



# Triangular Co-operation and Aid Effectiveness

CAN TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION  
MAKE AID MORE EFFECTIVE?



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## **Abstract**

Can triangular co-operation make aid more effective? Judging by recent international declarations, governments think it can. They say that better results can be achieved when Southern partners and “traditional” donors (*i.e.* members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee – DAC) join forces through triangular co-operation. Two examples: first, Brazil, Canada and Norway working together in Haiti; second, South Africa and Canada collaborating with Burundi, Rwanda and Southern Sudan.

This paper addresses four questions:

- What is triangular co-operation, which countries are involved, and why?
- What are the claimed benefits of triangular co-operation *vis-à-vis* bilateral co-operation?
- What are the challenges in rendering triangular co-operation effective?
- How can the benefits of triangular co-operation be achieved and its challenges overcome?

The paper concludes that triangular co-operation may achieve good results when:

- Beneficiary countries own and participate actively in projects/programmes, helping to adapt them to local realities;
- Programmes/projects are aligned with beneficiary countries’ development priorities;
- Partners divide responsibilities so as to make the best use of their comparative advantages.

Whether triangular co-operation is cost-effective remains unclear. Even if services and technologies provided by developing countries may be less expensive, triangular co-operation may imply higher transaction costs.

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## List of Acronyms

ABC*	Brazilian Co-operation Agency ( <i>Agência Brasileira de Cooperação</i> )
CAMEP*	Autonomous Metropolitan Drinking Water Station, Haiti ( <i>Centrale Autonome Métropolitaine d'Eau Potable</i> )
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
MDI	Management development institute
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MINUSTAH*	United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti ( <i>Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en Haïti</i> )
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PALAMA	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
SSC	South-South co-operation
TDC	Triangular development co-operation/triangular co-operation
UN	United Nations
UN DCF	United Nations Development Co-operation Forum
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
*	Denotes acronyms in original language

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## Executive summary

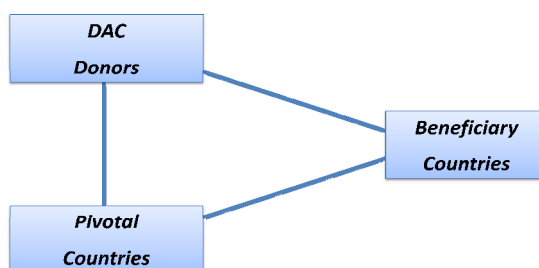
Can triangular co-operation make aid more effective? Judging by recent international declarations, governments think it can. The underlying assumption is that better development results can be achieved when Southern partners and “traditional” donors (*i.e.* those that gather in the OECD Development Assistance Committee) join forces through triangular co-operation.

This paper addresses four questions:

- What is triangular co-operation, which countries are involved in it and why?
- What are the claimed benefits of triangular co-operation *vis-à-vis* bilateral forms of co-operation?
- What are the challenges in rendering triangular co-operation an effective mode of development co-operation?
- How can the benefits of triangular co-operation be achieved and its challenges overcome?

### Definition of triangular co-operation

Presented at the OECD DAC Policy Dialogue on Development Co-operation (Mexico City, 28-29 September 2009, [www.oecd.org/dac/mexicodialogue](http://www.oecd.org/dac/mexicodialogue)), this paper defines triangular co-operation as partnerships between DAC donors and pivotal countries (providers of South-South Co-operation) to implement development co-operation programmes/projects in beneficiary countries (recipients of development aid).



### Who Is involved in triangular co-operation, and why?

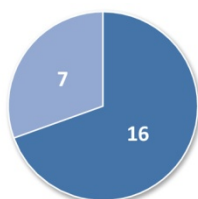
Numerous countries are engaging in triangular co-operation in different parts of the world. Their motivations vary: besides joining forces to promote development in beneficiary countries, they aim to strengthen relations with Southern partners and build capacity of developing countries as providers of South-South co-operation.

### DAC Donors participating in triangular co-operation

(Projects in negotiation, in implementation or completed)

■ Yes: BEL, CAN, DNK, FIN, FRA, DEU, ITA, JPN, LUX, NOR, ESP, SWE, CHE, GBR, USA, EC

■ No: AUS, AUT, GRC, IRL, NLD, NZL, PRT



### Examples of pivotal countries engaging in triangular co-operation with DAC donors

<b>Africa</b>	Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia
<b>Asia</b>	India, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam
<b>Eastern Europe</b>	Russia, new EU members
<b>Latin America</b>	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico

### *The claimed benefits of triangular co-operation*

Advocates claim that triangular co-operation can be an effective means of delivering aid because it combines the comparative advantages of different development actors. Benefits include:

- Thanks to the similarities of development challenges in pivotal and beneficiary countries, pivotal countries can contribute expertise that is adapted well to beneficiary countries' realities at a lower cost.
- DAC donors can provide their financing and expertise in development assistance.

### *Practical challenges in triangular co-operation*

However, there are several challenges for achieving good results in current triangular co-operation initiatives. These appear to be similar to the challenges in other modalities of development co-operation:

- Co-ordination challenges leading to high implementation costs: existence of distinct procedures in institutions from different countries, longer negotiation process, difficulties on agreeing common standards/procedures for measurement and evaluation, and unclear division of roles and responsibilities;
- Lack of demand from and involvement of beneficiary countries;
- Limited scope/scale of triangular co-operation projects.

### *Conditions for achieving effectiveness in triangular co-operation*

Based on a study of the available literature and a series of interviews with officials engaged in triangular co-operation, we conclude that triangular co-operation may achieve good results when:

- Beneficiary countries participate actively in and have ownership over projects/programmes, helping to adapt them to local realities;
- Providers of South-South co-operation and DAC donors align with beneficiary countries' development priorities;
- Partners divide responsibilities based on their area of expertise, so as to make the best use of their comparative advantages.

A clear conclusion about cost-effectiveness in triangular co-operation could not be drawn. Triangular co-operation may improve co-ordination and reduce transaction costs. However, it also implies longer and more complex negotiations among a larger number of partners.

