

**UNFPA**

**Policies & Procedure Manual  
South-South Cooperation Strategy**

UNFPA SOUTH\_SOUTH COOPERATION STRATEGY<sup>1</sup>

2010- 2013

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<sup>1</sup> This is an update of 1997 UNFPA's SSC Strategy

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### I. Introduction

South-South cooperation (SSC) is premised on the notion that countries facing common challenges and seeking to achieve common goals can make faster progress through shared learning and experiences.

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) refers to SSC as an important development instrument and resource mobilization objective. UNFPA, which has a long history with SSC, considers it critical to achieving the ICPD agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The UNFPA Strategic Plan 2008-2013 makes SSC central to capacity development and technical cooperation. A 2010 survey and the many initiatives presented at the UNFPA Global Consultation on South-South Cooperation show that many Southern countries have knowledge to share with other nations, both North and South.

The following updated SSC strategy incorporates findings from the survey and new developments in SSC. It accounts for UNFPA's reorganized structure and related changes in technical assistance, and experience with UN reform. Closely linked to the current organizational strategy on middle-income countries (MICs) and the guidance note on capacity development, the strategy contributes to an overall management package designed to increase the effectiveness of programmes, policies and operations.

The strategy conforms with General Assembly Resolution 64/222, which adopted the 2009 Nairobi Outcome Document on SSC<sup>2</sup> and called on all UN entities to support cooperation among developing countries as well as with GA G2/2008 TCPR and undg guidance on South-South, MICs and capacity development.

### II. Definitions and Principles of South-South Cooperation

SSC makes significant support available for implementing ICPD through sharing new and innovative technical approaches, building capacity, scaling up political commitment and mobilizing sufficient resources for development.

Effective SSC fosters strategic and flexible partnerships, and seeks opportunities for mutual learning. It moves away from development *assistance* and towards international *cooperation*, based on the principles of national ownership, respect for sovereignty and equality among partners. It can influence the global agenda both politically and technically, and promote national capacity development.

As an operational definition, the UNFPA strategy adopts the following:

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<sup>2</sup> Issued by the High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. See: <http://southsouthconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Final-outcome-document-SSC.doc>.

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SSC is a means of development by an exchange of knowledge, experience, technology and information and capacity development between and among developing countries through governments, civil society organizations, academic institutions, national institutions and networks to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD agenda and achievement of the MDGs in participating countries.

All UNFPA SSC initiatives should be:

- **Nationally owned and demand driven**, so that countries set agendas free of conditionality and sensitive to the national context;
- **Partnerships of equals**, based on trust, mutual benefit and equity;
- **Focused on mutual development** through the sharing of experiences, technology and skill transfers, training and research;
- **Committed to results and mutual accountability**; and
- **Actively complementary** to other modes of international cooperation.
- Build on **regional capacities and enhance regional partnerships**, including across regions of the South.

SSC initiatives at UNFPA typically entail securing resources, advocating alliances, mainstreaming SSC in development cooperation and implementing SSC agreements. They may involve:

- Institutional and capacity development, along with an environment that fosters such development;
- Technical, educational, humanitarian and cultural cooperation;
- Exchanges of knowledge, expertise and technologies;
- Policy development and the sharing of good practices, experiences and lessons learned;
- Bilateral, sub-regional, regional, inter-regional or triangular cooperation, where two or more developing countries work in partnership with a traditional donor country; and
- Action by governments, national organizations, international organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and the private sector.

A country can be simultaneously a recipient and provider of SSC. Some countries have expertise in many ICPD POA core issues, but most have strong experience in particular areas. UNFPA should encourage partnerships where everyone has something to share.

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All UNFPA-backed initiatives should apply the principles of aid effectiveness<sup>3</sup>, and reflect the UNFPA mandate, human rights-based approaches and gender mainstreaming prerequisites.

### III. A Brief Background

Over the past decade, SSC has grown exponentially and has gained support of member states political movements. They include the G-15 Group of South-South Consultation and Coordination and the Group of 77. Summits and conferences have shaped the SSC framework, including the 2000 South Summit in Havana, the 2003 High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation in Marrakech, the 2005 Second South Summit and the 2009 High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. Many MICs have become active proponents of South-South partnerships.

