



United Nations  
Office for South-South Cooperation



# South-South Ideas

## South-South Cooperation: Advancing Alternative Development Paradigms

Indian Technical and Economic  
Cooperation Programme Case Study

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**July 2021**



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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| DPA     | Development Partnership Administration                                     |
| G-NEXID | Global Network of Export-Import Banks and Development Finance Institutions |
| GNI     | Gross National Income  |
| INGAF   | Institute of Government Accounts and Finance                               |
| IPCC    | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change                                  |
| ITEC    | Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme                        |
| JICA    | Japan International Cooperation Agency                                     |
| KCCP    | Knowledge Co-Creation Programme  |
| LDC     | Least Developed Country  |
| MEA     | Ministry of External Affairs   |
| NACEN   | National Academy of Customs, Excise and Narcotics                          |
| NACIN   | National Academy of Customs, Income Tax and Narcotics                      |
| NCGG    | National Centre for Good Governance  |
| NITTT   | National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research             |
| NJA     | National Judicial Academy  |
| OECD    | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development                      |
| PAC     | Public Affairs Centre  |
| ROI     | Return on Investment   |
| SCAAP   | Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme                       |
| SDG     | Sustainable Development Goal   |
| SSC     | South-South Cooperation  |
| SVYA    | Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusudha  |
| UNDP    | United Nations Development Program   |
| UNOSSC  | United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation                          |



# Executive summary

This report analyses the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) and suggests a suitable framework for analysing the effectiveness of ITEC and similar programmes under the principles of South-South Cooperation (SSC). It examines the execution of ITEC regarding two of India's close neighbours - Nepal and Bangladesh. It provides an overview of India's development cooperation and its relationship with Nepal and Bangladesh to establish the context for ITEC assessment. The methods used include a review of the existing literature, discussions with subject matter experts and officials involved in the programme, a study of the official documents on ITEC and critical enquiry.

The study found that while ITEC is good at fulfilling all of the principles of SSC, several aspects diminish its effectiveness as a development cooperation programme due to the lack of:

1. Well-documented feedback and follow up procedures
2. Contextualisation to the needs of recipient countries
3. Alignment with SDGs, climate change, and gender
4. Transparency in the selection of courses or participants
5. Active involvement of recipient countries in designing courses

Key Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the programme include:

1. Contextualise and customise courses using a needs-assessment of partner countries
2. Enhance transparency and openness to outside scrutiny of the ITEC programmes
3. Foster partner country participation in course selection and design
4. Establish outcome-driven institutional feedback and follow-up based on defined standards and processes
5. Develop a composite index, based on measurable indicators, to evaluate ITEC impact

This report is not a comprehensive analysis of ITEC - it provides a broad analysis and evaluation of the programme. Nor is it limited to a functional assessment (evaluating ITEC's effectiveness at building capacity). It aims to assess the usefulness of ITEC within the broader frame of Global South progress and SSC.

The study was constrained by several limitations. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India, was circumspect in its engagement. This limited interactions with officials and access to data and internal documentation. The study therefore drew information from external subject matter experts and the existing literature. Its findings and recommendations should be evaluated in the light of these limitations. It is also necessary to emphasise that difficulties were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The extended lockdown in India, Nepal and Bangladesh imposed unexpected constraints on fieldwork and on engaging with relevant stakeholders.

# 1. Introduction

This report analyses the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC), while proposing a template for assessing similar South-South Cooperation (SSC) development initiatives. It provides an overview of the history of ITEC within the context of Indian Development History and describes the programme's current state and processes. It continues by discussing potential ITEC assessment criteria before applying these to ITEC cooperation in Nepal and Bangladesh. The report concludes with recommendations for ITEC improvement. Existing research literature, ITEC guidelines and interviews with subject matter experts were used to substantiate the report.

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## Indian Development Cooperation History

Before Indian independence in 1947, MK Gandhi and other Indian Freedom Struggle leaders argued that their future independent country's foreign policy should pursue global harmony or what they called "One World" (Chaturvedi, 2016). This worldview was in action when the Indian National Congress hosted the Nepali Congress Party in exile in 1946. After MK Gandhi's death, his protégé Jawaharlal Nehru followed an idealistic foreign policy that argued against colonialism and racism, and was also realistic about protecting India's sovereignty. These principles were first established in the Panchsheel Agreement (MEA, 2014) and further codified in the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned movement.

The Panchsheel Agreement listed the following principles:

- Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
- Mutual non-aggression
- Mutual non-interference
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful co-existence.

Under Nehru's idealistic policy, India made significant contributions to multilateral institutions, led the Non-Aligned Movement and helped many Global South countries achieve decolonisation. The seeds for ITEC were also planted. Despite the altruistic impact of Nehru's idealistic foreign policy, many scholars believe it left India blind to critical regional factors and vulnerable to China, leading to India's defeat in the India-China 1962 war. While the importance of India's idealistic foreign policy in this defeat is contested, India moved markedly away from it after 1962 (Ganguly and Pardesi, 2009).

