

The Bogotá Spirit

South-South peers and partners at the practice-policy nexus

BY NILS-SJARD SCHULZ

ON A WARM EVENING IN LATE MARCH OF THIS YEAR, more than 500 enthusiastic delegates from around the world poured out of the Chamber of Commerce building in Bogotá, with a shared vision that South-South cooperation would reshape today's development cooperation landscape. Despite the Colombian capital's dizzying altitude of 2,800 meters, their zeal for effective South-South knowledge exchange and mutu-

al learning left the participants of the Bogotá High Level Event on South-South cooperation and Capacity Development clear headed and with a long list of ideas, projects and plans, for their countries and regions, and for their multilateral, parliamentary, civil society, and research organizations. A groundbreaking format, including "talk show" sessions, video broadcasting and case story presentations, promoted lively discussions on South-South and triangular cooperation and resulted in the Bogotá Statement, a forward-looking manifesto for



Participants at the High-Level Bogotá event included Bertram Leroy Johnson, Delegate from the Government of Barbados, and Marcio Lopes Correa, Brasil, Coordinator for Multilateral Technical Cooperation, Brazilian Agency of International Cooperation, ABD.

inclusive and effective policy making within the shifting development cooperation architecture.

An evolving process

THE ROOTS OF THE BOGOTÁ PROCESS lie 8,200 kilometers westward, in Accra. Here, in Ghana's buzzing capital, a High Level Forum (HLF) of some 1,800 representatives gathered in September 2008 to endorse the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) which reinforces the promise of better quality aid expressed three years earlier in the Paris Declaration. The journey from Paris's Ile-de-France, the host location of the previous HLF, to the former Gold Coast, and in Africa's first country to gain independence from colonial rule, was not a mere symbolic concession to the increasing voice of developing countries in global development policy making. With Southern leaders from dozens of low- and middle-income countries coordinating their priorities, this turned out to be a real opportunity for horizontal policy making. As a result, the AAA reflects sensitive policy commitments in areas such as the increased use of national budgets for channeling aid, the reduction of conditionalities, and a groundbreaking approach to South-South cooperation as part of the aid effectiveness agenda.

Not surprisingly, it was a member of the Accra developing countries' caucus who took up the mandate to explore South-South cooperation for aid effectiveness, enshrined in article 19 of the AAA. From late 2008, an international debate started to look into South-South cooperation as a way of fostering horizontal partnerships and drawing on the full potential of developing countries, in particular middle-income countries, as both recipients and providers of development cooperation. With the strong backing of countries and organizations represented in the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness hosted at the OECD-DAC, Colombia proposed in March 2009 the creation of a specialized task team which was launched with amazing energy during a two-day, globally connected event in September 2009 in Washington DC. From that moment, the



Sanjit Bunker Roy, Director and Founder of Barefoot College, India; Laura Bocalandro, Coordinator of the Regional Public Goods Program, Inter-American Development Bank; Alfonso Quiñonez, Secretary for External Relations, Organization of American States; and Maria Claudia Camacho, Labor Specialist and Coordinator of RIAL, OAS.



Task Team on South-South cooperation (TT-SSC), with strong leadership in countries such as Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, and Thailand, was to ensure that South-South cooperation and the aid effectiveness agenda would enrich and complement each other. This would be a natural process emerging from the more proactive and innovative role in global policy making being played by the developing world.

Analysis based on experience

AFTER ASSESSING THE LONG HISTORY of South-South cooperation and the complex evolution of the aid effectiveness agenda, the founding members of the TT-SSC quickly identified the recipe for success: Explore and analyze the practices and experiences of South-South cooperation, and in particular South-South knowledge exchange. Focusing on a clear-cut niche, South-South technical cooperation and capacity development, they would draw on real-life practice to help inform and ensure relevant and consistent policy recommendations. Two milestones were already visible: The Bogotá High-Level Event on the very near horizon (in March 2010), would be a mid-term conference on the way to the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Korea in late 2011.

Energized by the immediacy the Bogotá HLE, in late November 2009 the TT-SSC put out a call for case stories about South-South technical cooperation in the context of aid effectiveness. These stories could cover three themes: Adapting the aid effectiveness principles to South-South technical cooperation, enriching the aid effectiveness agenda with the practice of South-South knowledge exchange, and identifying complementarities between South-South and North-South cooperation. Partner countries in particular, but also donors and nongovernmental actors were invited to share their experiences. The TT-SSC members were explicit in their desire to explore what works and what doesn't, and to classify and systematize the results.

The TT-SSC engaged with regional organizations including the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development



Maximo Romero Jimenez, Director General for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico.

Bank, and the Organization of American States. At the global level, the World Bank Institute helped connect practitioners, and a global core team of communication and policy advisors guided the process. This approach enabled practitioners around the world to access just-in-time support, engage in peer networks, formulate regional perspectives, and build an enabling environment to make best use of the limited time that many leaders and champions in developing countries could commit to new initiatives.

Stories of challenge and success

THE RESPONSE from the countries and organizations surpassed expectations: 110 case stories were presented in only nine weeks. The showcased experiences involve 133 countries from around the world, as well as 10 multilateral organizations, 4 civil society organizations, and 3 parliamentary bodies. Case story drafts were discussed at meetings in Addis Ababa, Bogotá, Brussels, Mexico City, Pretoria, Seoul, and Washington, DC. Indeed, the Bogotá process is likely to be the broadest universe of country-led experiences ever collected.

The case story process also shows the immense potential of engaging Southern practitioners and policy makers in global and regional decision making. Experience-sharing is a priority for many developing countries, and learning is a powerful, yet underexplored tool for adapting the global development architecture to the shifting poles of wealth and development. With its highly energized plenary sessions and roundtables discussions

of the case stories, the Bogotá HLE was an inspiring example of how results can be achieved under tight deadlines by drawing on the commitment of a diverse group of champions from developing countries and multilateral institutions.

In addition to the practices illustrated in the previous section of this issue, the following pages present a selection of six case stories. They provide a snapshot of the impressive diversity of experiences and lessons learned through South-South knowledge exchange. Take for instance Indonesia's collaboration with countries such as Uganda to establish sustainable *sharia*-based microfinance systems. Or Ecuador's support to Bolivia's capacity to fight a dramatic dengue outbreak, saving lives and contributing to the development of Bolivia's health sector capacities. Conventional donors are increasingly engaging through triangular cooperation, as shown in Ireland's horizontal partnership with Liberia and East Timor to promote women's rights, peace and security, or Japan's engagement in third country training programs with ASEAN members.

And yet, peers and partner have only started to extend the Bogotá spirit and

much can be expected in the coming months. At the launch of its second phase work plan, the TT-SSC members, a growing community of more than 90 countries and organizations (as of July 2010), have agreed to extend the analysis by preparing additional case studies. So, as you read through this issue of Development Outreach, the practitioners and policy makers in dozens of countries and organizations are conducting in-depth reviews of their experiences on South-South knowledge exchange, hand-in-hand with local and regional academic institutions. All this will provide more good practices and policy guidance for the Korea HLF and beyond, including the emerging G20 development agenda and the policy discussions at the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (UNDCF). Indeed, the time has come for an ambitious and innovative developing world to guide global policy makers toward a more effective system for governing development in a multipolar world. Enjoy the read!

More information:

Even more cases at <http://www.southsouthcases.info>

Follow the TT-SSC at <http://www.southsouth.info>

Be in touch at southsouthcases@gmail.com

Nils-Sjard Schulz is Policy Adviser to the Task Team on South-South cooperation (TT-SSC).