Emerging economies, often referred to as emerging donors, have made significant investments in SSC. Traditional donors have recognized the value of SSC as well, including in the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, which strengthens the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> This has reinforced SSC as a horizontal learning mechanism well placed to boost the development of national capacities.

The needs of the least developed countries call for special attention, as highlighted in the 2001 Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries. It particularly endorses triangular mechanisms that fund South-South partnerships with contributions from donor governments.<sup>5</sup>

#### *The UN's role*

There is growing demand for the UN to support and broker SSC that is nationally led, and aimed at achieving national and international development goals, including the MDGs. In 2007, the General Assembly's Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review<sup>6</sup> encouraged all UN entities to mainstream support to SSC and triangular cooperation, and requested donors and UN member states to mobilize resources accordingly.

The General Assembly's 2009 Report on South-South Cooperation<sup>7</sup> urged intensified multilateral support for South-South initiatives. It proposed the continued development of innovative mechanisms to mobilize resources, including through contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation.

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<sup>3</sup> UNFPA, "UNFPA's Role in the Changing Aid and Development Environment: From Policy to Practice" 2009

<sup>4</sup> See: [www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_3236398\\_35401554\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html).

<sup>5</sup> See: [www.unohrrls.org/UserFiles/File/LDC%20Documents/Report%20of%20the%20LDC%20III\\_E.pdf](http://www.unohrrls.org/UserFiles/File/LDC%20Documents/Report%20of%20the%20LDC%20III_E.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> UN General Assembly, "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system," 2007, A/62/208. See: [www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r62.shtml](http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r62.shtml).

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly, "Report of the Secretary General: The State of South-South Cooperation," 2009, A/64/321. See: <http://southsouthconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/64th-Session-A-64-321.pdf>.

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In December 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted the Nairobi Outcome Document, underlining SSC as an important element of international cooperation for economic growth and sustainable development. The General Assembly's High-Level Committee on SSC has now mandated the development of a UN inter-agency collaborative framework on SSC and operational guidelines to help implement the Outcome Document.<sup>8</sup>

### IV. The UNFPA Strategic Response: Objectives and Actions for 2011-2013

UNFPA's SSC strategy will help the organization strengthen its support, bolster preparedness in a fast-changing environment and learn from experience.

According to the UNFPA Global Consultation on SSC and the Technical Division survey, several factors currently limit SSC initiatives, including a greater need to recognize their potential and a development system premised on North-South aid flows. Through the five objectives outlined here, UNFPA can proactively encourage SSC initiatives, along with systematic follow-up, and monitoring and evaluation for long-term sustainability. All programme managers should promote and advocate SSC wherever appropriate. Programme resources of country, regional and global should be allocated to towards promotion of SSC.

The strategy's medium-term objectives are:

- *Objective 1:* Develop a **common understanding** of SSC to enhance consistent strategies across programmes and regions.
- *Objective 2:* Promote SSC initiatives to **support the ICPD agenda, capacity building and technical cooperation.**
- *Objective 3:* **Expand partnerships** with countries, and engage non-traditional actors, including civil society groups.
- *Objective 4:* Ensure that **resource mobilization** addresses emerging development partners and new modalities of cooperation.
- *Objective 5:* **Strengthen coordination** within UNFPA and with other UN agencies and global partners around SSC in both development and humanitarian situations.

Actions to achieve each objective are as follows.

***Objective 1: Develop a common understanding of SSC to enhance consistent strategies across programmes and regions.***

**Deepen staff capacity:** The 2010 survey found that UNFPA staff understands SSC in different ways. Ensuring a consistent approach requires staff globally to understand the

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<sup>8</sup> On 21 December 2009 the UN General Assembly adopted the Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Resolution 64/222. See: [www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r64.shtml](http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r64.shtml).

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operational definition in this strategy. SSC should be an ongoing part of staff training. All programme managers should be clear on how SSC works at UNFPA.

