

Personnel Exchanges as a Cooperation Model for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

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List of Abbreviations

JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
Norec	Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation

Acknowledgements

This research work was carried out under the South-South Cooperation Global Thinkers Initiative, the global coalition of think tank networks for South-South cooperation. This United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation/United Nations Development Programme joint initiative brings forward voices and knowledge from think tanks around the world. The project aims to maximize the potential and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation through joint research and knowledge sharing to inform policy dialogues and agenda-setting.

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Executive Summary

The world is changing rapidly. One of the striking features on the international development scene is the steady growth and popularity of South-South and triangular cooperation as a means to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Personnel exchanges have been one of the popular ways to cooperate and gain competence by exchanging professionals, fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and developing competencies.

This research study explores the critical role of personnel exchanges as a collaborative model within South-South and triangular cooperation, emphasizing knowledge sharing and competency development. Framed under the South-South Global Thinkers Initiative, the study aims to enrich the understanding of the dynamics of personnel exchanges to increase the impact of development initiatives.

The primary objectives include understanding the multifaceted nature of personnel exchanges and assessing their effectiveness in advancing development cooperation agendas. The study also delves into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual platforms on the future of personnel exchanges, with a focus on the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation's (UNOSSC) South-South Galaxy platform.

An in-depth examination of the reciprocal personnel exchange cooperation model, developed by Norec, reveals its potential to promote multi-directional knowledge exchange. The study assesses the model's effectiveness, emphasizing egalitarian principles and uncovering insights to optimize its implementation for more equitable and mutually beneficial exchanges.

The relevance of personnel exchanges cannot be overstated. They facilitate knowledge transfer, capacity-building, cultural understanding, networking and diplomacy. The study acknowledges that not all exchanges are equally effective and identifies factors such as cultural interactions, institutional partnerships and societal engagements as key to successful exchanges.

Drawing on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study addresses the challenges and opportunities confronting personnel exchanges, examining, in particular, innovative approaches that use digital solutions to augment such initiatives. It underscores the importance of adapting to changing circumstances while maintaining the essence of collaboration that personnel exchanges offer. The study showcases the potential of personnel exchanges to promote multi-directional knowledge exchange. The research maps and analyses the exchange cooperation model, providing insights to optimize its implementation for more equitable and mutually beneficial exchanges.

The challenges identified include resource inequality, the need for well-defined institutional frameworks, political differences and the Global South's potential dependency on developed countries. The study proposes solutions, such as addressing resource inequality, building trust through regular in-person meetings and promoting language skills.

Key recommendations include disseminating exchange models such as Norec's, emphasizing multi-actor partnerships, and incorporating virtual platforms for sustained knowledge sharing. Solutions to challenges - including sustainability, distance, language barriers and different levels of development - underscore the importance of clear communication, technological facilitation and mutual benefit.

Personnel exchanges are integral to South-South and triangular cooperation, fostering cooperation, solidarity and shared solutions. Various models, as mapped in the study, can facilitate successful partnerships, contributing to the achievement of development goals in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

In conclusion, this research study provides valuable insights into the significance of personnel exchanges, offering practical recommendations to enhance their effectiveness and contribute to the broader goals of South-South and triangular cooperation.



1

Introduction

This study examines the significance of personnel exchange as a cooperative model for South-South and triangular cooperation, emphasizing the sharing of knowledge and relevant competencies among individuals, countries, development actors and international networks.

According to the outcome document of the Second High-Level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation (Buenos Aires Plan of Action+40), the key objectives of South-South cooperation include enhancing the capacity of developing countries to seek local solutions to their development issues and promoting and strengthening collective self-reliance among developing countries by exchanging experiences. Another pivotal objective is to enhance the quantity and quality of international development cooperation. This involves pooling capacities to improve the effectiveness of the resources directed towards such cooperation.¹

This study is initiated under the framework of the South-South Global Thinkers Initiative — a global coalition of think-tank networks facilitating the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and perspectives from the Global South. The initiative aims to maximize the potential and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation through joint research and knowledge sharing to inform policy dialogues and agenda-setting on South-South and triangular cooperation.

Through this research collaboration, Norec, UNOSSC and the SDPI developed a shared vision of enriching personnel exchanges. The study aims to highlight the multifaceted dynamics of personnel exchanges in creating the impetus for cooperative development initiatives. By fostering comprehensive improvements, this report sets the stage for enhanced effectiveness of personnel exchange, enabling South-South and triangular cooperation to strengthen its impact and contribution to achieving the SDGs and other Global South priorities.

¹ UNOSSC, <https://unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/>

The study's main research questions focus on understanding the varied implications and effectiveness of personnel exchanges in advancing development cooperation agendas and priorities. This inquiry explores the significance of personnel exchange beyond the aspects of technical knowledge transfer, recognizing its role in fostering a deeper understanding of the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of the host country, particularly from a Global South perspective.

The research also seeks to investigate the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of virtual communication and learning platforms on the future of personnel exchange. It focuses specifically on how a digital platform such as the UNOSSC's South-South Galaxy platform may complement and enhance exchanges. This comprehensive examination aims to shed light on the evolving dynamics and opportunities within the realm of international development cooperation and knowledge sharing.

The scope of work also involves examining Norec's model of reciprocal personnel exchange cooperation² and its potential to promote the exchange of expertise through personnel exchange programmes. The inquiry involves an in-depth review of the effectiveness of Norec's reciprocity-based model, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that knowledge exchange occurs bi-directionally. This encompasses improving technical skills and language acquisition and sharing diverse information about economic, social and political conditions and challenges among the participating countries. The research seeks to determine whether the model's practical implementation aligns with its egalitarian principles, fostering true equality among all stakeholders engaged in the exchange. This investigation aims to gain insights that can contribute to refining and optimizing Norec's model for the benefit of more equitable and mutually beneficial personnel exchange initiatives.

2 The Norec personnel exchange model involves three levels: the individual, or the people participating in an exchange; the institutional, or the organizations managing the process of sending, hosting and returning the individuals; and that of the community and wider society in which the exchange is embedded at home and abroad.



Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used to gather information for the report and address the key research questions.

2.1 Literature review and mapping of good practices

The researchers conducted a thorough **literature review** to examine the empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of personnel exchange programmes. This involved a comprehensive analysis of research articles, project reports on personnel exchange initiatives conducted by international organizations, reports from the public sectors in Southern countries, and relevant developments on discussions and updates on personnel exchange programmes. The review aimed to draw insights from personnel exchange programmes, encompassing their stated objectives, participant profiles, outcomes achieved and associated knowledge transfer initiatives.

