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SEVENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

South–South and triangular cooperation: The way forward

Purpose of the document

In the present document, the Governing Body is invited to consider, and possibly endorse, an ILO Strategy on South–South and triangular cooperation, in accordance with the direction set out in the Programme and Budget for 2012–13 (see the draft decision in paragraph 11).

Relevant strategic objective: All the strategic objectives and Outcome 1: Effective and efficient utilization of all ILO resources, under Strengthening governance, support and management, in the Strategic Policy Framework.

Policy implications: If adopted, the strategy will serve as a reference for the implementation of relevant partnerships and development cooperation projects, and resources allocated for South–South cooperation in the programme and budget will be used accordingly.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Implementation of the strategy will need to be reported at the end of the biennium.

Author unit: Department of Partnerships and Development Cooperation (PARDEV).

Related documents: None.

Executive summary

This document reviews the evolution of the concept of South–South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) within the United Nations (UN) system and in the ILO, and examines how such modalities can complement existing modes of technical cooperation. It then proposes an ILO strategy for promoting SSTC in the ILO’s Technical Cooperation Programme, in line with the requirements of the Programme and Budget for 2012–13.

I. Introduction

1. The Programme and Budget for 2012–13, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 100th Session (2011), places particular emphasis on SSTC as a means of achieving the Organization’s objectives.¹ SSTC is regarded as a way to draw on the particular advantage of the ILO, namely the experience and knowledge of its tripartite constituents, as an effective means of capacity development, knowledge sharing, exchanging of experiences and best practices, and interregional cooperation, and as a means of mobilizing resources. Drawing on the programme and budget and the Technical Cooperation Strategy adopted in 2009, the following paper proposes an ILO strategy to foster SSTC as a modality of technical cooperation.

II. South–South and triangular cooperation: An overview

2. While cooperation between developing countries has been part of global development cooperation since the 1970s, it has recently gained greater visibility. The growing importance and relevance of SSTC was reaffirmed by several major UN conferences. At the General Assembly in 2004, the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries became the High-level Committee on South–South Cooperation. Under the guidance of the High-level Committee, the UN system has prioritized SSTC as a key modality for promoting collaborative initiatives at the national, regional and interregional levels. The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, also reaffirms the increased importance of SSTC. In December 2009, the High-level United Nations Conference on South–South Cooperation, held in Nairobi, gave a major political boost to SSTC, requesting UN system organizations to make additional efforts to ensure that they meet member States’ expectations regarding support for such cooperation.
3. The 2009 Nairobi outcome document, endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2010, provides the most comprehensive and far-reaching definition of SSTC in the framework of the UN system. As part of the UN system, the ILO has been drawing on this particular definition of SSTC, adapted as follows in view of the ILO’s particular mandate:
 - (a) SSTC involves initiatives in the social, economic, environmental, technical and political fields, and in this perspective it can be a useful tool to engage social partners from developing countries to promote the Decent Work Agenda through development cooperation.
 - (b) SSTC is a manifestation of solidarity among the countries and peoples of the South that contributes to their national well-being, national and collective self-reliance, and

¹ ILO: Programme and Budget for the biennium 2012–13 (Geneva, 2011), paras 39–44.

