

Trends in South-South Cooperation

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South-South Cooperation (SSC) is being impacted by the emergence of economic behemoths—India, Brazil, China and South Africa. In 2006 alone, about US\$3 billion in development assistance came from Southern contributors (Johnson, Versailles and Martin, 2008). What comes next? What are the trends and pressing demands in SSC?

Coordination is the prime issue. International coordination is a challenge. The United Nations Special Unit on SSC is the main body coordinating this global effort. Regional cooperation is indeed increasing across Asia and Africa. The East Asian crisis of 1997 underscored the interdependence of Southeast and East Asian countries, leading to SSC-oriented arrangements such as the Chiang Mai Initiative. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a regional institution set up by the African Union, is another outcome of regional cooperation. It aims to maintain the flow of official development assistance (ODA) despite Africa's conflicts. Regional cooperation helps to leverage complementary technical, financial and joint development activities within neighbouring countries.

The emergence of China, India and Brazil. Given the scope of China's activities in developing countries and the debate that those activities have prompted, China's involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be overlooked. The Chinese government does not officially report on its ODA, but private estimates suggest that it spent US\$4.5 billion on assistance for Africa alone through 2006 and plans to double that amount by 2009 (Davies, 2006). China's growing role as a donor in Africa has led to numerous infrastructure projects, though it remains to be seen who benefits and over what period (Kaplinsky, McCormick and Morris, 2006). In Zambia, China has run several agricultural and infrastructure projects, and has signed several contracts to provide economic and technical cooperation (Davies, 2006). Data on the impact of this aid on poverty alleviation are currently sparse. Africa needs to take ownership of its own pro-growth policies in order to ensure that it is not captured by a new form of colonialism. India has been playing a key role in technical cooperation initiatives on education and training, study tours and disaster relief assignments. The Indian government and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) have also formed ties to promote capacity building in the distribution of new technologies (UNIDO, 2007). Brazil's role in sharing its successful social policy programmes with countries in Africa, as well as its efforts to enhance multilateral and inter-American collaboration, have provided learning space and collaboration across continents.

Triangular cooperation is growing and is here to stay. Countries of the North—such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan—have also entered the picture to form a cooperative donor triangle with developing partners in the South. While this provides

added financial and programme support to developing countries, SSC with this triangular approach can easily slide into a hegemonic, North-dominated relationship. Equally, triangular cooperation provides an opportunity for developing countries to share knowledge and experience if a careful balance of resources and administration of projects and funds is maintained between the donor and beneficiary countries. As this form of cooperation increases, approaches will have to be refined so that the provision of financial resources and the delegation of project implementation are balanced.

Capacity building remains a challenge. Most of the current training on SSC activities is undertaken within the UN and in institutions that focus on research. For example, the Training Centre for Regional Integration (CEFIR) serves as a hub of research and statistics specialising in capacity building for regional integration in South America. Its activities are geared to government officials, civil society, academia and the private sector. The International Poverty Reduction Centre in China (IPRCC) delivers training on policy analysis, poverty evaluation, and monitoring and evaluation tools. Apart from research and policy training between developing countries, there is also technical-oriented cooperation and training. Thus UNIDO coordinates multidisciplinary biosafety training among biotechnology workforces in Chile, Malaysia and Tanzania.

Research is needed on the impact of SSC on human development. Training and knowledge sharing on SSC should include practical tools and evaluation techniques such as poverty and social impact analyses, in order to answer the questions of who drives development policy and who exactly benefits. Notwithstanding the South's heterogeneity, an institution for knowledge exchange may prove beneficial in identifying best practices in technical cooperation and policy innovation. Since SSC is intended to broaden development cooperation in order to address human development, and not just growth or the removal of bottlenecks in finance, infrastructure or technology, there should be a greater focus on assistance unrelated to foreign direct investment, so that the South can more effectively achieve the Millennium Development Goals for sustainable development.

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