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Frequently Asked Questions

SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

1. What is South-South and triangular cooperation?

The Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperationⁱ defines **South-South cooperation (SSC)** to be “a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions. South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation”.

The definitions for South-South and triangular cooperation are based on the **Nairobi Outcome Document**ⁱⁱ, negotiated in the UN High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation and adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2009.

ⁱ Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation SSC/17/3 (2012) Note by the Secretary-General, High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation Seventeenth session New York, May 2012

ⁱⁱ Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation 64/222



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

Key principles for South-South cooperation areⁱⁱⁱ:

- Common endeavor of peoples and countries of the South, based on shared experiences, common objectives, and solidarity
- Guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, ownership and priorities as defined on national development plans and strategies.
- Partnership among equals and free from conditionalities
- Continuing to increase mutual accountability and transparency, while coordinating with other development projects and programmes on the ground
- Embracing a multi-stakeholder approach, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia and others that contribute to meeting development challenges and objectives in line with national development strategies and plans

The UN's working definition for **triangular cooperation (TrC)** is “Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries, supported by a developed country(ies) or multilateral organization(s), to implement development cooperation programmes and projects”.^{iv}

Through triangular cooperation, Southern development assistance providers can benefit from the financial and technical support, experience and technical know-how of multilateral and developed-country partners. The increased capacity to tackle development challenges, strengthened partnerships and enhanced regional integration benefits everyone.

ⁱⁱⁱ Based on Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation 64/222 and the Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation SSC/17/3.

^{iv} Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation SSC/17/3 (2012) Note by the Secretary-General, High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation Seventeenth session New York, May 2012

2. Why is South-South and triangular cooperation so important to global development right now?

The global development cooperation landscape is changing rapidly. Developing countries and emerging economies have become key actors not only in trade and investment, but also in global and regional development. They have accumulated rich, innovative and diversified development practices and are actively supporting each other to find practical and relevant policy solutions. Developing countries are also increasingly demonstrating leadership in building common agendas and taking collective actions in order to address a multitude of challenges that cut across regional and national boundaries.

SSC and TrC have increased the diversity in opportunities for development assistance. For many developing countries they are offering a significant resource channel that is additional to and on different terms from the official development assistance funds.

Southern partnerships are vital in overcoming the current development challenges and reaching internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. SSC and TrC, complementing the traditional North-South model of development assistance, will also be critical in implementing the post-2015 development agenda.

3. What is the role of the UN and UNDP in South-South and triangular cooperation?


A primary policymaking entity on SSC within the United Nations system is the **High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation**, a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly. The Committee meets biennially and its 18th session was held in May 2014.

The UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) serves as the substantive secretariat of the High-Level Committee. The UNOSSC works to enhance the coherence and coordination of UN support to South-South and triangular cooperation.

In its **Strategic Plan 2014-2017** UNDP proposes to make SSC and TrC a core way of working and to fully utilize its programmatic reach and resources at the global, regional and country levels to support SSC and TrC. UNDP aspires to provide a global operational arm for supporting SSC and TrC that is also accessible to the UN Development System.

4. What roles can UNDP play in supporting South-South and triangular cooperation?

UNDP has a strong role to play as knowledge broker, capacity development supporter and partnership facilitator. UNDP will focus on:

 **1. Brokering knowledge on scalable development solutions** and analysis on what has worked and what has not, with systematic information of who, where and what is happening in South-South and triangular cooperation

2. Enabling harmonization of policies, legal frameworks and regulations to increase opportunities and maximize mutual benefits of South-South exchanges, while **supporting capacity development** of Southern partners to better implement SSC and TrC initiatives



3. Facilitating partnerships, fostering innovations, and promoting the scaling-up of promising ideas

In its South-South and triangular cooperation efforts UNDP connects and works together with wide variety of interested stakeholders from governments to private sector and civil society.

5. How can I learn more about UNDP's work in supporting South-South and triangular cooperation?

For more information about UNDP's support to South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Human Development please contact the South-South Cooperation Team at (sscforshd@undp.org).

Also see:

- *Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation 64/222*
- *The state of South-South cooperation Report of the Secretary-General 66/229*
- *Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation SSC/17/3*
- *UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-17: Changing with the World*



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