

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE GUIDELINES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION INTO THE COUNTRY- AND REGIONAL-LEVEL WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

What is the purpose of the Guidelines?

The 'Guidelines for the Integration of South-South and Triangular Cooperation into the Country- and Regional-Level Work of the United Nations Development System' aim to help UN professionals to understand the concept and principles of South-South and triangular cooperation and to effectively support national partners to leverage South-South and triangular cooperation to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and national priorities.

They are designed to provide the knowledge and tools to operationalize UN support for the South-South and triangular cooperation modalities and to implement the UN System-Wide Strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for Sustainable Development.

The Guidelines offer step-by-step guidance for integrating South-South and triangular cooperation into the Common Country Analysis and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) processes at the national level as well as at regional and sub-regional levels.

Who are the Guidelines meant for?

The Guidelines are primarily designed for country- and regional-level UN personnel involved in the preparation of Common Country Analysis (CCAs), the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), regional workplans and collaborative frameworks.

Who developed the Guidelines?

The Guidelines were developed by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation with the guidance of the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO). They were reviewed by select Resident Coordinators/ Resident Coordinators Offices and the UN Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and triangular cooperation.

What is the definition of South-South Cooperation?

South-South cooperation 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.

What is the definition of Triangular Cooperation?

Triangular Cooperation involves **Southern-driven partnerships** between two or more partners **supported by a developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s)** to implement development cooperation programmes and projects.

What is the difference between South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation?

While **South-South cooperation emphasizes collaboration among developing countries, Triangular Cooperation involves the participation of developed countries and/or multilateral organizations in South-South cooperation** and has the potential to make a significant contribution to the realization of the objectives of South-South cooperation.

It must be understood that South-South cooperation is not a replacement for North-South Cooperation but a complement to it, both working alongside each other.

What is the scope of South-South cooperation?

South-South cooperation takes different and evolving forms at different levels, including, inter alia, the sharing of knowledge and experience, training and capacity building, technology transfer, financial and monetary cooperation and in-kind contributions. South-South trade is also an important form of SSC.

South-South cooperation embraces a multi-stakeholder approach, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, and other actors that contribute to meeting development challenges and objectives in line with national development strategies and plans.

South-South Cooperation can be enhanced by various national, regional, and subregional initiatives in the social, economic, environmental, technical, and political fields. Its advancement has also been achieved through multiple institutional arrangements that foster subregional and regional integration.

What is the significance of the UN Day for South-South Cooperation?

The United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation aims to raise people's awareness of the UN's efforts to work on technical cooperation among developing countries. Originally observed

on December 19, the date for the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation was moved in 2011 to September 12. It commemorates the date when the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted a plan of action in 1978 to promote and implement technical cooperation among developing countries.

What are the key policy documents for South-South cooperation?

1. Buenos Aires Plan of Action (1978)
2. New Directions for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (1995)
3. Nairobi Outcome Document (2009)
4. Framework of Operational Guidelines on United Nations Support to South-South Cooperation (2016)
5. BAPA+40 Outcome Document (2019)
6. Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, Outcome Document of the BAPA+40 (2019)
7. System-wide Strategy (2020–2024)
8. The Guidelines (2023)

[Access the UNOSSC Library here](#)

What are the Guiding Principles of South-South cooperation?

The guiding normative and operational principles of South-South cooperation were set out in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action of 1978 and reiterated in the Nairobi outcome document.

Guiding principles of South-South cooperation	
Normative	Operational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Solidarity ▪ National ownership and leadership ▪ Mutual benefit ▪ Partnership among equals ▪ Non-conditionality ▪ Complementarity ▪ Respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mutual accountability and transparency ▪ Development effectiveness ▪ Coordination of evidence- and result-based initiatives ▪ Multi-stakeholder approach

Because South-South cooperation is grounded foremost in the principles of national sovereignty and ownership, it is the prerogative of developing countries to initiate, organize and manage South-South cooperation activities as well as their financing and programming. Developed countries and UN development system organizations may play promotional and catalytic roles, as requested.

What are the comparative advantages of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation?

The recognized comparative advantages of South-South cooperation include:

- low transaction costs;
- speed of service and project delivery;
- greater flexibility;
- use of national systems, capacities and demand-driven approaches;
- complementarity of capacities;
- and relevance of solutions shared among partners of the South facing common development challenges in similar contexts.

Triangular cooperation complements North-South and South-South cooperation through transfer of knowledge and expertise - encourages innovation and co-creation leading to shared collateral benefits.

What are the key inter-governmental bodies for South-South Cooperation?

