



**POLICY PAPER
ON NATIONAL
STRATEGIES FOR
SOUTH-SOUTH AND
TRIANGULAR
COOPERATION**



This paper was developed jointly by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the South Centre based on the concept of the Islamic Development Bank on National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The paper was authored by Yuefen Li, Daniel Uribe, and Danish from the South Centre in close consultation with Riad Ragueb, Ahmed Faruk Diken, Abdelhakim Yessouf, Abdul Majid Khan, Aminuddin Matt Ariff, Faquaruddin Mehmood, Moncef Soudani, and Sameh Hussein of the Reverse Linkage team of the Islamic Development Bank.

POLICY PAPER ON NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

A PILLAR OF THE NATIONAL ECOSYSTEM FOR
SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

ABSTRACT

For developing countries to realize the full potential of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) for achieving their national sustainable development objectives, it is important to formulate national SSTrC strategies as part of their national SSTrC ecosystems. Such national strategies would serve as guidance for a country's SSTrC activities, initiatives and institutional framework, both as provider and beneficiary of SSTrC. This policy brief highlights the importance of developing national SSTrC strategies for achieving national development objectives and lays out the main elements that can be taken into consideration by developing countries for designing their national SSTrC strategies. While many developing countries do not have an explicit SSTrC strategy in place yet, the state of play shows that its elements can be found in various policies, institutional guidance and national development strategies. The absence of a holistic approach and a nationally acknowledged strategy carries the risk of fragmentation and incoherence in undertaking SSTrC activities. The potential of national SSTrC strategies for enabling effective responses to crises (such as COVID-19) is also explored.



The **Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)** is an international financial institution with a current membership of 57 countries. Its mission is to promote comprehensive human development, with a focus on the priority areas of alleviating poverty, improving health, promoting education, improving governance and prospering the people.

The **South Centre** is an intergovernmental policy research think-tank composed of and accountable to its 54 developing country Member States. It conducts policy-oriented research on key policy development issues, and supports developing countries to effectively participate in international negotiating processes that are relevant to the achievement of SDGs. The Centre promotes the unity of the South in such processes while recognizing the diversity of national interests and priorities.



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ACRONYMS

BAPA	Buenos Aires Plan of Action
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NDS	National Development Strategy
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	South-South Cooperation
SSTrC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation
TrC	Triangular Cooperation
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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After decades of fast expansion, South-South Cooperation (SSC) is playing a pivotal role in the economic development of many developing countries, especially in capacity building and technical cooperation in many sectors, including, but not limited to, agriculture, health, education, trade, investment and finance. Triangular Cooperation (TrC) has also been on a trajectory of solid increase. Though not a substitute for North-South Cooperation, South-South Cooperation has been recognized as one of the means for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²

With developing countries have contributed more than half of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) growth in recent years,³ the expanding cooperation and exchanges among Southern countries are a natural development that originated from, and were boosted by, the desire for solidarity and the reform of international governance. It is obvious that the potential of SSTRC is far-reaching and immense. However, harnessing its full potential requires proactive strategies based on economically sound analysis with long-term vision and medium and short-term policies. Developing countries are facing a dichotomy between the increasing importance of SSTRC in their national economies and the lack of long-term vision and medium and short-term policies to coordinate and guide SSTRC at the national level. Only a handful of countries have any national strategy on SSTRC, while elements of SSTRC policies can be traced in national development plans, trade and investment agreements, regional agreements, etc. However, since such elements are in most cases scattered across different sections of such instruments without addressing SSTRC in an explicit, elaborate and holistic manner, it is difficult to take them as a comprehensive guide for action-oriented follow-up.

While SSTRC activities in many countries have covered different sectors of the national economy, with projects

and initiatives being implemented in high frequency, a lack of a national strategy could sometimes lead to suboptimal, even unwelcome outcomes. A passive attitude could prevail and projects and initiatives could be implemented on a first-come, first-served ad hoc basis. As a result, underlying risks might affect countries down the road. For instance, for beneficiary countries of SSTRC, the absence of a national strategy might bring risks of crowding-out domestic investment in economic sectors of strategic importance. A lack of effective national guidance and coordination can sometimes lead to unintended competition among enterprises in the same sector in partner countries, which could sometimes even result in a race to the bottom. When it comes to the provision of SSTRC, lack of communication among different domestic actors can also cause a fragmentation of efforts for utilizing available SSTRC opportunities. Coordination and complementarity can, therefore, be strengthened by identifying common objectives and their accompanying coordination mechanism or network. Having a national strategy would also provide clear orientation for criteria for project design and implementation, which would align with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and SSC principles. The criteria would give due consideration to the economic benefits for the recipient countries, minimizing possibilities of 'white elephant' projects, or non-adherence to labor and environmental standards. Priorities for attracting SSTRC to promote sustainable development, in line with national conditions, would be spelt out in the national SSTRC strategy. This would enable the mainstreaming of SSTRC and, in turn, would lead to the putting in place of necessary institutions or mechanisms. Likewise, it would allow the timely identification of existing SSTRC opportunities, thus making it less likely that vital initiatives would slip through the fingers.

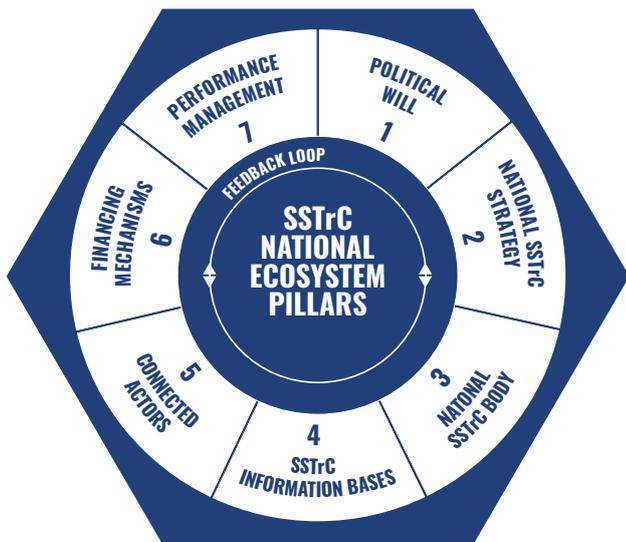
The 'National Ecosystems for SSTRC' framework, advocated by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the South Centre, is composed of seven different pillars, namely political will, national strategy, national body, connected actors, financing mechanisms, information bases and performance management. These pillars interact with each other in a cohesive manner. This framework was endorsed by many stakeholders during the Second High-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) and a report⁴ was published in September 2019. There is good reason why the framework includes 'national SSTRC strategy' as one of the seven pillars.

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² General Assembly resolution 73/291, of 15 April 2019, Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, annex.

³ “What is ‘South-South cooperation’ and why does it matter?”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs News, 20 March 2019. Available from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/south-south-cooperation-2019.html>.

⁴ The report entitled “Developing National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development” can be reached here: <https://www.isdb.org/pub/general-publications/2019/developing-national-ecosystems-for-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-to-achieve-agenda-2030-for-sustainable-development-0>.



THE PILLARS OF THE SSTrC NATIONAL ECOSYSTEM

A national strategy would serve as a compass for SSTrC initiatives, both for being a provider and a beneficiary of SSTrC, nationwide and at all levels, including for the private sector. The strategy would give a broader perspective, clear long-term vision and defined goals and targets of SSTrC, which would be purposefully aligned with the general national development strategy (NDS) as a whole, if the country has one, taking into consideration the national endowment, comparative advantages and other social and economic conditions. Such a strategy would allow streamlining SSTrC efforts and promoting cohesiveness and collaboration among governmental agencies and other stakeholders engaging in SSTrC. Short and medium terms strategies/policies should be spelt out to facilitate the translation of long-term vision into tangible actions, thus giving a more holistic perspective of a country's

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SSTrC strategy. This would provide long-term vision and action-oriented guidance for the short and medium terms, as well as internal coordination among sectors and stakeholders. The national SSTrC strategy would balance national interests with international commitments and obligations, while abiding by SSC principles, thus contributing to the attainment of the SDGs and building trust and solidarity with partner countries. It is expected that costs would be controlled and benefits maximized by following such a national strategy for SSTrC. The formulation of the national SSTrC strategy in itself is a clear demonstration of the political will of the country to leverage SSTrC. The effective implementation of the strategy would require the support and proper functioning of the rest of the pillars of the national ecosystem for SSTrC.