In addition, **good practices were mapped** to identify actors within existing personnel exchange initiatives in the Global South to take stock of such initiatives to further inform policy development, fostering innovation and promoting the sustainability of such initiatives. This process can both inform the design and refinement of exchange programmes and contribute to efficient resource allocation, guiding investments towards approaches with demonstrated effectiveness.

The study is also informed by the contributions and insights obtained via the **e-discussion on the South-South Global Thinkers Platform**, which invited think tank community members to participate. The e-discussion was launched prior to initiating the research study.



Limitations:

Few personnel exchange activities have been assessed rigorously. However, going forward, the study can provide a foundation for obtaining valuable lessons, learning from the mapped experiences of organizations and individuals involved in personnel exchange. The findings can serve as benchmarks for programme evaluation, influence policy development and inspire innovation in this area. Additionally, identifying sustainability factors contributes to the long-term success and positive integration of exchange experiences within broader societal contexts.

2.2 Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews (KIs) were conducted using a structured questionnaire (see Annex A). Interview participants included stakeholders in personnel exchange programmes: representatives from government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Table 1 provides an overview of the KIs with the stakeholders engaged in the research process.

Table 1

Details of Key Informant Interviews

Respondents	Number of interviews
Norec beneficiaries	5
Think tanks	2
Academics/faculty members	14
Government officials (e.g., higher education commission; scientific foundations)	14
Total	35

Five of the 35 interviews specifically involved beneficiaries of Norec's personnel exchange programme (for further details, refer to Annex B). During these interviews, respondents shared their programme experiences and provided feedback on their effectiveness. The discussions encompassed the advantages and challenges of personnel exchanges, considerations related to gender dynamics within the exchange model, and recommendations for enhancing the overall efficacy of personnel exchange programmes.



3

Bridging Borders: Exploring the Relevance of Personnel Exchange in Development Cooperation Agendas

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The relevance of personnel exchanges must be appreciated. They promote knowledge transfer, capacity-building, cultural understanding, networking and partnerships, diplomacy and cooperation, global problem solving, entrepreneurship and innovation, educational opportunities, and the empowerment of individuals.

Thus, they strengthen diplomatic ties and cultural exchange and soft power (Toru and Ahmed, 2020). Norec (2022) defines exchanges as “sending and receiving young people on work placements between partners in different countries to learn and share knowledge and skills.”

Countries in the Global South are dealing with social and macroeconomic challenges. The vulnerability of their domestic economies exacerbates these challenges (Bhowmick, 2022). Sustained relations with and between those countries become important to promote a narrative of development cooperation (Belebani, 2019). The United Nations (2019) and ESCAP (2021) have stressed that cooperation in the form of knowledge and expertise exchanges through programmes, projects and initiatives are important in mitigating challenges confronted by the countries in the Global South. Furthermore, cooperation is also important for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Aslam et al., 2020).

The role of personnel exchanges is even more important in the context of achieving the SDGs, as knowledge exchange helps to build the capacity of individuals and institutions, thus supporting the achievement of development agendas (UN, 2021). Personnel exchanges provide significant benefits, fostering cultural understanding, economic growth and diplomatic cooperation. The World Bank (2020) emphasized the role of such exchanges in fostering economic development and creating lasting connections that can lead to business partnerships, academic collaborations and grassroots initiatives. The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Global Goals Initiative emphasizes the importance of global cooperation through exchanges, which proved helpful in the COVID-19 pandemic, as normal working relationships and exchanges between countries were strained or even halted (Raihan et al., 2020). By using online platforms during the pandemic, individuals from different regions shared their views and experiences. This proved significant in promoting healthcare and social protection during times of crisis (Ahmed and Ahmed, 2023; Mabugu, Ahmed et al., 2022).

Research studies advocating personnel exchanges as a cooperative model for South-South and triangular cooperation have grown and transformed significantly. As researchers delve into this area, it is increasingly important to examine the existing body of literature to identify ongoing practices in personnel exchanges, gaps, trends and key contributions.

This section focuses on non-Norec examples to assess the relevance and effectiveness of personnel exchange cooperation modality against the questions below (Norec’s contributions are explained and assessed in later sections).³

BOX 1

Personnel exchange can contribute to development cooperation in many ways – from facilitating knowledge sharing to fostering collaboration and building capacity across different sectors and regions.

Government official exchange: Officials from different government departments exchange positions for a specific period. For example, an education official from Country A may work with the education department in Country B to share best practices and strategies.

Technical experts exchange: Engineers, scientists or technical experts from one organization or country exchange positions with their counterparts in another to work on joint projects in fields such as agriculture, health care or technology.

Researcher exchange programmes: Universities and research institutions often engage in personnel exchanges to promote collaborative research. Researchers may spend a sabbatical or a specific research period at an institution in another country, contributing their expertise and gaining new insights.

Healthcare professionals exchange: Doctors, nurses and healthcare administrators may participate in exchange programmes to address specific health challenges. For example, a medical professional from a developed country might work in a developing country to provide training, conduct health clinics or share expertise in disease management.

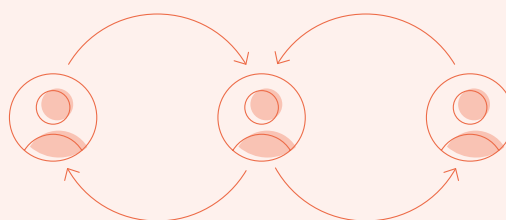
Entrepreneurial exchange: Entrepreneurs and business leaders may participate in exchange programmes to foster economic development. They may share business strategies, mentor local entrepreneurs and explore opportunities for collaboration and investment.

Non-profit and non-governmental organization personnel exchange: Staff from non-governmental or non-profit organizations may exchange roles to enhance organizational capacities. This could involve sharing expertise in project management, fundraising or community development.

Educational exchange for teachers: Teachers and educators may exchange positions to strengthen teaching methodologies, curriculum development and educational leadership. These exchanges may be held at various levels, from primary schools to universities.

International development agencies exchange: Personnel from international development agencies may exchange roles to ensure a holistic understanding of global development challenges. This could involve individuals working on projects related to poverty alleviation, sustainable development and humanitarian assistance.

Youth exchange programme: Young professionals and students may participate in exchange programmes to foster a global perspective and develop cross-cultural skills. These programmes often focus on leadership development, community service and cultural immersion.



³ The Galaxy database also provides examples and descriptions of personnel exchanges. <https://unsouthsouth.org/library/south-south-galaxy/>

Are all personnel, institutional and societal exchanges effective?



The effectiveness of exchanges in the Global South depends on various factors. The three main contributors to effectiveness are cultural interactions, institutional exchanges and societal exchanges. Cultural interactions and people-to-people connections can promote mutual understanding and empathy, leading to positive outcomes such as increased cultural awareness, friendships, and stronger South-South and triangular cooperation.