After 1962, India adopted a more realistic foreign policy, with greater emphasis on defence and national security. India's ongoing commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement was now more in rhetoric than in practice. In 1991, India experienced a balance of payments crisis and was forced to move away from state-led growth to liberalise its economy. This led to India's emergence as a major economic power and resulted in foreign policy being strongly influenced by trade and economic objectives. The Indian government focused on developing stronger relations with rich countries with a sizeable Indian diaspora, such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Business leaders accompanied Indian Ministers on foreign visits (Chiriyakandath, 2004). Indian foreign policy is now also guided by its industries' need of oil and mineral resources, especially in Africa.

The Indian government made a concerted effort to transition from being an aid and development recipient to becoming a development partner.

India has never published an official development cooperation policy. However, its development actions have been in line with wider foreign policy objectives. Under Nehru, Indian development cooperation aimed to empower fellow post-colonial nations and then heavily geared towards helping other developing countries. In 1951, Indian Ambassador KM Pannikar proposed the Colombo Plan to assist South Asian and South-East Asian countries. This plan had strong elements of Technical Cooperation and South-South Cooperation and it led to the creation of ITEC in 1964.

India also provided South-Asian neighbours with regular grants and project focused development cooperation. Until the 1990s, Indian Development Cooperation was concentrated on South-Asia.

In the 1990s, India's liberalisation and wider geopolitical shifts led its development cooperation to be less Global South orientated and less anti-West. Indian foreign policy, and Indian development cooperation became more self-centred. The geographic focus shifted to Africa (Chaturvedi et al, 2014) and was interested in securing resources and markets for Indian industry.

While India's development cooperation was always linked to advancing its strategic goals, 2003-2004 marked a change in strategy (Tilak, 2014). The Indian government made a concerted effort to transition from being an aid and development recipient to becoming a development partner. India stopped receiving aid from all but 5 major donors (Goyal, 2018) and pre-paid bilateral loans worth US\$1.8 billion. It also provided debt relief grants to the Least Developed Countries (LDC). After 2004, there was increased emphasis on development grants and credit lines and less emphasis on technical cooperation, hence the quantity of development expenditure. India was a founding member of the Global Network of Export-Import Banks and Development Finance Institutions (G-NEXID) (Goyal, 2018) and is one of the largest contributors to the Commonwealth Technical Cooperation Fund.

While India has not published any official development cooperation policy, some researcher believe that its development aid priorities are driven by competition with China (Goyal, 2018) for influence in Africa and South Asia and also to further the interests of the Indian private sector abroad (Goyal, 2018). In 2012, India established the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) within the Ministry of External Affairs to streamline and improve delivery of development assistance through conceptualization, launch, implementation and commissioning. The DPA has three divisions - DPA I deals with project appraisal and credit lines, DPA II manages capacity building schemes, disaster relief, and ITEC, and DPA III handles project implementation.

India's development cooperation policy has shifted its initially idealistic pursuit of promoting the Global South, to a more strategic and focused development cooperation policy. While ITEC was founded as part of its earlier idealistic development cooperation policy, the ways in which the wider change in Indian foreign policy is influencing its current form and performance must now be assessed.

## 2. Introduction to ITEC

The Indian Cabinet established ITEC on 15 September 1964. It was inspired by a genuine idea of sharing the development lessons India was imbibing. In announcing their decision to launch ITEC, the Cabinet noted, “...a programme of technical and economic cooperation is essential for the development of our relations with the other developing countries on the basis of partnership and cooperation for mutual benefit. It would also be a concrete manifestation of our resolve to contribute to the evolution of world community based on the inter-dependence of all its members in the attainment of their common goal for promoting the social and economic well-being of their people.” (Ministry of External Affairs, 2014).

Despite being an aid recipient, India assisted many countries through ITEC and its sister initiative, the Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme (SCAAP) for many years. After India’s liberalisation and opening to global markets in the 1990s, its growing economic strength led to changes in priorities and the means of providing development assistance. ITEC has several components. In addition to organising training courses in India, it also posts Indian experts abroad, provides disaster relief, gives equipment, organises study tours and performs feasibility studies/consultancy services. ITEC is demand-driven, and so the assistance it provides is usually in response to requests from friendly countries and India’s political commitments (Ministry of External Affairs, 2014).

In 2019-2020, India spent approximately \$1.08 billion on Development Cooperation (Ministry of External Affairs, 2020); of which \$28 million was dedicated to ITEC.

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### Current State of ITEC

As mentioned earlier, ITEC grew out of the Colombo Plan and was launched in 1964. It was a bilateral programme alleged to reflect the ideas of India’s first two Prime Ministers (Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri,) on national interdependence and mutual assistance (Ministry of External Affairs, 2014). ITEC was designed to assist the many Asian and African countries gaining independence from colonial rule at that time.