**Strengthen UNFPA's role as a facilitator:** According to the survey results and discussions with partners, UNFPA should systematically promote demand for SSC, and work through its network of regional and country offices to match countries that can supply assistance with those requiring it. It should map available needs and services; encourage potential providers; identify new markets; and develop long-term strategies. A special orientation package could elaborate UNFPA's roles and will be included in the Induction Package provided by DHR/LCMB).

**Mainstream SSC activities in all programmes:** Global and regional programmes, including monitoring and evaluation, should integrate SSC, especially for capacity development, as should UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), Country Programme Action Plans (CPAPs), and UN contingency plans for emergency and humanitarian response. UNFPA can take the lead in joint planning around national development priorities linked to its mandate.

**Document good practice and share lessons learned:** Increasingly, advocacy efforts must be combined with evidence-based research. Sound programming can also benefit from documentation and sharing of lessons learned. UNFPA has a critical role in setting the agenda and harnessing knowledge in the core areas of work, gender, SRH and data.

### ***Objective 2: Promote SSC initiatives to support the ICPD agenda, capacity building and technical cooperation.***

**Strengthen SSC networks in developing countries, including emerging economies:** UNFPA should conclude long-term agreements with countries and institutions that could become permanent sources of SSC. Where SSC has been integrated in national plans, UNFPA should bolster national capacities by mapping recipient country needs; assisting with long-term planning and strategies for marketing expertise; and strengthening monitoring and evaluation. Other support should go towards developing regional and national institutional capacities to provide technical assistance, share knowledge and collaborate.

Mapping supply and demand is crucial, and needs regional and global support. A roster of technical assistance sources should be established, and shared within UNFPA and with other UN agencies. Partner profiles with expertise in both development and humanitarian programming should be regularly updated. UNFPA should help partners establish standards for expertise, and create regional vetting panels to manage the quality of information in the roster.

Cooperative agreements on matching SSC providers and recipients could be negotiated within and across regions. Some regional offices have already scanned national needs for technical support and proposed one or more potential providers.

**Assist countries with operational arrangements:** This could include setting up financial management systems, developing memoranda of understanding, proposing logistical requirements using national or direct execution, and helping with reporting.

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**Support countries as recipients:** UNFPA should help countries assess national needs; advocate for SSC where appropriate; seek partners, including building triangular initiatives; and engaging traditional donors.

**Conduct policy dialogues and advocacy:** UNFPA should promote SSC as a development strategy and call for the full engagement of national actors. It should advocate for national SSC policies in the MICs and for regional cooperation. Participation in global events and support for parliamentarians and networks such as Partners for Population and Development can influence the global SSC agenda and mobilize additional resources.

**Strengthen monitoring and evaluation:** Current reporting, monitoring and evaluation related to SSC is sketchy. UNFPA should develop quantitative and qualitative mechanisms for comparing experiences, improving SSC and documenting lessons learned. For more on this topic, see Section VII.

**Expand knowledge management:** Knowledge management systems should help fill existing gaps in understanding of SSC, identify and track sources of expertise, and enable staff and partners to use and contribute resources. These systems should underpin mapping exercises, as noted above, as well as the documentation and sharing of good practices and lessons learned, and communities of practice involving UNFPA staff and partner institutions.

Building UNFPA's own South-South country office network, as an internal community of practice and the first stop for questions about SSC, would advance understanding of SSC and the diverse resources available. Country offices should designate South-South focal points to maintain the exchange of information.

The new MyUNFPA2 platform and the Fusion knowledge management platform will become central to the exchange of experiences and collective learning. These internal platforms will be linked to external systems such as those developed by the World Bank and the Task Team for SSC. UNFPA SSC experts, focal points and other interested staff should also join other communities of practice and networks within and outside the UN.

***Objective 3: Expand partnerships with countries, and engage non-traditional actors, including civil society groups.***

**Identify SSC partners:** UNFPA needs to continually scan for potential partners, technical experts and qualified institutions. The scan should make use of sources including evaluations carried out by national institutions. ROs/SROs, The Technical Division and Information and External Relations Division should help forge interregional partnerships.