# 1 Introduction

Two trends have become highly prominent in the international dialogue on development co-operation in recent years. The first is the growing role of middle-income countries as not only recipients, but also providers of development co-operation. The second is the increased attention to principles of effective aid, in response to the criticism that decades of aid have not led to the desired results of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction.

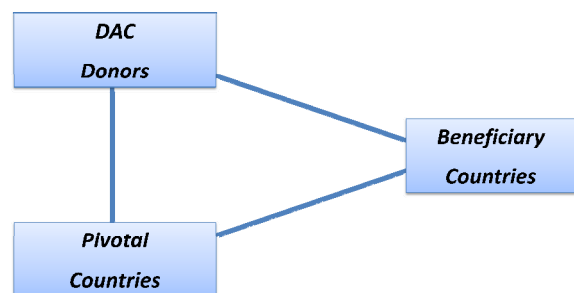
Taken together, these trends raise an important question: can middle-income countries providers of development co-operation and “traditional” donors – *i.e.* those that gather in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) – work together to make aid more effective than it has been in the past? Judging by recent international declarations, governments think they can. At the 2008 United Nations (UN) Development Co-operation Forum, participants called for all providers of development co-operation to attain more widely agreed practices and objectives. The Accra Agenda for Action – endorsed by more than 100 governments in 2008 – recognises the importance of a close partnership among different development actors and, more specifically, it calls for “further development of triangular co-operation.”

It is this concept of triangular co-operation that lies at the centre of this paper, which was designed to support discussions at the Policy Dialogue on Development Co-operation, held in Mexico City on 28-29 September 2009. Based on a study of the available literature and a series of interviews with officials engaged in triangular co-operation initiatives, this paper address the following questions:

- What is triangular co-operation, which countries are involved in it and why?
- What are the claimed benefits of triangular co-operation *vis-à-vis* bilateral forms of co-operation?
- What are the challenges in rendering triangular co-operation an effective modality of development co-operation?
- How can the benefits of triangular co-operation be achieved and its challenges overcome?

There are diverse definitions and forms of triangular co-operation that can foster development, such as co-operation among three developing countries.<sup>1</sup> However, for the purposes of the Policy Dialogue in Mexico City, this paper concentrates on partnerships between *DAC donors* and *pivotal countries*<sup>2</sup> to implement programmes/projects in *beneficiary countries*.<sup>3</sup> The aim is to examine whether triangular co-operation can be an effective modality of development co-operation.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 provides an overview of triangular co-operation, identifying its main actors, their motivations and the geographical concentration of their efforts. Section 3 outlines the claimed benefits of triangular co-operation for more effective aid. Section 4 lists the main challenges faced by current triangular co-operation initiatives. Section 5 proposes some conditions for achieving effective triangular co-operation based on the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Arguments are illustrated with evidence from two triangular co-operation projects: “Honour and Respect for Bel Air” and the “Public Sector Training and Development Projects in Post-Conflict Countries.”



## 2 Overview of triangular co-operation<sup>4</sup>

Numerous countries are engaging in triangular co-operation in different parts of the world.<sup>5</sup> Their motivations are varied. Besides joining forces to promote development in beneficiary countries, these countries aim to strengthen ties with Southern partners and build capacity of developing countries as providers of South-South co-operation.

Most OECD DAC members are involved in triangular co-operation. At least 16 of them have negotiated, implemented or completed projects in partnership with developing countries. These are: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Community.<sup>6</sup> However, only Japan and Spain have set objectives for triangular co-operation in their development co-operation policies. Some others have included triangular co-operation in their strategies to foster regional co-operation.

A large number of providers of South-South co-operation are also engaging in triangular co-operation, particularly with countries from their own region. In Africa, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia share their knowledge with other developing countries through triangular arrangements. In Asia, pivotal countries include India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. In Eastern Europe, examples include Russia and new European Union members. In Latin America, virtually all countries are providers of South-South co-operation, and some of the most active in triangular co-operation are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico. In most cases, pivotal countries provide their support to nations from the same region. However, there are also examples of projects across continents. For instance, Brazil co-operates with lusophone countries in Africa and Asia; Malaysia and the Philippines have collaborated with Kenya, and Vietnam with Madagascar.

**DAC donors participating in triangular co-operation**  
(Projects in negotiation, in implementation or completed)



**Examples of pivotal countries engaging in triangular co-operation with DAC donors**

<b>Africa</b>	Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia
<b>Asia</b>	India, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam
<b>Eastern Europe</b>	Russia, new EU members
<b>Latin America</b>	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico

On a multilateral level, triangular co-operation is promoted by the United Nations, in particular by the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Special Unit for South-South Co-operation and the United Nations Economic and Social Council's (UN ECOSOC) Development Cooperation Forum. The first produces analytical work, prepares policy recommendations and finances triangular co-operation projects, while the other is a discussion forum that provides policy guidance and recommendations on a variety of subjects including South-South and triangular co-operation. Most recently, triangular co-operation was also discussed by countries participating in the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process.<sup>7</sup>

The main motivation behind triangular co-operation appears to be the possibility of combining the strengths of DAC donors and providers of South-South co-operation to promote development in beneficiary countries. However, triangular co-operation may also help to:



- Build the capacity of developing countries as providers of development co-operation;
- Strengthen relations between DAC donors and providers of South-South co-operation;
- Strengthen relations among Southern partners and enhance regional integration.

### 3 Claimed benefits of triangular co-operation

Advocates of triangular co-operation claim that its value lies in combining the comparative advantages of pivotal countries and DAC donors. As the UNDP states:

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*Triangular South-South co-operation is becoming increasingly popular as a way of fostering development by leveraging the best features of cooperation between developing countries with assistance from developed countries.*

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“Triangular South-South co-operation is becoming increasingly popular as a way of fostering development by leveraging the best features of cooperation between developing countries with assistance from developed countries” (UNDP, 2004).

