

South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Peace and Development

Bridging the Policy Gap

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Summary

Dynamic economic growth and progress in countries of the Global South has spurred a wave of South-South partnerships to learn from each other's practical experiences. Furthermore, the growing preference of developing countries for Southern expertise and solutions, combined with preparedness of emerging powers in the Global South to step up assistance to other developing countries, has prompted enhanced efforts within and outside the United Nations system to facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation with a view to harnessing the tremendous wealth of the Global South for sustainable development.

This policy brief argues in favor of systematically nurturing South-South partnerships to create sustainable peace in fragile societies, including for the politically sensitive and complex tasks of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The United Nations, as a driving force behind development of universal frameworks for partnerships, by facilitating dialogue and formulation of a coherent policy framework, could maximize the impact of South-South and triangular cooperation in the area of peace and security and foster complementarity between the presently fractured activities of the United Nations system, OECD countries and emerging powers such as India, Brazil and South Africa, in line with the intrinsic linkage between peace and development and multi-stakeholder approach envisaged in the post-2015 development framework.²

1 The views expressed in this policy brief are solely that of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations.

2 This policy brief draws on Mathur, A., *Role of South-South and Emerging Powers in Peacemaking and Peacebuilding*, Oslo, 2014. <http://english.nupi.no/Publications/Books-and-reports/2014/Role-of-South-South-Cooperation-and-Emerging-Powers-in-Peacemaking-and-Peacebuilding>

I. Resurgence in South-South and triangular cooperation for development

A. The game changer?

Stronger and deeper relationships among developing countries and the pivotal role of several emerging powers in the Global South as growth poles, drivers of connectivity and critical sources of replicable and scalable experiences have made South-South (SSC) and South-South-North or triangular cooperation (TrC), a powerful framework for trade, investment and finance as well as exchanges of relevant, cost-efficient and innovative development solutions among developing countries. There has been a striking resurgence in SSC, as evident from the select facts quoted below, with significant implications for the future. It is projected that by 2020 the combined economic output of Brazil, India and China will surpass that of the top six traditional economic leaders of the North, driven by new South-South trade and partnerships.³

- In 2010, South-South development cooperation reached between \$12.6 billion and \$14.4 billion, of which 75 per cent was focused on *technical cooperation and capacity-building* initiatives involving transfer of expertise, skills and equipment.⁴
- South-South foreign direct investment grew 20 per cent a year between 1996 and 2009 and merchandise exports reached \$4 trillion in 2011, surpassing exports to the North since 2008.⁵
- In addition to exchanges and transfers of expertise, equipment and recent transition experiences, the emerging powers expanded their bilateral *financial assistance programs* by leaps and bounds – both in a spirit of solidarity and as an expression of their soft power. Between 2005

3 Human Development Report, *The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*, UNDP, 2013, Foreword, p. ii.

4 E/2012/78, para. 111.

5 *South-South Trade Monitor*, UNCTAD, July 2013, p. 1.

and 2010, Brazil and India grew their foreign aid spending by more than 20 per cent while the United States budget grew by just 1.6 per cent over the same period and that of Britain, France and Germany grew by less than 5 per cent annually.⁶

- Contributions of the emerging powers to multilateral programs increased by some 16 per cent between 2005 and 2011, becoming an important factor in broadening the resource base. In 2008, 2010 and 2012, Brazil's donations to the UN humanitarian appeals for some of the poorest countries increased by \$3.3 million, \$26 million and \$54.4 million, respectively.⁷ The India, Brazil and South Africa Fund in UNDP, known as the IBSA Fund, offers another example of partnership with the UN to identify replicable and scalable projects that can be disseminated to interested developing countries as examples of best practices in the fight against poverty.
- SSC has also involved collective actions in addressing trans-regional thematic problems such as food security, climate change and HIV/AIDS by multiple countries in the pursuit of mutually beneficial development and enhanced bargaining power in multilateral negotiations.⁸

