Dhaka Outcome and Action Agenda

11 December 2017

Adopted at the workshop on “Innovations in Service Delivery: The Scope for South-South and Triangular Cooperation” convened in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 09-11 December 2017.

**Background**

The Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, on the sidelines of the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in September 2016 proposed a collaborative South-South Network on Public Service Innovation. The idea was supported by high-level UN officials and representatives of member states that participated in the discussion. The Network would facilitate deeper understanding and broader exchanges among Southern countries on public service innovation. The Network would identify important innovations and scaling-up novel solutions to public service challenges. This proposal was in recognition that governments around the world – in both developing and developed countries – are rapidly modernizing service delivery, through innovative tools and approaches, as a step towards becoming more citizen-centric, responsive and participatory. Furthermore, public service innovation can transform people’s lives in a significant and tangible way in a very short time. Such changes could contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Interestingly but not surprisingly, a remarkable number of these innovations are emerging in the global South including Bangladesh. The adoption and upscaling of these innovations in Bangladesh and other examples discussed show that unprecedented leapfrogging can take place. If these Southern innovators – from the public sector but also increasingly from the for-profit and non-profit private sector – can develop and operationalize the right platform to showcase their public service innovations, more people could benefit.

Subsequently, in follow-up to the proposal made in 2016, on the side-lines of the 72nd United Nations General Assembly, in September 2017, the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, along with four other heads of states and governments, launched the publication “South-South in Action: Citizen-friendly Public Service Innovation in Bangladesh” in partnership with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. This publication captures South-South success stories and offers knowledge on Bangladesh’s public service delivery success pathway that can act as a resource for other Southern partners.

Following work and consultations in New York among country Missions to the UN, during the 2016 South-South Development Expo and during capacity Development workshops in Africa (all undertaken between the two UNGA Sessions), the UN Office for South-South Cooperation and the Government of Bangladesh concluded that there was sufficient interest for a knowledge-sharing platform. The ‘South-South Network for Public Service Innovation’ (SSN4PSI) was launched at the Global South-South Development Expo on 27 November 2017 in Antalya, Turkey. This Network will not only assist countries to help achieve their pledges under Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and Agenda 2063 for Africa but also help countries to achieve citizens’ demands for efficient public service delivery consistent with their development goals.
Dhaka Workshop

As the first meeting of the SSN4PSI, the Dhaka Workshop on Innovations in Service Delivery and the Scope for South-South and Triangular Cooperation was held at the Prime Minister’s Office in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 9 to 11 December 2017. The Workshop was jointly convened by Access to Information (a2i) Programme of the Prime Minister’s Office, Bangladesh (which is supported by UNDP) and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

Architect Yeafesh Osman, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Science & Technology, Bangladesh, Mr. Dina Nath Dhungyel, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Information and Communications, Bhutan, Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to the Honorable Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh, Mr. Kazi Shofiqul Azam, Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Mr. Jorge Chediek, Envoy of the UN Secretary General on South-South Cooperation and Director, UNOSSC, Mr. Kabir Bin Anwar, Director General (Admin), Prime Minister’s Office and Project Director of a2i and Mr. Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor, a2i, Prime Minister’s Office led the Opening Ceremony. Mr. Mohammed Shahriar Alam, M.P., Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, Mr. Md. Abul Kalam Azad, SDG Principal Coordinator, Prime Minister’s Office, Bangladesh, Ms. Mia Seppo, UN Resident Coordinator, Bangladesh, Mr. Jorge Chediek, Envoy of the UN Secretary General on South-South Cooperation and Director, UNOSSC, Mr. Kabir Bin Anwar, Director General (Admin), Prime Minister’s Office and Project Director, a2i, and Mr. Anir Chowdhury, Policy Adviser, a2i, Prime Minister’s Office led the Closing of the Workshop.

Participants from the following countries participated in the Dhaka Workshop:

- 18 countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, United Kingdom, Fiji, India, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Philippines, Singapore, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, USA;
- 3 academic organizations – National University of Singapore (NUS), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh; Nanyang Polytechnic International, Singapore;

Objectives

The main objective of the Dhaka Workshop was to make progress from the launch of the Network to the first event that provide a timely platform to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences and expertise among relevant stakeholders and on to develop pathways for future Network organization and activity to achieve the vision set by the leaders at the UN General assembly sid-even-t.
More specifically, the Dhaka Workshop aimed to:

- Facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the kind of service delivery innovations that create sustainable impact and process of creating that impact;
- Enable pathways from innovation prototyping to up-scaling;
- Identify linkages between service delivery innovations and development leapfrogging;
- Explore the role of public service innovations in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Enable match-making to catalyze partnerships among participating countries on public service innovations.

**Major Themes**

The major themes covered in the workshop were:

1. Innovations in ensuring healthcare for all
2. Innovations in skills development for the 21st century
3. Innovations in public service delivery
4. Institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation

**Methodology**

The workshop employed a unique and effective methodology ‘fit-for-purpose’ to analyze a number of chosen public service innovations (from participating countries in the workshop) and developed high-level action plans for how these innovations may be customized to solve similar problems in recipient countries. In particular, the following specific approaches and tools were utilized:

1. **Online survey on Innovations in service delivery and South-South and Triangular Cooperation** prior to the workshop event to capture the demand and supply sides of SSC on public service innovations. There were 41 respondents from 19 countries (49% from government agencies, 38% from NGOs and development partners, and 13% from others). Between them they shared 21 good practices. Some of these good practices were used during the workshop and will be incorporated in the future planning of the Network.

