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Introduction

This document is addressed primarily to the participants involved in the growing phenomenon of on-site, developmentally-relevant “North-South (N-S) collaborations”. These are collaborations between northern and southern individuals, who are located on-site in a developing country and are engaged in activities which have the potential for developmentally-valuable local acquisition of skills and know-how.¹ On the northern side, the collaborators are expatriates working in the South in such areas as business joint ventures, relationships between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and — the most familiar type — technical cooperation on a government-to-government basis.²

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1. The traditional term has been “transfer of skills”. Many have rightly disliked the term, however, because of its perceived patronizing tone. Some alternatives, such as “exchange of skills”, solve the problem of patronizing language, but are somewhat inaccurate in the sense that the essential movement of skills and technologies in the world today remains from North to South — although there are strong reasons for advocating more learning in the other direction too. The authors prefer the term “local acquisition of skills” for its combination of empirical accuracy and respect for the South. It is in fact literally impossible to “transfer” or to “exchange” skills, for they cannot be simply handed over in the way money or goods can. Skills can only be *acquired* by the efforts of “recipients” themselves. Of course, such an acquisition can be greatly facilitated by the efforts, attitudes, and personal demeanor of the northern collaborator.
 2. N-S collaborations are, of course, only one sub-set of what could be called “international” or “cross-cultural” collaborations. This report, therefore, is an analysis of only one part of a larger field, but it should still be of interest to those concerned with other forms of collaboration (e.g., Americans working in Europe or foreign students in the UK). Certainly, the lessons about individual effectiveness will be similar between all types of international or cross-cultural collaborations. And while the analysis of environmental or macro levels discussed in this report is largely specific to N-S collaborations, the factors that come into play are probably similar to those in other fields.