

2024 Global Advocacy Dialogue Series

Dialogue #1: Charting New Horizons: South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development

6 March 2024

Amartya Sen Conference Room

United Nations FF Building (304 East 45th Street, 10th floor)

Light refreshments will be served

Hybrid format on Teams: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Concept Note and Agenda

Background

Within the overall context of the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNOSSC and IsDB, a series of Advocacy Dialogue has been initiated with the aim to explore the latest development and partnerships trends, focusing on the innovative and evolving nature of South-South and triangular cooperation. To this end, the first in the series dialogue will introduce the potential for Triangular cooperation to accelerate sustainable development.

The South-South and triangular cooperation presents a compelling approach, to addressing the multifaceted socio-economic challenges facing the countries, particularly the developing countries. Triangular cooperation represents an important complement to South-South cooperation, particularly in the context of the reeling impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Such cooperation can facilitate the sharing of expertise, resources, and technological advancements among nations, enhancing global health responses. Moreover, triangular cooperation can play a pivotal role in mitigating economic inequalities by fostering inclusive development initiatives that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities.

As climate change intensifies, collaborative efforts in technology transfer and sustainable development through triangular cooperation can aid vulnerable nations in adapting to and mitigating environmental challenges. Political stability and conflicts, another critical concern, can be bolstered through collaborative models that engage multiple stakeholders. Additionally, by aligning efforts to stabilize supply chains and navigate technological disruptions, triangular cooperation can provide a resilient framework for addressing these issues collectively. The essence of triangular cooperation lies in its ability to leverage diverse strengths, fostering a comprehensive and adaptable response to intricate global challenges and ensuring a more equitable and sustainable future. However, financing triangular cooperation remains a significant challenge despite its vast potential. Often, the requisite financial resources are either limited or unevenly distributed, which hampers the full realization of these initiatives. Therefore, addressing this financial gap is imperative.

Given its transformational and catalytic potential, triangular cooperation has also been advocated within the United Nations System since the term was introduced by the New Directions for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries¹ in 1995. New momentum for triangular cooperation has been built in the years following the adoption of the [Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on](#)

¹ TCDC/9/3

[South-South Cooperation](#)^{2,3}, [UN system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation](#) and leading to the call by the UN Secretary-General in its [2022 report to the General Assembly on the State of South-South cooperation](#)⁴ for the establishment of a Triangular Cooperation Window within the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC). Following this call, the UNOSSC is now in the process of exploring the proposed funding window to incentivize and catalyse triangular cooperation, signifying a concrete commitment to the success of triangular cooperation, providing a structured mechanism for sustained collaboration over the long term.⁵ The insights from the dialogue will also help inform the conceptualization of this funding window and mobilize partnerships on this.

Moreover, the IsDB (and OECD) and the UNOSSC released two publications on triangular cooperation in October 2023. Among others, the OECD-IsDB [Study on Global Perspectives on Triangular Cooperation](#) highlights the increasing significance of triangular cooperation in global development. This form of cooperation, involving multiple countries and stakeholders, is seen as a vital tool for addressing complex global challenges. A notable finding is the diversity of participants in triangular cooperation. This includes not only traditional donor and recipient countries but also emerging economies, private sector entities, and civil society organizations. The report also emphasizes the role of triangular cooperation in advancing the SDGs. It provides examples of successful projects that have contributed to poverty reduction, health improvements, and environmental sustainability.

The UNOSSC study on [Triangular Cooperation with the Arab Region: Policies, Perspectives and Practices of Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) Members](#), which was initiated in response to the growing interest from the member states in the Arab region, examines how and to what extent DAC members engage with triangular cooperation, and how this engagement plays out in the Arab region. Among others, the study notes that, while there's no universal consensus on triangular cooperation's definition (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), many view it as a modality fostering synergies across different cooperation profiles. Collaboration between Southern providers and DAC members is seen as innovative, bridging the gap between traditional North-South assistance and the burgeoning South-South cooperation. Despite potential challenges due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders, the combined expertise in triangular cooperation is believed to enhance development results and strengthen partnerships.

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", as emphasized in the BAPA + 40 Outcome Document. As the study reveals, Arab States have also been actively engaged in triangular cooperation, in addition to playing an important role in South-South Cooperation processes.

² A/RES/73/291

³ According to the 2019 BAPA + 40 Outcome Document, triangular cooperation complements and adds value to South-South cooperation with its central task consisting of "enabling requesting developing countries to source and access more, and a broader range of, resources, expertise and capacities." While noting the inclusive and diverse nature of triangular cooperation, the 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."

⁴ State of South-South cooperation, Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/297).

⁵ As part of its core service offer on Trust-fund management, UNOSSC has an extensive experience of managing the South-South Trust funds which have been instrumental in supporting South-South cooperation by facilitating voluntary contributions and the strategic allocation of resources based on priorities identified by developing countries. This includes, PGTF Fund, India-UN Development Fund, IBSA Fund and the UN fund for South-South Cooperation.

