

DAC GLOBAL RELATIONS

‘Green’ triangular co-operation – Findings from an OECD survey

What’s the rationale for looking specifically at ‘green’ triangular co-operation?¹

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated manner. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires addressing the global environment directly (e.g. SDGs 13, 14 and 15), as well as dealing with environmental issues linked to other development activities and goals (e.g. SDGs 7, 11 or 12). At the same time, all countries endorsed the Paris Agreement on climate change, as well as other environment-related agreements on biodiversity, desertification or disaster risk and resilience.

Generally, triangular co-operation provides a diverse range of actors with an opportunity to explore new ways of working together. For the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement creates opportunities for countries to work together trilaterally, while other environment-related organisations also advocate for more triangular co-operation (e.g. UNEP or the CBD). A forthcoming working paper to be released by the OECD shows how triangular co-operation contributes to achieve ‘green’ objectives.

What is ‘green’ triangular co-operation?

Triangular co-operation can support achieving this new ‘green’ development agenda in innovative and collaborative ways - providing solutions to today’s environmental constraints to development. Although no international definition exists, triangular co-operation is increasingly understood as having three partners, bearing in mind that the roles that these partners take can change as the project evolves:

- **Pivotal partner:** shares a given sustainable development solution, knowledge, expertise, technology or other resources;
- **Facilitating partner:** connects other actors to form a triangular partnership and provides financial and/or technical support for the collaboration; and
- **Beneficiary partner:** is the target of a development intervention.

‘Green’ triangular co-operation is defined here as triangular co-operation activities that target local environmental issues, such as tackling water pollution or enhancing air purity; as well as global environmental goods, such as adapting and mitigating climate change, stopping biodiversity loss or desertification. Using this definition, we find that one quarter of the triangular co-operation projects gathered through a survey the OECD conducted in 2015 target ‘green’ objectives, as the table below shows, as either the principal or a significant objective.

Aim of the ‘green’ triangular co-operation activity	Projects where this is the ‘principal’ objective	Projects where this is a ‘significant’ objective
Local Environment	8%	38%
Climate Change Adaptation or Mitigation	10%	23%
Biodiversity	7%	14%
Desertification	-	-
TOTAL	25%	75%

¹ This factsheet was prepared by Juan Casado-Asensio and Nadine Piefer of the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate in September 2017, drawing on responses to a survey kindly provided by 63 actors involved in triangular co-operation. In some of these responses, complete data was not provided on the activities reported.

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Most projects studied here have a ‘significantly green’ objective, indicating that ‘green’ issues are being integrated into triangular co-operation activities with other primary objectives (75% of the projects). This is especially the case for triangular co-operation projects that aim to improve the local environment. The remaining projects have a ‘principally green’ objective (and would have not gone ahead without that ‘green’ motivation), with the majority of projects being climate-related.

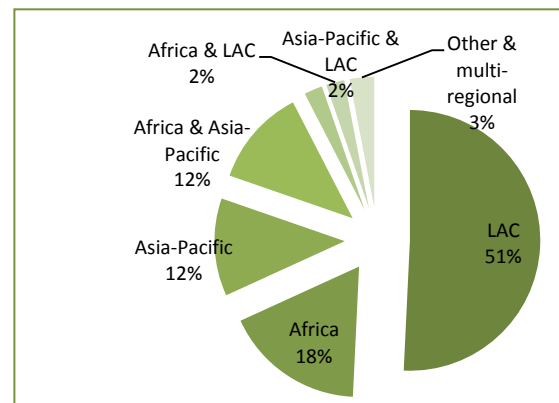
Interestingly, too, not a single project was reported with a desertification-related aim and only one ‘brown’ project was reported – that is, a triangular co-operation activity that targets objectives that go against the environment (in this case, promoting the use of fossil fuel). This finding points towards triangular co-operation being recognised as a useful tool for promoting ‘green’ objectives.

Who are the actors involved in ‘green’ triangular co-operation?

Out of the 63 survey respondents, the following 40 countries and international organisations reported ‘green’ triangular co-operation projects.

Countries				International organisations
Argentina	Denmark	Italy	Peru	Asian Development Bank (ADB)
Armenia	Dominican Republic	Jamaica	Portugal	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
Australia	Ecuador	Japan	South Africa	Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)
Burkina Faso	France	Korea	Spain	Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)
Chile	Germany	Madagascar	Sudan	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-China
Colombia	Guatemala	Mexico	Timor-Leste	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
Cook Islands	Indonesia	Mozambique	United Kingdom	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)
Costa Rica	Israel	Norway	Uruguay	World Food Programme (WFP)

The top five participants in ‘green’ triangular co-operation projects are: Norway, Chile, Germany, Mexico and Argentina. Most ‘green’ triangular projects are in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), 18% in Africa with South Africa as the most active country, and 12% in Asia-Pacific with the UNDP office in China being involved in numerous projects. Interestingly, there seems to be more exchange among African and Asian countries in the ‘green’ field (12% of the projects) than among Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions (2% each for Africa and Asia-Pacific). In addition to governments and international organisations, 40% of the reported projects involved non-state actors, such as universities and research institutions, the private sector or civil society organisations.