The High-level Committee (HLC) on South-South Cooperation is a subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly that has served as the main policy and decision-making entity on issues pertaining to South-South cooperation. The Committee is responsible for:

- Reviewing the progress made in implementing the tasks entrusted to the United Nations development system in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action
- Ensuring that efforts to strengthen South-South Cooperation are sustained within the United Nations development system
- Supporting new policies and innovative approaches to further the development of South-South Cooperation
- Considering the availability of financial resources and their effective use by the United Nations development system, without prejudice to existing programmes
- Ensuring coordination of the promotional and operational South-South Cooperation activities of the United Nations development system

Each session of the High-Level Committee is presided over by a President assisted by a Bureau that consists of members chosen from each of the regional groups. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) acts as a substantive Secretariat for the High-level Committee (HLC) on South-South Cooperation.

General Assembly Second Committee: During its annual session, the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) of the General Assembly deals with issues relating to economic growth and development, including South-South Cooperation. During this session, Member States negotiate a resolution on South-South Cooperation, outlining important mandates for all stakeholders to promote South-South and triangular cooperation. UNOSSC acts as a substantive Secretariat for the Session on South-South Cooperation.

What is the role of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)

UNOSSC is the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation within the UN system and on a global basis. UNOSSC manages the Trust Funds for South-South Cooperation and facilitates access to a knowledge portal, the South-South Galaxy, for all partners to upload and access development solutions and broker partnerships.

At the global level, UNOSSC convenes the UN inter-agency mechanism for South-South and triangular cooperation, comprising over 40 UN entities, including UNDCO and Regional Commissions.

At the country level, UNOSSC works through the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) headquarters and regional offices to leverage the resident coordinator and United Nations Country Team (UNCT) roles to support national efforts to assess, advocate for, manage, design and implement South-South and triangular cooperation policies and initiatives by identifying, sharing and transferring Southern-generated development solutions.

What is the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation?

In line with the General Assembly resolution 72/237, in 2018, UNOSSC established the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, with a membership of more than 40 United Nations entities, including the UN Development Cooperation Office and Regional Commissions. The inter-agency mechanism, coordinated and convened by UNOSSC, aims to encourage coherence, coordination, joint support and sharing of information on South-South and triangular cooperation development activities and results achieved by various United Nations entities.

What is the key entry point for UN development system support to South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level?

The UNSDCF is an important entry point for UN development system engagement in and support to the coordination of South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level.

What are the key considerations and practical steps for UN Country Teams to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation priorities of national government partners at each stage of the CCA and UNSDCF process?

How can we integrate South-South and triangular cooperation at the roadmap step of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)?

The Roadmap constitutes an opportunity to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into the key milestones, timelines, support needs, and roles in the UNSDCF design process.

There are three main entry points for integrating South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into the road map. At roadmap stage, flag the need to:

- Position South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in the country analytic work.
- Identify South-South and triangular cooperation stakeholders in the mapping exercise.
- Identify UNCT comparative advantages and gaps in integrating South-South and triangular cooperation into the CCA and UNSDCF elaboration processes.

How can we integrate South-South and triangular cooperation at the Common Country Analysis (CCA) step of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)?

CCA can provide the data and information to identify the development challenges for which South-South cooperation or triangular cooperation can be suitable options or an accelerator of development results.

At the CCA stage, UNCTs could:

- identify whether South-South and triangular cooperation policies, institutional frameworks are in place in programme country.
- analyze existing South-South and triangular cooperation operational activities, potential new opportunities.

- assess national capacity against nationally defined needs to determine whether South-South cooperation and/or triangular cooperation is a suitable option to address a national development challenge or accelerate development results.
- consider the comparative advantages of the UNCT to facilitate South-South Cooperation.
- map key partners and stakeholders relevant to the implementation of the UNSDCF and national sustainable development goals.

How can we integrate South-South and triangular cooperation at the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) formulation stage?

While formulating the UNSDCF, the UNCT can:

- Analyze the results of national capacity assessment and comparative advantages of UN entities to determine the specific South-South and triangular cooperation solutions that could be shared with the country and included in the UNSDCF results framework.
- Integrate SSC in the theory of change, reflecting South-South and triangular cooperation as enabler to achieve specific UNSDCF outcomes and outputs.
- Integrate SSC in the results framework and in joint workplans, joint annual reviews and monitoring frameworks
- Reflect South-South and triangular cooperation under partnerships for delivering on the UNSDCF results.
- Include SSC expertise in the governance structure and as Member of the UNSDCF multi-stakeholder advisory board – where applicable

Guidelines provide checklists outlining catalytic actions and criteria to determine South-South and triangular cooperation outcomes at the country level.

How do we integrate South-South and triangular cooperation in UN entity Country Programme Documents?

The UNSDCF and Country Programme Documents (CPD) or Country Strategic Plans (CSP) of individual UN entities are important entry points for UN system engagement in and support to the coordination of South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level.

These modalities can be considered at the very outset of the CPD processes by flagging the need to :

- Position South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in the country analytic work
- Identify South-South and triangular cooperation stakeholders in the mapping exercise
- Identify UNDP comparative advantages and gaps in integrating South-South and triangular cooperation into the CPD elaboration process.

