South-South cooperation in the context of aid effectiveness

Telling the story of partners in 110 cases of South-South and triangular cooperation

Executive summary

The members of Task Team on South-South Cooperation (TT-SSC) believe that South-South learning and knowledge exchange is a powerful tool to address development challenges and develop capacities “from within”. Committed to implement paragraph 19 of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), a milestone in global development partnerships, the TT-SSC’s is implementing the following triple mandate of the AAA:

- Adapting the aid effectiveness principles to South-South cooperation (AAA para. 19a);
- Enriching the aid effectiveness agenda with the practices of SSC (AAA para. 19b);
- Identifying complementarities between South-South and North-South cooperation (AAA para. 19e).

Mapping the practices and experiences at the intersection between SSC and aid effectiveness, the TT-SSC conducted a call for case stories which informed the Bogotá High-Level Event (HLE) on South-South cooperation and capacity development in March 2010. In only nine weeks, dozens of countries and organizations contributed a total 110 case stories, reflecting an enormous diversity and strength of South-South knowledge exchange and mutual learning.

From this vibrant process, the following key messages have emerged:

Adapting the aid effectiveness principles to South-South cooperation is a welcomed challenge for almost all case storytellers. Ownership seems to be one of the strengths, together with the use of specific comparative advantages, especially in difficult contexts. Three main tasks are pending for actors involved in South-South learning and knowledge exchange:

- Information systems need to be boosted in order to generate quantitative and qualitative data for measuring, assessing, and accounting in a transparent, regular, and timely way;
- Sound result management may enable actors to show the scope, relevance, and impact of South-South knowledge exchange and learning;
- Mutual accountability is closely related to the previous two tasks and needs to be attended more consistently in the future, especially at the country level.
**Enriching the aid effectiveness agenda** with the practices and experiences of South-South cooperation will continue to be on the top of the agenda of those developing countries that desire to contribute clear-cut contents to global development policies. Regional platforms have a critical role to play to facilitate these contributions. Three main pillars can be used for deepening the agenda toward the Seoul HLF in 2011:

- **Horizontal partnership** is a key element for mutual learning among diverse development actors and is based on trust, mutual benefit, and equity;

- **Efficiency** in South-South knowledge exchange appears to outbid traditional technical cooperation, using not only cheaper, but also more adapted human resources. Yet, this thesis needs to be backed with accurate research on inputs and impacts;

- **Incentives for policy and institutional reform** are at the heart of South-South dynamics, especially in difficult contexts. Deeper analysis should explore the role of South-South incentives as a powerful tool for policy and institutional change and capacity development.

**Identifying complementarities between South-South and North-South cooperation** is not difficult in face of the increasing interest of traditional donors to become “emerging triangulators”, on the one hand, and the growing family of mechanisms, on the other. However, bringing diverse development actors together refers to very recent processes, reflecting also the new need for innovative collective action between different actors:

- **Triangular cooperation** appears as a still recent gangway with great potential for horizontal partnership and win-win-win situations. Learning from existing risks, such as transaction costs and fragile recipient ownership, should ultimately lead to stronger foundations for triangular efforts;

- **Several mechanisms for promoting South-South cooperation** are available and it is now time to build an architecture connecting national, regional, and global platforms where innovation, lessons, experiences, and forms of coordination can be captured and systematized.

Together with the outcomes from the Bogotá HLE, that is the Bogotá Statement and the conclusions of the thematic roundtables, the case story findings are a critical reference for the analytical framework of the TT-SSC’s second phase of analytical work, which will generate case studies and new case stories.

All case stories and the full report are available on http://www.southsouthcases.info

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