



Emerging Contours of Triangular Cooperation and Global South



RIS

Research and Information System
for Developing Countries

विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

Emerging Contours of Triangular Cooperation and Global South

Edited by

Milindo Chakrabarti

Sushil Kumar



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Preface



Professor Sachin Chaturvedi

Vice Chancellor, Nalanda University and Director General RIS

In the current times, the global fragmentation of alliances and institutional mandates is at its peak. Therefore, it becomes imperative to engage in new consensus-building efforts grounded in the philosophies of sustainable and equitable development, and to arrive at effective modalities of cooperation, despite significant challenges. The Global South can take the lead in this endeavour by securing policy space and empowering countries to make independent economic decisions that promote both economic growth and socio-cultural harmony. An emerging modality of engagement led by the Global South includes various models of Triangular Cooperation (TrC) – a hybrid collaboration involving both the Global North and South. This model is firmly rooted in the principles of ownership, horizontality, and partnership.

There have been intense deliberations on the crucial issues of enhanced development cooperation and development financing at multiple levels by member governments, including those from the Global South, the G7, and others. The G20, under India’s presidency in 2023, emphasised the need to strengthen North-South, South-South, and Triangular Cooperation. Brazil’s G20 presidency in 2024 further reinforced the trilateral cooperation as one of the key priorities. RIS has consistently endeavoured to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to deliberate on the nature, scope, challenges, and way forward for South-South Cooperation (SSC) and Triangular Cooperation.

This present report reflects the spirit of solidarity, which is the principal driving force behind cooperation among Southern countries. It is our expectation that this compilation will significantly enhance the understanding of Triangular Cooperation and offer diverse perspectives on development cooperation.

We thank Ambassador Sanjay Kumar Verma, Chairperson, RIS for his initiative and guidance for bringing out this report. We would also like to compliment Professor Milindo Chakrabarti, Visiting Fellow and Dr Sushil Kumar, Assistant Professor at RIS for preparing this important study. I am sure, it will serve as a valuable reference for policymakers, academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders in both the Global South and the Global North.

We also take this opportunity to thank all participants of the capacity-building programmes and conferences – invited speakers, presenters, chairpersons, sponsors, and attendees – for their invaluable contributions. Lastly, we extend our gratitude to our colleagues at RIS for their guidance and insightful inputs. We also acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the publication team – Mr Tish Malhotra, Dr Ivy Roy Sarkar, Mr Sachin Singhal and Mr Sanjeev Karna – for designing and production of this report elegantly.

Sachin Chaturvedi

Introduction



Milindo Chakrabarti* and Sushil Kumar**

The observed empirical mismatch between development and growth in GDP created the scope for looking at a third alternative that is commonly referred to as Triangular Cooperation (TrC). This compilation titled “Emerging Contours of Triangular Cooperation and Global South” is an attempt to capture the possibilities and prospects of TrC in making a world devoid of stark inequality and a sustained planet. It comprises contributions from several scholars and practitioners that were published during the last decade and a half and identifies the challenges to be taken care of to operationalize the idea in reality. The compilation is divided into two parts. The first section takes care of the Indian experiences of TrC, it comprises of two contribution the first chapter provides a brief description of India’s approach to triangular cooperation and initiative taken, while the second chapter gives a detail elaboration of India-Germany development partnership in Africa. The second part takes care of experiences from other countries and some analytical problems like localisation of development actions but very much in a multilateral framework this section also highlights the Japanese experience in Triangular Cooperation that are necessary to be taken care of. Together, these sections provide

a reflective understanding of TrC as a policy instrument and modality.

The idea of TrC aims to bring in voices from the North and the South to engage in actions for a unified and a collective solutions’ driven mandate to achieve sustainable development. The idea of partnerships has evolved since the Bandung conference, with the evolving nature of TrC taking shape. Earlier partnerships were more among the governments, but with new development stakeholders, the private sector, civil society, philanthropy, academia and sub-national institutions are also getting engaged. The new formats are also overcoming the traditional format of viewing the developing countries as pivots for transferring technical and technological resources and good practices, with the financial resources from the developed countries. The new arrangements are bringing them all together in a horizontal partnership to evolve the modalities of operations. It is widely felt that resources, particularly after the COVID crisis, need to be brought back to the SDGs and climate change agenda. The collective will of realising sustainable development requires a collective action in which the TrC is slated to play a principal role to achieve the ultimate objectives

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of providing “access, equity and inclusion” in global resources to every citizen of the world, so that no one is left behind. In this context, it becomes essential to reflect on what sustainable development entails.

Sustainable development has become a buzzword in today’s world. Its quest looks for a human system where not only is no one left behind, but also the planet is protected from over-exploitation. Having been used for centuries to follow an extractive path of development, where human needs were the fulcrum of change, with nature and its resources taken as unlimited free gifts for use as much as required, we are now facing the possibility of losing the planet earth as a safe habitat for human sustenance in the near future. Parallel extraction of human resources also went on side by side, leading to increasing intra-country and inter-country inequality across the globe. Sustainable development is considered an answer to this double-edged sword, professing to take care of exploitation at both these levels. Even though the term was coined a long time back in several international meetings, the identification of sustainable development goals and their endorsement by almost all the countries in 2005, brought the idea to a sphere of operationalisation.

It should be maintained that the term development emerged well before. Development as the term became relevant by the 1940s, when the process of decolonisation became evident to be pursued actively in the following decades. Many countries came out of the clutches of colonialism and became politically independent to decide on their future course of action. However, these countries were facing a serious scarcity of resources, both financial and human. Lack of human capacity did not help them to increase productivity by creating necessary innovation, while lack of finance created bottlenecks to procure necessary inputs

from other countries. This two-way stream of scarcity led to the realisation of two different types of development cooperation models. While the first model, later identified as South–South Cooperation (SSC), emphasised on providing solutions for human capacity enhancement by one southern country to another, the second model, identified as North-South Cooperation (NSC), intended to meet the gaps in financial resources being faced by the Southern nations. These models operated in parallel, often complementing each other, but with varying degrees of success.

These two models were simultaneously used to ensure “development cooperation” till the beginning of the twenty-first century, when it was realised that just growth in GDP cannot lead to development, as in the process we have often been engaged in destroying our natural resources beyond their levels of sustenance. Another factor that also got noticed was that the Northern donors were relying on copying their experiences of development that depended on the extraction of natural resources from other regions to facilitate capital accumulation and subsequent investment in technology creation and generation of physical capital. The SSC model, on the other hand, could engage in capacity building of the citizens of the Global South with their limited access to resources. But they could apply their experiences they achieved in the path of development. These features led to the question about the effectiveness of NSC aid. The simultaneous efforts by UNDP in creating the idea of the Human Development Index in the last decade of the previous century also clarified that GDP growth and human development do not always move in the same direction. This insight further legitimised the emergence of alternative models like TrC, which seek to bridge these gaps by combining the strengths of both SSC and NSC in a more balanced and equitable manner.



Section I





Triangular Cooperation: Frameworks, Approach and Initiatives

Sachin Chaturvedi*

Introduction

The growing dynamism, heft and bandwidth of South-South co-operation (SSC) and triangular cooperation have changed the international development cooperation system, creating new opportunities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Innovative issue-specific pilot collaborations are finding success. For instance, voluntary national climate sustainability standards, discussed among high-, middle- and low-income countries, centre on common regional challenges and localised definitions of good social and environmental practices. India is emerging as a leader in forging innovative forms of co-operation and partnerships, which the development co-operation system should integrate. India's leadership of the Group of Twenty (G20) in 2023 offers an opportunity to further advance innovative partnerships.

Emerging financial platforms expand the potential of non-traditional multi-stakeholder partnerships among SSC actors. These include the New Marshall Plan, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the Silk Road Fund. SSC exchanges, investment, and trade projects are achieved through new development banks – the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, for

example – in the emerging market economies of Brazil, the People's Republic of China, India and South Africa. This dynamic can provide new solutions. However, it also creates more complexity and challenges for accountability and co-ordination across diverse development actors, systems and normative frameworks. The core areas of contestation include a lack of universally accepted norms and OECD standards in measuring the quality of development; siloed financial platforms providing conflicting inputs to the United Nations' Financing for Development Forum and High-level Political Forum; and misalignment across clubs or new institutions arising in response to a lack of representation and trust of the existing system of global governance

Custodians of official development assistance (ODA) have held a de facto monopoly on defining norms for development co-operation, and those custodians – OECD-DAC members – have struggled to embrace and engage with new and diverse counter-institutional assistance frameworks. But change is in the air. They may have rejected SSC as a modality for development cooperation in high-level forums on aid effectiveness in the 2000s (for example, lack of recognition in the Accra High-level Political Forum in 2008) and showed lukewarm engagement in discussions at the Second

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High-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation, known as BAPA+40, in 2019, but today, the new statistical measure of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development has incorporated the growing importance of SSC.

India's Mantra for South-South and Triangular Cooperation is "broaden scope, scale and innovation"

Despite unresolved areas of contestation between development actors, more providers are maximising development potential by leveraging new partnerships in South-South and triangular cooperation. Since 2014, India has witnessed a new movement for triangular cooperation, with political impetus and engagement of the prime minister. It has pushed frontiers with new actors, deeper engagements and more significant commitments. A characteristic of the Indian triangular co-operation model is that top political leadership leverages domestic development innovations and partnerships with diverse development actors to scale up initiatives. Triangular cooperation addressing physical infrastructure can advance social progress. For instance, improving regional energy grids expands digital connectivity and provides access to opportunities in education and health.

Its no-frills and low-cost delivery have helped India make its South-South framework a success. India has provided development partnerships through the "theory of development compact" comprising of five modalities: capacity building, grants, concessional finance, technology and trade. India tailors different combinations of these modalities to each context. In Mozambique, for instance, support for solar panel production utilised three modalities: capacity building through trainings for scientists by Central Electronics Limited, concessional finance and a grant element for infrastructure projects.

India has identified new avenues for engaging with the private sector to provide a platform for innovation. A Global Innovation Partnership

launched in 2022 under a United Kingdom-led programme would be financed through a trilateral development co-operation fund to advance the SDGs.

RIS estimates that India's development cooperation reached USD 8.7 billion in 2020 (OECD, 2022). India's development partnership portfolio covers over 160 countries and trains more than 20 000 people annually (RIS, 2022). Delivering through Indian missions makes ventures cost-effective. Still, the impact is limited due to development cooperation portfolio budget constraints. Thus, partnerships with ODA providers will likely scale up development cooperation activities and provide an impetus for the sustainable funding required.

Expanding Partnerships Depends on All Actors Being Open to Change and Agree on Common Minimum Principles

Common principles must be established to embark on a new and sustainable development trajectory. Doing so will ensure that partnerships between development actors leverage comparative advantages and serve common development goals. The Indian Presidency of the G20 could be the impetus, concentrating a higher level of political attention on delivering projects through development co-operation and wielding the strength of triangular co-operation. Through its G20 presidency, India could, for instance, also spearhead new paradigms for measuring gross domestic product, such as accounting for biodiversity, social inclusion and wellness.

At the core of resolving cooperation in international governance is balancing and integrating the universality of SDG frameworks for accountability and safeguarding national sovereignty for development progress. The ODA system must integrate new forms of cooperation and governance mechanisms. The emergence of South-North, North-North, South-South

and triangular co-operation has garnered new opportunities for multi-actor partnerships with reciprocal learning formats. Actors should also clarify the role of civil society as implementors of triangular cooperation. Embedding civil society and helping to strengthen their delivery mechanisms can expand impact beyond the government framework and reach. For instance, engaging with diaspora-linked civil societies opens new avenues for exchanges and greater triangular co-operation efficacy.

In these challenging times, innovative partnerships are the only way forward. Rising demand and global challenges, frequent supply chain disruptions, and crises arising from food and fuel scarcity exacerbate challenges for developing countries. ODA alone cannot address these crises and satisfy overall demand. It is time to reconcile different narratives and norms and join forces.

India's Triangular Cooperation Engagements and Initiatives

- With its rich experience as a leader in South-South Cooperation, India plays a pivotal role in promoting triangular development partnerships. Its active involvement in triangular cooperation initiatives reflects its capacity to share knowledge, technologies, and best practices with other developing nations, drawing from its own developmental journey. India has acted as a catalyst for change, enabling countries to adopt tailored solutions across key sectors such as agriculture, energy, infrastructure, and healthcare.
- India's approach to development cooperation is human-centric, rooted in mutual respect and partnership principles. It emphasises triangular cooperation while leveraging its strengths in agriculture, technology, and healthcare for knowledge sharing and capacity building in third countries. A cornerstone of India's development philosophy is ensuring that its initiatives contribute meaningfully to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It works closely with partners in agriculture, health, and women-centric development, reaffirming that triangular cooperation is not a substitute but a complement to South-South cooperation.
- A flagship initiative exemplifying India's leadership is the International Solar Alliance (ISA), co-led with France, comprising over 150 member countries. The ISA supports solar energy projects in several developing nations, backed by \$2.22 billion in credit lines—demonstrating how clean energy can be deployed through innovative partnerships.
- India is actively expanding its network of partnerships, engaging with countries like Germany, Japan, the USA, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, as well as through initiatives like the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC). These efforts highlight India's commitment to cross-regional triangular cooperation. The India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) partnership stands out as a successful model, showcasing the potential of triangular frameworks to address development challenges effectively.
- Its innovation ecosystem has matured significantly, generating valuable insights and learnings that benefit other developing countries. Two notable trends have emerged:
 - » increasing global relevance of India's innovation-based solutions.
 - » enhanced dialogue and cooperation in the realm of South-South innovation and entrepreneurship, which has become a practical and concrete way of advancing the South-South agenda.
- The engagement in triangular cooperation was further emphasised during the Indian G20 presidency, with expanded

collaborations involving countries like Germany, the UK, the EU, and France. These partnerships span a variety of sectors and modalities—from grant-based projects to investment-driven initiatives such as the Global Innovation Partnership (GIP) with the UK. These efforts illustrate how leveraging technical, financial, and human resources can deliver impactful results in third countries.

