

CONCEPT NOTE

Global South Perspectives on the Peace and Development Nexus: Potential of South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Addressing the Impact of Conflict on Global South Countries

Reflections among policymakers, development thinkers, and experts from various disciplines across and beyond the United Nations system on how South-South and triangular cooperation can help Global South countries respond to challenges triggered or exacerbated by conflict in order to protect, sustain, and advance sustainable development gains.

Disclaimer: Any information or views shared in this dialogue are the contributors' own and do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Context

Recent and unfolding conflicts have elevated the intricate nexus of peace and development and the need for strategic action on the multidimensional impact faced particularly by Global South countries. With just 35% of the SDG targets on track for achievement by 2030,¹ further challenges to progress just four years to target date raise red flags on the prospects of development gains being rolled back or lost.

In increasingly interconnected regional and global economies, disruptions generated by conflict propagate through networks of trade, finance, energy markets, food systems, and human mobility — cascading across borders, amplifying existing vulnerabilities, and generating secondary crises that disproportionately burden developing countries. Even conflicts occurring far beyond national borders can trigger multi-layered development shocks, over which countries exercise little control yet bear disproportionate consequences --- such as sudden spikes in energy prices, disruptions to grain and fertilizer supplies, tightening financial conditions, and shifts in global investment patterns that rapidly translate into inflationary pressures, fiscal stress, rising debt burdens, and growing social vulnerability.

The United Nations project a global economic downturn that “could spiral beyond anyone’s control.”² The scenario has distinct implications for the Global South that may get lost, missed, or undervalued as the world remains focused on the decisions and actions of main players at the regional and global levels. To protect development gains and help chart developing countries’ trajectories as 2030 nears, these implications need to be elevated and analyzed to guide forward-looking strategies.

¹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2025.pdf>

² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/03/1167087>; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/cmt/middle-east-north-africa/iran-israelpalestine-united-states/sprawling-middle-east-war-explodes>

Against this backdrop, the present reflections build on the analytical foundations of the UNOSSC global report “[South-South and Triangular Cooperation 2025: Bridging Horizons and Continents – Forging Transformative Pathways in South-South and Triangular Cooperation](#),” which introduced a strategic foresight perspective into the analysis of South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTrC). Extending that framework, this initiative examines how Global South countries and their development partners can better anticipate the impact of emerging global trends, including geopolitical tensions, economic disruptions, and technological shifts that shape development trajectories, as well as how South-South and triangular cooperation can help strengthen resilience and safeguard sustainable development gains.

Objectives

The UN Office for South-South Cooperation launches this series to **explore how South-South and triangular cooperation can help Global South countries respond to challenges triggered or exacerbated by conflict in order to protect, sustain, and advance sustainable development gains.**

The series will include reflections from UNOSSC, the Lead Author of the 2025 Global Report, Dr. Adel Abdellatif, and a select group of prominent thinkers from the Global South, as well as North, on the potential risks and implications of conflict to countries on varying points of the development landscape. It is designed to capture trends and generate insights on these trends with a focus on how they ripple through or “land” in developing countries and, leaning on insights and lessons from relevant South-South cooperation initiatives, raise how South-South and triangular cooperation can support development efforts in the context of heightened uncertainties and complexities.

The reflections will address and examine inquiries such as the following:

1. What are the repercussions or development impact of conflict on Global South countries in general and/or countries in specific income groups or designation in particular (e.g., Least Developed Countries/LDCs, Landlocked Developing Countries/LLDCs, Small Island Developing States/SIDS, Middle-Income Countries/MICs, etc.).
2. What are the trends that affect the development prospects and trajectories of the Global South the most?
3. What plausible development scenarios may emerge for Global South (and North) countries in the context of the ongoing conflicts, and how might these scenarios reshape economic resilience, trade and supply chains, food and energy security, and overall progress towards the SDGs?
4. How can South-South and triangular cooperation serve as a strategic mechanism to strengthen resilience, mitigate the adverse development impacts, and support Global South countries in safeguarding and advancing sustainable development gains in an increasingly uncertain global environment?

