

INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

MAKING BEST USE OF THE VALUE ADDED OF TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

17-18 APRIL, LISBON

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The OECD Development Co-operation Directorate and the Camões – Institute for Co-operation and Language Portugal) organised the [fourth International Meeting on Triangular Co-operation on 17-18 April 2018](#) in Lisbon. Over 100 representatives from national governments, international organisations, municipalities, the private sector, civil society, academia, trade unions and private philanthropy participated in the meeting.

This event advanced momentum for the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate's work to strengthen the knowledge base for triangular co-operation. The OECD works to fill information gaps on triangular co-operation by dispelling common myths, hosting an online repository and library of reports, projects, studies and factsheets and organising events to bring together different stakeholders that are involved in triangular co-operation. To elevate this work in an effort to provide more evidence leading up to the Second UN High-level Conference on South-South Co-operation (BAPA +40), and beyond, more information on various types of triangular co-operation projects – as well as results and evaluations - are needed.

The Lisbon meeting was hosted by Portuguese Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation Teresa Ribeiro, and OECD Director of the Development Co-operation Directorate Jorge Moreira da Silva.

KEY MESSAGES FROM LISBON TO BUENOS AIRES

Throughout the two-day long international meeting in Lisbon, participants discussed diverse aspects of triangular co-operation, its value added and challenges, and its contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda. In this spirit, the following key messages were derived during the discussions:

- Shifts in the international development co-operation landscape require re-thinking traditional ways of working. These changes open more space for triangular co-operation and multi-stakeholder partnerships as ways of delivering the 2030 Agenda. There is a need to transcend ideological divides and move away from traditional frameworks of development co-operation towards a discourse on providing global public goods.
- Interest in triangular co-operation is increasing as BAPA +40 is approaching. To fully grasp the specific value added of triangular co-operation and to account for the changing global context,

more evidence on different types of triangular co-operation is needed, involving representatives from the private sector, civil society, academia, private philanthropy, trade unions, and local and municipal actors. Creating and maintaining these types of partnerships requires “speaking each other’s language”. Experiences working in triangular co-operation can lead to a better mutual understanding and foster interest in the type of partnerships that are fit to work in today’s changing development architecture.

- Triangular co-operation needs to be better aligned and linked with national development strategies, other development programmes in the same country, as well as regional or global initiatives. To do so, experiences and cases should be tracked, documented and promoted internationally, both cases that feature good practices and failures. Like that practitioners and policy makers might systematically bear in mind the option of working trilaterally - also as a component of larger programmes – especially when innovative approaches are needed.
- Flexibility is a key feature of triangular co-operation. To make better use of triangular co-operation it is important to recognise the plurality of the development landscape and its dynamics. Innovation and development are often happening on the ground through people-led movements. Local-level processes can be scaled-up and used as examples or models.
- Triangular co-operation projects are most successful when they are allowed to grow organically, based on the experiences and demands of the partners involved, and are then backed at the political level.
- Triangular co-operation is a transformative agenda. Science, technology and innovation are game changers and key for growth, capacity building and access to technologies. BAPA +40 needs to address inequalities and promote greater access to technology for all countries.
- Experiences with co-operation projects that continue beyond ODA and that are initiated based on experiences in triangular co-operation – such as mixed funds and partnerships (e.g. the Chile-Japan Partnership) – are emerging. Triangular co-operation can, and increasingly is, used more strategically to forge new partnerships and mechanisms of development co-operation.

OPENING SESSION

The Portuguese Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, Teresa Ribeiro, opened the meeting by underscoring the global importance of triangular co-operation as an innovative way to achieve the SDGs. Jorge Moreira da Silva, Director of the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, pre-launched the “Toolkit for identifying, monitoring and evaluating triangular co-operation” - a product that answered a call at the last international meeting in Lisbon in 2016, where participants identified the need to better capture and communicate the value added of triangular co-operation. Jorge Moreira da Silva de-constructed four myths that the OECD/DCD has been attacking in its analytical work and introduced the objectives of the meeting:

- 1) To contribute to preparations for BAPA +40 by adding a co-ordinated global voice on how triangular co-operation adds value in achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- 2) To understand what makes triangular co-operation attractive for the private sector, private philanthropy, civil society, regional organisations, sub-national actors and others.
- 3) To renew the mandate of the Global Partnership Initiative on effective triangular co-operation (GPI).
- 4) To prepare a roadmap for a knowledge hub on triangular co-operation.