- Multiple agreements have been signed with advanced economies—including the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, Germany, and others—for implementing triangular development projects in third countries. The expertise of Indian institutions in areas such as agriculture, food security, women’s entrepreneurship, healthcare, technology, and geospatial applications is being effectively utilised for knowledge exchange and capacity building in partner countries.
- India’s role extends to new trilateral formats like the Quad, I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA), India-France-Australia, India-France-UAE, and initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). These frameworks aim to deliver projects aligned with diverse development priorities in the target nations.
- As a major player in the Global South, India brings to the table not only its technical capabilities but also a deep understanding of regional needs, positioning itself as a reliable and empathetic development partner.
- India has developed formidable experience and expertise in building and leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to achieve its ambitious developmental goals. According to a World Bank report, DPI enabled India to accomplish large-scale financial inclusion within just six years—a feat that would typically take up to 47 years. This success demonstrates the transformative potential of DPI and highlights its relevance for other countries seeking rapid and inclusive development. India can play a key role in bridging the global digital divide by sharing its expertise, technology, and resources. These efforts can significantly enhance digital connectivity, promote effective e-governance, and improve digital literacy in other nations. Such collaboration is likely to generate a multiplier effect, producing a cascading impact on broader socio-economic development agendas across the world.
- In the fields of education and skilling, India possesses extensive experience and proven models. By sharing its best practices, policy frameworks, and resources, India can contribute to improving access to quality education, vocational training, and lifelong learning opportunities in developing countries, particularly in the Global South. These initiatives can empower individuals, strengthen human capital, and foster sustainable and inclusive development. India’s role in this regard can be instrumental in supporting other nations as they work toward building resilient education and workforce systems.
- Moreover, Centres of Excellence across the Global South should play a pivotal role in triangular cooperation. These institutions—whether regionally focused or globally engaged, including with parts of the Global North—can serve as anchors for deeper collaboration and innovation.
- Lastly, India has proposed the establishment of a dedicated development fund, with \$2.5 million allocated for capacity building and \$1 million for trade policy and WTO negotiations. This initiative aims to address the expertise gap in many developing countries, where the lack of specialized knowledge often hinders effective participation in multilateral trade negotiations.



Emerging Contours of India-Germany-Africa Triangular Cooperation

Sushil Kumar*

Introduction

Among India's most prominent triangular collaborations are those undertaken with Germany in various African countries, with agriculture serving as a strategic anchor. Agriculture remains a central pillar of livelihoods in the Global South, and it is no coincidence that the majority of Indo-German TrC initiatives have been concentrated in this sector. These projects are designed not only to enhance food security and resilience but also to serve as platforms for innovation diffusion and institutional capacity building.

In India-Germany-Africa cooperation, agriculture is an area where the cost-effectiveness and long-term value of TrC are particularly visible. Indian technologies – ranging from water-saving irrigation methods to precision farming – are often better suited to the agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions in Africa than those from industrialised countries. When complemented by German technical expertise and financial resources, these projects illustrate the power of blended development cooperation. One notable example is the Malawi

project, which supported the creation of an incubation centre for women entrepreneurs. This initiative exemplifies the principle of synergy – where Indian expertise, German facilitation, and local African leadership converge to generate impactful outcomes. Delegations from Malawi visiting Indian incubation hubs brought back not just technologies but a change in mindset – an often overlooked yet vital outcome of development cooperation (Chaturvedi, 2023).

India and Germany signed a joint Declaration of Intent on Triangular Cooperation, opening new avenues for expanding cooperation and exchange among various stakeholders. With its multi-actor, multi-country approach, triangular cooperation creates new spaces for synergies and innovation and promotes the achievement of the SDGs. In a short span since the declaration, pilot projects on two continents have been successfully concluded, engaging academia, civil society, and governments of three different countries to spread successful solutions.¹

Examples include Cameroon, where novel potato cultivation technologies developed in India were introduced, and Ghana, where

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India's experience with bamboo products helped create models for rural economic prosperity, particularly for women and youth. Agribusiness incubators from India were introduced to women's groups in Malawi. These examples underline the innovative nature of this modality and its potential to generate real-world impact (Chaturvedi, 2023).

Triangular cooperation is still in its early stages and needs further development to increase its effectiveness. Yet, it remains a unique and valuable tool for fostering global solidarity, innovation, and flexible partnerships. It builds multi-stakeholder cooperation grounded in shared responsibility and mutual learning. Germany continues to support TrC through technical assistance, capacity building, and training workshops, contributing innovative solutions to global development challenges.²

Triangular cooperation aligns closely with SDG 17, which emphasises partnerships to achieve development goals. It brings unique resources and collaborative advantages that can overcome complex development challenges. From a development perspective, a common understanding of outcomes, grounded in the SDGs, is essential.

Germany's approach to TrC prioritises complementarity over promotion of national products. Projects like the India-Peru data initiative with MIDIS demonstrate applied research in inclusion and social protection. Current engagements in Ghana, Cameroon, Malawi, Ethiopia, and Madagascar reflect sectoral expansion – particularly in agriculture, with millet-based initiatives. Germany also seeks to broaden its TrC footprint in the health sector, building on its strong bilateral experience with India. Trilateral collaboration, though complex due to multi-actor coordination, benefits from reliable procedures and a shared operational language.

Framework for India-Germany's Triangular Cooperation

The collaboration between India and Germany in triangular development cooperation was formalized through the Joint Declaration of Intent issued by both countries' ministries in 2022. The Ministry of External Affairs of India (MEA) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) outlined their intent to jointly design and implement development projects targeting the SDGs in third-party countries, particularly in Africa, Asia. Cooperation activities may also cover developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region and Indo-Pacific regions.³ The primary objective of this partnership is to leverage India's unique development experience, especially in areas like sustainable agriculture, green energy, and social inclusion, alongside Germany's technical expertise in institutional capacity building, environmental sustainability, and climate action. Through this triangular model, India and Germany aim to empower third countries by offering them comprehensive solutions to their development challenges, combining technical know-how with localized knowledge.⁴

The India-Germany triangular cooperation is guided by several principles designed to ensure effectiveness and inclusivity. One of the key principles is that the projects are driven by the needs and priorities of the beneficiary partner countries. India and Germany emphasize that the cooperation should be demand-driven, with the beneficiary countries playing an active role in the identification and design of projects. This approach ensures that the solutions provided are relevant, culturally sensitive, and appropriate for the specific challenges faced by these countries.

Furthermore, the cooperation between India and Germany is intended to complement, rather than replace, bilateral development cooperation

efforts. Both countries have their distinct modes of cooperation with developing countries, and the triangular framework serves to enhance the impact of these initiatives by drawing on the combined strengths of both partners. For example, India's extensive experience in South-South cooperation through initiatives like the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme complements Germany's long-standing focus on institutional development and technical assistance (GIZ, 2022).⁵

Another crucial principle is the commitment to transparency and mutual consultation. Both India and Germany have emphasized the importance of continuous dialogue and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector. This collaborative approach ensures that all parties involved in the projects are aligned in their objectives and contribute meaningfully to the project's success.

Mechanisms of Implementation

To operationalize their cooperation, India and Germany have established a clear set of institutional mechanisms. The Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH serve as the respective nodal agencies responsible for the coordination and implementation of triangular cooperation projects. These agencies work together to identify priority sectors, select beneficiary countries, and design joint activities.

A Steering Committee comprising senior representatives from both sides provides strategic guidance for the projects. This committee is responsible for approving specific initiatives, selecting beneficiary countries, and regularly reviewing progress. Additionally, a Joint Implementation Group (JIG), consisting of representatives from DPA and GIZ, ensures

that the day-to-day activities are carried out effectively and efficiently. The JIG also monitors the allocation of resources and tracks the progress of projects, ensuring that they meet the defined goals and objectives (MEA, 2022).

Overview of India-Germany Triangular Cooperation Projects

In the Joint Declaration of Intent on the implementation of triangular development cooperation projects in third countries signed during the 6th India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations in May 2022, India and Germany expressed the intent to focus on the Sustainable Development Goals and related climate goals in third beneficiary countries, with a focus on Africa and Asia. Triangular Development projects have since been implemented in several countries, including Cameroon, Ghana and Malawi in Africa.

RIS has been at the forefront of conducting research and bringing traditional and non-traditional stakeholders together to deliberate on South-South and Triangular Development Cooperation for a comprehensive understanding of the emerging trends in global development cooperation for decades. It has partnered with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) to conduct a study on "Emerging Facets of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation." The study, which was completed in November 2024, aimed to enhance policy dialogues on Triangular Cooperation (TrC) involving Indian institutions and other key stakeholders.

Between March and June 2023, RIS, jointly with GIZ and the Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation (GPI), organised three online learning sessions with stakeholders implementing the India Germany TrC projects, followed by two online capacity building sessions to jointly reflect on challenges, lessons learned and potential measures to strengthen such projects in the future and

to prepare these stakeholders for their new project proposals. RIS had bilateral meetings with the Indian implementing partners (visited MANAGE, Hyderabad and University of Horticultural and sciences, Bagalkot) and a delegation from Ghana implementing one of the TrC projects to understand their roles and expectations from these projects.

Jointly with GIZ and GPI, RIS organised the '1st Asian Conference on Triangular Cooperation' on 2-3 November 2023 in New Delhi. The conference, the first of its kind, discussed TrC as a growing development cooperation modality. Experts deliberated on issues related to poverty, hunger and inequality, triangular partnerships for sustainable rural development, vocational training to reduce inequalities, empowerment of women and youths, including women entrepreneurship, sustainability, Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) economy and biodiversity. The discussion also explored the need for scaling up and financing for TrC. GIZ, RIS and GPI jointly produced four newsletters.

RIS held a Capacity Building Programme for stakeholders implementing TrC projects from India on 12-14 February 2024. This

capacity building programme included 11 participants from nine institutions, representing diverse sections from academia, practitioners of development cooperation, civil society and other stakeholders (the majority of the participants were from the implementing partner institutes). The programme was designed to orient the participants towards an integrated and multi-dimensional understanding of Triangular cooperation. RIS, in collaboration with GIZ (India), organised a policy dialogue on "Triangular Cooperation: New Modality and New Hope" in hybrid mode on 24 April 2024. It aimed at facilitating an interactive and open brainstorming among triangular cooperation actors, including development cooperation agencies, think tanks, CSOs, etc.

RIS participated in the VII Regional Conference on Trilateral Cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean 2024, "Overcoming obstacles, building bridges," held from 22-25 May 2024 in Salvador, Brazil. RIS also proposed a plan to undertake remaining capacity-building programmes and policy dialogues.

RIS conducted a capacity development programme on Triangular Cooperation on 19-20 September 2024 at New Delhi. This capacity



Capacity Building Programme on Triangular Cooperation at RIS.



Brainstorming Session on Triangular Cooperation: New Modality and New Hope.

building programme had 12 participants from India and neighbouring countries (Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (joined online), representing diverse sections from academia, practitioners of development cooperation, civil society and other stakeholders. The programme was designed to orient the participants towards an integrated and multi-dimensional understanding of Triangular cooperation. It covered the following issues: triangular cooperation and women empowerment; food standards; practical issues of triangular cooperation; India-Germany Triangular cooperation partnership in Africa.

RIS also participated in the 8th International Meeting on “Triangular Cooperation: Linking Global Processes to Create Local Impact” on 7-8 October 2024 at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and participated in the plenary session 2. The aim of this session was to gain from the ideas of the representatives from Asia and their partners to identify strategic tools to leverage inter-regional triangular cooperation. Interregional projects rank second in the global triangular cooperation, led by the Asia-African partnerships. Asian partners are sharing their experiences through triangular co-operation and benefitting from solutions emerging from



Capacity Building Programme on Triangular Cooperation at RIS.



8th International Meeting on "Triangular Cooperation: Linking Global Processes to Create Local Impact in Lisbon.

both regionally and internationally. Sharing and learning across regions seem promising in areas such as agriculture and climate change mitigation. Spanning different cultures and continents, these triangular initiatives require good communication and inter-cultural understanding, which is often facilitated by digital tools.

The following initiatives represent key ongoing efforts:

Malawi

Agri Business Incubator Model for Women in Agriculture & Food Systems in Malawi

Triangular Cooperation Pilot extends knowledge & technical support from India to Malawi in developing Agri business incubator models for women and building sustainable innovation ecosystem. The Cooperation boosts emerging start-ups, especially those of small & marginal women producers/farmers, ensuring better quality of life. The key implementing partners are GIZ, National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, NITI

Aayog (AIM), Government of India and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Institute (SMEDI) in Malawi.

Key Components

- Development of an Agri Business Incubator for Women Entrepreneurs
- Building capacities of two local institutions for Training of Trainers and competencies of 50 Women Entrepreneurs
- Policy recommendations for developing Agri Business Incubators



AmayiHub', the first ever Incubator exclusively for Women entrepreneurs in Malawi was inaugurated in December 2022 at SMEDI, Mponela Centre, (Source, GIZ)

Ghana

Developing Bamboo-Based Enterprises for Sustainable Livelihood and Income Generation in Ghana

This Triangular Cooperation Pilot extends technical expertise, knowledge, and experiences from India to promote and enhance the value of bamboo-based enterprises in Ghana. The cooperation aims to capacitate enterprises of women & youth to enhance their income by adopting innovative design and product development skills along with training them on financial & managerial skills to professionally manage their enterprises. The key implementing partners are GIZ, International Bamboo and Rattan Organization, India and Forestry Commission Training Centre (FCTC), Ghana.