One advantage that pivotal countries are often credited with is an expertise that is adapted to the needs of beneficiary countries. This adaptability stems from the fact that pivotal

countries face or have faced development challenges in environments that are similar to those of beneficiary countries. While social, economic and political contexts vary from country to country, pivotal and beneficiary countries may share economic and geographic characteristics, cultural, historical and regional ties, and common languages (CUTS, 2005; Kumar, 2008; OECD, 2009a). These similarities favour a better understanding of beneficiary countries’ reality and increase the possibility that solutions designed and implemented in pivotal countries may thus be successfully replicated in beneficiary countries. Our interviewees agreed that the use of pivotal countries’ experience and know-how is one of the main elements contributing to effective triangular co-operation.

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*Pivotal countries make two main contributions to effective triangular co-operation: they have expertise that is adapted to the needs of beneficiary countries; second, they can provide consultancy services and technologies at low prices.*

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A second advantage of pivotal countries is that their experts, services and technologies cost less than those of DAC member countries, rendering triangular co-operation more cost-effective than traditional bilateral

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*Opinions on the financial advantage of triangular co-operation vary. While services and technologies of pivotal countries cost less than those of DAC donors, the complex process of negotiation may actually increase costs.*

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aid. Some argue that developing-country experts costs one third of developed country experts at prevalent international rates (CUTS, 2005). However, others point out that triangular co-operation may increase the transaction costs of development co-operation (Ashoff, 2009), particularly in the initial phase of projects/programmes, when multiple partners have to negotiate the objectives, activities and procedures of their collaboration. These negotiation costs would thus have to be weighed against the saved costs resulting from less expensive services and technologies.

The main advantages brought to triangular co-operation by DAC donors are their funding and years of know-how in development assistance. Their support may enable co-operation among developing countries or increase the scope and impact of such partnership. According to the UNDP (2004), “In order to maximise their financial, logistical and technical resources, [developing] countries can ask for the support of a Northern donor as a third partner” (similar claims are made in Braude *et al.*, 2008; and SEGIB, 2007). Kumar (2008) states that “Even though developing countries may have development experiences to share with other developing countries, their funding capacities may be limited. Hence, TDC [triangular development cooperation] is a win-win approach to meet the ends of both Northern as well as Southern partners.” He adds that with the help of DAC donors, “Triangular co-operation could thus assist in fuller exploitation of potential of SSC [South-South co-operation]” (Kumar, 2008). While DAC donors often finance triangular co-operation, their role may go beyond financing. Many of the parties interviewed for this paper expressed that deeper engagement of DAC donors is desirable so as to promote fuller use of each partner’s distinct expertise. DAC donors could contribute with their know-how in development assistance, for example in the design and evaluation phases of triangular co-operation projects.

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*DAC donors can provide the financial and technical support to enable co-operation among developing countries or increase the scope and impact of such partnership.*

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#### 4 Practical challenges in triangular co-operation

Interviews conducted for this paper suggest that, in practice, the claimed benefits of triangular co-operation may be difficult to realise. Practical challenges include co-ordinating partners, involving beneficiary countries in projects, and enlarging the scale and scope of triangular co-operation projects. These challenges are not unique to triangular co-operation and are considered general obstacles to effective aid by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

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*Practical challenges include partners’ co-ordination, beneficiary countries’ involvement, and limited scale and scope of triangular co-operation projects.*

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The main obstacle to effective triangular co-operation seems to be co-ordination among partners. This challenge is noted in the Paris Declaration, which recommends harmonisation of donors’ policies and procedures to decrease costs of development assistance (OECD, 2005). In the case of triangular co-operation, the presence of multiple stakeholders may hamper harmonisation and increase transaction costs, as a result of:

- Existence of distinct procedures in partner institutions from different countries (*e.g.* organisation of work at field level, performance assessment frameworks, evaluation techniques *et al.*);
- Longer negotiations on the operational aspects of the project/programme;
- Difficulties agreeing on common standards/procedures for monitoring and evaluating projects;
- Unclear division of roles and responsibilities leading to inefficiencies in implementation.

Not all interviewees agreed that triangular co-operation raises co-ordination costs. Some noted that, in practice, triangular co-operation often builds on existing bilateral co-operation, for example when a bilateral initiative is replicated in third countries or a third partner joins an existing project/programme.

A second challenge pointed out by interviewees is the lack of engagement on the part of beneficiary countries in the planning and execution of triangular initiatives. This appears to run counter to the Paris Declaration principle that beneficiary countries must exercise effective leadership over development programmes and projects in order for them to achieve their desired development results.

A third difficulty in triangular co-operation is the limited scale and scope of triangular co-operation initiatives. These initiatives usually adopt a project-based approach, which the Paris Declaration warns may result in a disconnect with broader development goals established by beneficiary countries (OECD, 2005). In addition, multiple projects may generate duplicated efforts, dispersed resources and incoherence among different initiatives.

## **5 Conditions for effective triangular co-operation**

This final section examines how to achieve the benefits of triangular co-operation and overcome its practical challenges. Since the recommendations of the Paris Declaration focus on minimising difficulties that also affect the performance of triangular initiatives, this paper uses the Paris Declaration's principles to evaluate how triangular co-operation can achieve better results for beneficiary countries. Interviews imply that triangular co-operation might be more effective with more rigorous adherence to the following principles: ownership of beneficiary countries, alignment with local development priorities and harmonisation of partners' procedures (an evaluation of how triangular co-operation could benefit from results-oriented management or mutual accountability has not been possible due to insufficient information). Two triangular co-operation projects illustrate this argument: "Honour and Respect for Bel Air" and the "Public Sector Training and Development Projects in Post-Conflict Countries" (Boxes 1 and 2).

