



BACKGROUND NOTE

In the last few years, RIS organised many dialogues and conferences on South-South Cooperation (SSC) at Delhi and also at other places to strengthen the dialogue process among the policymakers, practitioners and academics. There are several other factors which have also generated enhanced attention towards SSC. They include increasing number of success stories; growing interest of developed economies in role of SSC; increasing contributions of emerging countries to fortify it; wide range of projects undertaken under its ambit; and convenient mode of implementation. All these indicate that the developing countries are playing a prominent role in economically empowering the Global South.

2. SSC covers political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains in the form of bilateral, regional, sub-regional or inter-regional cooperation. Southern nations are sharing among themselves an increasingly vast amount of knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through joint efforts.

3. SSC has resulted in increased volume of trade flows and FDI among the developing

countries. It is also advancing the spirit of regional economic integration. Similarly, there is also considerable increase in the instances of sharing of technology and solutions to address problems related to development. This all has become possible with the involvement of public and private sector, academia, institutions, non-governmental organizations, local communities and others, along with the endeavours by national governments. Developing countries are turning to one another to advance their mutual economic growth and development, rather than singularly depending on the traditional donors.

4. The success stories of SSC clearly show a growing spirit for endogeneity among the developing countries themselves by enhancing their creative and innovative capacities to come up with solutions for developmental challenges in line with the aspirations, values and needs of their citizens. The spirit of “pooling and sharing” has enabled the Southern countries to enhance their complementary capacities.

5. Through comparative advantages of one another, the Global South is also richly contributing towards exchange of technical assistance and social development. Some have developed successfully their own modules of skill development, agricultural entrepreneurship development programmes, animal health programmes, rural development programmes, and wellness programmes for their citizens. The Pan-African e-network Project spanning 53 African countries is one such interesting examples of SSC. Broadly speaking, it has helped participating countries in capacity building by imparting quality education to their students through best universities and educational institutions. It also provides tele-medicine services through online medical consultations between African medical practitioners and medical specialists in varied disciplines. Many other developing countries are also engaged in advancing cooperative and collaborative spirit of SSC to reduce poverty, improve public health and enhance educational facilities.

6. Over the years, several institutions, including RIS, have carried out substantial research work on SSC and organised a number of major events which have helped in generating a much better and clear picture of SSC. It is evident from the fact that OECD countries have also now started using the word ‘assistance’ and ‘partner’ instead of ‘aid’ and ‘donor/recipient’.

7. The RIS organized two major international conferences on SSC with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, and other international partner agencies. These conferences have contributed significantly towards sharing of a wide range of perspectives on SSC by eminent scholars and key traditional foreign aid providers for a holistic understanding of the new international development assistance architecture. The coming together of civil society organizations, from India and abroad, government experts, academics and subject experts from various national, regional and international organizations has contributed extensively in understanding SSC in a multi-dimensional perspective.

8. The 2-day Conference on South-South Cooperation organized by RIS and the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST) in Delhi during 10-11 March 2016, highlighted diverse perspectives on SSC and also led to a substantially enhanced understanding of the wide spectrum of its approaches and its growing impact. The participation of 120 subject experts from 35 countries spread over 20 important specific sessions, focusing on different aspects of global development assistance strategies witnessed exchange of candid views on the importance and effectiveness of SSC. The rich and vibrant discussions on various dimensions provided a unique opportunity to bring up effectively the SSC narrative before the international community. The delegates shared their perspectives on development cooperation programmes, including South-South Cooperation, Triangular Cooperation and regional and even sub-regional cooperation. The Conference showcased successfully the plurality and the sense of solidarity within SSC through various modalities and cross-cutting sectors of demand driven nature of SSC.

9. The Conference also emphasized the complementarity between SSC and North-South Cooperation (NSC), even though they are based on different theoretical foundations. There was also well-informed discussion on the efficacy of evaluation methodologies and monitoring systems being advocated by traditional donors, including OECD-DAC norms, for assessing global development assistance architecture. There was a high degree of solidarity among the developing countries in dealing with the critical issues of Climate Change, Sustainable Development Goals, Financing for Development, International Trade, etc. Majority of panelists

were of the view that watertight frameworks and modalities being led by the Northern donors were not in consonance with the spirit of SSC owing to the plurality and uniqueness of its norms. Broadly, it was agreed that the developing countries must intensify their efforts towards cooperation and come up with cost-effective, viable, development-friendly and people-centric policies and programmes for the promotion of SSC. The emphasis on plurality also brought to the fore the idea of “development compact (DC)” as a paradigm for concretizing SSC. DC signifies multiplicity of modalities in delivering development cooperation supports in such a manner that though various distinguishable modalities are employed, they are interconnected with one another.