Key Components

- Skill and capacity development of women and youth on innovative product design & enterprise development.
- Support establishment of Innovation hub at Forestry Commission Training Centre at Kumasi in Ghana.
- Facilitate network & platforms for skill transfer from Indian enterprises/experts.



Bamboo training hub establishment activities, pilot project workshop 2022. Indian experts visited Ghana & trained nearly 50 women & youth on innovative design-diversification of products (GIZ, 2022).

Cameroon

Potato seed production through Rooted Apical Cutting (RAC) technology in Cameroon

The RAC technology is an innovative, smallholder farmer-oriented technology that cost-effectively addresses the issue of access to quality seed potato and its on-farm multiplication for seed production. The Key Components of project were Capacity building of 15 scientists, 6 local entrepreneurs and 100 farmers in Cameroon,



Cameroonian delegation trip to India to have a first-hand experience of the RAC technology in the UHSB screen house, October 2022.

Transfer of RAC-technology with the required infrastructure development and handholding support, Capacity building exchanges between Cameroon and India, for targeted stakeholders. The key implementing partners are GIZ, University of Horticultural Sciences Bagalkot (India) and The Institute of Agriculture Research for Development (IARD), Cameroon.

Key Components

- Capacity building of 15 scientists, 6 local entrepreneurs and 100 farmers.
- Transfer of RAC-technology with the required infrastructure development and handholding support.

- Capacity building exchanges between Cameroon and India, for targeted stakeholders.

Peru

Development of a geospatial portal prototype for planning, monitoring, and evaluation of MIDIS interventions and social programs

This project seeks to provide technical support to the Peruvian Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS) for the development of a geoportals prototype. This tool will enable GIS (Geographic Information System) based planning, monitoring and evaluation of MIDIS' activities and social programmes for comprehensive analysis and evidence based decision making. The key implementing partner are Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), India; Ministry of development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), Peru and GIZ.



Secretary MoRD Mr. NN Sinha with Mr Walter Vlavidia, Director de la Dirección de Seguimiento, MIDIS and GIZ representatives in Berlin during kick-off discussion and project planning (Source, GIZ).

Key Components

- Provide technical support to MIDIS for the development of a geoportals prototype that optimizes the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of their interventions
- Standardizes the spatial and non-spatial data produced by the different MIDIS line directorates and social programmes
- Provides a tool for visualization, analysis, processing, and development of MIDIS interventions

Principles of Triangular Cooperation

1. Demand-driven nature: TrC projects are initiated based on specific requests from the recipient country, ensuring that interventions align with national priorities and needs.
2. National ownership: These projects are designed to promote accountability and sustainability by ensuring that the recipient country takes full responsibility for their success.
3. Flexibility and adaptability: TrC projects are intentionally flexible, allowing local stakeholders to guide implementation and make adjustments based on evolving circumstances and contextual needs.
4. Stakeholder involvement: The active participation of local stakeholders is essential for the effective implementation and long-term success of TrC projects.
5. Cost-effectiveness: Compared to support from countries such as Germany or neighboring nations, TrC projects are often more affordable while still delivering impactful results.

Key Takeaways for India's Triangular Cooperation

- Trilateral cooperation (TrC) constitutes an integral part of the global development agenda, specifically under SDG 17, which focuses on partnerships for the goals. In light of the complex geopolitical landscape, TrC

- offers a partner-oriented model.
- Through this modality, countries can leverage comparative advantages by sharing knowledge, resources, and experiences to accelerate equitable development. Fundamental to this process is investing in technical capacities, specialisation, and technology transfer.
 - The cooperation is demand-driven, and the goal is for all countries involved to learn from each other, share experiences, and exchange knowledge, especially in areas like women's empowerment, economic development, and social upliftment. The cooperation should be equal, where no one party dominates the discussions or decisions. Major features include cost-effectiveness, promptness, and flexibility.
 - This form of collaboration is not a substitute, but rather a complement to North-South cooperation. South-South cooperation does not imply reducing the responsibilities of the developed world with respect to ODA commitments. The need for new and additional financing, along with the provision of means for implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals, remains a responsibility of developed nations.
 - It is the right modality to act together with more global solidarity, innovative thinking, and flexible action. It creates multistakeholder partnerships for global Sustainable Development Goals based on common responsibility and joint and mutual learning.
 - Trilateral cooperation can provide new synergies and innovation in the field of international cooperation. It offers new avenues for promoting cooperation in terms of social and economic development and environmental sensitiveness. It should be based on a transparent, viable, inclusive, sustainable, and rule-based approach and should cater to the local needs.
 - This form of collaboration emerges as an essential dimension of global governance reforms and has evolved into a balanced partnership model.
 - It can also emerge as a modality where we bring in and take the frontier of knowledge forward. Initially, the idea was that the developed or OECD country would provide resources, the developing countries or emerging markets would give the knowledge, and the recipient would benefit. Recently, this concept has evolved – countries are financially contributing and partnering with each other. They are both contributing resources as well as sharing knowledge.
 - Trilateral cooperation and South-South cooperation have to start focusing on unpacking the needs and matching resources, technology, and knowledge accordingly, designing the partnership based on that. A southern-driven narrative is going to be important because there has been a backlash against northern-led development programmes creating development inequities of power and equities.
 - It is an innovative modality of cooperation, but there is still a need to find a common solution for the common development challenges. It leverages the strengths of each player, including technical, financial, and human resources, as well as geographical and cultural familiarity, to be able to deliver projects to third countries.
 - It is essential to include more development cooperation partners (i.e., IBSA Fund, UN Fund, etc.). Additionally, fostering a joint vision of development, institutionalising the partnership, co-creating and co-designing development cooperation, decentralising cooperation, and connecting local, national, and global efforts are important steps.
 - This partnership could strengthen the South-South Cooperation (SSC) strategy. Horizontality is built into this partnership, and it has a flexible modality for cooperation.

It has the inherent strength to bring knowledge from other development cooperation partners. It is cost-effective due to the amplified and complementary contributions brought by all partners.

- Triangular cooperation has historical precedents but is more relevant today due to its alignment with the growth and perspectives of the Global South, emphasizing solutions driven by Southern experiences.
 - It promotes mutual learning and the sharing of local knowledge and is vital for fostering innovative ideas. It complements the bilateral cooperation partnership, and the local community needs to be involved to get the maximum benefit of development cooperation. In terms of sector-specific focus, there is a need for more projects addressing feminist-related activity and climate-related issues.
 - There is a need to create a new finance structure to support this modality. It is crucial for bridging the financing gap and fostering the sustainability of development projects. There is also a need to think about how to scale up the triangular cooperation partnership.
 - The success of this approach was attributed to the similarity in economic development stages between the pivotal and partner countries. Among countries in the same stage of development, the solutions are more appropriate, adaptable, and more in sync with the status of technology and the nature of financial architecture. Such partnerships at the sectoral level are important, particularly in agriculture, climate change, etc.
 - In this approach, resource optimisation is also driven by frugal innovation, where solutions are created with minimal resources. For instance, while high-tech solutions from developed countries are often expensive, innovation can emerge from places with fewer resources but strong local practices.
- A notable example is from Cameroon, where potato farmers needed specific trays for growing seedlings in water before transplanting them to the soil.
- This model promotes equality among the three partners, encouraging trust and shared responsibility. This eliminates the typical division between developed and developing countries, fostering a collaborative environment focused on tangible project outcomes rather than political or diplomatic objectives.
 - Creating inclusive frameworks for triangular cooperation – grounded in values like solidarity, equality, and non-conditionality – can lead to a paradigm shift in South-South cooperation.
 - Trilateral cooperation, long recognised by the G20, aims to create synergies for maximum development impact, as highlighted in past declarations such as the 2010 Seoul Development Consensus and the 2018 Buenos Aires Declaration. Paragraph 14 of the G20 New Delhi Declaration recognises its importance. The G20's recent focus on this modality underscores its significance for the development of working group mechanisms, emphasizing the need for action frameworks involving various stakeholders.
 - India's approach to development cooperation is human-centric, rooted in mutual respect and partnership principles. It emphasizes triangular cooperation while leveraging its strengths in agriculture, technology, and healthcare for knowledge sharing and capacity building in third countries. A cornerstone of India's development philosophy is ensuring that its initiatives contribute meaningfully to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It works closely with partners in agriculture, health, and women-centric development, reaffirming that triangular cooperation is not a substitute but a complement to South-South cooperation.

Inter-Regional Triangular Cooperation

- All partner countries, multilateral institutions, regional institutes, and other stakeholders in cooperation need to strengthen interregional coordination of Triangular Cooperation (TrC) to fully realize the potential of this partnership.
- Interregional Triangular Cooperation serves as a valuable mechanism for protecting global public goods that transcend borders and regions.
- Through its multilateral approach to cooperation with Global Partners, Germany contributes effectively to addressing significant global challenges.
- Germany has acted as a facilitator in numerous interregional projects:
- Through the Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) partners.
- More recently, through a Regional Fund for TrC with Asia, with a focus on India and China as pivotal partners.
- G20 members such as Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico are already at the forefront of implementing interregional Triangular Cooperation initiatives with African partners, often in collaboration with Germany.



Section II





Rethinking Development in Africa: Evolving New Vision and Leveraging New Modalities

Ibrahim Mayaki*

Introduction

Rethinking development in Africa is a pressing issue that challenges the effectiveness of traditional approaches. While we have a general understanding of technical solutions, relying solely on them no longer enables us to fulfil our development agenda. This raises the question of whether we should continue adhering to classical definitions of development.

A few years ago, I commissioned a study with the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures to explore Africa's development scenarios in the context of present-day realities. We examined the critical transitions underway on the continent, identifying five main ones.

The first transition is the demographic shift. Currently, Africa is home to 50% of the world's population under the age of 18, and with current growth rates between 2.8% and 3.2%, the continent's population is projected to double by 2050. This poses significant challenges, particularly for countries like Mali, where a high population growth rate strains the job market. With approximately 250,000 to 300,000 educated young people entering the workforce in Mali each year, the limited industry and

predominantly rural population exacerbate the employment crisis. To address this, agricultural transformation and diversification of the rural economy must become central policy priorities. It's important to note that the accelerating nature of this demographic transition complicates the task of designing governance systems that can effectively respond to the challenges.

The second transition pertains to human development and inequality. Africa remains one of the most unequal regions globally, with the number of poor people increasing despite relative reductions in poverty rates. While progress has been made in areas such as health and education, a significant proportion of Africa's population still struggles with poverty. Combining the demographic and inequality challenges creates a complex equation that requires careful policymaking.

The third transition is the technological shift. Despite being a fragile country, a country like Somalia boasts the highest density of cell phones on the continent, surpassing countries like Egypt, South Africa, and Kenya. This example demonstrates the profound impact technology can have. Today's youth, particularly in countries like South Africa, are connected

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and aware of developments in neighbouring nations. This newfound social connectivity presents a novel dimension for governance, one that governments were not confronted with two decades ago.

The fourth transition centers around natural resources, specifically the impact of climate change on critical resources and agricultural systems in Africa. The continent currently imports around \$35 billion worth of agricultural products, and although crop yields have improved, they remain insufficient. Addressing food security becomes crucial in designing policies that can effectively reduce poverty and promote inclusivity.

A fifth transition, interconnecting the previous four, is the governance transition. Governance systems are evolving across the African continent, but the outcome remains uncertain. The doubling of Africa's population by 2050 will significantly impact governance systems, and it's crucial to avoid governing societies with a median age of 19 in the same manner as those with a median age over 40. The widening gap between the demands of the youth population and the capacity of public administration poses a potential source of instability. Shifting power dynamics have already been observed, with a move from centralized governments to local authorities and organized youth.

The above transitions will be critical in rethinking the way we design policies, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of the process and in how governments design their policies.

Governance and Power Relations

Instances such as Tunisia's experience highlight the fragility of governance systems. Despite being perceived as a model of development, Tunisia faced implosion, and the reasons behind it remain under analysis. The negative perceptions of

young people towards governance systems may have played a role. Consequently, relying solely on traditional development indicators to gauge success is no longer sufficient. Perception cannot be disregarded by policymakers, and power dynamics in Africa, influenced by demographic transitions, are constantly changing.

Tunisia serves as a prime example of development success. It received recognition and praise from institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and the African Development Bank. Tunisia's achievements included high IT penetration, excellent literacy rates for girls, robust agricultural production with significant exports to Europe, and well-developed infrastructure comprising quality ports and airports. It was considered a model of development and appeared to be on a promising path. Tunisia's unfortunate implosion continues to be analysed, with no consensus on its exact causes. Was it due to governance shortcomings, the dictatorship of Ben Ali, or high unemployment levels? The crucial point is that a potentially "developed" country in Africa experienced a failure and collapse. This could have been influenced by the negative perceptions of the country's governance systems among the youth. Tunisia serves as a warning for other African nations. Traditional development indicators are no longer sufficient in light of the youth's evolving role. Governments may believe they have the power to drive change, but if they lack the ability to do so, it signifies inadequate governance systems. To address these issues, a shift of power has been observed, moving from centralized governments to local authorities, communities, and especially the organized youth. It is evident that governance systems cannot be effectively changed in a top-down manner if they are perceived as inadequate. Examining the presence of Boko Haram in Nigeria, Cameroon, the South of Niger, and Chad reveals a troubling fact: the median age of a Boko Haram fighter is just 16 years old.

