

2021 VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE ON EFFECTIVE TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

Launch of the GPI brief “Leveraging Triangular Partnerships to Respond to COVID-19 and Build Back Better from the Pandemic”

14 September 2021 | Report

The Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) on Effective Triangular Co-operation organised the launch of the latest GPI publication to celebrate the United Nations (UN) Day for South-South Cooperation. Fostering an interactive discussion among the co-authors, other GPI members and the broader development co-operation community, the webinar brought together 79 participants from all regions of the world.

The GPI brief *Leveraging Triangular Partnerships to Respond to COVID-19 and Build Back Better from the Pandemic*, a joint effort of a dozen GPI members, was launched on 14 September 2021. In a video message to the celebrations of the UN Day for South-South Cooperation, the UN Secretary-General highlighted a few days before that “as the world seeks to ramp up COVID-19 response and recovery and tackle the existential threat of climate change, South-South and triangular co-operation is more essential than ever”. Encouraged by his message, UNOSSC Deputy Director Xiaojun Grace Wang underpinned the relevance of the brief and the importance of voluntary initiatives, such as the GPI, to foster the implementation of the BAPA+40 Outcome Document. The modality builds bridges, catalyses resources, and increases ownership of the beneficiary partner.

The GPI generates a space where different stakeholders can interact. The co-creative process behind the publication of the GPI brief is as significant as the output itself. With the support of the core group, nine GPI members were involved in co-designing, co-producing, and co-disseminating this research¹. All actors had the equal opportunity to influence and contribute to it. The GPI enables research



The GPI enabled a co-creative process, where different stakeholders had equal opportunity to influence and contribute to the publication.

Such a process is probably much richer than the process of academic research that we have in our own institutions.

Mr Paulo Esteves, BRICS Policy Center

institutions, such as the BRICS Policy Center, to align their work with development challenges in a continuous exchange among researchers and practitioners. The brief provides actionable knowledge on how triangular co-operation can strengthen partnerships in challenging times as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ The brief was co-authored by the following GPI members: BRICS Policy Center, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Trade Centre, Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Mexican Agency for International Development Co-operation (AMEXCID), Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA).

Five GPI members, representing the co-authors of the brief, shared evidence and their reflections on the analyses: The International Trade Centre (ITC), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID), the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC), and the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA).

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated existing development challenges and imposed new ones. The crisis is unprecedented in scale, and the progress made towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) suffered a severe setback. Speakers agreed no individual country, no matter how powerful, can face global challenges alone. Strategic partnerships are crucial to overcoming global challenges. Panellists agreed on the importance of joint action to respond and recover from the COVID-19 crisis in an effective, just, and equal way. In this context, the brief presents evidence on how the international development community can make use of triangular co-operation in response to the pandemic and beyond.

Adopting the Triangular Co-operation approach in international development requires combined global efforts and know-how to promote common interests internationally, and change the landscape of development cooperation.

Amb. Imad Al-Zuhairi, Director General, Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA)



To leverage the modality, the authors of the brief recommended to:

- Ensure that good practices and solutions are replicated and scaled up in and beyond the context of COVID-19
- Incorporate triangular co-operation components, as sharing of knowledge and experience, into COVID-19 response programmes;
- Promote triangular co-operation to leave no one behind.

Through triangular co-operation, facilitators, pivotal partners and beneficiaries co-create the project, promoting innovation in its design and implementation. Panellists highlighted that building trust, finding complementarities among the partners, and a horizontal and dynamic relationship increase ownership of development projects by all stakeholders involved. Increasing the ownership and engagement is vital to the success, effectiveness and sustainability of projects, particularly with the constraints posed by COVID-19, when most of the communication exchange turned virtual.

One of the good practices is the case of the Africa KAIZEN Initiative², a partnership between the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which shows increasing ownership since its start in 2017. Through triangular partnerships, JICA is scaling up the KAIZEN approach to 25 African countries. With contribution from

In this difficult situation of COVID-19, higher ownership makes projects more effective.

Triangular co-operation is key in the enhancement of ownership of partner countries.

Mr Hironobu Murakami, Deputy Director General Economic Development Department and Group Director for Private Sector Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).