the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

- (c) SSTC should not be seen as official development assistance, but as a partnership among equals based on solidarity, and it is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North–South cooperation. From this stems the concept of “triangular cooperation” which is defined as South–South cooperation supported by a Northern partner. The ILO has already engaged in such triangular arrangements in the agreement between the United States and Brazil to support Haiti in combating child labour in the construction sector, as well as in the 2011 Brazil–United States Memorandum of Understanding to promote Decent Work through South–South and trilateral cooperation.
 - (d) SSTC takes different and evolving forms, including, inter alia, the sharing of knowledge and experiences, training, and technology transfer. In this regard, the ILO’s experience in promoting good practices and sharing information could be highlighted and expanded. The ILO Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR) has been practising and promoting SSTC through a regional knowledge-sharing platform and network for skills development policies, connecting public institutions, international organizations, social partner organizations, universities and civil society. South–South and triangular capacity-building and training modalities have also been used by the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin. The ILO also has formal strategic partnerships with several regional entities in the South, such as the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Andean Community, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Furthermore, the ILO, in cooperation with the regional commissions and the regional UN Development Group teams, has been fostering many good practices in horizontal cooperation and networking.
 - (e) SSTC embraces a multi-stakeholder approach. The ILO has a comparative advantage in this regard, due to its tripartite nature, and social partners can play a key role in promoting SSTC.
 - (f) SSTC recognizes that “interrelated global crises, in particular the financial and economic crisis, volatile energy prices, the food crisis, poverty, and the challenges posed by climate change, as well as other challenges, including communicable and non-communicable diseases, are already reversing the gains achieved in developing countries and hence require action at all levels”.² In the UN system, the ILO can play a distinctive role and make a unique contribution to addressing and helping to resolve these crises, including, for example, through the application of the 2009 Global Jobs Pact and the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.
4. South–South cooperation is also seen as an important means to address the challenges facing the least developed countries. The Istanbul Programme of Action highlights

² Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South–South Cooperation, A/RES/64/222.

South–South cooperation as an important modality of aid and calls on developing countries to develop such cooperation with the least developed countries.³

5. SSTC is a natural fit for the ILO mandate and approach to development cooperation. The ILO's tripartite constituency provides a useful platform for consensus building and cooperation between the actors of developing countries. Governments, employers and workers in member States make up the largest network of expertise on the world of work. Representatives of that tripartite constituency can, through social dialogue, share views on issues of common interest concerning economic and social policy. The orientations of SSTC, including respect for national autonomy and priorities, the diversity of circumstances and solutions, and solidarity among nations, converge with the approach of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.
6. The Programme and Budget proposals for 2012–13 include a more focused emphasis on ILO experience and future work on SSTC. For example, explicit reliance on SSTC is factored into the strategies for the outcomes on skills development, social security, working conditions, workers' organizations, labour administration and labour law, decent work in economic sectors, forced labour and child labour. Furthermore, across many outcomes special emphasis is placed on tapping local expertise, for instance through specialized networks involving constituents and the academic community, as a cost-effective means of enhancing national ownership and institutional capacity.

Skills development and knowledge sharing platforms: Participation of workers' organizations

South–South and triangular cooperation has been an effective means to foster cooperation between trade unions and universities in order to strengthen knowledge and research capacity for policy interventions and organizational development. The economic crisis has led to an increase in precarious and vulnerable employment globally, especially in the South. In response, the knowledge and expertise of trade unions can be leveraged when drafting national and international policies targeting these issues. One way is through the Global Labour University, which was established in partnership with the ILO as one of the few advanced education infrastructures that builds knowledge capacity for trade unionists from southern countries.

The role of the private sector in South–South and triangular cooperation: The SENAI–ILO/CINTERFOR experience presented to the Global South–South Development Expo in 2010

The National Service for Industrial Apprenticeship (SENAI) is a Brazilian non-profit organization with a mandate to provide technical and vocational education and training in industrial areas of expertise and to promote applied research and technology transfer for the benefit of Brazilian industry. Its educational programmes reach well over 2 million people annually. Since its foundation, the SENAI model has inspired the establishment of similar vocational training institutions in Latin America. In the framework of the ILO/CINTERFOR network and knowledge-sharing platform, SENAI has supported these institutions with advice on capacity building and the customized training of staff. SENAI now has more than 48 international partnerships with educational and technological institutions in 25 countries.

III. The ILO and South–South and triangular cooperation in practice

7. The ILO has for several decades attached importance to regional economic cooperation initiatives, which were already a form of SSTC. In 2005, Brazil became the first partner

³ The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–20 was one of the outcomes of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, A/CONF.219/3/Rev.1.

country from the South to support the ILO's Technical Cooperation Programme through a South–South cooperation arrangement. Since then the ILO has more formally strengthened its role as a bridge between countries of the South, helping them to share decent work experiences and to move towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. New partners from the South have established partnerships and indicated an interest in promoting the Decent Work Agenda through SSTC, including Argentina, Chile, China, India, Kenya, Panama, Singapore and South Africa. This indicates a positive enhancement of multilateralism in a changing geopolitical environment. The key points of entry for ILO SSTC activities have been integrated packages targeting such areas as the promotion of employment generation and of social protection floors, sectoral activities, migration, child labour, green jobs, forced labour, social dialogue, skills development and capacity building.

