

Leveraging India-led global initiatives for India-Africa Partnership

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RIS Policy Brief



1. Introduction

On 31 May 2026, leaders from across Africa and India will gather in New Delhi, India, for the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit. The theme chosen for the summit captures that ambition: “IA SPIRIT: India Africa Strategic Partnership for Innovation, Resilience, and Inclusive Transformation.” The case for a deeper partnership between India and Africa has been sharpened by geopolitical tensions and global supply chain disruptions in recent times. The ongoing crisis in the Persian Gulf has sent tremors through energy markets worldwide. For Africa’s import-dependent economies, rising fuel costs cascade quickly into higher food prices, transport costs, and put pressure on already-stressed public finances. While Africa faces significant threat to its energy security, the challenge is exacerbated by its significant vulnerability to climate change. There exists a significant gap in the global adaptation financing, which is now estimated at roughly \$310 billion

(UNEP, 2025) and is twelve times higher than the current international flows of the same. There is also a major debt distress spread across 21 African nations, thereby reducing the capabilities of the region to achieve climate resilience.

India has been a strong advocate of promoting renewable energy and has emerged as a leader in solar power. Africa, with its vast expanse of arid regions, is uniquely suited for solar energy generation. India, with its expertise in solar energy technologies and its commitment to renewable energy, has been increasingly involved in projects aimed at harnessing solar power in Africa. India’s vision of global cooperation on renewable energy and sustainable development has considerably materialised through multilateral forums established through India’s efforts, such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient

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Infrastructure (CDRI). In addition, the Global Biofuels Alliance is the second green energy effort led by India after the International Solar Alliance (ISA). India launched the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) at the 2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi to accelerate sustainable fuel adoption, with significant participation from African nations to foster South-South cooperation (Press Information Bureau, 2023). With an increasing emphasis on the conservation of tigers, during the event of the 50th year of Project Tiger in India, Prime Minister of India announced the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) in 2023 for the conservation of seven big cats: tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar, and puma. These organisations and institutional frameworks represent a new model of South-South climate governance, which is knowledge-driven, demand-responsive, and rooted in India's domestic success rather than external dependence, a major challenge that Africa continues to navigate.

As articulated by Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, India's approach to development cooperation is based on the framework of a "Global Development Compact" which is based on India's development journey and experiences of development partnership. He further suggested that this Compact will be inspired by the development priorities set by the countries of the Global South themselves; and will be human-centric, multi-dimensional and promote a multi-sectoral approach to development. Such a framework may not put countries debt burden in the name of development finance, rather must contribute to balanced and sustainable development of the partner countries. The interlinked modalities of this 'development compact' comprise of trade for development, capacity building for sustainable growth, technology sharing, project specific concessional finance

and grants. Earlier, at the Parliament of Uganda, he had stated 10 principles of India-Africa partnership that included a clear statement on the challenges of climate change, the need to work with Africa to ensure a just international climate order; to preserve biodiversity; and adopt clean and efficient energy sources.

India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar during the launch of the theme of the IAFS-IV stated that India-Africa cooperation extends in areas like climate action, renewable energy, resilient infrastructure, environmental conservation and a more sustainable future for Africa. He stressed that, African nations are key partners in India-led global initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, the Global Biofuels Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Big Cat Alliance.

Against this background, the policy brief examines how India can contribute to Africa's initiatives in realising the SDGs through the new global platforms anchored under its leadership, especially in the wake of declining climate finance, increasing climate vulnerability and inadequate policy environment.

2. India's Multilateral Initiatives for Sustainable Development

India's approach to the implementation of SDGs has evolved in two directions: domestic and diplomatic. Through the diplomatic initiatives, India has broadened the horizons of SDG implementation to a multilateral level backed by a shared commitment, particularly with countries in the Global South. With this vision, India has spearheaded the establishment of multilateral alliances such as the International Solar

Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, Global Biofuels Alliance and International Big Cat Alliance. These initiatives also stem from India's domestic capabilities in solar power generation, disaster management, biofuel production and wildlife conservation and its ability to transfer these, which can be institutionalised as global public goods under its leadership (Jha, 2024). India's leadership is exemplified in the idea that the South-South leadership is not restricted to the transfer of resources, but rather sharing the development models, shifting from the traditional donor-recipient relationship (Mawdsley, 2012). Moreover, these initiatives place India within the multiplex world order, having the ability to drive multilateral institutions, often to overcome the limitations and inadequacies of Northern-led frameworks (Acharya, 2018).