The Blended Learning Leadership Initiative, a Global Girl Project youth exchange programme, is one such example. It involved groups of girls from Haiti, Jordan, South Africa, India and Cambodia who came together to share their experiences and learn about the cultures of other countries.⁴ However, these programmes' impact may be limited if they fail to translate into broader institutional or societal change.

Institutional exchanges involve partnerships among organizations, universities and governments, often facilitated by economic cooperation agreements between countries. For example, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs fellowship programme⁵ has offered a reciprocal exchange since 2015, providing an opportunity for U.S. professionals to engage in collaborative projects with alumni in sub-Saharan Africa. This builds on strategic partnerships and professional connections developed during the fellowship. The reciprocal exchange encourages U.S. experts and leaders to collaborate with African Fellows on critical issues, such as promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity, while contributing to U.S. public diplomacy efforts and strengthening mutual understanding between the United States and Africa.

When these exchanges obtain adequate commitment and resources and align with the needs of the Global South, they can effectively transfer knowledge, technology and expertise (UNDP, 2019). Involving local civil society organizations in such collaboration is also important (UNDP, 2023).

There are no assessments of the extent to which such exchanges have helped to increase economic growth and social development in the South. Some initiatives would lend themselves well to such assessment, which would be worth trying. For example, under the South-South cooperation exchange between Colombia and Belize, fishers from Colombia learned cultivation, harvesting and processing techniques from counterparts in Belize and implemented them at home (UNDP, 2017).

Can personnel exchanges lead to policy improvements in the South?



UNDP (2019) highlights that knowledge sharing and capacity-building are essential to develop skills and empower countries in order to address local policy and regulatory challenges more efficiently. This can encompass many areas, including expertise and best practices relevant to education, agriculture, technology and healthcare.

UNOSSC (2022) states that entering into trade agreements and partnerships (prompted by personnel exchanges) offers potential for economic growth and trade opportunities to increase the export of goods and services and open new markets. Furthermore, sharing research findings and resources can accelerate progress in areas such as healthcare, renewable energy and environmental conservation. Collaborating culturally and diplomatically can lead to increased tolerance and appreciation for diversity. Joint efforts can contribute to regional stability by addressing common challenges such as conflict resolution, poverty reduction and disaster management (Ahmed et al. 2015).

UNOSSC (2022) highlights that working together for peacebuilding can enhance security and stability in conflict-prone regions (Javed et al., 2020, Hassan et al., 2016). By emphasizing solidarity and mutual support (embedded in personnel exchange models), Global South countries can strengthen their negotiations with international organizations and reduce their dependency on aid and assistance from wealthier countries in the Global North. This cross-cultural innovation brings together diverse perspectives and approaches to create novel solutions to complex problems. Norec's project on triangular cooperation for vocational skills and entrepreneurship training in Malawi, Norway and Uganda is a prime example of youth in these countries benefitting from tailor-made training courses on vocational and entrepreneurial skills. Staff exchanges include both in-house teachers and hired professionals who guide host country partners on vocational and entrepreneurial skills.

⁴ Global Girl Project, <https://www.globalgirlproject.org/blog/2021/11/23/global-south-exchange>

⁵ <https://www.mandelawashingtonfellowship.org/reciprocal-exchanges/>

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) carries out a programme that sends experts to developing countries, where they transfer their skills and make proposals in line with specific on-site conditions.⁶ They work mainly with administrators and engineers who play a central role in their countries' economic and social development. The programme contributes simultaneously to human resources development and organizational and institutional development. The main feature of this cooperation is that it takes place in the developing countries. Given the increased demand for cooperation, as in the areas of institution-building, policymaking, and fiscal and monetary policy, JICA has sent policy advisors to key government agencies responsible for policy formulation to provide vigorous support for these areas. Examples include core support to develop important policies in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Central Asia and Eastern Europe as these countries move toward establishing market economies. Cooperation in the field of industrial policy is being provided to Jordan and Bulgaria.

BOX 2

Good Practice in Personnel Exchange Cooperation:

Government of Japan's Digital Agency and the Estonian Ministry of Economy and Communications

In 2022, the Government of Japan's Digital Agency and the Republic of Estonia's Ministry of Economic Affairs signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to exchange best practices, experiences and expertise in innovative and effective digital government and society solutions, policies and regulations, public procurement, and governance models. Activities will include personnel exchange and strengthening collaboration under the Data Free Flow with Trust initiative. This will involve exploring the possibility of an exchange between experts or officials, seeking to identify areas for deeper cooperation.

Source: [Digital Agency, Government of Japan](#)



How are exchange programmes relevant to Global South agendas?



Puri (2010) and UNDP (2019) highlighted that exchange programmes foster knowledge and technology transfer, enabling the spread of innovative ideas and practices to drive progress. Cultural exchanges promote mutual understanding and respect between countries, benefiting international relations and fostering soft power through cultural diplomacy. The Asian Cultural Council, formed in 2019, is one such example. This platform promotes cultural exchanges and links culture with peace, sustainable development and innovation (Singapore International Foundation, 2021).

Exchange programmes that create business partnerships and collaborations have also stimulated economic growth and trade. The Report of the Secretary-General on the State of South-South Cooperation (2009) shows that such programmes encourage sustainable development, diversity and global leadership through environmental awareness, responsible resource management, cross-border innovation, policy learning and advocacy. Similarly, the 2022 version of that report highlighted that cooperation on climate action has taken several forms, including country-level exchanges to address mitigation and adaptation. The report also mentioned that innovative cooperation initiatives were implemented through online knowledge platforms, distance learning and virtual training. Such initiatives have also helped to spread social innovations from the South (Khan, Javed et al., 2016).

6 https://www.jica.go.jp/english/information/press/2023/20231018_42.html

BOX 3

Good Practice in Personnel Exchange Cooperation: **JICA's Third Country Experts Dispatch (TCED) programme**

Since 1994, JICA has helped to send competent Southern officials and experts to other developing countries for technical transfer activities and knowledge sharing through its Third Country Experts Dispatch (TCED) programme. In most cases, these officials and experts had served previously as the counterparts of JICA's bilateral cooperation with their countries. The TCED scheme began in 1994.

Source: [JICA](#)



Two case studies are important to mention. The first, Southern Voice, is a network of over 66 think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America that promotes debate on fair global development by leveraging evidence and analysis from the South. It facilitates research exchange through conferences, workshops and online platforms, enabling Southern researchers to share findings and network. Additionally, it supports collaborative research projects and provides grants for international participation.

Southern Voice also brings researchers together to debate through expert group meetings, policy dialogues, publications and public outreach. These activities empower Southern researchers, promote evidence-based policymaking and strengthen the voice of the Global South in development discussions. Examples include the State of the SDGs report, the Young Think Tankers Initiative and the Digital Transformation Initiative.