10. Financing for development has emerged as another key issue in several international fora during the last couple of years. Non implementation of the UN commitment of official development assistance to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7% of their Gross National Income at market prices; non-implementation of Paris Declaration by OECD members; lack of consensus on illicit financial flows and transfer pricing are some of the factors blocking access to development finance. At the end partner countries, institutions and systems require greater efforts. German G-20 has proposed ‘Africa Compact’ for meeting similar objectives.

11. Discussions and debates are afoot to identify if there exist some features that would lead one to conclude that the two approaches are moving towards some degree of convergence. While a group of experts is inclined to carry out such exercises, another group of scholars and practitioners is engaged in the quest for a new institutional mechanism that would design a joint approach for collective action, without compromising with the non-negotiable principles of the SSC, that is to strive for global public goods – a fundamental requirement to achieve the SDGs.

12. Taking into consideration the strong Southern belief in multilateralism as the way forward to effectively deal with these challenges and to consolidate gains achieved during the last two international Conferences on SSC, the 3rd International Conference on South-South and Triangular Development Cooperation would be held at New Delhi on 24 and 25 August 2017. Such an effort becomes all the more relevant against the backdrop of 6th Biennial High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum, to be organized in 2018 and 40th Anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, culminating into hosting of BAPA+40 in 2019.

13. A number of prominent delegates representing all would be attending this major event.

14. The Conference will have six sessions. The 1st plenary session on ‘SSC Framework and Emerging Global Order’ would focus on issues beyond the so-called definitional debates to situate the existing SSC Framework in the emerging global order. The other important issues include, status of SSC in global governance of development cooperation, and potential of newly emerging models of development cooperation in expanding the SSC spirit of “sharing” in global governance of development cooperation.

15. The 2nd plenary session would specifically deal with ways to interlink SDGs, SSC and TDC and suggest possible “institutional” structures that can effectively help achieve desired targets. Given the global consensus about achieving the SDGs by 2030 so that no one is left behind, SSC and TC will have to play a vital and definite role.

16. The 1st parallel session on ‘Sectoral Connect to SSC’ would have two parallel sessions focusing on agriculture, health, infrastructure development, banking and finance, human resource development – mainly capacity development and training and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). These sectors are significant for realizing the SDGs by 2030 for in-depth understanding of the issues involved, nature of partnerships required and the related challenges, and of course the extent of new value created in these sectors. Some of the issues that may come up during discussions in these sessions are:

- To what extent does the SSC contribute to building the capacity of independent production system of a partner country? In other words, how does SSC influence local level production systems and value chains in specific sectors?
- How does the SSC contribute to local capacity building and strengthening the existing institutions in terms of the identified sectors?
- Does the SSC add to the sectoral competitiveness and integrated development of partner countries?

17. The second parallel session on the first day would deal with the issues linked to ‘Impact Assessment of the SSC and Triangular Cooperation’ through presentation of cases from across the world (session II (a)). The session II (b) would cover Science, Technology and Innovation.

18. On second day, the plenary session III would be dedicated to the memory of Prof. Saman Kalegama, a great friend of RIS and the community of researchers and practitioners engaged in SSC and Triangular Cooperation, who passed away recently. Given his roots in the social and economic issues in Sri Lanka – an island nation – the session would focus on flagging some concerns the island nations in general and those located in the Pacific Ocean in particular from the perspective of enhancing the scope of SSC and TDC in these countries. By and large, island economies are mostly small and their economic strength is derived from select ocean resources such as fisheries, tourism, ocean energy, deep sea mining and so on. The economic fortunes of the small island economies depend on the efficient utilization of select ocean resources and thus expose them to vulnerability. The rich endowment of ocean resources, which serves lifeline for their economy, can, however, be used to their advantage through emerging emphasis on strengthening the concept of “Blue Economy”.

19. The conference would conclude with discussion on the future research agenda for the SSC and TDC and policy imperatives. (Plenary Session IV). The tentative agenda of the session may include documentation of success stories and also the factors that contributed to some failures. Some issues that may be highlighted during this session would include

- Southern principles sensitive methodologies for impact assessment of SSC and TDC projects.
- Role of non-State actors including the civil society, private sector and communities in SSC and TDC projects.
- Role of UN and other bilateral agencies hitherto influenced by OECD DAC framework to bring in SSC principles and modalities of engagement to explore scope and space of SSC to contribute towards the growing demand for global public good to achieve the SDGs.