According to the UNDP, these young individuals earn more than \$3 a day, possess Kalashnikov rifles, and reside in territories that have been neglected by development initiatives. Such cases highlight the limitations of the traditional development model. Governance plays a pivotal role in addressing this issue.

Two compelling examples that underscore this are the Central African Republic and Botswana. Despite their similarities in size, population density, and mineral resources, Botswana and the Central African Republic (CAR) have taken divergent paths since gaining independence around the same time. At the onset, both countries had a GDP per capita of \$400. However, Botswana's GDP per capita has surged by a factor of 20, now standing at approximately \$8,000. In contrast, the CAR's GDP per capita has plummeted by half, currently hovering around \$200. These contrasting trajectories demonstrate how countries on the same continent, inhabited by the same Africans, can experience significantly different outcomes in their development journeys.

Botswana stands out in a unique way due to its policy design and implementation, which prioritize inclusivity – a dimension that the Central African Republic (CAR) lacks. In terms of governance systems on a global scale, most African countries can be classified into two categories: those resembling Botswana in their policies and those similar to the CAR. The presence of more countries adopting governance systems like Botswana's will lead to increased emphasis on inclusivity in Africa's development trajectory. Botswana's governance systems, policy design, and implementation processes embody a crucial dimension of inclusivity, setting it apart from countries like Tunisia that experienced an implosion. The government of Botswana holds the power to drive change due to the central role inclusivity plays in its governance system. As power relationships have shifted, it has become clear that inclusivity is an essential prerequisite for sustainability within a young population. These realizations have

sparked a paradigm shift in our approach to development, diverging significantly from the conventional wisdom of several decades ago.

The ODA - System

As Africa navigates through critical transitions and evolving power dynamics, it becomes crucial to scrutinize the design process of development policies. Additionally, the uncertainties of global cooperation present another significant issue. Aid has long been a vital component of our development strategies. However, many African governments are increasingly convinced that aid, in its current form, may likely diminish within the next decade. In fact, considering data from DAC and OECD, it is already on the decline. Moreover, we are witnessing a transformation of traditional aid into military support, particularly evident in the Sahel region of West Africa. A substantial portion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided to the Sahel is now linked to military objectives. Consequently, the development dimension of the multilateral system is being critically questioned.

From a rules-based multilateralism to regional powerhouses

The traditional multilateral system is currently grappling with significant challenges as powerful national actors question its role and effectiveness. The sustainability of this system, with its core project, is now uncertain. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody a universal agenda that should be embraced and implemented by diverse countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Malawi, and the United States of America. However, when evaluating progress through various reports, it becomes evident that we are falling far behind, especially compared to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the face of global uncertainty, Africa is shifting its focus towards an internal agenda, prioritizing its own developmental aspirations.

A concrete illustration of this shift is the establishment of the African Free Trade Agreement. Although it will require considerable time and effort to operationalise the agreement and establish harmonization processes, we are committed to progressing towards a free trade area. We firmly believe that reimagining development entails strengthening our regional internal markets. It is within these markets that we can foster a learning curve in terms of competitiveness, enabling us to assume a significant role in an increasingly globalized world characterized by heightened uncertainty.

In light of the challenges we face, we are compelled to prioritize the objective of regional integration, a pursuit we have been engaged in since the 1960s. We recognize that one of the primary hindrances to Africa's overall development is its fragmentation. Therefore, it is crucial for us to pursue regional solutions as they offer the most effective pathways forward in various sectors such as education, energy, transport, and more. By embracing regional integration, we can unlock the optimal solutions that lie at the regional level, paving the way for comprehensive development across the continent.

The New Leadership

By actively engaging in regional solutions, national governments can regain credibility and foster successful processes of democratization. As regional blocks gain greater influence and power, they can effectively shape leadership dynamics at the national level. This shift towards regional cooperation not only strengthens the collective voice of African nations but also creates a platform for shared decision-making and collaborative problem-solving. Ultimately, by empowering regional entities, we can contribute to the development of accountable and responsive leadership at both the regional and national levels, promoting stability, progress, and effective governance.

Inclusivity

In reevaluating our perspective on development, we must consider the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their connection to environmental issues. The question arises as to whether this “classical development” approach will continue to dominate or if alternative approaches will emerge. The traditional development industry is facing significant scrutiny from local actors across Africa, spanning from North to South, East to Central. The credibility of the old team of donors, partners, and governments is notably low among today's youth.

This shift in perception demands a critical examination of how we perceive and pursue development. It calls for a departure from conventional models and a reimagining of innovative approaches that align with the aspirations and priorities of local communities. Engaging with the SDGs and incorporating environmental considerations will be key in this process. By placing emphasis on inclusive and participatory development, we can create more meaningful and impactful outcomes that resonate with the aspirations of the youth and address the pressing challenges of our time.

To effectively rethink development, it is imperative to prioritize inclusivity as a fundamental principle. Inclusivity is not an abstract concept; rather, it can be tangibly manifested through specific processes. The traditional top-down approach to designing education policies, health policies, and others has often been met with resistance from the majority of the population. Inclusivity, in this context, necessitates the co-production of public policies by governments and all relevant stakeholders at the national and local levels.

To bridge the gap between technological solutions and their effective implementation, political solutions must also be considered. This entails a comprehensive review of governance systems, placing inclusivity at their core. This

paradigm shift is essential if we are to meet the expectations of the youth and actively pursue the Agenda 2063, a shared vision for Africa's development.

Reinventing Governance Systems

To ensure active participation in the development agenda, Africa needs to reinvent its governance systems. These new systems should embrace two essential dimensions: empowering local communities at the grassroots level and redefining the roles of the state, governments, and the need for inclusivity at the regional level. This transformation should prioritize bottom-up approaches rather than top-down directives. It is worth noting that Botswana's impressive \$8,000 per capita GDP is not solely attributed to diamond exports but is rather a result of leadership and governance that prioritized the preservation of people's dignity.

As an example of inclusive planning, during my tenure as Prime Minister in 1998, we conducted a comprehensive survey in Niger as part of our three-year planning process. Rather than delegating the plan's design solely to experts, we actively sought input from the population to understand their priorities. This seven-month survey was conducted nationwide, with the anticipation of identifying key areas of focus. Interestingly, our assumptions about national priorities were challenged, as different regions

prioritized water, agricultural production, and land issues differently. This demonstrated the importance of listening to the diverse voices and perspectives of the population in shaping effective policies.

Surprisingly, our findings revealed that justice emerged as the foremost priority in all regions, surpassing water, education, and infrastructure. This unexpected result emphasized the critical importance of addressing justice-related issues in our development efforts. It highlighted the deep-rooted desire within communities for fairness, equality, and a legal system that upholds their rights. Recognizing this prioritization of justice is essential for creating a society where individuals can thrive, trust is fostered, and social cohesion is strengthened.

Rethinking development in Africa necessitates a comprehensive reevaluation of justice in its entirety. Justice should be viewed holistically, encompassing not only the legal system but also social, economic, and political dimensions. It is imperative to address the systemic barriers and inequalities that hinder access to justice, promote transparency and accountability, and ensure fair and equitable outcomes for all individuals. By placing justice at the forefront of our development agenda, we can create a more inclusive and just society, empowering individuals and fostering sustainable progress for Africa as a whole.



Reconfiguring New Priorities and Contestations in Triangular Cooperation

Sachin Chaturvedi*

Introduction

Among the various development strategies, localisation is emerging as the new normal. More and more efforts are being made to ensure growth with local contents and local hands with local livelihood security with as less carbon footprint as possible. This has given a greater flexibility for the national governments to choose policy options from successful experiences and strategies. Specific experiences from emerging economies - be that China or India, and even earlier the newly industrialised countries (NICs), stand for that endogeneity. Efforts are on to identify the most appropriate modality in this regard.

It is in this context the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA+40) be leveraged to revisit the essential idea of TCDC/ECDC that got strengthened at the Buenos Aires conference in 1978. This idea was to explore technical cooperation among the developing countries and the consequential expectation was the outcome of economic

cooperation among the developing countries and from this perspective the TCDC and ECDC were very much wedded to the idea of collective development in the South within the resources the partner countries may spare.

However, it is important here to point out that 1978 was not the first time when the need for technical cooperation among the developing countries was highlighted. It was right from the Bandung days that the South was exploring possibilities for technical cooperation.

The launching of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) facilitated cooperation on this front. In the Third NAM Foreign Ministers' meeting in 1972, a detailed framework for South-South cooperation (SSC) in the field of science and technology and for a New International Economic Order was evolved. The declaration at the Kuwait Summit, in 1977, articulated TCDC quite well, when it said: "An historical imperative brought about by the need for a new international order with a conscious, systematic and politically motivated process, developed to create a framework of

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multiple links between developing countries.”

In the recent past the modality of triangular cooperation (TrC) has multiplied engagement of the Southern actors. Earlier, the TrC was defined more as a partnership between an OECD member and a developing country in an LDC, for instance, Germany and Brazil and Japan and Kenya have emerged as leaders in these partnerships in several LDCs. However, over the years more and more of the Southern actors are cooperating in a third country, for instance IBSA development projects and the recently announced India-China partnership in Afghanistan. One finds that more and more of the cases are being conceptualised within the framework of TrC.

In fact one may wonder how this transition from TCDC to TrC should be viewed. What differences and what similarities are really there? What kind of future one may expect are some of the questions this paper intends to address. This paper is structured to explore the transition from technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) to triangular cooperation (TrC). The Section II of the paper discusses the local specificity and experiences while section III focuses on legacy of TCDC and ECDC and their inter-linkages. Section IV looks into new impetus for triangular partnerships whereas section V concludes with new paths in times of SDGs and way forward.

Local Specificity and Experiences

Emphasis on local specificity is emerging as an extremely important facet of development planning and provides policy planners a policy choice for modulating it to local aspirations and priorities. The expectation is that, the process would factor-in local challenges within the development priorities and policy framework. At several meets of the developing world, four major listed impediments on way to development included collapsing commodity process; high real interest rates on loans; decline

in private and official resource transfer and protectionism in industrial countries. These factors have adversely affected prospects for fellow developing to move up the ladder.

With faster economic growth in emerging economies many of these economies have made efforts to come out of these challenges in their own ways. India for instance, has launched programmes like ‘Skill India’ and ‘Start-up India’ for providing an ecosystem to address some of these challenges apart from keeping inflation low with low rate of interests. In the process, however, exclusions have multiplied globally. The recent initiatives in India may eventually help in ensuring Access, Equity and Inclusion (AEI) for bringing in greater inclusion.

In the recent past, one of the successful efforts in India was to open bank accounts for people for direct benefit transfers. Since 2014, more than 344 million people could get bank accounts for themselves, under the PMJDY (Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna). Of this almost 60 per cent are opened in the bank branches located in rural or semi-urban areas. The total deposits in all these accounts stood at Rs. 91,141 crore. The extent of zero balance account has gone down from 58 per cent in 2015 to 15 per cent in 2019 with average balance more than doubling from Rs. 1,065 to Rs. 2,603 in the same period (Bakshi, 2019). Efforts have also been to formally connect PMJDY with other financial inclusion programmes; for instance, these bank account holders have been provided with Rupay debit card with in-built accident and life insurance cover with coverage of Rs. 100,000 and Rs. 30,000 respectively.

These local measures indicate how important it is to indigenise growth process and explore options that may eventually help in deployment of factors of production for local gains and for creation of local economic surplus. Technical cooperation among developing countries, in this respect, would be highly effective if details are worked out well and a general template is evolved.

As emerged from the classic paper of Rodrik (2004), generalisation in economic growth prescriptions have not helped developing countries in the last 50 years. The paper argues out, based on experiences of the Southeast Asian countries how distinct growth strategy may help manage economic issues much better than the prescriptions. As Table 1 shows the East Asian countries could adopt their own property rights, corporate governance, industrial organisations, capital flows, public ownership, and even on business to government relations and labour markets. The effort of localised prescriptive strategies probably has helped several developing economies, in fact, diversity of local eco-system with narrowing institutional designs, economic

systems, modalities of transactions, market-state relations and macroeconomic frameworks.

Legacy of TCDC and ECDC

The two concepts of TCDC and ECDC evolved as major instruments for SSC. These programmes evolved at different tracks of UN and at the fora of developing world like the NAM and G-77 process. At the UN, ECDC appeared in 1974, in light of the debate on NIEO through the General Assembly Resolution 3201. It identified the limitations of the global development strategies, its imperatives for an interdependent world and exclusions that it was leading to. They were defined most elaborately in the Buenos Aires

Table 1 Experience of East Asian Economies

Institutional domain	Standard ideal	"East Asian" pattern
Property rights	Private property enforced by the rule of law	Private, but govt authority occasionally overrides the law (esp. in Korea).
Corporate governance	Shareholder ("outsider) control, protection of shareholder rights	Insider control
Business-government relations	Arms' length, rule based	Close interactions
Industrial organisation	Decentralised, competitive markets, with tough anti-trust enforcement	Horizontal and vertical integration in production (chaebol); government mandated "cartels"
Financial system	Deregulated, securities based, with free entry. Prudential supervision through regulatory oversight.	Bank based, restricted entry, heavily controlled by government, directed lending, weak formal regulation.
Labour markets	Decentralised, de-institutionalised, "flexible" labor markets	Lifetime employment in core enterprises (Japan)
International capital flows	"prudently" free	Restricted (until the 1990s)
Public ownership	None in productive sectors	Plenty in upstream industries.

Source: Rodrik (2004).

Plan of Action (BAPA) on TCDC, adopted in 1978 and in the Caracas Programme of Action on ECDC adopted in 1981.

The BAPA and other efforts at G-77/ NAM enriched the TCDC/ECDC process at multiple levels. Most important of these were the ability of developing countries to think of a roadmap for excellence and second their ability to work with the developed countries.