² For more details on Africa KAIZEN Initiative, access: <https://www.nepad.org/publication/applying-kaizen-africa>.

Cameroonian KAIZEN consultants trained in the JICA project with Cameroonian government, the initiative supported the Central African Republic and Mali in the quality production of masks and other medical equipment.

Flexibility is also a key characteristic of triangular co-operation and crucial to respond to COVID-19, as shown in the project *Supporting Indian Trade and Investments for Africa (SITA)*³, a partnership between the International Trade Centre, United Kingdom, India and six countries in East Africa. Despite the constraints to business travels and networking, partners enabled an agile response. To Mr Govind Venuprasad, SITA Coordinator at the International Trade Centre, operational flexibility is of paramount importance. The core activities of the project continued, adjusting to the challenges and the pandemic context. Through SITA, over 300 companies in Ethiopia and Rwanda received support for personal protective equipment (PPE) production. The modality has proved its potential to scale-up local initiatives and replicate success stories in the global south.

However, SITA's experience shows that while training programmes are easy to replicate virtually, business meetings to discuss trade and investment deals seem to yield better results after physical meetings. The *modus operandi* of the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC) also support this analysis⁴. As an agency supporting the mutual exchange of personnel between institutions, organisations and businesses in Norway and the global South, NOREC's experience has been that the physical meetings have unique qualities, especially in creating new alliances and the necessary trust in partnerships.

Webinars are great tools, but the add-on qualities of direct interaction, deeper learning and on-the-job training are missing. So we must work for as open borders as possible, especially in the personnel exchange sector.

Mr Helge Espe, Senior Advisor, Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC).



In this context, the panellists reinforced the value-added of triangular partnerships to catalyse resources and efforts responding to the development challenges and restrictions posed by COVID-19. It is important to create and strengthen mechanisms where the resources and capacities meet the needs and priorities of beneficiary partner.

In the effort to leave no one behind, triangular co-operation was also implemented to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, as presented by the Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for



During the pandemic, Mexico has used triangular co-operation in different ways – and it works!

Ms Maria Elena Alcaraz, Coordinator of International Fora for Development Cooperation, Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID).

Development (AMEXCID). Through a public-private partnership, Mexico and Argentina partnered to produce and distribute AztraZeneca vaccines, including Mexican donation of almost two million doses of vaccines to Belize, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Paraguay.

³ For more details on SITA project, access: <https://www.intracen.org/sita/>.

⁴ For more information on NOREC's triangular co-operation and the impacts of COVID-19 in its activities, read "Box 3: Is triangular co-operation a more robust concept of exchange during times of COVID-19? – Experiences from the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (Norec)" of the GPI brief.

Triangularity results in knowledge-sharing and innovative thinking for the planet and the well-being of people. The COVID-19 crisis has made that message even more evident, and it is imperative to join forces and harness effective partnerships. Various panellists plead to bridge better the triangular co-operation agenda with thematic discussions, increase coordination among partners, and encourage existing mechanisms, such as the GPI, promoting and facilitating the use of triangular co-operation.

We need to mainstream triangular co-operation on the discussions on climate, biodiversity, etc. There is a pressing need to foster effective triangular partnerships.

I encourage all of us to both contribute to and benefit from the GPI as a platform and hub for triangular co-operation.

Mr Jorge Moreira, Director of the Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD.



Ms Catalina Quintero, Director of Cooperation at the Colombian Presidential Agency of International Co-operation (APC-Colombia), moderated the event. The discussions provided substantial evidence and important reflections on the challenges posed by the pandemic. After debating why and how to leverage triangular co-operation to implement the 2030 Agenda, the webinar concluded with a call to action for GPI members and the broader development co-operation community to increase engagement in horizontal and innovative partnerships. Only with joint action, we will be able to achieve the sustainable development goals.

The webinar was part of a two-day programme of the 2021 GPI Virtual Meeting. The following day, the GPI organised a virtual Marketplace to create opportunities for interaction and matchmaking among GPI members and partners, moving from discussions at the webinar to action⁵.

The full recording of the webinar is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOYzBuLIUI>.

⁵ To learn more on the GPI Marketplace initiative, access: <https://triangular-cooperation.org/marketplace/>.