**Define priority areas for collaboration and partnerships:** The Environmental Scanning functions at country regional and global levels should help sift requests and identify priorities for SSC.

**Enhance triangular cooperation:** UNFPA should facilitate exchanges, give technical advice and help define suitable frameworks for triangular initiatives. This could entail designing flexible mechanisms for cooperation, integrating South-South activities within the general

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context of international assistance and ensuring that all parties make at least in-kind contributions to resources for SSC.

**Reduce administrative hurdles:** South-South technical services usually require special agreements that produce procedural difficulties. Special efforts are needed to identify and minimize these obstacles that can enhance more efficient programming in development context while enabling timely and life saving humanitarian response programmes.

### ***Objective 4: Ensure that resource mobilization factors in emerging development partners and new modalities of cooperation.***

**Use Programme resources:** Country offices should consider use of programme resources to leverage additional funding through SSC or triangular cooperation.

**Explore synergies:** Possible synergies with existing cooperation frameworks are crucial. Using technical assistance from regional or national institutions will encourage external support for additional costs.

**Consider trust funds:** Bilateral agencies that have reduced direct contributions in a region, but wish to maintain their work in some countries, might be interested in supporting SSC through a trust fund. Three possibilities include the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund (PGTF), the India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) Trust Fund and the South-South Experience Exchange Trust Fund (SEETF). The PGTF is a UN fund that supports economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. The IBSA Trust Fund disseminates information on replicable best practices to stop poverty and hunger. The World Bank-managed SEETF responds to specific demands from low-income countries that want to learn from counterparts in other developing countries.

### ***Objective 5: Strengthen coordination within UNFPA and with other UN agencies and global partners.***

The absence of coordination hinders SSC. Addressing this issue requires better understanding of the division of labour and mechanisms for exchanging information. Collaboration across countries and regions is key to ensuring that international commitments and obligations are realized.

**Country level:** UNFPA should promote SSC through UN joint planning, including *ad hoc* interagency groups on SSC and UNDAFs.

**Regional level:** UNFPA should encourage exchanges of information among regional director team members and the use of common databases. This will help avoid duplication, particularly in partnerships with regional and national institutions.

**Global level:** UNFPA should work with the UN Development Group and UNDP's Special Unit on SSC to advocate coordination. It should also back better representation of the UN in the Task Force on South-South Cooperation supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). UNFPA can also advocate for SSC in UN reform process and humanitarian networks and platforms.

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### V. Recommended Range of Roles and Responsibilities for Implementation of the Strategy

#### *Country offices*

- Strengthen UNFPA SSC focal points and support national mechanisms.
- Assist governments, NGOs and academic institutions to develop specific plans for SSC on reproductive health, gender and population.
- With support from regional and sub-regional offices, map development needs and assess existing capacities among southern partners that match these needs in the country programme, and facilitate special initiatives such as Partners on Population and Development.
- Ensure that SSC is incorporated in country programme design, including situation analyses for the UNDAF, CPAP and UN contingency plans for emergencies.
- Ensure that an SSC criterion is included in all country programme evaluations, as appropriate.
- Coordinate UNFPA SSC activities with those of other UN organizations.

#### *Regional and sub-regional offices*

- Work closely with UNFPA country offices to promote SSC and ensure that UNDAFs reflect SSC priorities.
- Ensure that SSC is incorporated in regional programme design.
- Support continuous capacity building for country offices and national counterparts
- Work with country offices to map country needs and services or products in the region that are available through SSC, and support efforts to assist MICs in developing niche areas of expertise.
- Establish long term agreements with countries and partners with recognized excellence in population and development areas for ensuring systematic technical assistance in the context of regional and country programmes.
- Assist country offices in developing monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Establish TOR for SSC agreements.
- Work with partners to contribute to a global database (roaster) of regional and national institutions that can provide high-quality technical expertise.
- Document and disseminate country and regional experiences and lessons learned.
- Liaise with other regional offices to identify inter-regional opportunities.
- Provide regular reports on SSC and triangular cooperation, including for the biennial report for the UN High-Level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.
- Ensure that SSC is resourced for contingency and preparedness planning processes and for emergency response.
- Ensure that an SSC criterion is included in all regional and country programme evaluations, as appropriate.

