

Concept Note

Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific
2-3 July 2015
Bangkok, Thailand

1. Background

Bridging technological gap has been one of the main objectives of the post-colonial development agenda. Since the 1950s a number of paradigms have attempted to address the technological gap in developing countries mostly relying on technologies from the North. Success has, by and large, eluded many countries in the South, among other reasons, for lack of appropriate technologies and comprehending the conditions under which the technology in question had to be introduced and adopted. It is understood that the technology transfer from the North has had and continues to have significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of many countries in the South. However, such efforts need to be complemented by exchanging knowhow and experiences among countries with similar levels of socio-economic development. Most developing countries are interested in technical transfer that are relevant to their conditions and benefit from experiences with adaptation and institutionalization in a country within living memory.

South-South Cooperation (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.¹ The Bandung Afro-Asia Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955, recognized the urgency of promoting economic cooperation among the global south and signalled the beginning of a trend, which was to have a profound influence on future international cooperation.

In the 1970s, the UN General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions calling upon the international community and the United Nations system to assist developing countries in their efforts to increase technical exchanges among themselves. These efforts culminated in the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), held in Buenos Aires in 1978. The Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) was adopted, which represents a major milestone in the evolution of SSC to this day.

Since Buenos Aires, a number of events and High Level Fora (HLF) have stressed the need for national ownership of development processes and the building momentum of SSC framework.² 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 UN Global SSC Strategy is governed by the Nairobi Outcome Document and its ten fundamental principles (Table 1)³.

The Nairobi document also urged the UN funds, programs and specialized agencies to take concrete

¹ The first idea of southern countries cooperating together began with the 1st Asian Conference hosted by the pre-Independence India in 1947.

² Rome (2002), Paris (2005), Accra (2008), Nairobi 2010), Busan (2011) and Addis (2013).

³ The objectives were defined in the Conference on South-South Cooperation held in Nairobi in 2010. For further information: <http://ssc.undp.org/content/dam/ssc/documents/Key%20Policy%20Documents/Nairobi%20Outcome%20Document.pdf>

measures to support South-South Cooperation by acting as catalysts for cooperation and strengthening the capabilities of regional organizations.

Table 1. Principles adopted by the Nairobi Outcome Document, 2009.

Normative Principles:	Operational Principles:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for National Sovereignty • National ownership • Partnership among equals • Non-conditionality • Non-interference in domestic affairs • Mutual benefit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual accountability and transparency • Development effectiveness • Coordination of evidence- and results-based initiatives • Multi-stakeholder approach

1.1. Triangular Cooperation

Triangular Cooperation refers to the form of collaboration in which developed countries⁴ and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, management, governance and technological systems, as well as other forms of support. Triangular cooperation creates the opportunity to harness the comparative strengths of different partners, from both the north and south, as well as multilateral institutions, to achieve synergies and greater combined impact than would have otherwise achieved through individual or traditional bilateral partnerships.

The Accra Agenda for Action (2008) emphasises the importance of experience exchange among developing countries and recognises the significant value addition by triangular cooperation. This is in terms of support from OECD donors for the transfer of knowledge and experience between and among developing countries. While triangular cooperation is gradually increasing and improving, it still consists mainly of scattered, small-scale initiatives. Traditional donors are still some distance away from mainstreaming the approach in their development cooperation strategies; but a number of them, in particular Japan, have identified triangular cooperation as an effective aid modality.

The Middle Income Countries (MICs) 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. MICs are indeed playing an increasingly important role in the international development architecture, as donors, trading partners and sources of expertise. The FAO-China SSC Trust Fund, the ASEAN+3 “Chiang Mai Initiative”, with its financial cooperation arrangements; the Banco del Sur (initiated by Venezuela with Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay in UNASUR); and 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.

1.2. SSC in FAO

FAO considers SSC as an important means of exchanging knowledge and experience among countries of the Global South in support of national development objectives and by extension FAO’s strategic objectives. FAO has one of the largest SSC programmes among the UN agencies and has gained significant experience in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience among equal partners.

⁴ Mainly OECD countries

In line with the UN Global SSC Strategy, the FAO South-South Cooperation (SSC) framework attempts to facilitate the exchange of technological knowhow and experiences among countries of the Global South with the aim to bridge the widening technical gap in support of food security and poverty alleviation efforts. The SSC has proved to be the most efficient and effective means of exchanging technical knowhow and experiences. This is in terms of cost-effectiveness, appropriate technology, experience within living memory and institutionalization of the knowhow.

FAO has facilitated the deployment of over 2 000 experts and technicians in 53 countries since the inception of the SSC programme in 1996. Initially the SSC programme narrowly focussed on specific technologies and an emphasis on direct outreach to farmers. SSC has been successful among participating countries by sharing experience and technology that proved relevant to local conditions, culturally and socially sensitive, cost-effective, and enhanced outreach to farmers. Interest in SSC is rising from existing and potential recipient and supplying countries, along with demand for a flexible approach that addresses diverse needs.

