

# India-Africa Developmental Partnership: Experiences, Challenges and Way Forward

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**Abstract** India's engagement with Africa is highlighted under the ethos of South – South Cooperation. And this cooperation is mainly based on ideas of equality, shared history, partnership and capacity building. Therefore, the experience of development and empowerment needs to be felt on both sides by the African and Indian peoples. The question remains is there in real terms South-South cooperation in process or is it just rhetoric reinforced at summits or bilateral platforms. This paper attempts to analyse the importance of such engagements and their relevance to enhance the goal of development and empowerment for peoples of African countries and India.

**Key words** – Bilateral Relations, Capacity Building, decolonization, Democracy, Diaspora, Foreign Policy, Human Resource, India-Africa Relationship, India Africa Forum Summit, Indian Technical Economic Cooperation (ITEC), Institutional Accountability, Line of Credit, Regional Relations, South-South Cooperation, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations

## Introduction

India and the African countries share a distinctive collaboration through history; ranging from Trade relations during the ancient times, to the impact of colonial system vis-à-vis indenture leading to the spread of Indian Disapora and Indian cultural roots to the African soil. In the present day, the relationship is further enhanced guided by focused foreign policies geared towards mutual development and learning. The foundation was laid in 1950s when India voiced the call for decolonization of African countries at the United Nations and offered scholarships to students from Developing countries to pursue education in India as early as in 1949. Later started several programmes under the South-South Cooperation and in 1964 initiated the Indian Technical Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme to enhance training in Human Resource Development. Serving as a platform of constant interactions, sometimes reflected dissociation and now is tilted toward positive interactions. India – Africa relationship has been fostered on a continued shared journey of vibrant dynamism.

## Measure to Enhance India-Africa Partnership

India's trade with African countries started to surge from the new millennium. The economic partnership saw a growth exponentially from 2006 onwards under the UPA government led by PM Manmohan Singh. With the first India Africa Forum

Summit (IAFS- I) in 2008 this revived the partnership and called for demand driven partnership. By the year 2012 under the UPA India-Africa trade relations reached nearly 70 bn.

The India Africa Forum Summits in 2008 and 2011, respectively, were the outcome of this realization for enhancing interaction by boosting business avenues, enhancing cooperative ventures, human resource development via capacity building, infrastructure development and exchange of cultural knowledge. The Government of India further predicted trade to touch over a 90 bn target by 2015. This dynamic trend of renewed partnership is a result of constant realization for having a reinvented engagement between India and the African countries.

The consequent India-Africa Forum Summit held at New Delhi in October 2015 was a step forward to further commit and lay the foundations of development, progress and growth. This is reflected in the way India's trade with African countries has grown from a mere USD 6.8 billion in 2003 to 76. 9 billion in 2018.

## India's Africa Policy

India and Africa share a stronger bond with long-standing ancient ties, shared colonial experiences and post-colonial interactions at the International Forums such as the UN, NAM, UNCTAD on matters of global concerns and specific

international events. India's prior policy guided by Nehru, focused on strengthening relations with Africa through the African Union at a continental level. The prior policy in way perceived Africa as bloc with which India had its policy. The contemporary dynamics of foreign relations has moved ahead of that parochial view of limited foreign policy which has resulted in an up-swing in bilateral relations. However, some dominant African states have a greater position in having stronger relations with India in comparison to other African states, owing to political stability, economic viability and colonial linkages.

India – Africa engagement can be looked at with four important markers which defines their partnership: (i) sense of solidarity which is commonly shared through the above mentioned forums; (ii) no conflict of interest, visible friendly relations; (iii) ancient linkages and shared colonial history and (iv) socio-economic conditions which can serve as alternatives for development.