BOX 4

Good Practice in Personnel Exchange Cooperation: **Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)**

The Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders is the flagship programme of the U.S. government's [Young African Leaders Initiative \(YALI\)](#). Established in 2015, the Fellowship's Reciprocal Exchange component offers U.S. professionals the opportunity to engage in collaborative projects with Fellowship alumni in sub-Saharan Africa, building on strategic partnerships and professional connections developed during the Fellowship. The Reciprocal Exchange encourages U.S. experts and leaders to collaborate with African Fellows on critical issues, such as promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity, while contributing to U.S. public diplomacy efforts and strengthening mutual understanding between the United States and Africa.

Source: [Mandela Washington Fellowship](#)



The second is Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and its Think Tank Initiative, which played a pivotal role in fostering research exchange and collaboration for global development. The initiative focused on strengthening research capacity within independent policy research institutions in developing countries, promoting North-South partnerships, South-South networks and triangular collaboration. Examples include partnerships for poverty reduction strategies between the Centre for Policy Dialogue (Bangladesh) and the Institute for Development Studies (UK), the African Policy Network partnerships for research on governance and development in Africa, and the collaboration between the Overseas Development Institute (UK), and the Brazilian Center for International Relations (CEBRI) on climate change adaptation strategies.

During the pandemic, IDRC promoted online knowledge-sharing platforms, such as its Research Repository and Knowledge for Policy platform, that enabled researchers from the Global South to engage with their peers. These platforms offer access to valuable research findings, publications and resources, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration beyond geographic boundaries. Access to expensive research journals and related materials is also provided on a subsidized basis. Similarly, virtual communities of practice connect researchers working on specific themes or challenges, providing platforms for online discussions, collaboration and mutual support regardless of physical location.

Through these arrangements, IDRC has focused over the years on a diverse range of Global South agendas, including climate change adaptation, poverty reduction, global health, food security, governance, digital technology, science and innovation, gender equality, youth education, urbanization, and peace and security (Mabugu, Ahmed et al., 2022; Ward, Gogue et al., 2007).

How has COVID-19 impacted exchanges in the Global South?



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on international exchange programmes, particularly in the Global South, where travel restrictions, lockdowns and health concerns have disrupted traditional in-person exchanges. As a result, many institutions and organizations have rapidly adopted virtual exchange formats to continue international collaborations. Virtual exchanges include online classes, webinars, virtual conferences and remote research collaborations.

For example, the World Food Programme Centre of Excellence against Hunger⁷ launched a virtual exchange in Brazil to implement South-South cooperation activities in the wake of travel restrictions. Whatley (2022) reported that the most significant benefits of virtual exchanges include increased accessibility and inclusivity. Participants from remote or underserved areas who may have previously been unable to engage in international collaboration due to financial or logistical barriers can now do so without traveling. This has also helped reduce carbon emissions associated with international travel, aligning with environmental sustainability goals. In addition, virtual exchanges help young people develop global awareness and learn skills that can enhance employment prospects and personal growth (World Learning, 2023).

Virtual exchanges have also allowed for continuing education and research during the pandemic. Students continued their education through online classes and virtual internships, while researchers maintained their collaborations through virtual research projects and attended virtual conferences when in-person engagements were not possible. This supported resilience during the pandemic, ensuring that education, research and international partnerships continued despite disruptions.

Norec's global partnerships and personnel exchange programmes flourished during COVID-19 through the increased use of digital tools, leading to more frequent communication, broader participation and enriched collaboration. While acknowledging the importance of in-person meetings, Norec's own assessment proposed developing plans that leverage a balanced approach of virtual and in-person interactions to further strengthen its network.⁸ Norec also redefined its model for personnel exchange and promoted digital exchange via virtual platforms. The key measures in this regard included building competence using virtual platforms, digitizing courses, and supporting research and policy development. After the pandemic, researchers from the Global South participated in virtual meetings and online dialogues.⁹ More researchers were able to participate in these spaces than attend in-person meetings before the pandemic. The Igarape Institute (2021) emphasized that online collaborative platforms, such as We the Peoples, were significant to document views of a broader audience in writing.

⁷ <https://www.wfp.org/centre-of-excellence-against-hunger>

⁸ "Norec's international collaboration grew stronger due to the pandemic," <https://www.norec.no/en/news/news/norecs-international-collaboration-grew-stronger-due-to-the-pandemic/>, accessed on 11 December 2023.

⁹ <https://www.ssc-globalthinkers.org/topic/covid-19-pandemic-opportunity-leveraging-global-south-research-and-knowledge>

However, virtual exchanges have also posed challenges in terms of cultural immersion and social interactions as compared to traditional in-person exchanges. Building personal relationships and understanding diverse cultures can be more challenging in a virtual environment. This has highlighted the need to find new ways to address these issues.

The digital divide poses another challenge to virtual exchanges. While such exchanges have expanded access, not everyone has equal access to reliable internet service and digital devices (Javed and Ahmed, 2022, Manzoor et al. 2021). Thus, participation remains limited to certain groups and regions. This has led to a greater emphasis on addressing the digital divide to ensure that everyone can participate (Javed et al., 2021, Khan et al., 2016).

Despite these challenges, virtual exchanges will likely remain a significant part of international collaborations even as in-person exchanges resume. Future exchange programmes may incorporate a mix of virtual and physical elements to provide flexibility and inclusivity. Some organizations and institutions are already adopting hybrid models, combining virtual and in-person components to maximize the benefits of both. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the development and adoption of digital tools and technologies for online collaboration, making virtual exchanges more effective and interactive than ever before.

How can we navigate current and future complexities in South-South cooperation frameworks?



The existing evidence base offers few answers to this question; future research should explore this area further. While global South-South cooperation offers many advantages, existing frameworks do have gaps. First, unequal resources and capabilities in the Global South can lead to uneven contributions to and benefits from cooperation efforts. Additionally, unlike North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation often lacks well-defined institutional frameworks. This can create significant challenges for coordination and implementation. Many Global South countries may also have limited financial, technical or human resource capacity to engage in meaningful cooperation, which can hinder the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Political differences and conflicts among countries within the Global South can also hinder cooperation efforts. These differences may arise from historical, ideological or territorial issues. The risk of dependency on a few more powerful countries within the Global South raises another concern: it can lead to unequal power dynamics and potential exploitation. The diversity of countries within the Global South can also lead to fragmentation and the lack of a unified voice or strategy in international forums. Additionally, projects initiated through South-South cooperation may face sustainability challenges if they are not well-planned or lack long-term funding mechanisms.