Mónica Aspe, the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the OECD, spoke on good practices in knowledge sharing on triangular co-operation, drawing on her experience with the Mesoamerican project. She emphasised that, in the current global context, knowledge sharing is more important than ever – rather than an unstructured conversation, it is mechanism for each country to share its unique expertise and experiences working with others in order to advance development. And development matters – no matter in which part of the globe. While learning is happening, there is a special need to systematise the exchanges from the South to the North.

In his keynote address “Triangular co-operation on the road to BAPA +40” Jorge Chediek, Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Co-operation (UNOSSC), emphasised the importance of triangular co-operation as a way of working in the era of the 2030 Agenda. He underlined that the development co-operation landscape has changed dramatically, since the Buenos Aires Plan of Action was agreed in 1978. While some concepts and approaches are as valid today as they were 40 years ago, others have evolved substantially. Since the 2000s, regional and economic co-operation among countries of the South are on the rise. The 2009 Nairobi Conference was the first post-BAPA meeting – coinciding with the global economic crisis. With plans for the Second UN High-level Conference on South-South Co-operation (BAPA +40), there is now an opportunity to better situate South-South and triangular co-operation in the new universal 2030 Agenda. Experience shows that triangular co-operation can make a difference and it has come of age. Now, triangular co-operation explicitly features in the sub-themes 2-4 of the BAPA +40 Conference.

Dispelling the myths of triangular co-operation is important, but more evidence is needed on how triangular co-operation works and which results it can deliver. Discussing triangular co-operation at the BAPA +40 meeting paves the way for all development stakeholders to shape a new agenda. Jorge Chediek encouraged the participants of the Lisbon meeting to contribute as much as possible in preparing for BAPA +40, e.g. by channelling key messages on triangular co-operation through the OECD or facilitating discussions with member states of the UN.

MAKING BEST USE OF THE VALUE ADDED OF TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION – SCALING-UP TO MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

In the context of triangular co-operation, all partners transfer knowledge and expertise which encourages co-creation of development solutions, leading to additional benefits. Sub-theme 4 of BAPA +40 is “Scaling up the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in support of South-South co-operation and triangular co-operation” with a view of leveraging contributions of wider actors and resources. In this session, the panellists discussed the positive sides and challenges in triangular co-operation from the perspective of the private sector, private philanthropy. Chile also shared its views, as a country that has graduated from eligibility to receive ODA.

The private sector’s engagement in development co-operation is challenging in terms of understanding different concepts, ways of working and terminology. It is important to clearly identify the revenue streams development co-operation creates and the long-term financial viability of projects. This was the case with the Mexican Retailers Association (ANTAD) working with Germany and the Mexican Agency for International Development Co-operation (AMEXCID) in Guatemala and

Honduras. Jointly, they established a platform where suppliers can showcase their products to be seen by the buyers. This win-win-win situation has triggered further interest in development issues.

There is an increase in funding and engagement in triangular co-operation from the private philanthropy sector. Foundations foster co-operation in and between countries and look for replicable experiences, as the Aga Khan Foundation illustrated through its work in Central Asia and Africa. Often triangular co-operation projects grow organically and “informally” as parts of larger programmes and the partners involved are not aware of the concept, so that they are not labelled as triangular. The case of the Arab-Gulf Fund for Development (AGFUND) and its work with local institutions, banks and NGOs, for instance in Yemen with Germany, shows the potential to work in areas that are difficult to reach through bilateral co-operation.

Chile is one of the countries that has the most experience with triangular co-operation. The representative of the Chilean Agency for International Development Co-operation (AGCID) encouraged participants to learn from what has not worked, since it is always easier to showcase what has worked well. The panellists and participants agreed that there are numerous positive sides of triangular co-operation. Among others, these include: flexibility, complementarity, transparency, learning and reflection and innovative ways of working.

