

Policy Brief

Boosting LiFE and green recovery through innovative triangular co-operation

Prepared for the 2nd Development Working Group side event

“Towards a Sustainable Future: Through lifestyle for Environment and Just Green Transition”

6 April 2023 | Kumarakom, Kerala

Background

The priority Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) introduced by the Indian Presidency in the G20 constitutes an unequivocal statement that the development and climate agendas are intertwined, and in order to reach their goals, all actors need to work collaboratively and change behaviours to include sustainability in every sphere. Effective and innovative partnerships are crucial to achieve the SDGs and encourage paradigm shifts to balance economic growth and sustainable development. Nevertheless, a cleaner, greener and bluer future demands a profound commitment and difficult decisions to change the current economic dynamics, create enabling environments, reconsider frameworks of well-being and business models, and achieve individual awareness that translates into responsible conscious choices. A recurrent question is how different actors, with potentially incompatible agendas and procedures, make decisions together and align to a common goal. This policy brief aims to link the “how” to work together – i.e. through triangular co-operationⁱ - in line with the theme of the Indian Presidency “One Earth, One Family, One Future”, the concept of LiFE, and the “Green Development Pact”.

Why is triangular co-operation a useful tool to achieve the LiFE goals of the G20?

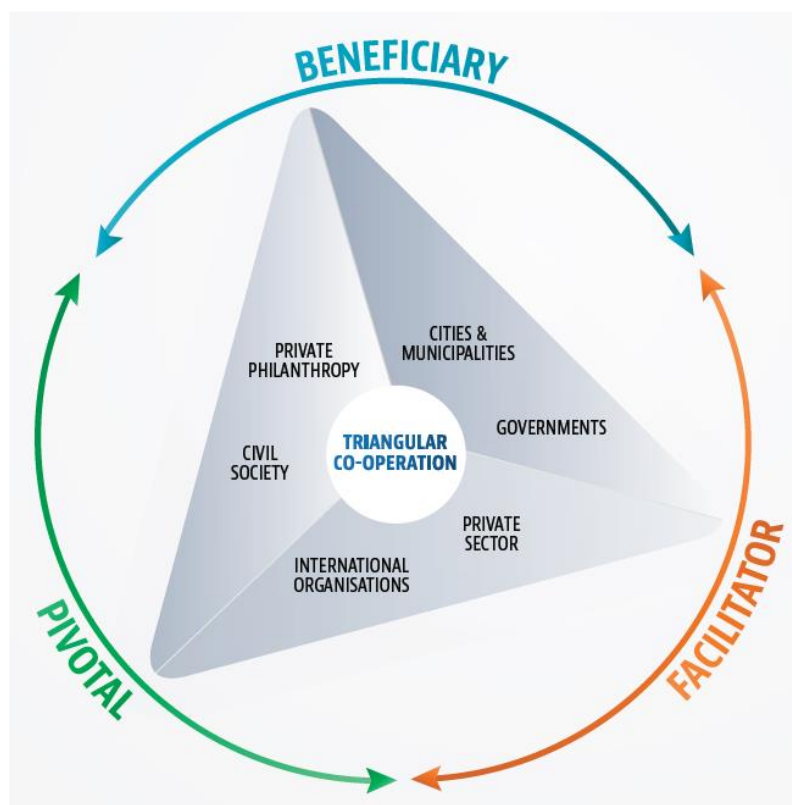
Green issues have become increasingly important in G20 discussions during the past years. The G20 members and engagement groups, particularly the T20ⁱⁱ, have long recognized the potential of triangular co-operation (TrC) as a dynamic modality, complementary to North-South and South-South co-operation models of contributing to sustainable development. In fact, the G20 gathers some of the most active proponents and participants of TrC projects: South-South Co-operation partners and OECD Development Assistance Committee members and international organizations, actors who had often performed as pivotal and facilitating partners.