Some of the unique features of India's engagement with Africa are marked by the following pointers:

- Cooperation based on Partnership
- Priorities determined by Africa as a partner and method of implementation through a consultative process
- Objective to create mutually beneficial interdependency (India Africa Business Series 2013)

### **India and Anglophone African Countries**

India shares stronger relations with Anglophone countries, owing to the colonial ties. As compared to Anglophone Africa, the intensity of India's relationship with Francophone and Lusophone countries have been limited. For India, the most crucial and important strategy for enhancing India-Africa relations, is to explore avenues, and further synergize its relations with Lusophone and Francophone Africa. Yet, in the past decade the effort to strengthen political understanding and expand economic cooperation between India and Franco-Lusophone regions have yielded results. Programmes like TEAM9, Focus Africa, Human resource and capacity building, the lines of credit to African countries initiated by India, has enhanced politico-economic and cultural engagement.

### **Human Resource and Capacity Building as Foreign Policy Strategy**

The African continent and the Indian sub-continent have many similarities which further establish firm opportunities for engagement and progress in the near future. India and many African countries are aspiring economies, having a large young population as a powerful resource and are potential markets for constant growth and interactions.

India's Africa policy has taken a new turn with emphasis on engaging on bilateral levels as well. India avoids the donor-recipient relationship in its development partnership strategy. India's development partnership is guided and driven by the following three pillars:

- No conditionality
- Partnership is not prescriptive
- Respect of solidarity

India has always focused on the importance of capacity building by developing the human resource. This is reflected as its soft power policy strategy of enhancing human resource in diverse countries throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The earliest form of capacity building was initiated in 1964 with the launch of ITEC programme (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation) which included/includes several dimensions of educational and vocational projects. SCAAP (Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme) as a corollary of ITEC, which is exclusively directed toward Africa. Similarly, TEAM9 for West African countries focused on Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Senegal, Mali, and Equatorial Guinea. The diverse nature of technical assistance, deputation of experts, consultations, projects, training of civil and military personnel are the main measures which are part of the ITEC programme, Africa has been the largest recipient of these initiatives.

Under TEAM9 assistance is provided to West African countries in the form of line of credits (LOCs) and projects like rural electrification, building of Presidential complex in Ghana, and so on.

Technological assistance is one such important dimension, through which constant interactions and consultations are conducted in the field of agriculture, and there is transfer of

technical know-how and innovation on both sides. The Indian experts in the field of agriculture with equipment, skill transfer and technology has made the development more prominent.

Another significant initiative is the Pan Africa e-Network, which is the outcome of a well structured vision of former President of India, Abdul Kalam. He had a vision to connect with Africa in order to share and also learn the many diverse ways in which education and medical assistance could be available at a click. The Pan-African e-Network in association with African Union operates via a network of satellites, fiber-optics and wireless connectivity aimed to bridge the digital divide to provide health and educational benefits to African nations as institutes, colleges and hospitals are connected virtually.

Closely linked with technical assistance is the need for development assistance in the form of loans, aid, expert credit, tariff exemptions and debt relief. India has allocated US \$ 200 million worth credits to the India-Africa Fund for projects helping in economic integration. This is in line with NEPAD which seeks to promote sustenance development and good governance in Africa.

The "Focus Africa Programme" launched in 2003 worked through the EXIM Bank to provide lines of credits to export councils, organizations and economic councils such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Common Market for eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to promote trade and to have access to the markets. Nearly, US\$ 25 million was extended in 2005 as LOC to 45 countries and duty free access was given to 94 percent of Indian tariff lines and 92.5 percent preferential duty free to exports from 34 African countries coming under the Least Developed Country category.

The Line of Credits LoCs are demand-driven and expanded on the principle of mutual benefit for both partners. While LoCs will create markets for Indian companies, foster export growth, build the recipient country knowledge base and their development gains. So far India has sanctioned 182 LoCs projects in Africa through the Export Import Bank of India (EXIM), with a total credit commitment of USD 10.5 billion. For example, India's irrigation project in Senegal led to a six-fold increase in rice production and currently over 30 percent of that country's consumption is now covered by their own domestic

produce as compared to their previous production of 12.1 percent.