The absence of robust accountability mechanisms can also be challenging, leading to mismanagement in some cooperation initiatives. Inclusivity is another concern, as some countries or regions within the Global South may be excluded from cooperation efforts, exacerbating inequalities. Nigam (2015) highlights that while South-South cooperation can be beneficial, it does not address underlying global power imbalances that often favour the Global North, perpetuating global inequality. Therefore, these potential challenges must be considered and addressed effectively when engaging in Global South-South cooperation initiatives.

BOX 5

Good Practice in Personnel Exchange Cooperation: **German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)**

To strengthen scientific relationships between German and foreign institutions and promote collaborative research activities, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) supports joint, binational research projects. Within the framework of project-related personnel exchange programmes, young researchers and scientists early in their academic career are given the opportunity to qualify in an international scientific environment. The programme is a funding mechanism for the qualification of young scientists.

Source: [DAAD Programme](#)





4

In-Depth Analysis: Maximizing the Norec Model for Sharing of Competence Through Personnel Exchange

To delve further into personnel exchange programmes such as the one offered by Norec, informational KIIs were held with the five institutions that benefited directly from Norec's reciprocal personnel exchange programmes.



Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH) in Malawi benefited significantly from personnel exchange and South-South cooperation in collaboration with Haukeland Hospital in Norway. This exchange programme has played a vital role in enhancing infrastructure at KCH. Over the period 2008-2016, the partnership facilitated the exchange of midwives, medical engineers, laboratory technicians and radiologists between the two hospitals. Professionals from Haukeland Hospital worked at Bwaila Maternity Hospital/KCH for one year, while their Malawian counterparts gained experience at Haukeland Hospital. This collaborative initiative involved approximately 30 staff members from both Haukeland and Kamuzu Central hospitals.



The Taita Taveta County Government in Kenya benefited from personnel exchange and South-South cooperation, fostered through its enduring partnership with Melhus Municipality in Norway. This involved exchanging professionals such as teachers, spatial planners and nurses and collaborating on projects targeting individuals with disabilities. The exchange was instrumental in facilitating mutual learning and sharing of best practices, resulting in enhanced service delivery for the residents of Taita Taveta County. While primarily characterized as a North-South and South-North exchange project, this example exemplifies the potential for meaningful global collaboration, illustrating that competence can be exchanged on an equal footing between the Global North and the Global South.



Integrated Village Development Service (IVDS) in Nepal benefited from personnel exchange and South-South cooperation through its partnership with India’s Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan. The two organizations worked together on an organic farming promotion programme that supported young people’s participation in agriculture as a tool for sustainable development. The exchange focused on migrants returning from cities, creating livelihood opportunities for young people in rural areas, with an emphasis on skill-building in organic farming. This exchange helped improve the lives of young people in rural Nepal by providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful farmers.



The Leprosy Mission/Nepal, Leprosy Mission International/Bangladesh, and Leprosy Mission International/Myanmar exchanged personnel to improve the treatment and inclusion of people with leprosy and other disabilities. The collaboration supported improving research capacity, working with local communities/groups, improving online remote services, and focusing on social integration directly with patients. This exchange helped to improve the lives of people with leprosy and other disabilities by strengthening their access to treatment and support.



The Aspada Paribesh Unnayan Foundation in Bangladesh benefited from personnel exchange and South-South cooperation through its partnership with Cambodia’s Krousar Yoeung Association and India’s Pahal Jan Sahayog Vikas Sansthan. The three organizations shared knowledge and skills among nutrition experts from the three countries related to nutrition-enhancing activities. This exchange aimed to improve the nutritional status of people in Bangladesh by providing them access to information and best practices.

BOX 6



The Microfinance Development for Improved Livelihoods project promoted sustainable and inclusive access to financial services for all to secure development and end poverty. Over the period 2018–2020, 20 employees – 10 from K-rep Development Agency in Kenya and 10 from Wasasa Microfinance in Ethiopia – conducted a seven-month exchange.

See the full [good practice on South-South Galaxy](#).



The Bangladesh-Indian WAVE-DHAN partnership, a small farming project, involved a youth-led project of young farmers engaged in agro-entrepreneurship, using digital tools to create employment opportunities. The project promoted the transformation of small-scale farming into viable cooperative businesses by organizing smallholder farmers, taking advantage of their social capital and collective action in the agricultural supply chain.

See the full [good practice on South-South Galaxy](#).



Norec’s Improvement in the Quality of Leprosy and Disability Services project helped build the capacities of health personnel to secure improved health, living conditions and dignity for people affected by leprosy and disabilities. Recognizing the value of all stakeholders’ knowledge creates greater project ownership, participation and sustainability and builds the organizations’ confidence and competence.

See the full [good practice on South-South Galaxy](#).



Norec’s Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Marketing through Youth Involvement project supported youth participation in sustainable agriculture and agricultural market value chains for improved food security in Kenya and Zimbabwe. The project began during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected in-person exchanges. Participants from both countries were thus required to use digital technology to exchange knowledge on sustainable agriculture and marketing.

See the full [good practice on South-South Galaxy](#).



5

Key Findings

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Our findings are based on an analysis of the literature review, insights from the e-discussion with the think tank experts and information collected from the beneficiaries of exchange cooperation programme.

The findings noted the known benefits of personnel exchange, including acknowledgement of and appreciation for the ways in which such exchanges have deepened South-South and triangular cooperation. In the context of development cooperation, this involves more than the immediate transfer of skills. Exchange plays a vital role in fostering collaboration, understanding and a culture of continuous learning, all of which contribute to the sustainability and success of development initiatives. These benefits include:



Knowledge transfer and capacity-building:

Personnel exchange facilitates the transfer of knowledge and skills among individuals from different countries or organizations. This can lead to enhanced capacities in sectors such as technology, healthcare, education and governance.



Cultural understanding and collaboration:

Interactions among personnel from different countries promote cultural understanding and collaboration. Exposure to different work environments and practices helps build relationships, trust and a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities.



Networking:

Personnel exchange fosters the creation of professional networks among individuals and organizations. These networks can endure beyond the exchange period, creating long-term connections that can be leveraged for future collaborations and partnerships.

**Innovation and creativity:**

Exposure to diverse perspectives and approaches can stimulate innovation and creativity. Personnel exchanges allow individuals to bring fresh ideas and solutions to challenges, encouraging a more dynamic and adaptable approach to development.

**Enhanced communication skills:**

Dealing with different languages and communication styles during personnel exchanges can improve communication skills. This is particularly valuable in a globalized world where effective communication is crucial for successful development cooperation.

**Mutual learning:**

Both sending and receiving parties benefit from a two-way learning process. The personnel who participate in the exchange both share their expertise and learn from the practices and experiences of their counterparts, leading to a more mutually beneficial relationship.