In cases where countries already have national development strategies, it would be desirable if the national strategies for SSTrC could be explicitly formulated. A national development strategy generally covers all economic sectors, their interrelationship and overall national orientations for development, which makes it difficult to give sufficient elaboration for SSTrC in particular because of its nature as a cross-cutting theme that can have an impact on all areas of development. A very detailed elaboration of SSTrC in national development strategies may create an unbalanced document. More often than not, only very general principles and directives for SSTrC can be mentioned in the national development strategies. The development of an independent strategy for SSTrC would support the implementation of the national development strategy through addressing the economic and social gaps and vulnerabilities of the country and guiding the national SSTrC activities. In other words, the national strategy for SSTrC would be instrumental for the attainment of the overall national development strategy.

In the case where the national development strategy is a lengthy document that allows detailed descriptions of the strategy on SSTrC, rules, regulations or mechanisms could be introduced to facilitate the implementation of the SSTrC strategies.

This policy brief elaborates on the state of play of national strategies for SSTrC, their relationships with national development plans, the importance of having an SSTrC strategy and what could be considered as major components for building such strategies. It also emphasizes the positive impact that SSTrC strategies can have on responding to crisis situations. Finally, the policy brief identifies some experiences that developing countries could bring from designing national development plans for the drafting and implementation of their national SSTrC strategies and policies.

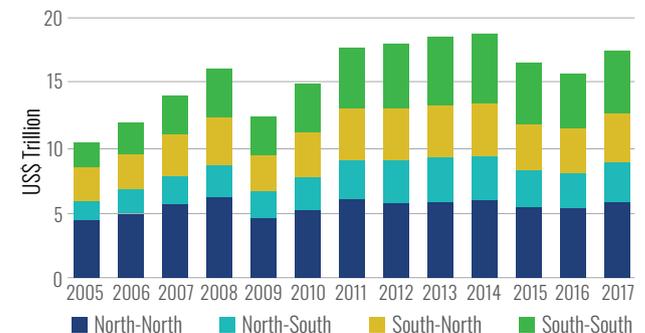
THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING SSTRc STRATEGIES

SSC has been contributing to national development since the 1950s, and the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) in 1978 further strengthened its momentum.⁵ From there on, especially since the mid-1990s, SSC has gradually evolved into a multidimensional process. The increasing weight of developing countries in the total world output and economic exchanges is an important factor, in addition to the desire for strengthening solidarity among Southern countries. For instance, South–South exports grew at an average annual rate of 13 percent between 1995 and 2016, far outpacing the growth of world exports, at 8 percent. Total foreign direct investment originating from developing countries has grown significantly, accounting for almost 30 percent of global flows, with a majority of these investments going to other developing economies.⁶ Some developing countries have even begun to interact with the South more than with the North, in particular in the area of trade (see Figure 1).

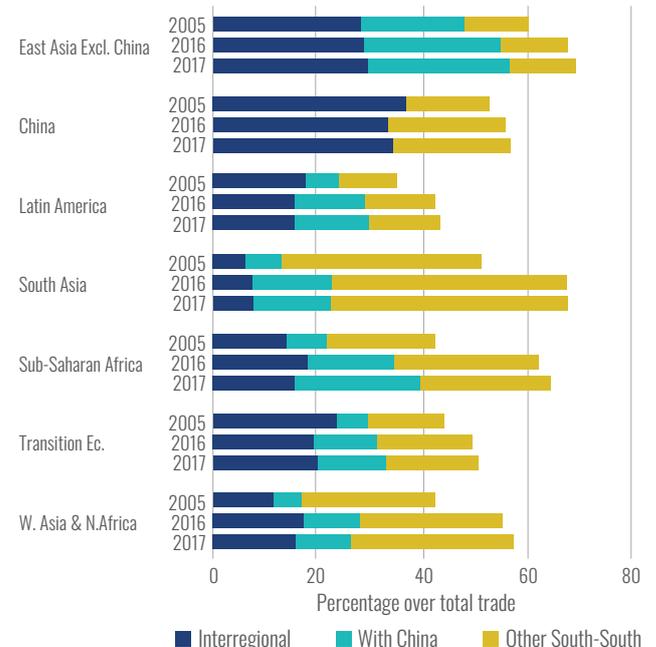
Developing countries are increasing their participation in SSTRc, but also progressively including elements of SSTRc in their national development strategies. According to the UN Secretary-General in 2018⁷, almost sixty-seven percent of countries participating in the 2018 Development Cooperation Forum Survey had an NDS in place, and almost sixty-four percent on average had provisions for SSTRc imbedded in them.⁸ These findings show that SSTRc has “gained relevance, and working partnerships between government, on one side, and non-state actors and academia, on the other side, have multiplied”⁹ towards achieving sustainable development.

FIGURE 1 TRADE IN GOODS BETWEEN/WITHIN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

(A) Distribution of World Trade Developed-Developing Countries



(B) South-South Trade



Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on COMTRADE data.

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8%

⁵ Islamic Development Bank and South Centre, “Developing National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development” (2019). Available at <https://www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2019-10/Developing%20National%20Ecosystems%20for%20South-South%20and%20Triangular%20Cooperation%20to%20Achieve%20Agenda%202030%20for%20Sustainable%20Development.pdf>.

⁶ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, South–South cooperation for trade, investment and structural transformation. Note by the UNCTAD secretariat, TD/B/66/6, 8 May 2019.

⁷ United Nations Economic and Social Council, Trends and Progress in International Development Cooperation, Report of the Secretary-General, High-level segment: Development Cooperation Forum (March 2018). Available from https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org/ecosoc/files/files/en/dcf/sgr_trends_progress_28_march_2018.pdf.

⁸ The 2018 Development Conference Forum (DCF) Survey was an independent study. Its preliminary findings and recommendations were reported by the Secretary-General during the High-level segment of the DCF 2018. Responses came from 58 developing country governments.

⁹ Uruguay, Uruguay’s International Cooperation Policy for Sustainable Development by 2030.

“As SSTRC constitutes an important element of the national economy for many countries and has great potential to develop further, the importance of having a national SSTRC strategy cannot be overemphasized.”

However, there is still some distance between gaining recognition for SSTRC and treating it as a strategic vehicle for achieving national economic development. A review of several NDSs reveals that SSTRC does not feature prominently in the document in most cases. Often, there is no mention of long-term vision or medium-term policies, thus making mainstreaming and harmonizing approaches and efforts at different levels of government institutions and the private sector a difficult task.

The synergies and interdependencies between the implementation of national development plans and SSTRC can facilitate the achievement of planned objectives in the NDS and action-driven measures included in international cooperation strategies.¹⁰ As SSTRC constitutes an important element of the national economy for many countries and has great potential to develop further, the importance of having a national SSTRC strategy cannot be overemphasized.

Very often, the announcement and clarification of the strategic vision and common targets and priorities of SSTRC would lead to quick impact. For instance, following Morocco’s King Mohammed VI direction that the country’s SSC should strengthen its ties with African countries, trade between Morocco and rest of the African continent quadrupled between 2004 and 2014.¹¹ Even for a regional group like the Southern African Development Community (SADC), after introducing its ‘Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2005 – 2015’, which provided the “strategic direction for achieving SADC’s long term social and economic goals”,¹² very positive results were shown with the clear guidance provided by the strategy,

and helped to put “a new impetus on industrialization to facilitate the deepening and acceleration of market integration, with equitable distribution of regional integration opportunities”.¹³ This is also part of the reason for the recent resurgence of NDS adoption, as indicated in the following section.

