

Triangular Cooperation with the Arab Region



United Nations
Office for South-South Cooperation

Policies, Perspectives and Practices of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Members



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Foreword

Complex, intractable, and persistent development challenges worldwide disproportionately affect the lives of millions in the South. It has become increasingly evident that despite political will and national ownership, developing countries can not tackle these challenges independently. Among other factors, they require resources and know-how provided through revamped knowledge-partnerships that transcend boundaries.

The COVID-19 pandemic response demonstrated how countries, through international solidarity and coordinated action, can generate transformative change at a scale and speed previously unimaginable. It also highlighted the necessity for context-specific development approaches and broader partnerships to assist governments and national institutions in finding the best-fitting solutions for their local needs.

In this context, triangular cooperation is gaining recognition as an essential modality in the evolving development cooperation architecture, complementing South-South cooperation. As articulated in the Outcome Document of the second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in 2019 (BAPA+40), triangular cooperation "provides added value by leveraging and mobilizing additional technical and financial resources, sharing a broader range of experiences, promoting new areas of cooperation, and combining affordable and context-based development solutions under flexible arrangements and agreed shared modalities." The document also urged Member States to "increase the use" of this modality under the leadership of the beneficiary country.

However, due to the diversity of approaches, interpretations, policy frameworks, as well as institutional and partnership arrangements, the BAPA+40 Outcome Document acknowledged "the need to better understand triangular cooperation and provide more evidence and rigorous information on its scale, scope, and impact."

Against this backdrop, UNOSSC commissioned this study to contribute to ongoing and future policy discussions and partnership arrangements at all levels. Initiated in response to interest expressed by Arab states, the study examines the policies, perspectives, and practices of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) concerning triangular cooperation, followed by a focus on DAC member engagement with the Arab region. Among other findings, the study reveals that although no consensus exists on the definition of triangular cooperation, many Arab states are actively engaged in this form of cooperation with DAC members, with some exclusively serving as pivotal partners. These Arab partners have relevant domestic experience in addressing issues similar to those of beneficiary countries and share their financial resources, knowledge, and expertise.

We are confident that this study will contribute to strengthening the knowledge base on triangular cooperation and thus take up the BAPA+40 call for more evidence on the modality. Beyond its immediate focus on DAC members and Arab states, the study will also be of interest to regional institutions, UN entities, and other stakeholders seeking to explore and/or leverage this form of cooperation as they continue to address development challenges.



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Introduction

Triangular cooperation has become an increasingly popular development partnership modality, closely connected to the expanding trajectory of South-South cooperation. The contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been repeatedly highlighted across and beyond the United Nations system.¹ According to the framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation, South-South cooperation is defined as “a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how.”² Building on this understanding, triangular cooperation refers to “Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects.”³ The combination of knowledge and/or material resources from both within and beyond the South is usually presented as the central added value of triangular cooperation initiatives.⁴ More specifically, developed countries – often referred to as

“traditional donor countries” – and multilateral bodies are expected to support South-South schemes through facilitation efforts directed at “the provision of funding, training, management and technical systems.”⁵

As the quintessential grouping of traditional donors, the 31 members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania⁶, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States – play a central role in triangular cooperation schemes. The engagement of individual DAC members with ‘triangular-like’ partnerships goes back more than six decades,⁷ and DAC member support for initiatives among countries from the South has taken many forms.⁸ According to the second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation that took place in Buenos Aires in 2019 (in short BAPA+40),⁹ triangular cooperation “complements and adds value to South-South cooperation” with its central task consisting of “enabling requesting

1. See United Nations, ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,’ 2015, para. 17.6 and 17.9 [<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>]; UNOSSC, ‘HPLF: Strengthening SDG 17 through South-South and Triangular Cooperation,’ July 2019 [www.unsouthsouth.org/2019/07/18/hplf-strengthening-sdg-17-through-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation/]; UNOSSC, ‘Triangular cooperation in the era of the 2030 Agenda,’ 2020 [www.unsouthsouth.org/2020/01/30/triangular-co-operation-in-the-era-of-the-2030-agenda/].

2. United Nations, ‘Framework on Operational Guidelines for United Nations Support for South-South and Triangular Cooperation,’ Note by the Secretary-General, SSC/19/3, 2016, p. 5 [<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/826679>]. This framework on operational guidelines was submitted to the United Nations High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation by the United Nations Secretary-General.

3. Ibid.

4. See, for instance, Prantz, Sebastian and Zhang, Xiaomin, ‘Triangular Cooperation: Different Approaches, Same Modality,’ IDS Bulletin, 52(2), 2021 [<https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/3137/3159>]; Kaplan, Marcus, Busemann, Dennis and Wirtgen, Kristina, ‘Trilateral cooperation in German development cooperation,’ German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, 2020 [https://www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Berichte/2020_Dreieckskooperation/DEval-2020-Trilateral-cooperation.pdf].

5. UNOSSC, ‘About South-South and Triangular Cooperation’ n.d. [www.unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/].

6. As of August 2022, the DAC had 30 members. Lithuania joined the DAC in November 2022 as its 31st member. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) hold observer status at the DAC. While all DAC members belong to the OECD, not all OECD members belong to the DAC.

7. For details, see Section 2.

8. For a detailed OECD perspective on triangular cooperation, see OECD, ‘Enabling effective triangular co-operation,’ OECD Development Policy Papers, No. 23, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/5fc4501e-en>]; for an overview of relevant OECD publications, see OECD, ‘OECD Publications on Triangular Co-operation,’ n.d. [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/oecdpublicationsontriangularcooperation.htm].

9. The 2019 conference took place about 40 years after the 1978 UN conference on technical cooperation among developing countries had adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for “promoting and implementing technical co-operation among developing countries”; see United Nations, ‘Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries,’ A/CONF.79/13/Rev.1, United Nations, 1978 [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/56998/files/A_CONF.79_13_Rev.1-EN.pdf].

developing countries to source and access more, and a broader range of, resources, expertise and capacities.”¹⁰ While noting the inclusive and diverse nature of triangular cooperation, the BAPA+40 outcome document also calls upon member states, including “developed countries,” to increase their engagement with triangular cooperation for “the mobilization of additional resources, knowledge and expertise under the leadership of beneficiary country [sic] necessary to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.”¹¹

Beyond their contributions to inter-governmental processes at the United Nations, DAC member states have developed their own approaches to triangular cooperation. Some have fed into, or have been inspired by, coordination and conceptualization efforts accompanied by the OECD, including an updated definition of triangular cooperation that centres around the roles of beneficiaries, pivots and facilitators.¹² While no consensus exists on the exact definitional and operational contours of triangular cooperation among United Nations members (or among DAC members, for that matter), a plethora of reports and policy documents refer to it as an increasingly relevant modality that creates synergies among different cooperation profiles. Collaboration between Southern providers and DAC members is often highlighted as a particularly innovative format, offering ways for bridging the divide between traditional North–South assistance and the expanding field of South–South cooperation.¹³ While proponents admit that triangular schemes might require more investment than bilateral initiatives due to the larger number and often considerable diversity of stakeholders involved, they suggest that the benefits warrant these efforts. By combining the expertise of established and more recent providers, triangular cooperation is said to improve development results for beneficiary countries and strengthened partnership ties for all stakeholders.¹⁴

Against this backdrop, the present study examines *how and to what extent DAC members engage with triangular cooperation, and how this engagement plays out in the Arab region*. Commissioned by the United Nations Office for South–South Cooperation (UNOSSC), Division for Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States in response to growing interest from United Nations member states, regional institutions, the United Nations development system and other stakeholders, the study aims at providing insights into DAC members’ organizational policies, perspectives and collaboration practices. While the definitions used by the United Nations and the OECD are the main references for discussing triangular cooperation, individual DAC member usage is also taken into account. Following a review of global patterns, and in response to the interest expressed by Arab states, the study focuses on triangular cooperation between DAC members and Arab counterparts. As has been discussed elsewhere, Arab states – here understood to include Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia, the State of Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen¹⁵ – have played an important role in South–South cooperation processes.¹⁶ Recent evidence suggests that these states have also been actively engaged in triangular cooperation and have contributed to collaboration processes that warrant more extensive and systematic analysis.¹⁷ By focusing on DAC members’ triangular cooperation policies, perspectives and practices – both globally and in their engagement with the Arab region – the study contributes to responding to “the need to better understand triangular cooperation and to provide more evidence and rigorous information on its scale, scope and impact.”¹⁸

10. United Nations, ‘Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation,’ A/RES/73/291, United Nations General Assembly, New York, 2019 [www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/N1911172.pdf].

11. Ibid, para. 28.

12. For a more detailed discussion, see Section 2.

13. For a critical discussion of the “North’s” role in South–South cooperation, see Abdenur, Adriana E. and Fonseca, João Moura Estevão Marques Da, ‘The North’s Growing Role in South–South Cooperation: keeping the foothold,’ *Third World Quarterly* 34(8), 2013, pp. 1475–1491 [https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.831579].

14. For recent contributions, see OECD, ‘Enabling effective triangular co-operation,’ OECD Development Policy Papers, No. 23, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019 [https://doi.org/10.1787/5f4501e-en]; Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), ‘Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,’ Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

15. This is in line with the regional programme for Arab States of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that includes “20 out of the 22 countries belonging to the League of Arab States,” see Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, ‘Regional programme document for Arab States (2022–2025),’ DP/RPD/RAS/5, 2021, p.2.

16. See Momani, Bessma and Ennis, Crystal, ‘Between caution and controversy: lessons from the Gulf Arab states as (re-)emerging donors,’ *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25:4, 2012, p. 605–627 [10.1080/09557571.2012.734786]; Deen, Thalif, ‘South–South Cooperation Takes Off in Arab World,’ *Inter Press Service*, 21 February 2014 [www.ipsnews.net/2014/02/south-south-cooperation-takes-arab-world/]; see also Mawdsley, Emma, *From recipients to donors: Emerging powers and the changing development landscape*, Zed Books, London, 2012.

17. Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018 [https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en]; see Hynes, William M. and Carroll, Peter J., ‘Engaging with Arab Aid Donors: The DAC Experience,’ IIS Discussion Paper, No. 424, 2013 [http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2267136].

18. United Nations, ‘Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation,’ A/RES/73/291, United Nations General Assembly, New York, 2019, para. 28 [www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/N1911172.pdf].

Insights discussed in this study stem from a detailed review of publicly available evidence – including policy documents, studies and reporting exercises – and primary data gathered through a survey,¹⁹ semi-structured interviews²⁰ as well as online and in-person conversations²¹ conducted between December 2021 and August 2022.²² Representatives from 30 DAC members, except for Lithuania that only joined the DAC in November 2022, responded to inquiries about their engagement with triangular cooperation. Overall, 56 officials provided input for this study. Interviews were conducted with 39 respondents, while 17 shared insights in written form. In addition, 26 DAC members provided responses to the survey through an online tool, during interviews or in written exchanges. To date, and based on available evidence, this is arguably the most comprehensive and systematic data gathering exercise on DAC members' triangular cooperation in general, and triangular cooperation with the Arab region in particular.²³

Overall, this study finds that DAC member engagement with triangular cooperation has been heterogeneous, ranging from proactive promotion to complete neglect. On the one hand, a growing list of triangular initiatives and considerable headway in terms of monitoring and reporting reflect the increasing clout of triangular cooperation across DAC membership. On the other hand, triangular cooperation terminology itself, as well as the strategic relevance of triangular schemes, are a basic point of contention or confusion. Reporting tools are often missing at the national level and have turned out to be difficult to establish in contexts still dominated by bilateral logics, leading to limited institutional knowledge about the concrete contours of triangular cooperation experiences. As part of the global portfolio of DAC members, triangular cooperation with Arab partners presents a similar heterogeneous picture. Most engagement to date has built on a mix of bilateral experiences, issue-specific expertise and political considerations. While there is substantial evidence of joint triangular activities among DAC members and Arab states, this collaboration is

arguably neither continuously growing nor stabilizing. While there might be some region-specific impediments to a smooth increase in triangular engagement between DAC members and Arab providers – including differences in normative frameworks, cooperation approaches and funding preferences – many DAC members take a rather lukewarm stance on triangular schemes more generally. The variety of concrete schemes that do take place, however, suggests that – beyond politically and technically complex coordination processes – there is space for expanding joint action.

The study is structured as follows. **Section 2** provides an overview of frameworks and venues relevant for DAC members' engagement with triangular cooperation, including definitions and reporting exercises. It offers an overview mapping of how the 30 DAC members have engaged with triangular cooperation and presents current perspectives of DAC member representatives on the relevance of triangular cooperation for their development cooperation policies and portfolios. It also presents some of the main factors accounting for the overall heterogeneity of engagement practices. **Section 3** maps DAC members' engagement with triangular cooperation in the Arab region. It provides an overview of DAC relations with the Arab states, notably the two-track distinction between Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipients and ODA providers; discusses underlying patterns and conditioning factors; and provides insights into concrete projects and initiatives. **Section 4** focuses on the contours of German and Japanese engagement with triangular cooperation in the Arab region. As particularly visible triangular champions, the cases of Germany and Japan provide insights into the particularities of two DAC members that, in different ways, have shown a concrete commitment to triangular cooperation with Arab partners. **Section 5** highlights key insights, outlines potential steps towards expanding DAC members' triangular cooperation with the Arab region, and concludes by outlining the most relevant recommendations stemming from the data analysed and discussed throughout this study.

19. Building on available evidence to address knowledge gaps regarding DAC members' engagement with triangular cooperation, the survey covered six questions focusing on (1) DAC perspectives on the relevance of triangular cooperation as a modality; (2) the institutionalization of triangular cooperation at the national level; (3) the use of triangular cooperation with partners in the Arab region; (4) the perceived relevance of triangular cooperation with the Arab region relative to other world regions; (5) interest in expanding triangular cooperation with the Arab region; and (6) policy areas with potential for expanding triangular cooperation with the Arab region. For survey results, see Sections 2 and 3.

20. Interviewees were selected based on their expertise as DAC member representatives in charge of triangular cooperation in line ministries and government agencies, and as observers familiar with triangular cooperation. Additional interviews were conducted with selected partner organizations. While some DAC members were more strongly represented in the list of interviewees than others, representatives from all 30 DAC members contributed to the data gathering process. The result of this exercise is so far the most comprehensive and systematic overview on DAC member engagement with triangular cooperation.

21. In addition to semi-structured interviews, follow-up conversations were conducted to clarify accounts and deepen the engagement with particular dynamics, notably for the case studies on Germany and Japan (see Section 4).

22. This study focuses (almost exclusively) on DAC member perspectives; perceptions and experiences of partners that act as pivots and beneficiaries – including those in the Arab region – should be the subject of future work.

23. For a 2015 survey on triangular cooperation conducted by the OECD that includes insights from 13 DAC members, see OECD, 'Building the knowledge base on triangular co-operation: findings from the 2015 OECD survey on triangular co-operation', Interim Report, May 2016 [[www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/Interim Report Triangular Co-operation 2015 Survey - May 2016.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/Interim%20Report%20Triangular%20Co-operation%202015%20Survey%20-%20May%202016.pdf)].

Development Assistance Committee members and triangular cooperation

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has a six-decade history as the foremost coordination forum for some of the world's largest donor governments.²⁴ OECD members can join the DAC if they satisfy certain criteria, notably having the institutional setup in place for conducting, monitoring and evaluating development cooperation as well as providing proof of "an accepted measure of effort" regarding the amounts they spend on development cooperation reported as Official Development Assistance (ODA).²⁵ Since its setup in 1961,²⁶ the DAC has expanded significantly and currently counts 31 members, including 30 OECD member states and the European Union (Box 1).²⁷ While the bulk of DAC members' ODA is provided through bilateral and multilateral channels, a small but growing constituency across DAC member states has also focused on triangular cooperation as a distinct and increasingly prominent modality. First examples of triangular cooperation – broadly understood in line with the United Nations working definition as collaboration among developing countries supported by what

would later be referred to as "traditional donors" – goes back all the way to the 1950s.²⁸ While the engagement of ODA providers through technical cooperation with developing countries long remained a niche arrangement, a number of DAC members, such as Japan, had engaged with triangular-like arrangements even before the DAC was established while others, such as Germany, started exploring the setup of triangular pilot initiatives in the mid-1980s.²⁹

Building on United Nations debates and processes,³⁰ triangular cooperation only emerged as a separate topic at the DAC towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s.³¹ As part of discussions in the task team on South-South cooperation and the OECD's aid effectiveness agenda, more systematic conversations about triangular cooperation among DAC members unfolded in the follow-up to the 2011 Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan and the nascent Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)³² as well as at OECD meetings in Lisbon from

24. OECD, 'DAC in Dates: The History of OECD's Development Assistance Committee,' OECD Publications, Paris, 2006 [www.oecd.org/dac/1896808.pdf]; Bracho, Gerardo; Carey, Richard; Hynes, Williams; Klingebiel, Stephan and Trzeciak-Duval, Alexandra (eds.), 'Origins, Evolution and Future of Global Development Cooperation: The Role of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC),' DIE Studies 104, Bonn, 2021 [https://doi.org/10.23661/s104.2021].

25. OECD, 'Joining the Development Assistance Committee (DAC),' n.d. [http://t4.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/joining-the-development-assistance-committee.htm?msckid=2fda1201aac711ec90a57c9ca32d64d5]. On DAC participants and DAC observers, see OECD, n.d.

26. The Development Assistance Group – the forerunner of the DAC – was set up in 1960 as part of what was then the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation and, in 1961, became the OECD. OECD, 'DAC in Dates: The History of OECD's Development Assistance Committee,' OECD Publications, Paris, 2006 [www.oecd.org/dac/1896808.pdf].

27. For a historical overview, see OECD, 'DAC in Dates: The History of OECD's Development Assistance Committee,' OECD Publications, Paris, 2006 [www.oecd.org/dac/1896808.pdf]; Bracho, Gerardo; Carey, Richard; Hynes, Williams; Klingebiel, Stephan and Trzeciak-Duval, Alexandra (eds.), 'Origins, Evolution and Future of Global Development Cooperation: The Role of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC),' DIE Studies 104, Bonn, 2021 [https://doi.org/10.23661/s104.2021].