### Box 1. "Honour and Respect for Bel Air"

The project "Honour and Respect for Bel Air" aims to promote security and development in the neighbourhood of Bel Air, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It is led by the Brazilian non-governmental organisation (NGO) Viva Rio with the support of the Brazilian government, Canada, Norway and international organisations. The main partners are:

- The Haitian government, public companies and civil society (*beneficiary country*)
- Viva Rio, implementing NGO from Brazil (*pivotal country*)
- The Brazilian Embassy in Port-au-Prince (*pivotal country*)
- The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), from Canada (*DAC donor*)
- The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), from Norway (*DAC donor*)
- The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), a NGO from Norway (*DAC donor*)
- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), sponsoring the project

Viva Rio has been operating in Haiti since 2004 and has focused its activities in Bel Air since 2007. Its mission in Bel Air is to reduce armed violence and promote urban rehabilitation, focusing on ensuring security, development and human rights of inhabitants. The areas of intervention are diverse, including water supply, solid waste management and education. Viva Rio pays special attention to associate its activities with peace-keeping purposes, women empowerment and youth education.

It is important to clarify that the government of the pivotal country (*i.e.* Brazil) does not participate directly in the implementation of this project, which is led by the NGO Viva Rio. The Brazilian government has a supportive and advisory role, participating, for instance, in the Steering Committee of the project. However, Brazil is considered the pivotal country in this case because the expertise in dealing with armed violence and situations of urban precariousness was developed in this state.

#### **Results**

In 2008, good results were already achieved in areas such as security, water distribution and solid waste management. For instance, there was an important reduction of urban violence and numbers of homicides after the a peace accord was signed among rival groups. The rate of homicides in Bel Air decreased from 26 deaths per 100 000 inhabitants in 2006/2007 to 17 deaths per 100 000 inhabitants in 2008/2009. This number is lower than that of many cities in Latin America, and comparable to the 2006 homicide rate in Detroit, USA (Viva Rio, 2009). In addition, access to water has been increasing after distribution channels were improved and prices reduced. Today, the distribution of drinking water is managed in partnership with Bel Air community and reaches nearly 24 000 people. Finally, waste collection was also improved. The cleanup operations, carried out in cooperation with Haitian authorities, have made it possible to unclog waste-filled water mains, making the neighbourhood healthier and safer in the event of heavy rainfall.

These results might be partially due to Viva Rio's choice of focusing its attention on only one neighbourhood and not the whole city of Port-au-Prince. Thus the NGO could invest in a comprehensive development project that addresses many of Bel Air problems and achieves more and better results in a shorter period of time. It appears that many NGO's take the opposite approach: they disperse efforts over many neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince or the entire country, conducting many but very small interventions.

## Box 2. “Public Sector Training and Development Project in Post-Conflict Countries”

“The Public Sector Training and Development Project in Post-Conflict Countries” is a triangular co-operation involving South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi and Southern Sudan supported by Canada. The agencies involved in the project are:

- The “École Nationale d’Administration” (ENA), the management development institute (MDI) from Burundi (*beneficiary country*)<sup>8</sup>
- The Rwanda Institute of Administration and Management (RIAM), the MDI from Rwanda (*beneficiary country*)
- The Capacity Building Unit of the Government of Southern Sudan<sup>9</sup> (*beneficiary country*)
- The Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA), the MDI and implementing agency from South Africa (*pivotal country*)
- The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), from Canada (*DAC donor*)

As outlined on the CIDA website, the purpose of this initiative is to “support public sector training and development” aiming to improve service delivery in three post-conflict countries: Rwanda, Burundi and Southern Sudan. The training methodology is developed by PALAMA and the partner MDIs in the three post conflict countries and covers four areas: project management, financial management, human resource planning and monitoring and evaluation (PALAMA, 2008). During its five-year duration (2008-2013), the project is expected to provide training for approximately 6,700 middle and senior public service managers.

### Results

During interviews, partners’ opinions about the project were very positive, although it is too early to draw definitive conclusions. The main positive aspect seems to be the high level of commitment and participation of beneficiary countries, which has already produced some good –although somewhat unintended – results:

- Change of mentality: beneficiary countries have been participating actively in the project and, as a result, they are increasingly aware of the importance of ownership over their own development.
- Strengthened relations among beneficiary countries: the project has been an opportunity for building trust and strengthening relations between countries that were not in close contact before. For instance, Rwanda and Burundi are now exchanging information about public sector training.

Even if the expected results are not concrete yet, partners are already considering long-terms plans and scaling-up. Plans involve replicating the initiative on a regional level and inviting other DAC donors to support it. A long-term project co-ordinator has just been appointed to serve in the new PALAMA’s office in Kigali (Rwanda). In the long run, the idea is to turn Kigali’s office into a regional hub for development co-operation in public service training. PALAMA has also been talking with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and Germany about the possibility of supporting the project. It appears that these donors are very interested in the proposition.

## 5.1 Alignment with national development priorities

Alignment of donors' support in partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures is one of the main messages of the Paris Declaration. In the case of triangular co-operation, alignment of co-operation activities with national development priorities is important to ensure good adaptation of pivotal countries' practices to beneficiary countries' realities. Beneficiaries' priorities should constitute the criteria for choosing implementing agencies that have relevant expertise to address national development challenges. They should also be taken on board during negotiation, formulation, implementation and evaluation of triangular co-operation. Otherwise, instead of "adaptation", it would be an "imposition" of foreign practices.

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*Alignment with beneficiary countries' development priorities ensures that pivotal country practices adapt to beneficiary country realities.*

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If triangular co-operation projects are aligned with the objectives set out in the national development strategies, then the risks of dispersion of efforts and incoherence among different development initiatives – usually connected to project-based approaches – may be reduced.

Overall, the Bel Air and the Public Sector Training projects seem to be aligned with the priorities of their respective beneficiary countries. In both cases, the implementing agencies from pivotal countries have relevant expertise to share with beneficiary countries, and the views and needs of local governments and/or populations are taken into account in project design and implementation.

The high incidence of armed violence in a context of poverty and great socio-economic inequality is a challenge shared by the "favelas" in Rio de Janeiro and poor neighbourhoods in Port-au-Prince. Viva Rio has been working for more than a decade in such a context, designing and implementing projects for urban rehabilitation and the reduction of armed violence in poor neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro. This experience enables the Brazilian NGO to develop certain activities in Bel Air that have not been completely addressed by the Haitian government.

