Eleventh Meeting of 
FAO Southwest Pacific Ministers for Agriculture

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

11–14 May 2015

Theme: Climate Smart Agriculture

South-South Cooperation:
Partnerships to Bridge the Knowledge Gap

Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Apia, Samoa 2015
Executive Summary

South-South Cooperation (SSC) is the mutual exchange and sharing of development solutions – knowledge, experiences and good practices, policies, technology and know-how – between and among countries in the Global South. Over the years, SSC has evolved into the most cost-effective and efficient means of exchanging technical know-how and experiences among equal partners in an atmosphere of solidarity and partnership to support nationally defined objectives. It can play a major role in facilitating the exchange of accumulated experiences and technologies, which can be adapted to specific contexts in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to address existing and emerging impediments to sustainable development and food security.

The United Nations (UN), Group of 77 and other multilateral and bilateral international institutions have been actively promoting SSC in their programmes of work as an important and effective means to bridge the technological gap among countries of the Global South. The opportunities provided under triangular cooperation to harness the comparative strengths of developed countries and multilateral organizations to facilitate South-South initiatives have been crucial through the provision of funding, training, management, governance and technological oversight, as well as other forms of support.

SSC is central to the emerging development paradigm and architecture where the donor-recipient model is increasingly leaving space to stakeholder cooperation, country ownership, more reliance on home-grown capacities and the exchange of development solutions among equals. As such, SSC can play a major role in the achievements of The Framework for Pacific Regionalism, which stipulates further regional integration, sustainable natural resource management, sharing of know-how and experiences within the region, sustainable development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

The FAO-SSC framework suggests a number of modalities for the exchange of know-how and experiences, which are designed to be contextually relevant and adaptable. With its experience in SSC facilitation and its wealth of technical experience, FAO can play a catalytic role in SSC collaborations.

FAO envisages shared responsibility and partnership, not only in terms of technical exchanges but also in terms of costs. All partners engaged in SSC are expected to share the costs involved in the identification, formulation, facilitation and implementation processes. The SSC process with PICs involves the development of a framework between FAO and the regional or national institutions of PICs that would govern potential cooperation within the region and other countries/institutions outside the region.

Ministers are invited to:

1. consider the relevance of SSC in the region between PICs; and
2. consider a preferred framework and funding mechanism for SSC exchange between PICs.
Introduction

1. SSC has increasingly been recognized as one of the most efficient and effective means of exchanging technical know-how and experiences among countries of the South. Cooperation among countries of the Global South has always existed in various forms and scopes. More recently, cooperation among countries of the South has significantly evolved from a narrow to a more comprehensive definition. The UN and other multilateral development partners have increased their focus on SSC as an important complementary modality to bridge the technological gap in support of sustainable development and eradication of poverty and hunger. In 2004, the UN General Assembly adopted SSC as a terminology to define a broader concept covering political, technical, cultural and economic cooperation fully reflecting the needs and aspirations of cooperating countries within the context of global common goods, with the eradication of hunger chief among them.

2. The FAO corporate strategy defines SSC as “……the mutual exchange and sharing of development solutions—knowledge, experiences and good practices, policies, technology and know-how transfer, between and among countries in the global south.” SSC is based on solidarity among partner countries for mutual benefit, whereby FAO and other such institutions play a catalytic role in facilitating cooperation among countries and institutions that have proven development solutions to share with countries in need of them. FAO provides a framework for cooperation that reflects international experience in SSC initiatives and provides technical oversight to ensure international standards and norms are adhered to in the transfer of technology and experiences across agro-climatic zones and regions. The cooperation is expected to be mutually beneficial to cooperating countries. It is important to emphasize that SSC is not a replacement for North-South cooperation, which is highly significant and beneficial; rather, it complements other modalities of cooperation.