There were several kinds of ITEC assistance:

- Primarily public sector capacity building through training courses
- Secondment of Indian experts as technical consultants
- Funding to establish training institutes and laboratories

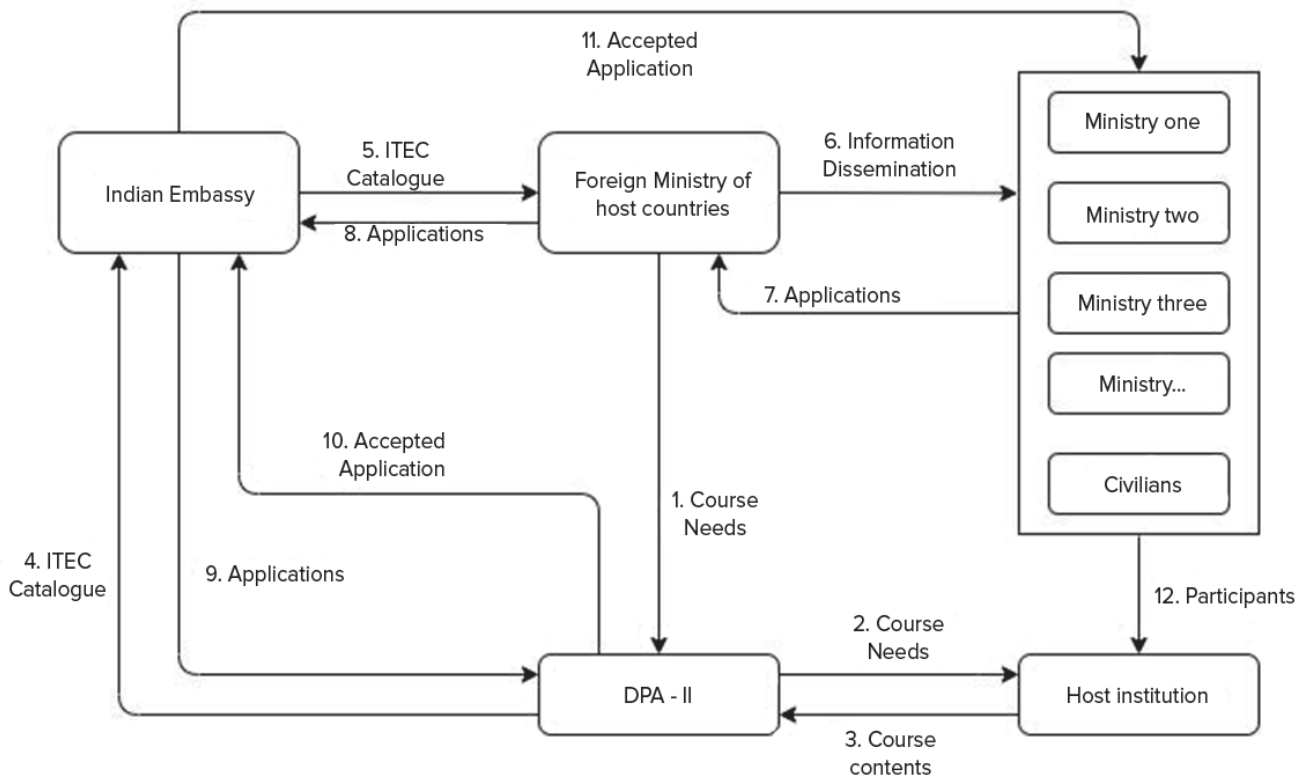
This report will focus solely on capacity building through training courses; as this has historically been the dominant form of assistance.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) sees ITEC is a demand-driven programme, with courses designed in consultation with recipient countries. According to MEA data, 161 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Pacific and Small Island countries are involved in ITEC. However, it is unclear if all these countries participate equally. Each country receives a fixed number of ITEC slots. These slots are then exchanged for different forms of assistance.

There are no official guidelines on slot allocation, and more slots are usually given to countries that are strategically important or have a large Indian diaspora (Mullen et al., 2015).

The process for taking part in ITEC training programmes is shown in Figure 1. DPA – II, which oversees ITEC, invites Indian training institutions to provide ITEC courses or asks them to provide a specific course based on requirements identified by the DPA communicated by other countries. In the past Indian public institutions were the sole providers of ITEC courses, but recently private institutions have also begun to offer ITEC training (Agarwal, 2012)

**Figure 1: ITEC Training Process Graph**



Source: Own elaboration.

Once the course programme is finalised, the course catalogue is prepared and distributed to Indian Embassies, Consulates and High Commissions, along with other details for dissemination. The Indian Embassy, Consulate or High Commission sends the course catalogue and other details to the designated nodal agency - usually the recipient country’s Foreign Ministry. The nodal agency is then responsible for submitting this ITEC information to the relevant departments, organisations and agencies. Interested applicants have to be nominated by their home departments and approved by the nodal agency (Ministry of External Affairs)

Once their nomination is approved by the nodal agency, candidates must complete and submit an online form on ITEC.go.in. This form is then printed out by the candidate and sent to the nodal agency, which sends it back to the Indian Embassy who share the application with DPA-II.

DPA-II select the participants for each course from the applications received. It informs the Indian missions overseas of its selection, and they in turn inform the selected participants. Participants' transport to, accommodation and food expenses in India are covered by ITEC. The Indian embassy see off participants from their home countries, while the host institution is responsible for meeting them on arrival, arranging their stay and transport during the course and accompanying them to their point of departure back to their home country.

Annually, over 12, 000 civilian participants attend the ITEC Civilian Training Programme (Ministry of External Affairs, About ITEC). ITEC also provides defence programmes but as information on these courses is limited, they are not considered in this report. ITEC offers civilians a diverse and varied range of courses – covering IT to rural development, parliamentary practices to entrepreneurship, marine to aeronautical engineering, etc. Their duration varies from 6 days to 2 years (for certain technical courses). Courses include classroom learning and field visits and are exposed to Indian culture through sightseeing visits.

