



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION IN GERMAN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

Key messages

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and specifically SDG17, calls for global development partnerships. For Germany, triangular co-operation – development projects that are jointly planned, financed and implemented by three or more partners – is a key example of the new strategic partnerships needed. Dedicated financial and institutional resources have helped the country become one of the largest partners of triangular co-operation worldwide.

Keywords

[Partner countries](#) | [Partnerships](#)

Key partner

[Germany](#)

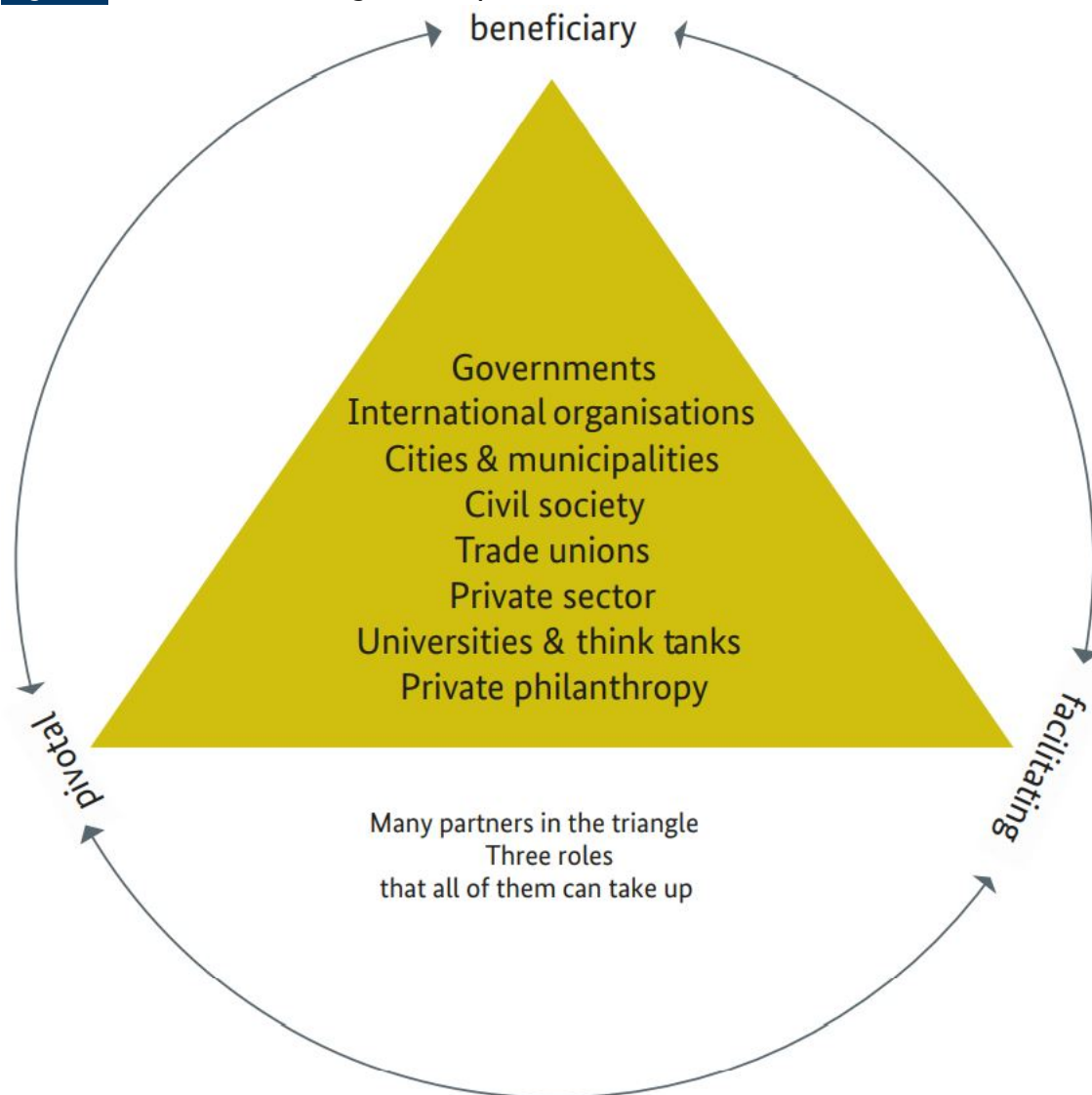
Challenge

To achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Germany sees a need for the international community to work in new forms of strategic partnership. It views triangular co-operation as a key example of such partnerships, linking South-South and North-South co-operation and fostering mutual understanding and learning. As part of its ambition to step up [strategic co-operation with global partners](#), Germany has increased the role and value of triangular co-operation in its co-operation portfolio.

Approach

For Germany, triangular co-operation means a development project that is jointly planned, financed and implemented by three (or more) partners: a beneficiary, a pivotal partner and a facilitating partner. These three roles may change over the lifetime of a project and Germany views its role as that of a learning partner, too.

