

INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

IMPLEMENTING BAPA +40 - WHAT IS NEXT FOR TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION?

17-18 OCTOBER 2019, LISBON

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The OECD Development Co-operation Directorate and the Camões – Institute for Co-operation and Language (Portugal) organised the fifth International Meeting on Triangular Co-operation “Implementing BAPA +40 – What’s next for triangular co-operation?” on 17-18 October 2019 in Lisbon. The event was hosted by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and supported by the Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South-South Co-operation (PIFCSS).

Over 150 representatives from 67 countries, from all regions of the world, 12 international organisations, and 23 representatives from the private sector, civil society, academia, trade unions and institutional philanthropy participated in the meeting. The series of meetings that the OECD and Portugal have been organising jointly in Lisbon since 2012, is significantly contributing to building a community of practice, sharing knowledge on triangular co-operation, and unleashing the full potential of Triangular Cooperation in implementing the global development agenda.

Using the momentum that the Second UN High-level Conference on South-South Co-operation (BAPA +40) provided, this year’s meeting was dedicated to implementing the BAPA +40 Outcome Document. Recognising triangular co-operation explicitly in the BAPA +40 Outcome Document, and placing it in a higher political level reflecting its increasingly relevant role in the implementation of the SDG’s, has paved the way for more awareness about the modality and for more discussions around effective triangular co-operation, expressed in the reference to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) and the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) on Effective Triangular Co-operation. Now, we need to implement what was agreed in Buenos Aires on 20-22 March of this year.

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

KEY MESSAGES

To implement the BAPA +40 Outcome Document, and advance the implementation of the SDGs, participants and speakers agreed that we need a mind-set shift from *ad hoc* project approaches to inclusive and horizontal partnerships in which everyone gives and benefits at the same time, and to strengthen multilateralism through broader and more comprehensive commitments and solutions. To live the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda, key messages from this meeting include:

- At BAPA+40 the global development community reiterated its commitment to promote triangular cooperation as a means to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Now there is a need to move to action, use the existing platforms and tools to develop and promote triangular co-operation, and to adapt existing structures to step up our efforts of working in trilateral partnerships more systematically.
- We need to have the right ecosystems in place at national, regional and global levels, with strong political will, a clear vision and institutions, which are flexible to engage in different types of partnerships. Our processes and bureaucratic systems need to follow, including legal frameworks under which development agencies operate. There is no need to re-invent the wheel, but we need to adapt the existing structures to make them more flexible when engaging in horizontal partnerships for development – finding a good balance between guidance, vision and flexibility.
- To partner more effectively with civil society, private sector, philanthropy, academia and think tanks, we need to find common ground. If all partners are involved in the initiation, design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of trilateral initiatives, they are likely to work more effectively and co-create solutions that are well adapted to the development challenges of triangular activities.
- Triangular co-operation is good at scaling-up innovations from one country to another and thus, at bridging different regions. More evidence and data, including from evaluations, on how triangular co-operation works in different regions is needed.
- Transaction costs can be perceived as a good investment in trilateral partnerships – we need to move away from perceiving it as a problem, especially as there is no definition or baseline for comparison with other modalities of development co-operation. We also need to better communicate the value-added of Triangular Cooperation, and to reach broader audiences when informing about what is already being done. Trust is the basis of any trilateral partnership, coordination is crucial among all stakeholders, and flexibility is a key feature of triangular co-operation. Building the partnerships is as important as implementing the project.
- Different tools, manuals and guidelines are available to facilitate the implementation of effective triangular co-operation, promoted by the UN, the OECD, the PIFCSS and other organizations, countries and think tanks. The OECD Toolkit for identifying, monitoring and evaluating triangular co-operation was piloted by the EU-LAC Facility for Triangular Co-operation (ADELANTE) and helped the EU shape its vision for the second phase, by drawing on the recommendations of this exercise.
- The Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Co-operation is committed to supporting the implementation of BAPA+40 and presented new ideas in its roadmap and action plan until 2022, which was received with great interest by all participants. Further partners joined the GPI during that session.
- We need to do more together: we need to create space for partnerships to grow, and become more strategic. During the meeting point on triangular cooperation market place, nine projects were identified including support to the new Indonesian Agency for International Development (AID), which was launched on 18 October.

Implementing triangular co-operation: Strengthening the ecosystems

Ecosystems for development co-operation are complex and the overall institutional set-up at the global, regional and national levels is fragmented. An ecosystem is a collection of interlinked parts with reinforcing feedback loops between them. They complement each other without a specific

hierarchical order. There is **no one-size-fits-all approach to strengthening ecosystems** – different dimensions need to be considered for each specific case.

Based on work jointly done by the South Centre and the Islamic Development Bank, the components of a national ecosystem for South-South and Triangular Co-operation comprise: political will, national SSTRC strategy, information bases, connected actors, SSTRC agency, financial mechanism, and performance management – with constant feedback loops among all of the seven different pillars. The panellists agreed that **political will – the commitment** - is the most important component. For instance, Morocco and Indonesia include a reference to SSTRC in their constitutions and in the case of Morocco, the King has placed SSC as a major pillar of the country's foreign policy.