28. See Chaturvedi, Sachin and Piefer-Söyler, Nadine, 'Triangular co-operation with India: Working with civil society organisations,' OECD Development Co-operation Working Papers, No. 89, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2021, p. 22f [https://doi.org/10.1787/285b1a9a-en].

29. BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation]; see United Nations, 'Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries,' A/CONF.79/13/Rev.1, United Nations, 1978 [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/56998/files/A_CONF.79_13_Rev.1-EN.pdf]. See also Section 4.

30. For an overview, see Haug, Sebastian, 'Mainstreaming South-South and Triangular Cooperation: Work in Progress at the United Nations,' DIE Discussion Paper 15/2021, Bonn, p. 8 [www.die-gdi.de/en/discussion-paper/article/mainstreaming-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-work-in-progress-at-the-united-nations/].

31. One of the first references to triangular cooperation at the DAC apparently goes back to a master's thesis by an OECD intern; conversation with an OECD official, March 2022.

32. The GPEDC is a multi-stakeholder partnership dedicated to providing a platform for global discussions about development effectiveness issues; see GPEDC, 'About the Partnership' [https://effectivecooperation.org/].

DAC members by year they joined the Committee

Belgium	1960	United Kingdom	1961	Switzerland	1968	Czechia	2013
Canada	1960	United States	1961	New Zealand	1973	Iceland	2013
France	1960	European Union**	1961	Finland	1975	Poland	2013
Germany	1960	Norway	1962	Ireland	1985	Slovakia	2013
Italy	1960	Denmark	1963	Spain	1991	Slovenia	2013
Japan	1960	Austria	1965	Luxembourg	1992	Hungary	2016
Netherlands	1960	Sweden	1965	Greece	1999	Lithuania	2022
Portugal*	1960	Australia	1966	Republic of Korea	2010		

*Portugal withdrew from the DAC in 1974 and re-joined in 1991 — **Joined under the name European Economic Community

Source: Author's own elaboration based on publicly available data.

2012 onwards.³³ The GPEDC currently dedicates one of its action areas – led by DAC member Canada – to triangular cooperation.³⁴ The Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) on effective triangular cooperation,³⁵ in turn, developed out of GPEDC deliberations but currently operates as a somewhat independent space for states and other stakeholders interested in and committed to promoting triangular cooperation as an effective development cooperation tool. Core group members of the GPI include not only the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS) and the OECD but also non-DAC OECD members Chile and Mexico as well as Canada, Japan and Norway as DAC providers.

Since its inception in 2016, the GPI has left its imprint on triangular cooperation debates, including through its voluntary guidelines that put forward a revamped definition of triangular cooperation (see below). Against the backdrop of the high-level endorsement of triangular cooperation at BAPA+40 in 2019,³⁶ discussions about and engagement with triangular cooperation are currently higher on the international development agenda than ever before.³⁷

33. For details see OECD, 'Policy Dialogue on Triangular Cooperation: Summary of Discussions,' May 2013 [[www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/\[FINAL\]%20Summary%20Policy%20Dialogue%20on%20Triangular%20Co-operation.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/[FINAL]%20Summary%20Policy%20Dialogue%20on%20Triangular%20Co-operation.pdf)]; Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, 'Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,' OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/411102acd-en>].

34. GPEDC, 'Action Area 2.2: Triangular Development Cooperation,' 2020 [www.effectivecooperation.org/content/action-area-22-triangular-development-co-operation].

35. For details, see Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation, 'Triangular Cooperation' [<https://triangular-cooperation.org/about/>].

36. See United Nations, 'Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation,' A/RES/73/291, United Nations General Assembly, New York, 2019 [www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/N1911172.pdf].

37. For details on BAPA+40 implementation efforts related to triangular cooperation, see GPI, 'GPI Spotlight: Triangular Cooperation Briefs' [<https://triangular-cooperation.org/spotlight/>].

②.① The DAC and triangular cooperation: evolving definitions

In their engagement with triangular cooperation, and inspired by GPI-related deliberations, an increasing number of DAC members have at least discursively moved beyond the stakeholder parameters highlighted in the United Nations working definition (see above). A recent OECD background paper (2022) highlights that

“the understanding of triangular co-operation is evolving. There is growing recognition that the partnerships involved in triangular co-operation are far more fluid in reality, and not exclusive to working with governments, but can also involve engaging with the private sector, philanthropy and/or civil society.”³⁸

About a decade ago, discussions in OECD spaces underlined that “the essential difference between triangular cooperation and other arrangements lies in how the different partners interact” (Casado-Asensio and Piefer, 2018, p. 11), and specific roles unique to triangular schemes were identified. Today, the revised approach to triangular cooperation – championed by the OECD and adopted by the DAC Working Party on Statistics – centres around the definition put forward by the GPI that understands triangular cooperation as activities designed and implemented by three or more partners that take on the roles of beneficiary, pivotal and facilitator (Box 2).³⁹ The GPI definition makes no

reference to South–North distinctions and instead explicitly highlights that the three roles can evolve over the course of a collaboration process.

This broader understanding currently co-exists side by side with the more traditional take on triangular cooperation being exclusively about the support of South–South cooperation, highlighting the extent to which basic definitions matter when studying triangular cooperation practices. Interviews for this study have shown that while an increasing number of DAC members explicitly refer to the GPI definition, most DAC practitioners still connect triangular cooperation with the idea of supporting collaboration and learning among developing countries. As the manager of a triangular cooperation project initiated by a DAC member put it during an interview: “this is about South–South cooperation, about sharing experiences; triangular cooperation comes in to support it.”⁴⁰ In practical terms, the DAC Working Party on Statistics indeed foresees only ODA recipients as beneficiary partners of triangular cooperation, with pivotal partners being defined as having “relevant domestic experience of addressing the issue in a context similar to that of the beneficiary country.”⁴¹ In concrete terms, the operationalization of the broader GPI definition thus still resonates with the United Nations working definition and its focus

Box 2

The DAC definition of triangular cooperation

In triangular cooperation “there are at least three partners ... where three main roles can be identified as follows:

- i a beneficiary partner, which has requested support to tackle a specific development challenge and which is an ODA-eligible country;
- ii a pivotal partner, which has relevant domestic experience of addressing the issue in a context similar to that of the beneficiary country and that shares its financial resources, knowledge and expertise; and
- iii a facilitating partner, that may help connect the other partners, and supports the partnership financially and/or with technical expertise. These roles might evolve over time.”

Source: DAC Working Party on Statistics.

38. OECD, ‘Background Paper: Unpacking the Definition of Triangular Co-operation and Improving Statistical Tracking (draft version),’ 2022.

39. Ibid; see also Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation, Voluntary Guidelines for Effective Triangular Cooperation, n.d. [<https://triangular-cooperation.org/voluntary-guidelines/>].

40. Interview, January 2022.

41. In a recent adaptation of that definition, Germany also posits that triangular cooperation projects consist of “one developing beneficiary country, one pivotal partner and one facilitating partner;” and while “[t]he latter two may be either industrialised or developing countries,” the beneficiary role is reserved exclusively for ODA recipients (BMZ, ‘Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,’ Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation]).

on the facilitation of collaboration among developing countries.⁴²

Notwithstanding ongoing discussions and harmonization efforts, triangular cooperation as a terminology and concept remains a complex and, for many, somewhat opaque phenomenon. The term “triangular” is often used interchangeably with “trilateral” or “tripartite,” with all three terms carrying different (and in and of themselves far from clear-cut) meanings.⁴³ Outside a small group of practitioners and analysts familiar with the intricacies of triangular cooperation, interviews and background conversations for this study have corroborated the extent to which triangular cooperation debates still remain removed from mainstream approaches to development cooperation in DAC member bureaucracies. Across DAC members,

development cooperation officials tend to have rather vague ideas about the definition and characteristic features of triangular cooperation. Some DAC member representatives, for instance, assume that co-financing with other high-income countries – even if those share certain context features with beneficiary countries and de facto act as pivotal partners – does not count as triangular cooperation.⁴⁴ Others have developed explicit internal guidelines for operationalizing what conditions need to be met for a project to count as triangular cooperation. In the case of Czechia, for instance, projects implemented in an ODA recipient partner country⁴⁵ in cooperation with another provider – a “donor country or international organization” – that co-finances at least 50 percent of project costs are counted as triangular and, as such, are reported to the OECD.⁴⁶

②.② Evidence on DAC members’ engagement with triangular cooperation: growing but patchy

Evidence on how traditional donors engage with triangular cooperation seems to be readily available. In a 2018 OECD working paper, the authors stated that a substantial part of existing studies on triangular cooperation had focused on “the involvement of members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee.”⁴⁷ At closer look, however, systematic data is scarce. The diverse, and sometimes somewhat incompatible, understandings of and approaches to triangular cooperation among DAC members make a comparative approach particularly challenging. Against this backdrop, the OECD has recently made some headway not only in the conceptual debate but also regarding the collection of empirical evidence. A key mechanism has been the inclusion of a triangular cooperation tracking code into the OECD Common Reporting Standard (CRS) in 2015. Since 2016, DAC members

have thus been asked to report on their triangular cooperation as part of the ODA data collection process with details on funding and project implementation. So far, however, compliance with this reporting request has been limited. As Tables 1 and 2 show, the OECD’s CRS data (as of May 2022) only provides a partial and partly inconsistent picture of DAC members’ triangular cooperation practices. Only a handful of DAC members have reported regularly, starting in 2016 (European Union and Germany), 2017 (Czechia, Italy and Portugal) and 2019 (Canada, New Zealand, Norway, and Poland). Others have reported on triangular cooperation in some years but not in others (Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain and United Kingdom). Even more significantly, the majority of DAC members – 17 out of 30 – have not (yet) reported on triangular cooperation.⁴⁸

42. See also BMZ, ‘Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,’ Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

43. See McEwan, Cheryl and Mawdsley, Emma, ‘Trilateral Development Cooperation: Power and Politics in Emerging Aid Relationships,’ *Development and Change* 43(6), 2012, pp. 1185-1209 [<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2012.01805.x>]; Abdenur, Adriana E. and Fonseca, João Moura Estevão Marques Da, ‘The North’s Growing Role in South–South Cooperation: keeping the foothold,’ *Third World Quarterly* 34(8), 2013, pp. 1475-1491 [<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.831579>]; Zoccal, Geovana, ‘Triangular Cooperation: Broader, more Dynamic and Flexible,’ DIE Briefing Paper 14/2020, Bonn, 2020 [<https://doi.org/10.23661/bp14.2020>].

44. Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 18 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en>].

45. Czechia currently focuses on six priority countries, including Cambodia, Ethiopia, Georgia and Zambia.

46. CzechAid, ‘Metodika: Zahraniční rozvojové spolupráce České republiky,’ 2016, p. 20 [www.czechaid.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Metodika-ZRS.pdf]. While the transfer of experience and know-how can be part of these projects, one – or the – key role of the Czech cooperation agency in these triangular projects is to provide funding.

47. Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 10 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en>].

48. See below for different factors – from normative reservations to administrative hurdles – behind this patchy reporting pattern.

Table 1

Number of triangular cooperation projects reported by DAC members via CRS since 2016⁴⁹

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Norway ⁵⁰				434	434
Canada ⁵¹				115	115
Czechia		32	25	18	75
European Union	7	16	13	12	48
Germany	10	11	13	10	44
Portugal		9	5	4	18
Slovakia		13			13
New Zealand				11	11
United Kingdom		6	2		8
Poland				7	7
Italy		4	1	1	6
Spain			5		5
Luxembourg		2			2
Total	17	93	64	612	786

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on CRS data available in May 2022 provided by the OECD (including data up until 2019).

Table 2

Amounts spent on triangular cooperation as reported by DAC members via CRS since 2016 (in thousands of US\$)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
European Union	14,215	44,290	25,399	22,806	106,709
Germany	11,990	13,298	10,788	8,157	44,233
Canada				31,817	31,817
Norway				27,888	27,888
New Zealand				19,906	19,906
Czechia		5,833	2,023	1,592	9,448
Portugal		974	1,430	88	2,491
Italy		1,797	70	522	2,389
United Kingdom		2,162	108		2,270
Slovakia		1,596			1,596
Luxembourg		1,055			1,055
Spain			548		548
Poland				213	213
Total	26,205	71,005	40,365	112,988	250,562

Source: Author's own elaboration; based on CRS data available in May 2022 provided by the OECD (including data up until 2019).

49. So far, what is reported as 'project' has differed significantly across DAC members. Germany, for instance, has reported its Regional Fund for triangular cooperation in Latin American as one project, even though that Fund finances various initiatives each year. See also below on Canada.

50. 2019 was the first year that Norway reported on triangular cooperation via CRS. The reported number for 2019 contains project agreements signed prior to 2019 with disbursements in 2019 as well as new project agreements signed in 2019. For 2020, Norway reported 148 projects, with the drop in numbers stemming from limited engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as changes to internal reporting practices.

51. While OECD data states that Canada had 115 triangular cooperation projects in 2019, 115 actually refers to the number of project-sector-country combinations in Canada's triangular cooperation portfolio reported via CRS IDs. The actual number of Canadian triangular cooperation projects in 2019 was 13; this difference will be accounted for in future reporting.

To triangulate evidence provided through CRS data, a triangular cooperation repository set up by the OECD offers an alternative and, in many ways, complementary source.⁵² As the result of parallel efforts to collect project data through knowledge sharing exercises and stakeholder outreach, the repository arguably stands out as the largest collection of triangular initiatives to date. Continuously updated, it currently includes roughly a thousand entries that provide a remarkable overview of triangular schemes implemented over the last decade or so. While the repository is not an independently reviewed exercise but relies on stakeholders reporting their own initiatives and thus remains far from presenting a complete and systematic picture,⁵³ it provides evidence that DAC members may be significantly underreporting in CRS. Not only does it include a considerable number of triangular initiatives led by DAC members that to date have not reported triangular projects through CRS – such as Austria, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States – it also suggests that some DAC members that do report via CRS, such as Germany, might not have provided full and up-to-date data.

Reasons behind these patchy reporting patterns are varied. One has to do with the general challenges development cooperation reporting faces. For many DAC members, the fragmentation of government ministries and other public agencies involved in international cooperation efforts makes development cooperation reporting a particularly challenging undertaking. More often than not, entities such as Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) or the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) are in charge of significant cooperation portfolios but do not have a government-wide mandate to coordinate external cooperation across public sector bodies. This complicates intra-government coordination across the board, and also puts limitations on triangular cooperation reporting.

BMZ, for instance, has no leverage over and sometimes is unaware of cooperation projects – including triangular ones – set up by other German government bodies, such as those in charge of environment or health. While many officials at BMZ know little about the key characteristics of triangular projects, officials at other ministries know even less about how they are expected to

respond to OECD reporting guidelines on triangular cooperation. In Japan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a mandate to design ODA-related policies, including on triangular cooperation, and coordinate its efforts with all government entities. While the Ministry collects information about triangular cooperation, especially data provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), it faces challenges in tracking some of the efforts related to triangular cooperation supported by other government entities.⁵⁴ Interviews suggest that this is similar across most – particularly large – DAC member bureaucracies. In line with general reporting limitations that affect all cooperation modalities, no single government unit or official is able to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date list of their country's triangular cooperation projects, detailed funding-related data or basic information about all of their country's initiatives registered in the OECD's triangular cooperation repository.

A reporting challenge related more immediately to triangular cooperation practices, in turn, centres around limited levels of formal and detailed operationalization. For most DAC members, engagement with triangular cooperation unfolds in an ad hoc manner following specific requests or opportunities instead of a strategic approach. Those that have had more substantive and strategic engagements, like Germany and Japan, also do not put forward comprehensive aggregated financial data on their triangular cooperation portfolios, albeit for different reasons. In Japan, triangular cooperation is mostly operationalized through third-country training, dispatches of third-country experts, or components of more comprehensive bilateral projects. Triangular cooperation reporting to date has covered the numbers of third-country trainees and third-country experts involved in these schemes. JICA also collects financial data on stand-alone third-country training and dispatches of third-country experts. As it has been difficult to financially disentangle triangular components of larger technical cooperation projects, however, comprehensive budget figures on Japan's triangular cooperation are not available (see Section 4). In Germany's portfolio, different funds and projects commissioned by BMZ and executed by the German implementing organization *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) are explicitly dedicated to using triangular cooperation as a modality, but until recently there was no central mechanism

52. That repository was set up before DAC members started reporting on triangular cooperation via CRS and has since been regularly updated on a voluntary basis; see OECD, 'Triangular co-operation repository of projects,' 2022 [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm]. Information provided by the South-South Galaxy portal has also been taken into account; see UNOSSC, 'South-South Galaxy,' n.d. [www.unsouthsouth.org/south-south-galaxy/].

53. In the case of Norway, for instance, the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has regularly provided input for the repository while the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) under the same ministry has not.

54. For an example of Japanese engagement with triangular cooperation not implemented by JICA, see: South-South Galaxy, 'Advocacy and Education on Waste Management,' n.d. [<https://my.southsouth-galaxy.org/en/solutions/detail/advocacy-and-education-on-waste-management>].

to systematically monitor and report on all triangular initiatives.⁵⁵

Against the backdrop of what are often limited reporting practices, a meaningful comparison of triangular cooperation budgets across DAC members would require a detailed portfolio analysis to first establish the pool of triangular initiatives and then calculate the sum of expenditures. This is further complicated by the

fact that triangular cooperation is sometimes used only for selected components of a larger project, requiring decisions about which parts of expenditures should be counted as belonging to a global triangular cooperation budget. This is a task most DAC member bureaucracies themselves have not yet tackled. The lack of comprehensive, systematic and hence comparable data needs to be taken into account when analysing DAC members' engagement with triangular cooperation.

