

IMPLEMENTING BAPA+40 THROUGH TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

CASE STORY: JAPAN

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BAPA+40 and Triangular Co-operation

The BAPA+40 Outcome Document was a milestone for triangular co-operation. The Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Co-operation (GPI) has identified 53 recommendations related to the modality. Among those, four dimensions stand out: (i) triangular co-operation system, (ii) working methods and cross-cutting issues, (iii) partnerships, and (iv) sectoral focus.

The GPI Spotlight series are short and informative publications. It is an analytical exercise to identify how its members are using triangular co-operation to implement the BAPA+40 recommendations.

JICA's triangular co-operation at a glance

The Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) is a pioneer in triangular co-operation (TrC), engaging in the modality since 1975. The commitment originates on the conviction that developing countries are mutually deepening ties by “helping each other achieve independent development” (JICA, 2013) and with a deep appreciation of locally developed knowledge.

TrC is included in the national [Development Co-operation Charter](#) and JICA's Thematic Guideline on South-South Co-operation (SSC). TrC is seen as a tool to support pivotal countries in implementing SSC and to mobilize knowledge from Southern countries to enrich the body of knowledge provided by JICA's bilateral assistance.

JICA identifies the contribution of TrC to development co-operation effectiveness in the following three dimensions:

1. disseminate knowledge developed through JICA's successful bilateral efforts,
2. contribute to the promotion of regional and global co-operation, and
3. complement bilateral co-operation

with knowledge and experience of developing countries.

In the Development Co-operation Charter, which was recently revised in June 2023, South-South and TrC is also mentioned as a means to promote multi-layered multilateral co-operation.

Knowledge sharing at the heart of JICA's triangular co-operation

Two forms of TrC have characterized the JICA's TrC: **third-country training program (TCTP)**, and **third-country experts**. TCTP is a “scheme in which JICA provides participants of developing countries with a technical training program in collaboration with a Southern partner for the purpose of transferring or sharing experiences, knowledge and technology”.

The first experience was conducted in 1975 with Thailand and Laos as partners. Through third country experts dispatch, JICA supports sending Southern officials and experts –initially, previous counterparts of bilateral co-operation— to other countries for knowledge sharing and technical transfer. The scheme started in 1994.

To this day, JICA has worked with 77 countries in these exchanges, leveraging the agency's presence in 96 countries and embedded technical experts. According to JICA, **more than 84,000 participants have attended a TCTP since 1990** and more than 1,700 experts have been dispatched since 1994.

The country offices play a key role in the matchmaking process owing to their knowledge of local and regional actors and potential partners and the long-term relationships and trust built through bilateral technical co-operation.

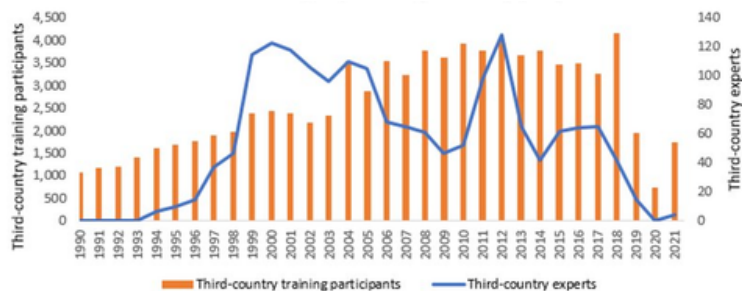
TCTP is the flagship modality of JICA's TrC. Key characteristics:

- Demand-driven. Usually initiated at the request of partners, not only emerging economies, but even low-income countries.
- Responds to specific demands instead of predefining countries, regions, or topics of collaboration, encouraging a horizontal engagement and role shifting.
- Usually follows a bilateral technical co-operation between JICA and a developing partner that resulted in a Centre of Excellence or regional benchmark.
- Trainings are offered regionally and open to multiregional exchange and participation. Common language and challenges have enabled many interregional exchanges as well.

JICA's planning and implementation is normally channeled through regular bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) mechanisms with the country playing the pivotal role. TrC components can be embedded in traditional technical co-operation projects, bilateral or regional. TrC components can be embedded in traditional technical co-operation projects, bilateral or regional.

Likewise, training programs can be complemented by technical co-operation projects or even lead to long-term ODA projects for some cases. Both Japanese and third-country experts can

Figure 1. Number of third-country training participants and third country experts dispatched (by FY)



Source: JICA (2023)

provide the knowledge for TCTPs, depending on the specific demand and needs.

Over the years, initiatives have gradually emerged outside the contours of previous bilateral experiences. Institutions in countries with pivotal roles have also increased their motivation to participate in TCTPs because of the possibility to share their rich technical capacities, the effect of the exchange in their own learning and institutional strengthening, the potential reputational gain, and the network formation.

Some TCTP initiatives are linked to Partnership Programs (PP), a comprehensive framework established between the government of Japan and 12 partner countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Tunisia). Under PP, TrC usually follows certain cost-sharing principle (in-kind contributions can be accounted for) and joint annual planning cycles.

