

South-South Cooperation: Expanding Opportunities for Innovative Solutions



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South-South cooperation is a term to describe the exchange of funds, resources, technology, and knowledge among two or more developing countries. South-South cooperation occurs among governments, private sector companies, nongovernmental organisations, community-based organisations, and civil society organisations across states, regions, or countries. The underlying principle of South-South cooperation is that it is a partnership among equals based on a shared solidarity born out of similar experiences and sympathies, which is guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free from any conditions.¹

Triangular cooperation refers to South-South cooperation that has been facilitated with the financial and technical support of multilateral agencies or industrialized national partners.

Timeline of South-South Cooperation

In the 1950s, South-South cooperation emerged in the context of the shared struggle by former colonies to attain independence. The Bandung conference in 1955 brought together 29 countries from Asia and Africa to promote economic and cultural cooperation in their regions “on the basis of mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty.” This pioneering South-South conference paved the way for the rise of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961 and the Group of 77 (G77) in 1964. To expand market size and promote trade across national boundaries, southern countries then created a number of regional and subregional economic bodies in the same decade, including the Central American Common Market, the Central African Customs and Economic Union, and the Association of South East Asian Nations.

In 1972, the UN General Assembly set up a Working Group to examine ways of intensifying technical cooperation among developing countries. This led to the establishment in 1978 of a Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (SU/SSC) within United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to promote, coordinate, and support South-South and triangular cooperation on a global and UN system-wide basis.

Evolution of South-South Cooperation in Movement to Increase Aid Effectiveness

2003: First High Level Forum, Rome. Key donors draft the Rome Declaration, a common set of principles to improve the management and effectiveness of aid.

2005: Second High-Level Forum, Paris. More than 100 partner governments, donor agencies, development banks, and international agencies endorse the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to put into practice a set of principles to improve aid effectiveness, enabling them to reach specific targets by 2010.

2008: Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Accra. Attendees draft the Accra Agenda for Action, a series of commitments to strengthen and accelerate implementation of the Paris Declaration. This acknowledges the contributions made by all development actors, “and in particular the role of middle-income countries as both providers and recipients of aid.”ⁱ

Over the past 30 years, there has been a remarkable upsurge in South-South cooperation, spurred by sustained economic growth since the late 1980s in a number of emerging economies that have become increasingly important providers of development assistance to Southern countries, with the largest being China, India, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela, each providing approximately US\$1 billion per year.ⁱⁱ Other emerging economies such as Brazil, Nigeria, and South Africa have contributed to South-South cooperation through multilateral institutions and private investments.

The intensification of South-South exchanges has meant that its share in overall development funding rose to about 10% or US\$17 billion of total development funding at the end of 2009. In fact, South-South flows registered an increase of 63% from 2006-2008.ⁱⁱⁱ

Regionally and sub-regionally, Africa, the Arab states, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean have encouraged a range of South-South partnerships. In Africa, regional organisations such as the African Union have worked to strengthen financial and trade ties. Sub-regional organisations such as the East African Community are working toward establishing a common market, and the EAC health policy initiative is promoting health research for policy making. The Arab states have also engaged in extensive South-South cooperation, particularly in the oil and gas sectors, and technology transfer in engineering, pharmaceuticals, medicine, and agriculture. In Asia and the Pacific, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has focused on community building and resilience in the face of global threats. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is working toward a common market and has established common passports to make intraregional travel easier.

The international community has vigorously supported triangular cooperation with third country training, exchanges, and mentoring. Japan has been a major supporter, with third-country training programmes in Malaysia, Mozambique, and other Asian and African countries. Brazil, Canada, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States have facilitated exchanges in agriculture, vaccination, technology transfer, and sanitation.