②.③ DAC members and triangular cooperation: a mapping

While the last few years have seen considerable improvement in the collection of triangular cooperation data, notably within the OECD, there is still a considerable lack of insight into how and to what extent DAC members actually engage with triangular cooperation. Previous studies mostly focus on the experiences of individual DAC members that have been particularly active, or discuss specific triangular cooperation initiatives, often without linking individual case studies to broader patterns. A systematic engagement, including a comparative overview, has been missing from the debate. While insights from publicly available sources provide a helpful first step for mapping basic characteristics of DAC members triangular cooperation, triangulation with survey and interview data contributes to a more accurate account.⁵⁶ An initial mapping in Table 3 offers a tentative – and arguably still incomplete – overview of the extent to which engagement with triangular cooperation has differed across the 30 DAC members, much of which has so far not been considered in policy reports and academic analysis. Data refers to the last 15 years (2007-2021), with most insights stemming from the last decade. The table covers different dimensions of how DAC members are positioned in the triangular cooperation landscape with regard to: (1) policies and frameworks on triangular cooperation; (2) concrete triangular projects and programmes; and (3) the extent to which they count with a somewhat identifiable triangular cooperation budget. In order to identify broad patterns among DAC members across these three dimensions, empirical evidence was mapped according to a four-pronged scoring system (strong, intermediate, limited and no information, see below for the mapping methodology).

Whereas some DAC members score high on all dimensions (notably Germany and Japan, see Section 4) or can be said to have engaged substantially (such as Canada, the European Union, Norway, the Republic of Korea and Spain), others have had no or limited links with triangular cooperation as a development cooperation modality. At the same time, notes on individual DAC members indicate how more indirect forms of engagement, changes over time or differences in operationalization practices complicate the comparative overview. Finland, for instance, may not have engaged with triangular cooperation *per se*, but its regional programmes include South-South support components (see Section 5). As reflected in Table 3, repository and CRS data suggests that Australia and New Zealand have had some visible engagement with triangular cooperation over the last decade; but both countries currently do not seem to be involved in triangular cooperation schemes (see below). Slovenia, in turn, reported to not engage in triangular cooperation, but the OECD repository includes a 2013-2015 initiative – reported as triangular by other partners – that lists Slovenia alongside Lebanon, Germany and the OPEC Fund for International Development.⁵⁷ Slovenia makes a clear distinction between co-financing, on the one hand, and triangular cooperation, on the other, with the latter involving ODA recipients in both beneficiary and provider roles⁵⁸ (and thus applying a standard that said initiative apparently did not meet). This highlights why meaningful comparison across triangular cooperation partners requires a more explicit and in-depth engagement with definitions and reporting practices.

55. BMZ recently introduced an official tracking code for triangular cooperation that now allows tagging triangular cooperation projects when they are registered in BMZ's project database. This code is set to enable a more continuous and systematic reporting on triangular cooperation, also via CRS.

56. As the footnotes in Table 3 highlight, survey and interview data has improved the mapping considerably; Greek, Hungarian and Slovak experiences, for instance, would have otherwise fallen off the radar.

57. See OECD, 'Triangular co-operation repository of projects,' 2022 [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm].

58. Written exchange with a Slovenian official, April 2022.

Table 3

A tentative comparative mapping of DAC member engagement with triangular cooperation

	Policies and frameworks	Projects and programmes	Identifiable budget
Australia ⁵⁹	limited	intermediate	strong
Austria	n/a	limited	intermediate
Belgium	intermediate	limited	limited
Canada	intermediate	strong	strong
Czechia	intermediate	intermediate	intermediate
Denmark	limited	limited	limited
European Union	intermediate	strong	strong
Finland ⁶⁰	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	n/a	limited	limited
Germany	strong	strong	strong
Greece ⁶¹	n/a	limited	n/a
Hungary ⁶²	n/a	limited	limited
Iceland	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	n/a	limited	intermediate
Japan	strong	strong	strong
Luxembourg	intermediate	limited	limited
The Netherlands	n/a	limited	limited
New Zealand ⁶³	n/a	limited	intermediate
Norway	limited	strong	strong
Poland	limited	limited	limited
Portugal	intermediate	limited	limited
Republic of Korea	intermediate	strong	strong
Slovakia ⁶⁴	n/a	limited	limited
Slovenia ⁶⁵	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain	intermediate	strong	strong
Sweden	n/a	intermediate	intermediate
Switzerland	intermediate	intermediate	intermediate
United Kingdom	n/a	intermediate	intermediate
United States	limited	strong	limited

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on publicly available information from official sources and the OECD triangular cooperation repository (OECD 2021) covering the period 2007-2021.

59. While Australia appears as one of the more engaged DAC members in this overview, Australian officials indicated that Australia is currently not engaging with triangular cooperation as a modality.

60. While Finland has not engaged with triangular cooperation *per se*, its regional programmes include South-South components; see Section 5.

61. Greek experiences have not been recorded in publicly available databases and cover small initiatives implemented between 2007 and 2013; see Section 2.

62. While the OECD repository does not provide information about any Hungarian projects, Hungarian officials were able to provide evidence of a growing list of triangular cooperation initiatives; see Sections 2 and 3.

63. While New Zealand reported having spent almost \$20 million on triangular cooperation in 2019 (see Table 2), representatives from the New Zealand government stated that they had not engaged in delivering assistance through triangular cooperation.

64. While the OECD repository does not provide information about any Slovak projects, Slovak officials were able to provide evidence of a couple of recent triangular or "triangular-like" cooperation initiatives; see Section 3.

65. While Slovenia reported to not engage in triangular cooperation, the OECD repository provides evidence for a 2013-2015 initiative – framed as triangular by other partners – with Lebanon, Germany and the OPEC Fund for International Development; see OECD, 'Triangular co-operation repository of projects,' 2022 [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm]. Slovenia makes a clear distinction between co-financing, on the one hand, and triangular cooperation, on the other, with the latter involving ODA recipients as both recipients and providers. As quite a few other smaller, and notably Central European, DAC members do not make such a clear distinction, data collected for this study highlights that meaningful comparison across providers requires a more streamlined approach to definitions and operationalizations.

	Policies and frameworks	Projects and programmes	Identifiable budget
Strong	Explicit policies and/or general strategy papers on TrC.	10 or more projects and/or programmes (or their components) explicitly framed as TrC, including multi-year initiatives.	Budget for TrC initiatives identified as overall substantial relative to that of other DAC members.
Intermediate	Guidelines or sections on TrC in official documents with substantial content.	Between 5 to 10 projects and/or programmes (or their components) explicitly framed as TrC.	Budget for TrC initiatives identified but, overall, less substantial relative to that of other DAC members.
Limited	TrC mentioned in official documents but not in an overarching or systematic way.	Less than 5 projects and/or programmes (or their components) explicitly framed as TrC.	Budget for TrC initiatives not explicitly identified and/or overall minimal relative to that of other DAC members.
No information	No information has been identified.	No information has been identified.	No information has been identified.

②.④ DAC member perspectives on (their current engagement with) triangular cooperation: a mixed picture

Survey data and accounts of interviews with DAC member representatives not only complement OECD repository and CRS data but also offer windows into the perspectives of individuals in charge of triangular cooperation in their respective organizations. Of the officials from 26 DAC member bureaucracies whose accounts fed into the survey, 11 stated that triangular cooperation was currently “(very) relevant” in their country’s cooperation portfolio, while 15 qualified it as “not (very) relevant” (Figure 1). This corroborates the patterns identified in Table 3 (see above), highlighting that engagement with triangular cooperation varies significantly across DAC members and that a nuanced approach is required to make sense of the current triangular cooperation landscape. Out of 26 DAC members, only two – Germany and Japan – stated that their engagement with triangular cooperation was currently guided by a dedicated policy (Figure 2).

While some (7) said that their engagement was embedded in frameworks that made some sort of explicit reference to triangular cooperation, all others (16) stated that there was no policy or programmatic framework on triangular cooperation, and that engagement with triangular cooperation – if happening at all – was not formalized and mostly ad hoc. Insights from the survey, interviews and publicly available documents suggest that while some providers – including Canada and Spain – are currently in the process of devising a formal policy on triangular cooperation, a vast majority of DAC members lack a dedicated strategy or programmatic framework for triangular cooperation as a modality. Most DAC members have also not (yet) adapted their national reporting systems to the tracking code for triangular cooperation introduced into the ODA reporting system in 2015, limiting any attempt at monitoring and reporting from the outset.⁶⁶

⁶⁶. As a representative from one of the larger DAC member agencies put it: “To be honest, I am not proud of what we do on triangular cooperation. We are not tracking it, often we are not even calling it that way. It is impossible to gather information about it. In international meetings, we just speak to the same examples over and over again.”

Figure 1
Perspectives on the relevance of triangular cooperation in DAC member portfolios

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on a survey conducted with 26 out of 30 DAC members.⁶⁷

For my country, triangular cooperation as a modality is ...

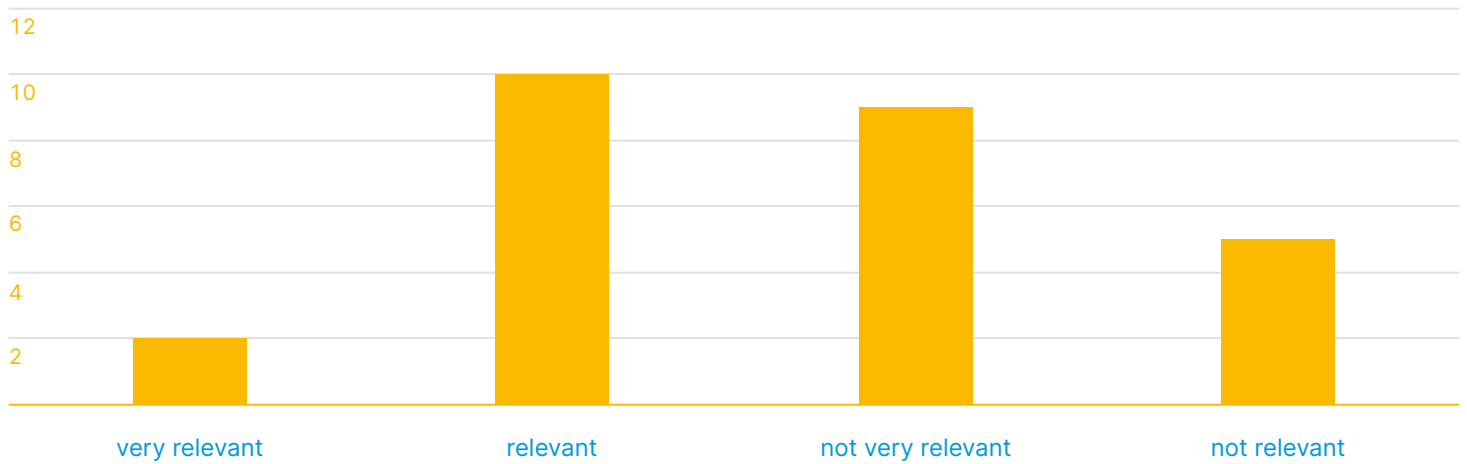
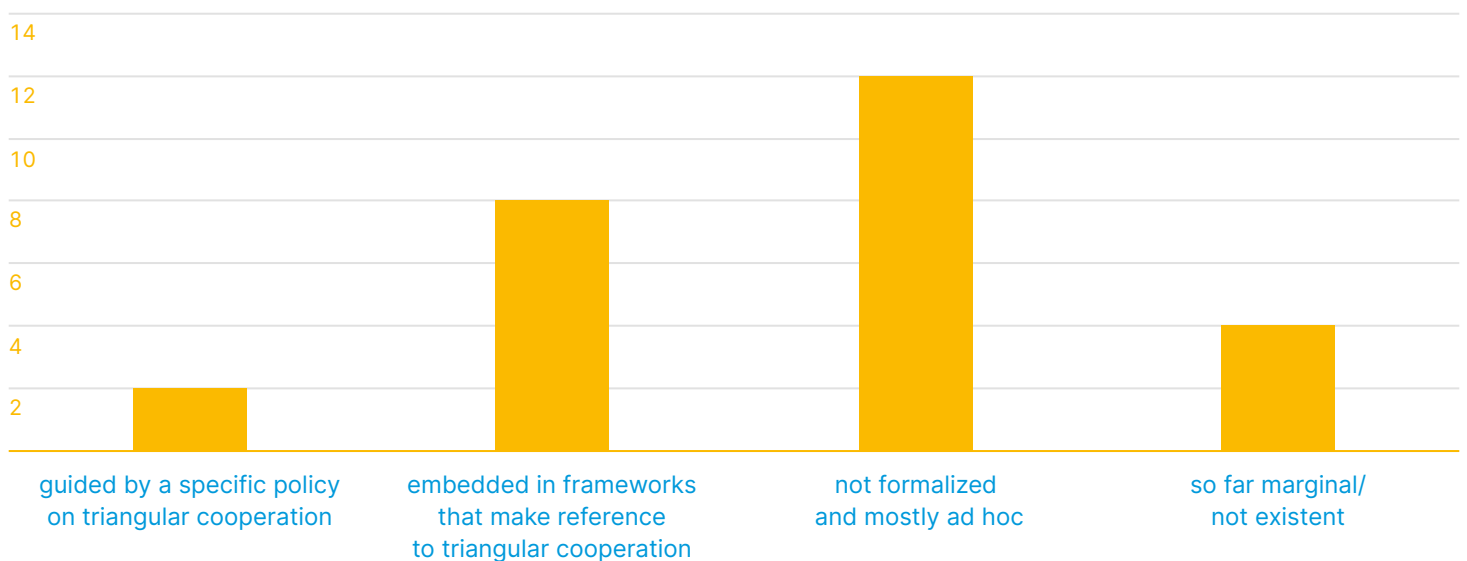


Figure 2
Formal references to triangular cooperation in DAC member policies and frameworks

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on a survey conducted with 26 out of 30 DAC members.⁶⁸

For my country, engagement with triangular cooperation is ...



⁶⁷. DAC member representatives completed the survey online, sent written responses via email or were asked survey questions during interviews.

⁶⁸. DAC member representatives completed the survey online, sent written responses via email or were asked survey questions during interviews.

As existing analyses of triangular cooperation often rely on data shared at international meetings – also because very little publicly available information exists on triangular portfolios – evidence provided by multi-lateral bodies is often incomplete. While the OECD repository or official reports on triangular cooperation provide examples of triangular projects carried out by almost all DAC members, ministries and agencies in DAC member states themselves often have limited to no information on their past triangular cooperation trajectories. This leads to substantial discrepancies across sources. As mentioned above, CRS reporting and/or the OECD repository suggest that Australia and New Zealand, to different extents, have had somewhat substantial engagement with triangular schemes (see Table 3). Officials from both countries consulted for this study, however, were unaware of their triangular cooperation trajectories and, after consulting with relevant colleagues, concluded that there was no information they could share. At the same time, there are cases – including Greece and Hungary – where projects do not appear in publicly available data, but where interviewees have shared evidence of past and/or ongoing engagement with triangular schemes.

There are various factors behind differences in the perceived relevance of triangular cooperation or engagement fluctuation over time. Many of those DAC members that describe triangular cooperation as “not (very) relevant” are smaller providers with limited portfolios. They cite capacity challenges and the limited size of their general cooperation portfolios as reasons why engagement with triangular schemes has remained marginal and ad hoc.⁶⁹ As Hungarian officials put it during an interview, South-South and triangular cooperation “is a highly relevant topic [...] We are open and eager to find new ways of cooperation in international development, including triangular cooperation [...] but our capacities are relatively limited.”

For smaller DAC members, in particular, external shocks or major budgetary shifts can have a decisive impact on whether a niche modality like triangular cooperation – irrespective of the positive results it may generate – continues to play a role

in both strategies and cooperation practices.⁷⁰ Greece, for instance, is one of the smallest DAC members in terms of overall ODA expenditure. More than two thirds of Greek ODA are currently spent as contributions to multilateral organizations, leaving only a limited bilateral programme – \$85 million in 2021 – that also includes Greek expenditure reported as “in-donor refugee costs.” Between 2007 and 2013, however, Greece supported a few smaller triangular initiatives implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Meteorological Organization and regional organizations.⁷¹ In the same period, Greece also cooperated with UN Habitat and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on a secondary education and women’s empowerment programme with Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania and Spain on a number of training programmes in agriculture, health, water management, women’s capacity building and the reconstruction of hospitals across northern Afghanistan.⁷² Following major budgetary cuts in the wake of the financial crisis that started in 2008, this inceptive and maybe surprisingly rich trajectory came to a halt and has so far not been mentioned in existing multilateral mapping exercises.

For larger and/or more established DAC members, their – often evolving – levels of engagement seem to correlate with whether their overall appraisal of triangular cooperation is enthusiastic or more cautious. According to an OECD survey in 2015, most respondents appreciated triangular cooperation as a means of collaboration for the transfer and adaptation of development solutions through both shorter-term activities, such as dispatching experts, training, workshops or study visits, and longer-term development projects.⁷³ However, there are also voices that have been more critical about triangular cooperation.

69. For many smaller DAC members, a considerable part of their development cooperation reported as ODA consists of contributions to the European Union.

70. In terms of both overall volumes and prominence within DAC member bureaucracies, it is arguably fair to say that triangular cooperation is (still) a niche modality.

71. This included collaboration with the African Union (2008-2011), the Indian Ocean Commission (2010-2013) and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (2008-2011).

72. Written exchange with a Greek official, March 2022.

73. OECD, ‘Dispelling the myths of triangular co-operation: Evidence from the 2015 OECD survey on triangular co-operation,’ 2016, Paris [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-globalrelations/2015-oecd-survey-report-on-triangular-co-operation.htm]; see Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 18 [https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en].

A number of DAC members – including Denmark, France and the Netherlands, for instance – acknowledge the potential of triangular cooperation but, based on past experiences, also highlight its challenges. Taken together, problematic aspects of triangular initiatives cluster around three main issues.⁷⁴

Lowering cooperation standards

A limited number of DAC members are concerned that their cooperation quality is lowered if pivotal countries do not have the experience and capacity to provide quality development assistance in line with DAC members' expectations and standards.

Neglecting the beneficiary

Some DAC members highlight that triangular cooperation initiatives often centre around the experiences and preferences of traditional and emerging providers (i.e., facilitating and pivotal partners) and tend to neglect the needs, priorities and strategies of beneficiary countries.

Producing substantial transaction costs

Some DAC members point to the considerable costs caused by the need to overcome different perspectives, preferences and administrative hurdles from three partners that often make both design and implementation of triangular cooperation projects a complex undertaking.