2. **Field visits by international participants** to three locations in Bangladesh to witness innovations in healthcare service delivery, skills development and public service innovations. This was done on the first day of the workshop to allow meaningful discussions and exchange of views in the next two days of the workshop.

3. **‘Reverse engineering’ of six public service innovation case studies** from participating countries, two in each of the three major themes, conducted in parallel, to dissect features responsible for success, and analyze how they translate to other country context. Important features that were analyzed ranged from problem identification, prototyping to upscaling, leadership transformation, capacity development, organizational, cultural and political change, strategy formulation and policy reform, infrastructure building, resource

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1 Reverse Engineering is a tool used in the workshop to disassemble the components (political, financial, capacity, policy, technology, infrastructure, etc.) of a good practice to more clearly and comprehensively understand how to map the practice, component by component, instead of the whole practice as a blackhole, to a different context.
mobilization, and very importantly, institutionalization of innovation to create sustainable impact.

4. **Analysis of twenty examples of public service innovations** from participating countries, conducted in parallel under the three major themes, and extraction of important lessons that allow effective South-South Cooperation. Many of the case studies were selected from for-profit and non-profit sectors where major innovations in public service delivery innovations frequently come from the non-state actors. Various approaches to public-private partnerships were examined in these sessions.

5. **Institutionalization experience-sharing with ministers, senior government officials and experts** from participating countries on the critical need and different approaches to institutionalize South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The underlying approach to the Network is South-South and triangular cooperation. Thus it was important to review the alternative approaches adopted by various countries to institutionalize South-South and triangular cooperation.

**Output**
The deliberations in the workshop generated 38 possibilities for partnerships under the South-South Network under the thematic areas of health, skills, and public service delivery – the numbers were 6, 20 and 12 respectively. These were generated by the following 13 countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Public Service Delivery</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13 Countries</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 Partnerships</strong></td>
<td><strong>20 Partnerships</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 Partnerships</strong></td>
<td><strong>38 Partnerships</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Institutionalizing South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Context of Public Service Innovations**

Two plenary sessions facilitated by the UNOSSC provided a platform to discuss the need to operationalize and institutionalize South-South cooperation. The discussions from the sessions drew some crucial conclusions:

- The SSN4PSI can play an active role in the operationalization and institutionalization of the South-South cooperation.
- The role of NGOs, CSOs and the private sector is crucial in advancing South-South cooperation.
● South-South Network will require triangular cooperation to share good practices and catalyze further upscaling of public service innovations.
● Innovative financing mechanism, collaboration and knowledge exchanges will be crucial in ensuring that the network brings tangible benefits for its members in leapfrogging public service improvements.

Other workshop Outputs
Even though this was in the inaugural meeting of the Network, some partnerships were concluded. The workshop also witnessed signing of three MoUs: 1) between a2i and Lykke Asia Pvt. Ltd., 2) between a2i and EkStep Foundation of India, 3) between UNDP Bangladesh and UNDP Fiji to bring in cutting edge approaches in financial inclusion of the poor, educational transformation, and development of one-stop service delivery centers for remote and under-served citizens.

Way Forward
The participants of the three-day long Dhaka Workshop made the following major recommendations:

● Take SSN4PSI from concept to action by active match-making between countries that are interested in sharing their public service innovations and countries that are interested in customizing and implementing these innovations in their own context;
● Create a solutions database for knowledge management, advancing learning and facilitating the ‘import’ and ‘export’ of South-South cooperation initiatives. This will also assist adoption and scaling-up successful initiatives;
● Organize SSN4PSI events as part of disseminating, exporting, importing and following-up of innovations among stakeholders to provide a platform to share ideas and new key innovations in service delivery;
● Organize field visits, web-conferencing, online meetings, study tours, assessment meetings, and capacity development for potential and interested stakeholders to facilitate better knowledge sharing, coordination and enhance the efficiency of partnerships;
● Provide technical, advisory and advocacy assistance on customization of solutions to the importing countries in implementing the adopted South-South solutions to attain their national priorities and other internationally agreed development goals;
● Maintain communication through continuous social media networking (like Facebook page/blog, etc.) for sharing, discussing, and disseminating knowledge, experiences, and ideas. A closed Facebook page would also generate planned discussions and provide information of the Network easily and effectively;
● Develop an annual workplan and choose key personnel (the ‘faces’ of the network) who will be the key focal points responsible for the proper functioning of the Network;
● Establish a SSN4PSI Innovation Fund to operationalize and institutionalize South-South Cooperation and to encourage collaboration and knowledge exchanges among stakeholders;
● Develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the Network to provide stakeholders information about the activities and performance. KPI is also important to measure South-South cooperation initiatives, and to review activities and outcome.
● Yearly annual report covering reviews of the most impactful SSN4PSI cooperation stories.