the measurable impacts of both traditional and emerging modalities under the Compact. Despite their growing relevance, SSC projects often lack systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, leaving stakeholders with limited evidence on long-term

developmental outcomes (Chakrabarti & Chaturvedi, 2021; UNCTAD, 2024).

The OECD doesn't generate primary data for SSC, though it does track SSC and triangular cooperation related data of the members of its Development Assistance Committee, who are primarily developed countries. The UNOSSC is a primary source for data and analysis on SSC globally. UNOSSC's South-South Galaxy⁷, a global knowledge sharing and partnership brokering platform launched in 2019 aims to facilitate partnerships between countries and regions for knowledge sharing, capacity development and creating a wide range of opportunities. Revamped in 2024 with AI-powered digital assistant and a PowerBI Solutions dashboard for enhanced data accessibility, visualization and analysis, the platform offers a range of new features and serves as a consolidated South-South and triangular cooperation platform for all partners and acts as 'one-stop-shop' for all to utilize and benefit from. However, the platform faces challenges inherent to digital knowledge sharing, such as the need to address the global digital divide, limited digital access, the scale of debt and climate challenges in developing countries, and ensuring the credibility and relevance of SSC initiatives in a complex global landscape.⁸

To address such challenges, future research must design an evaluation framework that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative metrics tailored to SSC's ethos of mutual benefit and non-conditionality. A promising model, proposed by Chakrabarti and Chaturvedi (2021), divides assessment into three layers: process (alignment with SSC norms like ownership and horizontality), performance (efficiency in implementation), and impact (tangible socio-economic or environmental outcomes). Integrating OECD criteria with SSC-specific values, future tools should measure, for example, not just how many professionals were trained, but how local institutions were strengthened, or how national policies evolved.

Measurement strategies should integrate mixed-methods approaches: financial metrics, productivity gains, and infrastructure outcomes must

be complemented by stakeholder satisfaction, institutional development, and policy influence (Berns & Lala, 2021). For example, triangular cooperation (TrC), involving a Southern provider, a Northern partner, and a recipient country, requires evaluating co-created outcomes and the added value of multi-stakeholder participation (OECD, 2019; RIS, 2025). Participatory monitoring tools including community surveys and collaborative indicator-setting can ensure inclusivity and mutual accountability.

Measuring SSC outcomes poses several challenges. Given these challenges, a forward-looking research agenda should outline specific methods and models. Researchers could employ input-output analysis or data envelopment analysis (DEA) to compare the efficiency of various projects or modalities by relating resources (labour, funds, technology) to outputs (e.g., number of professionals trained, kilometres of road built). Developing shared theories of change for each compact can also help in tracing the pathway from immediate outputs to long-term impacts like poverty alleviation or improved literacy. These causal chains should be empirically tested using timeline-based evaluations - midline, end line, and follow-up, to assess sustainability and adaptive learning. (Reality of Aid, 2024).

Suggested indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning-

- Multidimensional poverty: Tracking national or sub-national Multidimensional Poverty Index headcount and intensity to capture overlapping deprivations beyond income (education, health, living standards). Pairing with project-level contribution analysis (Lao News Agency, 2021).
- Skills coverage: Monitoring SDG 4.4.1- the proportion of youth/adults with ICT or job-relevant skills (per UIS/UN-Stats metadata) and complement with World Bank STEP survey modules are available to capture cognitive, socio-emotional and job-specific skills (United Nations Statistical Division, 2022), (World Bank, 2020).
- Institutional capacity: Pre/post self-assessments of partner institutions (process reliability, service timeliness, uptake of standards),

consistent with UNOSSC guidance on capacity development in South-South cooperation (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation & United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