The latter challenge was identified by a considerable number of DAC member representatives.⁷⁵ As one official put it, in triangular cooperation “three actors have to adopt a common approach to standards and procedures and create the legal, institutional and budgetary conditions for successful implementation; this is often [...] difficult to accomplish.”⁷⁶ Another official highlighted that triangular cooperation “requires a lot more work than bilateral or multilateral cooperation; we have to coordinate with other partners, that makes the whole process longer and more complex [...]. Sometimes we need to wait for our partners; even if we want to go ahead quickly, other partners may need more time, so we can't step forward.”⁷⁷ Even though a recent OECD report has suggested to approach the time, energy

and/or funding needed to overcome these challenges not as transaction costs but instead as investments,⁷⁸ a number of DAC member representatives do not seem convinced.⁷⁹

It is often a combination of different factors that leads to triangular cooperation emerging as a popular topic, or to its dismissal. Individuals can play a key role in increasing the popularity of triangular projects, such as a Dutch minister that explicitly embraces the modality or a Swiss official pushing for it in his technical interactions with partner countries. Once these individuals leave their positions, however, there is often (very) little institutional capacity that remains to continue triangular work. Major institutional changes, such as the merger of entities in charge of development cooperation with foreign ministries, also challenge the survival of niche modalities like triangular cooperation. The case of Australia is particularly noteworthy. While AusAid used to be a rather visible player in triangular cooperation (as reflected in the mapping in Table 3 that considers data from 2007 onwards), the agency's incorporation into the Australian Foreign Ministry in 2013 seems to have led to a situation where, today, officials are not aware of and have no information about Australia's triangular cooperation trajectory.

For strong proponents of triangular cooperation, no merger or major change in government warrants letting go of the modality. For its most adamant advocates, triangular cooperation combines two fundamental dimensions that are essential for most development partnerships: targeted interventions addressing specific development needs and broader politico-strategic considerations centring on relationship and partnership building.⁸⁰ Ideally, triangular cooperation contributes to this “twin set” of objectives.⁸¹ A number of DAC members – such as Canada, Czechia, Germany, Hungary and Portugal – have championed triangular cooperation in their own ways, often by embedding it into existing frameworks and collaboration priorities. Irrespective of limited capacities and transaction costs unique to triangular cooperation, Hungarian officials, for

74. For a similar overview, see Guido Ashoff, 'Triangular cooperation: opportunities, risks, and conditions for effectiveness', World Bank Institute, Washington D.C., 2010 [https://effectivecooperation.org/system/files/2019-06/Special%20Report_0.pdf].

75. See also findings in Kaplan, Marcus, Busemann, Dennis and Wirtgen, Kristina, 'Trilateral cooperation in German development cooperation', German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, 2020 [https://www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Berichte/2020_Dreieckskooperation/DEval-2020-Trilateral-cooperation.pdf].

76. Interview with a DAC member official, February 2022.

77. Interview with a DAC member official, March 2022.

78. OECD, 'Enabling effective triangular co-operation,' OECD Development Policy Papers, No. 23, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/5fc4501e-en>].

79. This is arguably also because most triangular cooperation projects in their portfolios to date have only had small budgets and limited timeframes; in relative terms, transaction costs have been higher than in large-scale projects with a longer duration, highlighting the need to invest more resources into triangular schemes to reap all benefits of this modality (exchange with an OECD official, May 2022).

80. OECD, 'Enabling effective triangular co-operation,' OECD Development Policy Papers, No. 23, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/5fc4501e-en>]; see also Kaplan, Marcus, Busemann, Dennis and Wirtgen, Kristina, 'Trilateral cooperation in German development cooperation', German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, 2020 [https://www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Berichte/2020_Dreieckskooperation/DEval-2020-Trilateral-cooperation.pdf]; BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

81. See OECD, 'Enabling effective triangular co-operation,' OECD Development Policy Papers, No. 23, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/5fc4501e-en>].

instance, were rather clear in their appraisal of whether or not triangular cooperation was beneficial. “Of course, it is,” they stated in an interview, “especially for recipients. In most cases, it is worth the work.” Czechia, in turn, has set up an increasing number of triangular initiatives, including projects co-funded with other DAC members, such as Austria and Slovakia.⁸² For CzechAid, the co-financing structure in triangular projects helps strengthen the intervention as a whole. As one Czech official stated during an interview: “In triangular cooperation, small amounts can have considerable impact because we pool efforts; it has been an excellent instrument [...] for combining funding from different sources and making [projects] more sustainable.” Although bilateral cooperation has remained the core cooperation modality of Czechia, and while shrinking budgets have made it difficult to further expand engagement, triangular cooperation is seen as an important tool for using synergies with other providers.

With reference to this kind of positive appraisal, DAC members proactively championing triangular cooperation have explicitly responded to critics. Germany’s most recent authoritative strategy paper on the matter, for instance, holds that risks associated with triangular cooperation – notably additional workload, coordination requirements and transaction costs – “have often been overrated and are more typically perceived by traditional donors than by the other partners. There are now strategies through which these challenges can be addressed.”⁸³ Moreover, the German paper holds that:

“the extra coordination workload at the beginning of triangular cooperation projects is a good investment in building trust between the partners and in harmonizing donor activities. Experience has shown that this workload declines as partners increasingly engage in joint activities.”⁸⁴

Others have noted that triangular cooperation “offers special potential for innovative solutions, as it facilitates cooperation between partners who usually would not engage in joint action.”⁸⁵ An often-cited motivation to engage in triangular cooperation in the first place centres around mutual learning and the sharing of management systems, strategic approaches and on-the-ground experiences.⁸⁶

Overall, the above discussion of comparative mappings and perspectives across DAC membership suggests that, while DAC members generally share a provider or facilitator position, it makes little sense to speak of a homogeneous or streamlined DAC or “traditional donor” approach to triangular cooperation. If interested in general patterns, the analysis needs to take a variety of dimensions across different providers into account, ideally centring around a specific thematic or geographic lens. The following sections do so by focusing on DAC engagement with the Arab region.

⁸². For an example, see Austrian Development Agency, ‘Projects: Sustainable Development of the Area of Aragvi Protected Landscape and the Local Communities, n.d. [www.entwicklung.at/en/projects/detail-en/sustainable-development-of-the-area-of-aragvi-protected-landscape-and-the-local-communities].

⁸³. BMZ, ‘Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,’ Bonn, 2022, p. 7 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

⁸⁴. Ibid, p. 15.

⁸⁵. Ibid, p. 9. For a proposal on how inter-state alliances can use triangular cooperation to bridge entrenched divides between developed and developing countries, see Haug, Sebastian, ‘Exploring “Constructive Engagement”: MIKTA and Global Development’, *Rising Powers Quarterly* 2(4), 2017, pp. 71-73 [https://risingpowersproject.com/exploring-constructive-engagement-mikta-global-development/]. See also Haug, Sebastian, Cheng, Han and Trajber Waisbich, Laura, ‘Accelerating SDG implementation through triangular cooperation: a roadmap for the G20.’ T20 Policy Brief, 2023 [https://t20ind.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/T20_PB_TF6_654_SDG-Through-Triangular-Cooperation.pdf].

⁸⁶. OECD, ‘Dispelling the myths of triangular co-operation: Evidence from the 2015 OECD survey on triangular co-operation,’ 2016, Paris [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-globalrelations/2015-oecd-survey-report-on-triangular-co-operation.htm]; see Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ *OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers*, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 18 [https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en].

3

DAC members' triangular cooperation with the Arab Region

For roughly five decades, the DAC and its members have engaged with an evolving set of Arab partners. The first discussions of joint cooperation schemes between DAC members and Arab providers in third countries – what would later be referred to as triangular cooperation – took place in the 1970s. Following the oil price rise in 1973, Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) began to expand their assistance portfolios abroad, notably to strengthen ties with and their influence across the region.⁸⁷ This led to the DAC becoming interested in getting to know, and potentially collaborate with, its rising Arab counterparts.⁸⁸ Ever since, the relationship between DAC members and different parts of the Arab region has been an evolving, and recently again more prominent, feature of the OECD's global engagement portfolio (see below).

The Arab region has been defined in different ways and overlaps with the regional designation of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). For many DAC members, the Arab region as a category provides some

challenges, as classification schemes differ across bureaucracies. The responsibility for countries that tend to be classified as Arab states is usually distributed across different parts of DAC member administrations, including divisions working on Africa, Asia, the Middle East or, in the case of the European Union, the Directorates-General in charge of European Union neighbourhood engagement and international partnerships. These differences notwithstanding, the general notion of the Arab region usually resonates with both general and expert audiences. For the present study, the definition of the Arab region builds on the approach taken by UNDP and refers to an ensemble of 20 countries, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia, the State of Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.⁸⁹

③.① DAC members and Arab states: a two-track approach

From a DAC perspective, the group of Arab states includes two rather distinct profile types regarding cooperation dynamics and development partnerships (Table 4). On the one hand, there are Arab states that are ODA eligible. What all DAC members share is that the beneficiaries of their assistance – including that provided through triangular cooperation – must be listed as ODA recipients. Out of the 20 Arab states considered in this report, 14 are on the DAC's recipient list and can act as beneficiary (and potentially also pivotal) partners in triangular schemes. In one way or another, all of them have engaged as beneficiaries (and

less often as pivots) in triangular cooperation initiatives, with Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, but also Algeria and Lebanon, being among the most prominent partners.

On the other hand, some Arab states have a substantial trajectory as assistance providers themselves. Out of the 20 states under consideration, six – namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – are high-income countries that, for DAC members, can only be engaged as pivots in triangular schemes. Through their assistance funds, Kuwait,

⁸⁷ Hynes, William M. and Carroll, Peter J., 'Engaging with Arab Aid Donors: The DAC Experience,' IIIS Discussion Paper, No. 424, 2013 [<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2267136>].

⁸⁸ Ibid; see Development Assistance Committee (DAC), 'Summary Record of the 268th Meeting held on 15-16 May 1975, at the Chateau de la Muette, Paris,' OECD Archives.

⁸⁹ For details, see the UNDP regional programme cited in the introduction.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are organized in the Arab Coordination Group,⁹⁰ together with Arab banks and funds that have put a strong or exclusive focus on the Arab region, notably the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the OPEC Fund for International Development, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Islamic Development Bank.⁹¹ Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates not only report ODA figures at the activity level to the OECD but, together with Qatar, also act as DAC participants, i.e., non-OECD members that officially participate in DAC processes.⁹²

Based on these general patterns, the DAC's de facto two-track approach to the Arab region thus centres

around most Arab states as beneficiaries and a small group of Arab providers as pivotal partners in triangular schemes. As a mechanism and forum for exchange between the latter group and DAC members, the Arab-DAC Dialogue was set up in 2009, building on earlier attempts to explore options for engagement.⁹⁴ Co-facilitated by the OECD's Development Cooperation Directorate and the Arab Coordination Group, the Dialogue includes both high-level political meetings and task forces focusing on technical matters. Together with the increasing engagement of a small but growing number of Arab providers as ODA-reporting DAC participants, the Dialogue reflects the prominence of DAC engagement with the Arab region through a focus on intra-provider exchange and coordination.

Table 4
The DAC and the Arab region: a de facto two-track approach

	Eligible for ODA	Not eligible for ODA	ODA provider	DAC participant
Algeria	X			
Bahrain		X		
Djibouti	X			
Egypt	X			
Iraq	X			
Jordan	X			
Kuwait		X	X	X
Lebanon	X			
Libya	X			
Morocco	X			
Oman		X		
Qatar		X		X
Saudi Arabia		X	X	X
Somalia	X			
Sudan	X			
State of Palestine ⁹⁵	X			
Syria	X			
Tunisia	X			
United Arab Emirates		X	X	X
Yemen	X			

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on publicly available data.

90. Coordinated by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Coordination Group was set up in 1975 to coordinate and harmonize the funding activities of its members; see Arab Fund, 'Coordination Group' [<https://www.arabfund.org/default.aspx?pageId=610>].

91. For details, see Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa [<https://www.badea.org/>]; OPEC Fund for International Development [<https://opcfund.org/>]; Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development [<https://www.arabfund.org/>]; and Islamic Development Bank [<https://www.isdb.org/>].

92. Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Romania are currently the other DAC Participants; interview with OECD officials, April 2022.

93. As highlighted in the introduction, "Arab region" here refers to the 20 states listed in the table.

94. See Hynes, William M. and Carroll, Peter J., 'Engaging with Arab Aid Donors: The DAC Experience,' IIS Discussion Paper, No. 424, 2013 [<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2267136>].

95. At the OECD, the State of Palestine is usually referred to as "West Bank and Gaza Strip" or "Palestinian Authority"; see OECD, 'DAC List of ODA Recipients', 2022-2023 [<https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2022-23-flows.pdf>]; OECD, 'Palestinian Authority' [<https://www.oecd.org/countries/palestinianauthority/>].

③.② Mapping DAC members' triangular cooperation with the Arab region

Triangular cooperation with the Arab region has included the active engagement of a wide variety of stakeholders, from Arab governments and civil society to multi-state Arab funds, regional development banks and United Nations organizations. Similar to DAC members, Arab providers have focused their triangular cooperation efforts in the Arab region on states often framed as fragile, including Iraq, Syria and Yemen.⁹⁶ Previous work has highlighted the key role of both Arab providers and DAC members in expanding the use of triangular schemes across and beyond the region, usually by discussing illustrative examples.⁹⁷ The present study goes a step further. Building on the global mapping of the extent to which DAC members engage with triangular cooperation (see Section 2), this section engages with 30 DAC members and provides a first step towards a more systematic account of whether and to what extent they engage in triangular cooperation with Arab states.

While DAC members are far from the only triangular cooperation partners in the Arab region, they are a key group of players, not only because of their extensive development assistance experience and their trajectory of engagement with the region but also due to their substantial cooperation budgets. As highlighted above, comparing DAC member budgets for triangular cooperation is a difficult undertaking as few DAC members report on their triangular cooperation budgets globally, let alone by region. The quantification of resources spent on individual initiatives is only available for some DAC members, and often at different levels of aggregation. Underreporting and inconsistent reporting practices complicate the picture further.

Table 5 presents a first step towards mapping DAC member engagement in triangular cooperation with the Arab region. Instead of engaging in a complex and inevitably limited budget comparison exercise, the table builds on information available via the OECD triangular cooperation repository and data collected through interviews. It provides a rough overview of the quantity of triangular cooperation projects and the number of Arab state partners for each DAC member.

Unsurprisingly, those DAC members that have not engaged with triangular cooperation (see Table 3 in the previous section), such as Iceland and Ireland, also have made no use of the modality in the Arab region. Most other DAC members, including both smaller and larger providers, have recorded a limited number of initiatives (usually between one and four) with a selected number of Arab partners. Only three – Germany (16), Japan (11) and the United States (8) – are on record with substantially more initiatives.⁹⁸

To complement this overview, the survey among DAC member representatives discussed in the previous section asked respondents about the extent, relevance and potential of their triangular cooperation with Arab states. Results resonate with publicly available evidence in that, overall, triangular cooperation with the Arab region has not been particularly prominent across DAC membership. Only the representatives of two DAC members, Germany and Japan, stated that in their country's cooperation with partners in the Arab region, triangular cooperation as a modality was currently used "sometimes" or "often" (Figure 3; see also Section 4). For all others, triangular cooperation was used "sporadically" or not at all. For those DAC members that have engaged in triangular cooperation with Arab states, including the most active ones, that engagement was "intermediate" or "weak" when compared with their country's triangular cooperation in other world regions (Figure 4). With regard to potential future trajectories, no DAC member representative stated upfront that their country was not interested in expanding triangular cooperation with Arab states, but for the majority (17 out of 26) the situation was "unclear" (Figure 5).

⁹⁶. For details, see Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, 'Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,' OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, [<https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en>].

⁹⁷. Ibid.

⁹⁸. While US representatives reported that their engagement with triangular cooperation was limited and often did not fall under the definitions put forward by the United Nations and the OECD, the cases of Germany and Japan are dealt with in more detail in Section 4.

Table 5

DAC members and triangular cooperation with Arab states: a first but incomplete mapping

	# of triangular cooperation initiatives with Arab states	# of Arab states as triangular cooperation partners		# of triangular cooperation initiatives with Arab states	# of Arab states as triangular cooperation partners
Australia	3	4	Japan	11	17
Austria	1	3	Luxembourg	n/a	n/a
Belgium	3	8	The Netherlands	1	2
Canada	2	11	New Zealand	n/a	n/a
Czechia	n/a	n/a	Norway ⁹⁹	2	3
Denmark	2	5	Poland ¹⁰⁰	n/a	n/a
European Union	1	1	Portugal ¹⁰¹	n/a	n/a
Finland	1	1	Republic of Korea	1	2
France	2	2	Slovakia ¹⁰²	n/a	n/a
Germany	16	10	Slovenia	1	1
Greece	n/a	n/a	Spain	1	2
Hungary	2	7	Sweden	4	6
Iceland	n/a	n/a	Switzerland ¹⁰³	3	5
Ireland	n/a	n/a	United Kingdom	2	5
Italy	4	9	United States ¹⁰⁴	8	13

Source: Author's own compilation.¹⁰⁵

99. In addition to the figures presented here that reflect NOREC initiatives reported via the OECD repository, NORAD has conducted a limited number of projects with the State of Palestine and Sudan that have been re-classified as triangular cooperation.

100. No Polish initiatives are recorded in the OECD repository. However, Poland has provided evidence on two trilateral initiatives with Arab states and fellow DAC members that might not fall under the United Nations and OECD definitions of triangular cooperation but are briefly discussed in Section 3.

101. While Portugal has so far not recorded triangular cooperation projects with Arab partners, it has signed MoUs on triangular cooperation with Morocco and Egypt; see Section 3.

102. No Slovak initiatives are recorded in the OECD repository. However, Slovakia has provided evidence on two trilateral initiatives with Arab states and fellow DAC members that might not fall under the United Nations and OECD definitions of triangular cooperation, but are briefly discussed in Section 3.

103. While the African Risk Capacity has been registered in the OECD triangular cooperation repository, the official in charge of Switzerland's engagement highlighted that there was no triangular cooperation involved.

104. USAID representatives highlighted in an interview that there has been no in-depth engagement with triangular cooperation as a modality, and that definitional questions have remained vague.

105. The data in this table mainly relies on information provided by the OECD triangular cooperation registry, currently the most comprehensive but still incomplete source for triangular cooperation initiatives. Information from other publicly available sources and interviews was added to complement the overview. The specific periods covered differ across providers but, overall, all recorded initiatives took place between 2007 and 2021.