#### **India Africa Forum Summits (2008/2011/2015)**

India's relations with Africa are grounded by a strong knowledge base, which is reflected in significant investments in education, research and technology. This has been the focus of the 3 Summits held so far.

The India Africa Forum Summits are seen as catalysts for reinvigorated relations between India and Africa. Through this forum, India has established a 'Three Way Policy' framework to foster ties with Africa, i.e., at the continental level through the African Union; at the regional level via the regional economic communities (REC); and finally engaging at the bilateral level.

This revamped friendship has heralded an interface of interaction between government personnel for sharing expertise, business groups for enhancing and developing economic partnerships, and academia and student's exchanges and interactions, as part of people to people contact initiatives.

There are many important initiatives which are undertaken and are in the pipeline for the governments of India and Africa to work out at a bilateral and multilateral level. These include the Line of Credit (LOCs), knowledge transfer, human resource management and scholarships being granted to African students coming to pursue higher studies in India.

#### **Human Resource Development Initiatives**

India announced an ambitious plan to establish nearly 100 institutes across the African continent in consultation with African Union. Under India-Africa Forum Summit-1 certain institutions are still under realization. The Africa-India framework for enhanced cooperation was adopted to supplement the 2008 framework.

#### **IAFS I**

The proposed capacity building institutions under the IAFS 1 were India-Africa Institute of Foreign Trade, India-Africa Diamond Institute, India-Africa Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, and India-Africa Institute of Information Technology. Others include – India-Africa Food Processing Cluster, Integrated Textile Processing Cluster, India-Africa Medium Range Weather Forecasting System, Information

Technology Institutes, Institutes in English Language Training, Centre for Vocational Development and Training, Civil Aviation, India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development, to name a few. So far out of the hundred institutes only three are operational and the locations for twenty five regional institutes have been identified. The launch of Cotton Technical Assistance Programme in the C4 countries – Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and Togo has been a success story; the programme trains the farmers directly in modern technique and processing of cotton in these countries.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the India-Africa food processing cluster, and India-Africa textile clusters are important industry sectors to be realized as part of the Pan-African initiative. India's commitment to build vocational centres in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Libya, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe are still in the pipeline due to administrative delays.

### IAFS II

The IAFS II has taken up wider gamut of initiatives to be implanted under training institutes, a vast range of institutes such as training and promotion of rural development, water resource sector, art and culture, training in maritime sector, industrial sector, training in oil and gas, training in hydro, thermal and power grid, training in climate change and environment, so on are underway.

Under the human resource development and scholarships in IAFS II, more than 22,000 scholarships for three years were the star attraction. The new ranging scholarships include; shipping, maritime, oceanic engineering, nautical science, and architecture are the significant sectors which are identified for enhancing human resource development and capacity building in Africa.

In the Francophone region, under the IAFS II bilateral level commitment, India had proposed to set up food process business incubation centre in Mali, solar charging in Cape Verde, biomass gas fire systems in Guinea, cotton 4+3 in Benin, and two solar engineering vocational training centres for women in Liberia and Senegal<sup>2</sup>.

Under the IAFS II regional recommitment with ECOWAS, Soil and Water Tissue testing laboratories in Burkina Faso, Farm Science Centre in Liberia, agricultural seed production- CUM-Demonstration centres in Togo and two material testing laboratories for highways in Ghana were proposed.

With the presence of Indian corporate in Africa and the expanding India-Africa bilateral trade, the IAFS II promulgated the formation of the India-Africa Business Council. The IABC was formed in March, 2012, headed by Mr. Sunil Mittal from the Indian side and Mr. Alhaji Aliko Dangote, the African counterpart to further consolidate business between India and Africa. The second IABC meeting was held at Johannesburg in September, 2013. This clearly indicates India's approach of viewing Africa as a dynamic partner. The IABC aims at cooperation in focusing on capacity building in areas such as, agriculture, and agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, textiles, mining, petroleum and natural gas, information and technology, gems and jewels, banking, infrastructure development approach and railways.