A **national strategy for South-South and triangular co-operation** needs to highlight, what the country can give and what the country can receive (dual provider-recipient role), bearing in mind that the North can also be a recipient of countries of the South, as the case of microfinance shows. In addition to the national strategy, practical feedback from the ground is important for the formulation and implementation of the projects.

Ecosystems for effective triangular co-operation need to ensure that the driving seat is shared by all partners and the beneficiary country actively shapes the activities. **Trust** is the basis of any trilateral partnership, **co-ordination** is crucial among all stakeholders, and **flexibility** is a key feature of triangular co-operation. Often the established regulatory frameworks and procedures are not flexible enough to engage in horizontal trilateral partnerships. We need to re-think the way that we approach triangular co-operation and adapt our institutional and procedural frameworks accordingly – applying bilateral procedures to trilateral co-operation may lead to higher transaction costs and to missing opportunities for inclusive partnerships among equals. We need to also invest in the quality of the partnership from a longer term perspective and not only focus on short-term results. If we manage to have instruments that are flexible, we could unleash the full potential of triangular co-operation.

Implementing BAPA +40 opens opportunities to strengthen the ecosystems of South-South and Triangular Co-operation. There is no recipe and each country will need to find its own model, based on its development story. Experiences of others could be inspirational and the work by the Islamic Development Bank and the South Centre is contributing to the partner countries' needs by ensuring that they are at the centre of the decision-making process.

Creating synergies in bringing new partners on board for effective triangular co-operation – How can we provide effective ecosystems for innovative multi-stakeholder triangular partnerships?

Participants agreed on the importance of including partners beyond governments and international organisations in triangular co-operation. Ecosystems for triangular co-operation are already increasingly multi-stakeholder and should become even more so. To achieve this aim, we need to understand better the needs of stakeholders as well as underlying power relations. Against this background, the discussion moved from earlier discussions on the “if” and “how” to engage all development stakeholders in triangular co-operation to “how to improve the conditions for their engagement”, linking with the overall debate on the ecosystems for effective triangular co-operation.

Civil society organisations and academia: To achieve an enabling environment for working with civil society organisations and academia in triangular co-operation we need commitment, dialogue and trust. All of this needs time to grow and favourable legal and institutional frameworks to systematically engage CSOs and academia in triangular co-operation. New instruments may be needed to balance existing power inequalities of partnerships, and access to information and knowledge. Project initiation and design still mostly happens through inter-governmental negotiations and CSOs and academia are brought on board later on, when the project objectives have already been agreed.

Private sector: Engaging the private sector needs to be done in a way that benefits all partners – bearing in mind that the private sector is not a monolithic group. This requires creativity, flexibility and innovation. It is important to listen to the private sector and learn about the solutions and the ways of seeking to achieve these goals. Thus, the private sector needs to be included in project formulation and political conversations. Usually, policies are drafted and the private sector is invited to contribute afterwards. If we change the perception of the private sector as a mere financial contributor to being a partner, room is given for mutual benefits where the private sector is part of the solution and involved in co-creation. It is important for the private sector to understand triangular co-operation and that it leads to clear results that benefit companies as well as partner countries. An intermediary may be needed to facilitate this understanding. Companies often see the government as opposition and there is a lack of trust.

Institutional philanthropy is a diverse group of partners in triangular co-operation and actively involved in implementing triangular co-operation projects, going beyond the role of funding projects. Maintaining their principle of independence, trusting partnerships with governments are key to foster social change, on the other hand, however, diversity of philanthropy means that there is no universal recipe for the effective collaboration with them. We need to find synergies among all development actors to achieve the main goal of leaving no one behind. Ownership of the beneficiary is key to finding synergies among the different partners – triangular co-operation has proven to be strong in enhancing the ownership of the beneficiary partner(s).

Generally, participants agreed that to work more effectively with different partners beyond governments, we need to find common ground, spend time on building trust and all sit around the table, rather than being part of a menu of options to engage different stakeholders. This also helps address power imbalances in multi-stakeholder partnerships. Despite heterogeneity and differences among the different stakeholders, addressing the specific needs and views of civil society organisations, private sector and institutional philanthropy found many commonalities, see also the visualisation in the annex below.

What is needed to implement effective triangular co-operation? Sharing experiences from evaluations, toolkits and guidelines

There are numerous **guidelines, toolkits and manuals** available to facilitate the implementation of triangular co-operation. They can serve as a shopping list and support in implementing triangular co-operation. It is crucial to find a good balance of having and using guidelines and maintaining the flexibility that is one of the key values of triangular co-operation – besides trust, ownership, and co-creation.

The Ibero-American Management Guidelines for Triangular Co-operation serve as orientation for partners in the region. First experiences of Ibero-America put emphasis on the initiation phase, the formulation and design of trilateral initiatives – at the same time they pointed to the need to adapt to each individual case.