Traditionally, under the umbrella of national development plans, developing countries have considered international cooperation in line with their investment and trade strategies. Similarly, they have followed an understanding of regional integration and participation in international decision-making bodies as objectives of their foreign policy.¹⁴ Following this approach, countries have recognized, to some degree, the essential dynamics between international solidarity and initiatives for achieving the SDGs through SSTRC, which seems to have renewed the willingness of states to design the NDS as a commitment to achieving the SDGs, particularly by countries of the South.¹⁵

The clear elaboration of SSTRC strategies, either through the inclusion of priorities and modalities of SSTRC directly in the NDS, or by the development of an explicit separate strategy, could help minimize fragmentation of SSTRC initiatives in different sectors, while promoting more interagency coordination and cohesiveness among stakeholders.

The formulation of SSTRC strategies would also allow developing countries to identify their strengths and expertise for the establishment of long-lasting partnerships, which are based on sound economics and are visionary in nature, taking into full account the national economic and social conditions of the partnering states. Such an approach will ensure that SSTRC efforts are supportive of, and aligned with, the national development strategies and policies, thus contributing to the attainment of the SDGs, fully recognizing that “cooperation is destined to play a very relevant role in the reduction of the country’s structural gaps and vulnerabilities.”¹⁶

Owing to their differing development stages, developing countries have had the opportunity to enhance their economic cooperation as an expression of solidarity and means of mutual learning.¹⁷ A number of common factors among developing countries bring together the significance of developing national SSTRC strategies (see Figure 2).

¹⁰ Matteo Pedercini and others, “Harvesting Synergy from Sustainable Development Goal Interactions” (2019) 116 *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 23021.

¹¹ Jean-Pierre Christophe Chauffour, *Morocco 2040: emerging by investing in intangible capital* (English), Directions in development: countries and regions (Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, 2018). Available from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/711471507878053392/Morocco-2040-emerging-by-investing-in-intangible-capital>.

¹² SADC, Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, 2001. Available from <https://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/818>.

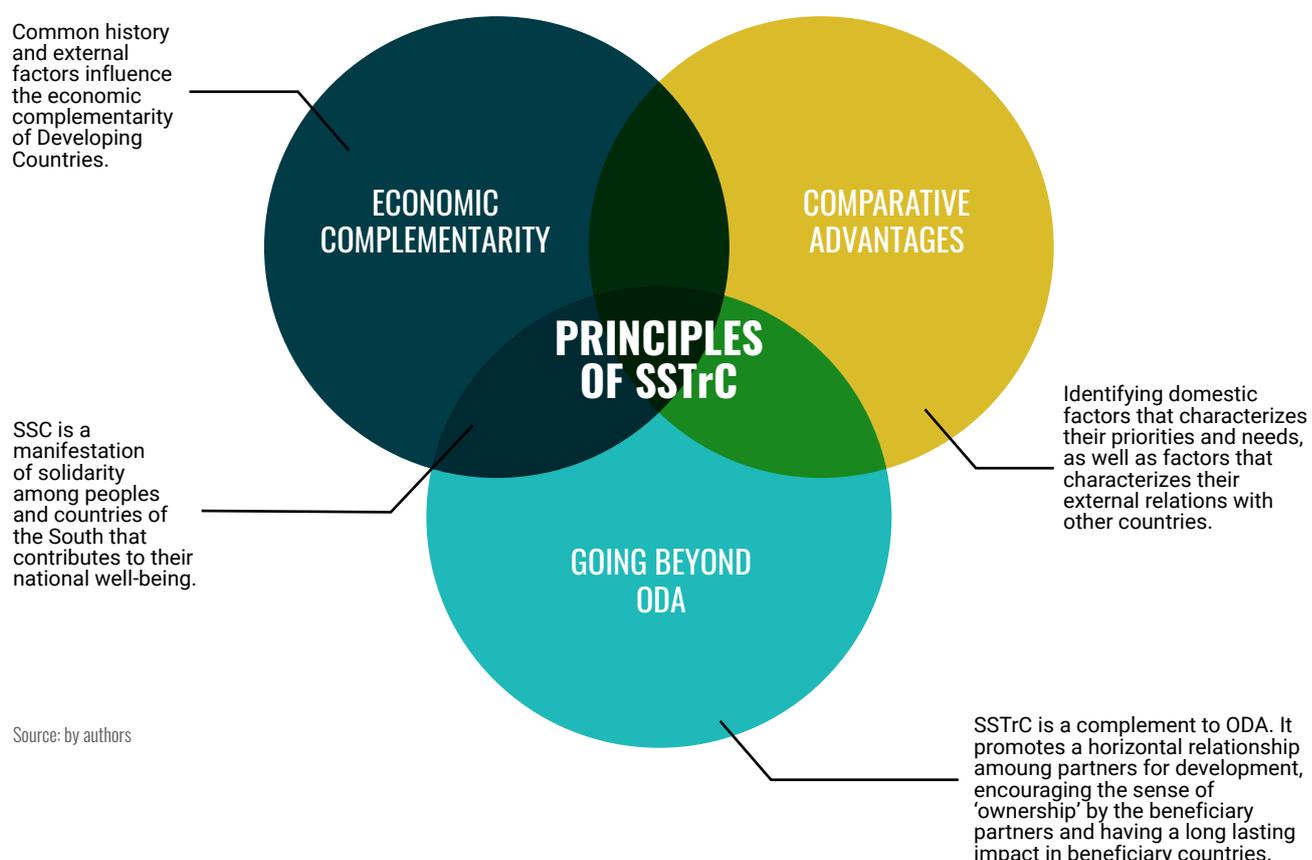
¹³ SADC, Summary of the SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2015-2020. Available from https://www.sadc.int/files/5415/2109/8240/SADC_Revised_RISDP_2015-2020.pdf.

¹⁴ See for example *Plan Emergent Senegal 2014-2035*, and the South Africa National Development Plan 2030.

¹⁵ Admos O. Chimhowu, David Hulme and Lauchlan T. Munro, “The ‘New’ National Development Planning and Global Development Goals: Processes and Partnerships” (2019) 120 *World Development*, p. 80.



FIGURE 2 COMMON FACTORS AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR PROMOTING SSTRc



Source: by authors

2.1. ECONOMIC COMPLEMENTARITY AMONG, AND COMMON CHALLENGES OF, DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

Developing countries face several common external and internal challenges and share proximity in development stages, which result in their economic complementarity. For developing countries, eradicating poverty is still a core objective of their development strategies, and at the macroeconomic level, developing countries face some structural constraints. Many developing countries are still dependent on primary sectors, particularly the agricultural sector and primary commodities, where market volatility represents a major risk.

Climate change has also deepened the vulnerabilities faced by the South. According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an analysis of the impact of climate vulnerability on the cost of sovereign debt shows that countries with higher degrees of climate vulnerability face higher sovereign borrowing costs owing to the high volatility risk that the frequency and severity of climate related catastrophes will have on fiscal revenues and expenditures of countries facing them.¹⁸

“Developing countries face several common external and internal challenges and share proximity in development stages, which results in their economic complementarity.”

¹⁶ Uruguay, Uruguay’s International Cooperation Policy for Sustainable Development by 2030.

¹⁷ Francisco Simplicio, “South-South Cooperation: A Contemporary Perspective”, in *South-South Cooperation, Africa on the Centre Stage*, Renu Modi, ed. (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), p. 19. Available from <http://link.springer.com/10.1057/9780230316812>.

¹⁸ United Nations Development Program and United Nations Climate Change, “The Heat Is On: Taking Stock of Global Climate Ambition”, NDC Global Outlook Report 2019. Available from https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/planet/climate-change/NDC_Outlook_Report_2019.pdf.

2.2. IDENTIFYING COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES FOR SSTRc

As SSTRc expands, the relevance of its contribution to the development needs of the South is also increasing. To design impactful strategies for SSTRc, developing countries should be clear about their own comparative advantages based on identifying both the domestic factors that characterize their priorities and needs as well as the factors that characterize their external relations with other countries.¹⁹ Although the theory of comparative advantage is largely based on trade doctrines, the capabilities of states to cover identified priorities in their national development strategies also require an analysis of opportunity costs for covering such requirements with domestic efforts only, or determining potential areas for SSTRc to achieve more impactful and cost effective outcomes.