Benefits of South-South Cooperation

Numerous benefits of South-South cooperation are cited in the literature and include:^{iv}

- Creation of opportunities for countries to expand the markets for their skilled nationals, technologies, and products while making relevant, affordable technologies available to receiving countries
- Increased cooperation among stakeholders to achieve internationally agreed upon goals such as the Millennium Development Goals
- Increased country ownership of the development agenda that is more aligned with participants' priorities and needs
- Development of the capacity of those involved
- Expanded professional networks
- Increased economies of scale through less duplication of effort
- Promotion of greater sustainability, as the process is typically adapted to local contexts and capacities

Modalities of South-South Cooperation

There are several ways to enhance South-South cooperation. The instruments and methods that are chosen depend on the objectives, audiences, and desired outcomes. In order to achieve a more sustainable learning experience with greater impact and results, a blended-learning approach is often used, which combines several different instruments, learning methods, and resources and applies them in an interactive and meaningful way. Below is a developing list of instruments that can be used alone or in a blended format to further South-South cooperation:^v

- Practitioner/Peer networks and communities of practice
- Field visits and study tours
- Summits and conferences
- Competitions and knowledge fairs
- Just-in-time knowledge exchanges
- Structured learning platforms: Courses and workshops
- Creation of centres of excellence

Donor Support of South-South Cooperation

Donor and international organizations are paying increasing attention to South-South and triangular cooperation, seeing it as method for enhancement of country ownership, use of comparative advantages, and scale-up of the impacts of past assistance.

Promoting triangular cooperation has been hampered by a lack of policy and institutional frameworks to guide these efforts.

Countries with extensive experience partnering with donor and international organizations in triangular cooperation are concentrated in Latin America and Asia due to their advanced expertise in the cooperation area and implementation capacity.

Donor and international organizations involved in triangular cooperation support development of capacity for South-South cooperation; information-sharing and match-making between countries; and knowledge sharing and networking among Southern countries.

It has been noted that triangular cooperation entails high transaction costs and complex policy coordination. Developing well-articulated policy frameworks is seen as a requirement of addressing policy coordination. Standardization and streamlining procedures, a shift to more field-based operations and greater alignment with developing countries' needs are seen as ways to minimize transaction costs.^{vi}

Types of South-South Cooperation

As noted, South-South cooperation occurs among governments, private sector companies, nongovernmental organisations, community-based organisations, and civil society organisations across states, regions, or countries and can be facilitated externally by northern countries.

Most efforts in South-South cooperation have focused on trade, finance, and macro economic development. South-South initiatives in other areas, such as health, nutrition, and food security, have been less pronounced, but are

increasing. Table 1 lists a range of case examples of South-South cooperation in recent years.

Table 1: Types and examples of South-South cooperation

Type	Who
Organization to Organization	The Population Council in Zambia facilitated a match between the police in Malawi and Zambia to provide emergency contraception after rape. Population Council Zambia was able to facilitate three visits between the two police departments. The two police organizations reportedly learned a great deal from each other and both are now providing emergency contraception. ^{vii}
Country-to-Country	Partners in Health facilitated a collaboration between Haiti and Lesotho in which an HIV care model developed in Haiti was applied in rural Lesotho to scale-up HIV and other treatment services. The collaboration allowed for sharing perspectives and experiences unique to the provision of care in a resource poor setting and resulted in cross-country working relationships and a successful adaptation and replication of the Haitian model in Lesotho. The relationships and exchanges of methods have continued over a three-year period. ^{viii}
Regional	The Government of Thailand Foundation of the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD Foundation) serves as the regional center in the Asia-Pacific region to facilitate networking and collaboration among organizations of/for persons with disabilities for the purpose of empowerment of persons with disabilities and a barrier-free society. ^{ix}
Intra-Country	India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) have pooled their economic power and development experiences in the IBSA Fund, which received the 2010 UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Award. The fund identifies replicable projects that can be disseminated to interested developing countries as examples of best practices in the fight against poverty and hunger. Each of the three countries is also involved separately providing and facilitating South-South technical exchanges within and across regions. ^x
Triangular	In this project, professionals of Josefina Machel Hospital, Lucrecia Paim Maternity Hospital, 13 primary health care centers, and other hospitals in Angola were trained in hospital administration, equipment maintenance, nursing care, radiology, and laboratory by Brazilian professionals. The training course was facilitated by the Grant Aid Cooperation of the Japanese Government. ^{xi}

Lessons Learned in South-South Cooperation

Systematic collection and compilation of information on South-South cooperation, and disseminating this information to the public, is very limited. However, based on a review of the literature and interviews with practitioners of South-South cooperation, remarkably similar views emerge on what does and does not work.