B. Evolving global governance and support

Acknowledging the exponential growth in SSC and its relevance as one of the “drivers of development effectiveness” and a “key instrument for achieving organizational results”,⁹ from 2012 onwards the UN accelerated a system-wide drive to effectively mainstream SSC and TrC as a *cross-cutting issue* in the design and implementation of all its global, regional and country programs. To facilitate policy dialogues and opportunities for promoting SSC-TrC approaches to development, the General Assembly High-level Committee on SSC approved the framework of operational guidelines on UN support to SSC-TrC and expanded the mandate of the UN Office for SSC (UNOSSC). Several UN agencies entered into strategic partnerships with the emerging powers to leverage their relevant experiences and expertise and supported national governments to set national priorities and the SSC agenda and identify in concrete terms the support they required from the UN system. Similarly, other multilateral and regional organizations and governments advocated incorporating SSC perspectives, experiences and models in national and multilateral frameworks to achieve internationally agreed development goals.

II. South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable peace

A. Mutual complementarity

Faced with recurring conflicts, the current approach to peacebuilding has placed a renewed focus on ongoing mediation and provision of capacity building support to conflict-affected countries to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and build effective and inclusive local institutions that provide basic security, social cohesion, governance, justice and

sufficient foundations for democratic and equitable development. Its emphasis on national ownership, regional solutions and demand-driven transfer of expertise and knowledge with a view to channeling long-term, affordable and tailored support to fragile societies, analogous to the core principles guiding SSC-TrC, has created a compelling context for systematically broadening and mainstreaming SSC-TrC as a key modality for successful conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts in UN mission and non-mission settings.

B. A new normal: dynamic engagement of the emerging powers and the conceptual shift

An appreciation of the growing stake and leverage of the emerging powers in fragile societies, in direct proportion to the scale of their bilateral assistance programs, commercial interests and political aspirations for regional stability and dominance, as well as their preference to operate within the framework of SSC-TrC, has further underscored the strategic significance of SSC-TrC and partnership with the emerging powers for efforts to expand and enhance the effectiveness of support to conflict-affected countries.

Moreover, having transitioned into *vibrant and stable democracies*, several emerging powers like India, Brazil and South Africa have become models and powerful symbols of the potential of democracy in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and non-Western societies. Faced with increased demands for sharing their successful transition experiences, expertise and best practices, the emerging powers have overcome their reluctance to make promotion of democracy and inclusive institutions a key element of their foreign policies and cautiously balanced the tensions in their policies by expanding the SSC-TrC framework to redefine *peacebuilding support as an expression of solidarity and shared experiences*. They have favored home grown approaches and consent-based multilateral efforts over bilateral arrangements to scale up their support to fragile societies in politically sensitive areas such as conflict management and promotion of democratic values and inclusive political processes. For example, India has supported strengthening of civil society and inclusive political processes through participation in the UN Democracy Fund with the second largest contribution to this Fund after the United States. Leveraging the convening role of regional organizations to develop responses to major improvements or deteriorations in governance in the region, Brazil has pushed for the incorporation of democracy requirements within regional mechanisms such as Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States, Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Similarly, South Africa has been a major force behind the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), promoting good governance in the region.

However, citing political and policy differences that would compromise the core principles of SSC, namely respect for sovereignty and national ownership, non-interference in domestic affairs, partnership among equals, demand-driven engagement for mutual benefit, and regional collaboration founded on shared political or socio-cultural characteristics and interests, the emerging powers have resisted attempts to bring SSC support activities and OECD–DAC assistance under a common framework of aid effectiveness such as the New

6 ‘Look who’s saving the world: BRICS pump up foreign aid’, The Christian Science Monitor, 26 March 2012.

7 Jamil Chade, “With an eye on getting greater influence in international politics, Brazil multiplies by 50 its help to foreign governments”, O Estado de Sao Paulo, 6 March 2013.

8 SSC/17/3, p. 6.

9 A/64/504, p. 16 and SSC/17/1, p. 14.

Deal outside a UN-led process. To take their engagement to the next level, drawing upon domestic transition experiences, long tradition of providing assistance to other developing countries and lessons learned in UN and regional peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, they have looked towards the UN to play a meaningful role in the development of an integrated framework that reflected and harmonized their priorities, perspectives and approaches, including the primacy of SSC-TrC, with that of other stakeholders, while pressing for a more *representative global governance architecture* that gave them a bigger voice and role.