3. This paper is intended to highlight the merits of SSC and, more importantly, to illustrate how SSC can effectively contribute to the aspirations and objectives of PICs. Climate change, less diversified sources of food and reliance on imported food in PICs are some of the elements that necessitate concerted efforts to improve capacities and capabilities in sustainable natural resource management; more diversified and nutritionally balanced food production; processing; and marketing. Furthermore, the frequency and severity of disasters in PICs over the recent past call for urgent measures to enhance capabilities to improve disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. Some countries among PICs – as well as others beyond the region – have accumulated highly relevant and effective experiences and have developed technologies to address similar issues. SSC can play a major role in facilitating the exchange of these valuable experiences and technologies, which may be adapted to specific contexts in PICs to address existing and emerging impediments to sustainable development and food security in the region.

A historical perspective

4. SSC, as a means of mutual support among countries of the South, may have originated in South-East Asia nearly 70 years ago and has since been instrumental in forming policy to promote cooperation among countries of the Global South with a view to bridge the knowledge gap and promote sustainable growth and well-being. The Bandung (Afro-Asia) Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955, recognized the urgency of promoting economic cooperation among the Global South and signaled the beginning of a trend, which was to have a profound influence on future international cooperation.

1 The first idea of southern countries cooperating together began with the 1st Asian Conference, hosted by pre-Independence India in 1947.
5. In the 1970s, the UN General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions calling on the international community and the UN System to assist developing countries in their efforts to increase technical exchanges among themselves. These efforts culminated in the UN Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, held in Buenos Aires in 1978. The Buenos Aires Plan of Action was adopted, representing a major milestone in the evolution of SSC to this day.

6. Since the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, a number of events and high level fora\(^2\) have stressed the need for national ownership of development processes and the building of momentum of an SSC framework. The Nairobi UN meeting on SSC in 2009, in particular, sought to promote, enhance and widen the benefits of mutual support among developing and transition economies, as well as maintain support for the process from the developed world through *triangular cooperation*. It also reviewed 30 years of progress since Buenos Aires. The Nairobi Outcome Document adopted the following ten fundamental principles of SSC, which continue to govern the SSC framework in the UN system.\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normative Principles:</th>
<th>Operational Principles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Respect for National Sovereignty</td>
<td>• Mutual accountability and transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National ownership</td>
<td>• Development effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partnership among equals</td>
<td>• Coordination of evidence- and results-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-conditionality</td>
<td>- based initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-interference in domestic affairs</td>
<td>• Multistakeholder approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mutual benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. The Nairobi document also urged UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies to take concrete measures to support South-South Cooperation by acting as catalysts for cooperation and strengthening the capabilities of regional organizations.

**Triangular cooperation**

8. Collaboration, in which developed countries\(^4\) and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, management, governance and technological systems, as well as other forms, support what is known as *triangular cooperation*. *Triangular cooperation* creates the opportunity to harness the comparative strengths of different partners, from the North and South, as well as multilateral institutions, to achieve synergies and greater combined impact than would have otherwise been achieved through individual or traditional bilateral partnerships.

9. The Accra Agenda for Action (2008) emphasizes the importance of experience exchange among developing countries and recognizes the significant value addition provided by *triangular cooperation*. This relates to support from donor countries, as members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, for the transfer of knowledge and experience between and among developing countries. While *triangular cooperation* is gradually increasing and improving, it still mainly consists of scattered, small-scale initiatives. Traditional donors continue to be some distance away from mainstreaming the approach in their development cooperation strategies.

---


\(^3\) The objectives were defined in the Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Nairobi in 2010. For further information, see [http://ssc.undp.org/content/dam/ssc/documents/Key%20Policy%20Documents/Nairobi%20Outcome%20Document.pdf](http://ssc.undp.org/content/dam/ssc/documents/Key%20Policy%20Documents/Nairobi%20Outcome%20Document.pdf)

\(^4\) Mainly countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
although a number of them – in particular, Japan – have identified triangular cooperation as an effective aid modality.