India continues to disseminate its experience in models of governance and planning, with the African countries, in areas of local governments, working democratic structures, and training of police personnel in a way for African states to mould a more appropriate form to suit their own requirements.

The allocation of lines of credit on concessional terms on 8.2 bn has been announced with 7 bn being approved for Africa in various sectors for example in infrastructure, sustainable growth and agro-processing. Along with LOCs, the Pan-Africa e-tele-education and e-medicine and enhancing people to people contact for enhancing partnership for development, are important pillars for translating the dream of "south south cooperation" into reality, these mechanisms are already in place and continue to remain key features of India-Africa cooperative developmental initiatives. These new initiatives should harness employment, keeping in view the development of local businesses. Along with this, the governments need to implement the said initiatives in such a way to train and employ African women to target poverty and alleviate it to some extent from the masses. Thus, further the south-south developmental reality.

<sup>1</sup> Joint statement of 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Africa trade Ministers Meet, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2012, New Delhi, India

<sup>2</sup> Joint statement of 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Africa Forum Summit, [www.ministry-of-foreign-affairs.com](http://www.ministry-of-foreign-affairs.com)

### IAFS III

Under IAFS III the focus on Development partnership, capacity building, training, nurturing of human capital saw an upswing. PM Narendra Modi unveiled the 10 billion additional Lines of Credit and a grant assistance of USD 600 million to Africa for developmental projects.

Information technology (IT) is an important pillar of India's technical cooperation with Africa, given the role of the information and communication technology (ICT) sector in India's growth story and the importance most African leaders attach to ICT sector development. The Pan African e-Network, launched in 2009, was a groundbreaking initiative to extend Indian expertise in IT to provide better healthcare and education facilities in 53 African countries.

The second phase of this programme, e-VidyaBharti and e-ArogyaBharti (e-VBAB), was started in 2018, with an aim to provide free tele-education to 4,000 African students each year for five years and continuing medical education for 1000 African doctors, paramedical staff, and nurses. The programme is fully funded by the Indian government and is web-based, so any Indian university qualified to offer online education can do so for African students.

India's scholarship programme also grew rapidly. At the third India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015, India pledged to provide 50,000 scholarships to African students over a five-year period and set up institutions of higher learning in Africa. Over 42,000 scholarship slots have already been utilised in the last five years.

The 'Framework for Strategic Cooperation,' the outcome document of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit, stated that India and Africa will "enhance cooperation through training, learning and collective negotiations on global trade issues, including at the WTO to protect and promote the legitimate interests of developing countries, especially the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

In 2018, India's Ministry of Human Resource and Development launched the 'Study in India' initiative to attract students from neighbouring and African countries. Foreign students can choose from 1,500 courses being offered at the undergraduate,

graduate and PhD level by public and private institutions in India, and meritorious students could receive up to 100 percent fee waivers. However, the initiative has not been successful in attracting African students to India. Most foreign students who come to India only opt for the Indian Institutes of Technology through academic collaborations (and not the 'Study in India' programme).

Of the top ten countries with the most number of students in India (making up about 63.9 percent of all foreign students in the country), only two are African – Sudan, accounting for 4.5 percent of foreign students, and Nigeria, with a 3.4 percent. Foreign student enrolment for higher education programmes such as PhDs is also far lower than undergraduate programmes, highlighting that India is not perceived as an appropriate destination for higher education and research.

### Experiences and Challenges

In the absence of a clear and well-articulated vision for Africa, India's development cooperation is often compared to the Chinese model of development cooperation in the region (Broadman 2008) Despite significant differences which is based on state-led infrastructure for resources deals, rising debt threats, lack of domestic capacity building and job creation. In 2018, Modi outlined the 'Ten Guiding Principles for India-Africa Engagement'(Statement, 2018), often regarded as India's vision statement for Africa. But these tenets cannot be seen as the mission for the next decade because many aspects are not new and instead represent continuity in principles that have traditionally defined India-Africa engagement.