Figure 3
Triangular cooperation in DAC members' portfolios in the Arab region

Source: Author's own elaboration based on a survey conducted with 26 of 30 DAC members.¹⁰⁶

Within the context of my country's cooperation with partners in the Arab region, triangular cooperation as a modality is currently used ...

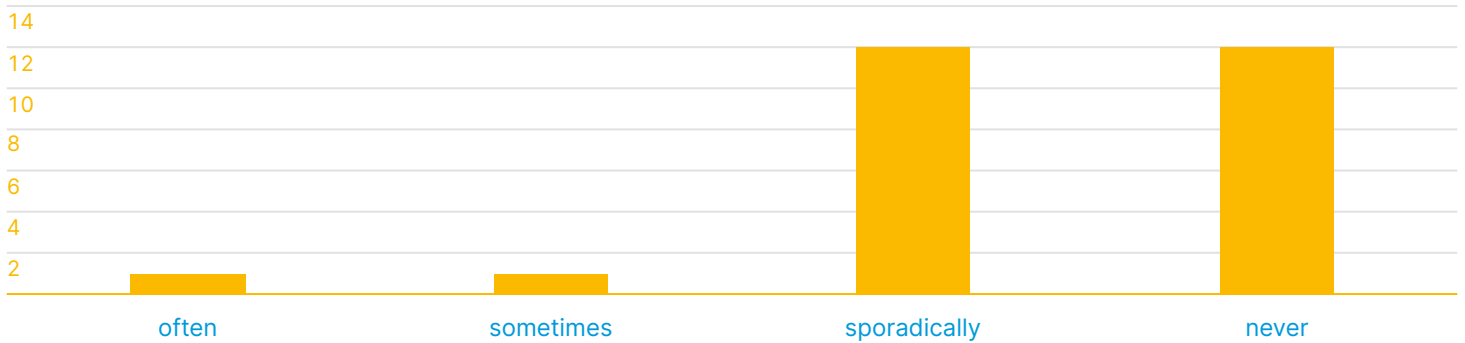


Figure 4
Comparative relevance of triangular cooperation in the Arab region in DAC members' portfolios

Source: Author's own elaboration based on a survey conducted with 26 of 30 DAC members.¹⁰⁷

Compared with my country's triangular cooperation in other world regions, triangular cooperation with countries in the Arab region is ...

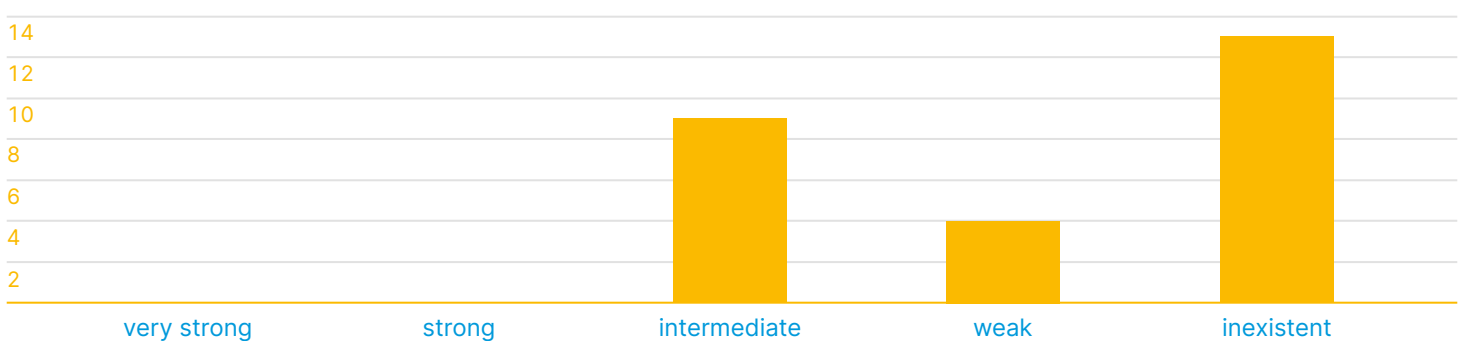
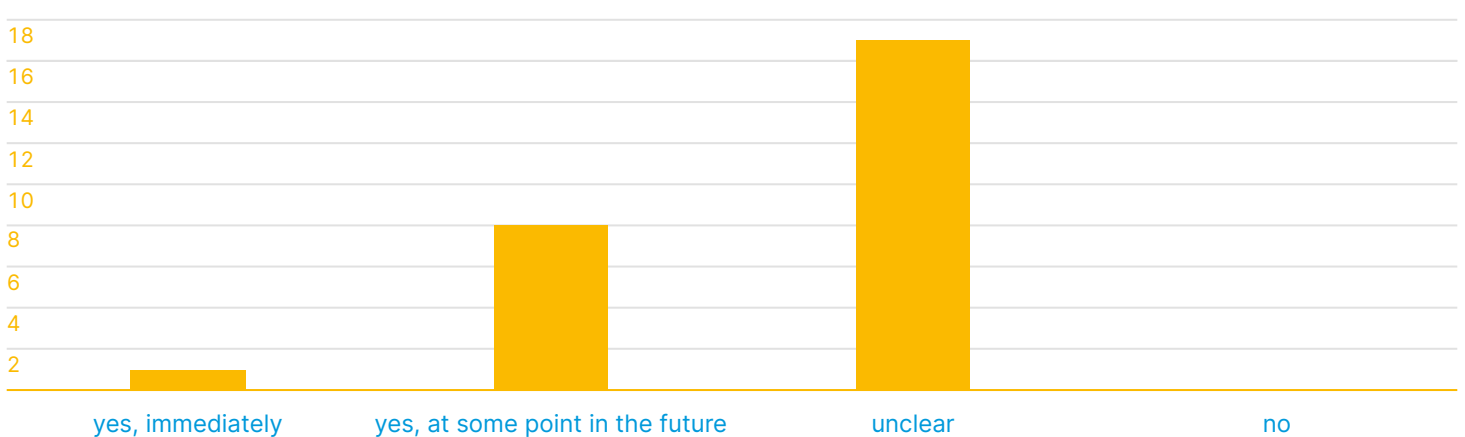


Figure 5
Potential future of DAC members' triangular cooperation in the Arab region

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on a survey conducted with 26 of 30 DAC members.¹⁰⁸

Would your country like to expand triangular cooperation with the Arab region?



106. DAC member representatives completed the survey online, sent written responses via email or were asked survey questions during interviews.

107. DAC member representatives completed the survey online, sent written responses via email or were asked survey questions during interviews.

108. DAC member representatives completed the survey online, sent written responses via email or were asked survey questions during interviews.

Overall, DAC member triangular cooperation in the Arab region has thus been limited, both in absolute terms and relative to triangular engagement in other parts of the world. Reasons for that are, again, varied and related to different factors. For a number of DAC members, triangular cooperation has remained strongly attached to engagement with Latin American countries. While many DAC members, including Germany and Spain, continue to have their strongest triangular links with Latin American partners, they also (try to) use the modality in their engagement with other world regions. Others, such as the European Union, continue with a rather exclusive geographical focus. Stemming partially from the ways in which European Union Directorates-General and their mandates are set up, European Union officials report that it has been difficult to employ the tools used under the European Union's framework for triangular cooperation in Latin America with other world regions.¹⁰⁹ So far, no triangular cooperation focal points are in place in other directorates, including the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations in charge of a substantial number of Arab countries. A recently established European Union cooperation facility with Asian partners also does not include provisions for triangular cooperation.¹¹⁰ So far, detailed discussions on triangular cooperation at the European Union seem to have focused exclusively on Latin America; and there is little indication that this will change in the foreseeable future.

More generally, the strategic geographical priorities of DAC members influence their potential focus and level of engagement with triangular cooperation. Most DAC members, notably those with a long trajectory of providing assistance, have explicit and evolving lists of priority countries. These lists specify, and also limit, the group of countries with which they engage in development assistance.¹¹¹ Norway, for instance, has currently 25 priority countries, notably in Southern and Eastern Africa, Latin America and Asia.¹¹² Arab states, in turn, have not been a Norwegian assistance priority. Still, Norway can report a few triangular initiatives involving Arab states, such as an exchange initiative implemented from 2012 to 2015 through which the Afhad University for Women in Sudan joined the African Physiotherapy

Platform for Learning with Bergen University College.¹¹³ The potential for Norway to expand triangular cooperation in the Arab region, however, is likely to remain limited by general strategic decisions.

In addition to the particular geographical trajectory and focus of triangular cooperation practices, the size of DAC member cooperation portfolios also matters. Representatives from several smaller DAC members, including Czechia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and New Zealand, stated that they had either no or limited experience with triangular cooperation overall and/or no or limited experience with triangular cooperation in the Arab region. DAC members with larger ODA portfolios, in turn, have had at least a basic level of engagement with triangular cooperation in the region, but the nature of engagement and the explicitness of references to “triangular” terminology have differed significantly. The United Kingdom, for instance, has had ongoing engagement on a variety of topics with key Arab providers, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Joint concerns for humanitarian work or Arab partners’ interest in expanding cooperation with Africa have offered key rationales for exploring cooperation options; and a secondee from the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has recently been working with Saudi Arabia’s humanitarian agency.¹¹⁴ However, in contrast to the Global Development Partners Programme of the now defunct Department for International Development – set up under the British government’s Emerging Powers Initiative – that had put an explicit emphasis on triangular cooperation, the FCDO has now endorsed a decentralized strategy through which individual missions are in charge of cooperation modalities.¹¹⁵ This is why there is currently no streamlined ministry-wide approach to triangular cooperation.¹¹⁶

Denmark, in turn, has had experiences with multi-country schemes in the Arab region without considering the language or rationale of triangular cooperation. The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, for instance, engages Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia as so-called focus countries. The main logic of the Partnership Programme requires that organizations

109. Interview with a European Union official.

110. Interview and written exchanges with European Union officials.

111. See Section 4 for the case of Germany.

112. Government of Norway, ‘Partner Countries in Norway’s Development Policy: Executive Summary,’ 2018 [www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/partner_countries/id2621624/].

113. According to Norwegian sources, 28 participants were involved in exchanges of 10 months on average in partner institutions in Norway, Sudan, Tanzania and South Africa. The second phase of the project, scheduled for 2016–2019, was terminated early due to financial irregularities.

114. Interview with a British official, March 2022.

115. On the United Kingdom’s Global Development Partnerships Programme that used to provide funding for triangular cooperation initiatives, see OECD, ‘Building the knowledge base on triangular co-operation: findings from the 2015 OECD survey on triangular co-operation,’ Interim Report, May 2016, p. 14 [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/Interim Report Triangular Co-operation 2015 Survey - May 2016.pdf]. See also Shunichiro Honda and Mihoko Sakai, ‘Triangular Cooperation Mechanisms: A Comparative Study of Germany, Japan and the UK,’ JICA Research Institute, 2014 [www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/jrft3q00000029ts-att/Triangular_Cooperation_Mechanisms_1_for_web.pdf].

116. Interview and written exchanges with British officials between April and August 2022.

– often from the Arab region – that implement activities are actively engaged in all four countries. There have also been some regional activities that have included more than one focus country. While there have been “spillovers”¹¹⁷ and connections between different strands of work in different Arab states, the term “triangular cooperation” has not been used in that context and, as such, has not been a strategic focus. What is more, the regional initiatives under the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme have recently been found to not work as well as country-specific operations. An independent mid-term review in 2020 found that

measuring outcomes and impact of regional activities via established results frameworks was more difficult compared with activities in one of the four focus countries separately. While the review did not identify ways in which the follow-up to regional activities could be improved, it suggested downscaling the latter and putting an even stronger emphasis on country-specific engagement.¹¹⁸ For Denmark, multi-country initiatives, including potential triangular schemes, are thus unlikely to become a strategic focus for engagement with Arab states anytime soon.

③.③ Triangular cooperation among DAC members and Arab partners: concrete initiatives

While triangular cooperation might not have been the most popular component of DAC member engagement with the Arab region, a number of DAC members have explicitly embraced triangular schemes with Arab states, even if only for a limited number of initiatives.¹¹⁹ Portugal, one of the most visible policy advocates for triangular cooperation among DAC members, counts with a limited triangular project portfolio overall but has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on triangular cooperation with Morocco and Egypt. These MoUs provide a broad framework for expressing a general interest in contributing to poverty eradication and sustainable development in Lusophone countries. Portuguese officials have been in conversations with Moroccan and Egyptian counterparts to explore joint capacity development initiatives in Mozambique on health and fisheries, sectors in which Morocco and Egypt have relevant expertise.¹²⁰

Belgium has more substantive experience in supporting triangular schemes on the ground in the Arab region. From 2014 to 2019, it operated a €400,000 support fund for promoting triangular cooperation in collaboration with Morocco, targeting Belgium’s ODA partner countries in francophone sub-Saharan Africa. Training activities and the transfer of know-how in different areas were implemented by Morocco together with Belgium’s cooperation implementation agency. Partly based on this experience, Belgium is currently in the

process of setting up Link Up Africa, a similar initiative funded through European Union resources.¹²¹ France has also joined Moroccan counterparts and other partners in North Africa to support the Initiative for the Adaptation of African Agriculture to Climate Change with a grant of €1 million.¹²² As this initiative builds on South-South support schemes focusing on food security, farmers’ living conditions and capacity building,¹²³ France’s financial contribution reflects a triangular setup where the “traditional donor” supports cooperation among developing countries through financial contributions.

The Republic of Korea, in turn, has reported triangular cooperation initiatives with Egypt, the State of Palestine and, again, Morocco. With Morocco, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) set up a project to support the automotive sectors in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal and Tunisia through technical and vocational education and training. Building on a previous bilateral project between the Republic of Korea and Morocco that had been dedicated to the establishment of the Advanced Automobile Training Institute in Casablanca in 2013, the two countries have offered multi-year trainings directed at government officials and technical personnel from the four beneficiary countries to support formulating vocational training action plans. A follow-up phase, planned to run until 2024 with a budget of \$6 million, focuses

117. Interview with a Danish official, February 2022.

118. Ibid.

119. A general challenge regarding the analysis of concrete triangular cooperation initiatives – in the Arab region and beyond – is the limited availability of systematic reporting data, let alone evaluations that provide evidence on (the lack of) development-related impact. See Section 5.

120. Interview with a Portuguese official, February 2022.

121. Written exchanges with Belgian officials, March 2022.

122. Written exchange with a French official, May 2022.

123. United Nations, ‘Initiative for the Adaptation of African Agriculture to Climate Change,’ 2022 [<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/initiative-adaptation-african-agriculture-climate-change>].

on supporting vocational education instructors from different African countries with technological know-how.¹²⁴ Identified as one of KOICA's best practices, this project has served as an important reference for KOICA efforts to take a more strategic approach to triangular initiatives. As a KOICA official put it during an interview:

“Creating new concepts like triangular cooperation is good but takes time. It needs consultation with many partners. Having a best practice helps to broaden its reach, scale up and make people understand what [triangular cooperation] looks like [in practice].”¹²⁵

Smaller DAC members, notably those in Central and Eastern Europe, overall have had a more limited cooperation experience than their counterparts in East Asia, North America and Western Europe. Their restricted engagement with triangular cooperation in the Arab region is thus mostly a function of their general trajectory, even though many of them do count with concrete examples of triangular-like engagement. Slovakia, for instance, has implemented a small humanitarian project for Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees in Lebanon. While this would not typically count as a triangular project, it brings together a DAC member with stakeholders from two Arab states and provides a reference for similar Slovak projects in other parts of the region, such as one planned with Syrian refugees in Iraq.¹²⁶ In a similar vein, Slovenia has been implementing a number of small-scale projects, with budgets of about €50,000, in Lebanon and Jordan for Syrian refugees.¹²⁷ While Slovenia has been explicit in stating that they have not engaged in triangular cooperation, neither in the Arab region nor elsewhere,¹²⁸ collaboration for establishing support structures with and for stakeholders from two Arab states could provide a reference and starting point for contributing to a more full-fledged triangular cooperation initiative.

Among DAC members in Central Europe, Poland and Hungary have recently been more actively engaged with triangular-like formats, even though their triangular initiatives do not always resonate with United Nations and OECD definitions. While Poland has had limited experience with triangular cooperation so far, it reports two small projects in the humanitarian sector, both with Arab countries as beneficiaries:¹²⁹ one implemented together with Germany in Morocco (2019), and one with Hungary in Jordan supporting Palestinian and Syrian refugees (2021). In the framework of the latter, Hungary provided technical equipment to 13 hospitals while Poland provided medical assistance by sending doctors to refugee camps.¹³⁰ Plans to set up a trilateral project with Hungary in Lebanon are currently on hold due to the war in Ukraine. As part of Visegrád Group endeavours (with with Czechia and Slovakia), Hungary and Poland have also contributed to initiatives in Libya with Italy and in Morocco with Germany.¹³¹ While strictly speaking these projects do not fall under established definitions of triangular cooperation, they provide evidence for the variety of approaches that are taken to be triangular or trilateral cooperation by DAC members. Collaboration among DAC providers with a third, ODA-recipient country has been particularly prominent as an alternative approach to understanding triangular cooperation, notably among smaller Central European DAC members.

A more straightforward example of triangular cooperation has been Hungary's partnership with Egypt. In 2021, the two countries signed an MoU with the intention of collaborating on international development cooperation with third countries which, for Hungary, need to be ODA-eligible. While the thematic focus has remained broad, geographically Hungaro-Egyptian cooperation is to be directed at the African continent. Building on Egyptian experience in collaborating with fellow African countries, Hungary and Egypt are currently formulating a joint healthcare project in Ghana. Still in its early stages, an initial pilot is set to focus on the Ghanaian healthcare sector, with Egypt offering medical assistance and Hungary providing technical support.

124. For details on this project, see South-South Galaxy, 'Triangular Cooperation in Vocational Training among Morocco, Republic of Korea and Four African Countries: Providing training courses for government officials and technical instructors,' n.d. [<https://my.southsouth-galaxy.org/en/solutions/detail/triangular-cooperation-in-vocational-training-among-morocco-republic-of-korea-and-four-african-countries>].