The International Solar Alliance was established in 2015 jointly by India and France to expand the development and adoption of solar energy technologies and mobilise efforts against climate change by tapping into the potential of countries lying between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, popularly called the 'sunshine belt'. With its endorsement as a multilateral treaty by the United Nations, the ISA has gained a legitimate position as an international organisation leading in sustainable energy transition. Enabling developing economies to decouple their energy consumption from their GHG emissions by replacing carbon-intensive fossil fuel use with renewable solar energy is one of ISA's cardinal goals (Oguntuase, 2023). The alliance has shaped its global solar cooperation through delivery, scale and measurable impact. Within delivery, ISA has identified four key pillars, including a Catalytic Finance Hub with the aim of mobilising private capital in underserved markets; a Global Capability Centre to build

knowledge, skills and digital infrastructure; regional and country-level engagement to ensure country-specific delivery; and a technology roadmap and policy support to evolve standards, data and policy frameworks.

The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) – established in 2019 under the leadership of the Government of India and with the support of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is a multi-stakeholder global partnership of national governments, UN agencies and programmes, multilateral development banks, the private sector, and academic institutions. The partnership focuses on areas of governance and policy, emerging technology, risk identification and estimation, recovery and reconstruction, resilient standards and certification, finance and capacity building (IISD SDG Knowledge Hub, 2019). The coalition promotes integration of infrastructure resilience in essential sectors such as 'energy, transport, water, telecommunications, health and digital networks' (UNDP Africa, 2026) through knowledge exchange, capacity development and robust financing mechanisms.

To promote biofuel, use and broaden bioenergy reach, the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) was officially launched by 9 heads of state, including India, the G20 Chair (Press Information Bureau, 2024). Founding members include Brazil, the United States, and India, which collectively account for approximately 85 per cent of global ethanol production and 81 per cent of consumption. The main objective of the alliance is to facilitate the global adoption of sustainable biofuels through capacity building, technology transfer, and policy lesson-sharing, positioning biofuels as a complement to solar and wind, particularly in the transport sector (Das, 2024).

On the wildlife front, the IBCA is the first cross-country effort that aims to build capacity and ensure knowledge sharing to help conservation of big cat species. It can be considered as a ‘multi-country, multi-agency coalition comprising 95 big cat range and non-range countries’ with the objectives of big cat conservation, bringing together conservation partners, scientific organisations in big cat research and other groups funding such conservation efforts (International Big Cat Alliance, n.d). Through such an effort, the agency aims to develop the financial and technological capabilities to support resource-lacking big cat range countries. The countries that gave their consent to join IBCA are Brazil, Egypt, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Kenya, Peru, Malaysia, Uganda, Surinam, Armenia, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ecuador and Mongolia.

3. Climate Change and Debt Crisis: Implications for Sustainable Development in Africa

The global energy system is dominated by fossil fuels. Energy-related GHG emissions increased nearly 20 per cent in Africa between 2008 and 2017, albeit starting from a very low initial level relative to other developing economies. According to the UN, Africa is losing up to 5 per cent of its economic output to global warming. Moreover, the effects of climate change in Africa include prolonged droughts and devastating floods, negatively impacting food production, increasing prices and worsening poverty (Africa Energy Portal, 2024). Energy demand in African economies is expected to nearly double by 2040, as populations grow and living standards improve. Without a climate policy and a transition to renewable energy sources, Africa’s share of global

energy-related carbon emissions is projected to increase by 3-23 per cent by 2100 (Lucas et. Al., 2015). Africa suffers \$12.7 billion annual losses in infrastructure from disasters (CDRI, 2025). Eastern Africa bears the highest losses, followed by Northern Africa and Southern Africa (CDRI, 2025).