10. The Middle-Income Countries that are active in triangular cooperation include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey, among others. Middle-Income Countries, indeed, are playing an increasingly important role in the international development architecture – as donors, trading partners and sources of expertise. The FAO-China Trust Fund; ASEAN+3 Chiang Mai Initiative, with its financial cooperation arrangements; Banco del Sur initiated by Venezuela with Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay at the Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas (Union of South American Nations); the REAF/Mercosur cooperation for family farming; and several initiatives by South Africa to support African countries are only a few examples of an increasing trend.

SSC and the evolving global context

11. The postcolonial development paradigm – donor/recipient – has increasingly been challenged by developing countries and multilateral development partners over the recent past. The “beggars can’t be choosers” model appears to be gradually crowding in stakeholder/cooperation; country ownership; more reliance on home-grown capacities; and exchange of development solutions among equals. The governance of international development cooperation has recently emphasized country ownership and contextually relevant technical cooperation among countries (the Paris Declaration Indicators of Progress\(^5\)). The International Development Association, in its IDA16 Replenishment meeting, held in Bamako, Mali, in May 2010,\(^6\) emphasized government ownership and that the member country’s institutions are to be in the driving seat. Implementation of IDA-funded projects and programmes are to be governed by the countries’ policies, rules, regulations and building on existing institutions. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on sustainable and contextually appropriate systems of sharing technology, knowledge and experience among developing countries.

12. The SSC strategies, policies and frameworks, including those adopted by FAO, take into account the evolving international context, which include the following:

1. The changing world environment, whereby emerging economies are – today – major providers of technical assistance, technologies, experiences and lessons learned, and are dynamic partners of the Global South-South Development Expo, in particular countries such as Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa (BRICS economies).\(^7\)
2. The strong affirmation by the Group of 77 that SSC is an effective instrument to optimize the promotion and exchange of development solutions.
3. The changing development paradigm, with the internationally agreed principles on aid and development effectiveness,\(^8\) and inter-governmental initiatives and processes.\(^9\)

---


\(^7\)The BRICS accounts for 41.6 per cent of the world’s population and nearly 20 per cent of the world’s gross domestic product.

\(^8\)See http://www.aideffectiveness.org/

\(^9\)Including the follow up to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20); the Istanbul Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, 2011-2020; current process to define and
4. The Zero Hunger Challenge and regional processes in place, including the High-Level Meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, held in June 2013\(^\text{10}\) (jointly hosted by FAO), where the declaration by Heads of States and governments also underscored the importance of SSC as a vehicle to end hunger in Africa.

5. The commitment of all UN agencies to strengthen and allocate resources for more and better SSC, as evidenced by the UN Office for SSC.\(^\text{11}\)

6. The awareness of SSC through High Level Fora, Global South-South Development Expo, SSC conferences, policy dialogues, and related meetings have continued to raise the visibility of and generated interest in SSC.

13. With the increasing scale and scope of SSC flows, several countries, institutions and multilateral agencies have also recognized the need to set-up dedicated SSC units.

**South-South cooperation in the Pacific**

14. Following a thorough review of the Pacific Plan, the Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting, held in Palau in 2014, adopted the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.\(^\text{12}\) This framework stipulates further regional integration, close collaboration among national and regional institutions; sustainable development; sharing of experiences and know-how; harmonization of policies and practices for improved natural resource management in support of sustainable and inclusive development; and prosperity. Pacific Leaders have sought to emphasize their interdependency, shared responsibilities and the enormous benefits in collaborating and sharing best practices and experiences in line with the general trend in regional integration and international development cooperation.

15. The Framework for Pacific Regionalism provides a significant space for SSC, which stipulates the sharing of knowledge and experience not only among the PICs, but also by developing partnerships with other countries that have similar agroclimatic and socioeconomic conditions. As part of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the SSC framework would lend itself to facilitate the exchange and adaptation of best practices, policies and technologies within the region. Such an exchange is directly in support of key objectives that are explicit in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

16. Other countries in Asia have accumulated significant experiences and technical know-how, which may prove instrumental in achieving the overall goal of the PIC, in particular, those stated in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. FAO has already facilitated SSC exchange between a couple of PICs countries (China and the Philippines), where valuable lessons have been learned. Other countries in the region with similar agroclimatic conditions, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam, among others, may also prove valuable partners in bridging the technological gap through the SSC framework.