2. Justification

Asia has taken giant strides in addressing food security issues since 1970s and some have become OECD members with significantly high levels of per capita income. Most countries in the South are keen to learn from the Asian experience in addressing similar issues that were menacing realities in Asia not long ago. Obviously levels of development in Asia vary significantly across countries and regions within each country. There is, therefore, significant potential to share Asia's knowhow and experiences with other countries and regions not only within the continent but also in other parts of the South.

Despite the high-level political-will and commitments as mentioned earlier, SSC seems to have lagged behind its potential to bridge the wide and widening technological gap in countries of the South. This consultation is an attempt to bring together policy makers and practitioners from member countries, multilateral and bilateral organisations as well as other stakeholders in the region with a view to enhance efforts to facilitate SSC and realise its potential. SSC promises a significant potential bridging the technological gap in food and agriculture as well as the rural economy in general. The slow pace of SSC in the region may well be reversed by proactively promoting bilateral and multilateral modalities of cooperation to exchange experiences and technical knowhow.

3. Consultation Objectives

The consultation is aimed to provide a forum where member countries and other stakeholders will be able to share their experiences, identify potentials for cooperation and the way forward for SSC to bear fruit.

The consultation is expected to provide a platform for member countries and other stakeholders to exchange experiences, knowhow and identify solutions to fill the knowledge gap and hence contributing to hunger and poverty eradication. The consultation will not only discuss measures to enhance SSC facilitation within the Asia-Pacific region but also other regions. The consultation will also aim to highlight practical steps in fostering collaboration and networking where needed, in support of SSC.

4. Expected Outputs

The consultation is expected to result in the following outputs:

- (i) SSC experiences, good practices and knowledge in food and agriculture sector are presented and shared among member countries, partners and other stakeholders;
- (ii) Constraints and bottlenecks to the promotion of SSC are discussed and options to overcome bottlenecks are identified and agreed;
- (iii) Priority actions and strategic options are identified and agreed to address constraints and create an enabling environment to further enhance and promote SSC in the Asia and the Pacific region;
- (iv) Proceedings of the consultation including conclusions and recommendations are produced.

5. Consultation Process and Framework

5.1. Expected Participants

The two-day consultation will include representatives from RAP member countries and other stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific Region. The participants will necessarily include both, potential recipient and supplying countries, who are willing to share their knowledge and experiences in the fields of food, agriculture and rural development.

3.2. Venue and Date

The consultation shall be organised in Bangkok, Thailand on 2 and 3 July 2015.

Annex 1. List of Participating Countries and Institutions.

Participants	No. of Participants	Participants	No. of Participants
1 Afghanistan	1	Regional institutions and multilateral partners	
2 Bangladesh	1	29 Australia	1
3 Bhutan	1	30 Belgium	1
4 Brunei Darussalam	1	31 Canada (CIDA)	1
5 Cambodia , Kingdom of	1	32 Denmark	1
6 China Peoples' Republic	2	33 France (AFD)	1
7 Fiji, Republic of	1	34 Germany (GIZ)	1
8 India	2	35 Italy	1
9 Indonesia	1	36 Japan	1
10 Korea, Democratic Peoples' Republic of	1	37 The Asian Development Bank (ADB)	1
11 Korea, Republic of	1	38 Japan International Development Cooperation Agency (JICA)	1
12 Lao, Peoples' Democratic Republic of	1	39 Pacific Island Forum (PIF) - Fiji	1
13 Malaysia	1	40 Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Jakarta, Indonesia	1
14 Maldives	1	41 Netherlands	1
15 Mongolia	1	42 New Zealand (NZAID)	1
16 Myanmar, Union of	1	43 Norway (NORAD)	1
17 Nepal, Federal Democratic Republic of	1	44 Portugal	1
18 Pakistan	1	45 Spain	1
19 Papua New Guinea	1	46 Sweden (SIDA)	1
20 Philippines	1	47 Switzerland	1
21 Singapore	1	48 UK, DFID	1
22 Solomon Islands	1	49 European Union	1
23 Sri Lanka	1	50 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Kathmandu, Nepal.	1
24 Samoa	1	51 United Nations Development Fund (UNDP)	1
25 Thailand, Kingdom Of	2	52 United Nations Office for SSC	1
26 Timor-Leste	1	53 UN SSC Task Team, Asia-Pacific	11
27 Vanuatu	1	54 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	1
28 Viet Nam	1	55 The World Bank (WB)	1
		56 USAID	1
		57 Resource Partners	6
		58 FAO-HQ	2
		Total	77