Country Analysis can provide the data and information to identify the development challenges for which South-South cooperation or triangular cooperation can be suitable options or an accelerator of development results.

At this stage, UN entity Country Offices could:

- identify whether South-South and triangular cooperation policies, institutional frameworks are in place in programme country.
- analyze existing South-South and triangular cooperation operational activities, potential new opportunities.
- assess national capacity against nationally defined needs to determine whether South-South cooperation and/or triangular cooperation is a suitable option to address a national development challenge or accelerate development results.
- consider the comparative advantages of the UN entity to facilitate South-South Cooperation.
- map key partners and stakeholders relevant to the implementation of the CPD

Guidelines provide checklists outlining catalytic actions and criteria to determine South-South and triangular cooperation outcomes at the country level.

While formulating the CPD, UN entity Country Offices can:

- Draw on the UNSDCF outcomes and results reflecting support to national partners on South-South and triangular cooperation.
- Integrate SSC in the theory of change, reflecting South-South and triangular cooperation as enabler
- Analyze the results of national capacity assessment and comparative advantages of the UN entity to determine the specific South-South and triangular cooperation solutions that could be shared with the country and included in the CPD results and monitoring framework, joint workplans, joint annual reviews

- Include SSC expertise in the governance structure and as Member of the CPD multi-stakeholder advisory board – where applicable

What are the key entry points for integration of South-South and triangular cooperation at regional level?

Key entry points include Regional Collaborative Platforms and Regional Commissions.

Regional Collaborative Platforms

- Expected to be key regional mechanism for SSC integration
- RCP work planning (Regional Commissions, UNDCO, UN regional offices)
- Issue-Based Coalitions (IBCs)
- Working Groups
- Peer Support Groups (PSGs)
- Regional knowledge platforms

Regional Commissions

- Annual Regional Forums on Sustainable Development
- Subsidiary Bodies- Regional Conference on SSC in LAC
- Support to subregional Mechanisms and Neighborhood Initiatives
- Development Account Projects- the UNCTAD-led DA project on Quantifying SSC to Mobilize Funds for the Sustainable Development Goals.

How can partnerships and financing for South-South and triangular cooperation be factored into preparation of the UNSDCF?

South-South Cooperation, as a complement to and not a substitute for North-South Cooperation, can be an important source of financing for sustainable development and innovative partnerships.

During UNSDCF formulation:

- Integrate South-South and triangular cooperation funding sources and mechanisms in the financial landscape analysis while examining SDG financing requirements and identifying available resources and financing avenues.

- Reflect on SSC in the multi-year and annual funding framework; and in the corresponding joint partnerships and resource mobilization strategy as potential external/ public avenues for mobilizing resources to support national sustainable development plans and SDGs.
- Review other key SDG financing sources at regional level including Southern development banks, multilateral development banks, joint investment mechanisms and diaspora financing.

Detailed information on these South-South cooperation funding mechanisms, including how to benefit from South-South cooperation financing can be found in the [Guidelines](#) (pg 59) and on the [South-South Galaxy](#), an online portal.

What South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge platforms and knowledge resources can UNCTs access while preparing and implementing UNSDCF?

Exchanges of expertise and knowledge from countries of the South offer viable pathways for addressing common challenges among developing countries as they are as cost-effective, easily adaptable and scalable. The UN development system plays an important brokering role in such knowledge-sharing. Some knowledge platforms and resources include:

- UNOSSC has established a one-stop-shop online knowledge portal – South-South Galaxy to facilitate knowledge exchange, partnerships - repository with over 950 development solutions that links existing South-South cooperation knowledge developed by UN entities and other development actors.
- Information on several other South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge networks, portals and mechanisms can be found in the [Guidelines](#) (pg 47) including the SS Global Thinkers, Global SS Development Expo, and the United Nations Global Platform, amongst others.
- Another important resource for countries preparing UNSDCF is the section of the [Guidelines](#) (pg 49) sharing ‘Good practices in integrating South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into the CCA and UNSDCF processes’ in several countries incl. Algeria, Brazil, India, China etc.

Are there other capacity development tools/ support available to UN Country Teams to support integration of South-South and triangular cooperation in UNSDCF?

UNOSSC is developing an online E-module/ course on South-South Cooperation for UN Country Teams and Regional UN entities, in collaboration with DCO, UN System Staff College and a Task Team comprised of several UN entities. The E-Module will be launched in September/ October 2024. A Pilot Training of Trainers for RCOs, UNCTs, DCO and Regional Commissions will be organized in early 2025.

In addition, UNOSSC is shortly improving its web page on the Guidelines to make it more user friendly and to include features like a Digital Assistant/ ChatGPT as well as a Helpdesk to respond to questions and requests for support from UNCTs and Regions.