125. Interview with a Korean official, February 2022.

126. Interview with a Slovak official, February 2022.

127. Data set provided by the Slovak foreign ministry on cooperation with Arab states, April 2022.

128. Written exchange with a Slovenian official, April 2022. As highlighted above, Slovenia makes a clear distinction between triangular cooperation and co-financing.

129. In light of the war in Ukraine, the humanitarian unit at the Polish foreign ministry was unable to provide more detailed information.

130. Interview with Hungarian officials, February 2022.

131. Ibid.

As Hungarian representatives highlighted:¹³²

“They [Egypt] have more experience on the African continent. This [triangular cooperation] is a fairly new cooperation model for Hungary [...] If this project [with Egypt] turns out to be in line with our strategic and political priorities [...] maybe this can be a template for future cooperation with other countries.”

In this constellation, the Egyptians initiated the project, via the Egyptian Agency for Partnership and Development (EADP). DAC member Hungary has thus been learning from Egypt – the pivotal partner – on how to engage with triangular cooperation schemes. For

Egypt, Hungary has been one of the few countries with which triangular cooperation has been put in practice. “We get a lot of requests,” an Egyptian official stated during an interview, “but triangular cooperation projects are never easy and require compromise; most countries that express interest [...] don’t follow through.”¹³³ Hungary’s expanding engagement with Egypt and other partners in the Arab region suggests that, beyond the OECD repository and the often-discussed experiences of larger DAC members, a more in-depth engagement with more recent experiences of smaller DAC members might yield insightful clues to the potential and future directions of triangular cooperation.

③.④ Challenges for triangular cooperation among DAC members and Arab partners

A variety of concrete initiatives notwithstanding, the overall limited role triangular cooperation has played for DAC members in their collaboration with Arab partners suggests that certain elements impede the expansion of engagement. Indeed, interviews highlighted normative considerations, differences in cooperation practices and the use of different funding modalities as central factors that, while relevant across the board, also shape triangular cooperation prospects. Although some DAC member representatives perceive considerable differences between their normative frameworks – including their understanding of human rights – and those of Arab partners, engagement with Arab states takes a prominent place in some DAC members’ political strategies, also visible in their joint bilateral cooperation portfolios. When it comes to introducing new engagement mechanisms such as triangular formats, however, cooperation officials can face scepticism of colleagues and superiors that builds on a combination of general normative concerns and an aversion to little known cooperation modalities. As one DAC member official put it, “sometimes [...] I feel like human rights issues are a thought-terminating cliché. No matter what suggestion [for collaboration with Arab partners] comes up, in the end everything can be muted because of human rights concerns.”¹³⁴ Another official highlighted that, indeed, “the devil is in the detail: we need to take human rights records into account when intensifying relations, and then we need to find areas that are less controversial, to make sure a [triangular cooperation] project is not mired in controversy from the very first day.”¹³⁵

While not unique to triangular partnerships, normative considerations add to constellations that can make closer collaboration between DAC members and Arab providers anything but a straightforward cause. Thematic areas for DAC members’ triangular cooperation in the Arab region have thus tried to stay away from terrain perceived as too controversial. As the examples discussed above show, themes have ranged from humanitarian support to industrial productivity and often focus on capacity building and training. Water-related questions have been particularly prominent for DAC-Arab collaboration. The Netherlands, for instance, has engaged with Jordan and the United Arab Emirates on the water-food-energy nexus and established trilateral working groups on water, energy and trade with Israel and the State of Palestine. While the latter initiative is playing out against the backdrop of a highly politicized context, it has included meetings with technical experts from the Israeli and Palestinian line ministries in charge of issues related to water, energy and border crossings.¹³⁶

Switzerland, in turn, has championed water-related issues in the context of the Arab-DAC Dialogue. Together with Kuwait, and in coordination with members of the Arab Coordination Group, Switzerland has been leading the Arab-DAC Dialogue task force on water and sanitation, currently the most active Dialogue-related process at the technical level.¹³⁷ The task force has engaged in scoping exercises in Guinea and Tunisia, also to explore options for joint triangular initiatives.¹³⁸

132. Ibid.

133. Interview with an Egyptian official, March 2022.

134. Interview with a DAC member representative, February 2022.

135. Interview with a DAC member representative, March 2022.

136. Interview with a Dutch official, February 2022.

137. Interview with an OECD official, April 2022.

138. Interviews with OECD and Swiss officials, March and April 2022.

For a while, Switzerland tried to proactively explore triangular cooperation as a tool for engaging Arab providers.¹³⁹ A staff position was created in Abu Dhabi to promote dialogue and explore concrete options for collaboration, also with reference to the Arab-DAC Dialogue task force. The practical operationalization of the general intent to work together, however, turned out to be more challenging than anticipated, notably because of different cooperation approaches. Arab providers usually work directly with beneficiary governments and often provide loans. Switzerland, however, has moved away from government budget support and often works through grants for non-governmental bodies. While Arab state funds are ready to provide funding to ministries in partner countries, Switzerland requires intermediaries that manage the funds. These differing foci have made it difficult to find common ground for joint projects. At some point, those in charge of the global water programme at headquarters in Bern decided to let go. “It wasn’t worth the hassle; our goal was to set up reasonable, efficient water projects,” and attempts to make triangular schemes work had turned out to be too complicated for that purpose.¹⁴⁰ In the end, triangular cooperation was seen as “not particularly dynamic, we tried but it has somewhat faltered.”¹⁴¹

The challenge of how to deal with differing approaches and the often-unpredictable differences in pace across partners was often mentioned during interviews, and not only with regard to the differences between DAC members and Arab providers. Poland, for instance, experienced a long and complex process for its small education project with Germany and Morocco in 2019 where bureaucratic exigencies in the three countries made design and implementation a challenging undertaking. As a Polish official reported: “The project was successful in the end [...] but the process was so long that the topic of the project changed over time; we had

a year of negotiations. The time spent on it compared to the outcome was not entirely convincing.”¹⁴² In its trilateral initiative with Hungary and Jordan in 2021, in turn, Poland implemented its part of the project independently from Hungary’s project component. Working in coordination but independently from each other made the process easier and smoother, and they successfully finalised the project together.¹⁴³

Based on what DAC member representatives reported during interviews, the Polish-Hungarian example reflects the more general experience that a certain degree of parallelism in triangular projects can make the implementation of activities easier. Although projects are coordinated among all players involved, different providers implement their parts independently. While this can lead to other challenges – notably in terms of how different project components relate to or build on each other – it makes implementation more straightforward and allows different providers to make use of their established procedures. Whether this kind of parallel and coordinated bilateral engagement qualifies as triangular cooperation depends on whom one asks, and arguably on the players involved. Poland and Hungary providing coordinated support in Lebanon, for instance, might fall outside the definitional contours of triangular cooperation because none of the two providers is a Southern country (see the United Nations working definition) nor builds on recent experience immediately relevant for the project context and thus could be said to act as a pivotal partner (see the OECD definition). The coordinated implementation of two different, bilateral project strands by a DAC member and an Arab provider is arguably closer to the logic of triangular cooperation as outlined in the most relevant United Nations and OECD documents and also resonates with cooperation practices in triangular cooperation funds set up by an increasing number of DAC members.¹⁴⁴

139. Interviews with Swiss officials, February and March 2022.

140. Switzerland has had similar experiences with the exploration of triangular schemes with CIDCA in China; interview with a Swiss official, March 2022.

141. Interview with a Swiss official, March 2022.

142. Interview with a Polish official, March 2022.

143. Ibid.

144. Interview with a German official, January 2022.

4

DAC champions on triangular cooperation with the Arab region: Germany and Japan

Existing data provides an incomplete picture of triangular cooperation activities with Arab states, undermining a systematic comparison of individual DAC members. Nonetheless, the engagement of two DAC members stands out as particularly noteworthy: Germany and Japan.¹⁴⁵ Both countries have not only been triangular cooperation champions at the global level but have also visibly committed to and employed the modality in their cooperation practices with Arab partners. To provide more detailed insights into their engagement patterns, and thus respond to demands voiced by other DAC

member representatives to learn more about how their peers approach triangular cooperation in the region, this section presents details on Germany's and Japan's policies on triangular cooperation, their approaches to triangular cooperation with Arab states and their concrete triangular cooperation projects in the Arab region. Highlighting the particularities of both providers, this section offers a more in-depth view of how Germany and Japan approach triangular schemes in the region and what Arab states might expect in terms of concrete engagement options.

4.1 Germany

Germany reports having implemented triangular cooperation projects for almost four decades. As the line ministry in charge of the bulk of Germany's development cooperation, BMZ published the first comprehensive policy paper on triangular cooperation in 2013. As an updated version, a 2022 Position Paper currently provides the authoritative reference for BMZ and its implementing organizations, including GIZ. For BMZ, a triangular cooperation project is "jointly planned, financed and implemented by one developing beneficiary country, one pivotal partner and one facilitating partner" while "[t]he latter two may be either industrialized or developing countries."¹⁴⁶ This is arguably one of the most specific and demanding definitions currently in use among DAC members. It not only specifies three

roles in line with the GPI definition and highlights the fact that a triangular cooperation initiative has to be jointly planned and implemented, but it also requires all parties to contribute to financing the initiative.¹⁴⁷

Contrary to more sceptic perspectives discussed in the previous section, BMZ embraces triangular cooperation as a modality of choice and emphatically presents it as "an opportunity to engage in practical ways to link North-South and South-South cooperation."¹⁴⁸ Official German policy thus presents a staunchly positive picture of triangular cooperation as a modality that "fosters horizontal relationships between partners, with all sides contributing something, learning from each other and taking joint action" and, as a corollary, argues

¹⁴⁵. For an early study that compares German and Japanese (together with British) approaches to triangular cooperation, see Shunichiro Honda and Mihoko Sakai, 'Triangular Cooperation Mechanisms: A Comparative Study of Germany, Japan and the UK,' JICA Research Institute, 2014 [www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/jrft3q00000029ts-att/Triangular_Cooperation_Mechanisms_1_for_web.pdf].

¹⁴⁶. BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022, p. 3 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

¹⁴⁷. The financing dimension is not part of GPI guidelines, see Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation, 'Voluntary Guidelines for Effective Triangular Cooperation,' 2019 [www.effectivecooperation.org/system/files/2019-08/VOLUNTARY%20GUIDELINES%20FOR%20EFFECTIVE%20TRIANGULAR%20COOPERATION_1.pdf]. While beneficiary countries' in-kind contributions also count as "funding," Germany aims at making sure that all partners – including beneficiaries – contribute financially to triangular projects.

¹⁴⁸. BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022, p. 3 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

that “greater use is to be made of triangular cooperation in development cooperation.”¹⁴⁹ BMZ explicitly states that Germany’s facilitating role should “not be limited to the mere financing of South–South cooperation” and instead highlights that “Germany views its role in triangular cooperation as that of a learning partner, too.”

A comprehensive independent evaluation of Germany’s triangular cooperation portfolio published in 2020 found that triangular cooperation projects usually delivered successfully at the output level – on capacity development, for instance – but that it was often difficult to establish to what extent they had contributed to broader development outcomes and impact. Given the low level of resources invested in triangular cooperation overall, however, the evaluation highlighted the general efficiency of triangular measures and their “potential [...] to achieve long-term impacts on the political-strategic dimension.”¹⁵⁰ For the German government, triangular cooperation indeed “increases [...] political and strategic credibility and legitimacy when it comes to ideas on how to make development more participatory, sustainable, and effective.” It also allows Germany to identify new partners for global initiatives, use its funding to leverage additional resources from external sources and explore alternative ways of working with countries where its bilateral development cooperation is being phased out.¹⁵¹

Germany’s approach to triangular cooperation with the Arab region

In geographical terms, Germany’s engagement with triangular cooperation focuses on its revised list of partner countries, ten of which belong to the Arab region as defined in this study: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the State of Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.¹⁵² In principle, these ten countries can act as beneficiaries in German triangular cooperation; they – and all other countries in the region – can (also) act

as pivotal partners for the benefit of any of Germany’s 60 partner countries worldwide.¹⁵³ In terms of triangular engagement with the Arab region, Germany set up its regional flagship programme ‘Cooperation with Arab Donors’ (CAD) in 2009.¹⁵⁴ The main objective of CAD has centred around strengthening and expanding cooperation between Germany and Arab providers at the operational level in order to build relationships, foster dialogue and improve the impact of cooperation for beneficiary countries.¹⁵⁵ Activities have included studies, events, capacity building measures and joint projects, many with a triangular setup or a triangular component. In these triangular cooperation initiatives, both pivotal and beneficiary partners have usually come from the Arab region, collaborating on issues such as civil society capacity building or financial inclusion. The pivotal partner provides funding and expertise, and BMZ – via GIZ – contributes through both funding and technical support. Over the years, CAD has offered a wide range of support functions, including funding, advisory services, training and equipment;¹⁵⁶ and CAD-related initiatives have usually included a co-financing arrangement with Arab providers.

A project with the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND) as pivotal partner, for instance, ran from 2015 to 2018 in Yemen and was set up to promote women’s financial inclusion, building on the Programme’s experience in promoting and supporting microfinance facilities in the Arab region. The \$600,000 project budget was equally shared between GIZ and AGFUND.¹⁵⁷ Another example that highlights how complementarities can play out in a triangular project is the ‘Safe and Creative School Spaces’ initiative, supporting Syrian and Jordanian students in schools that had taken in a substantial number of Syrian refugees.¹⁵⁸ The three-year project, also running from 2015 to 2018, brought together GIZ under the CAD programme (supporting teacher training and extra-curricular activities), the OPEC Fund for International

149. Ibid. Other policy documents and analyses on the matter are usually somewhat more cautious, stating that triangular cooperation “can help achieve” development goals or “can be useful” (see Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, pp. 5 and 10, emphasis added [<https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en>]).

150. Kaplan, Marcus, Busemann, Dennis and Wirtgen, Kristina, ‘Trilateral cooperation in German development cooperation,’ German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, 2020, p. vii [https://www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Berichte/2020_Dreieckskooperation/DEval-2020-Trilateral-cooperation.pdf].

151. BMZ, ‘Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,’ Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

152. BMZ, ‘Random Selection of countries,’ n.d. [www.bmz.de/en/countries/36778-36778].

153. See BMZ, ‘Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,’ Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

154. German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH (GIZ), ‘Cooperation with Arab Donors (CAD),’ n.d. [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/14363.html].

155. Interviews with German representatives, January and February 2022; see GIZ XX.

156. German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH (GIZ), ‘Cooperation with Arab Donors (CAD),’ n.d. [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/14363.html]; see Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 22 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en>].

157. Interview with a German official, February 2022.

158. See GIZ, ‘Madrasati – Safe and Creative School Spaces,’ 2016 [www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/Madrasati-safe-creative-schools-June-2016.pdf].

Development (funding the maintenance and renovation of school buildings) and the Queen Rania Jordan River Foundation's Madrasati Initiative (supporting school renovations).

After several extensions over the course of 12 years, the CAD programme is currently being brought to a close. Building on this multi-year experience, Germany has now embarked on strengthening cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank to expand its engagement in the region. A letter of intent signed in March 2022 is setting the foundation for more concerted engagement, including joint triangular initiatives. The emerging framework with the Islamic Development Bank is set to replace CAD as the dominant programmatic reference for Germany's triangular engagement across the Arab region. Given the variety of initiatives implemented under the CAD programme as well as its overall duration, a detailed (impact) evaluation of CAD projects – with an explicit focus on triangular components – would provide relevant insights for the next steps of DAC members' triangular cooperation with Arab partners.

Germany's triangular cooperation projects in the Arab region

Over the last decade, the CAD programme has been Germany's main mechanism for funding – usually rather small-scale – triangular cooperation projects in the Arab region (Table 6). With a budget integrated into the CAD programme structure, the typical process towards the setup of a triangular project consisted of GIZ and an Arab provider coordinating their support for a beneficiary country in the region. Overall, GIZ tried to always leverage the same amount as its Arab counterparts, usually less than €300,000 from each side per project. Funding was not provided through co-financing via a joint channel but unfolded in parallel,¹⁵⁹ with both providers offering separate grants to implementing partners, such as local NGOs. In the State of Palestine, for instance, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and GIZ implemented a joint scheme for supporting young start-up entrepreneurs in 2019 and 2020. Following a similar logic, Germany

supported Tunisia and the State of Palestine with the implementation of their financial inclusion strategies. Co-funded by BMZ and the AGFUND, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research, a Tunisian NGO, provided financial inclusion trainings for more than 400 young entrepreneurs in the State of Palestine and Tunisia and trained trainers; and more than 100 entrepreneurs received loans to start or expand their businesses.¹⁶⁰ Beyond this kind of output-level data, however, evidence on the impact of individual projects has been scarce. The 2020 evaluation of Germany's triangular cooperation did not include projects conducted under the CAD programme, and except for Morocco and Tunisia – listed as African partners – initiatives with countries from the Arab region were not taken into account.¹⁶¹

A more recent example of a triangular cooperation initiative that successfully built on the comparative strengths of Germany and its partners and thus provides insights into the potential impact of triangular schemes is a technology transfer from Singapore for the production of Filtering Face Piece (FFP) masks in Jordan. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Jordan needed to enhance its capacity to produce protective equipment, notably FFP-2 masks. The Islamic Development Bank had started supporting mask production technology transfer between Singapore and Jordan and reached out to Germany to inquire whether BMZ was interested in co-financing. Germany decided to financially support capacity building measures on mask certification for Jordanian stakeholders. GIZ provided technical support on FFP mask tests to the Royal Scientific Society in Jordan in line with international certification standards, enabling these products to be shared across the region. Together with the Islamic Development Bank as the main facilitator and Singapore as the pivotal partner sharing its mask production technology, Germany thus joined an innovative partnership to support Jordan in its pandemic response. As Jordanian stakeholders highlighted during interviews, this cooperation was particularly beneficial because it not only responded to concrete pandemic-related needs but also provided the foundation for scaling up local mask production for export purposes.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹. See the above discussion on Poland's experience with parallel implementation.

¹⁶⁰. See BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

¹⁶¹. See Kaplan, Marcus, Busemann, Dennis and Wirtgen, Kristina, 'Trilateral cooperation in German development cooperation,' German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, 2020 [https://www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Berichte/2020_Dreieckskooperation/DEval-2020-Trilateral-cooperation.pdf].