ITEC recently launched three new initiatives:

1. ITEC Executive - aimed specifically at middle to high-ranking civil servants. The ITEC Executive enrolment process is similar to that of traditional ITEC training programmes. ITEC Executive includes courses such as the Management Development Programme on Creating and Sustaining National Competitive Advantage (for diplomats) and the Management Development Programme on Innovation in Public Administration for senior administrators.
2. eITEC - online training for ITEC participants. eITEC offers online courses on issues including Gender Inclusive Governance, Legislative Drafting, Voter Registration and Online Teaching.
3. ITEC Onsite – if a country indicates that it has a large number of candidates for a particular course, ITEC sends experts to that country to conduct training programmes on site. All of the arrangements are managed by the host country.

In 2019-2020, ITEC received a budget allocation of \$28.9 million for the 11,645 participants who received ITEC training courses (Ministry of External Affairs, 2020)



# 3. Previous ITEC Analyses

Despite being around since 1964, the literature dedicated to ITEC and ITEC analyses is sparse. This is because limited data is available on ITEC, Indian Development Cooperation and the Ministry of External Affairs.

The Government of India prefers internal ITEC reviews to external assessment. Most of the available literature analyses ITEC's effectiveness in advancing India's foreign policy goals, rather than the actual effectiveness of the programme in driving development in its partner countries. This section focuses on three assessments carried out with the cooperation of the Ministry of External Affairs, supplemented by information from other literature. Findings are arranged in three sections covering the process, content and impact of ITEC courses respectively.

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## Process

A study of previous literature (Tuhin, 2016) notes that ITEC is a demand driven process. ITEC historically offered specific courses (for example on the green revolution,) to participant countries while also accepting requests for specific courses, such as when courses were held for private sector participants from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. The highest number of ITEC slots per country is currently provided to Afghanistan followed by Myanmar, but in terms of regions, Sub-Saharan Africa leads the field (Tuhin, 2016). ITEC has operational issues, especially a cumbersome application process that may result in slots going unfilled (Mullen et al., 2015). There is no indication that the application process has changed since 2015. There has been a shift in delivery method, with increasing involvement of private for-profit training providers such as NIIT and ApTech, especially for Technology and IT courses (Agarwal, 2012).

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## Content

Past literature highlights that certain partner institutes, such as the Barefoot College, train illiterate grandmothers to become 'Solar Mamas', proving that ITEC courses need not be limited to specialist programmes. Recommendations include encouraging greater participation from non-English speaking countries by providing translators and creating platforms to allow/encourage participants to stay in touch with their training institutes (Dalal, 1994).

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## Impact

The Indian Government launched ITEC with three objectives (Dalal, 1994):

1. Reinforce and continually enhance political goodwill and basic economic and commercial interdependence with neighbouring countries.
2. Respond to legitimate claims on India's ability to help countries with a large Indian population.
3. Strengthen ties with newly-independent developing countries with considerable development potential.

When ITEC began, most of India's development aid was allocated to technical cooperation. However, the quantity of technical cooperation aid has not kept up with the increase in India's aid budget and by 2013-2014, only 2% of India's external aid budget was assigned to technical cooperation. Nevertheless, historically these amounts have had an outsized significance for India's foreign relations. ITEC is highly cost effective, the average cost of training one candidate during a

7-8 week course conducted in English was approximately US\$2,800 (Agarwal, 2012). The fact that most ITEC courses are conducted at national institutes where costs are highly subsidized contributes to its cost-effectiveness. ITEC also enhances the reputation of Indian educational institutions overseas.

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## **Assessment of Similar Programmes**

Given the limited ITEC assessments, this study reviewed how other institutions assess similar programmes. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Knowledge Co-Creation Programme (KCCP) is the most similar programme to ITEC. JICA undertakes an annual survey of participating partners (Miyoshi, 2006) to define its courses for the following year. International experts vet the courses, confirm their suitability and most importantly, examine if there are advantages to the course being taught in Japan. Courses are grouped into region and country specific groups, and cohorts are small, with 5 - 14 participants per course (in general). JICA also involves local and prefectural Japanese governments in its courses, and aims for two-way knowledge transfer (Nakamura, Elder and Mori, 2011). JICA has also published case studies and books on the solutions implemented by participants on their return home, which gives an idea of KCCP impact. External assessments of JICA courses used relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and degree of impact criteria (Shazwin and Nagakoshi, 2010).

Previous ITEC assessments tend to be overly functional and do not interrogate ITEC through the lens of wider development concerns. Little research has been done on the participation of individual countries. No previous ITEC assessments have examined the programme from a SSC perspective.

## 4. Assessment Framework

*“This is an Agenda of unprecedented scope and significance. It is accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. These are universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development... We pledge to foster intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility. We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development. We reaffirm our strong commitment to the full implementation of this new Agenda. We recognize that we will not be able to achieve our ambitious Goals and targets without a revitalized and enhanced Global Partnership and comparably ambitious means of implementation.”*

(United Nations, 2015)

Globalisation and the increasing entanglement of social and economic systems across borders mean that previously national or regional problems have international ripple effects.