The Indian Presidency has pointed at three core shifts (reshaping demand, rethinking supply and responsive ecosystem) and enablers (traditional knowledge, technology, nudges, policy & infrastructure)ⁱⁱⁱ to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Through the years, the Sherpa and Finance tracks of the G20 have generated plans, roadmaps, and initiatives that can be aligned to LiFE. The G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its annual updates have been able to integrate and align those contributions to the different aspects of sustainability. The recent Bali Update of the G20 Action Plan added around 20 new collective and concrete actions agreed in 2022 that focused or included green and climate relevant approaches. These actions range from public acknowledgment of relevance, promoting dialogue and systematic analysis, supporting mobilization of resources, or encouraging policy adjustment^{iv}. It is still to be explored how to bring together different actors to design and implement greener policies, adapt modes of operations, utilize the systematic analysis, and integrate resources mobilized.

With regard to the art of partnership formation, TrC is one way to bring together innovations from all regions with technology, resources, and experiences from Southern and Northern G20 members with

the overall aim of achieving more sustainable lifestyles. All partners contribute and all partners learn through TrC. It is a transformative modality to build trust, embrace complementarity, address power imbalances, co-create flexible solutions, and ultimately, make better decisions together.^v Engaging in triangular schemes can help partners to learn about the value of investing political will, financial resources, time, and effort in building long-lasting and inclusive processes among unlikely partners.

Figure 1. Three (shifting) roles in triangular co-operation

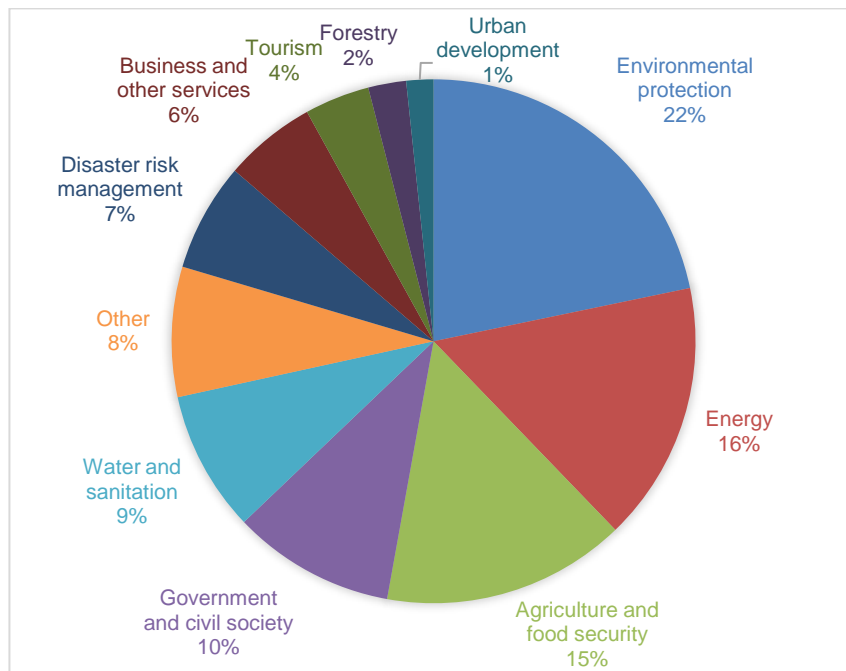


Source: OECD (2022: 13), Triangular co-operation with Africa, https://triangular-cooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/OECD_Triangular-co-operation-with-Africa.pdf

What is the evidence on “green” triangular co-operation contributing to LiFE goals?

Evidence and data show that TrC is a valuable modality for tackling green issues and internalizing cross-cutting approaches to sustainable development that contribute to LiFE. OECD statistics reveal that 56% of screened triangular co-operation disbursements between 2020 and 2021 targeted the environment, using the OECD’s environmental marker. This is above the DAC average of 33% for 2019-2020^{vi}. Of the over 1000 TrC projects collected in the OECD’s online repository^{vii}, about one third address issues related to LiFE. These triangular schemes specifically focus on overall environmental protection, (renewable) energies, agriculture and food security, public policy design with sustainable approaches, waste and water management, and disaster risk management, among other sectors (see Figure 1).