Research must also explore comparative case studies across regions and modalities to identify replicable best practices. For example, assessing India supported entrepreneurship centres in Laos and Cambodia may yield valuable insights on SME development and monitoring techniques (Reality of Aid, 2024; Chakrabarti and Chaturvedi, 2021). Moreover, collaborative efforts with OECD or UN agencies could help prototype SSC-specific M&E toolkits, extending efforts like SDG Indicator 17.3 and TOSSD (Total Official Support for Sustainable Development) to non-financial cooperation metrics (UNStats, 2022). The TOSSD framework usefully discloses cross-border official support and the mobilisation of private finance, but Global-South stakeholders have cautioned against double-counting, donor-centric valuations, and weak recipient visibility (Kharas & Rogerson, 2017). A just approach under the Compact would include: (i) prioritising recipient-perspective reporting (what is received, on what terms, and with what development results); (ii) clearly separating mobilised private flows from public effort (OECD, 2019); and (iii) publishing methodologies for concessionality/PPP valuations to avoid inflating of support (United Nations, UNCTAD, 2024). These guardrails are consistent with critiques in the literature and with OECD's own guidance notes as TOSSD evolves. Also, institutional support is essential. Hence, SSC funding bodies like the BRICS Bank or UNDP's South-South Trust Fund should be incentivized to collect harmonized M&E data. Platforms like the Voice of the Global South Summit, BAPA+ conferences, Delhi Process of RIS and DAKSHIN events could then serve as venues for harmonizing indicators and fostering peer learning. (UNCTAD, 2024).

In summary, the Global Development Compact's promise of solidarity-based, multi-modal development can only be fully realized if its impacts are rigorously measured and compared. This will require concerted research on new M&E frameworks that fuse quantitative metrics with qualitative assessments. It will also demand experimental

policy work to pilot these approaches and institutionalize them in SSC practice. Such an agenda is both urgent and promising by illuminating what works in South-South partnerships, it would help ensure these evolving modalities truly deliver on their shared aspirations for a resilient Global South (Reality of Aid, 2024; Chakrabarti and Chaturvedi 2021).

Endnotes

- ¹ For details, see RIS Brochure at <https://dakshin.org.in/uploads/publications/169172908282Five%20Modalities%20of%20Development%20Compact-South-South%20Brochure.pdf>, accessed 18 September 2025
- ² See also the chapter entitled: Conceptualizing the right to development for the twenty-first century, in OHCHR book entitled: REALIZING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT, (2013), available online at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Development/RTDBook/PartIChapter4.pdf> accessed 18 September 2025
- ³ For example, MANAGE, Hyderabad, provides several training programmes to international applicants (<https://www.manage.gov.in/trainings/trgCalendar-2025-26.pdf>)
- ⁴ For example, NDRF has undertaken humanitarian assistance in recent earthquakes worldwide (<https://www.ndrf.gov.in/en/international-operations>)
- ⁵ For example, Operation Sadbhav launched for floods caused by Typhoon Yagi in Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/operation-sadbhav-typhoon-yagi-myanmar-laos-vietnam-indian-air-force-navy-2600287-2024-09-15>)
- ⁶ <https://www.iibf.org.in/documents/Brochure/Social%20Stock%20Exchange.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://southsouth-galaxy.org/>
- ⁸ Statement by UNOSSC Director Dima Al-Khatib to mark the International Day for South-South Cooperation <[https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165828#:~:text=Nevertheless%2C%20the%20challenges%20are%20real,more%20closely%20with%20each%20other](https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165828#:~:text=Nevertheless%2C%20the%20challenges%20are%20real,more%20closely%20with%20each%20other>https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165828#:~:text=Nevertheless%2C%20the%20challenges%20are%20real,more%20closely%20with%20each%20other)>.

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BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.



FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India's development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.



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FISD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India's development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India's engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.



As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.



Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on SSC approaches for international development.



DST-Satellite Centre for Policy Research on STI Diplomacy at RIS aims to advance policy research at the intersection of science, technology, innovation (STI) and diplomacy, in alignment with India's developmental priorities and foreign policy objectives.

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The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged across inter-governmental processes of several regional economic cooperation initiatives. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas.

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