In 2020, the world faces several challenges: some new, some old. Globalisation and the increasing entanglement of social and economic systems across borders mean that previously national or regional problems have international ripple effects. For example, war in the Middle East set off a refugee crisis in Europe. The first truly global crisis has also emerged - climate change and global warming could push 100 million people into poverty by 2030, and increase the number of natural disasters and food insecurity. The consequences of the climate crisis will be uniquely global: 143 million international climate refugees are predicted (Hallegatte, S., et. al. (2016). Fighting the climate crisis will require a global shift to a non-carbon intensive development model. At the time of writing this report, another new global crisis has emerged. Covid-19 is wreaking havoc across the world. Acknowledging that this new class of global problems will only be solved through global cooperation when adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in Resolution 70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations General Assembly specified Goal 17: *“Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.”* (United Nations, 2015).

Development cooperation is a key component of the global partnership for sustainable development. Historically, development cooperation, especially between the Global North and South, has been seen as a form of compensation for colonialism and was mostly focused on poverty reduction and aid. However, progress in the Global South and the urgency of global problems, combined with the tightening of Global North aid purse strings in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, have led to a need for new kinds of development cooperation (Gray, K, Gills, B.K., (2015)). South-South development cooperation is well placed to address this. But to do so, SSC must become more effective.

This can only be achieved through rigorous assessment and evaluation. The following technical cooperation assessment framework is intended to help improve effectiveness, especially in the light of the SDGs and the climate crisis.

---

## Parameters of Assessment Framework

Development cooperation capacity building is hard to measure as its impact is not immediately evident. Capacity building is also unlikely to produce a financial Return on Investment (ROI).

The goal of capacity building projects like ITEC is to invest in developing countries' human capital and to build the functional teams, knowledge and skills required to address development needs. This report therefore considered two parameters (indicators by which ITEC outcomes can be measured and standards for programme delivery) in assessing the ITEC framework:

1. Content - Content aims to assess course usefulness for the participants and the benefits of the courses in meeting partner country's needs. Although a course may be demand-driven, it might not actually help a country achieve its SDGs. The following will be assessed:
  - a. Course Alignment (to recipient country challenges).  
Each country faces unique challenges. So capacity building or training needs to actually tackle those challenges. Along with country specific issues identified by analysing the literature, this assessment framework will also tackle issues including:
    - i. Gender: identify specific courses to tackle the social, political and economic issues faced by women to ensure gender equity.
    - ii. SDG Agenda: as nearly every country aligns development policies with the SDGs, it is important that capacity building activities do the same.
    - iii. Climate Change: climate change is the 21st century issue, and it is important to build ability to adapt to and mitigate climate change in the Global South.
  - b. Content tailoring to recipient needs.
2. Processes –ITEC processes including participant selection, feedback and course follow-up will be reviewed. This will provide insight into MEA efforts to improve ITEC effectiveness. The following will be examined:
  - a. Candidate selection.
  - b. Post-course candidate follow up.
  - c. Steps to promote gender equality and inclusion.

---

## Parameters of Assessment Framework

This assessment uses existing ITEC documentation (course brochures, academic literature, media reports) and stakeholder consultations. PAC consulted a serving MEA official, five subject matter experts and a retired diplomatic officer experienced in ITEC implementation. These insights from inside the system highlighted the geo-political motivations behind ITEC, participants' experiences and post-course interactions. Subject matter experts' contributions were used to understand ITEC's inner workings and to design the assessment process.

The research team hoped to survey ITEC participants to assess the quality of the courses, but the MEA did not share details of ITEC participants from Nepal and Bangladesh.

# 5. Assessment of ITEC Cooperation with Nepal

## Development History of Nepal

A brief review of Nepal's development history, relationship with India and current development challenges provides the context for analysing ITEC cooperation.

In the 18th century, Nepal was created by the unification of several states at risk of British invasion. In 1846, a coup established Rana dynasty rule. The Rana dynasty maintained close relationships with British India and did not attempt to develop Nepal, either by building institutions or infrastructure. In the 1950s, India helped restore the erstwhile Shah dynasty, but Nepal emerged as one of the world's least developed nations. Over the next 50 years it swung between autocracy and democracy, officially becoming a federal democratic republic in 2008.

Its strategic location between India and China has made Nepal the beneficiary of bilateral and multilateral aid from several actors. However, a persistent lack of good governance remains a hindrance to development. Lack of institutional capacity (Sharma, 2011) prevented Nepal from being able to absorb aid.

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## India-Nepal Relations

Diplomatic ties between India and Nepal were established in 1947. The Indian embassy in Kathmandu was set up in the same year. The India-Nepal treaty of peace and friendship was signed in 1950. The India-Nepal economic cooperation programme was launched in 1951 (Khadka, 1997). In 1954, India launched its first Nepal aid mission to consolidate Indian development projects, expand engagement and ensure punctual project delivery. Later in 1966, India's aid mission was renamed as the Indian Cooperation Mission as a sign of its willingness to cooperate for friendship and mutual benefit.

Although India was among Nepal's first development partners, there is little discourse regarding Indian aid or recognition compared with other development donors. India is not a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and so it does not commit to the DAC standards for accountability, transparency and participation (Adhikari, 2014). Similarly, India has played a limited part in donor meetings, does not prioritise evaluation of completed projects, and does not publish information on project outcomes.