First and foremost, South-South cooperation should be seen as a continuum of activities that goes beyond single trainings or workshops to an ongoing relationship that includes mentoring, telephone conversations and

meetings, and sharing materials and knowledge over time.

Comparative advantages, such as country experience, technical capacity, practical know-how, cost-effectiveness, similar social and cultural background, and the use of the same language, helps ensure effective cooperation.

Overcoming challenges that emerge during South-South cooperation require organizations to think strategically, re-evaluate, and keep learning. Partners must also work with other organizations over time to build new networks and partnerships with both smaller and larger

organizations. Practitioners all emphasize that technical assistance is a long-term proposition and not a one-time training activity.

Finding a match of skills and needs is critical to success in South-South cooperation. It is critical to assess the qualifications and readiness of both recipients and providers for the endeavor. Providers of assistance need to have both the technical expertise and the ability to provide capacity building in a way that meets the recipient's needs. The recipient needs to have the infrastructure and personnel to participate fully in the exchange and the ability to absorb and apply the learning to improve its performance in the target areas. Both the recipient and the provider need to make a sustained commitment to the goals of the exchange and have a sense of ownership in the process and outcomes of the endeavor. As organizations learn, move forward, and adapt methods, they build networks, access knowledge, and sometimes create synergy and momentum that would otherwise not exist.

Factors promoting greater participation include: close contact between the two countries; cost-sharing; and the use of participatory planning tools. In the case of triangular cooperation, a presence in the beneficiary country helps communications and encourages participation of all parties.

Unanswered Questions

Given that the collection and compilation of information on South-South cooperation is very limited, there are a number of unanswered questions regarding South-South cooperation that need further study:^{xii}

- Are there sectors or areas of development where South-South cooperation holds a distinct advantage?
- How can effective mechanisms for disseminating best practices and lessons learned be developed?
- How can triangular cooperation be strengthened to the advantage of all parties?

- For South-South cooperation, how are its delivery components (expertise, equipment, materials, shipping and transportation, etc) priced and shared? Are there emerging good practices which can guide future South-South cooperation initiatives, granted that no one practice is applicable to different cases?
- To what extent is South-South cooperation actively involving non-government entities? Recognising the expertise of the latter in areas like poverty alleviation, community development and so on, how can this expertise be mobilised for greater use?

EnCompass LLC Work in South-South Cooperation

This brief is part of EnCompass' larger work in South-South cooperation, which includes efforts to:

- Document best practices in South-South cooperation
- Create new tools for designing, monitoring, and evaluating South-South cooperation efforts
- Facilitate the provision of South-South cooperation among partners
- Promote capacity building via training and Web-based tools

EnCompass has been actively engaged in the documentation of best practices of South-South cooperation. Most recently, we researched Southern development solutions for presentation at the Global South-South Development Expo conference in November 2010, and prepared a white paper to guide UNAIDS in building the organization's support of South-South cooperation.

We have also been involved in the development of a framework and tools for South-South technical exchange for the USAID AIDSTAR-One (www.aidstar-one.com/) project.

Resources to Learn More

Interested in learning more? The following are useful resources on South-South cooperation.