17. In implementing its projects in the Pacific, FAO has facilitated the exchange of specialists from Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries between PICs in the areas of forestry and statistics. Nevertheless, further effort is needed to ensure a more structured collaboration is in place, shape the UN development agenda beyond 2015; outcome of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Korea, in 2011; and call for a Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

---


\(^\text{11}\) See [http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc.html](http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc.html)

rather than have an ad hoc situation. While FAO has also facilitated the cooperation of research institutions in the PICs, there are opportunities for additional SSC collaboration, utilizing PICs national institutions.

**Potential SCC modalities**

17. Modalities for SSC can be relatively large in scope and cover most cooperation among government, non-government, research, education and other institutional exchanges. FAO predominantly, but not exclusively, favours institutional exchanges rather than individual experts from developing countries. Facilitating cooperation among institutions paves the way for long-term contacts, collaboration and institutionalization of the adopted technologies and experiences, ensuring sustainability and further development of the acquired technology. Furthermore, long-term exchanges are feasible only if institutions are involved in the exchange, the continuation of which is independent of an expert’s career plans in the provider and recipient countries.

18. Some of the main SCC modalities for consideration in the Pacific may be summarized as follows, with the cooperation being among institutions in the PICs or among PICs and institutions outside the region:

1. **Deployment of long-, medium- and short-term expertise** This involves the deployment of experts to provide technical advice; demonstrate new technologies; provide opportunities for learning by doing; and offer hands-on training at different levels. The duration of the deployment would depend on the type of technology or experience that is exchanged, the specific situation of the host institution and the objective(s) of the exchange. The exchange could be at (i) the *policy and strategy levels*, where experiences with specific policies and strategies and the processes leading to their success may be shared among institutions at a high level; (ii) *technology and know-how exchange at a sub-national level*; this may involve specific institutions engaged in the exchange of technologies and experiences. The exchange could be in the form of experts deployed to the recipient country, experts/technicians invited for training and exposure visits or a combination of the two; (iii) *technology demonstration at the farmer field level*: experts and technicians, as well as model farmers, may be deployed to demonstrate and help adapt effective and innovative technologies at the farmer field level; or (iv) *capacity building*, where experts may be deployed to design and conduct structured or semi-structured training modules at different levels. These are mostly on-the-job short- and medium-term training rather than a formal degree course.

2. **Capacity and institution building**: Structured courses, exposure visits, adapting and replicating institutional experiences in support of building capacities and institutions are part of this modality. The facilitation would involve very close and constant exchanges between two or more institutions with similar mandates. The exchange may take the form of structured, on-the-job training and exposure visits, as well as specialized training. The Governments of Malaysia, Singapore (as part of its initiative to support small island low-income countries, among others) and Thailand have been offering tailor-made training courses to national experts from a number of countries. A partnership with these may go a long way to strengthen institutions in PICs.

3. **Formal technical education and capacity building**: The University of the South Pacific and other technical training and research institutions in the Pacific could be linked with similar institutions in Asia to ensure the exchange of academic and training material. SSC and *triangular cooperation* can make a significant contribution in facilitating exchanges...
among academic and research institutions, technical colleges and institutes by facilitating curricular exchanges, visiting lecturers, distance learning, exchange of professors/lecturers and access to academic and research content. Improving the quality of graduates is a long-term and sustainable solution to address the technological gaps prevailing in PICs.

4. **Knowledge networks**: This component envisages the establishment of knowledge sharing networks among technical institutions in PICs, allowing institutions to access a pool of technical resources on an emergency or regular basis (e.g. specific networks for animal health, plant diseases, production, processing, marketing and information technologies and experiences, among others). Indeed the PICs networks may be linked to other regional or global networks to expand the pool of technical resources.

