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Task Force 01

FIGHTING INEQUALITIES, POVERTY, AND HUNGER

G20 Traction for Trilateral Cooperation to Achieve G20 Deccan High-Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition

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Abstract

The ongoing multiple challenges of food crisis, conflicts, and climate emergencies call for effective policies and programmatic actions to achieve sustainable agri-food systems transformation. This, in turn, requires deeper trilateral cooperation through the diffusion of technologies, information exchange, and resource mobilization supported by various institutions, including multilateral agencies. G20 Deccan High-Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPs), endorsed by Leaders in September 2023, outline enabling actions and call for their prompt implementation to protect the food insecure. These principles include a range of actions such as humanitarian assistance, strengthening safety nets, building climate resilience, inclusivity in value chains, innovations, and investments where trilateral cooperation can play a critical role. Yet the G20 traction needed for implementing HLPs needs ramping up. Effective implementation of HLPs requires increased investments and faster diffusion of technologies towards transforming climate-resilient food systems and enabling agri-tech start-ups requiring policy and actions at all levels. Investment priorities also need to be aligned with sustainability objectives. Inclusivity necessitates integrating smallholder farmers, including women and youth, in agri-food value chains. The G20 Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) also needs strengthening. These call for deeper trilateral engagement to enhance food availability, accessibility, and affordability for faster, better, and sustained actions.

Keywords: Finance, G20 Deccan High Level Principles (HLPs) for Food Security and Nutrition, Inclusive Responsible Investment, South-South Cooperation, Trilateral Cooperation, Technology Facilitation Mechanism.

Context

G20 leaders committed to enhancing food security and nutrition for all, in line with G20 Deccan High-Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition at the New Delhi summit in 2023 (G20 Leaders' Summit, 2023). These principles necessitate undertaking enabling actions to protect the food insecure, strengthen safety nets, increase climate resilience, and work towards sustainable, inclusive, well-invested, and innovative food systems. Universal coverage of food security and nutrition remains a key development objective at the global and national levels. Several of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that can address food security and nutrition issues include Partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17) spurred on Zero Hunger (Goal 2), Good health and Well-being (Goal 3), Gender Equality (Goal 5), Affordable and Clean Energy (Goal 7); leading to No Poverty (Goal 1), Reduced inequalities (Goal 10), Responsible Consumption and Production (Goal 12) and Climate Action (Goal 13). While these goals are interconnected and affect poverty, food security, and nutrition, there is a vast scope that swifter and deep enough trilateral cooperation can still help achieve SDGs across the globe. In this context, there is a need to enhance traction to the commitments and follow-up action agreed upon in the G20 Deccan declaration.

Challenges

The number of people facing food security and hunger has risen since 2015 and may exacerbate due to conflicts, extreme weather events, and growing inequalities (UN, 2023). The global challenge of malnutrition among children also persists despite some progress. There is a global decrease in stunting from 26.3 percent to 22.3 percent and

wasting from 7.5 to 6.8 percent among children below the age of five years from 2012 to 2022 (Anand *et al.*, 2023). By 2030, seven percent of the global population (575 million people) will be living in extreme poverty, and only one-third of countries will meet the target of lowering the poverty levels by half (UN, 2023). Moreover, the challenge posed by climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem collapse will remain a threat to humanity in the long term (WEF, 2023).

Challenges faced by developing countries, including least developed countries (LDCs), need support from other countries due to lack of resources, especially inadequacy of financing and slow speed of technological diffusion. In 2021, OECD's Developing Assistance Committee (DAC) provided 185.9 USD billion as official development assistance (ODA), which is 0.33 percent of the collective Gross National Income (GNI) of the donor countries against the target of 0.7 percent (OECD, 2023). The report adds that long-term trends in aggregate development assistance shows fewer resource allocation to developing countries. Also, an increasing proportion of ODA budgets is allocated to refugee costs incurred in donor countries.