Table 1: Useful resources on South-South cooperation

Author	Title	Type	URL	Goal
JICA, UNDP	<i>Networking and Learning Together: Experiences in South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Asia</i>	Report (2009)	http://cfigurasin.com/sscpublications1234/Networking%20and%20Learning%20Together.pdf	Lessons learned and case studies for policy makers and development practitioners to scale up South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation
UNDP	<i>Sharing Innovative Experiences</i>	Newsletter	http://ssc.undp.org/Shar-ing-Innovative-Experiences.62.0.html	Presents Southern solutions to Southern challenges through the use of Southern expertise covering a wide range of areas
UNDP	<i>South-South in Action</i>	Newsletter	http://ssc.undp.org/South-South-in-Action.250.0.html	Quarterly newsletter to showcase South-South and triangular cooperation carried out on the ground by South-South Cooperation focal points of governments and the UN organizations
UNDP	<i>Enhancing South-South and Triangular Cooperation</i>	Report (2009)	http://southsouthconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/E_Book.pdf	The study highlights good practices in enhancing South-South and triangular cooperation.
South-South Opportunity	The South-South Opportunity	Web Portal	http://www.southsouth.info/	Community of professionals dedicated to South-South cooperation. Site content is group generated
Task Team on South-South Cooperation, OECD	<i>South-South cooperation in the context of aid effectiveness</i>	Report (2010)	http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/tt-ssc-case_stories_2010-executive_summary.pdf	Summary report on 110 case stories presented to the Task Team on South-South Cooperation
American International Health Alliance.	The HIV/AIDS Twinning Center	Portal	www.twinningagainstaids.org	Creates peer-to-peer relationships between organizations working to improve services for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS
<i>The Steering Committee members of the Bogota High-Level Event, 2010</i>	<i>BOGOTA STATEMENT: Towards Effective and Inclusive Development Partnerships</i>	Policy	http://portal.oas.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=2F3Dlzw1KvI%3D&tabid=293	The Bogota Statement was endorsed at the Bogota High Level Event on South-South cooperation and Capacity Development on 24-25 March 2010. This global policy document offers clear-cut recommendations for improving the effectiveness of South-South knowledge exchange

Footnotes

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- ⁱ United Nations General Assembly. Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. General Assembly Resolution 64/222 of 21 December 2009.
- ⁱⁱ United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). 2008. Background Study for the Development Cooperation Forum: Trends in South-South and Triangular Development Cooperation. Geneva: ECOSOC.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Puri, H.S. 2010. Rise of the Global South and Its Impact on South-South Cooperation. *Development Outreach Oct 2010*. Washington, DC; World Bank.
- ^{iv} United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2009. Enhancing South-South and Triangular cooperation. NY: UNDP.
- ^v South-South Opportunity. 2009. Instruments. Available at <http://www.southsouth.info/page/instruments-1>.
- ^{vi} UNDP, 2009.
- ^{vii} Keesbury J. and Askew I. 2010. Comprehensive Responses to Gender Based Violence in Low-Resource Settings: Lessons learned from Implementation. Population Council. Lusaka, Zambia
- ^{viii} Ivers, L.C., J. Mukherjee, F. Leandre, J. Rigodon, K. Cullen, and J. Furin. 2010. South-South Collaboration in Scale-up of HIV Care: Building Human Capacity for Care. *AIDS* 24(1):S77.
- ^{ix} The South-South Opportunity. 2010. Thailand-Asia Development Center on Disability. South-South Opportunity Case Stories. Available at http://www.impactalliance.org/ev_en.php?ID=49052_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC.
- ^x IBSA. 2010. About IBSA. Available at <http://www.ibsa-trilateral.org/index.php>.
- ^{xi} Task Team on South-South Cooperation. 2010. Telling the Story of Partners Involved in More than 110 Cases of South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Bogota: OECD.
- ^{xii} Abdel-Malek, T. 2010. South-South Co-operation and Capacity Development: Some Issues and Questions. A discussion paper for the High Level Event, Bogota, 24-26 March 2010. Paris: OECD.

ENCOMPASS LLC

EnCompass is a women-owned consulting firm based in Washington, D.C., that seeks to enhance the impact and capacity of government and multilateral agencies, corporations, and nonprofits around the world through customized services in organizational and leadership development, training, technical assistance, and evaluation. We offer a global and multicultural team of staff and consultants with a deep expertise in a range of issues including health, HIV/AIDS, gender analysis, and human rights. Best known for our strengths-based approach and whole-systems perspective, we consistently deliver outstanding and innovative results for our clients.

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