#### *Technical Division*

- Develop new ideas and state-of-the-art research on SSC for population and development activities, in coordination with UN and other organizations.

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- Analyse SSC practices to understand what works and what does not.
- Establish long term agreements with countries and partners with recognized excellence in population areas for ensuring systematic technical assistance in the global level.
- Ensure that SSC as a technical assistance modality is a key business line at UNFPA and is encouraged for population-related programmes.
- Provide strategic guidance and support regional and country offices in planning and implementing SSC activities, as requested.
- Facilitate SSC exchanges between regional organizations and networks.
- Monitor SSC programmes and activities at the global level, and regularly follow up the implementation of the SSC strategy.
- Negotiate long-term commitments by highly qualified partners through agreements with governments, global alliances and international networks, including for intervention in emergency situations, as requested.

### ***Information and External Relations Division***

- Analyse intergovernmental discussions and decisions on SSC, and support the deliberations of UN Member States.
- Draft SSC strategies linked to intergovernmental consensus.
- Pursue inter-agency cooperation on SSC, in tandem with other divisions.
- Advocate for SSC and UNFPA's role in it.
- Contribute to internal UNFPA discussions and policy development.
- Lead the development of a resource mobilization direction/ideas for SSC.

### ***Programme Division***

- Ensure that SSC and related M&E indicators are included in programme design (planning/monitoring and evaluation) guidance.
- Monitor and report on SSC indicator(s) in the Strategic Plan.
- Provide guidelines for reporting on SSC as part of the UNFPA annual reporting exercise.
- Ensure that an SSC criterion is included in UNFPA evaluation guidelines.
- Oversee institutional knowledge management, including through a roster of governments and institutions, internal communications and knowledge management platforms.
- Provide access to communities of practice and Fusion to internal and external partners.
- Collect and consolidate good practices and lessons learned through a standard template on the knowledge platform.
- Establish a roster of UNFPA personnel involved in SSC.
- Promote and enhance SSC in UNFPA humanitarian responses to develop capacities.

### ***Learning and Career Management Branch/Division of Human Resources***

- Mainstream SSC through wide range of UNFPA learning initiatives as a modality for capacity development.
- Strengthen capacities among UNFPA staff on the nature, content and implementation of SSC as a modality for capacity development.

## **VI. Coordinating Implementation**

The success of this strategy will rest on strengthening coordination across different levels of UNFPA and a dedicated effort to institutionalize the actions outlined here. Following the Nairobi

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Outcome Document's call for mainstreaming support for SSC, UNFPA should strengthen its participation in a variety of relevant global and regional coordination mechanisms. It also needs to work with other UN Development Group (UNDG) agencies to ensure that SSC is incorporated in collaborative UN efforts, in conformity with national development plans and agency mandates.

An advisory group comprising a mix of SSC experts, focal points and programme managers should report to the operations committee, under the facilitation the Technical Division Terms of reference will be developed for the advisory group.

### **VII. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The recent Technical Division survey noted that monitoring and evaluation have either not been conducted or are not well documented for SSC initiatives. This has contributed to a perception that SSC activities take place in isolation from each other and without a common thread. Both monitoring and evaluation need to be strengthened.

Regular monitoring will require quantitative and qualitative mechanisms to compare experiences in tracking, promoting and improving SSC, and to document and disseminate lessons learned. UNFPA should increase the collection of SSC performance data, and design indicators to capture institutional changes and country satisfaction. The UN has developed indicators<sup>9</sup> that could be included in the SSC orientation package mentioned under Objective 1.

SSC evaluations should underline UNFPA's role in strengthening regional and national institutions, particularly under the new UNFPA technical assistance modality (see separate guidance note). Evaluation tools should be made available to country offices. The GRP evaluation process (4 years cycle) should assess the SSC strategy at country, regional and global levels, and support updating and revision.

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<sup>9</sup> TCDC High Level Committee. "Revised Guidelines for the Review of Policies and Procedures Concerning Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries." Thirteenth Session, 27-30 May 2003.