Identifying priorities and development needs could allow developing countries to actively and purposefully engage as both beneficiaries and providers of SSTRc projects and initiatives. At the same time, understanding and defining such development priorities might allow developing countries to actively look for providers and assess opportunities that can increase productivity, contribute to industrialization and achieve development objectives in both partner countries. Thus, the national economic conditions and priorities of developing countries could serve as the foundations for SSTRc strategies, allowing more effective interventions and minimizing misallocation of resources.

“Identifying priorities and development needs could allow developing countries to actively and purposefully engage as both beneficiaries and providers of SSTRc projects and initiatives.”

¹⁹ In David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage, the rules regulating the relative value of commodities in one country do not regulate the relative value of the same commodities exchanged between two or more countries. See: David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (Batoche Books, 2001), p. 89.

“SSTRc has been conceived as a mechanism for promoting economic, social and cultural exchanges that support the development strategies of countries of the South, considering their own priorities, needs and development stages.”

2.3. SSTRc GOES BEYOND OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

SSTRc has been conceived as a mechanism for promoting economic, social and cultural exchanges that support the development strategies of countries of the South, considering their own priorities, needs and development stages.²⁰ Although official development assistance (ODA) continues to play a distinct and vital role for development cooperation,²¹ its nature is based on the relationship of 'donor' and 'recipient', which is structured as a vertical relationship among the parties in the intervention. On the other hand, SSTRc has been built on the basis of strong geographical, historical, cultural and economic ties among countries from the South, promoting a horizontal relationship among partners for development.

SSTRc initiatives at the regional and sub-regional levels have also boosted the relevance of projects related to transport, energy and communication infrastructure, including diversification of the energy sector,²² which contributes towards achieving their development priorities. Experiences of developing countries have shown that SSTRc initiatives not only encourage the sense of 'ownership' by the beneficiary partners, but also have a lasting impact for covering the gaps in their development perspectives, especially by serving as a complement to ODA.

²⁰ See: Paulo Esteves and Manaira Assunção, "South-South Cooperation and the International Development Battlefield: Between the OECD and the UN", (2014) 35 *Third World Quarterly* 1775.

²¹ See José Antonio Alonso, "Development cooperation to ensure that none be left behind", in Committee for Development Policy, Summaries and key messages of papers produced by the CDP sub-group on "leaving no one behind", CDP2018/PLEN/10, March 2018. Available from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-2018-Summary-LNOB.pdf>.

²² United Nations Development Program, *Scaling-Up South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development*, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (2016), p. 14. Available from https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/development-impact/SS%20Research%20Publications/11960%20-%20Design%20for%20Scaling-up%20South-South%20Cooperation%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20-%2009-3_Web.pdf.

STATE OF PLAY OF NATIONAL SSTRc STRATEGIES

Almost all developing countries, including least developed countries (LDCs), have been participants in SSTRc. Their priorities, though currently not always clearly spelled out, are normally based on their own specific domestic circumstances, regional interests and other nationally determined considerations. These national priorities should play a critical role in the formulation of national development vision, objectives and policies, which in turn influence their SSTRc initiatives. This section provides a general overview of the national strategies, policies and practices

in developing countries that include elements of SSTRc for promotion of cooperation and sustainable development.

Given the importance that developing countries place on SSTRc as an enabling modality in their developmental process, they have formulated some elements of national policies on SSTRc, though not a national SSTRc strategy *per se*. While the policy architecture varies from country to country, these can serve as a guidance for carrying out SSTRc initiatives (see Box 1).

BOX 1 STATE OF PLAY IN THE FORMULATION OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SSTRc

Uruguay's International Cooperation Policy for Sustainable Development by 2030 states that "cooperation is destined to play a very relevant role in the reduction of the country's structural gaps and vulnerabilities, the consolidation of alliances with its partner countries, the building of trust with more distant countries and the generation of common ground in international political arenas".²³ In the last ten years, Uruguay has strengthened bonds with its neighboring countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and other Southern countries by sharing its successful experiences in terms of development through SSTRc, as well as through its participation in regional cooperation schemes.

Similarly, Bangladesh's National Policy on Development Cooperation (which was at the final draft stage at the time of writing this policy brief) is linked with their long term development strategies and includes key principles such as country ownership, alignment and harmonization with strategic development priorities of the country, transparency of data and sustainability of results.²⁴

South Africa's partnerships with developing countries are critical to advancing not only its own development needs, but also the African Union's Agenda 2063, and to create political, economic and social convergence

for the fight against poverty, underdevelopment and the marginalization of the South. South Africa, therefore, promotes the strengthening of South-South Cooperation and supports the agendas of the South in all relevant fora.²⁵

In Thailand, the International Cooperation Programme places specific focus on trilateral cooperation, as well as engaging with various regional and multilateral frameworks through cooperation frameworks like the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy.²⁶ Its cooperation efforts are undertaken as per the different partnership arrangements. These are conducted in line with its Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which is reflected in its 20-year National Strategy and its 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017 – 2021).²⁷

For Senegal, the 'Plan Emergent Senegal' running from 2014-2035 represents its economic and social objectives which are operationalized through sectoral policies that identify strategies, objectives, priority lines of action, means of implementation and performance indicators. It includes clear identification of various risk factors for the Plan and seeks the establishment of clear objectives to be achieved through international and regional cooperation, including the boosting of economic cooperation, regional integration and participation of the Senegalese diaspora.

²³ Uruguay, Uruguay's International Cooperation Policy for Sustainable Development by 2030.

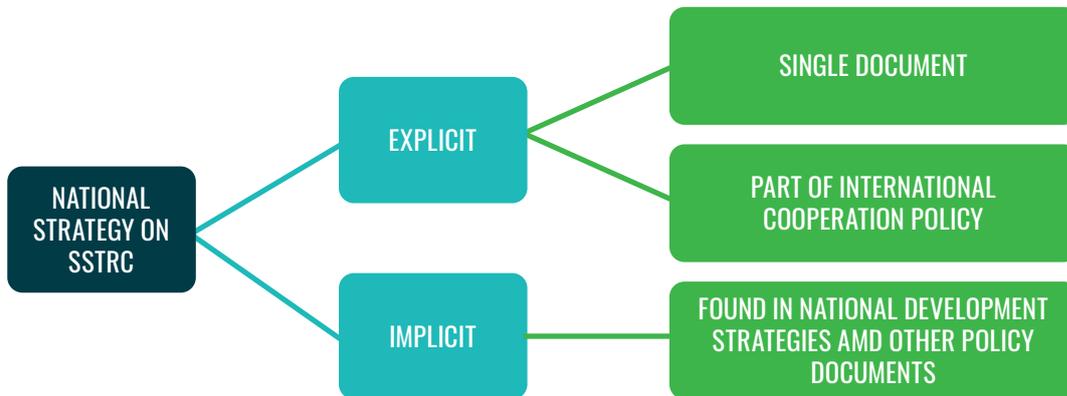
²⁴ Bangladesh: National Policy on Development Cooperation. Available from https://erd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/erd.portal.gov.bd/notices/594d272c_6917_4891_a62a_5d14a629c9b9/Latest%20Version_HFM_NPDC.pdf.

²⁵ Based on the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Revised Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020 and South Africa National Development Plan 2030 Our Future - make it work.

²⁶ Thai International Cooperation Agency (TICA), Thai International Cooperation Programme (TICP). Available from [https://tica-thaigov.mfa.go.th/en/content/40611-thai-international-cooperation-programme-\(ticp\)?cate=5d7da8d015e39c3fbc007485](https://tica-thaigov.mfa.go.th/en/content/40611-thai-international-cooperation-programme-(ticp)?cate=5d7da8d015e39c3fbc007485).