Some of the challenges in implementing triangular co-operation include: ensuring ownership of all partners, especially the beneficiary – recognising that everyone benefits in triangular co-operation, sustainability, higher transaction costs and taking into account the power imbalances and politics of the partners involved in triangular co-operation.

Furthermore, participants encouraged thinking beyond triangular co-operation among governments. There is also a lot of activity at the local level, in city-to-city triangular co-operation, with civil society and even among trade unions. A by-product of triangular co-operation may be a collective improvement of international commitments, such as international labour norms. BAPA +40 could be a space to mobilise non-state actors and think about an international funding facility or mechanism for triangular co-operation.

ADDRESSING PRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES THROUGH TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

Triangular co-operation can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in innovative and collaborative ways and can provide solutions to overcome today’s environmental, economic and social constraints to development. Experiences from Brazil, India, the MENA region and Zambia illustrated the broad range of triangular initiatives. Panellists and participants agreed on four key factors to deliver the SDGs through triangular co-operation: inclusion, diversity, partnership and civil society.

Brazil shared experiences with crowd-funding for agricultural research, and highlighted an example of innovative ways of working in a marketplace approach with the UK in Africa. Taking the global challenge of health care, India has scaled-up a successful bilateral co-operation project to strengthen the insurance system and provide chip cards for those working in the informal sector. Diverse arrangements that are triangular in nature can bring global public goods.

CAWTAR emphasised the importance of thinking locally and scaling-up successful initiatives. Often, triangular co-operation projects are an evolution of bilateral co-operation and we need to acknowledge better the role of civil society – also in terms of triangular co-operation among non-governmental organisations.

The example from Zambia shows how complementary expertise and technology of China, Denmark and UNDP has led to higher levels of access to renewable energies, which makes a difference for the Zambian people and contributes to SDGs 1-8. Sustainability of triangular co-operation projects is essential – rather than being thought of as single initiatives, they should be embedded in a comprehensive approach that is aligned to national development strategies and other development programmes in the area.

Participants agreed that the future of triangular co-operation is in discussing it more strategically and how it can support in delivering global public goods. Also, it needs to encompass all levels, as innovation often comes from local and people-led movements.

PRESENTING A TOOLKIT FOR IDENTIFYING, MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE VALUE ADDED OF TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

There was strong interest from participants to also discuss operational issues of triangular co-operation and to exchange experiences with managing triangular co-operation. The Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South-South Co-operation (PIFCSS) has developed the most comprehensive set of guidelines to this end, which could provide ideas for other regions.

The OECD draft toolkit on identifying, monitoring and evaluating the value added of triangular co-operation focusses on one issue which is not specifically mentioned in the PIFCSS guidelines: the value added of triangular co-operation. The toolkit was drafted through a broad consultation process with a group of interested experts - many of them present in the meeting - together with the OECD.

Participants confirmed the validity and usefulness of the toolkit. It was clarified that the toolkit should be applied to inform additional elements on a case-by-case basis when designing, monitoring or evaluating triangular co-operation projects – it is *not* meant as guidance on “how-to-do-triangular co-operation”.

Panellists and participants made suggestions for further aspects to be considered in the revision of the toolkit following the meeting. Among other issues that were raised, flexibility should be stressed more throughout the toolkit as a key value added. A concern of representatives of non-state actors was its applicability and flexibility to account for the openness to bring in civil society and the private sector into triangular partnerships.

When talking about the toolkit, participants also discussed the working definition of triangular co-operation. Throughout the meeting, participants expressed discomfort with the term “beneficiary”. Ideally, in triangular co-operation everyone benefits - the “beneficiary” carries knowledge, as all have something to contribute. Nevertheless, strong ownership and benefits of the partner that is targeted in the project need to be ensured. It is important to be sincere and not to close our eyes to power relations in triangular co-operation. Even if cultures and systems, e.g. in neighbouring countries, appear to be similar, the partners must develop sensitivities for differences.

Defining triangular co-operation – be it along roles or other characteristics - is challenging and runs the risk of being either too prescriptive or too broad. However, there is an appetite to better assess the key characteristics and develop a common understanding of triangular co-operation.

