

**Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
through South-South Cooperation**

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1. Abstract

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a much talked about and discussed issue amongst developing countries. There are three pillars on which the entire framework of SDGs stands, these are namely: environment, economy and society. The United Nations, governments of the nations, the business sectors, and civil society groups need to do more in terms of policies, education, and regulations on social, economic, and environmental fronts to guarantee that everyone is informed and mindful of his / her overall development.

The genesis of South-South Cooperation has been to give impetus to the exchange of resources, technologies, academics and trade between the developing countries to bring about growth and development in their countries. Thus, the whole idea was for mutual benefit amongst the developing nations. The development process in the countries has been driven by mutual consensus amongst them to bring economic, social and environmental stability. This paper will highlight the advantages of South-South Cooperation and their contribution toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2030.

Key Words: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2030, South-South Cooperation, Economic Stability, Eradication of hunger

2. Introduction

The idea of SDGs was adopted by United Nations in 2015 comprising 17 SDGs, that must be attained by all the countries and stakeholders by the year 2030. The purpose is to guarantee that this agenda goes beyond the rhetorical catchphrase and is rather incorporated realistically in development projects all over the world. The Agenda 2030 highlights the cooperation between **North-South Cooperation**, **South-South Cooperation** and **Triangular Cooperation (Hybrid Cooperation)** towards the attainment of SDGs.

At the outset, the focus of the paper is to understand three key focus areas:

- (a) First, what are Sustainable Development Goals and their history;

- (b) Second, the formation of the South-South Cooperation and their contribution toward achieving SDGs and
- (c) Thirdly, the way ahead.

Over the years, there has been an increase in exchange of economic activities, expansion of trade, enhancement in investments, and growth in financial and technological flows between the developing countries. Development in almost all sectors has been initiated by emerging economies and developing countries. The mutual assistance and cooperation amongst the nations has brought in vast amount of changes. The road to achieve SDGs is not smooth but full of road blocks and potholes, and thus there are numerous developmental challenges that are faced by the **Global South**. These challenges are being tackled by the emerging economies and developing countries and have become the key drivers to achieve SDGs, Agenda 2030.

South-South Cooperation amongst the developing countries and the emerging economies has emerged as an important vehicle to accelerate human development and has achieved greater importance since the time of its inception. The areas of cooperation are varied in nature from knowledge exchange, technology transfer, financing, peer support, neighbourhood initiative, diaspora exchange and last but not the least are the SDGs which these developing countries are aiming to achieve by 2030.

If we have to define South-South Cooperation, it will be, “a comprehensive framework for cooperation and interchange between countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical spheres is known as **South-South Cooperation (SSC)**.”

According to Mawdsley,¹ *South-South Cooperation is a distinct paradigm in the international development field because it aims at differentiating itself from North-South Cooperation projects that involve conditionalities attached to the disbursement of aid or that are tied of solidarity, the respect of goods and services. That is the reason this modality is based on the principles of solidarity, respect for national sovereignty, and the promotion of national ownership through demand-driven and horizontal development cooperation.*²

South-South Cooperation refers to the technical cooperation among developing countries in the Global South hemisphere that primarily include nations of Latin America, South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. These are the nations of the third world and others which are economically weak. South-South Cooperation provides the tools used by the states, international organizations, academic institutions, civil societies and the private sectors to collaborate and share knowledge, skills and

¹ Mawdsley, E. “The changing geographies of foreign aid and development cooperation: contributions from gift theory.” Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, No. 37(2012): 256-272.

² United Nations General Assembly. Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth session, Agenda item 58 (b), A/RES/64/222, December 21, 2009, a.

successful initiatives in specific areas such as agriculture development, protection of human rights, urbanization, health, climate change etc.

The developing countries nearly at the same coordinates on the trajectory of growth and development have many commonalities to share. These similarities emerge from their common experience of colonialism and economic exploitation. They all share the common problems of poor economic infrastructure, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, hunger, lack of technology and so on. Thus, a similar past, a similar present and similar future goals bring and bind them together for cooperation and follow almost a common approach to development issues.