**Increased motivation and professional development:**

Personnel participating in exchanges often experience increased motivation and professional development. Exposure to new challenges and environments can inspire individuals to excel in their roles and contribute more effectively to their home organizations upon their return.

**Cross-cultural sensitivity:**

Living and working in a different cultural context enhances cross-cultural sensitivity. This skill is essential in development cooperation, where understanding and respecting diverse cultures is crucial to projects' success.

**Positive impact on organizational culture:**

Introducing personnel with diverse experiences can positively influence the organizational culture of both sending and receiving institutions. This cultural enrichment can lead to more inclusive, adaptive and innovative workplaces.

**Long-term collaboration and sustainable development:**

Establishing strong connections through personnel exchanges can contribute to long-term collaboration between countries and organizations. Sustainable development requires ongoing partnerships; personnel exchange is a key mechanism for building and maintaining them.

Participants were also asked to identify and propose solutions to the challenges involved in personnel exchange. One of the main challenges identified to the partnership between Kamuzu Central Hospital in Malawi and Haukeland Hospital is the programme's sustainability. While Norec supported it, a long-term diversified funding plan should be developed to maintain its benefits in the long term; this may require ongoing efforts. Additionally, the programme should be more inclusive of people with disabilities (particularly women with disabilities) who require care; the relevant staff in Malawi needed additional capacity-building to address this.

Another challenge involves the high sunk costs of acquiring high-tech equipment, which prevent the SDGs from being achieved in the health space. One example concerns the case of collaborative initiatives among Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), Dr. George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH), and Haukeland University Hospital. These initiatives both strengthen North-South cooperation and foster knowledge exchange, capacity-building and skill enhancement. Respondents stated that this partnership has promoted mutual understanding and collaboration among institutions from different regions since 2020, showcasing the potential for shared expertise and best practices in the field of trauma and emergency medicine.

Through the Norec-facilitated exchange project with Haukeland University Hospital in Norway, the two Malawian institutions received an endoscopic surgical skills simulator. This enhanced their medical staffs' laparoscopic surgery skills and is particularly beneficial for treating penetrating trauma patients. The equipment is a valuable donation, providing advanced training instruments and contributing significantly to capacity-building.

The challenge associated with the partnership between the Taita Taveta County Government and Melhus Municipality is their geographic distance. This can make it difficult for staff to travel and collaborate on projects in diverse contexts. Technology could address this, but no structured tech-based coordination was identified. This is also essential for knowledge retention as it can be difficult to ensure effective knowledge transfer and retention after the programme ends. Additionally, the two partners have different cultural and legal contexts, which can sometimes result in advice from abroad that is generic, rather than specific.

The challenge reported in the partnership between Integrated Village Development Service and Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan involved a language barrier. Staff from the former speak Nepali, those from the latter speak Hindi, making it difficult for the two partners to communicate effectively. In addition, the two organizations have different levels of experience and resources, which can sometimes lead to imbalances in the partnership. The local level governance structures (e.g., at village level) were also different.

In the case of the Leprosy Mission/Nepal, Leprosy Mission International/Bangladesh and Leprosy Mission International/Myanmar collaboration, each has different levels of organizational and staff experience, making it difficult for them to relate to each other. The organizations' financial and project management systems and approaches also varied, which can make it difficult to understand each other's day-to-day challenges and problems. Further, the three entities have different cultures and working styles.

One of the main challenges in the partnership among Aspada Paribesh Unnayan Foundation (Bangladesh), Krousar Yoeung Association (Cambodia) and Pahal Jan Sahayog Vikas Sansthan (India) was the lack of shared resources. The three organizations are relatively small and have limited resources, posing problems in implementing collaborative activities on a large scale or even on a sustained basis. They also have different levels and types of government support and support from development partners is sporadic.

The majority of respondents expressed the opinion that face-to-face interactions are the most effective means of communication, despite the availability of low-cost virtual options. Respondents believe that effective communication, deep trust and enhanced collaboration are established through such interactions, ultimately contributing to the knowledge base of all participants.

The respondents emphasized the effectiveness of personnel exchanges for institutions. They affirmed that such exchanges contribute to capacity-building by facilitating the acquisition of new skills and research methodologies and developing networks among researchers and academics. Additionally, respondents noted that personnel exchange collaborations improve staff members' skills and boost their confidence, enabling them to participate actively in research and industrialization activities. Ultimately, these collaborations enhance the institutions' reputation.

Respondents also discussed the significant advantages of personnel exchanges for the community, although their impact at that level may not be as pronounced as their effect on individuals or institutions. Nonetheless, certain factors can contribute to learning, such as heightened cultural awareness within the community, which can foster a desire to learn from diverse cultures and active participation in community welfare initiatives. Appe (2018) notes that South-South development cooperation with assistance from civil society organizations can serve as a development model to raise awareness about cooperation in communities.

Respondents reported that not all personnel exchange programme participants contribute equally to the learning process. This discrepancy can be attributed to various factors, including differences in motivation levels, attitudes towards learning and participants' prior experiences. These factors should be considered when evaluating programme effectiveness and devising strategies to optimize learning outcomes for all participants.

Respondents pinpointed areas where enhancing the Norec model could bolster inclusivity and accessibility, broadening the reach of the personnel exchange programme to involve individuals from diverse backgrounds now underrepresented in various forums. Emphasis is given to prioritizing sustainable projects that yield long-term positive impacts on host societies. Many respondents advocate for comprehensive training for personnel exchange participants, covering cultural sensitivities, host country taboos and ethical standards. Moreover, in response to the evolving global landscape, it is recommended that Norec's personnel exchange model be updated to integrate insights from the Toru and Ahmed study (2020), addressing relevant global systemic concerns.

Respondents unanimously endorsed the value of virtual meetings, even in the post-pandemic landscape, citing factors such as accessibility, flexibility and cost-effectiveness. Virtual platforms are praised for transcending geographical constraints, fostering global collaboration and exposing participants to diverse perspectives, thereby amplifying overall benefits. Recording virtual sessions provides a valuable record for the future and also provides materials for training of trainers.

While acknowledging the efficiency, time and cost savings and the potential for international collaboration through virtual communication, respondents also highlighted the downsides of virtual meetings. Connectivity issues, particularly in regions such as the Global South, pose challenges. Virtual meetings may impede the development of personal connections, lead to miscommunication and introduce time zone complications. Technical difficulties, including disruptions in audio and video, can compromise engagement and result in ineffective communication. Respondents additionally pointed to the challenges of articulating thoughts clearly in virtual settings.

