



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR
COOPERATION (SSTC): MORE THAN A
DIPLOMATIC PHRASE**

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Context

- The **South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)** has emerged as a transformative force in global development in shifting geopolitical landscapes, widening inequalities, and dwindling development aid.

About the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)

- **Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), 1978** enshrined principles of mutual respect, shared learning, and solidarity, far from being a transactional model among developing nations.
- **Nairobi Outcome Document (2009):** It was negotiated in the **UN High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation** in Nairobi, Kenya and adopted by the UNGA.
 - ♦ It **defined the principles** guiding how cooperation **among developing countries (South-South cooperation)** operates, expanding beyond technical assistance to **encompass political, institutional, and infrastructural cooperation**.
- **The South-South Cooperation (SSC)** is defined as a process where **two or more developing countries** pursue individual or shared capacity development objectives through knowledge exchange, skills, resources, and technical know-how.
 - ♦ It involves governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector.
 - ♦ It acts as a **complement**, not a substitute, to North-South cooperation.
- **Triangular Cooperation** is defined as 'Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries, **supported by a developed country or multilateral organization**'.
 - ♦ It provides financial, technical, and experiential support to strengthen Southern partnerships and promote regional integration.

Key Principles of South-South Cooperation

- Common endeavor based on **shared experiences, solidarity, and objectives**.
- Respect for **national sovereignty, ownership, and priorities**.
- Partnerships among equals, free from conditionalities.
- **Mutual accountability and transparency**, aligned with development projects on the ground.
- **Multi-stakeholder engagement:** NGOs, private sector, civil society, academia.
- **Theme (2025):** '*New Opportunities and Innovation through SSTC*'

Contemporary Relevance of SSTC

- **A Response to Global Challenges:** Over 800 million people still live in extreme poverty, and many developing nations spend more on debt servicing than on essential services like health and education.
 - ♦ SSTC provides homegrown, scalable solutions tailored to local realities—from climate-smart agriculture to digital finance and health innovations.
- **Empowerment Through Solidarity:** SSTC is built on mutual respect, shared learning, and sovereignty, unlike traditional aid models that often come with conditions.
 - ♦ It fosters self-reliance and resilience, enabling countries to co-create solutions rather than depend on external prescriptions.
- **Catalyst for the SDGs:** SSTC is a key engine for achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030**, especially as traditional aid flows decline.
 - ♦ It's transforming sectors like agriculture, health, education, and technology through locally owned, cost-effective innovations.

Key Concerns and Challenges in SSTC

- **Fragmentation and Lack of Coordination:** Diverse political systems, economic priorities, and historical contexts often lead to fragmented efforts and difficulty in forming unified positions on global issues.
 - ♦ It can dilute the impact of SSTC initiatives and hinder the creation of cohesive platforms for collaboration.

- **Limited Institutional Capacity:** Many developing countries lack the technical, financial, and institutional capacity to implement and sustain SSTC projects.
 - ♦ Fiscal constraints and evolving geopolitical dynamics pose serious challenges to collective action.
- **Funding and Resource Gaps:** SSTC often relies on trust funds and voluntary contributions, such as the **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** or the **IBSA Fund**.
 - ♦ These mechanisms are not always predictable or sufficient to meet growing development needs.
- **Political Will and Follow-Through:** There are concerns about inconsistent follow-through on commitments, while countries like India have shown strong rhetorical support for SSTC.
 - ♦ For example, the **India-Africa Forum Summit** has been **overdue since 2015**, raising questions about sustained engagement.
- **Triangular Cooperation Complexities:** Involving developed countries or multilateral organizations adds value but introduces **power asymmetries and bureaucratic hurdles**.

Role of United Nations (UN) & UNDP

- The **United Nations** commemorates SSTC on September 12, recognizing its role in fostering inclusive partnerships and sustainable development.
- **UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC):** It supports coherence and coordination of SSC and TrC initiatives.
- **UNDP** incorporated SSTC as a **core working approach** in its **Strategic Plan (2014–2017)**.
 - ♦ It serves as an **operational arm** to support SSTC at global, regional, and country levels.
 - ♦ UNDP acts as Knowledge Broker, Capacity Development Supporter, and Partnership Facilitator.

India's Role and Philosophy

- **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (the world is one family): **India's evolution from a food-deficit to a food-surplus economy** — underpinned by one of the world's largest food safety nets — illustrates the **power of indigenous solutions**.
 - ♦ Its philosophy of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (*the world is one family*) aligns with SSTC's values of inclusion and cooperation.
 - ♦ India has emerged as a hub for cost-effective, locally relevant innovations in digital transformation, climate resilience, health systems, and sustainable financing.
- **Key Contributions:**
 - ♦ Hosting the Voice of the **Global South Summits**;
 - ♦ Securing permanent membership for the African Union during its G20 presidency;
 - ♦ Establishing the **Development Partnership Administration**;
 - ♦ Scaling the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** programme in 160+ countries;
 - ♦ Launching the **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** and sharing digital **innovations such as Aadhaar and UPI** globally.
- **India-WFP Partnership:** India and the **World Food Programme (WFP)** have co-created solutions with global relevance for more than six decades. It piloted innovations such as:
 - ♦ Annapurta (Grain ATMs);
 - ♦ Supply chain optimisation in food distribution;
 - ♦ Women-led Take-Home Ration programme;
 - ♦ National rice fortification project;

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] How has India's approach to South-South and Triangular Cooperation shaped its global development partnerships, and to what extent does it reflect the principles of equity, mutual benefit, and solidarity?