These initiatives can be fruitful only when there is effective coordination and implementation. Some of the proposed institutions in the previous 2 IAFS have not been completed. First and foremost the need is to identify the requirements of these proposed institutes in the identified countries, and the scope of their implementation in the said country.

With the African Union being the deciding authority for the location of each institute, the procedure of identification of location by the AU and its administrative hurdles has slowed down the process of implementation of IAFS goals.

The innovative idea behind the setting up of the training institutes for the African youth for capacity building is a genuine cause yet the feasibility with regard to the location are a food for thought, the maintenance and manning of these institutes in the long run are again important factors to ponder upon as according to the action plan, India is responsible for the establishment of the institutes, to equip and maintain them for three years from the day of establishment. Therefore, a long term sustainability of these institutes for the governments of African states to take it further.

One of the biggest shortcomings in the process of India's Development Engagement with Arica has been the rather slow implementation of LoCs, leading to a significant criticism of administrative and bureaucratic processes and procedures to process the same. This has led to the establishment of an important department called the development Partnership Administration (DPA) in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The main objective of this department is to monitor the various projects from their initial to final stages.

The biggest challenge is the minimal level of interactions at bilateral levels between heads of states and heads of Governments on both sides. This can be reflected upon as the cause of which the IAFS was attended only by 17 African countries HOSs/HOGs. These important interactions have to be made stronger at the leadership level, for programmes and projects to finalized and implemented.

### **Important Visits**

With the IAFS-II held on 24-25 May 2011, the first ever state visit of the Prime Minister of India to Ethiopia was made. The then Indian Hon'ble Prime Minister Manmohan Singh held bilateral meetings with the Ethiopian Hon'ble PM Meles Zenawi and announced that the trade between the two countries to reach a target of US \$ 1 billion by 2015. PM, Manmohan Singh also announced a new credit line of US \$ 300 million for Djibouti-Ethiopia Railway line. PM, Meless Zenawi, announced that there would be enhanced cooperation in agriculture, defence and trade between India and Ethiopia.

Two important documents were adopted during the summit namely;

1. The Framework for enhanced cooperation and

2. The Addis Ababa Declaration.

In response to Ethiopian requests, the Indian government deputed experts in protocol and diplomatic training. The ITEC programme for Ethiopia was started in 1969. In 2007-08, the number of training slots offered was 25. There has been a steady increase in the number of training slots offered by us. In 2009-10, the 90 slots were offered by us and were fully utilized. For 2010-11, 90 slots were offered by us and were fully utilized by mid-November 2010. For the year 2010- 2011, it has been enhanced to 120 slots which have also been fully utilized. Recently the Ministry of External Affairs on account of decisions taken during the India Africa Forum Summit has further enhanced these slots to 135 for the year 2011-2012.

The pan African e-Network project was launched in Ethiopia in July 2007. The Tele-Education Centre at Addis Ababa University and the Tele-Medicine Centre at the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa are working well and are considered useful by the Ethiopian side. The Tele-Education project has been replicated by the Ethiopian side and linkages established between the Addis Ababa University and the Indian Institutes of Technology at Delhi and Kanpur.

Director General of the department of Agricultural Research and Education and Secretary, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, visited Ethiopia in December 2011. During the visit the delegation signed an MOU for cooperation in the field of Agricultural research and Education, in the presence of the State Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development. The delegation also met the African Union and discussed India's support for life and Earth Sciences segment of the Pan African University and matters of mutual interest with the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology.

In 2018 the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, visited the Republic of Rwanda (23-24 July), Republic of Uganda (24-25 July) and Republic of South Africa (25-27 July). This was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Rwanda and the first visit by our Prime Minister to Uganda in over 20 years. The visit to South Africa is in the context of BRICS Summit. In the last 6 years there have been as many as 23 outgoing visits to Africa at the Presidential, Vice presidential and Prime Minister.