The ISA Annual Report 2025 identifies the challenge of universal electricity access goal being off track in Africa, with over 660 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia without electricity. Moreover, there exists the stark reality of a funding gap vis-à-vis climate finance in Africa. The inequality in fund allocation and fund utilisation is glaring.¹ Four times the current financing till 2030 is required for the countries in Africa to meet their Nationally Determined Contributions (Climate Policy Initiative, 2024). The primary barriers preventing the investment in Africa’s solar sector are perceived risks, weak policy environment (political and security risk), high capital costs and limited project bankability (International Solar Alliance, 2025).

a. ISA and Africa

Major share of ISA’s members are countries in Africa, with the continent sharing 36 of the 101 ratified members. Africa occupies a central position in the delivery component of the ISA. Within the Catalytic Finance Hub, the Global Solar Facility and Africa Solar Facility attend uniquely to the renewable energy demands of the region as well as solutions to climate change challenges (ISA, 2025). ISA has launched three flagship programmes – Scaling Solar Applications for Agriculture, Affordable Finance at Scale, and Scaling Solar Mini-grids. Two more are in the pipeline: Scaling Residential Rooftop Solar and Scaling Solar E-mobility and Storage. Countries participating in the Scaling Solar Applications for Agriculture programme

¹ Out of 54 countries, 10 countries in Africa account for 50 percent of climate finance flows, while 30 receive 10 percent of the finance. The most affected countries receive mere 10 percent of all Africa’s climate flows

include Mauritius, Senegal, Sudan, and Uganda. Uganda is also participating in the Affordable Finance at Scale programme, under which Mali is developing a 500 MW Solar Park. It is also part of the Regional Off-Grid Electrification Project. Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Tanzania are part of the USD 1-billion public investments in solar facilities and solar home systems. ISA also has a Solarising Heating and Cooling Systems programme, where, working with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), it has piloted solarised and efficient cold food chains in Nigeria. The development of solar-powered pack houses and cold storage facilities in Senegal and Ghana is being financed by a Euro 1.3-million grant from the French Facility for Global Environment (Oguntuase, 2023). In addition, five out of 14 signed Country Partnership Frameworks are with African nations of Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Gambia and Mauritius (MNRE, 2024).

The Catalytic Finance Hub of the ISA focused on overcoming the hindrances in climate finance flows through specific initiatives such as GSF and ASF. Yet, Africa has only 1 per cent of global installed solar capacity and less than 1 per cent of global investment. Moreover, though Africa holds 60 per cent of the total solar energy resources, only 3 per cent of global solar investment reaches the region.

b. CDRI and Africa

The African Union Commission (AUC) officially joined the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), reinforcing Africa's role in global efforts to strengthen infrastructure resilience in the face of climate and disaster risks (African Union Commission, 2025). Currently, the CDRI has 11 members² and four projects in Africa. The key activities of CDRI in Africa include

capacity building and technical support, conducting infrastructure risk assessment (Global Infrastructure Risk and Resilience Index (GIRI) model), collaboration with ECOWAS or the Economic Community of West African States and Heat Smart School. The ECOWAS membership noted that the partnership would enable access to global best practices and strengthen the development of disaster-resilient infrastructure, its design and maintenance (UNDP, 2026). As of now, out of the 54 countries, only 11 have dedicated disaster management laws.³ The CDRI can facilitate the creation of policy frameworks for disaster management and resilient infrastructure in other African countries.

c. GBA and Africa

The African members within GBA include South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mauritius and the latest member, Burundi. Unlike the CDRI and the ISA, the GBA does not have specific priorities for Africa. At the current stage, GBA is involved in standard-setting, landscape assessments, and conducting biofuels workshops to promote biofuel trade, increase awareness, and support adoption initiatives. The GBA undertakes the Biofuels Country Landscapes Programme, in which assessments are conducted on national biofuels readiness, feedstock potential, policy environment, and investment barriers.

Though the GBA initiatives are at a nascent stage, specific countries, including South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, have high biofuel potential due to their vast agricultural base, which produces sugarcane, maize, jatropha and cassava, suggesting potential for second-generation biofuel development. Owing to the feedstock surplus potential and high fuel use, Nigeria and South Africa could account for approximately 40 per cent of the biofuel market, largely driven by road ethanol and

² Trinidad and Tobago, South Sudan, Namibia, Mauritius, Mauritania, Madagascar, Kenya, Guinea, Ghana, Chad and Jamaica are the African nations with membership in CDRI.