---

## Nepal Development Challenges

From the 1950s to the 1970s, foreign aid comprised 95% of Nepal's government budget. Currently, foreign aid represents 24%. Yet Nepal remains one of the world's poorest countries, with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of \$970. Frequent earthquakes and floods have also adversely affected development.

Nepal is also very sensitive to climate change (USAID, 2017) and increasingly experiencing summer droughts, then flooding and landslides during the monsoon. Increased temperatures are causing rapid snow and ice melt, and glacier retreat. Two-thirds of the population work in agriculture, rendering livelihoods vulnerable.

The following courses were provided specifically to Nepalese participants:

**Table 1: ITEC Courses Offered to Nepal**

| Sl. No. | Course Title  | Course Description   | Duration | Institute  |
|---------|---|--|----------|--|
| 1       | Global perspectives on public financial management for Nepali nationals   | Provides training in public financial management, covering public finance systems in India and other global perspectives | 11 days  | Institute Of Government Accounts And Finance (INGAF)           |
| 2       | Investigation and control of revenue leakage for Nepalese officers  | Exposes participants to Indian and global practices in revenue collection and leakage investigation                      | 4 days   | National Academy for Customs, Income Tax and Narcotics (NACIN) |
| 3       | Special training programme for Nepal officials on Anti Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) | Trains revenue officials in techniques to prevent money laundering and counter terrorism financing (AML/CFT)             | 5 days   | National Academy for Customs, Income Tax and Narcotics (NACIN) |

**Table 2: Nepal Assessment Framework**

|                | Parameters               | Analysis   |   |
|----------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Content</b> | Course Alignment         | <p>The ITEC courses offered in Nepal are listed in Table 1.</p> <p>The first course on Public Finance Management appears necessary, but both the World Bank and the European Commission have already financed initiatives on Public Finance Management in Nepal. While there is a need for Public Finance Management at provincial level, the course does not seem to be specifically aimed at provincial officers. Additionally, the course aim seems to be less about giving the participants new skills, and more about introducing them to the Indian System of Public Finance Management.</p> <p>NACIN courses seem more geared towards teaching new skills, as they also involve professional exercises.</p> <p>Revenue leakage does seem to be an issue in Nepal, and there seem to be no other programmes tackling this issue.</p> |   |
|                | SDG Alignment            | No specific alignment to the SDGs.   |   |
|                | Gender and Inclusiveness | There does not appear to be any criteria to encourage greater gender equality in the selection process, or any emphasis on inclusiveness in these courses.   |   |
|                | Climate Change           | The INGAF course included a climate finance component.   |   |
|                | Content Tailoring        | None of the courses seem to customise content to issues unique to Nepal.   |   |
|                | <b>Processes</b>         | Candidate Selection  | ITEC course places seem to be currently given on a first-come-first-served basis. Experience is the only selection criteria listed for these courses.                     |
|                |                          | Candidate Follow-up  | While the Indian embassy organises an annual ITEC day, there does not appear to be any formal follow up mechanism to assess whether participants found the course useful. |

# 6. Assessment of ITEC Cooperation with Bangladesh

A brief review of Bangladesh's development history, relationship with India and current development challenges provides context for analysing the ITEC cooperation received.

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## Development History of Bangladesh

India has had a good relationship with Bangladesh ever since it intervened in the East-Pakistan war to ensure Bangladesh's independence. Like India, Bangladesh is a lower middle-income country. The Bangladesh Liberation War resulted in 3 million deaths and almost destroyed Bangladesh's physical infrastructure.

In 1972, Bangladesh was highly dependent on foreign aid, with 88% of development spending coming from outside the country (Helal and Hossain, 2013). This figure is now below 2%. However, Bangladesh is still classified as an LDC. Economists note that while Bangladesh has grown rapidly, this growth has not reached similar levels to that of India due to a lack of good governance [Asadullah and Chakravarty, 2019]. Lack of investment in human resources has resulted in most Bangladeshi workers taking up menial jobs overseas, instead of higher paying specialist jobs. It has also been unable to take advantage of its demographic dividend; as it has been unable to provide productive employment. [Reihan, 2018].

The government has recognised the need for reform in areas including public administration, the judiciary, the police, women's issues, anti-corruption activities and democratic governance at all levels of society; to enable further improvements towards becoming a modern, democratic society (Ministry of Environment and Forests, Bangladesh, 2012).

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## India-Bangladesh Relations

Bangladesh is India's largest South Asian trading partner. It is also a highly strategic partner, and the cornerstone of its Look East policy (Das, 2011). Bangladeshi policy makers understand that deeper cooperation with India is essential to enabling the greater development of Bangladesh. But the two countries also share underlying geopolitical tensions, mainly related to sharing water from the Teesta river that divides them.

Credit lines with concessional rates at India's EXIM bank are the main instrument of Indian development cooperation (PRIA, 2017) for Bangladesh. Bangladesh is the single largest recipient of India's credit lines, and has received over \$17.04 billion for development in areas such as roads, railways, power, shipping, special economic zones, health and medical care and technical education.

