



Expert Research Consultation: India's Approach to Triangular Climate Cooperation?

Event Summary

Wednesday, July 31, 2024

- CSEP hosted an Expert Research Consultation on 'India's Approach to Triangular Climate Cooperation' with **Pooja Ramamurthi**, Associate Fellow, CSEP.
- The discussion was focused on India's role in triangular cooperation in climate and energy, analysing opportunities and challenges of this modality.
- The discussants were **Ajay Mathur**, Director General, International Solar Alliance (ISA), **Rita Walraf**, Deputy Head of Division, Focal Point for Triangular Cooperation, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), **Gurjit Singh**, Former Chair, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Task Force on Trilateral Cooperation in Africa and Former Ambassador of India to Germany, Indonesia, Ethiopia, ASEAN and the African Union and **Atul Kaushik**, Global Development Centre Fellow, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). The talk was moderated by **Constantino Xavier**, Senior Fellow, CSEP.
- Expert Research Consultations feature a scholar presenting a working draft of evidence-based research to peers and practitioners. This closed-door, strictly off-record event seeks to enhance ongoing research by consulting key stakeholders in a round table format.

India's Approach to Triangular Cooperation

The discussion was focused on providing a comprehensive examination of the evolving landscape of Triangular Cooperation (TrC) in India. The speaker highlighted that all of India's recent long-term TrC agreements since 2014, include a focus on energy and climate, addressing both mitigation and adaptation. This modality of cooperation is seen not as a substitute but as complementary to India's larger climate diplomacy, reflecting the country's ambition to expand its global development footprint. India's engagement demonstrates a philosophy of learning by doing. It is characterised by smaller, result-based projects, especially in small island nations (SIDs) and least developed countries (LDCs). This approach allows for flexibility and adaptability in addressing the unique needs of different regions. A historical perspective noted that India's experiences with successful development cooperation models, particularly in Africa, have attracted interest from Northern donors.

Models and Motivations of Triangular Cooperation

Many of the traditional donor countries, such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and France, look at India as a pivotal partner in TrC. India's expanding bilateral ties with these countries have further solidified its role in this framework. The speaker highlighted three models of TrC, amongst others as undertaken by different donor countries. The Triangular Development Partnership (TriDep), a US-India model, focuses on workshops and capacity-building activities based on mutual interest, designed to foster policy learning and exchange. The Indo-German model is based on undertaking on-ground pilot projects and adapting local Indian innovations to a third country. While the UK model aims to create a fund to seed early-stage businesses coming out of India and implement their innovations in a third country.

The motivations for engaging in TrC are multifaceted. For recipient countries, TrC fulfils urgent needs without

the conditionalities often attached to aid from Northern donors. This lack of conditionality, coupled with the support of South-South cooperation and history of bilateral engagement, makes India a favourable partner. For India, engaging in TrC allows showcasing domestic innovations and enhancing its role as a developmental partner on the global stage. The lack of a distinct Indian lens on TrC was noted during the discussion. Initiatives have often been driven by top-level political interest rather than through a robust policy approach. While beneficial, this approach lacks empirical studies necessary to translate data into actionable policy recommendations. The motivation for Northern partners lies in sharing best practices and regaining trust, while recipient countries seek access to effective, low-cost, adapted technology. This mutually beneficial model illustrates the potential for TrC to create win-win situations for all involved parties.

Opportunities and Challenges

Cautious optimism about TrC's potential was expressed, with a need for more evidence to support its effectiveness. It was also observed that TrC is a small part of India's larger diplomatic engagements. The focus on climate change in this discussion, rather than other sectors like health or infrastructure, was questioned. This highlights the complex interplay between climate change and TrC, and the need for a more nuanced understanding of their nexus.

India has a developing country experience which can be leveraged for cooperation with other developing countries as appropriate policies can be easily implemented and adapted to their contexts. However, development cooperation experience, expertise and financing is stronger with developed countries, therefore working together with Indian solutions in third countries is ideal. There are differences between developed and developing countries in addressing climate solutions. For the former, the focus is on climate solutions while for the latter, the focus is on development solutions with climate benefits. Both these issues are addressed under the TrC modality. Alignment of standards and proce-

dures between countries is essential for successful and effective project coordination and delivery as differing norms and standards hinder the ability of undertaking larger projects under this modality. Developing countries are often assumed to be a bloc when they can be seen as potential partners. Larger developing countries such as India, Brazil and Indonesia have the capacity to invest in other countries while also providing incentives to bring manufacturing into their own countries, thus providing local value addition. The potential for cooperation among these larger developing countries was also noted. Finally, the importance of flexible models and private sector investment, such as impact investments, in overcoming procurement and financial challenges was noted.

Way Forward

The discussion called for more empirical studies and data-driven approaches to validate the efficacy of TrC in addressing climate challenges and other developmental goals. The question of whether simple co-financing can be considered TrC was raised, emphasising the importance of bringing together procedures, institutions, and people for better coordination. Clear communication and simple solutions to avoid overlap and ensure success were stressed.

It was noted that India can act as a bridge, showcasing low-cost, non-monetary components of development solutions. This bridging role highlights India's unique position to mediate and facilitate cooperation between developed and developing countries. The discussion concluded with a consensus on the need for India to learn to engage beyond the North-South paradigm, using TrC as an experiment to build effective institutions and collaborations. The need to understand and articulate space for the private sector to undertake development cooperation under the TrC modality, moving the discussion beyond sole focus on government engagement was highlighted. The discussion emphasised that for TrC to be successful, it must be adaptable, context-specific, and rooted in mutual benefit and shared goals.

All content reflects the individual views of the participants. The Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) does not hold an institutional view on any subject.

*This summary was prepared by **Anindita Sinh**, Research Analyst, CSEP.
For queries, please contact **Anahad Kaur**, Research Analyst, CSEP at akaur@csep.org.*

Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

6, Second Floor, Dr. Jose P. Rizal Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, India



@CSEP_Org



@csepresearch



Centre for Social
and Economic
Progress



www.csep.org