Respondents highlighted the profound impact of COVID-19 on societies, emphasizing the surge in the digital world and the prevalence of virtual meetings. The imminent transformation of personnel exchanges is evident. While virtual platforms offer accessibility and cost-efficiency, they also introduce a sense of alienation based on the lack of face-to-face interaction. This may impede effective discussions. Prolonged digital meetings can result in participant fatigue, diminishing the quality of conversations. In light of these evolving circumstances, future personnel exchanges must adopt a hybrid approach, combining virtual and face-to-face elements. This integration aims to strike a balance between technological convenience and the essential human connections that enrich exchanges.

While digital platforms can play a crucial role in enhancing government processes and communication, their ability to replace in-person exchanges hinges on the specific context and nature of interactions. Digital tools can complement in-person exchanges or sustain post-exchange interactions between institutions and individuals. Respondents emphasized the utility of these platforms for joint webinars, seminars, trainings and conferences, offering cost-effective avenues for online mentorship and collaborative courses. Such platforms are particularly beneficial for developing countries in the Global South that are constrained by financial considerations and they facilitate cost-effective South-South collaborations. However, some respondents noted that the license fees for certain platforms still pose constraints for some beneficiaries.

This section reviews some of the solutions that beneficiaries highlighted to the challenges they experienced.



Sustainability:

Partners should develop long-term funding plans that are less reliant on external donors. They should also explore ways to generate their own revenue, such as through social enterprises or fee-for-service programmes. In addition, partners should work to build capacity among their staff and within the organization so that they can continue to operate effectively when external funding ends.



Distance:

Partners can use technology to facilitate communication and collaboration before and after in-person exchanges. For example, they can use video conferencing, instant messaging and shared online platforms to stay in touch and work on projects together. Partners can also plan regular in-person meetings to build relationships and foster trust.



Language barriers:

Partners can use translation services and hire bilingual staff to address these barriers. Additionally, they can make an effort to learn each other's language, even if just a few basic phrases, to help smooth the flow of personnel exchanges.



Different levels of experience and resources:

Partners should be clear about their expectations and roles. They should also be willing to share resources and expertise. In addition, partners can seek support from external donors and organizations that specialize in South-South and triangular cooperation.



Different levels of development:

Partners should respect each other's cultures and contexts. They should also be willing to learn from each other and share best practices. Partners can also seek support from external donors and organizations that specialize in South-South cooperation.



Lack of shared resources:

Partners can explore ways to pool resources. For example, they can share office space, equipment and staff. They can also seek support from external donors and organizations that specialize in South-South cooperation.



Areas for exchange cooperation:

Clearly defined goals and objectives are crucial for exchange cooperation and should thus include mutually beneficial areas of cooperation. Structured needs assessments can be conducted to jointly identify these beneficial areas. Geopolitical factors and regional priorities should also be considered when developing areas for cooperation.



Mismatches:

Differences in cultural norms, work ethics, communication styles and problem-solving methods should be taken into consideration. Differences in skills and expertise can pose challenges that require partners to take prior measures.



Implementing effective feedback mechanisms:

Partners should define and communicate their expectations, objectives and desired outcomes prior to the exchange and ensure that participants understand their roles and responsibilities. Structured feedback sessions can be held in person or online to gather participant input on their experiences and suggestions to improve the exchange programme. When the programme ends, an evaluation of the overall experience and achieved outcomes can help improve future programmes.



6

Conclusion and Recommendations

Our findings suggest that personnel exchanges are essential for South-South and triangular cooperation as they facilitate knowledge transfer, capacity-building and cultural understanding among individuals, countries and development partners. They are also vital for Global South development objectives, including the SDGs. The following conclusions are based on the findings above.

- Personnel exchange programmes are integral to South-South and triangular cooperation. They foster cooperation as well as solidarity, cultural ties, knowledge exchange, friendship and shared solutions. Any initiative, programme or project that facilitates or strengthens personnel exchange is considered valuable and positive and is welcomed for advancing development goals. Such efforts contribute to aid effectiveness principles (including ownership, alignment and harmonization), as well as South-specific principles such as mutual benefit, reciprocity, resource efficiency and prioritizing knowledge over financial aid.
- Personnel exchange is a valuable modality for achieving specific cooperation goals. It is emphasized as a traditional aspect of development cooperation, particularly prevalent in South-South cooperation and projects. The cost-effectiveness of this approach is highlighted, given its reliance on local human resources working in government, civil society or academia. The primary expenses are associated with travel and accommodations, while the participants continue to receive their salaries from their home-country employer.
- Enhancing multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level partnerships is a significant challenge today. Leveraging its experience, the Norec model can be seen as facilitating partnerships, focusing initially on triangular cooperation and extending its support to South-South cooperation. The model can contribute by developing tailored personnel exchange protocols for potential partnerships and enhancing success in implementation, accountability and results.

- Tools such as the NOREC model and others still need to be disseminated widely. Challenges remain in bringing and engaging diverse actors, as mandated by the current 2030 Agenda. The model can play a role in illustrating how various actors learn, share knowledge and contribute to enhancing knowledge sharing and innovation.
- Successful exchanges, especially between developed and developing countries, require a jointly defined agenda and beneficiary involvement in selecting visiting experts. Lack of beneficiary input can lead to marginalization and hinder collaboration. Key elements of an exchange programme should include: clearly defining the programme's main components; identifying the sectors with high personnel exchange activity and addressing areas with limited engagement; analysing and tracking the levels within institutions participating in personnel exchanges; and developing a robust methodology or framework to document exchange cases systematically as case studies, aiding outcome evaluation and informing future actions.
- The COVID-19 pandemic affected in-person exchanges and prompted a surge in virtual meetings and learning. This offered advantages such as cost reduction, broader audience reach, recording for reuse and increased frequency of use. Although virtual interactions cannot fully replace the essence of the personnel exchange programme, digitalization and innovation have become inevitable to augment this modality.
- Digital solutions and platforms such as South-South Galaxy can serve as a central hub for strengthening knowledge sharing, exchange, peer learning and the sharing of good practices while maintaining its existing functions related to knowledge and partnerships.
- Implementing personnel exchanges using digital platforms call for trusted intermediaries, such as Norec and other development partners working in this area, to facilitate these programmes.
- Some examples show that remote personnel exchanges, facilitated through service contracts, have proven successful. Clear work planning and transparent performance management contribute to this model's success.
- Personnel exchange programmes are also important for institutions as they help individuals build capacity by acquiring new skills and methods. Interaction with people from diverse backgrounds helps boost confidence and professional development. Personnel exchanges are useful for the community as they develop cultural understanding and provide an opportunity to learn from diverse cultures and participate in community welfare initiatives.
- Countries in the Global South face multiple challenges in achieving the SDGs, but personnel exchanges can help to overcome them by promoting sustainable relationships and mobilizing resources. They also help to build individual and institutional capacity, which is essential for achieving home-grown development agendas.