The OECD/DCD will revise the toolkit based on the discussions in Lisbon and consult all participants on the new version, which will be published online. As a next step, pilots are needed to test elements of the three tools. Germany has expressed interest in such a pilot and others are strongly encouraged to engage in further pilots. Finally, feedback from these pilots will feed into regular updates of the toolkit online.

ADVANCING THE WORK OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE ON EFFECTIVE TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

The Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) on effective triangular co-operation has three work streams: advocacy, analytical and operational. The co-leads of each work stream convened discussions with all participants on how to advance the work of the GPI.

Advocacy work stream: A set of draft voluntary principles for effective triangular co-operation was discussed among the members of the advocacy work stream and those interested in this work. Some terminologies need further review in order to reflect the value added of triangular co-operation in practice (i.e. “beneficiary” does not fulfil the recognized fact that all parties in triangular co-operation get benefits from their participation). The final proposal of voluntary principles must include some reference to in-kind contributions, flexibility and active engagement of civil society and other stakeholders in triangular co-operation. The principles will feed into preparations for BAPA +40. Participants also underscored the relevance of updating the outreach plan of the GPI, with a clear definition of the target audiences. This should include a timeline with specific opportunities to present the final proposal of principles for GPI participants to endorse as a deliverable towards BAPA +40.

Analytical work stream: Participants discussed the two-fold objective of this work stream: 1) it aims at building the evidence base on triangular co-operation and will analyse cases, coming up with models and recommendations for what works and where the challenges are; 2) the work stream will collect key messages for BAPA +40 and underline them with specific cases. Along the project cycle, the work stream will identify and assess specificities as well as challenges of triangular co-operation.

Operational work stream: This work stream compiles existing guidelines, manuals, and tools for triangular co-operation, such as the PIFCCS guidelines for triangular co-operation, the UN guidelines, Brazilian manuals and experiences from many others. Elements of a planned brief publication of this work stream in the lead-up to BAPA +40, include learning from different experiences and providing a framework as orientation for more effective triangular co-operation.

The three work streams are related and will be co-ordinated to provide inputs for BAPA +40 and also to advance the effort to make triangular co-operation more effective beyond BAPA +40. The advocacy work stream will promote the concept of triangular co-operation broadly, the analytical work stream



will provide the evidence, cases and criteria, and the operational work stream will feed in management tools for effective triangular co-operation. As a next step, the co-leads of each work stream will convene conference calls, webinars and documents to continue the work. All participants are asked to share information on their triangular co-operation projects, operational guidelines and key messages for BAPA +40.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Overall, participants identified several actions to promote triangular co-operation:

- 1) Collect and systematise key messages on triangular co-operation for Argentina and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) to take to BAPA +40.
- 2) Carry out pilots of the toolkit and feed these experiences back into the regular updates. Participants are invited to pilot the toolkit with the OECD.
- 3) Assess the project cycle of a triangular co-operation activity, examining what makes a modality distinct from other modalities, such as a bilateral project, with a special focus on challenges and risks of triangular co-operation. This work will feed directly into the analytical and operational work streams of the Global Partnership Initiative on effective triangular co-operation (GPI) and may be included as a fourth tool in the toolkit. Possible topics to address include:
 - a. Co-ordination, administration, dealing with different types of bureaucracies and their requirements, e.g. for reporting;
 - b. Initiating and formalising triangular partnerships by ensuring ownership of all partners; and,
 - c. Transaction costs.
- 4) Share cases and of triangular co-operation through DCD's [online project repository](#)
- 5) Share operational guidelines, manuals and tools for the operational work stream of the GPI.

To support this process the OECD will continue to advance the following work:

- 1) Revising the toolkit based on the discussions in Lisbon, which will be sent to all participants for another round of consultations. Participants can also discuss with the OECD how to engage other stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector, local actors or private philanthropy, in order to make the toolkit relevant for their co-operation projects.
- 2) Develop a brochure on “Is it triangular co-operation?” to foster a common understanding of triangular co-operation.
- 3) Deepen experiences with the private sector, civil society, actors on the sub-national level, academia, philanthropy and other non-state partners in triangular co-operation.
- 4) Collect and analyse more triangular co-operation cases that are linked to other development programmes.