Despite its benefits, triangular cooperation, as noted in the two studies, faces challenges such as differing views, bureaucratic and administrative hurdles, funding constraints, preference for bilateral engagements, and varying levels of commitment among participants. In this regard, both studies have also recommended raising awareness, harmonization of concepts, strengthened institutionalization, and most importantly, the need to demonstrate concrete results and impact of triangular cooperation.

Moreover, the 7th International Meeting on Triangular Co-operation - “Scaling-up Partnerships”, organised by the OECD and Portugal in October 2023 in Lisbon, underlined, among others, the critical role of Triangular cooperation in terms of fostering strategic and inclusive partnerships, leveraging additional resources, supporting local ownership, and delivering high-impact results. This modality is a useful tool for scaling up innovations from one country to another and sharing home-grown solutions. It was also noted that partners in triangular cooperation developed their roles dynamically in the course of their initiatives. In doing so, they generated added value: all sides learn, share their experience and knowledge, and take on responsibility, thus creating a win-win-win situation.

The 3rd [South Summit Outcome Document](#) reaffirms the importance of triangular cooperation and acknowledges that triangular cooperation is aimed at facilitating, supporting and enhancing South-South initiatives, through the provision of, *inter-alia*, funding, capacity-building, technology transfer, resource mobilization, advocacy and policy dialogue and exchange of best practices as well as other forms of support, at the request of developing countries, in line with the principles of South-South cooperation, and must be led by the countries of the South.

However, it was also noted that this modality is currently under-utilized and that there is a need to invest more in triangular cooperation and support countries in their capacities to engage as partners in the modality. In this regard, the meeting also recommended the need to think more about innovative funding mechanisms and bring in financial institutions and development banks to ramp up resources; collectively improve the data on triangular cooperation to enhance the understanding and improve the visibility of the tool; and do more to better link triangular cooperation to key global thematic debates.

Thus, the planned Dialogue will build on some of the recent processes and research scholarship and provide a platform for sharing best practices, prompting discussions on strategic approaches, and enhancing the impact of South-South and Triangular cooperation.

Key objectives for the first Dialogue:

- Discuss the key conceptual contours of Triangular cooperation – definitions, frameworks and modalities of cooperation.
- Delve into the advancements, trends and opportunities in triangular cooperation and initiate discussions on some of the existing good practices and models.

Outcomes:

- Further clarity and understanding of the intricacies of Triangular cooperation.
- Sharing of experiences and identifying partnerships opportunities
- Collecting initial inputs into shaping the new Triangular Cooperation Window at UNOSSC

Agenda

08:00 – 08:15 Opening Session

Welcome by Dima Al-Khatib, UNOSSC Director

Opening remarks:

- Dr. Mansur Muhtar, Vice President, Operations, IsDB

Remarks by:

- H.E. Ms. Ana Paula Zacarias, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN
- Dr. Issa Faye, Director General, Global Practices and Partnership, IsDB

08:15 – 8:45 Session 1: Triangular Cooperation and relevant policy recommendations

Panel discussion on main areas of opportunity and policy recommendations emerging from the recent two studies:

- Joint OECD - IsDB Report on [Global Perspectives on Triangular Cooperation by Mr. Moncef Soudani, Manager Reverse Linkage Division](#), IsDB
- UNOSSC Study – [Triangular Cooperation with the Arab Region: Policies, Perspectives and Practices of Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) Members](#), by Dr. Sebastian Haug (TBC).

Moderated by: Mr. Amir Hamza Syed, Associate Manager, Global Advocacy, IsDB

08:45 – 09:45 Session 2: Exploring existing models in Triangular Cooperation

Proposed country case studies on Triangular cooperation.

- Portugal – Ms. Ana Fernandes, President, Camões - Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua, I.P.
- Germany – Ms. Rita Walraf, Deputy Head of Division, policy issues of sectoral and bilateral development cooperation, emerging economies, at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- Republic of Korea – Dr. Hwanil Park, Chief Director, Global Innovation Strategy Research Division, Science and Technology Policy Institute (STEPI), Republic of Korea (RoK)

Presentation of selected distinctive models of Triangular Cooperation, focusing on their strategic approaches, geographic and thematic/programmatic focuses and engagement and financing strategies.

In-depth conversation focused on thematic areas of focus and applicable funding/financing mechanisms.

Moderator: H.E. Ana Paula Zacarias, Permanent Representative of Portugal to United Nations

09:45 – 10:05 Reflections and the next steps

Moderated by: Ms. Xiaojun Grace Wang, UNOSSC, Trust Fund Director

10:05 – 10:15 Closing Session

- **Acknowledgements and appreciation for participation.**

Speakers: *H.E. Ana Paula Zacarias, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations*
Ms. Dima Al-Khatib, UNOSSC Director

Ms. May Babiker, Director, Cooperation and Capacity Development Department, IsDB