Evolution at NAM and G-77

The first move for TCDC was initiated at the Bandung Conference in 1955 and then through the creation of G-77 at the first meeting of the UNCTAD in 1964, deliberations at the NAM also played an important role.¹

The technical cooperation as a major tool to achieve the objective of economic cooperation among the developing countries (ECDC) emerged out of the BAPA. The sectors identified included: trade, technology, food and agriculture, energy, raw materials, finance and industrialisation.

The idea was to explore opportunities and accordingly prioritise utilisation of skills through the national focal points for ECDC. It was also proposed to review the developments at the biennial meetings of the heads of national technical cooperation agencies of the Group of 77. In order to facilitate flow of information among the developing countries, a Development Information Network (DIN) was launched at UNDP.

However, things could not move forward as desired and envisaged. The administrative system of different developing countries could not exhibit the flexibility and desire to absorb new mechanism for moving forward. The UNESCO 1991 report of ECDC/TCDC observed that:

“The lack of genuine progress might seem largely to be attributable to the fact that the discussions relating to TCDC and

ECDC are limited to official circles. The true practitioners of cooperation such as socio-professional bodies, heads of enterprises, research fellows and academicians have rarely been associated in the effort. And yet, both TCDC and ECDC still hold the promise and potential with which they began. Co-operation among developing countries can be lastingly and effectively revitalised if the lengthy debate which rarely leads to action is done away with and the focus centred on concrete projects that are implemented, preferably, by several countries.”

The TCDC and ECDC came up at a time when regional cooperation among developing countries was being explored through geographical solidarity and intraregional trade cooperation and by building joint industrial bases (DSE 1986). The Development Policy Forum (EF) of the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) organised a round table in July 1986, on regional and intraregional economic and technical cooperation.² The report from this round table brought out the fact that most of the Southern groupings were more keen for customs cooperation and keen to take advantage of trade to eventually emerge as economic communities.

At this meeting, Germany also listed 50 TCDC projects that it had supported since the launch of the programme and in fact was closely involved in promoting SSC since UNCTAD IV in 1976. It was in this context, the proposal for a Global System for Trade Preferences (GSTP).

At the Arusha Summit (1978) and Caracas Summit (1981) there was also a realisation of rather slow progress on TCDC and it was proposed to sharpen the cooperation in the realm of trade, technology, agriculture, energy, finance and industrialisation. The Caracas Summit raised an important issue which is still quite relevant for South-South Cooperation. It raised the problems related to coordination. It suggested to have “a concrete, coherent, integrated and sound” strategies for coordination. The Caracas Action

Plan was taken up in Bangkok at the ESCAP in 1985.

The energy continued in other platforms also. After the 1983 NAM Summit in Delhi, India took up the leadership for TCDC projects for Asia-Pacific and coordinated regional projects and their delivery across member countries. The focus remained around appropriate technologies. India hosted an inter-governmental organisation called Non-aligned Center for Science and Technology. Before the Summit, Delhi also hosted all the heads of the National Science and Technology Agencies of the Developing Countries in New Delhi, under the auspices of G-77. It identified following priorities:

Compilation and dissemination of information on existing capabilities and expertise;

- Formulation of cooperative arrangements through networks and experts exchange;
- Flow of technology among developing countries and cooperation in the area of technological innovation;
- Negotiating power of developing countries with regard to technology suppliers; and
- Organisational and financial matters for promoting TCDC/ECDC.

Efforts at the UN Forum

The 1974 General Assembly resolutions 3201 and 3202 are still relevant in different contexts. They at the outset acknowledged that the gains from the development process were setting in neo-colonial trends and monopolising technologies for the benefit of few while may set dangerous trends in the political and economic spaces.

It called for establishing a New International Economic Order based on equity, sovereignty, equality, interdependence, common interests and cooperation among all the States. Please see following paragraph from the Resolution 3201 (UNGA, 1974):

“All these changes have thrust into prominence the reality of interdependence of all the members of the world community. Current events have brought into sharp focus the realisation that the interests of the developed countries and those of the developing countries can no longer be isolated from each other, that there is a close interrelationship between the prosperity of the developed countries and the growth and development of the developing countries, and that the prosperity of the international community as a whole depends upon the prosperity of its constituent parts. International co-operation for development is the shared goal and common duty of all countries. Thus the political, economic and social well-being of present and future generations depends more than ever on co-operation between all the members of the international community on the basis of sovereign equality and the removal of the disequilibrium that exists between them.”

The United Nations conference in Buenos Aires in 1978, was unique with 138 delegations. It evolved one of the most comprehensive texts on TCDC with around 38 recommendations. It defined the objectives for TCDC and identified actions to be taken at the national level, actions due at the regional or sub-regional level and at the global level. UNDP was expected to advance this work through its UNDP Policies and Procedure Manual, released in 1983, on the recommendations of a high level committee.

After all these decades, through the UN General Assembly resolutions 71/318 and 71/2441 Member States decided to hold the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (also called as BAPA+40) in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 20 to 22 March 2019.

New Impetus for Triangular Partnerships

Triangular Cooperation (TrC) has emerged as a new priority area for several developing countries. After few such partnerships in late 1950s, India increasingly has shown greater appetite for this instrument. PM Modi has given new fillip to this modality with enhanced partnership with various countries. The idea of working closely with the United Kingdom across Small Island Developing Countries (SIDS) among Commonwealth Countries and with Japan in the Indo-Pacific FOIP framework, advancing the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) with Saudi Arabia and Africa are several recent examples, where India has made efforts to go beyond equator. In fact the recent initiatives of working with China in Afghanistan, after Modi-Jinping Summit in Wuhan has given a new hope for greater traction in South-South Cooperation leading to TrC. TrC identifies a collaborative effort at development cooperation involving three types of partners. While it identifies a Southern partner as a pivotal country, a Northern counterpart is termed a provider country that contributes technical and financial resources, besides sharing knowledge and experiences. The recipient countries, again from the Southern group, are those wherein such efforts are initiated.

With the journey from TCDC to TrC several new issues may come up. For instance, what were the factors that were holding TCDC back and what might be the facilitating factors for TrC? Issues would also arise, as to how non-compliance with the OECD guidelines would be explained by the TrC (OECD/DAC) partners and how (SSC partners) and in this case particularly the Asian partners would shy away from data reporting. These questions would haunt the future deliberations as efficacy and effectiveness, impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation, etc. get centre stage in the development discourse.

Now this obviously raises some more queries related to TrC. For example, does a country drafts its policy on TrC or is it a bottom-up phenomenon? If it is a top-down process, then how this is institutionally addressed to at the ground level? Is it a linear progression of an on-going bilateral programme or is it a specially designed venture? What role do line ministries, agencies and local missions play and how respective foreign ministries link with them?

The horizontality of TrC is another important issue. For example, are different actors at the same level? Who prevails with modalities and how, if at all, a common understanding is reached on accounting and other reporting mechanisms? Apart from several photo-ops that TrC provides, when there is a high-level political commitment to the TrC, inherent to this dynamic is also a question of who gets visibility and credit for TrC. There is also the issue of how partner economies view TrC. How is this helping them and in what way they feel how the prevailing practices may be improved further?

It is not easy to answer all these questions, and it is extremely difficult to do so in a brief note such as this one, but we have still tried to respond to some of the issues raised and have left others for a follow-up work.

The growing interest in triangular development cooperation (TDC) is often seen to be associated with a misconception that this is a new tool for development cooperation. On the contrary, TrC has always been there as an instrument for engagement between various countries at different stages of development. However, it has been receiving a greater attention ever since some of the countries entered the middle-income-countries (MICs) group. It was in late 1950s when India and USA together worked for establishing radio network across Nepal and Afghanistan and also for constructing the main capital road of Kathmandu.³ There is a fair possibility that there would be many more such instances from other regions as well.⁴

In fact, Japan has been working with the idea of TrC for decades now. It was in 1975 that Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) dedicated itself for promoting South-South Cooperation (SSC), which also gets reflected in the JICA ODA Charter. In 1985, Japan and Brazil began the first triangular cooperation scheme through the third country training programme (TCTP) (JICA, 2010).

Germany is engaged in arrangements like “triangular” cooperation probably for around 25 years or so though it may not be calling it as triangular cooperation, for instance, in 1986, Germany supported technology transfer from China to Mali.⁵ Germany started to supported triangular cooperation particularly in Latin America (Chile) after the start of the new millennium. From there it spread to triangular cooperation with Mexico and Brazil. Other major actors like Spain are also not exactly new to this process.

The fresh impetus, however, has also come in from some of the recent developments. The Rio+20 outcome document, ‘The Future we Want’, categorically calls for enhanced support for triangular cooperation which may provide much needed additional resources to the implementation of development programmes.⁶ The Development Working group of G-20 has also given similar message. The outcome document from the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness gave a fresh impetus to the TrC in late 2011, when it recognised SSC as an important building block in order to achieve wider development goals. Earlier in 2009, the Council of the European Union explicitly requested Member States to explore options for South-South and TrC. The events organised by the multilateral institutions have also given a push like the High Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation held in Nairobi (in December 2009) and the High Level Event on South-South Cooperation and Capacity Development hosted by the Government of Colombia (in March 2010).

With the new status of emerging economies, the middle-income economies (MICs) are increasingly playing the role of pivotal countries apart from expanding their well-established approach of SSC. Depending on specific situations and context, the key drivers for a TrC may be either a provider country or a pivotal country. In most of the cases, high-income economies are the providers of TrC while MICs play a pivotal role. The transition of some LDCs to MICs underscores their accumulation of intensive development experience which they are in a position to share with the rest of the countries. In some cases, it has been observed that some of the alert partner countries also lead such engagements, and these largely depend on the sectoral choices that are opted for. It would be useful to elaborate the reasons why MICs are legitimate and credible to share their successful development experiences with LICs. Within 30 years, China has overcome major economic challenges. In 2011, China’s GDP reached US \$ 7.3 trillion which was 16 times more than that of 1978. Similarly, experience of Brazil with Bolsa Família of providing financial assistance to poor Brazilian families is a successful example of social security. Chile and others also bring in important success in overcoming national poverty and challenges associated with it.

Initial Strength as a Building Block Initial bilateral experience between provider and pivotal and between pivotal and partner economies is a precondition for a successful TrC. As discussed earlier, Brazil and Japan have been collaborating since late 1950s. With this positive history of bilateral cooperation, the idea of TrC emerged. JICA supported technology for agriculture production with improved productivity of soya bean in Brazil, eventually making Brazil a world leader in this crop production.

Similarly, Germany has supported the establishment of nuclear-energy- based steel production plants in Brazil. Brazilian crude steel output has recently gone up by almost 5 per cent in 2012 to 36.8 million tonnes. The nuclear plant

was purchased from Westinghouse of the USA but the purchase did not include the transfer of sensitive reactor technology. (This technology was later supplied by Germany as part of a comprehensive nuclear agreement between Brazil and West Germany, which was signed by President Ernesto Geisel in 1975).

Regional Linkage as Motivation The historical linkages play a major role in evolving TrC and this explains the lead role that Brazil has played in the realm of TrC. According to a recent report from the Rio de Janeiro Federal University, a large number of workers from several African countries (Angola, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast area) immigrated to Brazil and now together they constitute nearly 49.6 per cent of black or mixed-blood population compared to 49.4 per cent of white population (Merco Press, 2009).

The historical linkage between Brazil and Portuguese-speaking countries and some of the African countries is an obvious choice for TrC. Brazil has partnered with several countries and agencies for advancing TrC. They include Canada, ILO, Norway, Spain, World Bank and the United States. Its triangular programmes have covered areas such as vaccinations, school feeding, reforestation, malaria eradication and waste collection. Brazil has also set-up a triangular development cooperation project to train nationals of Angola and Guinea Bissau in public administration. After independence, Timor-Leste wanted to establish a Portuguese identity and so Brazil was approached to help develop basic school curriculum for teaching Portuguese language and also for developing administrative capacity for judiciary and intelligence agencies.⁷ Brazil also provided temper proof voting machines. A project initiated for 2012 aims at sending Portuguese professors to Timor-Leste so as to train teachers in Portuguese language and arts. Brazil has agreed to send professors to teach in the National University of Timor-Leste, and will host

Timorese students at the National University of Luso Afro-Brazilian Integration in the northern Brazilian state of Ceará.

Similarly, the strength of Mexico in Central American and Caribbean region has assumed significance for Japan, Spain and Germany to have TrC with Mexico in that part of the world. The partner countries include Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia (SRE, 2011). The areas for cooperation with Japan and Germany are environmental management, agriculture as well as areas associated with civil protection, whereas with Spain TrC is for establishing community kitchens in Haiti.

There are also instances when regional commitment of pivotal countries has played an important role in building on the regional aspirations of the provider countries. For instance, as a commitment for ASEAN integration process, India decided to support efforts for accomplishing economic growth in the lesser advanced members of ASEAN, viz. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) through various measures. One of the measures was to support entrepreneurship development in the CLMV region and thus Entrepreneurship Development Institutes were established across the CLMV countries. GIZ from Germany collaborated with one such centre in Laos to run training programmes for skill development. This support from GIZ helped in generating additional revenue for the centre and India provided the infrastructure support for this.

Growing Development Profile of Partner Economies

In some cases, emerging economies also provide impetus for development cooperation with partner economies. For instance, in 2004 Brazil funded the establishment of International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) in

collaboration with UNDP. Later, in 2009, IPC-IG organised a special programme for Timor-Leste for developing social security programme on lines of Bolsa Familia called Bolsa Mae. Nearly 10,000 people are beneficiaries of Bolsa Mae programme, which had a budget of US\$876,153. The line ministries from Brazil (National Secretariat of Income and Citizenship, MDS; Secretariat of Strategic Affairs, SAE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) collaborated with IPC-IG for implementing this major training programme.