Figure 2. Triangular co-operation projects by thematic area linked to LiFE



Source: OECD (n.d.), Triangular co-operation repository of projects. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm>

The emphasis identified on capacity development at different levels (individual, institutional and systemic) and the promotion of cross-cutting approaches in policy making points at a commitment to internalize processes that achieve the ultimate goal of a Green Development Pact: foster growth and development responsibly, achieving the climate goals. Around 44% of the projects in the repository that address green and climate relevant issues are concentrated in Latin America and the Caribbean, while 60% of the projects with a multiregional approach are connecting experiences from Asia-Pacific and Africa. Examples include circular economy approaches for silk production in Latin America and the Caribbean, mutual learning among the Pacific and Asian countries and Japan on effective solid waste management, building a green economy in Rwanda, and promoting cocreation between Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia to implement mutually relevant green economy objectives, among others. Indonesia, India, Brazil, and South Africa – consecutive presidencies of the G20 between 2022 and 2025 - have been active pivotal partners in

Box 1. G20 presidencies as pivotal partners of triangular co-operation projects.

Pivotal partners of triangular projects have a key role in bridging co-operation traditions guided by horizontality and equality and respecting the ownership and leadership of local actors. The G20 Presidencies of India, Indonesia, Brazil, and South Africa can capitalize the lessons from their own experiences in triangular collaborations for LiFE. For example, India has partnered with the United Kingdom and Malawi to share and adapt technology for the production of energy efficient and environmentally friendly bricks. Indonesia associated with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Tanzania to develop capacities at all levels for the design, development, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of micro/mini hydropower plants which would increase rural electrification in the African country. Brazil and Germany have collaborated with Mozambique in strengthening the capacity of national meteorology and disaster management institutions to establish functioning early warning and proficient disaster management systems at the Buzi and Save rivers. South Africa and the United States supported capacity building in Mozambique, Namibia, and Zimbabwe to adequately address climate risk in planning and development decisions and strategies.

triangular projects that contribute to LiFE and bring together diverse actors and experiences from Asia, Africa, and Latin America (see Box 1).

How does triangular co-operation inform partnership formation in the area of LiFE and how can the G20 make better use of this modality to achieve its goals?

In terms of resources, triangular co-operation leverages scarce but varied resources to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. This modality of development co-operation recognizes the value of technology and context-relevant knowledge, which are considered enablers of LiFE and usually shared between Southern countries. Evaluations of TrC have shown long-term effects beyond the specific objectives of projects, particularly in joint learning and consolidation of networks.^{viii} In terms of partners, data show a growing participation of civil society, academia, subnational actors, and private sector in triangular initiatives, learning and co-creating horizontally among problem solvers that face similar challenges.^{ix} These actors may initially have divergent expectations, competing goals, and mistrust, but to succeed, they find ways to address the complexity and move jointly and concertedly.

As complexity has proven to be an existential feature of partnership formation, process facilitation among diverse actors is a core requirement to achieve actionable agreements on how to make good use of the financial resources available and carry through. The core LiFE shifts for a global collective approach to sustainability confirm that changing individual action and patterns of consumption can only go so far if the private sector continues with business as usual. The tendency towards multi-stakeholder partnerships that can also be observed in triangular co-operation aligns with the urgency of engaging the private sector in transforming their core processes to embracing circularity and greener value chains.

Multi-stakeholder experiences show the evolution of TrC schemes. For example, India and the US signed a high-level agreement in 2010 to promote an ever-green revolution to address global food security by sharing Indian innovations with selected African partners together with Indian CSOs. Adelante Window, a European Union initiative, is supporting partnerships where subnational actors and academia are increasingly driving triangular cooperation initiatives in Latin America and Europe. Under the framework of the Sino-German Center for Sustainable Development, a triangular collaboration has engaged the Ethiopian Textile Industry Development Institute, the China National Textile and Apparel Council and the UNIDO to improve the environmental, social and labour standard of the Ethiopian textile sector.^x And, India, the UK, and the Indian social enterprise and think tank Development Alternatives jointly support natural resource management and clean technology solutions in Malawi^{xi}.

What is the way forward and next steps?