Besides having relevant expertise, Viva Rio attempts to understand the local context in depth before planning its activities so as to attend local needs and priorities. For instance, the NGO has conducted an extensive household survey (with more than 10 000 families) in 2007, as well as preliminary research on Bel Air's water market before structuring their water-supply project. This attention to local reality helps the adaptation of projects to the Haitian context and facilitates alignment to local development priorities.

Finally, Viva Rio also maintains a close dialogue with the representatives of the Haitian government and civil society organisations participating in the Steering Committee of the Bel Air project. This contact also facilitates alignment to local development priorities.

In the Public Sector Training project, pivotal and beneficiary countries had to improve the quality of their public services after a period of political instability and subsequent transitions to a democratic regime. South Africa is not a post-conflict country, but faced major challenges in public sector management during the transition from the *apartheid* regime. PALAMA, the South African management development institute, developed expertise in public management training, enabling the institution to support the MDIs from Burundi, Rwanda and Southern Sudan.

Burundi, Rwanda and Southern Sudan have the opportunity to express their development priorities in the Public Sector Training project. The respective MDIs participate actively in designing the curricula and training programmes, which are developed according to each country's needs. Here, beneficiary countries' ownership and project alignment with national development priorities are closely linked.

## 5.2 Active engagement of beneficiary countries

Alignment to national development priorities and use of relevant expertise from pivotal countries may not

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*Active participation of beneficiary countries helps ensure that local priorities are respected, and support developing local capacity to manage the development process.*

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be sufficient to guarantee that a triangular co-operation programme/project will be able to address development challenges in beneficiary countries. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action point to the primary importance of ownership for effective development co-operation, as does the final report of the United Nations Development Co-operation Forum 2008: "Effectiveness of South-South and triangular co-operation also rests on national leadership. (...) as in North-South co-operation

it is imperative that programme countries show leadership by defining priorities and needs" (UN ECOSOC, 2008b).

Engaging beneficiary countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of triangular co-operation projects helps ensure that local priorities and systems are respected, and supports beneficiary countries in developing their capacity to manage the development process. However, as discussed in the previous section, involving beneficiary countries in triangular co-operation may be challenging in practice. Since it would be considered easier to implement projects without consulting local governments or civil society, the implementing agencies should devote efforts and time to co-ordinate with and guarantee active participation from local partners. This difficulty was found during the implementation of both the Bel Air and the Public Sector Training projects.

During implementation of the Bel Air project, Viva Rio works with civil society organisations, local public administrations and the local population – employing a majority of Haitians to conduct its work in Bel Air. For example, on water-supply projects, the NGO has been working with the public water-supply company, *Centrale Autonome Métropolitaine d'Eau Potable* (CAMEP). This active engagement of different groups from the beneficiary country helps to build local knowledge about how to address their own development challenges. With regards to accountability, Viva Rio provides reports of activities to local public administrations on a demand-driven and *ad hoc* basis.<sup>10</sup>

Beneficiary countries are also engaged in every phase of the Public Sector Training project. MDIs from South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi and Southern Sudan work jointly, taking every decision concerning the project's administration and the development of training programs together. Interviewees agreed that the active engagement of beneficiary countries has:

- Contributed to the adaptation of curricula and training methods to local needs;
- Promoted local learning and capacity development in the design of public-sector training programmes ;
- Helped build mutual knowledge, trust and confidence among partners.

### 5.3 Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities

The main claimed benefit of triangular co-operation is the effective combination of the strengths of different partners. According to the Paris Declaration, donors' actions are more effective when they are harmonised, achieving greater complementary and reducing transaction costs when they adopt a "pragmatic approach to division of labour" (OECD, 2005). By applying this recommendation to triangular co-operation, partners may benefit from a clear assignment of roles and responsibilities according to their area of expertise, while contributing to harmonisation and enhanced complementarity of their actions. According to the Brazilian Co-operation Agency (ABC), obtaining satisfactory results in triangular co-operation – a "new and [operationally] challenging environment" – depends on the successful division of responsibilities among the partners (including their respective headquarters and at the field level). Other interviewees agreed that defining respective responsibilities from the outset of their project/programme facilitated co-ordination during the implementation and evaluation stages.

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*Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities among partners increases complementarity and facilitates co-ordination during implementation and evaluation of triangular co-operation.*

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Research conducted for this paper did not yield sufficient evidence that would allow measuring the impact of triangular co-operation on financial costs of development assistance. Thus, no conclusions about cost-effectiveness can be drawn.

The most common division of roles in triangular co-operation is to assign the provision of financial resources to DAC donors and delegate formulation and implementation to pivotal and beneficiary countries. This is the case in both case studies. There are also examples of triangular co-operation where DAC donors and beneficiary countries have leading roles, and pivotal country provides limited technical assistance in some aspects of the project. For instance, the project Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education Project (SMASSE) started as a bilateral partnership between Japan and Kenya, but Malaysia and the Philippines joined later to provide training to Kenyans (JICA, 2006).

In Bel Air, Viva Rio is in charge of the project's formulation and implements the activities in partnership with Haitian public administrations and civil society. Canada, Norway and IDB sponsor the project, and the Brazilian embassy in Port-au-Prince gives institutional support to Viva Rio since the NGO's arrival in the country. The embassy facilitates relations with Haitian government, UN, UNDP, the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and Brazilian troops in Haiti. However, co-ordination appears to be less efficient with regards to evaluation and co-ordination of different sponsors. Working with many donors requires a lot of effort from Viva Rio, which has to negotiate small-scale contributions several times. Moreover, each donor has requested individual monitoring reports from the NGO, and they have been planning to conduct separate project evaluations. CIDA, NCA and IDB are now considering the possibility of harmonising their evaluations in order to reduce the burden on Viva Rio. Donors could also co-ordinate themselves for the approval of work plans.