JICA's contribution to the implementation of BAPA+40:

- **Study and innovation in the TrC system**

JICA has consistently contributed to the study, advancement, and innovation in the TrC system. The [JICA Ogata Research Institute for Peace and Development](#) has published research products comparing models of TrC, guidelines, and manuals

that have contributed to growing the study field of the modality and strengthen TrC capacities of the JICA staff and their partners.

- **Capacity development**

JICA has been a reliable partner of Southern providers such as Brazil, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand, in the consolidation of their national capacities to manage development co-operation. The support has materialized in project management trainings for SSC agencies, research and publication of national capacities for SSC, or integrating experienced advisors in SSC coordinating institutions, all of which has reinforced both, the partnership with potential pivotal countries and the collective capacities to manage TrC. In addition, JICA has joined forces with multilateral organizations to support capacity development of Southern actors and to promote TrC data analysis. For example, JICA partnered with the United Nations Office for South-South Co-operation (UNOSSC) and the Brazilian Co-operation Agency (ABC) to organize week-long peer-learning programs on Management of South-South and TrC, and with the Ibero-American General Secretariat, JICA collaborated to deepen the analysis on TrC with partners of the region.

- **Organizational learning**

Throughout the years, JICA has experimented with intraorganizational knowledge sharing on TrC. Recently, in 2022, staff from different JICA country offices started meeting virtually every quarter to share experiences and best practices on TrC management and follow-up, a bottom-up learning approach helpful in highly decentralized TrC implementation. Furthermore, JICA offices are also encouraging meetings with other TrC partners in the countries of operation, even with those partners that might not classify their initiatives under the TrC concept.

- **Global dialogue to strengthen the modality**

In coordination with multilateral organizations, JICA also supports the implementation of international discussions, meeting points, and showcasing of solutions and practices, bringing together Southern and facilitating partners of TrC. An example of this initiative that became a tradition in the global TrC community and provide an enabling environment for new partnerships is [the United Nations Global South-South Development Expo](#), organized mostly on an annual basis by UNOSSC.

Figure 2. Examples of TrC best practices identified by JICA offices in Egypt

The knowledge distributed in the 77 JICA country offices represents an asset worth exploring. The following best practices were identified and shared by a JICA collaborator in Egypt that worked in JICA's TrC since the modality started with the country:

- TCTP participants have organically woven structured or informal communities of practice and support groups. Peers can continue communication with each other, while lecturers adopt the role of coaches and peer-learning facilitators. Access to social networks facilitated this transition and the strengthening of the long-term relationships between technical experts. The Mutual Learning Workshop on the Control of Cross Hospital Infection for Middle East Countries (CCHI) generated such type of informal community.
- Flexibility and responsiveness to participants' interests can extend the potential impact of TCTP. Rather than limiting the engagement of beneficiary countries to one pivotal country, JICA's country office followed participants request to follow-up and engage in regional exchange after the completion of a cooperation experience with the Kilimanjaro Agriculture Training Center on rice cultivation techniques.
- Instead of relying exclusively on external consultants, increased involvement of country offices and pivotal country actors in monitoring and evaluation exercises has been effective for learning and adapting future initiatives.

At the occasion of this Expo, JICA organizes the South-South Co-operation Directors General (DG) Forum with UNOSSC and the Islamic Development Bank since 2008. Additionally, JICA is an active member of the GPI on Effective Triangular Co-operation since 2016.

- **Horizontality and commitment to ownership**

Japan has organized regional conferences on development priorities

and needs-matching mechanisms that reflect clear commitments to promoting ownership of beneficiary countries. Landmark examples are the annual Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the dialogues with the Pacific Islands Forum or the JICA-ASEAN meetings for narrowing development gaps. Initiatives such as the Coalition for African Rice Development and the Asia-Africa Knowledge Co-Creation Program emerged from these fora.

Recommendations for JICA to continue BAPA+40 implementation

- TrC data is bundled within the bilateral ODA disbursements. Adapting tracking and reporting systems internally to identify TrC initiatives and disbursements can contribute to consolidating the modality and increasing visibility of Japan's effort, through, i.e, reporting efforts on the modality to the DAC's Creditor Reporting System.
- Processing data of JICA's TrC at the initiative, training program or project level could also reveal trends in the thematic focus, nature of actors engaged, patterns of the project cycle, correlations between modalities, among others. Documentation of experiences and evaluation findings can nourish a new wave of research products to disseminate learning on TrC evolution and impact.
- The decentralization of operations in 96 country offices represents a goldmine for institutional and systemic learning. Documentation of experiences and exchange among country offices, headquarters, embassies, and other actors of Japan's development co-operation and beyond can encourage collaboration, innovation, institutional improvement, and systemic learning.
- Continuous experimentation in the design of TrC can lead to embracing alternative implementation modalities or variations of regional training and exchange of personnel. Long-term commitment to capacity building would also generate long-term trust among actors.

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