²⁷ United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Sustainability in Thailand: Experience for Developing Countries. Available from <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/2017/01/12/sustainability-in-thailand-experience-for-developing-countries-2017/>

FIGURE 3 IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT NATIONAL STRATEGIES ON SSTRC



Source: by authors

Elements of national SSTRc strategies can be found in standalone policy documents, as subset of larger international cooperation strategies or implicitly referred to in other public documents. Although the design and adoption of explicit strategies in the form of standalone policy documents would require a more formal and well-defined process, it could result in strengthened political will, greater authority for implementing the strategy, as well as increased institutional capacity towards mainstreaming SSTRc in other development policies. Similarly, a single integrated policy structure could catalyze the potential of SSTRc initiatives through better institutional coordination and strategy cohesion. Given that there are very few explicit national strategies on SSTRc already in place, it is also useful to consider other policy documents and measures where elements of the national strategy can be found. Particularly, implicit SSTRc strategies dispersed in various policy documents, agency circulars and other implementation mechanisms could be important elements to consider towards a more comprehensive and action-oriented mechanism (see Figure 3).

3.1. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

National development strategies have been an integral element of development planning for many countries and have received extensive recognition at the international level. For instance, in 2003, the Monterrey Consensus stated that “Each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, and the role of national policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasized.”²⁸

There has been a proliferation of national development plans in recent years, with research showing that “the number of countries with a national development plan has more than doubled, from about 62 in 2006 to 134 in 2018”.²⁹ Given the wide effects of national development strategies, countries take into consideration the priorities of their domestic constituents, their particular interests in regional affairs, obligations at the international level and, more recently, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WITH A NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED, FROM ABOUT

62 IN 2006

TO

134 IN 2018

²⁸ Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development (2002), para. 6.

²⁹ Admos O. Chimhowu, David Hulme and Lauchlan T. Munro, “The ‘New’ National Development Planning and Global Development Goals: Processes and Partnerships” (2019) 120 World Development, pages 76-89, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.03.013>.



The formulation of the NDS also feeds into its implementation measures, including for developing national SSTRC strategies. If a country has a NDS in place, it simplifies the task of drawing up a national SSTRC strategy, as many macroeconomic factors of the country would have been assessed and medium to long-term priorities would have been identified in the NDS. An important objective of the national SSTRC strategy would, therefore, be to ensure its alignment with the NDS and provide concrete policies regarding how SSTRC could contribute to the realization of the NDS. A national SSTRC strategy would play an important role for guiding SSTRC activities, especially in cases where the NDS only deals with the issue lightly, without providing a clear vision, priorities or medium and long-term plans.

3.2. ROLES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL AGENCIES

For their SSTRC initiatives, some countries designate a national body or institution to act as a nodal authority for implementing and coordinating all the efforts of the country in this field. Many countries from the South, including Brazil, Comoros, Egypt, Indonesia, Morocco, Palestine and Turkey, among others, have set up designated national bodies for their SSTRC activities. The policy document or legislation establishing these national bodies generally provides concrete guidance on the role and principles that have to be followed by the national body, which in turn provides an indicator towards the core tenets and features of the national SSTRC strategy. However, these tend to be general in nature and may not give clear orientation. Besides, they may not allow the agency to mainstream SSTRC at all levels and rally sufficient support from all stakeholders. Therefore, the establishment of a national agency would not eliminate the need for formulating a national SSTRC strategy. Rather, the national strategy would boost the role and outcomes resulting from the establishment of national bodies for SSTRC.

3.3. ELEMENTS OF SSTRC STRATEGIES IN REGIONAL COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

Regional cooperation initiatives and integration mechanisms can inform the design and implementation of a national SSTRC strategy across a variety of issue areas. The regional initiatives are also indicators of the concerns being faced by the region as a whole, which can assist states in identifying common causes and strategic alignments among regional partners.

For example, South Africa's revised strategic plan on international relations and cooperation includes the contribution to the Southern African Development Community as an objective for enabling an environment conducive to political and economic integration through advancing the African Agenda within the SADC region to secure regional integration, cooperation and development.³⁰ Similarly, it recognizes the existing linkages among a "better Africa in a better world" as the reason to support regional and continental processes, in particular aligning their efforts towards contributing to and achieving Africa's Vision 2063.³¹ Other initiatives include supporting the New Partnership for African Development and sub-regional initiatives under SADC and the South African Customs Union. The African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund have been the primary bilateral tools used by the country for its development cooperation initiatives in Africa.

Similarly, in the case of Uruguay, the commitments and obligations taken on by the state at the international and regional levels in matters of development, environment and human rights nourish and contribute to the cooperation received or offered by the country.³² In addition, Uruguay recognizes regional integration as one of the guiding values of its international cooperation strategy, in particular with countries in transition towards development in the region and in the South.³³

International cooperation strategies imbedded in larger development plans also acknowledge the imperative of positioning the state's needs in regional and multilateral processes. For example, Guyana has recognized the need for positioning itself as a leader in the region for ensuring that "the environmental dimensions contained in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy are further developed and adopted by its regional partners."³⁴

³⁰ South Africa Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Revised Strategic Plan, 2015-2020

³¹ Ibid.

³² Uruguay, Uruguay's International Cooperation Policy for Sustainable Development by 2030, p. 11.

³³ Ibid, p. 15.

³⁴ The Co-operative Republic of Guyana, The Framework of the Guyana Green State Development Strategy and Financing Mechanisms, Ministry of the Presidency and the United Nations Environment Programme (2017), p. 45.

3.4. COMMONALITIES AND RELEVANT ASPECTS FOR NATIONAL SSTRc STRATEGIES

Once national priorities have been determined through the building of a comprehensive country profile and stakeholder consultations, countries seek to identify the specific objectives and outcomes which they wish to see in their domestic contexts, as well as in cases when they are providers of SSTRc, and issues that require coordinated international action for them to be effectively addressed.

As shown in the few countries with a national strategy on international cooperation, the views of all relevant stakeholders were sought for developing a more holistic strategy with efficient implementation mechanisms. As one article notes, “The formulation of strategies for international cooperation at the local level can generate a series of reflections on the impact that these participatory exercises generate at the local level, in areas such as empowerment, sustainability, and the perception of actors, among others.”

It was also seen that SSTRc strategies tend to be long-term, forward looking and deeply aspirational, having been inspired by the efforts undertaken towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the ongoing work for the SDGs. On the other hand, their objectives can be short, medium or long-term, depending on the level of the activity and the sector involved.

“Many countries emphasize that their SSTRc initiatives also serve their national foreign policies and are for strengthening and building new trade and commercial relationships, promoting cultural exchanges and providing financial services, among others.”

The design and choice of development strategies are deeply rooted in the consideration of many factors, both domestic and international, that influence the developmental paths that states embark upon. In general, countries have their own cornerstones for NDS, which directly contribute to their SSTRc strategies. Many countries emphasize that their SSTRc initiatives also serve their national foreign policies and are for strengthening and building new trade and commercial relationships, promoting cultural exchanges and providing financial services, among others. A national SSTRc strategy would, therefore, help build trust, increase solidarity and contribute to the deepening of ties with partner countries.

Many developing countries wish to share their experiences through SSTRc initiatives and their participation in regional cooperation schemes. This can take the form of expert exchanges through technical cooperation and regional cooperation mechanisms, among others. It also enables a learning process from the successful experiences of development processes in other developing countries and utilization of the lessons learned from formulating their own policies and strategies, as well as their outcomes.





SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

Developing and developed countries normally design different plans and strategies to respond to different types of crises. Normally, such responses would consider prevention, control and recovery or restoration of the situation to its original state, to the extent possible.

As countries face an increasing number of new challenges and threats, the risk of responding to new crises test the governance capacity to deal with unexpected shocks in different areas.³⁶ The complexities of these crises go beyond national borders, as their effects could highlight the vulnerabilities of the global economy.³⁷ Such vulnerabilities might cause a larger impact in developing countries. For example, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic hit commodity exporters at the very beginning of the crisis – oil-exporting countries in particular - seeing a preliminary shortfall of about USD220 billion to developing countries (excluding China).³⁸

These complexities require a coordinated response from various connected actors, including planning to ensure crises response capacity, adequate funding and preventive measures against future crises. Generally, states have to develop such strategies at the domestic level, taking into consideration their capabilities and capacities, as well as international guidance and standards.