In the Public Sector Training project, roles seem to be clearly divided among partners: Canada mainly provides financial support and MDIs from South Africa, Burundi, Rwanda and Southern Sudan implement the project. Decisions concerning the project's orientations (*i.e.* approval of the work plan) are taken together in the Steering Committee's meetings, which happen twice a year. The Committee is composed of representatives from the three MDI's, PALAMA, CIDA and South Africa's National Treasury.<sup>11</sup> Although its



main contribution is financial, CIDA also provides some elements of technical co-operation when asked by the other partners. For example, Canadian experts were invited to conduct part of the trainings in French for Rwanda's and Burundi's nationals.

## 6 Conclusion

This analysis shows that many DAC members and Southern partners are involved in triangular co-operation. It also suggests that triangular co-operation may be a good opportunity for joining efforts and using the comparative advantages of DAC donors and pivotal countries to support the development of beneficiary countries. However, in order to achieve these benefits and overcome the practical challenges of triangular co-operation, it is important to observe certain principles of effectiveness. Respect to ownership, alignment and harmonisation may be particularly useful for promoting good results in triangular co-operation.

Further research and debate triangular co-operation and aid effectiveness is welcome, addressing not only the arguments presented in this study, but also other questions that could not be discussed in this opportunity. Examples of such questions are:

- What is the benefit of triangular co-operation when compared to other co-operation modalities (*i.e.* bilateral co-operation, multilateral co-operation, South-South co-operation)?
- Can triangular co-operation become an alternative to other types of co-operation (bilateral co-operation, multilateral co-operation, South-South co-operation)? How, and in what circumstances?
- Is it possible to agree on certain principles of effectiveness in triangular co-operation?
- How effective evaluation and mutual accountability in triangular initiatives be established and guaranteed?
- Can triangular co-operation be cost-effective?
- How can transaction costs of triangular co-operation be minimised?
- How can needs and offers in triangular co-operation be matched? In other words, how can developing countries that have helpful and adapted expertise be matched with other developing countries so as to promote co-operation among them, with the support of a DAC donor?

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## Annex A: Definitions of triangular co-operation

Even if there is no official definition of triangular co-operation, it is generally described as a partnership between developing countries for implementing a development project/programme with the support of a developed country or an international organisation (see UNDP, 2004; CUTS, 2005; Kumar, 2008; UN ECOSOC, 2008a). The UNDP defines triangular co-operation “as a way of fostering development by leveraging the best features of cooperation between developing countries with assistance from developed countries” (UNDP, 2004). Other sources provide similar definitions:

- UN ECOSOC (2008a): “Triangular development cooperation has been interpreted as OECD/DAC donors or multilateral institutions providing development assistance to Southern governments to execute projects/programmes with the aim of assisting other developing countries.”
- Kumar (2008): “A relatively new trend reinforcing SSC is of triangular development cooperation (TDC) with Northern countries and multilateral agencies supporting the programmes of cooperation between developing countries.”
- Centre for International Trade, Economics and Environment (CUTS) (CUTS 2005): “‘trilateral development cooperation’ where aid is channelled through institutions in third countries for being applied to development projects in poor countries.”

Some state that there can be triangular co-operation among developing countries only. For instance, Abdenur (2007) writes that triangular co-operation is an arrangement where “a developing country partner with either another developing country or an industrialised counterpart to lend technical assistance to a third country.” One example of triangular co-operation among developing countries cited by different authors is the IBSA initiative, which regroups India, Brazil and South Africa. IBSA aims to co-ordinate member countries in many different areas, including co-operation with other developing countries that may benefit from Indian, Brazilian and South-African expertise (Abdenur, 2007; Braude *et al.*, 2008; CUTS, 2005; UN ECOSOC, 2008).

This paper focuses on partnerships between *DAC donors* and *pivotal countries* (providers of South-South Co-operation) to implement development-co-operation programmes/projects in *beneficiary countries* (recipients of development assistance). This working definition allows for a focus on the dynamics of collaboration between DAC donors and participants in SSC, and on the potential and shortcomings of this partnership. It is important to clarify that this definition does not imply that triangular co-operation necessarily involves only three partners. In fact, it is a partnership among *three types of development actors*: *DAC donors*, *pivotal countries* and *beneficiary countries*. The actual number of partners may be higher than three, as noted by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (CIDA, 2007) and CUTS (CUTS, 2005).

Finally, it should be noted that the adjectives “tripartite” or “trilateral” are also used in the place of “triangular” by some countries (*e.g.* Sweden, Canada). We chose to employ “triangular co-operation” or “triangulation” because these terms are used by many countries and international organisations as well as in international fora (*e.g.* UNDP Special Unit for South-South Co-operation, G8, G77, OECD, Asian Development Bank).

## Annex B: Triangular co-operation projects

Supporting partners	Project	Beneficiary countries
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>		
<b>Argentina</b> <b>Brazil</b> <b>Canada</b> <b>Spain</b>	Pro Huerta Project	Haiti
<b>Brazil</b> <b>France</b>	Training in agriculture of conservation	Mozambique
<b>Indonesia</b> <b>Japan</b>	Agricultural assistance	Madagascar
<b>Japan</b> <b>Vietnam</b>	Rice production project	Madagascar
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
<b>Egypt</b> <b>Norway</b>	Training courses in the field of nursery	African countries
<b>Japan</b> <b>Malaysia</b> <b>Philippines</b>	Strengthening of Mathematics and Sciences in Secondary Education (SMASSE)	Kenya
<b>FISHING</b>		
<b>Brazil</b> <b>France</b>	Training in the area of fish-farming	Cameroon
<b>Japan</b> <b>Mexico</b>	Aquaculture	Honduras
<b>Japan</b> <b>Morocco</b>	Co-operation projects with the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA) in the area of fishery	African countries
<b>Japan</b> <b>Tunisia</b>	Training for trainers in fisheries development (2006 – 2008)	Gabon
<b>Japan</b> <b>Tunisia</b>	Experts in fishery techniques, navigation and shipbuilding mechanics to vocational training centre (2002 – 2004)	Mauritania
<b>FOOD SECURITY ASSISTANCE</b>		
<b>Colombia</b> <b>UN World Food Programme</b>	Donation to UNWFP to support triangular co-operation projects	Haiti
<b>FORESTRY</b>		
<b>Brazil</b> <b>Spain</b>	Reforestation the Mapou River Basin	Haiti
<b>GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY</b>		
<b>Brazil</b> <b>Germany</b>	Institutional strengthening of the National Institute for Standardization and Quality (Metrology and Quality Control)	Mozambique
<b>Brazil</b> <b>Norway</b>	Promotion of institutional/public administration strengthening	Angola
<b>Brazil</b> <b>Norway</b>	Promotion of institutional/public administration strengthening	Guinea-Bissau
<b>Brazil</b> <b>Spain</b>	Institutional strengthening of the Office of the Attorney General	Uruguay
<b>Brazil</b> <b>United States</b>	Strengthening of the National Popular Assembly of Guinea-Bissau	Guinea Bissau
<b>Canada</b> <b>South Africa</b>	The Public Sector Training and Development Project in Countries emerging from conflict	Burundi Rwanda Southern Sudan