As a follow-up to the third international meeting on triangular co-operation in Lisbon in 2016, the OECD together with a group of experts elaborated a **“Toolkit for identifying, monitoring and evaluating the value added of triangular co-operation”**, which was piloted by the EU-LAC Facility for Triangular Co-operation (ADELANTE) and the German Institute for Development Evaluation. The ADELANTE programme drew three concrete lessons from this joint pilot exercise with the OECD:

- Visualising triangular co-operation as an innovative tool to work with LAC, also in the framework of development in transition – uplifting national experiences to the regional level;
- Raising awareness among all the partners for the benefits and challenges of working in triangular co-operation;
- Learning for the second phase of the ADELANTE Programme to go beyond financing and supporting the projects, but also bringing in European expertise and experience on all levels. Triangular co-operation is increasingly multi-stakeholder, therefore, partners beyond governments will be able to form part of the project proposals from the beginning.

Experiences with **evaluating triangular co-operation** emphasise the importance of taking into account both development and partnership results and a mix of South-South Co-operation and DAC principles for evaluation. The US experience of a highly decentralised way of working has proven to be flexible to make use of different mechanisms. Scaling-up Indian innovations to other Asian and African countries addresses both development objectives and the Indo-US partnership.

In this regard, participants agreed that triangular co-operation is strong in **bridging different regions and scaling-up innovations** from one country to another. We need to think outside of the box and our comfort zone to share knowledge from different regions. Different **financing and technical co-operation instruments** are needed to provide global public goods through triangular co-operation, such as joint funds, calls for proposals, standalone technical co-operation, training or components of larger development co-operation programmes.

De-mystifying transaction costs in triangular co-operation, participants found that there may actually be no additional costs associated to triangular co-operation, if we consider the time to build the partnership and trust as an investment. Investing time in preparing and initiating projects is crucial for the success – building the partnership equals investment, linking it also to the issue of horizontality. The more horizontal the partnership, the lower the transaction costs are likely to be. Furthermore, we need to also consider the cost of in-action in our analysis.

PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (GPI) ON EFFECTIVE TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

The Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) on Effective Triangular Co-operation is prominently mentioned in the BAPA +40 Outcome Document. During the meeting, the GPI presented its vision and 3-year action plan until 2022. It will provide an annual implementation report with voluntary annexed contributions in the area of triangular co-operation on the implementation of the BAPA +40 outcome document. Next steps of the GPI work include implementing the voluntary guidelines on effective triangular co-operation and gathering data on how stakeholders use the guidelines (see Roadmap of the GPI document). All participants and other interested partners are invited to actively contribute to the work of the GPI.



Implementing BAPA +40 – Actions until 2020

Moving forward in implementing the BAPA +40 Outcome Document, participants identified several actions to promote triangular co-operation:

- As a next step, we need to **link the community talking about the modality of triangular co-operation, with the sectors and global challenges**, such as climate change. Triangular co-operation is a modality to achieve development goals and as such it needs to be **mainstreamed** into all discussions on development co-operation, global challenges and providing global public goods. Some countries, international organisations and partners beyond governments are already systematically incorporating the option of working trilaterally or including a trilateral component in larger bilateral or regional projects. Others could be inspired by these experiences and make better use of multisector and multidimensional partnerships, benefitting from their strategic value since these can spill over to other areas beyond development.
- Partners that are not systematically represented in current discussions on triangular co-operation need to be included in this growing community of practice, such the **multilateral development banks and regional organisations** from around the globe. Experience from Latin America and the Caribbean shows that regional organisations often take up the role of an honest broker in triangular co-operation. Organisations from other regions could join the discussions and activities in the future.
- There is potential to improve the **match-making** for triangular co-operation. The market place during this meeting was a good starting point - ideas for nine new trilateral projects evolved from the exchange and participants learned about different strategic approaches to triangular co-operation. Digital platforms, such as those hosted by the UNOSSC (e.g. South-South Galaxy) are further useful tools.
- To live the 2030 Agenda and implement the BAPA +40 Outcome Document, we need to put the **mindset change** towards a strong partnership orientation in practice. To do so, our ecosystems, frameworks and tools need to be adapted and strengthened, favouring horizontal peer learning and strong local ownership from the early stages of identification and design of the interventions; complementarity with national development strategies and other

donors' programs, so that Triangular Cooperation can be more effective, innovative and demand driven

- First pilots of the “Toolkit for identifying, monitoring and evaluating the value added of triangular co-operation” have provided interesting insights and results. All participants are invited to conduct further pilots and to systematically use (and provide feedback on) the Toolkit when planning and designing new trilateral initiatives.
- **More evidence and data**, including from evaluations, on how triangular co-operation works in different regions is needed.

All participants are invited to contribute to these follow-up actions. The OECD stands ready to facilitate and support activities to enhance the implementation of the BAPA +40 Outcome Document.

ANNEX: REQUIREMENTS OF A SOUND ECOSYSTEM TO ENGAGE DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