5. **Knowledge fairs**: These bring together practitioners, innovators and interested parties in animal husbandry, crop production, processing, marketing and other areas relevant to FAO mandate (e.g. the proposed Pacific Agriculture Week concept). The knowledge fairs are intended to bring together demand and supply of technologies and know-how with a view to facilitate a market exchange for relevant and sustainable technologies.

6. **Surge capacity and disaster management**: Disasters are, unfortunately, increasing in frequency and severity in PICs. Adequate and appropriate surge capacity to provide rescue, relief and recovery operations at short notice will go a long way to reduce casualties, avoid costly and unnecessary coping measures and minimize the long-term impacts of the disaster. In line with the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, this component envisages the formation of a regional surge capacity with experts from qualified institutions who could be deployed at relatively short notice, when disasters hit in a particular country. The deployment may be based on a pre-arranged agreement with participating institutions – managed by FAO – as part of the regional-level food security cluster, which is led by FAO. Specific training may also be organized to increase the knowledge base of the participating institutions and draw on international expertise in disaster management.

19. Regional institutions, such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat are national organizational structures to promote SSC in the region. This may be directly linked to and in support of the objectives under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. Indeed, specific national objectives may also be supported through context-specific SSC initiatives, which may fall under one of the aforementioned modalities for cooperation.

**To ensure that SSC bears fruit in Pacific Island Countries**

**Proposed process**

20. A framework for collaboration between the PICs – possibly through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat – could be envisaged, allowing PICs to work together on SSC initiatives. An assessment of needs and gaps would have to be conducted to identify where technical cooperation may be required. The country-level assessment would not only include the needs and gaps, but it would also incorporate the areas of expertise in which the country has excelled and which it is willing to share with other countries in the region. Other countries outside the region can be explored if the gap that has been identified cannot be effectively bridged from technologies and experiences available within the region. Joint efforts will need to be made to determine sources of finance to support specific
technical cooperation under the SSC framework. Once financial resources have been identified, a joint tripartite appraisal and formulation would define, in significant detail, the most appropriate modality for the transfer and adaptation of the identified experience and technology, implementation plan, and roles and responsibilities, as well as other essential details.

21. The implementation would follow the recommendations from the joint appraisal and formulation exercise. The formulation would also include a dynamic monitoring framework and sufficiently flexible implementation plan to reflect the changing environment over time. Some governments in Asia have already shown interest in providing support to the PICs under the FAO-SSC framework, which shall be further explored.

22. Under its FAO-SSC framework, FAO can play a catalytic role to facilitate SSC at all stages, from identification and assessment to implementation, all the while providing oversight to ensure that the transferred technology is appropriate, sustainable and in line with international norms and standards.

Finance

23. FAO envisages shared responsibility and partnership, not only in terms of technical exchanges but also in terms of costs. All partners engaged in SSC shall share the costs involved in the identification, formulation, facilitation and implementation processes. The recipient, including the providing countries, FAO and any other partners in any SSC endeavours, are expected to contribute to the costs involved throughout the process. The share of the costs, however, would depend on the financial capacity of the respective partners to individual SSC and triangular agreements. By contributing to the costs of cooperation, the recipient and supplying countries may be more careful in prioritizing SSC endeavours and, hence, establish an increased likelihood of success. Apart from solidarity and equal partnership, sharing costs may ensure that the recipient country does not see SSC as a free commodity and that the supplying country does not consider it a mere source of employment for its experts and technicians.

24. PICs – either as a group or as individual countries – may be able to pool resources to establish a trust fund in support of SSC facilitation. The trust fund or other modalities of financial management could be linked to the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat to support the achievement of the objectives under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism objectives. Visible contributions from PICs may also encourage other international development partners to contribute to the initiative.

Ministers are invited to:

1. consider the relevance of SSC in the region between PICs; and
2. consider a preferred framework and funding mechanism for SSC exchange between PICs.