Although the coordination of crisis response normally falls on the central government,³⁹ the extended lifecycle of crisis response will require an integrated approach by different levels of government and other stakeholders, including academia and civil society. The introduction of an element of crisis response in SSTRc strategies could minimize potential risks of lengthy containment of the crisis, costs and damages. By identifying the role of possible SSTRc partners, including the SSTRc national bodies or agencies and other connected actors, developing countries can provide more effective responses by categorizing necessary resources (human and financial) to control and palliate the crisis at hand, while also strengthening institutional capacities for the future by learning from shared experiences.

“Including the role of SSTRc for crisis response will also serve to identify root causes of vulnerabilities and allow addressing them from a multidisciplinary approach by increasing the skills, competencies and knowledge of both the people directing the operation and the individuals at the frontline of the crisis.”

³⁶ Richard Kozul-Wright, “COVID-19 crisis: How South-South cooperation can support economic recovery”, UNCTAD, 3 June 2020. Available from <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2381>.

³⁷ Charles Baubion, “OECD Risk Management: Strategic Crisis Management”, Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) Working Papers on Public Governance No. 23 (2013). Available from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/oecd-risk-management_5k41rbd1l1zr7-en.

³⁸ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, “Coronavirus: Can policymakers avert a trillion-dollar crisis?”, 9 March 2020. Available from <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2300>.

³⁹ Charles Baubion, “OECD Risk Management: Strategic Crisis Management”, Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) Working Papers on Public Governance No. 23 (2013). Available from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/oecd-risk-management_5k41rbd1l1zr7-en.

FIGURE 4 THE ROLE OF SSTRc IN THE LIFECYCLE OF CRISIS RESPONSE



Following such an approach might also promote the synergies and cooperation among developing countries, complementing multilateral efforts in a large-scale crisis. From such an approach, SSTRc strategies could consider its role for scaling-up financial resources, enhancing policy space and building resilience⁴⁰ over the entire lifecycle of the crisis management (see Figure 4). Including the role of SSTRc for crisis response will also serve to identify root causes of vulnerabilities and allow addressing them from a multidisciplinary approach by increasing the skills, competencies and knowledge of both the people directing the operation and the individuals at the frontline of the crisis.⁴¹

“As countries face an increasing number of new challenges and threats, the risk of responding to new crises test the governance capacity to deal with unexpected shocks in different areas.”

⁴⁰ Richard Kozul-Wright, “COVID-19 crisis: How South-South cooperation can support economic recovery”, UNCTAD, 3 June 2020. Available from <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2381>.

⁴¹ Agnieszka Kos and Artem Hromadskyi, “Crisis management in case of functioning of public administration units”, *Globalization, the State and the Individual*, No. 1 (13)/2017, p. 41.

FORMULATION OF NATIONAL SSTRc STRATEGIES



For developing countries formulating their national SSTRc strategies, there are certain considerations and elements that can play a vital role and can be derived from the experiences and lessons learned by developing countries while formulating their existing national development plans. This is notwithstanding the immense diversity in their legal procedures, modalities and regulations that are relevant to any policy outcome, including the role of the national body or entity undertaking and coordinating such policymaking efforts. In Egypt, for example, the Ministry of International Cooperation is responsible for “strengthening the economic cooperation and multilateral engagement between Egypt and other countries, international and regional finance institutions as well as specialized agencies of the United Nations”.⁴²

Some factors that can be utilized in the formulation of implementation mechanisms for a national SSTRc strategy include relevant elements from the national development plans based on a national assessment of capacities, needs and aspirations; treaty obligations from regional and multilateral agreements; international commitments towards common global and regional goals, such as through the 2030 Agenda and SDGs; past experiences of participating in SSTRc activities; an inclusive approach towards connected actors and a high level of public participation. These do not exist in isolation; they act as interactive, mutually-supporting elements.

Countries may also have distinct opportunities or face specific challenges, which should feed into their SSTRc strategy. This may include substantial experiences in specific sectors and industries that can be shared with other countries, or lessons learned from their own unique experiences that can be used by other countries to develop more sustainably (see Box 2). The comparative advantages enjoyed by countries in different sectors and dimensions also have a distinct role here, as they allow for the benefits arising out of already developed unique knowledge and expertise to be shared more effectively. At the planning stage itself, the strategy should take into consideration the different timelines for implementation, the stakeholders and connected actors and the provisioning of financial means to support effective implementation.

BOX 2 GOOD EXPERIENCES ON SSTRc FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

South Africa’s initiatives for SSTRc show clear linkage to its historical contexts, as it plays an active role in supporting conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa and beyond. Of particular note is the role South Africa played in facilitating the restoration of peace and stability in Lesotho; participating in international efforts to end the war in Sudan and sharing its experience in the truth and reconciliation and constitution development with Sri Lanka.

Formulation of the national SSTRc strategy could follow either a bottom-up or top-down approach. In any case, building a sound and solid country profile would be essential at the beginning. In doing so, strong technical expertise would be indispensable. Such an exercise requires the identification of priorities based on sound economic analysis and thematic options with a long-term vision for the most suitable economic structure for the future economic development of the country. Similarly, developing countries should consider the need to emphasize the role of SSC principles in the design of SSTRc strategies to boost the positive and sustainable impact on their development efforts, as well as that for their partner countries. Such a process will also benefit from the inclusion of the role of connected actors in the drafting process, including by identifying possible partnerships and improving existing ones.

SSC principles should serve as the basis for, and be well reflected in, the national SSTRc strategies. As SSC is a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national development, it is “based on their shared experiences and objectives. It should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.”⁴³ SSTRc initiatives must be led by Southern countries in line with their national strategies; with traditional donors and international institutions supporting and facilitating their TrC initiatives.

⁴² Ministry of International Cooperation, Egypt. For reference see: <https://www.moic.gov.eg/en-US/Sectors/Index?na=110>

⁴³ Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (2015), para. 56. Available from http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf.

“There are at least four elements that require attention when formulating a national SSTRC strategy. However, these elements should not be considered as a “One-size-fits-all” approach.”

FIGURE 5 ELEMENTS FOR THE FORMULATION OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY OF SSTRC



Source: by authors

On this basis, mutual benefit means that SSTRC partners should gain from the cooperation while emphasizing ownership by Southern parties in the intervention and maximizing their development benefits. The principle of non-interference in domestic affairs is enshrined in the United Nations Charter and lies at the heart of SSC. It also safeguards the policy autonomy of all partners, guaranteeing sufficient policy space for states to achieve their policy objectives. These principles have been well received over the years and are endorsed in the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.⁴⁴ All strategies must emphasize that SSTRC projects should be demand driven. This is a demonstration of having “mutual benefits” in mind. The horizontal relationship and the frequent mention of “cooperation among equals” is an important part of the strategy. Building trust is also frequently invoked, with many statements by leaders of developing countries mentioning that the principles of SSC, such as solidarity and non-conditionality, will govern the relations between them.

There are at least four elements that require attention when formulating a national SSTRC strategy. However, these elements should not be considered as a “One-size-fits-all” approach. Rather, as country experiences in the elaboration of broader development plans have shown, identifying the linkages between country profiling, implementing actors and implementation plans could greatly benefit the effectiveness of the strategy (see Figure 5).

The following sections describe some important elements that could be considered in the formulation of a national SSTRC strategy.

“Building trust is also frequently invoked, with many statements by leaders of developing countries mentioning that the principles of SSC, such as solidarity and non-conditionality, will govern the relations between them.”

⁴⁴ Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, General Assembly UN Doc. A/RES/73/291 (2019), para. 8.