New Priorities and Contestations

The spirit of TCDC/ECDC has encouraged the developing countries to explore how technical cooperation may trigger economic cooperation. The idea to have TC and EC in tandem with each other has given far more encouraging results. The TCDC also emphasised on five other features which paved way for productive engagement of available resources. These included, TCDC as means of self-reliance, as means of international cooperation, as source for technological improvement, as a source of appropriate technology and specific solution for a pressing challenge; as a cost effective source with no full reciprocity applied to the process.

The possibilities of rise of TrC and decline in TCDC may offer several challenges and opportunities. Given the nature of participating countries, for instance, China and India participating in third country, may bring TrC as a new modality of SSC. While if any OECD-DAC member partners with emerging economy with their terms and conditions, TrC may usurp the features and strength of SSC. The fact that though TrC would likely to be a successful, focussed, result oriented process, it may remain pragmatic and devoid of historical baggage that old modalities bring in. Time would tell how this modality would unfold.

While commitment from the developed countries are essential for LDCs and other developing countries, new modalities within

TCDC/ECDC would have to be explored. Countries like Japan, Germany and Norway have demonstrated their willingness to keep the bar high. The donor countries should play an active and supportive role in fostering an increased use of the TCDC modality in development cooperation.

As discussed earlier, factors hindering TCDC activities is a matter of concern since 1980s. In the organisation of an International Consultation on TCDC held in Beijing in 1983, ESCAP Secretariat prepared a Report evaluating the progress of TCDC activities being implemented in the Asian region. The report acknowledged the fact that lack of feedback from national sources delimited the development of comprehensive portrait (UNESCO, 1988, p. 62).

The ESCAP secretariat continued the work, but somehow no major change became visible. The limitations identified included, insufficient awareness of the benefits of TCDC, lack of information on the need and capacity of technical cooperation of the various countries in the region, lack of technical capabilities and divergence of interest with complete absence of financial resources for quality delivery and cost minimisation. The strength, however, emanated out of political support and growing knowledge base with several high level summits, and with this awareness and institutional and organisational connects also emerged.

The recent trend of declining overseas development assistance is not going to help in any way. Overseas development assistance and TCDC should mutually reinforce each other. South-South cooperation should not be at the expense of the much-needed development assistance provided by the industrialized countries.

Like the current triangular cooperation, TCDC also envisaged genuine and equal participation with the idea of collective gain, with no one benefiting more or anyone having a feeling of being deceived in the partnership. There is role to

be played by all with horizontality as the fulcrum for balancing the all.

Way Forward

In the days to come, the diversity of TrC and its scope to contribute in the evolution of new relationships in the realm of development cooperation is likely to expand. The need to further expand and deepen the TrC is already being felt across different regions and sectors. The fact that it has the potential to bring in horizontal cooperation at par with SSC is being seen as a major factor contributing to this potential. However, there are countries which have yet to explore and realise full potential of the TrC. Success in this area for a provider country it seems, would always be relative to its own achievement with various instruments for TrC, whether it is through training programmes or infrastructure projects or even financing. The yardstick should be once own starting point and possible areas for experimentation with TrC. It is not a bus that one would miss, as compared to those who are already on it. If country 'A' has sufficiently advanced in this area, it does not mean that country 'B', or any other provider country for that matter, has missed the TrC bus. If one is not on it, the loss would be of one's own movement on the trajectory of development cooperation as it brings in consolidation of one's own work with pivotal countries in the partner countries. There are other benefits of TrC – like underpinning global partnerships with implementing measures, promoting SSC, making use of complementarities. In that sense it is actually a path to bring in better returns on earlier expenditure and managing (or minimising) future costs of similar efforts in third countries.

In the beginning, small steps on this path are always going to be most productive. Small steps in TrC may help evolve level of engagement with optimum utilisation of resources. For instance, most of the provider

and pivotal countries that are engaged in TrC began with exchange of knowledge or training programmes. It is a move in terms of building trust through ground-level engagements with support from the top. Japan, for instance, along with many others, has dominated this form of engagement. Many of providers still focus on that approach while few have advanced in the realm of actual production or in management of certain productive economic activities; for instance, Germany has launched urban renewal projects in some areas. The latter are emerging more from ground, where impetus from top at political level and engagement at the level of operational agencies is extremely important for conception and eventual implementation. Japan has launched a long-term collaboration programme in Mozambique with help of Brazil for turning arid savanna into major cultivation area for crops like soya bean, rice, wheat, etc. Apart from agriculture this project is also helping build irrigation canals from Limpopo river into more than 300 km area supporting 12000 farming households (Hongo, 2009).

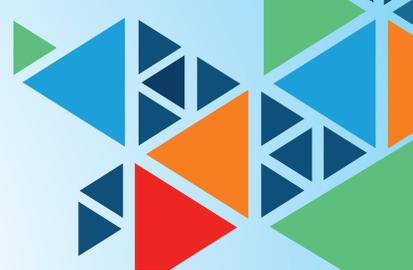
During engagements, both provider and pivotal countries may have to be more willing and open to each other on issues of legitimacy, visibility and on leveraging credit out of such engagements, which eventually may provide sustainability to the relationship. The strength would of course come from their previous engagements so that TrC is more path-dependent in terms of its outcome. As discussed before, it should be in the areas of respective strengths of the countries. Point of collaboration should be the one when maximum complementarities are accomplished. There is no clear evidence on scope and implications for scaling up of TrC. With this issues related to possible choices between fragmented and small projects vis-a-vis. systematic and larger projects come up.

Probably considering scaling-up, which though makes sense from policy perspective, may not be the best way to do it because in any

case TrC emanates from strategic vision of both provider and the pivotal countries, which is highly context specific and can be generalised only with the risk of compromising the efficacy of the project. However, in some sectors, such as urban management, scaling-up may in fact enhance efficacy. The idea that TrC involves huge negotiation costs and thereby higher transaction costs (in some context along with bargaining cost) could not be substantiated. Moreover, these costs may be managed with communications at all stages of engagement and with due designation of national agencies particularly by the LICs. The TrC comes in more from willingness of all the three stakeholders. In most of the cases, it is a natural extension of the on-going bilateral programmes.

As it has emerged, most of the TrC cases are in the area of knowledge exchange and capacity creation across partner economies. As the Rio+20 outcome document also emphasised on the need for enhanced capacity building for sustainable development through strengthening technical and scientific cooperation including

North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. Similar emphasis for expanding social protection floors within LICs has come from the report of the G-20 Development group. Although this is an essential initial investment, how LICs utilise this knowledge and capacity for economic development and societal growth is an important issue. The LICs so far have been a passive partner of the possible linkages between them; however, with growing role of provider and pivotal countries, the LICs should also come forward in suggesting as to how best a possible matchmaking may facilitate in accomplishing specific policy goals. In one of the interviews with a partner economy official, the feeling of 'training fatigue' was revealed. It came out that several of their officials are on various different training programmes throughout a year, but have very limited opportunities to place that knowledge to work in their own system. This calls for much more substantive role for LICs in the process so that enrichment efforts have relevance for goals and aspirations of LICs.



South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism

Jorge Chediek*

Introduction

The ideal of cooperation among developing countries was born in the 1950s as an attempt to establish new patterns of collaboration which addressed the limitations of a world order influenced by imperialism and colonialism, and caught up on the dynamic of the Cold War. However, some developing countries like, India and China had initiated their efforts in development cooperation well before, in the late 1940s, through provision of opportunities in training and knowledge sharing.

The 1955 Afro-Asian Bandung Conference became a landmark event, in which major developing countries committed to the principles of the charter of the United Nations, and called for an international order in which the interests and rights of developing countries were to be fully considered. The declaration, among others, called for the respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations; abstention from intervention or interference in the internal

affairs of another country; respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, singly or collectively, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations; abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve any particular interests of the big powers, abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries; refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country; settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations; promotion of mutual interests and cooperation; and respect for justice and international obligations.

The conclusions of this seminal international conference thus represented a commitment to a multilateral world, and to the engagement of all countries, regardless of their size and power, within the principles and instruments of the Charter of the United Nations. In that context, the urge for increased collaboration among developing countries, based on solidarity,

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respect and mutual interests, represented the first major milestone for what we now call South-South Cooperation.

These countries, eventually joined by many others, coalesced in the 1964 United Nations Conference for Trade and Development with the creation of the Group of 77 developing countries.¹ This group aimed from the start to collaborate to make the international trade and financial systems more favorable to the interests of the developing world. The efforts to promote the collaboration in these areas among developing countries was called Economic Cooperation among Developing countries, or ECDC, centered mostly on the Geneva spaces of the UN system.

In parallel, there were increasing calls for the United Nations System to more actively promote other forms of collaboration among developing countries. This request became a difficult proposition for the United Nations to accommodate; after all, the UN cooperation architecture was established mostly on the premise that development was to be the result of the transfer of knowledge and resources from the developed countries, thus operating in a way that the best -if not only - answers were to come from the North to the South. The proposition that collaboration among developing countries was an important component of the mission was not prevalent. The leadership and governance of the system also conspired to the incorporation of the South-South perspective to the mandates and the operational modalities of the United Nations, and even less so in the work of the multilateral financial institutions.

Nevertheless, the increasing activism of the G77, as well as the understanding by some UN leaders that this type of collaboration needed to be mainstreamed, led to the call of a UN Conference on the Technical Collaboration among developing countries. After almost five years of preparatory work at the political and technical level, this conference eventually took

place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between 30 August and 12 September 1978. This conference produced the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, for promoting, and implementing technical cooperation among developing countries. This very important and comprehensive document provided a broad framework for this collaboration, and opened spaces for the engagement of all actors of the international community to support this cooperation modality.²

The plan called for actions at the national, regional, interregional and global levels. Within the UN system, the United Nations Development Programme was given a leading role, through the strengthening of its Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, and with the mandate to promote the further engagement of the rest of the system, particularly the UN Regional Commissions. The document also called for the establishment of a permanent intergovernmental structure under the UN General Assembly, which became the High Level Committee on South-South cooperation that were to meet every two years to follow up on the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and to promote additional actions to expand this cooperation.

Therefore, as early as 1978 there was a full framework to legitimize and support South-South collaboration within the United Nations. Nevertheless, the system remained mostly committed to the traditional modalities of work, considering that the bulk of the funding continued to be provided by developed countries and the development paradigm of North-South flows remained the controlling ideological framework. This dominance was accentuated by the renewed preeminence in the 1980s of a market-based approach to international development, the paradigm that came to be simplistically known as “neoliberalism”. This vision stipulated that economic growth was to come from the freeing of market forces and the opening of the economies; as a result, significant

resources were devoted to facilitating this processes in most developing countries, with some funding devoted to mitigating the negative effects of the implementation of these policies. The resulting economic growth would then lead to the improvement of the quality of life of the peoples of the South.

In addition to this shift in the ideological framework of development, South-South cooperation did not increase significantly in the last decades of the last century. There were remarkable examples of developing countries committed to supporting other nations, among them India, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Libya; however, the predominant dynamics of international cooperation continued to be based on the parameters set by the countries of the North, embodied by the work of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.

The new century introduced some changes to this reality. Most of the nations that followed faithfully the neoliberal paradigm failed to achieve the expected results, as most countries did not achieve the promised economic growth and the social consequences of the reforms were more dire than expected.

At the same time, in spite of the relative lack of success at the global level, several developing countries achieved remarkable development results. The well-known example of the extraordinary achievements of the People's Republic of China since the Opening up and Reform process launched in 1978, was joined by many other successes such as the rural employment programs in India, the fight against hunger in Brazil, the health systems in Cuba, the model transition from the apartheid regime in South Africa, among many others. These initiatives generated a renewed interest from other developing countries to learn from these examples, thus generating a renewed demand for cooperation flows. At the same time, several of

these and other developing countries committed increased resources to facilitate and fund these exchanges, so South-South cooperation became increasingly important.

However, at the political level this collaboration was not adequately reflected in the international legislation. A major step was taken at the first South Summit held in Havana, Cuba in April of 2000, the meeting declaration (article 40) highlighted the importance of what it was then called South-South Cooperation (including technical and economic), as an "effective instrument", and a "vital element in promoting South-South relations and in achieving self-reliance".³ From there on, the position of developing countries was better coordinated from a common position and understanding.

This language implied an expanded vision to South-South cooperation. Not just to promote the improvement of the living conditions of the peoples of the Global South, but also as means to support increased political cooperation and to establish stronger links to allow more freedom of action of developing countries in the international system through their joint efforts.

As a result, a clear tension emerged between traditional donors, who wanted the cooperation from Southern countries to follow the parameters of established OECD practices and the Paris Declaration process, and to obtain increased resources from these countries to fund the multilateral system without major structural changes.⁴ At the same time, developing countries articulated by the G77 + China fought to keep Southern cooperation as qualitatively different, and not as a replacement but as a complement to North South cooperation, so as not to provide space for developed countries to renege on their commitments in terms of international assistance. The result was a series of annual General Assembly resolutions that maintained the "status quo" and failed to advance the debate beyond those entrenched positions.

Significant efforts were waged in changing the institutional positioning of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation within the system, without major changes. In this context, the 2009 High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, convened in Nairobi, Kenya in December 2009, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, failed to produce major breakthroughs in terms of conceptualization and on the importance and visibility of South-South cooperation,⁵ and no major advances were registered there and over the next few years.

