

India and Global Triangular Climate Cooperation

Motivations, Institutional Models, and Policy Options

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Over the past decade, India has actively engaged in triangular cooperation (TrC) with partner countries and multilateral institutions, with a strong focus on climate mitigation and adaptation. This paper seeks to decode India's engagement in climate TrC by exploring:

- the role that triangular engagements play within India's broader climate diplomacy;
- the motivations that drive India and its partners to increase engagement in TrC;
- the institutional models that India and its partner countries have used to operationalise TrC with each other; and
- India's policy options for expanding the impact and significance of its triangular engagements, in turn strengthening its portfolio as a credible development partner.

The research questions are addressed through qualitative analysis of data collected from 26 high-level stakeholder interviews as well as expert group consultations with relevant academics and practitioners.

Triangular Cooperation within Climate Diplomacy

Climate action and clean energy have had a strong emphasis in India's recent TrC engagements. Further, three of the four triangular multilateral initiatives spearheaded by India are climate-oriented – the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA). Key points to note are:

- Climate change has been high on the agenda in triangular engagements with India because partner countries have realised that the Global South urgently needs cost-effective, bottom-up solutions that India can supply to other developing countries based on its own experiences.
- The approach has been to ensure that the proposed climate solutions complement the national development goals of recipient countries, for improved healthcare, education, agriculture, gender equity, and disaster risk reduction.



- Compared to previous one-off TrC engagements, India has started to engage in long-term programmatic engagements based on its foreign policy priorities. India has shown willingness to support these engagements with finances and human resources.
- As triangular projects have been small-scale, focused on capacity-building and pilots, they cannot replace India's broader climate diplomacy at multilateral, plurilateral, and bilateral levels.
- Therefore, TrC currently plays a symbolic role for India, signalling the country's willingness for burden-sharing and offering alternative models of cooperation beyond North–South paradigms.
- However, TrC is instrumental for India to build up its climate portfolio in countries where it has low diplomatic presence and limited bilateral capacity to engage

in developmental projects. This is especially important for engagement with large-ocean states and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

- Finally, by leveraging the better-established institutional channels of facilitating partners, TrC provides an opportunity for India to learn through experience and experimentation on how to build up its own diplomatic capabilities.

Motivations of Partner Countries

Once, not as prominent, India has recently been an active participant formally institutionalising triangular projects in longer-term engagements. The following table describes the motivations from various partner countries to engage in TrC.

Recipient Partner (where projects are implemented)	Facilitating Partner (provides institutional/financial resources to facilitate exchange)	India as a Partner (solutions/expertise/finances are implemented in a third country)
• Opportunity to forge new partnerships. • Deepen existing partnerships. • Improve access to appropriate, tailor-made solutions.	• Navigate development cooperation within evolving geopolitics. • Engage with India as a counter to China. • Leverage Indian partnerships to better meet Southern development needs. • Co-create climate solutions for the developing country context	• Leverage established institutional channels to expand global footprint. • Avenue for India to shape multilateralism. • Position India as a hub of technology innovation and know-how.

About the author



Pooja Vijay Ramamurthi is a Fellow in CSEP. She has a PhD in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy at the School of Public and international Affairs (STEP) at Princeton University. She studies climate and energy transition policy, particularly focusing on the role that India can play in accelerating domestic and international action towards decarbonisation.

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