¹⁶². Interviews with Jordanian officials, May 2022. While this study focuses on the experiences and perspectives of DAC members, future studies are invited to engage in more depth with the voices of pivotal and beneficiary partners.

Table 6

Triangular projects under Germany's Cooperation with Arab Donors (CAD) programme (2010-2020)

Project	Sector	Duration	Beneficiary partner	Pivotal partner
Access of women to micro credits and support for victims of violence	Gender and financial inclusion	2010-2013	Yemen	AGFUND
Access of women to health and legal services	Gender and social inclusion	2011-2013	Tunisia and Yemen	AGFUND
Regional youth saving initiative	Youth and financial inclusion	2012-2014	Egypt, Morocco and Yemen	Silatech (Qatar)
Master study programmes on water resource management and renewable energy	Education and environment and energy	2014-2016	Different countries in the Arab region	OPEC Fund for International Development and Arab Fund
ARABTERM (online technical dictionary)	Access to knowledge	2008-2016	Different countries in the Arab region	OPEC Fund for International Development
Madrasati Initiative	Education and social inclusion	2015-2018	Jordan	OPEC Fund for International Development
Financial inclusion for young entrepreneurs	Youth and financial inclusion	2017-2018	State of Palestine, Tunisia	AGFUND, Saudi Fund
Supporting financial inclusion of women	Women and financial inclusion	2015-2018	Yemen	AGFUND
Development of rural and marginalized regions	Rural development	2016-2019	Jordan	Islamic Development Bank
Support for the setup of start-ups for youth	Youth and economic inclusion	2018-2020	State of Palestine	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD)
Improvement of capacities in information and communication technologies	Information and communication technologies	2019-2020	Jordan	Kuwait Fund

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on data provided by GIZ.

Germany: a strategic provider ready to expand triangular engagement

By explicitly combining both political-strategic and developmental objectives, Germany's triangular cooperation approach acknowledges not only project-related developmental outcomes of triangular initiatives but also their potential impact on relationship building, mutual learning and cooperation systems. Overall, Germany has embraced triangular cooperation as a modality that, ideally, leads to a "win-win-win situation for all partners, with synergies being generated through their joint efforts."¹⁶³ While evidence for development-related impact has been scarce, the German government holds that triangular cooperation can be of strategic value not only for Germany's interest in expanding partnerships but also for pivotal partners in the Arab region. The latest German strategy document argues that the latter can "gain experience working with countries which are not among their established cooperation partners," citing an example of German cooperation with Morocco (as pivotal partner) and Costa Rica (as beneficiary) on the protection of tropical and subtropical dry forests.¹⁶⁴

The basic separation between some Arab states, notably Gulf countries, being exclusively engaged as pivotal partners while others, such as Yemen, are exclusively approached as beneficiaries is in line with the DAC's general two-track approach to the Arab region (see Section 3), reflecting the heterogeneity of development realities, needs and institutional capacities. While most of Germany's triangular projects have so far taken place with partners in Latin America, notably through Germany's Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean,¹⁶⁵ BMZ explicitly refers to "demand for similar activities in the MENA region and in Africa."¹⁶⁶ As a German representative put it during an interview, Germany's triangular cooperation with Arab states "wants to contribute to strengthening the capacity of beneficiary countries. There is no limitation on sectors or modes of cooperation." Building on the CAD experience, and in light of the expanding collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, the stage thus appears set for Germany to expand triangular cooperation opportunities with countries across the Arab region.

④.② Japan

Japan has engaged with what is now referred to as South-South and triangular cooperation since the 1950s. Official accounts underline that in the decade following the Second World War, "Japan itself was a developing country supported by World Bank and other aid organizations, and therefore Japan's assistance then was a form of South-South Cooperation."¹⁶⁷ Building on this experience, Japan's 2015 Development Cooperation Charter highlights that triangular cooperation involves "emerging and other countries" in capitalizing on "assets that have been accumulated in the recipient countries" during Japan's bilateral development cooperation.¹⁶⁸ Japan's 2021 White Paper on

Development Cooperation defines triangular cooperation as support to South-South schemes in which cooperation is "provided by relatively advanced developing countries to other developing countries, utilizing their own development experiences, human resources, skills, funds and knowledge."¹⁶⁹ With reference to these policy frameworks, South-South and triangular cooperation has been regularly mentioned in JICA's annual plans¹⁷⁰ and the country assistance policies provided by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁷¹ In the words of a JICA official, triangular cooperation "has become an integral part of how we do cooperation with partner countries."¹⁷²

163. BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022, p. 7 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

164. BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022, p. 12 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

165. GIZ, 'Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean,' n.d. [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/12942.html].

166. BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022, p. 15 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

167. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), 'Thematic Guidelines on South-South Cooperation,' 2005.

168. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Development Cooperation Charter,' 2015 [www.mofa.go.jp/files/000067701.pdf].

169. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'White Paper on Development Cooperation,' 2020 [www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/page22_001470.html].

170. For the most recent example see JICA, 'JICA Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2021,' 2020 [www.jica.go.jp/english/about/organization/c8h0vm000000ks38-att/annual_plan2021.pdf].

171. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Country Assistance Policy for Respective Countries,' 2022 [www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/assistance/country2.html].

172. Interview with a JICA official, January 2022.

In programmatic-strategic terms, Japan has translated this focus into Partnership Programmes that have offered a more comprehensive framework for collaboration with key partner countries – most of them typically classified as emerging providers – on joint cooperation activities in third countries. In addition to four Arab states (see below), Japan's 12 Partnership Programme countries include Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico in Latin America and Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand in Asia. More generally, and across locales, JICA has invested in implementing training programmes, dispatching experts and hosting international conferences on related issues. As a core member of the GPI, JICA regularly participates in international meetings dedicated to exchanging and systematizing triangular cooperation experiences. While JICA's internal project database allows for identifying initiatives with triangular component – notably information on the number of people who have attended third-country trainings as participants and experts – JICA does not publicly report aggregated financial figures on its triangular cooperation portfolio.¹⁷³ So far, Japan is also among those DAC members that have not yet reported CRS data on triangular cooperation to the OECD (see Section 2).

Japan's approach to triangular cooperation in the Arab region

As in other world regions, JICA's approach to triangular cooperation with Arab states has often built on existing bilateral cooperation experiences. In line with Japan's 2015 Development Cooperation Charter cited above, triangular cooperation tries to “take advantage of expertise, human resources and their networks [...] accumulated in the recipient countries during the many years of Japan's development cooperation,”¹⁷⁴ and thus scales up successful approaches from Japan's bilateral work. As part of this general pattern, a key component of Japan's triangular cooperation portfolio has been the pooling of experts within regions, allowing JICA to establish networks of practitioners familiar with the context in which development-related interventions take place.¹⁷⁵

With regard to cooperation in what Japanese documents refer to as the Middle East, Japan's 2020 White Paper highlights that “[r]ealizing peace and stability in this region is extremely important [...] as it has significant impacts on both regional and global stability and prosperity.”¹⁷⁶ Here, as elsewhere, emerging provider countries have been a cornerstone of Japanese engagement. The Japanese government has signed Partnership Programmes that include an explicit focus on triangular schemes with four Arab states: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia (Table 7).¹⁷⁷

All four programmes build on a substantial collaboration trajectory and centre on jointly providing training in third countries, notably in Africa and the Middle East. While Japan explicitly welcomes requests from all countries across the Arab region, the four Partnership Programmes offer dedicated frameworks for planning and implementing triangular initiatives. With Tunisia, the agreement on setting up a Partnership Programme in 1999 marked the starting point for collaboration on training, particularly for francophone countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Collaboration with Egypt has not only been the longest but arguably the most advanced triangular cooperation partnership. JICA and Egypt began collaborating as early as 1985 with a training programme for other African countries; joint initiatives with countries in the Arab region started in 1994. The Partnership Programme set up in 1998 with Egypt was thus only one among several steps in an expanding bilateral commitment to joint triangular action, updated through another MoU signed in 2019 on the promotion of triangular cooperation.¹⁷⁸

173. Interview with a JICA official, January 2022.

174. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Development Cooperation Charter,' 2015 [www.mofa.go.jp/files/000067701.pdf].

175. Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, 'Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,' OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, pp. 24f [https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en].

176. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'White Paper on Development Cooperation,' 2020, p. 126 [www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/page22_001470.html].

177. Ibid, p. 24.

178. Interviews and exchanges with Japanese officials, January-August 2022.

Japan's triangular cooperation projects in the Arab region

Beyond these programmatic frameworks, Japan's triangular cooperation projects usually evolve in line with partner demands and regional circumstances. A JICA official stated during an interview:

“Just to give an example, some neighbouring countries, facing similar development challenges, wish to benefit from the cooperation between Tunisia and JICA. The inception of triangular cooperation in Tunisia can be based on either a request from such neighbouring countries or a proposition from Tunisian interlocutors of JICA's projects who are eager to showcase and share Tunisia's experiences with their regional peers.” ¹⁷⁹

In practical terms, JICA efforts to support the training and pooling of experts provide the basis for matching and dispatching specialists for often short but targeted third-country trainings.¹⁸⁰ The expansion of these training sessions has partly built on two cross-country programmes – Kaizen and PREPARE – that initially took off in other regions, notably on the African continent, and have also included Arab states. Building on a decades-long trajectory of supporting private sector firms with capacity building measures in Asia, JICA's Africa Kaizen Initiative¹⁸¹ was set up in 2009 to support African small and medium enterprises with quality control and productivity enhancement. Through Kaizen, 25 African countries have received support, some like Egypt and Tunisia through the implementation of projects and others, including Algeria and Morocco, by sending participants to training programmes in Japan.¹⁸² The Partnership for Building Resilience against Public Health Emergencies through Advanced Research and Education (PREPARE), in turn, has provided support for improving testing capacity and setting up disease surveillance systems. As part of PREPARE, Egypt's Suez Canal University has been part of a network of research institutions that provides training for laboratory technicians and government officials in African countries, most recently in the field of emerging disease control,

including during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁸³

Across the board, Egypt has been a key partner for Japan's triangular cooperation, covering all engagement mechanisms JICA currently has on offer. By scaling up bilateral projects with Egypt and Jordan, for instance, JICA has cooperated with Egyptian and Jordanian partners in supporting communities in Syria and the State of Palestine in the water and sanitation sectors.¹⁸⁴ Many training missions with Egypt have a strong bilateral component, with JICA playing a limited role. In 2021–2022, for instance, Egypt provided two training courses for Iraqi counterparts, one on electricity and one on water resource management. Another three-year project (2022–2024) recently set up by Japan and Egypt aims to support Yemen's health sector. With a focus on infection prevention and control in healthcare facilities, the faculty of medicine and the university hospital of Fayoum University in northern Egypt are set to deliver training courses to strengthen the capacity of Yemeni healthcare providers to deal with healthcare-associated infections.¹⁸⁵

For JICA's partners in Egypt, cooperation with Japan has not only been the most long-term engagement on triangular cooperation but also the only solid long-term scheme with a DAC member to date. Among the rather comprehensive conceptualization of the approach to triangular cooperation championed by the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development, Japan has so far been the only partner with whom triangular initiatives have regularly been implemented. Training for third-country representatives in Egyptian institutions have taken place in different sectors – from rice cultivation to HIV prevention – with expenses shouldered between Egypt and Japan. As an Egyptian official stated during an interview:

“JICA has been our most important partner [for triangular cooperation] [...] Setting up a triangular cooperation project is challenging. The most important thing is compromise. We give, they give [...] With JICA it works. It is going well because we have the same objectives.” ¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁹. Interview with JICA officials, January 2022.

¹⁸⁰. Evaluations of these targeted interventions usually focus on the output level (number of officials trained, for instance) and take stakeholder perceptions into account. For an evaluation of JICA's triangular cooperation portfolio published in 2013, see Nomura Research Institute, 'Evaluation of triangular cooperation, Third Party Evaluation Report 2012, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013 [https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/evaluation/FY2012/text-pdf/tc_summary.pdf].

¹⁸¹. In Japanese, kaizen refers to “techniques and tools for improvement of quality and productivity;” JICA, 'Kaizen Handbook (Summary),' 2018, p. 5 [www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2018/c8h0vm0000d1y0h4-att/KaizenHandbook_Summary.pdf].

¹⁸². JICA, 'Africa Kaizen Initiative – Japanese management approach of continuous improvement to enhance quality and productivity,' n.d. [https://my.southsouth-galaxy.org/en/solutions/detail/kaizen].

¹⁸³. JICA, 'Partnership for Building Resilience against Public Health Emergencies through Advanced Research and Education (PREPARE) – Initiative to strengthen international networks to tackle infectious diseases,' n.d. [https://my.southsouth-galaxy.org/en/solutions/detail/prepare].

¹⁸⁴. See Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, 'Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,' OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018 [https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en].

¹⁸⁵. Interview with a JICA officials, January 2022. Course content includes an introduction to the infection transmission cycle, the work of infection control units and the management of healthcare waste.

¹⁸⁶. Interview with an Egyptian official, March 2022.

Table 7

Japan's four Partnership Programmes in the Arab region

Partner country	Partnership setup	Partnership name	Partnership focus
Egypt	1998	Japan-Egypt Triangular Technical Cooperation Programme for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation in Africa	Implementation of third-country training and third-country expert dispatches in Africa; beyond this partnership framework, other triangular cooperation across the Middle East.
Tunisia	1999	Japan-Tunisia Triangular Technical Cooperation Programme for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation in Africa	Implementation of third-country training and third-country expert dispatches in the francophone parts of Africa.
Morocco	2003	Technical Cooperation Programme for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation in Africa	Support for African countries through third-country training that had already been conducted before the formal setup of this partnership.
Jordan	2004	Japan-Jordan Partnership Programme	Support for countries in the Middle East through third-country training that had been conducted before the partnership was set up.

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on data provided by JICA.

Japan: an integrated and inclusive approach to third-country training

Among DAC members, Japan seems to be the only provider whose triangular cooperation – here usually understood as third-country training – has become an integral part of the established development cooperation toolbox. While Germany has recently invested more effort in conceptual questions and reporting guidelines, Japan works with a long-standing programmatic framework and a strong focus on regional needs. Whereas some of the ongoing debates at the OECD and elsewhere focus on harmonizing approaches to triangular cooperation, also to generate more comprehensive and comparable data (see above), Japanese practices underline the strong link between bilateral cooperation trajectories and third-country training as additional or integrated components.¹⁸⁷ While this close technical connection between bilateral and triangular schemes is the reason why Japan has so far not reported CRS data on triangular cooperation to the OECD, Japanese officials indicate that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and JICA have started internal discussions about how to identify the part of expenditures that can or should be reported.¹⁸⁸

As discussed in Section 2 with regard to survey results, Japan is one of the few DAC members explicitly interested in expanding triangular cooperation, including in the Arab region. For JICA, whether setting up trainings or dispatching experts, an explicit demand from the potential beneficiary country is key. As a JICA official put it during an interview: “We consider possibilities of cooperation upon request; we want to cultivate the ownership of beneficiaries we work with.” While other DAC members, including Germany, have become more exclusive in how and with whom they cooperate, Japan is thus offering an explicit invitation to all countries in the region to engage and explore options, mostly for training-related collaboration.

¹⁸⁷. On this strong link, see also Shunichiro Honda and Mihoko Sakai, ‘Triangular Cooperation Mechanisms: A Comparative Study of Germany, Japan and the UK,’ JICA Research Institute, 2014 [www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/jrft3q0000029ts-att/Triangular_Cooperation_Mechanisms_1_for_web.pdf].

¹⁸⁸. Conversation with a Japanese official, August 2022.

Towards expanding and strengthening DAC members' triangular cooperation with the Arab region

As this study has shown, DAC member approaches to triangular cooperation have been heterogeneous. The spectrum of how DAC members have engaged with the concept and practice of triangular cooperation ranges from proactive promotion to complete neglect. An overall appraisal of these complex and evolving engagement patterns is an ambivalent undertaking. On the one hand, a growing list of triangular initiatives showcased through the OECD repository, as well as some considerable advances in terms of monitoring and reporting through the triangular cooperation code in ODA reporting practices, reflect the expanding clout of triangular cooperation across DAC membership.¹⁸⁹ As large providers with substantial triangular cooperation portfolios, Germany and Japan showcase the variety of potentially successful approaches to triangular cooperation. While Japan combines a broad focus on partner demand with a growing portfolio of third-country trainings, Germany has expanded its conceptual and strategic engagement with triangular cooperation as a modality of choice. Other DAC members, including Canada, the European Union, Norway and Spain, have also shown rather strong commitment to the modality, through both individual projects and contributions to policy coordination processes. Portugal stands out as a vocal advocate of triangular cooperation with a small portfolio. Central European DAC members, including Hungary, have also started to explore the modality through small-scale initiatives. Successful triangular cooperation projects, such as those co-led by Belgium

and the Republic of Korea, have transitioned into second phases, or have served as a reference for setting up similar schemes elsewhere.

On the other hand, however, DAC member engagement with triangular cooperation has also faced a number of challenges. The terminology as such, as well as conceptual and strategic reflections connected to it, are often a basic point of contention or confusion. Similar to other players in the field, DAC members “often implement triangular projects without describing them as such.”¹⁹⁰ Within most DAC member administrations, information about and evidence on triangular cooperation portfolios are scattered at best. As monitoring and evaluation efforts have been limited overall, there is little systematic knowledge on past triangular cooperation experiences, notably regarding development-related impact.¹⁹¹ Reporting tools are often missing and have turned out to be difficult to establish in contexts that are still dominated by bilateral cooperation logics. Structural limitations in monitoring and reporting have also meant that for some DAC members, institutional knowledge about triangular cooperation is not only minimal but also fragile. Australia and the United Kingdom, for instance, used to be perceived as rather strong triangular cooperation providers but seem to have had a reduced or less strategic focus on the modality *per se* since their development cooperation entities were merged with their respective foreign offices.¹⁹²

189. For the OECD toolkit on “identifying, monitoring and evaluating the added value of triangular cooperation”, see OECD, ‘Toolkit’, 2018 [<https://www.oecd.org/dac/triangular-co-operation/TOOLKIT%20-%20version%20August%202018.pdf>].

190. Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 11 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/41102acd-en>].

191. For a detailed assessment of Germany’s triangular cooperation, for instance, see Kaplan, Marcus, Busemann, Dennis and Wirtgen, Kristina, ‘Trilateral cooperation in German development cooperation’, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, 2020 [https://www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Berichte/2020_Dreieckskooperation/DEval-2020-Trilateral-cooperation.pdf].

192. During interviews, experts familiar with the OECD and scholars based in the United Kingdom shared this impression. On the United Kingdom’s approach to triangular cooperation via its Emerging Powers cooperation fund before the merger, see Shunichiro Honda and Mihoko Sakai, ‘Triangular Cooperation Mechanisms: A Comparative Study of Germany, Japan and the UK,’ JICA Research Institute, 2014 [www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/booksandreports/jrft3q00000029ts-att/Triangular_Cooperation_Mechanisms_1_for_web.pdf].

While Canada provides proof that such a merger does not necessarily lead to a dive in triangular cooperation engagement, the examples of France, Denmark, New Zealand and recently also Switzerland suggest that evidence about a DAC member's interest in triangular initiatives at a specific point in time does not mean that this engagement will consolidate or grow. Instead, the data gathering process conducted for this study suggests that for the majority of DAC members, engagement with triangular schemes is not institutionalised and depends on a wide variety of contextual factors.

As a part of DAC members' global triangular cooperation portfolio, triangular schemes with Arab partners present a similarly heterogeneous picture. Overall, and in line with bilateral practice, hardly any DAC member has a region-specific strategy or programmatic framework for engaging Arab states on triangular cooperation. Most engagement to date has built on a mix of bilateral experiences, issue-specific expertise and political considerations. Despite some DAC members' rather lukewarm stance on triangular cooperation, there is substantial evidence of DAC members and Arab partners jointly carrying out triangular activities. In addition to established Arab providers, those countries in the

region with a proactive approach to development cooperation via their own cooperation agencies – including Egypt, the State of Palestine, Morocco and Tunisia – might present themselves as rather obvious partners for expanding engagement. Some Arab states have also approached DAC members, or have been approached by them, as pivotal partners to collaborate in the Arab region or other parts of the world that are closely linked to DAC member preferences and expertise, such as Lusophone countries in the case of Portugal.

While there might be region-specific impediments to an easy increase of triangular engagement between DAC members and Arab states – including differences in normative frameworks, cooperation approaches and funding preferences – the variety of concrete schemes that do take place suggests that, beyond politically and technically complex coordination processes, there is space for joint action. From disease control training and support for certification processes to capacity building in the automotive sector or humanitarian assistance in refugee camps, evidence presented in previous sections shows that triangular cooperation can contribute to addressing challenges across a substantial range of policy fields and issue areas.

5.1 Expanding triangular cooperation: avenues for next steps

While there has been no comprehensive assessment of the global track record of triangular cooperation so far, individual cases – some of which have been discussed in this study – indicate that triangular initiatives can provide innovative ways to reach development and particularly partnership results. The expansion of triangular cooperation projects among an increasing group of stakeholders and the growing list of references to the modality in international policy discussions demonstrate considerable interest. What could next steps look like, then, when exploring options for expanding triangular cooperation with DAC members in the Arab region and beyond? In addition to ongoing efforts by Germany and Japan outlined above, insights gathered for this study point to different engagement opportunities for DAC members that, so far, have remained at the margins of triangular cooperation with Arab states.

To start with, a number of **policy mechanisms and fora** could be used more strategically to explore the setup of, and remedies for challenges to, triangular initiatives involving both DAC members and Arab states. The Arab-DAC Dialogue is arguably the most obvious and prominent venue for engagement between DAC members and Arab providers. Other bilateral or cross-regional platforms also provide potential spaces for exploring triangular cooperation potential. Finland,

for instance, provides funding for the Helsinki Policy Forum and other dialogue platforms that include representatives from different Arab states. Along a similar line, Finland supports smaller NGO dialogue initiatives in the Arab region. While these fora have so far not been used as venues for fostering South-South relations or discussing triangular engagement, they offer established platforms where triangular cooperation could be put on the agenda.

Another potential opportunity for exploring triangular formats between Arab states and DAC members lies in both groups' ongoing engagement with **multi-lateral bodies** that have operational activities in the region, notably United Nations entities. Again, Finland has a regional cooperation budget for the Arab region of roughly €3.5 million per year. Part of this budget is dedicated to regional programming that includes Finland supporting cooperation among different Arab states via the United Nations. Although Finland provides funding and participates in programme steering committees, the operational part is carried out by United Nations entities, including UN Women (on women, peace and security) and the International Labour Organization (on decent work) in Arab states on the ground. While this has not been framed or perceived as triangular cooperation so far, collaboration with a United Nations entity

offers another venue for strengthening triangular ties, e.g., by scaling up successful experiences with United Nations engagement through additional bilateral funds.

More generally, United Nations bodies themselves can make use of existing frameworks and platforms to expand their support for triangular schemes. The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), for instance, can provide a primarily inter-governmental space for member states to share and discuss their experiences with using triangular cooperation for SDG implementation in the region.¹⁹³ The regional programmes and strategies for Arab states of individual United Nations entities can also lend themselves for a stronger link with the triangular cooperation agenda. DAC members could use these mechanisms to support ongoing multilateral processes and take advantage of exchange platforms to explore concrete options of operational engagement.

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), in particular, offers various schemes for DAC members to advance triangular cooperation across different regions. As a global digital knowledge sharing and partnership brokering platform, South-South Galaxy supports developing country demands to make use of South-South cooperation for connecting, learning and collaborating with partners for SDG implementation.¹⁹⁴ Other mechanisms and platforms include the joint UNOSSC-UNDP South-South Global Thinkers initiative,¹⁹⁵ the South-South Cooperation Directors General Forum for Sustainable Development organized together with Japan and the Islamic Development Bank,¹⁹⁶ or the Facility for Capacity Development for Poverty Reduction through South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Science and Technology set up with the Republic of Korea.¹⁹⁷ Explicitly referring to experiences gained under the latter partnership, the United Nations Secretary-General has recently encouraged UNOSSC and its partners to establish a “triangular cooperation window” under the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation that would offer yet another mechanism for how DAC members can support triangular cooperation efforts through multilateral channels.¹⁹⁸

Another area with potential to explore and expand engagement with triangular cooperation between Arab states and DAC members is **humanitarian assistance**. For many DAC members with smaller portfolios – including Iceland and a number of Central European countries, for instance – cooperation engagement with the Arab region has been limited and, if at all, has focused on humanitarian issues. In most cases this has involved support for Palestinian and Syrian refugees and their host countries. The Swiss development cooperation department, in turn, is currently undergoing some fundamental restructuring, also to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian and development work. The Swiss interest in long-term humanitarian interventions might be of particular relevance for refugee support in the Arab region,¹⁹⁹ notably with countries like Lebanon and Jordan that host substantial refugee populations. Triangular cooperation – through Swiss coordination with Arab providers on humanitarian support facilities, for instance – might well prove of interest to all parties involved. Irrespective of a waning conceptual or institutional interest in triangular schemes in Bern (see Section 3), the concrete options of using triangular schemes to strengthen operational links with Arab partners and deliver stronger support for beneficiaries might lead to a new wave of hands-on triangular initiatives.

While their potential for substantial engagement with triangular cooperation is likely to remain limited, **smaller DAC members** beyond traditional heavyweight donors should not be discounted. Their cooperation portfolios might benefit from the integration of triangular elements into their engagement practices. Greece, for instance, has recently drafted a new international development cooperation strategy for the 2022-2025 period. Under this strategic framework, several Arab states, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya and the State of Palestine, have been identified as priority countries.²⁰⁰ After more than a decade without bilateral programmes, Greece is thus to cautiously expand its engagement with Arab states as part of a new phase of its development cooperation, and triangular cooperation could offer a tool to leverage its limited financial and institutional capacity. As a financially stronger but overall small provider,

193. For the 2022 edition of the Forum, see ESCWA, ‘Arab Forum for Sustainable Development,’ 2022 [<https://afsd-2022.unescwa.org>].

194. UNOSSC, ‘South-South Galaxy,’ n.d. [www.unsouthsouth.org/south-south-galaxy/].

195. UNOSSC and UNDP, ‘South-South Global Thinkers,’ n.d. [www.ssc-globalthinkers.org].

196. UNOSSC, ‘DG Forum Archive 2008-2021’, n.d. [www.unsouthsouth.org/2019/10/24/dg-forum-archive-2008-2018/].

197. UNOSSC, ‘RoK/UNOSSC Facility Steering Committee Calls for Extension of Cooperation,’ 2019 [www.unsouthsouth.org/2019/08/19/rok-unossc-facility-steering-committee-calls-for-extension-of-cooperation/].

198. See United Nations General Assembly, ‘State of South-South cooperation: report of the Secretary-General,’ A/77/297, 2022, p.18 [<https://unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/SG-Report-on-SSG-2022.pdf>].

199. Interview with a Swiss official, March 2022.

200. Written exchanges with a Greek official, January and February 2022.

Luxembourg has also not been a particularly proactive player on triangular cooperation. It has, however, made use of triangular schemes in cooperation with some smaller African countries, notably Cabo Verde and Sao Tome e Principe.²⁰¹ In principle, Luxembourg is ready to explore triangular cooperation options with Arab partners as well. While Luxembourg has so far not funded any bilateral development programmes with

governments in the Arab region, it might be ready to provide funding to local NGOs – building on its work with the State of Palestine, for example – or multilateral agencies, like the World Food Programme. Luxembourg also has some experience with triangular cooperation on education and training in the tourism and digital sectors elsewhere that could provide a reference for exploring similar schemes in the Arab region.²⁰²

5.2 Strengthening triangular cooperation: recommendations

Based on the findings discussed in this study, the following recommendations outline how DAC members and their partners – including Arab states and multilateral organizations – can strengthen the performance of and their engagement with triangular cooperation.

- While there is considerable potential for expanding triangular cooperation between Arab stakeholders and DAC members, the latter might want to start with **reviewing their strategic engagement** with this modality and clarifying whether and to what extent they are willing to expand efforts. For some DAC members – particularly those whose appraisal of past triangular initiatives has been mixed – increasing the use of triangular schemes might currently not be in the cards. For others, however, triangular cooperation might well offer an “entry point for increasing collaboration and promoting mutual learning”²⁰³ with partners in the Arab region and beyond.
- If triangular cooperation is identified as a strategic modality, DAC member bureaucracies might want to expand and **strengthen in-house institutionalization** efforts. Even for DAC providers that are generally seen as triangular champions, such as Germany or Spain, triangular cooperation is not yet an integral part of the development cooperation toolbox, often existing at the margins of mainstream approaches. Key steps include not only appropriate staffing and awareness raising about what triangular cooperation is and how it functions, but also the design of adequate monitoring, reporting and evaluation tools that enable bureaucracies to systematically accompany triangular cooperation projects over time and present relevant data on initiatives, partner countries, outcomes and budget.²⁰⁴ Introducing a code for triangular cooperation into national reporting programmes in line with ODA reporting guidelines – as has recently happened in Germany – allows DAC members to not only monitor triangular cooperation but also build an evidence base necessary for promoting and strengthening the modality.
- If interested in making use of triangular cooperation's full potential, DAC members might also want to invest in and/or expand **outreach efforts** on triangular cooperation among both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. In practice, very few DAC members, beyond the usual suspects, engage with that modality in proactive and systematic ways. Despite considerable analysis and coordination efforts by the OECD, the Islamic Development Bank and other multilateral bodies, the data gathering process for this study has shown that substantial confusion and/or disagreement over the concrete contours of triangular cooperation remains. Recent outreach and conceptualization efforts in Canada might provide insightful references for other DAC members, combining coordination and promotion measures domestically; the active support of coordination efforts in international fora; and the implementation of a growing number of triangular projects.
- Beyond general references to the modality as a means towards achieving the SDGs, triangular cooperation needs to be used and experimented with more widely to explore its full potential. Although the lack of strategization and institutionalization of triangular cooperation leads to challenges and limitations in how DAC members engage with the modality, it also points

²⁰¹. Interview with a Luxembourgish official, April 2022.

²⁰². Ibid.

²⁰³. Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, 'Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,' OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 31 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/411102acd-en>].

²⁰⁴. A systematic evaluation of initiatives implemented under Germany's CAD programme between 2010 and 2020 (see Section 4), for instance, could provide insights relevant for the entire triangular cooperation community. For inspiration on how to approach the evaluation of triangular cooperation initiatives, see OECD, 'Toolkit', 2018 [<https://www.oecd.org/dac/triangular-co-operation/TOOLKIT%20-%20version%20August%202018.pdf>].

to alternative ways of expanding triangular work. While complicating systematic design, monitoring and reporting, ad hoc approaches to triangular schemes – often based on concrete interests and networks in specific locales – offer a significant level of **pragmatism**. Limited political will at the strategic level, or mixed experiences with a triangular project in one part of the world, do not need to foreclose exploring triangular arrangements elsewhere. Even those DAC members whose ministry or headquarter staff have voiced reservations against the use of the modality in interviews and conversations might actually be ready to engage in triangular-like activities on the ground.

- As with other cooperation modalities, what seems to matter most for the success of triangular initiatives is a number of key **prerequisites**: concrete needs and requests from beneficiary countries; the development of focused joint objectives; a pragmatic stance on cooperation instruments; and individuals who are willing to dedicate time and energy to making things work. An explicit focus on these factors among all parties involved in triangular initiatives may initially require more time and energy than the preparation of traditional bilateral schemes but can be a useful investment in both development and partnership results over the long run. From an operational perspective, there are also ways to overcome administrative hurdles. As cooperation between Hungary and Poland has shown, for instance, implementing different components of a triangular project in parallel – rather than through joint structures – can make collaboration easier.
- Concrete opportunities for triangular cooperation in the Arab region often build on existing bilateral initiatives as most DAC members find it easier to expand engagement that way. In line with the GPI distinction, Arab states can engage with DAC members' triangular initiatives as both pivots and beneficiaries. Countries experienced with triangular schemes, such as Egypt, might want to explore the **combination of pivotal and beneficiary roles** more explicitly and share this experience with

other countries in the region. As beneficiaries and/or pivots, DAC members' preferred partner countries can provide an entry point into potential triangular schemes with other Arab states, as in the case of third-country training schemes. For cooperation with smaller DAC members, in particular, it might be useful to identify specific thematic and/or geographic niches of engagement that correspond to their strategic outlook.

- More generally, multilateral development banks and international organizations can contribute to a **cross-regional enabling environment** for triangular partnerships. In light of the expanding but still limited visibility of triangular cooperation across development cooperation circles, multilateral bodies can play a facilitating role in contributing to the development of common language²⁰⁵ that makes definitions and assumptions explicit.²⁰⁶ Building on their substantive and expanding trajectory of South–South cooperation support, United Nations entities have a key role to play in these efforts.²⁰⁷ While the OECD and regional development banks usually speak to more limited constituencies, the United Nations' universal membership offers an important foundation for broad and sustained efforts of combining the political promotion of triangular cooperation with operational work led by individual member states.

From the perspective of research and analysis, this study has offered a first step towards a more comprehensive and systematic account of whether and how DAC members engage with triangular cooperation; how their representatives perceive this modality; and how their engagement in the Arab region has unfolded. While it contributes to a systematic comparative overview, further work is needed to get to a fuller picture of how DAC members engage with triangular cooperation, including a detailed and ideally combined portfolio analysis of facilitating, pivotal and beneficiary partners. The practices and perspectives of beneficiaries, in particular, should play a more central role not only in the design and evaluation but also in the analysis of triangular cooperation initiatives.²⁰⁸

205. BMZ, 'Triangular Cooperation: Pursuing new forms of cooperation,' Bonn, 2022, p. 8 [www.bmz.de/en/ministry/working-approach/triangular-cooperation].

206. On the importance of frames and terminologies, see Haug, Sebastian and Kamwengo, Cynthia M., 'Africa beyond "South-South cooperation": a frame with limited resonance,' *Journal of International Development*, 35 (4), 2023, pp. 549-565 [<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jid.3690>].

207. On United Nations support for South-South and triangular cooperation, see Haug, Sebastian, 'Beyond mainstreaming? Past, present and future of United Nations support for South-South and triangular cooperation,' *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 10 (1), 2022, pp. 15-44 [DOI: 10.18588/202205.00a259].

208. For analyses that focus on beneficiary perspectives, see Kamwengo, Cynthia M., 'Beneficiary country ownership and the politics of partnership in trilateral development cooperation: a case study of Zambia,' PhD dissertation, Durham University, 2020 [<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/view/departments/DDD14.html>]; Haug, Sebastian and Kamwengo, Cynthia M., 'Africa beyond "South-South cooperation": a frame with limited resonance,' *Journal of International Development*, 35 (4), 2023, pp. 549-565 [<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jid.3690>]. See also Baran, Katarzyna, 'Rethinking recipient agency: what can we learn from Haitian accounts?,' *Third World Quarterly* 43(4), 742-759 [DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2021.2017276].

An arguably even more basic question centres on what the term “triangular/trilateral/tripartite cooperation” actually refers to, and how broad definitions are to be operationalized. In addition to ongoing conceptualization efforts at the OECD, the GPI and individual member state administrations, the United Nations might want to play a proactive role in exploring steps towards a working-level synthesis or the systematization of existing approaches. The review process of the United Nations operational guidelines on South-South and triangular cooperation, for instance, offers an opportunity for in-depth discussions among a broad group of stakeholders. A more widely shared operationalization

of triangular cooperation – or a more explicit and systematic approach to different understandings – would help address the challenges and promote the benefits of triangular cooperation schemes.

Overall, this study joins the “call for increased awareness of triangular cooperation”²⁰⁹ across research and policy constituencies and hopes to contribute to a more systematic and in-depth engagement with a development partnership modality that remains an under-explored feature of the global cooperation landscape.

209. Casado Asensio, Juan and Piefer, Nadine, ‘Breaking Down the Myths of Triangular Co-operation in Middle East and North Africa,’ OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No. 41, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 18 [<https://doi.org/10.1787/411102acd-en>].



United Nations
Office for South-South Cooperation