The major goal of South-South Cooperation is to enable countries to create domestic solutions to development issues rather than relying on outside interventions, which contributes to the value of the initiatives. Technical cooperation between developing nations in the Global South is another aspect of South-South cooperation. It is a tool used by governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, members of civil societies, and businesses to work together and share expertise and successful initiatives in a variety of fields, including agricultural development, human rights, urbanisation, health, and climate change, among others.

A comprehensive framework of cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical sectors is used to facilitate South-South interaction. It can take place on a bilateral, regional, intra-regional, or inter-regional basis and involve two or more developing nations. Through South-South Cooperation, developing nations exchange knowledge, abilities, know-how, and resources in order to jointly work toward their development objectives. Triangular Cooperation is another form of South-South cooperation. In this partnership, traditional donor nations and multilateral organisations help South-South efforts by providing financing, managerial and technical systems, training, and other forms of assistance.

The countries which came with common agenda under South-South Cooperation emerged on the basis of global improvement around the world. Sustained economic growth in emerging economies has fuelled a shift in the global centre of gravity from North to South.

3. What is South-South Cooperation?

The South-South Cooperation has been adopted by the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** as the basic principle of its economic approach to achieve the dream of collective self-reliance amongst developing countries. Though the term South-South Cooperation emerged in the 1970s, the idea has been on the agenda of NAM for a long time. It is also a basic approach of India's economic diplomacy towards, developing countries and Least Development Countries (LDCs).

The United Nations in its 17th High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation or Dialogue in 2012 facilitated the work done by these developing countries. But, the question lies what really is South-South Cooperation? Many countries and international institutions have defined this collaboration in their own perspective, one of which is: *“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 organisations, civil society, academia and the private sector for their individual and collective mutual benefit within and across regions. South-South Cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather complement to North-South Cooperation.”³

Indonesia's president, Sukarno during the **Bandung Conference**, referred to this cooperation as "the first inter-continental conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind."⁴ The Bandung Conference was distinctive and facilitated the formation of South-South Cooperation because it was the first time that the countries in attendance were no longer colonies of distant European powers.⁵ South-South Cooperation has been successful in decreasing dependence on the aid programs of developed countries and in creating a shift in the international balance of power.⁶

The Leaders of South American and African countries hope that this cooperation will bring a new world order and counter the existing Western dominance socially, economically and politically. Late President Hugo Chavez saw the formation of this cooperation as the "beginning of the salvation of the people,"^[9] and as a major anti-imperialist movement.

The **Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD)** encouraged “developing countries to voluntarily step up their efforts to strengthen South-South Cooperation and to further improve its development effectiveness in accordance with the provisions of the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on the same in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Apart from the country’ government’s role in development, non-state actors are also increasingly playing an active role. One example is Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), the largest non-governmental organisation in the world which is based in Bangladesh. It works in more than 13 countries providing assistance, and loans in education, health, disaster relief and skill development.

The objectives of South-South Cooperation are to:

- (a) encourage and fortify the ability of emerging nations to fend for themselves by strengthening their technological prowess in solving problems related to the development and their creative capability to do so;
- (b) promote and strengthen group self-reliance among developing nations by sharing experiences that increase awareness of shared issues and access to knowledge;

³ United Nations, “Framework of Operational Guidelines in United Nations Support to South-South and Triangular Cooperation,” High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, New York, 2012 (SSC/17/3). This definition is based on the Nairobi Outcome Document, negotiated at the UN-High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation and adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2009. According to this definition, all developing countries are considered as part of the Global South, and equal partners in South-South Cooperation.

⁴ Acharya, Amitav (2016-07-03). "Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective". *Australian Journal of International Affairs*. **70** (4): 342–357.

⁵ Ibid – reference 1

⁶ "South-South Cooperation Defies the North | Global Envision". globalenvision.org.

recognise and address the needs and problems of the least developed nations, landlocked developing nations, small island developing States, and the nation's most severely affected by, for example, natural disasters and other crises, and enable them to achieve

4. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), The Agenda 2030

In the 21st century, it is essential to reform the international development cooperation field and make all the countries responsible for growth and progress and leave no one behind. In year 2000 at the **UN Millennium Summit**, the initiative was taken by the countries to reform the world which led to the adoption of **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**.

