

POLICY DIALOGUE ON TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

16 and 17 May 2013 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, Portugal

Summary of Discussions

I. BACKGROUND

The OECD Development Co-operation Directorate and the Camões – Institute for Co-operation and Language (Portugal) co-hosted a [Policy Dialogue on Triangular Co-operation](#) on 16-17 May 2013 in Lisbon. This was the OECD's second event on triangular co-operation, following a [similar meeting](#) co-hosted with Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 28-29 September 2009 in Mexico City.

Representatives from all constituencies involved in triangular co-operation participated in the Policy Dialogue. In total, the meeting brought together 69 people: 24 from OECD members, 19 from developing countries and 4 from international organisations (see Annex for the list of participating countries and organisations).

There was broad agreement that the meeting was timely and contributed to advancing international dialogue on triangular co-operation. Participants discussed the characteristics of triangular co-operation as well as the necessary elements for good triangular co-operation. They also agreed on a set of follow-up actions, some of which could be implemented and scaled-up through international initiatives such as the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#).

Discussions were informed by recent analytical work carried out by the OECD in collaboration with a broad range of partners, namely:

- A [literature review](#), up-dating an [earlier study](#) on "Triangular Co-operation and Aid Effectiveness" (2009).
- A [survey report](#) based on responses from 73 countries and organisations.
- The conclusions from a [brainstorming meeting](#) with 24 experts with in-depth knowledge and practical experience of triangular co-operation.

These three pieces map the current "state of play" in triangular co-operation. Participants felt that this work makes an important contribution to filling the gap in analytical work on triangular co-operation.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

The Policy Dialogue provided an opportunity to build broader consensus on the main characteristics of triangular co-operation. Participants preferred not to define triangular co-operation. This is because there is no single model for it; triangular co-operation is designed to capture opportunities for collaboration and learning among different development actors. Discussions concentrated instead on the characteristics of triangular co-operation.

Participants found that triangular co-operation is a type of co-operation that focuses on development and promotes a sharing of knowledge and development solutions for capacity development and poverty reduction. There was general agreement that triangular co-operation involves partners playing three types of roles – facilitators, pivotal countries and beneficiary countries – sometimes simultaneously:

- The *facilitator* helps to connect countries and organisations to form a triangular partnership and gives financial and/or technical support to the collaboration.
- The *pivotal partner* often has proven experience and shares its knowledge and expertise through triangular co-operation.

- The *beneficiary* is the target for the development results to be achieved by the initiative and is responsible for ensuring that results are sustainable.

These roles are sometimes clearly attributed to each partner; but partners can also play multiple roles. Furthermore, there can be more than one partner playing the role of facilitator, pivotal and/or beneficiary. As triangular co-operation builds on comparative advantages and complementarities among partners, these roles are defined on a case-by-case basis, reflecting each partner's strengths.

Most participants agreed that triangular co-operation is an innovative instrument that reconciles North-South and South-South co-operation. However, triangular co-operation is not a substitute for bilateral North-South co-operation; it is a complementary modality.

There were questions about the role of private actors in triangular co-operation. While some participants felt that private actors could be partners in triangular co-operation, others pointed out that, when private actors are contracted to implement activities, they should not be considered as a partner in their own right. Participants agreed to continue discussions on this issue (see Section IV: "Actions to Promote Better Triangular Co-operation").

III. NECESSARY ELEMENTS FOR GOOD TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

Participants agreed that good triangular co-operation promotes sustainable development results through a sharing of knowledge and development solutions in a way that complements bilateral co-operation. Participants agreed on a set of necessary elements for good triangular co-operation:

- All partners share a common development objective. However, partners may also have secondary objectives for engaging in triangular co-operation.
- Partners contribute in a complementary way, based on their comparative advantage. This creates opportunities for learning from each other.
- Knowledge and experiences are adapted to the context of the beneficiary countries.
- All partners are strongly committed and actively involved from design to implementation.
- All partners bring sustained political buy-in.
- The partnership is driven by the needs of the beneficiary countries, which are in the lead from design to implementation.
- The partnership is based on mutual respect and trust.
- Roles and responsibilities are agreed reflecting each partner's strengths.
- There is a common agreement on planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and funding mechanisms, which contributes to lowering transaction costs.
- Partners have the flexibility to adjust to the different procedures used by the other partners and can find common ground for collaborating.
- There is good and clear communication among all partners.