### **Key Gaps in India's Africa Engagement Policy**

There are a few shortcomings in India's developmental engagement strategy in Africa that impacts the engagement.

First, India is not actively pursuing any specific development goals. An assessment of India's development cooperation instruments (LoCs, grants, and capacity building projects like ITEC) reflects the absence of a plan for Africa. Indian LoCs have not been designed to achieve a larger development goal such as food security, health security, clean energy or education for all.

LoCs are typically used by recipient countries to fund small development projects such as roads, bridges, railway lines, power transmission and water supply systems. Although the individual projects have development benefits for recipient countries, the overall development impact of Indian LoCs in Africa is not that significant.

Secondly, there is no synchronisation between different development instruments. LoCs, grants and capacity building initiatives operate as standalone instruments of development cooperation, with almost no links with each other. As a result, the overall development impact of India's development cooperation is small and difficult to measure.

Thirdly, with poor disbursement rates and project completion record of the commitments made remain as key constraints in furthering the partnership.

Fourthly, there have been numerous cases of violence against African students in India. Despite sharing long history of partnership, India dispersing scholarships for students coming to India, the general ignorance of the larger society is reflected in racist mindset that continue to impact students experience of stay in India. The lack of inclusive environment has led to African students voicing out their dissatisfaction in studying in India over the last 5 years mainly due to racist mindset of the populations in general but also the experiences on campus.

### **The Way Forward**

"India-Africa partnership is yet to achieve its full potential. What is needed is an infusion of energy, of something new and concrete, and with a specific focus and direction".

This is a critical time for India and African countries to act for their best mutual interests, by building a concerted alignment for developing cooperation based on human resource development and capacity building under the initiative of South-South Cooperation.

It's important that the countries

realize their strong points in exports and commodities to

enhance trade relations, and by focusing on human resource development which will prove to be more feasible in the longer run for making both sides mutually sufficient in terms of socio-economic development. For it is the main endeavor for enhancing a country's socio-economic condition.

Another significant component of the foreign relations is to garner and foster stronger people-to-people contacts in order to remove misconceptions and misinterpretations of each-others cultures and diverse societies. Students and research scholars exchange programmes on both sides can be an important tool to further enhance partnership between Indian and African Universities and academia. Regular Academic and Scholarly interactions on international affairs, business ventures, cultural exchanges and student exchange programmes are the way forward for enhancing the objective of South-South Cooperation.

Harnessing Value of Indian and the African Diaspora: - The Indian diaspora in Africa has been very vocal of their identity in the country of their adoption but also their country of origin. For instance, the Indian Diaspora in South Africa; proudly claim themselves as "South African Indians". The Indian Diaspora in South Africa are building their nation states at the same time uphold their Indian identity and contribute in trade relations, visits to the homeland. Similarly, the African diaspora in Indian states of Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have assimilated in the Indian culture yet maintain their African identity. Though their socio-economic conditions remains marginalized. They do not possess good dwellings; live in semi pucca houses, make shift homes, or in rented spaces in the urban spaces. A majority of the siddis, habshis are now included in the Scheduled Tribes list. Yet the access to entitlements remains a distant reality given the lack of awareness on government schemes. Therefore, the diasporas on both ends is large resource to harness better relations for the Indian sub-continent and the African continent.

To conclude, India must chart out a roadmap for its development cooperation programme in Africa that outlines a long-term strategy. A significant factor for India and Africa would be to jointly partner on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by sharing common practices and learning to enhance sustainability in all the targets; enhancing protection of the rights of the citizens, responsible businesses with respect to human rights, building accountable institutions, being

responsible for climate justice, as well as making just legal systems.

Thus, localizing SDGs in the South-South Cooperation framework would further enhance mutual partnership, growth and development in all aspect; such as the Business and Human Rights, Access to Entitlements by Citizenry, building of Inclusive Democratic Systems, and accountable Judicial Systems.

Especially post COVID Africa-India partnership needs a renewed energy and synergy of thoughts and actions to increase engagement and positive outcome.

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