

**Research Outline for Discussion (draft)**  
**Cluster on “Development Cooperation Partnership in Southeast Asia”**  
**7 September 2019**  
**Policy Research Network in Southeast Asia Meeting, RSIS, Singapore**

**I. Background**

The landscape of international development cooperation in Southeast Asia is rapidly changing, mainly due to the rising prominence of so-called “emerging donors”, or the “Southern providers of development cooperation” (Siriporn 2018). Among others, China and India pledged to contribute to the enhanced regional connectivity under the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) respectively. “Traditional donors” such as Japan (among others) are also strengthening efforts to assist the development of “quality infrastructure” under the initiative of Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). Less focused but nonetheless important development is that the emerging economies in the region such as Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia are steadily accumulating unique experiences as the providers of South-South Cooperation (SSC) in the region and beyond.

In the face of growing activism of donors with various norms, goals and modalities in the region (Sato *et al* 2011), Southeast Asian countries are urged to establish a development cooperation partnership. Here, “development cooperation partnership” refers to a mechanism or a platform of consultation, coordination, and mutual learning between donors and recipients as well as among donors to enhance the effectiveness of development cooperation. For the so-called CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam), development cooperation partnership is required to ensure that donors’ cooperation strategies align with the development strategies of the recipients, and thus to avoid “donor-driven aid”. For the “emerging donors” in the region (Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia), development cooperation partnership functions as a forum to coordinate their activities among themselves and with donors outside the region (China, India, and Japan etc.) to avoid the duplication of aid activities, or to exchange experiences and lessons learned. In a word, development cooperation partnership is a key device for the effective and efficient mobilization of the stakeholders’ resources in tackling the common development challenges of the region. It is also a mechanism for the ASEAN countries to achieve “ASEAN centrality” in designing the regional architecture of development cooperation.

Keenly aware of the importance to meet this challenge, the ASEAN countries are trying to strengthen communication and cooperation among themselves.<sup>1</sup> However, the

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<sup>1</sup> A recent example of this endeavour is the publication of the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-*

shape of development cooperation partnership in Southeast Asian region is still unclear, and its concrete architecture remains to be elaborated.

## **II. The Research**

Research Objective: Against the above-mentioned background, this joint research is designed to shed light on the realities of development cooperation process in Southeast Asian region with an emphasis on the analysis of SSC by the “emerging donors” in the region, and to provide policymakers and practitioners with policy recommendations to build an effective and workable development cooperation partnership both with outside donors (such as China, India, Japan etc.) as well as among regional countries.

Research Questions: A preliminary list of research questions are as follows:

- How are the realities and situation of the development of in-regional development cooperation in Southeast Asia? And what are its expected roles?
- What are the achievements, lessons learned, challenges, and the future direction of the development cooperation (SSC) by Southeast Asian “emerging donors”? (analyses of Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia are envisaged)
- How are Southeast Asian “emerging donors” trying to mobilize their unique experience of their own development for their development cooperation? (Comparative case studies would be useful)
- How do recipients assess the effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of development cooperation by traditional and emerging donors? From the recipients’ perspectives, what are the difficulties in managing numerous donors? (Comparative case studies of CLMV countries would be useful)
- What kind of development cooperation partnership should be established between outside donors and regional countries, and among regional countries, to facilitate the effective deployment of development cooperation for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive development of Southeast Asian region?
- How are the traditional donors’ experience of aid harmonization and coordination (both success and failure) applicable to Southeast Asian region?

Expected outputs of this research would be a series of papers of academic quality (7,000–10,000 words) with policy implications and recommendations for the policymakers and practitioners of development cooperation.

### **III. Timeline**

October 2019 (TBD)

Kickoff meeting among the team members to decide the research concept and questions

October 2020 (TBD)

Second meeting among the team members to discuss the draft papers

February 2021

Presentation of the research results at the Tokyo Forum

### **IV. The Team**

- Mr. Hiroaki Shiga (JICA Research Institute, coordinator)
- Dr. Nguyen Huy Hoang (Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute for Southeast Asian Studies)
- Dr. Siriporn Wajjwalku (Thammasat University)
- Additional members from Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia are envisaged.

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### **Reference**

Sato, Jin, Shiga Hiroaki, Kobayashi Takaaki, & Kondoh Hisahiro. 2011. "Emerging donors from a recipient perspective: An institutional analysis of foreign aid in Cambodia." *World Development*. Vol. 39. No.12, pp. 2091-2104.

Siriporn, Wajjwalku ed. 2018. *Actors and Processes in Development Cooperation: Challenges to Traditional Practices*. Network for International Development Cooperation (NIDC).