C. Connecting Southern partners

Given the relative lack of national and international policy, institutional, operational and financial enabling environment and recognizing the vast potential of SSC-TrC for peacebuilding, several donor governments, regional organizations and parts of the UN system have begun assuming a facilitator and global connector role by developing knowledge sharing platforms and rosters of experts in their respective areas of expertise. For example, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has launched several knowledge sharing platforms and other activities as detailed in figure 1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has increasingly linked its core development activities to building capacities in areas such as democratic governance and crisis prevention and recovery, mainstreamed SSC-TrC in the design and implementation of those programs, and formed strategic partnerships with DPA and the emerging powers to leverage their expertise and experiences. The World Bank Institute has launched an active learning and south-to-south Knowledge Exchange Program which captures and shares lessons in New Deal pilot countries with practitioners and key national stakeholders to enable innovation and concrete national level reforms. The Government of Norway has been assisting the African Union to build a civilian standby roster for the civilian component of the African Standby Force, mediation and post-conflict reconstruction and development. The emerging powers themselves are fast developing national institutions and infrastructure to scale up their role in peacebuilding within the framework of SSC-TrC.

D. Inter-governmental mandates

To address a critical shortage of capacities in fragile societies to prevent relapse into conflict and secure a sustainable peace, the Secretary-General,¹⁰ the General Assembly¹¹ and other stakeholders have called for harnessing mediation, peacemaking and peacebuilding capacities from the Global South. From 2012 onwards, the Security Council mandated in several instances: (i) deepening and widening the pool of rapidly deployable civilian expertise, particularly from countries in the Global South with relevant expertise and experiences in post-conflict peacebuilding and democratic transitions; and (ii) strengthening cooperation and coordination in building civilian capacities, minimizing possible duplication of efforts and ensuring their consistency and complementarity. Increasingly the mandates have emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and SSC-TrC for effective international assistance to conflict-affected countries and encouraged the UN and its partners to play a catalytic role in facilitating development of a coherent policy framework and relevant structures and processes.¹²

E. Operationalization of SSC-TrC within the DPA

The DPA, as the political arm of the UN Secretariat and coordinator of system-wide conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts, has increasingly found it necessary to mainstream SSC-TrC in several focus areas of its work as shown in figure 1, albeit inadvertently and in stand-alone projects only, to increase the impact of its programmes and deliver effectively a range of complex and context-specific services to fragile societies in partnership with more and more active and capable actors from the Global South, including regional organizations and the emerging powers.

By systematically mapping and reporting on the value added by SSC-TrC to its work, DPA could lay the basis for: (i) effective use of good practices and consistent mainstreaming of SSC-TrC in all areas of its work; (ii) development of an enabling DPA-wide policy framework consistent with evolving practice; (iii) an enhanced role of DPA regional and liaison offices as facilitators of SSC-TrC; and (iv) buy-in within the UN and DPA to lead system-wide efforts to formulate a coherent policy framework across the UN that facilitates expansion of SSC-TrC in the peace and security pillar of the UN's work as a cross-cutting issue. Similarly, DPA could evaluate jointly with UNDP the practical implications of efforts to facilitate SSC-TrC in context of the DPA-UNDP *Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention* that assists national actors in addressing political tensions, builds infrastructures for peace and assigns Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) in over 50 countries.

By illustrating the extent and impact of these initiatives to key constituencies, DPA could demonstrate the potential of mainstreaming SSC-TrC in the areas of peace and security that the majority of UN members favor, and stimulate a serious evidence-based policy dialogue aimed at furthering DPA and the UN's impact in key capitals on issues of importance, including DPA's role in preventing and addressing violent armed conflict.