There are two other elements that help, but are not necessary conditions for, good triangular co-operation. First, most participants agreed that cultural, linguistic and institutional similarities among partners can make collaboration easier, even though they do not guarantee results in themselves. On the other hand, some participants felt that cultural, linguistic and institutional differences create scope for greater learning among partners. Second, existing bilateral relationships among partners in triangular co-operation can ensure a higher level of trust and so facilitate implementation. In addition, through existing bilateral co-operation, partners can identify knowledge to be shared through triangular co-operation. Existing bilateral co-operation can also provide institutional arrangements that can subsequently support implementation of triangular co-operation.

IV. ACTIONS TO PROMOTE BETTER TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

During discussions, participants identified several ways to improve triangular co-operation. They found that there is little tracking, monitoring and evaluation currently taking place. They also agreed that there is a need to gather more evidence and exchange experiences, particularly on planning, implementing, monitoring and funding mechanisms. Finally, there is a need for more clarity about the role of private actors in triangular co-operation.

Participants agreed on seven areas for follow-up that can contribute to addressing challenges in triangular co-operation. Each of these will be championed by at least one country or organisation.

1. Tracking flows on triangular co-operation.

The Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) volunteered to look at how to better capture information about triangular co-operation flows, building on their experience of producing the "Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America". The OECD offered to support SEGIB in this area.

2. Producing more case studies on triangular co-operation.

The Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States volunteered to lead this work. This can include re-visiting the methodology developed by the former Task Team on South-South Co-operation (TT-SSC), conducting a meta-study of the case studies¹ prepared by the TT-SSC for the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (29 November – 1 December 2011, Busan) and producing some additional case studies. The Food and Agriculture Organisation will support this work and the Organisation of American States offered to contribute case studies conducted in its region using the TT-SSC methodology. The UN Office for South-South Co-operation, through its Division for Partnerships and Triangular Cooperation, will upload such studies in its e-library and disseminate them to interested partners.

3. Promoting further monitoring and evaluation.

Evaluations could be conducted at three levels: i) joint evaluations focusing on the shared development objective; ii) evaluations of how the partnership worked and how it could be improved; and iii) evaluations of the secondary objectives specific to each partner.

Germany is planning to undertake a global evaluation of their triangular co-operation activities through the independent German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval). They volunteered to bring this experience to the DAC Network on Development Evaluation and other relevant groups.

4. Looking at different mechanisms for promoting triangular co-operation.

Participants agreed that there is a need for more information on different institutional mechanisms for supporting triangular co-operation. Japan may be able to contribute to this area by building on the study the JICA Research Institute is preparing for the UN Global South-South Development Expo and Directors-General meeting in Nairobi in late October 2013. All participants were invited to share information on the mechanisms used by their countries and organisations in their triangular co-operation (e.g. joint agreements and memoranda of understanding) as inputs for this research.

5. Looking at funding mechanisms to support triangular co-operation.

SEGIB has already started discussions on this topic among its members and it offered to lead in this area. All participants were invited to share information on the funding mechanisms used by their countries and organisations in their triangular co-operation (e.g. cost-sharing and special funds) as inputs for SEGIB's work.

6. Discussing the role of the private actors in triangular co-operation.

¹ All the case stories and case studies prepared by the TT-SSC are available at: www.southsouthcases.info/index.php

Chile offered to organise a meeting in October 2013 in Santiago to discuss the role of private actors in triangular co-operation.

7. Disseminating the messages of this meeting to a broader audience, particularly to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.
 - Peru will report the conclusions of this Policy Dialogue to the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, which meets on 25-26 July 2013. It will suggest including triangular co-operation as a topic for the 1st Ministerial Meeting of the Global Partnership. This will give a political endorsement to the messages and measures discussed at the Policy Dialogue. The Global Partnership could also become a platform for follow-up on many of the actions agreed at the meeting.
 - The OECD will disseminate the meeting conclusions to a wider audience through its website and mailing lists.

The OECD offered to monitor implementation of these seven agreed areas of work. It will also assess the need for another policy dialogue in 2014, possibly back-to-back with an international event.

Annex: Participating Countries and Organisations

Armenia	Luxembourg
Australia	Madagascar
Austria	Mauritania
Bangladesh	Mexico
Benin	Mozambique
Burundi	Netherlands
Cambodia	New Zealand
Cameroon	Paraguay
Canada	People's Republic of China
Cape Verde	Peru
Chile	Portugal
Colombia	Republic of Moldova
Czech Republic	Slovak Republic
Egypt	Spain
Finland	Switzerland
France	Turkey
Gambia	United Kingdom
Germany	United States
Greece	Uruguay
Guyana	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
Ireland	Organisation of American States
Israel	UN Food and Agriculture Organisation
Japan	UN Office for South-South Co-operation
Korea	OECD