This brief has shown that triangular co-operation a way to bring together innovations from all regions with technology, resources, and experiences from Southern and Northern G20 members with the overall aim of achieving more sustainable lifestyles. Data and evidence show that triangular co-operation can be especially strong in “green” issues. The main value-added lies in learning the conditions that promote or hinder the integration of resources, interests, and mechanisms of collaboration into healthy, effective, accountable, and long-term partnerships among diverse actors. In this regard, the G20 can consider TrC for LiFE in the following ways:

1. Promoting expertise and best practices on partnership formation for a green economy through structured G20 exchange mechanisms, e.g. peer learning, policy dialogues, joint research. Knowledge on frameworks that support TrC on green and climate relevant issues is also useful.
2. Sharing TrC innovative solutions and ideas to scale them up, while involving subnational actors, academia, civil society and private sector partners.
3. Identifying new partnerships and building capacities to engage actors with apparent conflicting agendas to promote more sustainable production and consumption patterns, reduce environmental impacts, and improve human well-being through TrC initiatives.
4. Investing the time and resources needed to build and maintain the partnerships aimed at changing behaviours and dynamics to achieve more sustainable lifestyles.

ⁱ Triangular co-operation is a modality of development co-operation that engages actors with at least three roles, with each potentially having more than one actor: i) a **pivotal partner**, often has proven experience relevant to the context and shares its resources, knowledge and expertise through triangular co-operation. It can sometimes provide a bridge between South-South and North-South; ii) the **facilitating partner** helps to connect countries and organisations to form a triangular partnership and gives financial and/or technical support to the collaboration; and iii) the **beneficiary partner** seeks support to tackle specific development challenge in line with their national development priorities and needs. It is responsible for ensuring that results are sustainable. See Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Co-operation. How Does It Work? <https://triangular-cooperation.org/about/> As the modality evolves, there is growing evidence that the three roles of pivotal, facilitating, and beneficiary partners are not tied to specific countries. Roles can develop dynamically in the course of co-operation so that all partners benefit, all share relevant experiences and all support that facilitation of the joint endeavour. This is a concrete expression of the horizontal relation achieved among the partners.

ⁱⁱ T20 Bhopal Declaration, 2023

ⁱⁱⁱ G20 (2023): Development Working Group Issues note.

^{iv} Further efforts include developing a 'climate-related risks and natural hazard sensitive vulnerability measure' with the potential to better inform the design of Adaptive Social Protection; policy support on the design of low GHG emissions/low carbon and climate resilient development strategies and identification of financially viable projects related to green and blue economy in developing countries; the G20 Roadmap for Stronger Recovery and Resilience in Developing Countries, that establishes as a key area "fostering a more sustainable growth by promoting Green Economy, including Blue Economy through Low GHG emissions/Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Development"; the mandate from the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to further explore the macroeconomic impacts, including opportunities and risks linked to both the physical and transitions risks of climate change and the associated policy implications; as well as the work of the Environment Deputies Meeting and Climate Sustainability Working Group on strengthening existing G20 and global initiatives and frameworks to "enhance resource mobilization to support environmental protection and climate objectives".

^v OECD (2018): Toolkit for Identifying, Monitoring and Evaluating the Value Added of Triangular Co-operation. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/oecdpublicationsontriangularco-operation.htm>

^{vi} OECD and IsDB (2023): Global Perspectives on Triangular Co-operation, *forthcoming*.

OECD (2022), Aid in Support of the Environment, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/environment-development/Aid-Support-Environment.pdf>

^{vii} OECD (n.d.), Triangular co-operation repository of projects. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm>

^{viii} Kaplan, M., D. Busemann and K. Wirtgen (2020), Trilateral Cooperation in German Development Cooperation, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn.

^{ix} JICA-RI (2013). Tackling Global Challenges through Triangular Cooperation: Achieving Sustainable Development and Eradicating Poverty through the Green Economy. https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/20131001_01.html

^x Sino-German Center for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Textile Investment and Operation in Ethiopia. https://sg-csd.org/projects/textile_for_ethiopia/

^{xi} Chaturvedi, Sachin and Nadine Piefer-Söyler (2021): Triangular co-operation with India: Working with civil society organisations", OECD Development Co-operation Working Papers, No. 89, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/285b1a9a-en>