5.1. COUNTRY PROFILING FOR THE DESIGN OF STRONG AND EFFECTIVE SSTRc STRATEGIES

The initial step for any SSTRc strategic planning is to undertake a comprehensive country profiling exercise which would provide an economic, social and political anatomy of the country based on solid data and key information. To attract SSTRc as a beneficiary, it is important to be crystal clear about, *inter alia*, national development priorities and challenges, which are closely related to the weaknesses and strengths of a country, as well the aspirations at the regional and international levels. In order to be a provider of SSC, it is necessary to develop a country profile for the design of an SSTRc strategy that identifies the availability of national resources and expertise that could be utilized in the future through mapping indigenous development solutions and national resource centers⁴⁵ (see Box 3), the perceived potential areas that can be developed into economic growth drivers, existing international obligations and the views of connected actors and relevant stakeholders that could be part of this process.

On the basis of the country profile, developing countries could identify the domestic factors shaping their priorities and characterizing their strengths and the opportunity costs for covering such requirements. This analysis would support the state's efforts to understand what potential areas for SSTRc are necessary to achieve more impactful outcomes, and provide a clear vision for the country as both provider and beneficiary of SSTRc. Meanwhile, country profiling would also help identify the development needs, e.g. lack of clean water or need for developing manufacturing, as well as the targeted sector/industry for SSTRc, which normally has the potential of developing into a domestic economic growth driver. Through country profiling and priority identification, institutions throughout the country would know clearly what kind of SSTRc initiatives the country needs most. It would also support identifying the country's accumulated expertise and strengths that could be offered to other countries of the South through expert exchanges and technical cooperation.

⁴⁵ Definition of Resource Center: According to the IsDB, resource centers are national institutions that have proven expertise in one or more thematic areas which have the capability and capacity to work with institutions in other countries in order to help them solve their development challenges by sharing their know-how, expertise and resources through solidarity-based, peer-to-peer exchanges.

BOX 3 ISDB'S APPROACH TO MAPPING RESOURCE CENTERS IN ITS MEMBER COUNTRIES

IsDB fulfils the capacity development needs of its member countries through a variety of programs, utilizing SSTRc as an implementation approach. Most notably, IsDB uses its Technical Cooperation Program and its Reverse Linkage mechanism to achieve capacity development results, while promoting solidarity-based cooperation through SSTRc. These types of interventions touch a wide range of areas, including, but not limited to, transfer of know-how, expertise and resources to solve development challenges, development of critical skills required for the advancement of IsDB member countries, knowledge dissemination through regional and international fora, women's empowerment, youth development and support to the third sector.

A common requirement for success in such development interventions is to have a well-researched and validated roster of institutions qualifying as resource centers that would provide capacity development solutions to other institutions in member countries, with IsDB acting as the facilitator. Hence, IsDB was faced with the critical need to map the resource centers that exist in its member countries, understand their capabilities and assess their ability to cooperate internationally.

This need brought about the process that IsDB refers to as "mapping of resource centers", which is a data-based, structured framework that helps identify a specific set of institutions in member countries that could be objectively categorized as "resource centers" meeting the criteria of: (i) proven and reliable expertise; (ii) possession of adaptable and scalable development solutions; (iii) willingness to share expertise and resources with institutions in other countries through a peer-to-peer exchange; and (iv) existence of the capabilities required in such exchanges, including, but not limited to, language proficiency and ability to travel and work in other countries over an extended period of time.

IsDB's mapping methodology has been applied in numerous member countries so far, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia and Turkey, providing the foundations for a database of resource centers in IsDB member countries. These mapping studies constitute an important input into the country profiling exercise as a step in developing a national SSTRc strategy.

A. INFORMATION GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

The country profiling phase has to be inclusive and consultative, involving key stakeholders. Sufficient communication with stakeholders should be conducted to ensure the accuracy of information and shared views in formulating policy measures. Academics, civil society and other stakeholders should be involved, in addition to governmental institutions. This process could be supported by regional and international organizations with required experience and expertise.

Likewise, the country profiling phase should be guided by the SSC principles and the spirit of the 2030 Agenda, which could allow a broader understanding and vision of the SSTRC trends and future potentials regionally and internationally.

B. COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT AT REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Although the exercise of profiling is country-specific, there are certain issues which are of broader concern to the international community and require coordinated action at the regional or international level. These are global issues that require global solutions, for which national efforts need to be aligned, e.g. climate change issues and the 2030 Agenda, which are common elements for SSTRC strategies. Other issues of common concern, particularly in LDCs, are that of financing for development and diversification. As most national development strategies are focused on economic growth, they generally also touch upon aspects of international trade and foreign direct investment.

Another element is geographical preference for SSTRC in the form of regional initiatives. Proximity is often a factor taken into account, thus SSTRC often starts with neighboring countries. The easy reach, shared culture, similar conditions and strategic importance for national security could all be factors for such a choice.

It is useful to note here that country SSTRC strategies should not be created in isolation from the national development plans. Rather, a coordinated approach or linkage between them should be observed as a tool for their implementation. Therefore, the country profile for the SSTRC strategy would fully align it with the national development plans of the country and clearly reflect national priorities and roles at the regional and international levels.

5.2. IDENTIFYING SSTRC PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The development of any national strategy should be a dynamic process that includes the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders and connected actors providing valuable input. Through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, planning for development was reoriented into a more collaborative and coordinating effort for the implementation of strategies by all institutions and stakeholders, in particular “regional and local authorities, sub-regional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others.”⁴⁶

The identification of priorities and opportunities enabled through SSTRC is a key element for successfully designing the national SSTRC strategy. Information accumulated through the country profiling process should be categorized and clustered along specific issue areas by the involved actors. This would provide guidance for effectively reflecting their national interests and helping in the development of appropriate policies. These policies can then be utilized for effectively engaging in SSTRC activities.

The participation of connected actors, including governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, academics and technical experts, would allow developing countries to identify opportunities to expand SSTRC by enhancing the countries’ capacities to systematize their comparative advantages and increase financing and technical support for implementing SSTRC interventions. For example, Uruguay established an Inter-Institutional Reference Group (IRG) to design the cooperation policy. The group was composed of government technical officials, academia and members of the civil society. The first task of the Group was the adoption of the methodology of work, which included the principle of public participation in all stages of consultation. During Phase II, the Uruguayan agency for international cooperation was in charge of drafting the document in consultation with the IRG and representatives of the Office of Budget and Planning, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Finance.⁴⁷

In the case of Guyana, its development plan was designed through a multilayered, nationwide, stakeholder consultation process. Several technical

⁴⁶ Available from https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E, para. 45.

⁴⁷ Uruguay, *Uruguay’s International Cooperation Policy for Sustainable Development by 2030*, p. 27-28.

workshops were conducted for building skills and sharing knowledge on developmental methods and approaches. These inputs, along with secondary research and analyses conducted by researchers and experts, served as the basis for developing the policy recommendations included in such instrument.⁴⁸

5.3. DETERMINING APPROPRIATE POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS FOR NATIONAL SSTRc STRATEGIES

With the national development priorities providing guidance, the SSTRc strategies should include implementation plans and processes towards their achievement. The critical factors in such cases can be divided into those that are common and those that are distinctive and unique to certain developing countries.

In general, SSTRc strategies can be categorized as being short-term, medium-term or long-term in their implementation timelines. Some strategies may have all three timelines for outcomes, distributed between the different aims that the country seeks to achieve. Normally, country experience in designing national development plans envisages implementation periods ranging from 4 to 20 years, in particular those plans considering the 2030 Agenda, or other regional integration initiatives, as basis for their efforts.⁴⁹ The time framework should consider the dynamism of domestic decision-making processes, as well as short-term objectives, long-term outcomes and factors that

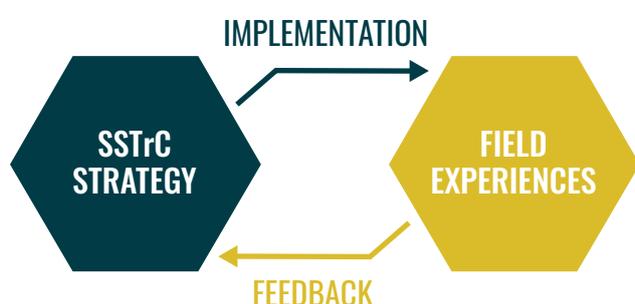
“Having a dynamic strategy for SSTRc provides distinct advantages over a static one, as it is more adaptable and can be updated based on the available capacities and prevailing circumstances.”

would help build resilience against external shocks and facilitate the implementation of national development and cooperation strategies.