Relevant Themes to Explore

This series of multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder reflections will explore themes of relevance to the Global South and explore where South-South and triangular cooperation can help address emerging as priorities for action. The series will link to other efforts of entities within and beyond the UN system that address these themes within the frame of their mandates.

- 1. Economic impact:** The economic impact of conflict has far-reaching consequences on the development trajectories of all Global South countries. These consequences vary across income profiles, however, thus the need to have deeper inspection of specific dimensions (such as those borne by landlocked developing countries dependent on economic corridors affected by conflict; by emerging economies facing risks to growth as energy and trade flows are disrupted; by agriculture-based economies anticipating prolonged disruptions to fertilizer supplies; etc.). This theme has multiple layers and dimensions, such the economic impact of disruptions to **remittances** at the national and household level; impact on emerging economies with **manufacturing**-centered industries; disruptions to **productive capacities** of export-centered economies; **labor** implications; etc.).
- 2. Debt distress and financing mechanisms:** Conflict raises risks to movement of people, goods and services, which raise costs (such as insurance coverage of shipments and price of transport). Conflict also triggers price hikes (at national, firm and household level) and market volatility, impedes investment and capital flows, raises debts and cost of borrowing, which also ripple to countries that may not be in conflict but see the cascade of impact reaching them.
- 3. Trade, supply chains, and productive systems:** Trade has been a central driver of structural transformation across the Global South. Contemporary conflicts are increasingly reshaping global trade geography and disrupting supply chains, with cascading effects on countries dependent on export markets, manufacturing ecosystems, and regional economic corridors.
- 4. Food security:** Disruptions to supply chains affect both importing and exporting countries, with agriculture-based economies concerned about impact of delays or insufficiency of agricultural inputs like fertilizers on their production cycles, while countries dependent on food imports face risks of widespread hunger and increased prices.
- 5. Energy:** Conflict has a destabilizing impact across economies, beyond the clear and immediate cost of price hikes and disruptions to production and socio-economic activities. The continuing dependence on fossil fuels is being examined with greater urgency, making alternative options more viable. Global South countries, however, will need context-specific solutions particularly on this front, given the nature of their industries and economies.
- 6. Gender dimensions:** Women and girls often face disproportionate risks in conflict settings, including heightened exposure to violence and reduced access to economic opportunities and essential services. Addressing gender inequalities is therefore central to any strategy that seeks to safeguard inclusive and sustainable development.
- 7. Basic service delivery, governance and social cohesion:** Economic stress generated by geopolitical disruptions can strain social cohesion and pressure public institutions. Ensuring equitable access to basic services remains essential for maintaining stability and sustaining development progress, particularly in fragile or conflict-adjacent contexts.
- 8. Migration, labor mobility, and demographic dynamics:** Conflicts frequently generate displacement and migration flows that reshape labor markets, remittance systems, and demographic structures. Understanding these dynamics is essential for both origin and destination countries across the Global South, and for designing cooperative responses that protect the rights and welfare of mobile populations.

Engagement

This effort encourages reflections from policymakers, development experts and practitioners, academia, civil society organizations, women and youth particularly from the Global South as well

as Northern partners working with Global South countries and constituencies. It is guided by the following:

- **Contributions are original** (written by the writer or prepared by the institution/organization itself). They could be previously published in other forms, but revisited and reframed for the aims and goals of this effort (please see Objectives and the questions proposed).
- **Contributions adhere to common editorial requirements** (are clear, backed by relevant data, referenced).
- **Contributions are concise** (not to exceed 1100 words, ideally between 800 and 1100 words).
- **Contributions adhere to UN core values and diplomatic conduct** (inclusion/respectful of diversity, including gender and opposing opinions; integrity/high standards of engagement/impartiality; professionalism).³
- **Contributions include concrete recommendations for action.**

This online platform for multidimensional, multistakeholder reflections will run **April to August 2026**. The reflections will be distilled, and the recommendations gathered into an Issue Brief, which will be **released and presented at the UN South-South Day on 11 September 2026**.

³ <https://www.un.org/en/content/codeofconduct/>, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/conduct-of-participants>, https://hr.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/English-Values%20and%20Behaviours%20Framework_Final.pdf