



Promoting Better Triangular Co-operation: Where Have We Got to Since Busan and Where to Next After 2015?

The Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation (APC-Colombia), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) organised a discussion on **“Promoting better triangular co-operation: where have we got to since Busan and where to next after 2015”**. The discussion took place on 16 April 2014 as a focus session at the [first High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#)¹.

The focus session brought together all constituencies in the Global Partnership – governments, international organisations, civil society organisations, parliamentary associations and the private sector - to:

- i) Take stock of progress made on promoting better triangular co-operation since the Busan High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 and learn about actions implemented since a [Policy Dialogue event on Triangular Co-operation](#)² was held in Lisbon in May 2013.
- ii) Exchange views on how triangular co-operation can be a tool for achieving sustainable development, including in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

The speakers at the focus session were:

- Mr Jon Lomøy, Director for Development Co-operation, OECD (Moderator)
- Mr Seiji Kihara, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan
- Ms Ryna Garay, Director for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador
- Mr Hiroshi Kato, Vice-President of Japan International Cooperation Agency
- Ambassador Fernando Abreu, Executive Director, Brazilian Cooperation Agency
- Ms Juanita Olarte, Director for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation
- Ms Mami Yamada Sakurai, Assistant Director for Partnerships and Triangular Cooperation, UN Office for South-South Cooperation

Background

Triangular co-operation has been receiving increased attention in recent years, including as part of international processes aimed at improving the effectiveness of development co-operation.

Triangular co-operation builds on the complementary strengths of different actors to bring innovative and flexible solutions to address development challenges. It can arise from a combination of South-South and North-South Co-operation, creating coalitions around the pursuit of shared development goals.

In this sense, triangular co-operation can be a tool for promoting structural changes and sustainable development. It can contribute to the implementation of the [post-2015 development agenda](#)³, which will cover a set of universal goals integrating the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development.

The [Busan Partnership agreement](#)⁴ (2011) proposed a number of actions relating to triangular co-operation, including broadening support, scaling-up and strengthening capacity to engage effectively in triangular co-operation. The first High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation provided a timely opportunity to take stock of progress made since Busan in promoting better triangular co-operation and to chart the way forward.

Key messages

Participants at the focus session agreed that triangular co-operation is coming of age as a modality of development co-operation. It is a type of co-operation that **follows the spirit of the Busan Partnership agreement in promoting inclusive partnerships based on common objectives shared by a diverse range of development partners.**

The discussions at the focus session showed that, since 2011, **several countries and organisations have been making efforts to promote better triangular co-operation.** Their work has helped to disseminate information on triangular co-operation, produce evidence on how triangular co-operation works and share experience about mechanisms to promote triangular co-operation. For instance, the [analytical work conducted by Japan](#)⁵ clarified some of the existing forms of triangular co-operation as well as the mechanisms to promote it and shed light on the benefits of this form of co-operation. Other initiatives mentioned include the creation of South-South and triangular co-operation funds as well as the regular publication of the [Report on South-South Co-operation in Ibero-America](#)⁶ by the Ibero-American Secretariat.



Some of the messages emerging from triangular co-operation experiences are:

- **Triangular co-operation can promote knowledge sharing** through a transfer and adaptation of development solutions, where all countries can be providers of knowledge and experience relevant to other countries. Triangular co-operation can also **promote knowledge “co-creation”** through the production of innovative solutions in a collaborative way.
- **Triangular co-operation can be a tool for building consensus and harmonisation among different partners** if conducted in an inclusive and sustained way. This harmonisation can strengthen bilateral relations among the partners involved.
- **Successful triangular co-operation is demand driven and aligned with national priorities of beneficiary countries.** Triangular co-operation cannot be used to impose topics or advance agendas not aligned with national priorities. In addition, it cannot be an excuse for reducing official development assistance (ODA) or avoiding existing commitments.
- **Triangular co-operation is strongly linked with South-South co-operation but it is a modality of international co-operation in its own right.** In this sense, it should be guided by differentiated principles such as: ownership, alignment, focus on results and absence of conditionality or interference in domestic affairs. Triangular co-operation should be grounded in inclusive and horizontal partnerships, which implies shared governance, decision-making and accountability among all actors involved.
- **Triangular co-operation still faces several challenges,** particularly with regards to co-ordination (due to differences in institutional models and bureaucracies) and a lack of information, data and evidence.

Looking ahead

Triangular co-operation can be an important tool for achieving sustainable development. The UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has already included triangular co-operation among the means to achieve the emerging goals that will guide the post-2015 development agenda.

However, more effort could be invested in building bridges between the international co-operation agenda and the post-2015 agenda.

Discussions during the focus session also pointed to a range of actions to strengthen the contribution of triangular co-operation to development:

- **Recognise triangular co-operation as a specific modality for co-operation.**
- **Ensure effective co-ordination and active participation of all partners** to reduce transaction costs and promote harmonised procedures.
- **Design mechanisms and tools to monitor, evaluate and measure progress and impact,** including the knowledge shared and created through this modality.
- **Improve communication and dissemination of information** to promote good practices and raise awareness of the importance of triangular co-operation to development.
- **Increase participation of civil society organisations** in triangular co-operation.

Links

- 1 <http://effectivecooperation.org/2014/04/10/first-high-level-meeting-of-the-global-partnership/>
- 2 www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/dialogue-triangular-cooperation.htm
- 3 www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/mdg.shtml
- 4 <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm>
- 5 <http://jica-ri.jica.go.jp/index.html>
- 6 <http://segib.org/es/node/7989>

Related webpages

- First High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation webpage: <http://effectivecooperation.org/2014/04/10/first-high-level-meeting-of-the-global-partnership/>
- OECD webpage on triangular co-operation: www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-cooperation.htm
- UN Office for South-South Co-operation webpage: <http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc.html>