³ Algeria, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ghana, Namibia, Malawi, Mauritius, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa

Fatty Acid Methyl Esters(FAME) diesel blending. In the presence of stronger institutional frameworks, the potential could be expanded towards the export of 2G oil-based feedstock and Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) (Manufacturing Africa, 2026). The policy frameworks and standard setting developed by the alliance can complement the existing frameworks and can supplement those countries that lack institutional settings.

d. IBCA and Africa

The mandate of the IBCA includes knowledge exchange, standard operating procedures, capacity building and financing for the protection of the seven big cats. The significance of IBCA to Africa is written into its species mandate, with the three out of seven big cats being the African lion, leopard and cheetah. This makes IBCA's attention to Africa urgent. As of 2025, there are four African countries in the alliance, namely, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Somalia and Angola (IBCA, n.d.). A related initiative was Kenya's bilateral MoU with India's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to explore the prospects and possibilities of Project Tiger in the region (High Commission of India, 2025). Further, the Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status (MSTRiPES) monitoring system developed by NTCA, including its camera trapping protocols and population estimation frameworks, is a directly transferable technology (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2024). Another ongoing initiative embedded within the IBCA is Project Cheetah, in which India, along with Namibia and South Africa, undertook the world's first inter-continental translocation of a large carnivore- African Cheetah, successfully completed with 20 cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa (2022-23) transferred to India (PIB, 2025).

4. Conclusion and Way Forward

The mandate and actions of these multilateral institutions suggest a new model of South-South climate governance with a significant potential to address Africa's SDG goals and overcome its crises. Given the fact that debt crisis is looming large in the region reinforced through the inefficiency of existing climate funding mechanisms and the retreat of traditional climate donors, it is imminent for India to deepen partnership with Africa through the above-mentioned multilateral platforms based on local needs and demands, and more for widening the scope of knowledge cooperation and supply chain resilience with a long-term objective of setting meaningful pathways for sustainable development globally. Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) and the Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), under which countries like Namibia have recently joined, signifying a paradigm change in global sustainability diplomacy. African countries have large deposits of green-critical minerals such as lithium, uranium, and rare earths, which lie at the heart of technologies that support the energy transition goals. Therefore, future of India-Africa partnership is deeply embedded in clean tech, capacity-building and market access as well as a host of other sustainable development initiatives in emerging sectors.

To further strengthen India's partnership on Africa's sustainable development goals, it is necessary to build upon the mandates of these institutions, and policy frameworks should reflect risk-sharing arrangements within each of the focal sectors, such as solar energy, biofuels, disaster infrastructure and biodiversity. The risk-sharing arrangements should promote non-debt instruments and scale up the mobilisation of private finance. As part of building resilient infrastructure

against disasters, the Sahel region and Central Africa should be prioritised, as these regions remain the most vulnerable but with lowest investment. Further, the CDRI should leverage the Resilient Infrastructure, Resilient Africa programme by strengthening financial and technical support. The Biofuels Country Landscape programme, the primary evaluation mechanism of GBA, should be completed for African members. The IBCA should facilitate the sharing of the Project Tiger methodology from India, including formal technical assistance and prioritise the membership outreach to Kenya, Botswana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa, as these are the key big cat states.

India's four global climate initiatives not only reflect the urgent need for supplementing the existing multilateral architecture for sustainable development and respond to their failures, particularly in the climate finance arena, but are also uniquely conceptualised, innovative and future focused modalities of South-South cooperation founded upon cooperation, knowledge sharing and mutual support. India-Africa relations, with a specific focus on their SDG agenda, would be a consequential relationship which would eventually stand the test of time as India consolidates the roadmap towards Viksit Bharat 2047 where partnerships for sustainable development with extended reach across the Global South shall be deeply anchored in a paradigm of progress and risk mitigation.

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RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It 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. Through its following centres/forums, RIS promotes policy dialogue and coherence on regional and international economic issues.



The word “DAKSHIN” (दक्षिण) is of Sanskrit origin, meaning “South.” The Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence in November 2023. The initiative was inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits. DAKSHIN stands for Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative. Hosted at the RIS, DAKSHIN has established linkages with leading think tanks and universities across the Global South and is building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues.



AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India’s strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.



CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.



FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.



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



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



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



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



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



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

— Policy research to shape the international development agenda —

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