In view of this blockage, the UNOSSC has promoted the convening of another conference on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action since 2016. This initiative was initially met with great skepticism by both the UN leadership and most member states, but the strong advocacy of the Office, and leadership of Argentina together with the offer to host the event in Buenos Aires led to the eventual approval of the conference.⁶

The UNOSSC then embarked on an effort to mobilize member states and other actors towards a forward-looking conference, breaking the political impasse and to fit South-South cooperation in the framework established by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. New allies were found, including within the OECD which had been working very actively on the promotion, reporting and systematization of triangular cooperation.⁷ In addition, the expanded institutional framework of the 2030 agenda opened the way to incorporate other actors beyond central governments to the South-South architecture such as sub-national governments, academia, NGOs, CSOs, the private sector, foundations and others. Many modalities of South-South Cooperation were identified, beyond the traditional technical cooperation, including infrastructure development, academic exchanges, technology transfers, trade, finance, investment and others.

The negotiations on the outcome document of the conference started earnestly in early 2019, with the able facilitation of the Permanent Representatives of Uganda and Lithuania, and the secretariat support of UNOSSC. Despite strong skepticism, agreements started to build up in a context of addition, accommodating proposals from all sides. As a result, the outcome document became a breakthrough outcome for South-South cooperation. Among other stipulations, it confirmed the principles of South-South cooperation, including the fact that it is complementary and does not replace North-South Cooperation, it expands the scope of potential actors of South-South cooperation, it increases the range of activities included, provides a stronger framework for triangular cooperation, and confirms strong calls for all countries to engage in these efforts. It also mandates the UN system to better coordinate its contributions and to develop a joint strategy to support South-South cooperation.

In addition, the Conference itself that took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between 20 and 22 March 2019 had the participation of representatives from 160 countries, including five heads of state and government, and with over 70 countries represented at ministerial level. In addition, many other organizations and actors actively participated, with over 140 side events and many individual presentations. The Conference, that came to be known as BAPA+40 thus became a milestone in the global cooperation architecture. In addition, by reaffirming that South-South cooperation is qualitatively different from North-South collaboration, mandating the UN System to support these partnerships, and confirming a central role for developing countries to set their own development priorities, the document constitutes a strong endorsement of multilateralism.⁸

South-South cooperation has now become a feature of the work of the United Nations. As

mandated by the BAPA + 40 Outcome document, a UN System Wide Strategy for South- South Cooperation for Sustainable Development has been produced, with the participation and engagement of over 30 UN entities.⁹ An implementation plan is under preparation to report and measure the impact of the activities of the system in this area.

In parallel to this work within the UN system, other efforts were made to expand and strengthen the institutional framework of South-South cooperation. Two development banks were established namely the New Development Bank, in 2014 and the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank in 2016, to provide much required additional funding to developing countries. In addition, existing Banks such as the Islamic Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development significantly increased their engagement in South- South cooperation.

Regional initiatives were also scaled up to promote increased cooperation within the regions, including in Africa (through the Africa 2063 initiative and the establishment of the continental free trade area), in ASEAN (through the economic community), and in Latin America through CELAC.

The COVID pandemic has shown that international solidarity and multilateralism are more necessary than ever. South-South cooperation provided many good examples of this collaboration, and the upcoming debates on the post pandemic world provide a great opportunity to highlight the importance and centrality of South- South cooperation in a more equal world.

To engage in these debates, action and agreements are needed in some areas, namely:

Advocacy: by definition, most developing countries still have serious domestic challenges, and they tend to possess limited resources to support other countries. In this context, it is difficult for the leaders of those countries to

justify providing for others, either financially or technically. Consequently, much of the expansion of South-South cooperation in the last few years has come from a limited number of countries. In addition, some of this collaboration is also one way only, through which those countries want to share their successes with others. Building on this valuable collaboration, further efforts are necessary to expand the scope of actors that engage in South-South cooperation, including countries that are less developed, and also to expand the two-way flow of this collaboration, so all actors benefit from this interaction.

Stronger Institutional Arrangements: at the national level, most of the institutions that manage cooperation in developing countries are designed to receive flows from traditional donors. As a result, they tend to lack the capacity to organize demand and supply for cooperation with other developing countries, including legal mechanisms and funding structures. Several cooperation agencies are already evolving to establish that capacity, and it should be an important component of assistance from other developing countries, and from other partners including traditional donors and particularly UN organizations. Initiatives such as the UNOSSC-Japan- Brazil Programme for the strengthening of cooperation agencies, and the Reverse Linkages supported by the Islamic Development Bank represent good examples of efforts that should be further scaled up. The joint contribution of the South Center, the Islamic Development Bank and UNOSSC on the national ecosystems is also a valuable tool to build in this area.

The Southern led development Banks mentioned above, viz. the Islamic Development Bank, New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Development Bank, represent spaces to channel financial and technical resources from within the Global South.

At the regional level, there should be a stronger commitment of regional and sub-regional organizations to promote and facilitate cooperation among their members, which is after

all their mission. There are very good examples, such as the work of the Ibero- American Secretariat, the ASEAN work, the initiatives of the African Union and others. More mechanisms are necessary to promote interregional cooperation to strengthen the collective positioning of the Global South.

At the Global level, there is a need of a better coordinated engagement of the developing countries in the governing structures of the United Nations, in order to achieve even deeper engagement of the UN system in support of South-South Cooperation. In this regard, it is critical to revitalize the role of the G77 plus China, in specifically providing thought leadership and proposals to advance the agenda beyond already agreed principles and practices. The establishment of effective links between the growing contributions of think tanks from the South with the political spaces in New York and Geneva should be further enhanced, building on examples such as the collaboration of the South Center on issues of trade and intellectual property. A better informed positioning from the South would allow developing countries to take the lead in shaping the global agenda, instead of being mostly responsive to initiatives that come from the North or from UN institutions.

Reporting: there is a criticism (particularly from traditional donors) that there is no adequate information on the flows of South-South cooperation. In that context, there is pressure from these partners to join the OECD reporting methodologies and mechanisms. On this matter, there is resistance from most Southern countries to utilize this approach, as South-South cooperation adopts many forms that are not well captured by these modalities, which emphasize the financial dimensions. At the same time, it would be particularly useful for the countries of the South to report more systematically on their cooperation, for which more advances are needed in the development of those methodologies. Many developing agencies from the South, among them the Brazilian Cooperation Agency have already established these reporting tools,

including through the measurement of non-monetary contributions. More work is needed in this area, and organizations as the UNOSSC could become a repository and disseminator of these practices.

Related to the above, it is very important to have information on the results achieved by South-South cooperation. On this issue, there is also pressure from the traditional donors that want to promote their evaluation frameworks. There are already many ongoing efforts to establish impact evaluation mechanisms for South-South Cooperation, such as the one being developed by the IBSA think tanks. There is a need to expand these efforts at the academic and political level, as it is critical to show to the leaders and the peoples of the Global South that this collaboration is helping build a better world.

Corollary: The further expansion and success of South-South cooperation will represent a great contribution to multilateralism. On one hand, the development cooperation landscape will benefit from the more proactive engagement of all actors, providing a broader set of options for the challenges of developing countries. At the same time, this expansion should also provide a broader ideological framework for the development debates, with an agenda that is genuinely global and is aimed at supporting the challenges of developing countries factoring in their own perspectives.

The COVID crisis has shown that global crisis necessitates global responses. Within the context of common but differentiated responsibilities, South-South collaboration must become a key component of the efforts to recover and to regain the march on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In sum, the world needs more and better South- South cooperation for the consolidation of a multilateral and more just world that effectively provides opportunities to those who need it the most. As Pope Francis has said “it is our duty to rethink the future of our common home and our common project” by strengthening multilateralism and cooperation between states.



South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism

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Introduction

The world is currently facing multiple development challenges, including post-pandemic recovery, climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and food insecurity, pushing millions into extreme poverty. Estimates indicate an annual financing gap of US\$ 3.9 trillion in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (OECD, 2020). With only 17 per cent of SDG targets on track, the achievement of these global goals is at significant risk (UN, 2024). Recognising the urgency of these challenges, the call for global partnership is more important than ever.

Japan has been engaging in and promoting triangular cooperation for over a half century since the 1970s, making it one of the traditional donors with the longest history in this field. The Japanese government has placed triangular cooperation at the center of its development cooperation policy (MOFA, 2013). Based on this strategic direction, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)² has accumulated

extensive experience in triangular cooperation with its partner countries around the world. Approximately 85,000 people worldwide have participated in triangular cooperation within its flagship programme, the Knowledge Co-Creation Programme (KCCP). Japan and its partner countries provide training courses for third countries, focusing on specific development challenges and joint solution development (JICA, 2024). As a development agency with a wide range of modalities, from technical cooperation to financial cooperation, JICA tailors in its triangular cooperation approaches based on the needs and conditions of its partner countries to maximise outputs and outcomes.

JICA's triangular cooperation has evolved over time with changes in the international positioning of South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTrC). Throughout its history of triangular cooperation, Japan has emphasised knowledge co-creation and mutual learning, inspired by its own experiences, since the Meiji Restoration in the 19th century, of adapting

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Western solutions to fit its local context. Since the initiation of SSTRC, Japan has created various momentum to boost this modality and expanded it globally through agreements with partner countries, networking through international dialogues, and integration into regular development cooperation programmes as knowledge sharing. Today, triangular cooperation is recognised as a complementary modality to South-South Cooperation for contributing to the achievement of SDGs and addressing global issues. In this context, JICA has utilised its triangular cooperation on the ground to tackle global challenges, such as pandemic responses, mine action in conflict-affected areas, and support for small-scale farmers. Now development issues are becoming more complex and multifaceted. In addition, many emerging and developing countries are proceeding with institutionalisation of cooperation agencies, and actively taking leadership roles in sharing experiences and know-how in managing cooperation programmes. Also, issues that were not commonly addressed by South-South cooperation, such as experiences of fragile and conflict-affected countries, are being addressed recently by sharing knowledge among countries with similar experiences. Against this backdrop, Japan has been shifting its strategy to view triangular cooperation as regional and global platforms for co-creating development solutions and strengthening its ties with like-minded partners through mutual learning.

Japan's Journey in South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Japan learned the importance of knowledge co-creation and mutual learning during its modernisation in the 19th century. Japan adopted advanced Western technologies and systems and integrated them with the existing local norms and values (Kitaoka, 2019), thereby creating solutions tailored to the local context. This approach was further reinforced by its own experience of post-war recovery and

subsequent economic advancement. During the reconstruction phase following World War II, Japan received significant aid for infrastructure development, funded by the World Bank and other entities. Simultaneously, Japan became an aid provider by joining the Colombo Plan in 1954 and began to take a leadership role in South-South cooperation (SSC) (JICA, 2005).³

Japan started sharing its development experiences, particularly with Asian countries, emphasising the importance of self-help efforts for aid recipients based on its post-war recovery and economic advancement.

This dual role of being both an aid recipient and donor provided Japan with a unique perspective on the effectiveness of SSC, shaping its development cooperation philosophy. Since then, Japan's philosophy has been that cooperation is not just about bringing finance or ready-made solutions from Japan, but about working together with partner countries to develop solutions that fit each country's context.

Starting in 1994, Japan signed Partnership Programme agreements with 12 countries⁴ that were showing economic growth and gaining potential as new providers of international cooperation. Under these Partnership Programmes, Japan and its partner countries held annual consultation meetings to discuss their joint technical cooperation projects, evaluate the outcomes, and plan for the following year. While some of these Partnership Programmes are less active today, others continue to thrive.

In 2002, triangular cooperation gained additional momentum through international frameworks for facilitation, such as the JICA-ASEAN Regional Cooperation Meeting (JARCOM), later renamed the Japan-Southeast Asian Meeting for South-South Cooperation (J-SEAM). These frameworks promoted regional knowledge exchange among ASEAN countries (JICA, 2018a). Moreover, Japan supported ASEAN initiatives through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (MOFA, 2022).

Additionally, Japan hosted the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), with the third conference in 2003 advocating for South-South cooperation through the “Asia-Africa Initiative.” This initiative involved Asian countries in supporting African development, with JICA ensuring the participation of these countries from the project formulation stage to foster ownership and match needs and resources (JICA, 2005). This approach fostered ownership among the involved parties and matched needs and resources after identifying the needs of the recipient side. These initiatives promoted an understanding of the significance of triangular cooperation and the voluntary efforts of emerging countries.

With these developments, the Japanese government began emphasising SSTRC as effective method for promoting development cooperation. The 2003 Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter clearly stated that Japan will promote this modality in partnership with countries in Asia and other regions.⁵

Furthermore, JICA established guidelines in 2005 to systematise triangular cooperation. These guidelines highlight the values of JICA’s trilateral cooperation, describe practice trends in different regions, and set directions to address future challenges (JICA, 2005).

To promote knowledge co-creation and mutual learning, gathering information on local needs and contexts was crucial. In 2003, JICA underwent a major strategic shift, transforming itself into an independent implementing agency apart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Under the leadership of Madame Sadako Ogata, who became JICA’s president that year, the organisation adopted an on-the-ground approach known as “gemba.” This strategy involved assigning more personnel to each country and delegating more authority to its overseas offices, rather than centralising control in its Tokyo headquarters. This shift accelerated the gathering of information on each country’s needs and streamlined decision-making in

various cooperation efforts, including triangular cooperation (JICA, 2018b).