France Mexico	Criminal investigation and forensic medicine	Haiti
France Mexico	Police training and re-equipment	Haiti
Germany Tunisia	Setting up the Audit Commission of Mauritania by training 30 magistrates in Tunisia and appointing Tunisian experts and consultants for institutional support	Mauritania
Japan South Africa	Police training and capacity building	Democratic Republic of Congo
Japan Thailand	Capacity building of drug law enforcement	Cambodia Lao PDR Myanmar Vietnam
South Africa Sweden	Police co-operation : capacity development in Rwanda, and sometimes in South Africa	Rwanda

#### HEALTH

Brazil Canada	Triangular programmes and actions in the area of health (immunisation)	Haiti
Brazil Japan	Human resources development programme for Josina Machel Hospital	Angola
Brazil Japan	Improvement of Children's Health Services.	Madagascar
Brazil Spain	Water resources and sanitation	Bolivia
Brazil United Kingdom	Support for the control of HIV	Peru
Brazil United States	Support for the programme of prevention and control of malaria	São Tomé and Príncipe
Italy Tunisia	Short- and medium-term professional training in the health sector	Niger
Japan Mexico	Integrated management of plagues	Nicaragua
Japan Sri Lanka	Asia-Africa Knowledge Co-Creation Project: experience sharing in hospital management	African countries

#### HUMANITARIAN AID

Egypt Food and Agriculture Organization	Sending Egyptian experts to Africa and delivering humanitarian assistance	African countries
Japan Mexico	Disasters prevention – the Taishin Project: improvement of earthquake-proof popular housing	El Salvador
Japan Mexico	Environment and disaster prevention	Guatemala

#### INDUSTRY

Chile Finland	Long-term technical assistance to develop small and medium-sized furniture production	Nicaragua
Colombia Japan	Share expertise in the design and maintenance of monitoring systems and automation of industrial processes	South and Central American countries
Colombia Spain	Land planning, protected areas and institutional strengthening	Haiti
Japan Mexico	Industry and manufacturing	Paraguay



<b>MULTISECTOR/CROSS-CUTTING / GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>		
Brazil Germany	Technological Centre for the Environment	Paraguay
Cuba Spain	Biodiversity stocktaking of the National Park La Visite	Haiti
<b>MULTISECTOR/CROSS-CUTTING / MULTISECTOR EDUCATION / TRAINING</b>		
Brazil Japan	Professional training Programme	Angola
Chile United States	Programme for staff of the Ecuadorian Internal Revenue Service to visit and learn best practices from the Chilean Internal Revenue Service.	Ecuador
Chile United States	Scholarships for Latin American students to pursue a graduate degree in a Chilean university	Bolivia Ecuador Paraguay Peru Countries from Central America and the Caribbean
European Commission Singapore	Training in areas such as finance, trade promotion, World Trade Organisation matters and information technology. Since 2004, a total of 114 officials have been trained	Cambodia Lao PDR Viet Nam
Japan Thailand International Organisations: Colombo Plan, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF	Trilateral co-operation for annual training programmes: Thai International Postgraduate Programme (TIPP), Annual International Training Courses (AITC), and annual training courses	More than 50 countries in South Asia, the Middle-East, Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>OTHER SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES</b>		
Brazil United Kingdom	Technical co-operation agreement for social protection work	Ghana
<b>POPULATION POLICIES / PROGRAMMES AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH</b>		
Brazil Germany	Fighting AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean (e.g. Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay)	Latin American countries
France Tunisia	Training courses in reproductive health – a two-year-term project – infant and maternal mortality	Nigeria
<b>TOURISM</b>		
Colombia Germany	Community-based rural tourism	Costa Rica
<b>TRADE POLICY AND REGULATIONS AND TRADE-RELATED ADJUSTMENT</b>		
Canada Tunisia	Establishment of a trade and export promotion structure	Niger
<b>TRANSPORT AND STORAGE</b>		
Brazil Italy	Urban mobility: rationalise urban planning activities in municipalities; improve urban mass transport infrastructure and modernisation of traffic control	Mozambique
<b>WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION</b>		
Brazil Japan	Improvement of water services and sanitation in the Zambezia province	Mozambique
Germany Mexico	Municipalities' solid waste integral management	Guatemala
Germany Mexico	Municipalities' solid waste integral management	Dominican Republic
Japan Mexico	Development of national strategy and framework of reference (priority areas, action lines and involved	Guatemala