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How do countries and international organisations engage in ‘green’ triangular co-operation?

Respondents reported engaging in ‘green’ triangular co-operation mainly through project-type interventions. Technical co-operation activities and dispatching experts, e.g. for training, workshops and exchange visits, also occurred frequently. This finding correlates with responses on budgets and durations. In general, the reported budgets for ‘green’ projects are significantly larger than the budgets that were reported in the survey for all triangular co-operation projects. Especially when it comes to renewable energy, we find larger volumes and longer durations of triangular co-operation projects. Costs were shared among the partners in 46% of the ‘green’ projects, similar to the finding overall (48%).

Budget range (in US dollar)	No. of ‘green’ projects	% of ‘green’ projects	Total number of projects	% of total projects
Under 100 000	18	15%	109	32%
Between 100 000 and 500 000	35	30%	99	28%
Between 500 000 and 1 000 000	21	18%	47	14%
Between 1 000 000 and 5 000 000	28	24%	63	18%
Between 5 000 000 and 10 000 000	4	3%	10	3%
> 10 000 000	10	9%	17	5%
TOTAL	116	100%	345	100%

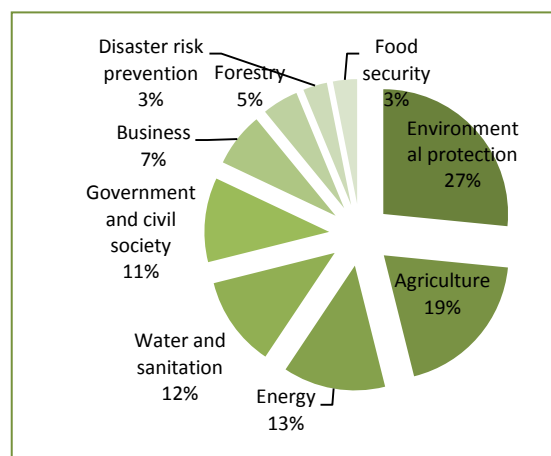
The reported average duration of ‘green’ triangular co-operation projects is 36 months, compared to 32 months overall. It is noteworthy that the starkest contrast is at the lower ranges of project durations: less ‘green’ activities last less than one year (only 2% in comparison to 15% overall) and more projects are between one and two years (51%) compared to the total number of reported triangular co-operation projects (38%) – which may indicate that integrating sustainability into projects that had other primary objectives requires more time. However, at the upper range of project durations, one third was between two and four years (31%) and 16% longer than four years, which is similar to the overall shares.

Duration of green triangular co-operation activities	No. of ‘green’ projects	% of ‘green’ projects	Total number of projects	% of total projects
< 12 months	2	2%	58	15%
Between 12 and 24 months	62	51%	142	38%
Between 25 and 48 months	38	31%	125	33%
Between 49 and 168 months	19	16%	53	14%
Total	121	100%	378	100%

Finally, in terms of sectors, general environmental protection accounts for over a quarter of ‘green’ triangular co-operation projects, followed by agriculture (19%), energy (13%) and water and sanitation (12%). Other ‘green’ sectors, such as forestry or disaster risk prevention, account for 5% and 3% respectively.

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Taking the energy field as an example, we find that many projects are renewable. This finding points at triangular co-operation being well-suited because improving access to renewable energy and making it more affordable requires small-scale and off-grid type of interventions, which are *ad hoc* in nature. In the energy field, triangular co-operation offers the opportunity to develop energy systems in a renewable way, by pooling the resources and expertise of different partners.



What are the trends?

The OECD has now conducted two surveys on triangular co-operation, in 2012 and 2015. Comparing the findings, it is clear that triangular co-operation remains highly relevant, including for achieving 'green' objectives. More project data and evaluations are now available and point to an increase in the number of projects, their budgets and durations. There is a great variety of triangular co-operation in terms of scale, scope, regions, sectors and project types. Moreover, respondents to the survey conducted by the OECD in 2015 mentioned a more strategic use of triangular co-operation by pooling different actors' expertise and resources. In the long run, this evolution can lead to greater ownership by the actors involved, the involvement of other actors, scaling-up and joint implementation of activities designed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).