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Annex - A

Questionnaire for Key Informant Interviews

Background:

Personnel exchanges are useful in promoting competence at all levels and helping countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Such a mechanism provides an opportunity to develop understanding regarding different cultural and community perspectives. These exchanges also promote awareness and adoption of alternative, multi-faceted approaches to learning. Such exchanges are an opportunity for self-development and awareness that leads to self-confidence and self-esteem. This study will examine the usefulness of personnel exchanges to achieve development cooperation agendas and priorities in Southern countries. The study poses the following broader research questions.

- What is the relevance of personnel exchange for achieving the development cooperation agendas and priorities?
- In addition to the explicit focus on technical knowledge, it is understood that international personnel exchange includes aspects of indirect learning. Those being hosted gain insight into and, often, sympathy for social, political and cultural aspects of the host country. What is the Global South perspective on this form of “public diplomacy”?
- How will COVID-19 and the growth of virtual meetings and learning arenas impact personnel exchange in coming years? How can South-South Cooperation digital platform, such as the South-South Galaxy, complement/ contribute to personnel exchange?

The study has some specific research questions, including:

- How can the Norec model be used further and, possibly, refined as a tool to initiate and strengthen competence sharing through personnel exchange?
- Norec’s model of reciprocity requires that knowledge flow in multiple ways (i.e. improving technical skills, learning of languages and sharing of information on economic, social and political conditions/challenges of the countries involved). It is also essential that all actors at the table have something to share and contribute. Does this reflect the reality today or is the concept not as mutually beneficial as we think?

Identification

Name of respondent:

Age:

Gender:

Contact number/email:

Date of survey:

Country:

Education (Number of years completed):

Job title:

Job department (public/think tank/academia):

Usefulness of Personnel Exchange Programme

1. Do you have the opportunity to being part of any of the following being held at international level? (Tick all that apply)

Training course	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Presentation at any other international forum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

2. How frequently do you have an opportunity to be part of international knowledge sharing platforms? (Tick all that apply)

Training course	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quarterly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yearly
Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quarterly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yearly
Conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quarterly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yearly
Presentation at international forum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quarterly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yearly

3. Which activities at a global or regional level are more effective tools of knowledge sharing? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Formal trainings	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-face interaction
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation/manuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual platforms	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other (please mention):

4. In your view, what are the key impacts of a personnel exchange programme? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural harmony	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Help in having more knowledge partners
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase chances of employment prospects	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposure to best practices at international level	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other (please mention):

5. What is the relevance of personnel exchange for achieving the development cooperation agendas and priorities? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Helps in driving planning phase	<input type="checkbox"/> Helps in implementation phase	<input type="checkbox"/> Helps in monitoring phase
<input type="checkbox"/> Helps in reporting and evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other (please mention):	

6. In your opinion, how personnel exchange programmes contribute to indirect learning at personnel level? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with social aspects of host country	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with political aspects of host country	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with cultural aspects of host country
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other (please mention):		

7. In your opinion, how do personnel exchange programmes contribute to indirect learning at institutional level? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Capacity building	<input type="checkbox"/> Improvement in quality of products/services	<input type="checkbox"/> Help in increasing the networking
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase in motivation of staff members	<input type="checkbox"/> Improvement in quality of leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other (please mention):

8. In your opinion, how do personnel exchange programmes contribute to indirect learning at community level? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Improvement in behaviour of individuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase in voluntary community work	<input type="checkbox"/> Active participation in political activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other (please mention):		

9. In your opinion, do all participants of the personnel exchange programme equally contribute to learning?

(Only tick a single choice)

- Yes No Don't know

9.1 If no, what are the possible gaps/challenges?

- Hesitation in sharing information Language barriers Cultural barriers
- Unequal opportunities to participate Any other (please mention):

10. In your opinion, what further improvements in Norec's model (or model known to you) of personnel exchange are required?

(Tick all that apply)

- Increase the frequency of exchange programmes More focus on gender equality By involving more diverse communities
- By involving each actor carefully to ensure overall learning for participants By involving more knowledge partners within and outside of the country Any other (please mention):

Impact of virtual meetings

11. Do you think virtual meetings are beneficial for learning even after the pandemic? (Only tick a single choice)

- Yes No Don't know

12. What are the key impacts of virtual meetings? (Tick all that apply)

- Time efficient Cost efficient Travel hassle can be avoided
- Flexibility of time Connect to more international knowledge partners Any other (please mention):

13. What are the drawbacks of virtual meetings? (Tick all that apply)

- Technical difficulties Unequal participation Different time zones
- Feel disconnected from one another Any other (please mention):

14. How will COVID-19 and the growth of virtual meetings and learning arenas impact on personnel exchange in the years to come? (Tick all that apply)

- Virtual meetings and learning arenas may restrict the number of physical meetings/interactions Virtual meetings and learning arenas are not appropriate for digitally disconnected regions Virtual meetings and learning arenas will get more interactive and innovative
- Virtual meetings and learning arenas will help in provision of more targeted content Any other (please mention):

15. How can the digital platform on South-South cooperation be utilized to complement/contribute to personnel exchange?
(Tick all that apply)

Increase in virtual training sessions

Increase in virtual meetings

By creating virtual groups

Any other (please mention):

15. Any comments/feedback?

Annex - B

List of Key Informants

Description	Respondent	Country
Norec beneficiaries	Kamuzu Central Hospital	Malawi
	Taita Taveta County Government	Kenya
	Integrated Village Development Service	Nepal
	The Leprosy Mission	Nepal
	Aspada Paribesh Unnayan Foundation	Bangladesh
Think tanks	International Development Research Centre	–
	Southern Voice	–
Academics /faculty members	National University Bangladesh	Bangladesh
	Bangladesh Open University	Bangladesh
	University of Dhaka	Bangladesh
	Kathmandu University	Nepal
	Pokhara University	Nepal
	Kathmandu Medical College	Nepal
	Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South	Pakistan
	Faculty Development Academy (COMSATS)	Pakistan
	Pakistan Meteorological Department	Pakistan
	OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation	Pakistan
	Islamabad Centre for Regional Studies	Pakistan
	International Water Management Institute	Sri Lanka
	Industrial Technology Institute	Sri Lanka
	International Centre for Climate and Environmental Science	China
	Government officials	Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan
Pakistan Science Foundation		Pakistan
Higher Education Commission of Pakistan		Pakistan
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology board		Pakistan
Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development		Pakistan
Pakistan Council for Scientific and Industrial Research		Pakistan
University Grant Commission of Bangladesh		Bangladesh
Bangladesh Academy of Science		Bangladesh
University Grants Commission		Nepal
Ministry of Higher Education		Sri Lanka
National Human Resources Development Council		Sri Lanka
National Agricultural Research Centre		Jordan
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research		Ghana
The West African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adapted Land Use		Ghana