Another hallmark of good strategy formulation is flexibility; adapting to changing circumstances during implementation. This requires enabling regular feedback from the connected actors that can be used to update the strategy in real-time, as per the lessons being learned from its implementation in the field (see Figure 6). For instance, Indonesia’s current Medium-Term National Development Plan (RPJM) 2020 – 2024, the third stage of its Grand Design on Indonesian SSTRc, focuses on forming stronger partnership within innovative and inclusive SSTRc, and includes the evaluation of their previous SSTRc efforts.⁵⁰

Having a dynamic strategy for SSTRc provides distinct advantages over a static one, as it is more adaptable and can be updated based on the available capacities and prevailing circumstances. For example, Thailand is now considering making adjustments to its 2018-2037 national strategy in light of changing trends caused by the global economic slowdown and the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵¹ Flexibility of the SSTRc strategy is especially important in emergency situations, where SSTRc activities can provide better responses, such as for the provisioning of medicines, doctors and equipment for relief work. Cuba has been at the forefront of such SSTRc initiatives for decades, providing doctors to help in disaster relief measures in both developing and developed countries.⁵²

FIGURE 6 REGULAR FEEDBACK DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF SSTRc INITIATIVES



Source: by authors

⁴⁸ Guyana National Development Strategy. Available from <https://finance.gov.gy/publications/national-development-strategy/>

⁴⁹ See for example Uruguay’s International Cooperation Policy for Sustainable Development by 2030 or Emerging Senegal Development Plan designed for its accomplishment on 2035.

⁵⁰ Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 17 of 2007 on Long-Term National Development Plan of 2005-2025

⁵¹ NNA Business News, “Thailand considers revamping 2018-2037 national strategy”, 3 June 2020. Available from <https://english.nna.jp/articles/15578>.

⁵² Al Jazeera, “Cuba sends doctors worldwide in coronavirus fight”, 30 March 2020. Available from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/cuba-sends-doctors-worldwide-coronavirus-fight-200330091411271.html>.

“The participation of these actors in existing and new SSTRC initiatives will require the development of a coordinated, transparent, and mutually beneficial relationship among all involved stakeholders, in particular through the recognition and implementation of SSTRC as basis of such efforts.”

The level of detailed directives provided by the SSTRC strategy for its implementation depends on several considerations. For some countries with a decentralized approach, the strategy might provide only broad principles, giving the connected actors the necessary flexibility to decide the operational modalities. In a more centralized system, a national body may be tasked with implementing the SSTRC initiatives in partnership with others. A third mixed approach may include a coordinating and facilitating function for a nodal central body for SSTRC initiatives being carried out by the connected actors.

5.4. USING SSTRC FOR MORE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Given that the type and nature of SSTRC initiatives, as well as SSTRC aspirations, are expanding due to the benefits they bring to all partners, the need to broaden relationships between SSTRC partners and traditional donors becomes an important element to supplement and reinforce SSTRC initiatives and objectives under a national SSTRC strategy.

While developing countries should mobilize existing national resources - both technical as well as financial/ in-kind contributions⁵³ - the development of a national strategy for SSTRC could also consider the role that traditional donors and international institutions might play to secure new resources and expertise for more impactful interventions. Contributions by regional and multilateral financing institutions, organizations and traditional donor countries not only support the achievement of the objectives set out in national SSTRC strategies, but could also serve as means to maintain the momentum of such initiatives .

The participation of these actors in existing and new SSTRC initiatives will require the development of a coordinated, transparent, and mutually beneficial relationship among all involved stakeholders, in particular through the recognition and implementation of SSTRC as basis of such efforts.⁵⁴

⁵³ Islamic Development Bank and South Centre, “Developing National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development” (2019), p. 19.

⁵⁴ Ibid.



Since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action in 1978, SSTRC has increased in volume and become multidimensional. The players have also multiplied at a fast rate. The ongoing role and potential of SSTRC in promoting economic development of provider and beneficiary countries have been well acknowledged. Nevertheless, only a very limited number of countries have national SSTRC strategies that promote synergies between SSTRC and national development plans. The absence of an SSTRC national strategy leads to inefficient utilization and limits the realization of its potential as a catalyst and an important tool to attain development objectives and growth.

The National Ecosystems for SSTRC framework advocated by the IsDB and South Centre includes national SSTRC strategies as a pillar, recognizing its role in enabling “countries to identify, channel, and take advantage of SSTRC resources and opportunities, including the effective implementation of programs and projects already under execution while enhancing complementarities and minimizing duplication”. The existing synergies between the different pillars can therefore be leveraged and enhanced by the national SSTRC strategy.

While only few countries have developed independent national SSTRC strategies, elements of SSTRC strategies can be traced in their national development plans and other policy documents, including regional trade and investment agreements or documents on implementing international commitments such as the MDGs and SDGs. Nevertheless, addressing national SSTRC strategies in an explicit, elaborated and holistic manner would be advantageous for fully leveraging the potential of SSTRC to fill the gaps. Likewise, it would allow countries to follow action-oriented strategies towards coordinating communication among different domestic players and avoid fragmentation in their SSTRC initiatives. In addition, the design and adoption of a national SSTRC strategy would not only harness its full potential, but also boost the principles of solidarity and respect of national sovereignty among all actors across the international cooperation framework, as countries would normally highlight the importance of adhering to the SSC principles.

Developing national SSTRC strategies would require a holistic analysis of country priorities and objectives with respect to SSTRC, its complementarities and common challenges with other developing countries, including through identifying comparative advantages for SSTRC as a response to those demands. Following this approach, one of the first elements required to address the need of developing such strategy is recognizing the importance of including the principles of South-South Cooperation in economic development plans and national SSTRC strategies. Such inclusion

would highlight the importance of the essential dynamics between international solidarity and states’ commitments to achieving the SDGs. On this basis, strategies must emphasize that SSTRC objectives should be demand driven and based on “mutual benefits”, while prioritizing horizontal partnerships among equals in every SSTRC initiative.

The formulation of a national SSTRC strategy will require a comprehensive country profiling exercise. The use of technical expertise would facilitate sound and solid country profiling that identifies the economic, social and political anatomy of the country, as well as the availability of national resources and expertise that could be utilized in future SSTRC initiatives. The macroeconomic factors, medium and long-term priorities and objectives identified in national development plans would be the basis for drawing up the national SSTRC strategy for the purpose of building a coordinated approach with those national development objectives. Similarly, the development of national SSTRC strategies can benefit from stakeholder consultations, which would generate a more holistic strategy and define efficient implementation mechanisms by assessing the expertise and strengths of different stakeholders.

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It is important to envisage national SSTRC strategies as long-term strategies with an integrated and inclusive approach linking different stakeholders, including government institutions at various levels, the private sector, academia and civil society. This potentially allows reducing costs and time for identifying possible SSTRC partners and contributes to strengthening the relationship between the national SSTRC bodies or agencies and other connected actors. Promoting these strategies could also prompt synergies and cooperation among developing countries, complementing multilateral and regional efforts and finding alternative financial resources.

Envisioning a dynamic and flexible national SSTRC strategy could provide sufficient policy space to adapt to changing needs and demands. Such dynamism could imply the development of a mechanism to identify and assess the implementation of SSTRC initiatives, with the objective of adapting and updating capacities and the strategy in face of new or prevailing circumstances. This could also enable valuable feedback from connected actors during the implementation of SSTRC activities.

Finally, through the development of national SSTRC strategies, developing countries would be better positioned to identify long-term visions and policies to coordinate and guide SSTRC at the national level, while being proactive in building strong and stable partnerships at the regional and multilateral levels. Likewise, national SSTRC strategies would enable mainstreaming its principles through the wide spectrum of national development objectives and allow the timely identification of vital SSTRC opportunities.

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