

Introduction

There is now ample proof of the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation to address difficult development challenges and accelerate results in communities and people’s lives across the globe. For example, “Countries of the South have contributed to more than half of the world’s growth in recent years”.¹

Ever since the [Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries](#) (TCDC) in 1978² and the evolution to “South-South cooperation (SSC), SSC has been a modality owned and valued by developing countries in their pursuit to reduce poverty and inequalities, and the momentum has only been growing. Today, Southern providers and partners are gaining stature in the international development landscape, and a growing number of countries are exploring how development solutions that have worked elsewhere in similar contexts can be adopted or adapted to their own.

As a trusted partner with a global presence, the UN development system acts as one of the primary South-South and triangular cooperation facilitators and catalysts through its global, regional and national South-South support architecture. That role was reiterated and amplified by Member States in the [BAPA+40 outcome document](#)³ in which they called on the UN development system to increase its work leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation in policy dialogue, technical assistance, normative support, collaborative alliances, knowledge-sharing, partnerships and mobilization of financial resources.

That endeavour gained renewed urgency and impetus with the adoption of the first-ever [United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024](#), in 2020.⁴ The new strategy provides a UN system-wide orientation to spur a coordinated, coherent UN approach to South-South and triangular cooperation policy, programming and partnership support and a boost to the impact of the support of the UN development system to South-South and triangular cooperation at the national, regional and global levels.

To this end, in the spirit of UN reform, the UN development system is called upon to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into the common country analysis (CCA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and into operational activities for development more broadly. This includes planning, programming, implementing, monitoring and reporting at the global, regional and country levels *when and where there is a demand from national partners and South-South and triangular cooperation are considered suitable options for a given development challenge to accelerate development results and/or to*

¹ UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), “What is ‘South-South cooperation’ and why does it matter?”, 20 March 2019.

² *Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, Buenos Aires, 30 August–12 September 1978*, chap. I.

³ UN, *Report of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation* (A.CONF.235/6), 2019.

⁴ United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024, 2021. Available at <https://unsouthsouth.org/2021/11/19/united-nations-system-wide-strategy-on-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-for-sustainable-development/>.

complement an existing programme. It is for this reason that these South-South and triangular cooperation guidelines have been compiled for the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation at the country and regional levels.

The guidelines are compiled for use at the country level and the regional level.

In these Guidelines, South-South and triangular cooperation are viewed not so much as crosscutting themes to mainstream throughout the common country programming process but rather as *means of implementation* that enable the UN development system to offer to a developing country suitable and complementary support to accelerate development results. As such, the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation is targeted and applicable, as needed, throughout UN operational activities for development, including during the CCA and UNSDCF processes.

What's New

Building on the broad recommendations, catalytic actions and performance indicators identified in the 2016 framework of operational guidelines on UN support to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/19/3)⁵ and consultations with UN entities and other partners, these Guidelines offer a step-by-step resource to use when integrating South-South and triangular cooperation into the CCA and UNSDCF processes. This includes improved analysis, capacity assessment, stakeholder engagement and programming tools.

The Guidelines are grounded in a bottom-up approach informed by good practices integrating South-South and triangular cooperation into common country programming and mandated by UN Member States as an important avenue for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with other international development agreements, at the country level. They feature a new strategy, action plan, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework.

A new strategy. The first-ever UN system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024, approved by the Executive Committee of the Secretary-General in 2020, was developed through an inclusive inter-agency process. The strategy provides a coordinated, coherent, UN system-wide approach to South-South and triangular cooperation policy, programming and partnerships at the country, regional and global levels.

At the country level, implementation of the strategy aims to better position UN entities to coordinate and harmonize South-South and triangular cooperation policies, operations and programmes in support of nationally defined priorities. The strategy is also a tool for coordinating the South-South and triangular cooperation efforts of UN entities to help countries to respond to and recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and build forward better.

⁵ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-buqyoV0jpSUC1PZ25xekFQaVk/view?resourcekey=0-hAE4KnInqtMM8UCBHJ8P2w>.

The creation of these Guidelines follows the approval of [the strategy](#). It responds to the specific call by Member States in [General Assembly resolutions 76/221](#) of 2021 and [77/185](#) of 2022 for the UN development system to continue to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation into CCAs and UNSDCF at the country level.

A new action plan. The action plan for implementation of the UN system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development features an M&E framework that identifies, for each of the five outcomes of the strategy, a set of specific deliverables (outputs), recommended indicators and indicative activities for the country, regional and global levels.

The action plan, including the M&E framework, is meant to be aligned, as relevant, with existing planning, M&E and reporting mechanisms and processes that UN entities already use. At the country level, the action plan with its M&E framework may be aligned with the UNSDCF review process and complement existing UNSDCF monitoring and reporting mechanisms to avoid duplication of effort.

The newly developed recommended outputs, indicators and indicative activities to support South-South and triangular cooperation complement the existing indicators that the UNCT and each UN entity use to report on South-South and triangular cooperation. The UNCT and UN entities are encouraged to contextualize these new outputs, indicators and indicative activities in the UNSDCF results framework and in country-programme results frameworks.

In 2022, the action plan, including the M&E framework, was expanded to include detailed responsibilities for data collection and reporting, building on existing systems, and baseline data was collected.

The aim is to ensure that the UN development system and UN entities are able to monitor the implementation of the strategy, track progress and conduct meaningful assessments, including collecting and analysing relevant information, that will inform UN-system and UN-entity monitoring of and reporting on South-South and triangular cooperation.