Scope of Trilateral Cooperation in G20

International cooperation is critical to attaining global food security and nutrition. South-South and Triangular cooperation (SSTrC) mechanisms are such steps toward assistance to developing countries. In the G20 Matera Declaration 2021, the G20 Foreign Affairs and Development Minister, UN agencies, and other partners gave a call to all relevant actors in G20 countries and beyond to 'implement the urgently needed actions to recover from the crisis, including by stepping up North-South, South-South and Triangular cooperation, with the aim to reach a world free of hunger and malnutrition, realize the right to adequate food, alleviate poverty, and promote just, peaceful and

inclusive societies.' These would help to bridge divides and leverage the resources and knowledge of partners to move toward the development path in an accelerated mode. Being a unique form of multilateralism, trilateral arrangements supplement broad multilateral cooperation frameworks. These mechanisms help to bring together the skills and expertise of involved partners, strengthen partnerships, and scale up opportunities for all (Chaturvedi and Piefer-Soyler, 2021). It may also help to overcome some challenges of bilateral cooperation, such as less efficiency of state machinery, including corruption, by involving non-state development actors (Dietrich, 2015). United Nations (2019) endorsed outcome document of the BAPA+40 recognising that 'South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation increasingly take different and evolving forms, including technical cooperation, the sharing of knowledge and experience, training, capacity building and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, aimed at achieving sustainable development ...'. Chaturvedi, (2023) argues that 'Despite unresolved areas of contestation between development actors, more providers are maximising development potential by leveraging new partnerships in South-South and triangular cooperation'.

In this endeavour, the efforts of G20, being an influential group of developed and developing economies and inviting multilateral organisations to attend its meetings, can be supplemented through trilateral cooperation arrangements. Haug, Cheng and Waisbich (2023), recommend to G20 members to take steps towards promoting triangular cooperation as a modality, as the group carries the potential to mobilise material, symbolic and ideational resources; across continents, political ideologies and development trajectories. With the inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a member of G20 at the India Presidency in 2023, higher traction to address the challenges faced by countries of the Global South is expected in the coming G20 meetings.

Modalities of the development assistance include trade and investment, technology exchange, skills upgradation, lines of credit (LoCs), and grants where LoCs and grants may be pooled under an overall financing mechanism (Chaturvedi, 2016). Some countries, especially Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) and Net Food Importing Developing Countries (NFIDCs), require special traction while collaborating on food security and nutrition efforts. FAO Crop Prospects and Food Situation (2024) assessed that globally there are 45 Countries/ territories which need external assistance for food. Out of these, as many as 33 countries are in Africa, nine in Asia, two in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Europe; with each country affected by one or multiple conditions.’ These countries can be assisted through better hand-holding under trilateral cooperation mechanisms.

Recommendations

Food crises would apparently continue to dominate the global outlook for 2024, given the ongoing crisis due to climate change spiked by conflicts. In 2023, during the G20 India Presidency, the G20 Leaders committed to supporting developing countries' efforts and capacities to address their food security challenges, to work together to enable access to affordable, safe, nutritious, and healthy diets, and to foster the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. The Leaders further committed to accelerating innovations and investments focused on increasing agricultural productivity, reducing food loss and waste across the value chains, and improving marketing and storage to build more sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture and food systems. The recommendations to G20 for future course of action are as follows:

Recommendation 1: A G20 platform for trilateral cooperation to facilitate all stakeholders, including LDCs and NIFDCs, to exchange modalities for ensuring food security and nutrition

Many international forums and agencies are concerned with ensuring food security. Recent instances include G20 Leaders' commitment to enhance global food security and nutrition for all at New Delhi Summit, 2023 (G20 Leaders' Summit, 2023); Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security (UNFCCC, 2023) and WTO ministerial declaration on the emergency response to food insecurity in 2022 (WTO, 2022). There are instances highlighting the need for collaborating efforts. For instance, a report of a mapping exercise on global responses to food insecurity, as requested by the G20 Indonesia Presidency, 2022, that was submitted

during the G20 India Presidency, 2023, underscores the need for a G20 platform where all these stakeholders can exchange information on the future course of action to achieve food security and nutrition and to bring sustainability resilience in food systems (FAO, WTO and World Bank Group, 2023).

It is recommended that a platform for trilateral cooperation be developed to facilitate food security and meet the nutritional needs of the countries. It will also act as a repository for implementation experiences, which may prove useful for further insights and planning. For this, G20 can establish an e-platform for sharing the best instances of trilateral cooperation and manifest the underlying strength harnessed in each such cooperation. To materialise our recommendation, the G20 Brazil presidency needs to create a working group panel comprising of Finance as well as Sherpa track with Development Working Group (DWG) as a lead and members comprising of Agriculture Working Group (AWG) and Research and Innovation WG (a new working group established under Brazil Presidency) along with concerned engagement groups to take this work further forward. The Brazilian Presidency's Task Force on Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, which aims to implement public policies and social technologies that are proven effective against hunger and poverty, should put special resources and collaboration efforts in this regard.

The proposed platform will also facilitate exchange of best practices, innovations and emerging technologies, to promote awareness and fast-track research.