8. SSTC also has the potential to attract the resources needed to achieve the Organization's objectives, which is particularly important in the face of rising unpredictability over future voluntary contributions and the changing geopolitical landscape of the global economy.

IBSA Declaration of Intent concluded with the ILO on South–South and triangular cooperation in the field of decent work

During the Global South–South Development Expo held in 2010, India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) signed a Declaration of Intent with the ILO on South–South and triangular cooperation in the field of decent work. The Declaration reaffirmed the intention to strengthen the ILO South–South cooperation programme in order to foster greater solidarity and enhance equality among countries and peoples in the world of work. It also reaffirmed the intention to support the ILO in creating a comprehensive programme on South–South cooperation. In 2012, the Government of India will be hosting the first IBSA Ministerial Conference on Decent Work, and many initiatives are under way to support the IBSA Declaration, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme's Special Unit for South–South Cooperation.

IV. Proposed ILO strategic framework for South–South and triangular cooperation 2012–13

9. The SSTC strategy for 2012–13 will be guided by the Programme and Budget for 2012–13 and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the UN Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of 2007, and the Nairobi outcome document endorsed by the General Assembly in 2010. The Office will continue to enhance and expand its SSTC partnerships within the UN and the bilateral and multilateral systems, and to establish further new partnerships, including with social partners and civil society organizations.
10. The proposed results framework for the strategy would be as follows:

Outcome 1: The ILO has greater institutional awareness and capacity to identify and implement SSTC, with a view to establishing and implementing an initiative on SSTC.

The recommendations on the ways and means to enhance system-wide contributions to SSTC made by the UN Joint Inspection Unit in early 2011 will be used as guidance. They include the endorsement of the strategic framework for SSTC currently under discussion, including an operational definition, the development of operational guidelines for the inclusion of SSTC in Decent Work Country Programmes, and the establishment and expansion of an initiative on SSTC in the ILO, facilitated by the Department of Partnerships and Development Cooperation in coordination with the relevant field offices. Activities will also include providing policy and operational guidance and coordination on SSTC, supporting the identification, validation and dissemination of innovative experience and good practices, supporting skills development, sensitizing ILO constituents to the

importance of SSTC, providing training to ILO officials at all levels, and mobilizing resources to expand the initiative.

Indicator: Number of technical meetings on SSTC approaches to decent work held involving the ILO.

Baseline: Five meetings in the past biennium.

Target: Ten meetings in the current biennium.

Outcome 2: The Decent Work Agenda is advanced through SSTC with the engagement of an increasing number of governments, social partners, UN agencies and non-state actors.

The Office will identify the possibility of partnerships with partners from the Global South and prepare individual strategies for concluding SSTC arrangements. Brazil and China, for example, are currently the largest funding source for South–South cooperation in the UN system. Partnerships with social partners and non-state actors, including academia, universities and parliamentarians, will also be enhanced and supported. Building on existing agreements and Memoranda of Understanding on decent work concluded between the ILO and new partner countries, the Office will make special efforts to promote SSTC. Furthermore, several countries from the Global North have begun supporting South–South–North triangular cooperation in the ILO, such as France, Germany, Spain and the United States, and such efforts and participation should be augmented. Engagement with the relevant regional and country offices regarding this outcome is also essential.

Indicator: Number of new or renewed partnerships with SSTC partners.

Baseline: Ten partnership agreements in the last biennium.

Target: At least five new partnership agreements per year in the current biennium.

V. Draft decision

- 11. The Governing Body endorses the ILO Strategy on South–South and triangular cooperation as set out above, taking into account the discussion of this item.***