III. Recommendations

- Given the growing centrality and political influence of SSC-TrC and the goal of the emerging powers to enlarge collaborative and effective efforts in support of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the UN system has an important role in promoting an evidence-based understanding of the value-added of SSC-TrC across the peace and security pillar and developing a coherent policy framework that balances a traditional North-South approach with one that recognizes and integrates South-South mechanisms, solutions and perspectives.
- Without reinventing the wheel, the UN should leverage the existing architecture and normative consensus existing within and outside in support of SSC-TrC and take the lead in urgently developing a system-wide strategy that: (i) advances mainstreaming of SSC-TrC across the peace and security pillar as a cross-cutting issue; (ii) identifies appropriate priority areas based on demand (such as electoral assistance); (iii) promotes institutional linkages and development of repositories of good practices, exchanges of experiences and knowledge through knowledge-sharing networks and regional seminars and interoperability of rosters of Southern expertise and experiences; and (iv) defines the UN's role as a catalyst and facilitator of SSC-TrC for realization of a coherent agenda that

¹⁰ A/66/811, p. 62.

¹¹ A/RES/66/655.

¹² See for example, S/PRST/2012/29, S/RES/2065 (2012) and S/RES/2086 (2013).

fosters both peace and development and purpose-oriented partnerships in the shared interest of sustainable peace.

- DPA, in collaboration with PBSO, UNDP, DPKO and others, is uniquely and strategically positioned to lead, coordinate and catalyze efforts to expand SSC-TrC given its role as coordinator of system-wide conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace-building efforts, using recent experience in mainstreaming

SSC-TrC, proximity to intergovernmental bodies and processes, and a growing field presence.

- By undertaking outreach to raise awareness and recognition of initiatives taken to expand SSC-TrC across the peace and security pillar, the UN system, in particular DPA, could advance its influence, impact and strategic positioning on issues of importance with the broader UN membership, including emerging powers.

Figure 1: Sample DPA activities mainstreaming SSC-TrC

DPA entity or office	Role	Examples of relevant SSC-TrC activities
All DPA divisions, liaison and regional offices: UN Office at the African Union, UN Office for West Africa, UN Regional Office for Central Africa, and UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia	Catalyst and capacity builder of regional and sub-regional organizations	Implemented 'political capacity-building' programmes to enable the African Union and other regional/sub-regional organizations to serve as the first-line responders in national and regional preventive, peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives, dispelling the notion that collaboration in peace and security matters undermined sovereignty; supported innovative regional approaches for good governance such as the African Peer Review Mechanism and sharing of intra- and inter-regional best practices; undertook information-sharing and joint analysis, joint training and assessment missions, and desk to desk learning
Policy and Mediation Division	Knowledge broker, partnership facilitator and capacity builder	Created Standby Team of Mediation Experts and Mediation Roster, with emphasis on expertise from the South, for deployment to conflict-affected countries; UN Peacemaker and UN Constitutionmaker, two online repositories of knowledge to facilitate exchanges, adaptation and scaling up of Southern approaches on peace agreements, mediation and constitutions
Electoral Assistance Division	Knowledge broker, partnership facilitator and capacity builder	Fostered South-South electoral assistance; organized knowledge sharing and partnership building workshops between Southern election stakeholders to build on comparative experiences for the development of improved electoral processes
Division for Palestinian Rights	Convener, knowledge broker and partnership facilitator	Gathered experts from governments, civil society and academia, including from the Global South in search for peaceful solutions to the Palestine Question and to draw upon the experience of States in midst of post-colonial efforts to build effective governments and economies; created rosters of experts and civil society organizations mainly from the region
Americas Division	Policy dialogue convener and results reporter	Designated a focal point to collect and disseminate information to senior management on activities of countries in the region related to facilitation of SSC-TrC
Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office	Knowledge broker and capacity builder	Gathered experts from governments in the region to develop regional strategy for fight against terrorism (eg. Central Africa Regional Counter-terrorism Strategy) and development of counter-terrorism capabilities
Select DPA divisions supporting field-based special political missions	Partnership facilitator and capacity builder	Facilitated deployment of civilian experts, expertise and approaches from the region to special political missions, as in the case of the UN Support Mission in Libya.
DPA and PBSO	Policy dialogue convener and advocate at policy and operational levels, results reporter	Featured successful instances of SSC in the Secretary-General's reports on peacebuilding. ¹³ Funded deployment of Liberian experts with security-sector reform experience to the UN Mission in Cote d'Ivoire and others.

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13 See, for instance S/2014/5, section V.



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