The MDGs were primarily an agenda for action in developing countries with the assistance of developed countries, and due to that, North-South Cooperation and Official Development Assistance (ODA) were the central means of implementation. But, it was only in the 2005 World Summit, that the UN member states committed themselves to achieve the MDGs by 2015, and the South-South Cooperation was recognised as a potential mechanism for the promotion of the MDGs. This recognition was a response to the increasing cooperation ties among developing countries such as China, India, South Africa, and Brazil, but also Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, among others who performed unprecedented growth in their GDP, trade, capital flows, and investments in the early 2000s.

The newly adopted SDGs stress the importance of South-South Cooperation in implementing the 2030 agenda. Goal 17, “Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development,” particularly places a greater emphasis on the critical role of the South-South Cooperation and the Triangular Cooperation in achieving the ambitious SDGs.



The 2030 agenda must be implemented, and South-South collaboration is crucial, according to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development, Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, places a special emphasis on the crucial role South-South and triangular cooperation in attaining this ambitious development agenda. The SDGs also establish goals for triangular and South-South cooperation that are focused on creating capacity and advancing technology, goals that all nations have committed to attaining. In order to facilitate this, many initiatives have emerged and thrived over the past 20 years, including China's Belt and Road Initiative, India's initiatives that include Trade, Training, and Technology Transfer through organisations like BRICS and supporting initiatives like the New Partnerships for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Saudi initiatives like the Saudi Development Fund, and an infrastructure boom made possible by Multilateral Development Banks like the World Bank. While aspects of technology transfer, trade, training, infrastructure development, and crisis support play a significant role in achieving the SDGs, the wider people-to-people connection facilitated by India and other BRICS countries is helping these countries foster better entrepreneurial relations and strengthen cultural ties, both of which are important for achieving the SDGs.

Despite the fact that developing nations in the Global South have a high level of interest and commitment in cooperation, policies, regulations, and procedures, a lack of institutional capacity for cooperation and incoherent policy making may be making it more challenging for Southern nations to benefit from one another's capabilities, experiences, knowledge, products, networks, and services. In addition to creating a split that may have long-term implications on Southern partners' relationships and capacities for coordination and support through South-South Cooperation. This difficulty may be a significant barrier to the achievement of the SDGs through South-South Cooperation. As a result, there may be a large number of partners that would like to participate in this cooperation but are unable to do so due to several restrictions resulting from the legislation in their home countries. Therefore, it would be crucial to include supporting capacities, such as those of state and non-state actors, rising economies, and least developed countries. Each of the strategic, policy, and institutional levels needs to receive this support. For instance, UNDP helped Thailand and Mexico to combine their expertise as a catalyst for growth in South-South Cooperation. Recently, UNDP helped the Iraqi government create a South-South Cooperation division within the Prime Minister's Advisory Commission (PMAC). UNDP promoted improved coordination of different cooperation and assistance mechanisms in Haiti. For implementation among southern partners, lessons from these types of examples must be documented and tailored for native usage in the country.

5. Conclusion

The SDGs have been fully recognised the world over as viable, implementable and achievable goals. As these were set into motion in 2015, the nations have got the lead of about 15 years for their implementation. The maximum challenges are to be faced by the Global South comprising third world countries, the Least Developed Nations, Nations at the periphery of development, developing countries and very few of the

emerging nations. To resolve and mutually benefit from each other's strengths, the idea of South South Cooperation was floated and quickly it was an accepted norm. And the nations of the Global South have started making efforts to have economic, social and technological tie-ups with other nations of the Global South to leverage each other strengths and move toward on the trajectory of growth and development aligned to the SDGs, Agenda 2030.

The South-South Cooperation has given the countries of the Southern Hemisphere a vehicle for joint collaboration in almost every field. There have been bilateral, multi-lateral, and peripheral collaborations so as to be on a path to achieve the SDGs by the year 2030 as stated by the United Nations. Definitely, the efforts are going into but how much at a ground level have these been successful is still difficult to answer being very subjective. Yet, it is prudent to say that the pace of collaboration that has been put into place by the South-South Cooperation has to now gain momentum and be accelerated so as to attain the development goals by 2030. It is a win-win situation for the countries of the Global South and the rest of the world to be moving towards the path of sustainable development in order to save the further deterioration of the earth from climatic and manmade destructions and the societies benefit from the attainment of social, technological and economic goals which are sustainable in nature for their common good.

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