Recommendation 2: G20 to seek IMF expertise to strengthen AMIS toward robust global supply chains supported by lines of credit. It will also help in quick information response and ensure better resilience and finance-backed inclusivity in food value chains

The mapping exercise on food insecurity conducted by FAO, WTO, and World Bank Group (2023) underscored the role of the G20 in moving beyond a sector-specific discussion of food security and considering improvement in the development of finance architecture to support investments to address underlying problems of hunger and food insecurity. At present, the AMIS secretariat comprises FAO, GEOGLAM, IFPRI, IFAD, IGC, OECD, UNCTAD, the World Bank Group, WFP, and WTO. In line with the G20 Leaders' commitment during the India Presidency, 2023 to strengthen AMIS, G20 should seek the expertise of the IMF to provide information on lines of credit under the dynamic changes in food trade and invite it also as a member of the Secretariat to further strengthen AMIS. It would help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) working in agriculture and the allied sector make informed decisions toward responsible public and private investments based on local requirements. Moreover, G20 needs to promote the sharing of best practices on food safety nets, towards making these automatically opening and backed by year-round robust global supply chains supported by lines of credit to buy food. Secondly, G20 also needs to put emphasis on trilateral cooperation leveraging digitalization. Developing a dedicated online portal on the recommended platform is also advocated to cater to the needs of individual nations.

Recommendation 3: G20 commitment to support early development of technology facilitation mechanisms on agri-food systems in line with SDG target 17.6, especially for countries facing food deficits and for the diffusion of technologies meant for overall agricultural development in an affordable manner to reduce the technology gap

The G20 Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) over the last decade (till December 2021) has benefitted 16.6 million farmers with grant financing of 1.5 billion USD to countries, 476 million USD to support private sector development, and 47 million USD to farmers' or producer organizations (GAFSP, 2021). There is a need to enhance the role of trilateral cooperation channels under GAFSP to support technology facilitation mechanisms for agriculture development through responsible public and private investments and blended finance to derive maximum benefits for swifter technology diffusion to countries in need.

Recommendation 4: G20 to promote the development of institutional and human capacity strategies through multilateral organisations under the mechanism of trilateral and south-south cooperation

Post BAPA+40 conference, the FAO has strengthened its support to South-South and Triangular cooperation with technical division in place (FAO and UNOSSC, 2022). G20 could leverage the expertise and resources of IOs and take the lead in developing such cooperation. The expenditure on these actions would be akin to investments with low pay-back periods.

Scenarios of Outcomes

The following three scenarios are expected.

1. **Retrogressive progress causing reversal to pre-2016 situation**

This is a sort of a pessimistic scenario, as many of the developing countries continue to be in deficit in food production, forcing these to be heavily dependent on imports when many international corridors are intermittently clogged due to conflicts, etc. Under this scenario, the progress made since the commencement of the SDG era on many indicators related to food security and nutrition may be reversed. Thus, the number of children facing stunting, wasting, and underweight challenges may increase, whereas the number of children being overweight (including obesity) may continue to increase.

2. **Business-As-Usual (BAU) scenario with the aspiration to catch up with the projected trajectory of 2016 to the pre-pandemic period**

This scenario is the most likely out of the three scenarios, in light of the ongoing global polycrisis while trilateral cooperation is exerting to counter it. This would lead to increasing global production maintaining the pre-pandemic secular trend, offer new thrust to help in better awareness in nutrition-rich food items and evolve a mechanism to help countries in need of food security.

3. **Trilateral cooperation successfully tackling climate change and other challenges**

Under this optimistic scenario, it is expected that the trilateral cooperation will get much more traction than at present and would, in turn, facilitate the diminishing of the adversities of food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. There are instances of

successful trilateral cooperation, like the promotion of organic farming in many places across the globe. The number of LIFDCs and NFIDCs would diminish through effective trilateral cooperation tackling the long-term structural issues presently causing the food deficit in these countries. Further, the increase in the production of food grains and nutrition-rich crops would meet the growing demand attributable to rising populations, better purchasing power, and also non-human consumption. It is also envisaged that increasing awareness of healthy and active lifestyles would lead to a lower incidence of NCDs. It is further expected that trilateral cooperation would deepen not only to ensure global availability but also accessibility and affordability, especially through more equitable distributional mechanisms.

G20 has the potential and demonstrated its commitment during the India Presidency 2023 by endorsing 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' towards cooperation not only across the G20 members but among all the countries. The inclusion of AU as a G20 member is a manifestation of this commitment. It would be better if the challenges, including climate change, were proactively tackled in an optimal manner for better well-being rather than being forced to sub-optimally tackle them as an existential necessity.

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