

Triangular co-operation

FACTS AND FIGURES

- According to a recent survey based on responses from 73 countries and organisations, triangular co-operation is implemented in all regions and covers many sectors, from health to agriculture to governance.

A growing number of development actors are engaging in triangular co-operation. The countries and organisations endorsing the Busan Partnership Agreement committed to “scaling up – where appropriate – the use of triangular approaches to development co-operation”. Even so, the potential of triangular co-operation is yet to be fully realised, and despite growing involvement, there is still much to learn about how this form of co-operation can best contribute to achieving development goals.

One of the major hurdles is the lack of reliable and comprehensive data on triangular co-operation. It is impossible to estimate its overall volume since many countries and organisations do not track these flows systematically.

WHAT IS THERE TO GAIN?

Triangular co-operation is a good long-term investment because it can have a considerable “multiplier effect”. As developing countries innovate and create solutions to their socio-economic challenges, it offers an opportunity for disseminating successful experiences and promoting learning among all partners involved.

Triangular co-operation complements bilateral cooperation, often building on and adding value to these relationships.

What is triangular co-operation?

While there is no internationally agreed definition, triangular co-operation is often understood as a partnership where one or more providers of development co-operation support South-South co-operation, joining forces with developing countries to facilitate a sharing of knowledge and experience among all partners involved. Triangular co-operation unites diverse development partners – bilateral providers of development co-operation, international organisations and partners in South-South co-operation – in pursuit of the common goal of reducing global poverty.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

Partners can divide responsibilities and adapt existing guidelines to help them respond to the communication and coordination challenges that arise in triangular co-operation. Developing countries can improve their capacity to engage in development co-operation, while bilateral providers of development co-operation can increase the flexibility of their requirements when negotiating with developing countries. To address these issues, political commitment is fundamental.

It is also challenging to identify appropriate knowledge to share. Partners can use their bilateral relations and knowledge networks to identify innovations that can be shared and connect with others to scale up development solutions.

Regular information-tracking and evaluation can help build data and evidence on triangular co-operation – which is scarce today – to inform decision-making and improve implementation.

ACTIONS THAT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Working together, including through the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, partners can:

- agree jointly on implementation mechanisms and division of responsibilities, including by building on and adapting existing mechanisms of bilateral co-operation
- use knowledge networks and existing bilateral relations to identify good practice and innovations that can be shared through triangular co-operation
- mandate and support co-operation agencies to participate in triangular co-operation
- make funding for triangular co-operation more predictable
- track statistics and information on triangular co-operation
- carry out more evaluations of triangular co-operation to help build understanding about its contribution to development and to draw lessons on how to meet the specific challenges involved