Figure 1 Three roles in triangular co-operation



Source: Triangular cooperation in German development cooperation, BMZ

Building on a [dedicated position paper for triangular co-operation](#) adopted in 2013 and updated in [2022](#), Germany combines a broad approach with dedicated financial and institutional resources to:

- **Foster both political-strategic and programmatic-thematic partnerships:** Based on the trusting relationship built through triangular co-operation, Indonesia and Mexico co-operated with Germany on sensitive political issues, such as establishing and strengthening of their co-operation agencies ([Indo-AID](#) and [AMEXCID](#)). A long-term [collaboration with Brazil to establish a meteorology institute in Mozambique](#) is an example of a thematic partnership.
- **Include private sector and civil society:** Germany encourages triangular co-operation that goes beyond government actors. Examples of private sector partnerships include work on [the sustainability of Chinese engagement in the Ethiopian textile sector](#), and a [virtual business platform in Central America](#). [Working with Arab partners](#), Germany supported the Tunisian civil society organisation, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research, to support financial inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa.

- **Source dedicated funding:** Through a [Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), Germany has committed EUR 30 million since 2010. The fund regularly launches calls for proposals, providing 40% of co-funding, while the remaining 60% is mobilised by the beneficiary and pivotal partners.
- **Invest in monitoring and evaluation:** Germany uses the [OECD's toolkit for identifying, monitoring and evaluating the value added of triangular co-operation](#) right from the phase of submitting project proposals through to project [evaluation](#). In 2020 Germany undertook a [portfolio evaluation](#) of its triangular co-operation through its evaluation institute DEVal.
- **Exchange internationally:** Germany exchanges lessons with partners, working with the United Nations, the OECD and the [Global Partnership Initiative \(GPI\) on Effective Triangular Co-operation](#).

Results

Germany has become **one of the largest partners of triangular co-operation worldwide** and regularly captures and communicates the results of its projects, which include:

- **Increased resources for development:** co-funding requirements help to achieve this, at the same time as strengthening ownership and buy-in from all partners. [The fund in Latin America](#) regularly receives more applications than it can fund; by 2022 it had agreed more than 100 projects. In 2021 Germany set up [a fund for Asia](#) and agreed to step up triangular activities in the Middle East and North Africa with the Islamic Development Bank in 2022.
- **Solutions which are adapted to different contexts** and better reflect socio-cultural norms through the role of the pivotal partner. For example, in a joint project by Indonesia and Germany to [strengthen women's economic empowerment in Afghanistan](#), the cultural proximity between Afghan women's group and their Indonesian peers contributed to the success of the project.
- **Strengthened development co-operation structures.** Partnership with Indonesia-AID and the AMEXCID in Mexico led to the creation of the [Guidelines for Multi-Stakeholder-Partnerships in Indonesia](#).
- **Cost savings and new business relations for the private sector.** For example, triangular co-operation on [energy efficiency between El Salvador, Mexico and Germany](#) allowed enterprises in El Salvador to achieve cost savings they themselves estimated at about USD 5 million.
- **New ways to respond to crises**, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Jordan, a joint triangular co-operation project with the Islamic Development Bank, supports local mask production by transferring technology from Singapore, training staff and certifying products.
- **Finding new solutions to complex problems:** bringing together partners who usually don't work with each other can be a powerful way of working that encourages innovation.
- **Mutual learning:** the horizontal nature of triangular co-operation means that all partners contribute, and all partners learn.

Lessons learnt

Building on its substantial experience and the findings from the portfolio evaluation, Germany issued a [position paper on triangular co-operation](#) in 2022. Key lessons and ideas for the way forward include:

- **Link triangular co-operation more closely to the bilateral portfolio:** Bringing in different partner perspectives, triangular co-operation can play a catalytic or complementary role. Ideally, triangular partnerships should be considered as an option in all development co-operation endeavours.
- **Plan and monitor for all objectives of triangular co-operation:** Indicators need to also track the mutual learning and partnership effects, as distinctive features of triangular co-operation.
- **Communicate benefits:** The approach needs to become better known among practitioners and policy makers. Germany intends to raise awareness of the political-strategic opportunities and to demonstrate how perceived transaction costs at the beginning are in fact a necessary investment in partnerships which can last beyond single projects, and which harmonise development partner practices.
- **Create incentives for triangular co-operation:** Germany aims to increase the volume of interventions, without giving up the principle that all partners must make significant contributions.
- **Use triangular co-operation for Germany's financial co-operation:** The participation of regional development banks offers opportunities in this regard.
- **Strengthen the potential for mutual learning:** Insights from triangular co-operation can feed into wider networks and exchanges on global challenges such as climate change or disease control.
- **Enabling medium- and long-term effects remains a challenge.** Most triangular co-operation projects are stand-alone, shorter-term and small-scale, making it more challenging for them to contribute to change beyond the end of the project.

Further information

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To learn more about Germany's development co-operation see:

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Last updated: 26-09-2022