	actors) for solid waste management	
<b>Japan Tunisia</b>	Water waste management (3 year program)	Iraq
<b>Mexico Spain</b>	Potable water and sanitation	Haiti
<b>GENERAL</b>		
<b>Argentina Italy</b>	Area of technical assistance, professional training and health	Latin American and Caribbean countries
<b>Argentina Japan</b>	The Partnership Programme for Joint Co-operation	Latin American countries
<b>Asia and Africa Japan</b>	Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)	African countries
<b>Belgium Egypt</b>	Fund to Egyptian experts working in Africa	African countries
<b>Brazil Germany</b>	Triangular schemes for fostering South-South co-operation	Haiti
<b>Brazil Japan</b>	Triangular schemes for fostering South-South co-operation	Haiti
<b>Brazil United Kingdom</b>	Triangular schemes for fostering South-South co-operation	Haiti
<b>Brazil United States</b>	Triangular schemes for fostering South-South co-operation	Haiti
<b>Chile Germany</b>	Fund for triangular co-operation aiming to share the Chilean development experience with other Latin American countries (examples: consumer protection in El Salvador, promotion of local economies in Paraguay or land use planning in Colombia)	Latin American countries
<b>Egypt Japan</b>	Annual training programmes since 1985, benefiting 2 200 trainees	African countries
<b>Luxemburg Tunisia</b>	Establishment of a Malian Solidarity Fund in 2004-2006 (sending Tunisian experts)	Mali
<b>South Africa Sweden</b>	Tripartite co-operation and regional programmes: Sweden has contributed funds to the African Renaissance Fund. Sweden also supports a number of regional initiatives in which South Africa takes part.	African Countries
<b>South Africa United States</b>	US/South Africa tri-lateral assistance: a mechanism for the South African Government to utilise its expertise to provide needed services in other African countries. It also provides a means for the government to enhance its capacity to deliver foreign assistance and improves inter- and intra-ministerial co-operation	African countries
<b>World Bank Many examples</b>	South-South Experience Exchange Facility (multi-donor trust fund) – IDA-eligible countries	IDA countries

**Sources:** This list of projects was prepared with information gathered from interviews and surveys with development actors involved in triangular co-operation, presentations in international meetings, and Internet sources (see Bibliography). It does not intend to be a definitive nor an extensive stocktaking of current triangular co-operation activities.

<sup>1</sup> See Annex A for a discussion of the definitions of triangular co-operation

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<sup>2</sup> The expression “pivotal country” is considered the most suitable for naming the countries providers of South-South co-operation. The terms “emerging donors” and “non-DAC donors” are employed more often but do not describe this group of countries accurately. Some pivotal countries began to provide assistance as early as many DAC donors; therefore, it is not adequate to call them “emerging donors.” “Non-DAC donors” does not appear to be very appropriate since it is not precise and defines the group by what they are not. According to the UNDP, “Pivotal countries can be defined as developing countries which, by virtue of their capacities and experience in promoting South-South co-operation, are positioned to play a ‘lead’ role in the promotion and application of TCDC [technical cooperation among developing countries], mainly by sharing their capacities and experience with other developing countries; although they could themselves also benefit from the experience of such countries.” For further information, please refer to [http://tcdc.undp.org/knowledge\\_base/pivotal\\_issue.html](http://tcdc.undp.org/knowledge_base/pivotal_issue.html)

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this paper, the terms *pivotal country* and *beneficiary country* are used to distinguish between provider and recipient of development co-operation. In some of our references the expression “recipient country” is used instead of “beneficiary country.”

<sup>4</sup> This overview presents a summary of information gathered from interviews and preliminary surveys with development actors involved in triangular co-operation, presentations in international meetings, and Internet sources. It does not intend to be a definitive nor an extensive stocktaking of current triangular co-operation activities.

<sup>5</sup> Annex B provides a non-exhaustive list of triangular co-operation projects compiled during our research.

<sup>6</sup> This list reflects the information received from DAC members’ headquarters and found on alternative sources (papers, international conferences’ presentations, other Internet sources). However, it is possible that more DAC donors are involved in triangular co-operation at the field level but their headquarters’ offices are not aware of these initiatives.

<sup>7</sup> The Heiligendamm Dialogue Process was established at the Heiligendamm G8 Summit in June 2007 by the G8 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States) and the G5 (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa) countries. It aims to promote dialogue with view "to enhance trust and confidence among the dialogue partners as well as developing common understanding on global issues," such as development, energy, cross-border investment and responsible business conduct, and research and innovation (see [www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en\\_21571361\\_40549151\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en_21571361_40549151_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)). At the L'Aquila G8 Summit (July 2009), G8 and G5 agreed to pursue their dialogue through the Heiligendamm L'Aquila Process (HAP).

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of simplicity, the “Ecole Nationale d’Administration,” the “Rwanda Institute of Administration and Management” and the “Capacity Building Unit for the Government of Southern Sudan” will hereafter be named “management development institutes” (MDI).

<sup>9</sup> Southern Sudan does not have a management development institute like Burundi and Rwanda do; nevertheless, they have established a capacity building unit in their recently constituted government for participating in this partnership. The Government of Southern Sudan was established after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 9 January 2005 (Government of Southern Sudan Liaison Office in Pretoria, South Africa)

<sup>10</sup> Viva Rio’s reports, work plans and research papers are also available at their website: [www.comunidadese segura.org/en/node/42433](http://www.comunidadese segura.org/en/node/42433)

<sup>11</sup> CIDA channels funds through South Africa’s National Treasury, which transfer the money to PALAMA.

# Triangular Co-operation and Aid Effectiveness

## CAN TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION MAKE AID MORE EFFECTIVE?

Can triangular co-operation make aid more effective? Judging by recent international declarations, governments think it can. They say that better results can be achieved when Southern partners and “traditional” donors (*i.e.* members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee – DAC) join forces through triangular co-operation. Two examples: first, Brazil, Canada and Norway working together in Haiti; second, South Africa and Canada collaborating with Burundi, Rwanda and Southern Sudan.

This paper addresses four questions:

- What is triangular co-operation, which countries are involved, and why?
- What are the claimed benefits of triangular co-operation vis-à-vis bilateral co-operation?
- What are the challenges in rendering triangular co-operation effective?
- How can the benefits of triangular co-operation be achieved and its challenges overcome?

The paper concludes that triangular co-operation may achieve good results when:

- Beneficiary countries own and participate actively in projects/programmes, helping to adapt them to local realities;
- Programmes/projects are aligned with beneficiary countries’ development priorities;
- Partners divide responsibilities so as to make the best use of their comparative advantages.

Whether triangular co-operation is cost-effective remains unclear. Even if services and technologies provided by developing countries may be less expensive, triangular co-operation may imply higher transaction costs.