However, Indian companies are the only ones allowed to bid for these projects, restricting the scope for developing the capacities of Bangladeshi firms. Critics have also noted the lack of transparency and documentation available regarding the projects commissioned through these lines of credit, resulting in a lack of assessment of their effectiveness. Nevertheless, relationships between India and Bangladesh remain strong.

## Development Challenges in Bangladesh

Bangladesh now faces multiple economic, political and geographic challenges. Primarily, it needs to generate employment to take advantage of its demographic dividend. While 1.5-2 million candidates hit the job market every year, only 600,000 new jobs are created. Considerable investment in human capital is required to enable Bangladesh to benefit from its demographic dividend. Bangladesh's economy is also highly dependent on the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector and remittances from abroad. It has been unable to create jobs in the higher-value manufacturing or service sectors. Bangladesh is also extremely vulnerable to climate change, and ranks 7th on the Long-Term Climate Risk Index (Eckstein, et. al., 2020). Bangladesh is a low-lying country, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that over 27 million people in Bangladesh will be vulnerable to sea level rises by 2050 (Wright, 2014). Climate change is also predicted to increase food insecurity and move populations into urban centres.

## Courses Offered to Bangladesh

The following courses were specifically provided to participants from Bangladesh:

**Table 3:** ITEC courses offered to Bangladesh

| Sl. No. | Course Title   | Course Description   | Duration | Institute  |
|---------|--|--|----------|--|
| 1       | Mid-career training programme in field administration for Bangladesh civil servants        | Certificate in field administration, which aims to provide administrators with a good understanding of Indian governance and administrative standards.                       | 2 Weeks  | National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG)               |
| 2       | Special training for yoga trainers from Bangladesh   | Certificate for yoga instructors, training them to teach yoga to the general public.   | 1 Month  | Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusudha (SVYA)                   |
| 3       | Special training programme for Bangladeshi judicial officers                               | Designed to build and increase the institutional capacity of the subordinate judiciary; to improve service delivery and quality through classroom teaching and field visits. | 2 Weeks  | National Judicial Academy (NJA)                          |
| 4       | Special training programme for Bangladeshi teachers in IT, web design and teaching methods | Teacher training programme in ICTs, web design and new skills to improve teaching abilities.   | 7 Weeks  | National Institute of Technical Teacher Training (NITTT) |



**Table 4: Bangladesh Assessment Framework**

|                | Parameters               | Analysis  |   |
|----------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Content</b> | Course Alignment         | <p>The government has acknowledged the need for administrative reform. Mid-career training for Bangladeshi civil servants could therefore be useful. However, the course merely exposes them to good governance practices in India, without elaborating how these could be applied in Bangladesh.</p> <p>An IT course for participants from Bangladesh is unnecessary as Bangladesh has its own billion-dollar IT industry (Faisal, 2019) which can provide IT capacity building for technical teachers.</p> <p>Bangladesh has its own Judicial Administrative Training Institute (JATI). It's not clear if the course provides judicial officers with skills beyond those obtained from JATI. Additionally, in Bangladesh, the judiciary suffers from executive interference (Mollah, 2012).</p> <p>While yoga has been shown to have many individual health benefits, it is unclear whether there is demand for yoga in Bangladesh. The provision of yoga training is more in line with current Indian foreign policy than development needs.</p> |   |
|                | SDG Alignment            | None of the course contents are aligned with the SDGs.  |   |
|                | Gender and Inclusiveness | There appear to be no selection criteria encouraging greater gender equality, or any course emphasis on inclusiveness.  |   |
|                | Climate Change           | There does not appear to be any focus on climate change.  |   |
|                | Content Tailoring        | None evidence of the courses customise content to the needs of Bangladesh.  |   |
|                | <b>Processes</b>         | Candidate Selection   | ITEC course places seem to be currently given on a first-come-first-served basis. Experience is the only selection criteria listed for these courses.                     |
|                |                          | Candidate Follow-up   | While the Indian embassy organises an annual ITEC day, there does not appear to be any formal follow up mechanism to assess whether participants found the course useful. |

## Comparison of Indian Engagement with Nepal and Bangladesh

As South-Asian countries, Nepal and Bangladesh, both share cultural similarities with India. India was an ally in the democratic struggles of both countries. Without Indian support, East Pakistan may not have been able to break away from Pakistan to become Bangladesh, and the nascent Nepal Congress Party found support in India.

However, India's geographic scale and economic superiority make South Asian neighbours wary of its potential regional hegemony (Bhasin, 2008). This has always coloured their perceptions of development aid. Recent moves by the Indian government, such as the unofficial 2017 trade block on Nepal (Pant, 2018) have further strained India's relationships with Nepal and Bangladesh.

Previous ITEC literature noted ITEC's success in changing perceptions of India, especially among participants. This is supported by anecdotal evidence from participants' chat groups on instant messaging platforms and Facebook. However, it is hard to establish the ITEC's development impact as (a) ITEC has not published any impact studies (b) external assessments of Indian aid for these two countries focussed on Indian funded infrastructure projects, which represent the majority of aid given to these countries (Bhagal, 2016). Some critics have therefore accused ITEC of being a programme that builds patronage networks (Adhikari, 2014).

Although both Nepal and Bangladesh are very vulnerable to climate change, no climate change training has been specifically organised for them. However ITEC holds several climate change courses (Ministry of External Affairs, 2019), so this could be because Nepal and Bangladesh have not requested climate change courses.