Today, this approach remains a core aspect of JICA’s operational vision. JICA gathers information and assesses needs from 150 developing countries through its 96 overseas offices. In countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Egypt, national staff with over 20 years of experience in triangular cooperation share their extensive knowledge with other overseas office staff. Similarly, Japanese experts are assigned to regions like Central America, specifically the Central American Integration System (SICA), and to Brazil, at the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), to listen to local needs and facilitate project formulation and implementation with JICA.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation as Effective Modalities for Contributing to SDGs

Triangular cooperation is increasingly recognised as an effective and complementary modality to SSC for contributing to the achievement of the SDGs and addressing global issues. The Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) in 2019 marked a milestone in promoting this recognition and reaffirming its potential. UN Member States acknowledged that SSTRC could leverage and mobilise additional technical and financial resources, enable stakeholders to share a broader range of experiences, and build partnerships and trust among all participants toward achieving the SDGs (UN, 2019). Japan also made an effort to deepen the discussion on the importance of triangular cooperation for BAPA+40. JICA had long been supported by the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) to jointly organise the Director Generals Forum for Sustainable Development alongside the United Nations South-South Cooperation EXPO, where delegates from UN member states shared their respective

experiences and learned from each other to further improve the impact of their cooperation. Under its G20 Presidency in 2019, following up the discussion initiated by Argentine Presidency in 2018, Japan enhanced the discussions in the G20 Development Working Group on triangular cooperation by organising a side event in January 2019, focusing on “Effective Triangular Cooperation to Achieve the 2030 Agenda.” The event discussed the role of G20 countries and international organisations in achieving the 2030 Agenda and shared practical examples of triangular cooperation (MOFA, 2019).

In the recent years, Japan has been utilising triangular cooperation by integrating it into its regular development cooperation programmes and projects as integral elements to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and tackle global challenges with its partner countries, focusing on knowledge co-creation and mutual learning. One example is a countermeasure against a health crisis. In response to the spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa, JICA launched a programme aimed at preparing for pandemics and strengthening the capacity of disease control experts in Africa through research. Using triangular cooperation, JICA was able to scale up the programme’s impact from Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya to almost half of the countries on the African continent. Based on this partnership, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research in Ghana, a partner of the programme, was able to conduct over 370,000 PCR tests between March and mid-July 2020, representing around 80 per cent of the PCR tests in the country. Furthermore, in January and February of the following year, Ghana hosted an online training on countermeasures against infectious diseases, including COVID-19, with the participation of 15 experts from nine countries in West Africa (GPI, 2021).

Similarly, JICA utilises triangular cooperation to support conflict-affected countries. JICA has

supported the Cambodia Mine Action Centre (CMAC) for over 20 years, enabling it to develop one of the best operational mine action capacities in the world. JICA then encouraged CMAC to start cooperating with other mine-contaminated countries such as Colombia, Lao PDR, Iraq, and Angola, thereby connecting their technology specific to conflict-affected countries to others facing similar challenges. In 2023, CMAC invited staff from Ukraine’s State Emergency Service (SESU) for training to enhance their mine action capacity (JICA, 2023). Now CMAC has accumulated rich experiences of co-creating mine action equipment and methodologies with various partners trying to introduce and develop new technologies, while JICA facilitates CMAC’s cooperation with new partner countries by deploying these new technologies.

JICA implements triangular cooperation to contribute to SDGs, too. From 2006 to 2009, JICA launched the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP) approach in Kenya, which strengthened the capacity of smallholder farmers and nearly doubled their average income. From 2010 to 2015, the second phase was implemented, establishing a unit dedicated to expanding the SHEP approach within the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture. Based on this cooperation, Japan and Kenya began providing training courses on this approach starting in 2014, inviting other African countries (JICA, 2015). To date, 57 countries have adopted this approach, expanding to Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America (Interview with a JICA staff). This exemplifies how triangular cooperation can start small in one country and then expand to other countries and regions.

As illustrated by these cases, JICA follows the golden rule of “Start small and then Scale-Up.” This strategy involves beginning with mutual learning and knowledge co-creation with one partner country and then expanding to other countries or regions if successful. During this process, JICA’s triangular cooperation

transforms local institutions into pivotal “Centers of Excellence,” strengthening their institutional capacity (Yamashita, 2022). Therefore, it is not merely an extension of bilateral cooperation but a broad application of co-created solutions to address context-specific regional challenges.

With its long-standing experience in triangular cooperation, JICA supports emerging development cooperation agencies in strengthening their capacity, too. In 2008, during the High-Level Forum on SSC, Directors-General level delegates declared the need to reinforce the management practices of development cooperation agencies responsible for SSTRC to enhance and increase development results. Following the forum, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) confirmed its support for this endeavour, particularly to assist least-developed countries. JICA and the UNOSSC joined this commitment. From 2012 to 2022, they provided training programmes, inviting approximately 40 countries. Recently, JICA has provided its partner agencies with lectures on JICA’s operations from project formulation to evaluation, supporting them in improving their management practices (Interview with a JICA staff).

Triangular Cooperation as a Platform for Co-creating Solutions

The revised Japanese Development Cooperation Charter in 2023 focuses on co-creation and solidarity to tackle complex global issues with diverse stakeholders. By recognising the importance of co-creation with various partners including those in developing countries, it reaffirms Japan’s commitment to enhancing SSC and triangular cooperation, working together with both developed and developing countries.⁶ Moreover, JICA launched its new strategies in 20 thematic areas, known as “JICA Global Agenda,” in 2021, which illustrates JICA’s vision and strategies in each of these 20 sectors and aims to bring together diverse stakeholders and capabilities to tackle these

challenges and maximise development impact in partner countries. The JICA Global Agenda and its implementing strategies include many examples of knowledge sharing with good practices of JICA’s partner institutions in developing countries in each sector (e.g. Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority for water supply) and its scale-up to the regional and global levels (JICA, 2022). This demonstrates JICA’s unique approach, which includes elements of triangular cooperation in its regular practice and co-creation of ideas as the foundation of Japanese cooperation.

In addition, while JICA has been implementing trilateral cooperation in many projects as an integral part of its regular development cooperation operations, without necessarily calling it triangular cooperation, today’s development issues are becoming increasingly complex and multifaceted. Additionally, some of the countries that JICA has supported in strengthening their institutional capacity over the past several decades are now promoting institutionalisation of their SSC and taking on leadership roles as emerging partners. There are more and more cases in which JICA works with these newly emerging cooperation agencies. In light of these changing dynamics in development cooperation, JICA is rethinking how it can leverage its evolving assets and what contributions it can make to the global international cooperation architecture.

One new perspective that JICA foresees for future triangular cooperation is that it becomes evident that the need for regional and global platforms for sharing experiences and knowledge of these emerging cooperation agencies is increasing. These knowledge-sharing exercises among agencies will enhance their common understanding and coordination among them. To date, JICA has been implementing triangular cooperation by partnering with new countries and scaling up bilateral cooperation to other countries. With the emergence of various development cooperation agencies, JICA aims

to strengthen dialogues with these new partners who share common values and can jointly create development solutions.

Furthermore, to improve the efficiency of its conventional triangular cooperation schemes, JICA leverages the assets accumulated over years of triangular cooperation as “public goods” for a region to tackle compounded crises and achieve SDGs. In Latin America, for example, JICA is co-creating a platform with its partner countries and their sector-specific institutions as centers of excellence. This platform identifies capabilities for a wide range of development challenges and catalogues them. Additionally, JICA is exploring ways to organise training courses and send experts to third countries more efficiently and quickly. Through these initiatives, JICA aims to streamline the effective use of triangular partnerships as regional and global public goods, promoting knowledge co-creation and mutual learning even further.

By leveraging resources, knowledge, and capacities in complementary ways, the international community can maximise the potential of triangular cooperation to significantly boost progress toward the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, especially during this critical Decade of Action. The success of triangular cooperation depends on collective and coordinated commitment. Notably, the G20 Presidency of Brazil has recently prioritised triangular cooperation at the G20 Working Groups and is leading discussions on catalysing this cooperation to build trust and partnerships

(OECD, n.d.). In this context, Japan is committed to working together to create an environment that promotes effective SSTRC, based on mutual trust and solidarity, ensuring that SSTRC brings together diverse actors and broadens knowledge and innovation to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how Japan, based on the history of its own development experiences, has emphasised knowledge co-creation and mutual learning, embedding triangular cooperation in all aspects of its development cooperation. Considering the changing dynamics in global development cooperation, Japan is now rethinking triangular cooperation as a platform for co-creating development solutions and expanding partnerships with new collaborators. JICA believes that this will mainstream the effective use of triangular cooperation as regional and global public goods. Triangular cooperation has the potential to bring various actors together through partnership and enhance unity, contributing to a fair and equitable international order and the achievement of SDGs. As the challenges, facing the international community, become more complex and multifaceted, it is becoming more important to share the experiences and knowledge of the countries of the South and promote common understanding and mutual learning in order to make triangular cooperation an even more effective approach.

Endnotes and References

Chapter 1: Triangular Cooperation: Frameworks, Approach and Initiatives

This excerpt is adapted from the author's previously published work: Sachin Chaturvedi, "In my view: Work with Southern providers to achieve greater scale and relevance", published in, Development Co-operation Report 2023: Debating The Aid System, OECD, 2023. The content has been included here with minor editorial changes and with appropriate permissions.

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Chapter 2: Emerging Contours of India-Germany-Africa Triangular Cooperation

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¹ <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/111747.html>

² Chaturvedi. 2023.

³ <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/LegalTreatiesDoc/DE22B3830.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/LegalTreatiesDoc/DE22B3830.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation>

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Chapter 3: Rethinking Development in Africa: Evolving New Vision and Leveraging New Modalities

This section is adapted from the authors previously published work: Ibrahim Mayaki. "Rethinking development in Africa". Published in Development Cooperation Review, 2023.

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Chapter 4: Reconfiguring New Priorities and Contestations in Triangular

Adapted from the author's previously published work: Sachin Chaturvedi. "Technical to Triangular Cooperation: Reconfiguring Development Partnerships for Localisation". Published in Development Cooperation Review, 2019, Vol 1 No. 10-12.

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- ¹ See: UNESCO. 1988.
- ² The consultations of this nature continued across the developing world, 1988 in Latin America, 1990 in Africa and 1992 in Asia. In 2002, the EF became part of InWEnt (Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH), created through the merger of the DSE and the Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft (CDG). The EF has been a unit at the GIZ since 2011.
- ³ See for details Chaturvedi (2012).
- ⁴ For instance, Freres. 2011. notes of NATO countries engaging with developing countries in Soviet bloc or TrC between Slovakia and Canada in Slovak priority countries.
- ⁵ Personal communication with Ulrich Wehnert.
- ⁶ See para 260, 277 and 280 of this document.
- ⁷ Personal Communication with Mr. Fábio Moreira Carbonell Farias, First Secretary, 24 May 2012.

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Chapter 5: South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism

Adapted from the author's previously published work: Jorge Chediek, "South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism", published in Development Cooperation Review, 2021, Vol 4, No 2

Endnotes

- ¹ The Group currently includes 134 countries
- ² The report of the Conference, including the Plan of Action, was approved by the General Assembly on 12 September 1978, through Resolution 33/134. It should be noted that since the year 2004, 12 September is commemorated as the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation
- ³ Group of 77 South Summit, Havana, 10/14 April 2000
- ⁴ The Aid Effectiveness process launched by the 2005 Paris Declaration, under the auspices of the OECD, opened a process that led to the 2011 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, which operated under a relative tension with South-South cooperation until BAPA + 40 (vid infra)
- ⁵ Approved by the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/222
- ⁶ UN General Assembly Resolution 71/244, paragraphs 30 and 31
- ⁷ Among those are the Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation, and the very good work of the OECD Development Cooperation Directorate
- ⁸ The report of the Conferences was approved by UN GA Resolution 73/291
- ⁹ The preparation of the Strategy was mandated by the BAPA+40 outcome document, and the final version is available in the UNOSSC website

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Chapter 6: Japan's Approach to South-South and Triangular Cooperation: A Platform for Co-Creation and Mutual Learning

Adapted from the author's previously published work: Sachiyo Yasunaga et. al. "Japan's Approach to South-South and Triangular Cooperation: A Platform for Co-Creation and Mutual Learning". Published in Development Cooperation Review, 2024, Vol 7, No 2.

Endnotes

- ¹ In this paper, "JICA" refers specifically to the Japan International Cooperation Agency, which executes programmes assigned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Meanwhile, "Japan" typically denotes the collective actions of

both MOFA and JICA unless stated otherwise.

- ² South-South Cooperation (SSC) refers to “the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries” (UNFPA, 2016). Japan in the past perceived it as a member of the developing countries until it became a member of Development Assistance Committee of OECD in 1964 (OECD, n.d.).
- ³ These countries include Singapore (1994), Thailand (1994), Egypt (1998), Chile (1999), Tunisia (1999), Brazil (2000), Argentina (2001), the Philippines (2002), Indonesia (2003), Mexico (2003), Morocco (2003), and Jordan (2004) (Yamashita, 2022).
- ⁴ “Japan will actively promote South-South cooperation in partnership with more advanced developing countries in Asia and other regions. Japan will also strengthen collaboration with regional cooperation frameworks and will support region-wide cooperation that encompasses several countries” (MOFA, 2003).
- ⁵ “Japan will strengthen the sharing of knowledge and resources as well as collaboration with other donors, both developed and developing countries that share the common objectives and principles of development cooperation... By promoting multilayered multilateral cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, Japan will provide developing countries with a variety of options” (MOFA, 2023).

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RIS

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute that specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues.

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. For more information about RIS and its work programme, please visit its website: www.ris.org.in

DAKSHIN

As announced by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, during the 1st Voice of Global South Summit held on 12-13 January 2023, the Global South Centre of Excellence (DAKSHIN) was established at RIS in the same year. DAKSHIN was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister during the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit held on 17 November 2023. DAKSHIN aims to identify innovative development solutions emerging from the Global South and scale them up for broader implementation across developing countries.

FIDC

The Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC), launched on 15 January 2013 in New Delhi, 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 co-operation 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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