# 7. Observations and Findings

Previous research found ITEC to be a highly cost-effective programme that has greatly increased India's reputation, and the reputation of its educational institutions. The programme's focus on civil servants allows India to cultivate a powerful patronage network in positions of influence in the participating countries.

The creation of ITEC Executive also shows that the Indian government is keen to build this network in higher positions of authority. However, there is a lack of transparency about how the courses and participants are selected. There is also a lack of rigorous feedback or a follow-up process to improve course quality.

The short duration of courses and addition of sightseeing trips in some course itineraries (though useful in providing exposure to India's culture and geography), questions their usefulness. The absence of a collaborative process that would allow course customisation reduces their utility. Although both countries are vulnerable to climate change, available courses provided little or no alignment with climate change issues.

Recipient countries are also not taking full advantage of the programme. ITEC is demand-driven, and could be more effective if recipient countries took an active role in designing the course programmes. If recipient countries were to perform an honest review of their capacity gaps, ITEC could help to fill them. Recipient countries could also carry out more publicity about the courses available, to ensure greater participation and build their workforce capacity. Historically, the Indian government has been happy to tailor courses at a partner country's request. ITEC intrinsically provides for such flexibility. Recipient countries can also conduct post-ITEC assessments of participants from their countries to better understand how the programme supports their development needs and to identify opportunities for improvement or additional support.

In many ways, ITEC is a perfect South-South Cooperation programme. It is cost-effective, mutually beneficial and does not interfere in internal matters. However, there is scope for improving its effectiveness, especially to ensure it is driven by the needs and demands of partner countries, and to scale it up. It would be good for South-South Cooperation if the World's biggest democracy were to significantly scale up ITEC to spread knowledge across the developing world.

# 8. Recommendations

1. The Indian Government and Ministry of External Affairs should increase ITEC transparency and communications. Disaggregated information on demand for courses, testimonials and student feedback should be released. Openness should be embraced to allow constructive feedback about ITEC programmes. Transparency is most important regarding:
  - a. The ITEC course and institute selection process.
  - b. The participant selection process.
2. The MEA would also benefit from outcome-measured impact evaluation by an independent and credible organisation. It would allow MEA to apply corrective measures and make significant improvements in the quality and suitability of ITEC courses. The ultimate metric should answer the question: what were the resulting outcomes in the partner country?
3. MEA should also go beyond the spirit of South-South Cooperation and ensure that the courses offered are needed, not merely demand driven. In other words, they should reflect the challenges faced generally by the Global South and specifically by participating countries, especially in the light of the SDGs, climate change and gender. Institutions and instructors should be encouraged to tailor their courses, and bring in lessons from outside India. This may require instructors with more diverse backgrounds. This could be covered by increasing the MEA support available to these institutions. The JICA system is a good example of how to determine which training courses to provide.
4. Recipient countries need to take a more active role. They should be more involved in publicising course opportunities to their personnel, and in course design to ensure that their participants are able to obtain maximum benefits.
5. Recipient countries should also assess and interview their participants to understand whether training enhanced their skills and allowed them to perform their duties more effectively. Responsibility for assessment can be taken by the participant's organisation/department. Assessment could be carried out via group debriefing, interviews, written reports or forms. This process would answer two important questions: (1) Does the participant believe the knowledge gained will be professionally useful and (2) Does their new knowledge fit the home organisation/department's wider goals.

Two aspects favour ITEC's ability to implement these changes:

- i. The ITEC programme is extremely cost-effective. Expenditure on the programme represents a mere 2.69% (\$30 million) of the total MEA aid budget of nearly \$1.1 billion. Recommendations are limited to process changes so will entail minimal expenditure increases, which are easy to cover through the aid budget.

- ii. Its large network of Indian partner institutions gives ITEC ready access to the capacity and expertise it needs to carry out such changes. If asked, ITEC partner institutions have the capability to study and identify participating countries' development needs and, in collaboration with experts from those countries, to identify the courses and programmes to fill those development needs.

ITEC has created a large network of alumni who have become ITEC torchbearers in their respective countries. In the process, it has developed a powerful cultural bridge between India and recipients across the continent. Many ITEC alumni have gone on to become ministers, senior diplomats, academics, government officials and leading entrepreneurs. As a result of different ITEC activities, there is now visible and growing awareness of India's provision of technical know-how and expertise. As India grows in economic stature and as a beacon of democracy in the Global South, it has the opportunity to evolve the ITEC project and set new standards for South-South Cooperation.

# 9. Key Findings

This report does not intend to provide a functional assessment of ITEC (evaluating its capacity building effectiveness). It aims to assess ITEC's usefulness within the broader frame of progress in the Global South and South-South Cooperation.

Nepalese and Bangladeshi students' participation in ITEC courses has been studied not from the micro-perspective of training effectiveness, but from a wider perspective of ITEC support's geo-political suitability. While ITEC programmes have generated immense goodwill for India in Nepal and Bangladesh; the programme has not helped these two countries achieve their wider development goals.

To ensure the relevance of ITEC to future global challenges, India needs to go beyond normative adherence to South-South Cooperation principles, and make substantial procedural improvements to improve the relevance, quality and impact of ITEC courses.

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