

Triangular Cooperation – A Partnership Approach on Global Goals

1/4

This newsletter is the first of a four-part series summarizing the discussions and recommendations from the **1st Asian Conference on Triangular Cooperation (ACTrC)**, held in November 2023 in India. The ACTrC brought together decision-makers, experts, practitioners, and academia to identify practical and resilient ways to engage in **Triangular Cooperation (TrC)**.

The plenary session “Triangular Cooperation – A Partnership Approach on Global Goals” appreciated the value, and the untapped potential of the modality to create inclusive, far-reaching, and well-organized partnerships. Three strategic directions characterized the discussion:

Building People-Centered Projects

A

- By prioritizing the needs and well-being of local stakeholders, TrC is more likely to have a meaningful and positive impact on the communities involved.
- The people on the ground must directly benefit from TrC and play a leading role in all its steps. Therefore, the TrC community should create more *bottom-up processes*.

Increasing the Involvement of CSOs

B

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) can play a decisive role in people-centered TrC. The radius of the modality widens and will create a more significant impact.
- The active participation of CSOs can lead to more comprehensive and effective responses to global challenges and a greater sense of unity and collaboration among involved actors.

Institutionalizing Structures for TrC

C

- Establishing institutional structures for TrC is crucial for promoting sustainable collaboration among facilitating, pivotal, and beneficiary partners.
- Exclusive budget lines (e.g., fund structures) can help to overcome the “bilateral bias” of many advisors and practitioners.

KEY STATEMENTS


In this first plenary session, moderated by Ulrich Müller (GIZ), five different speakers presented how their institutions will strengthen the outreach of TrC in 2024.

Dima Al-Khatib (Director of UNOSSC) assured that UNOSSC remains committed to leveraging its global and UN system-wide mandate to advance triangular collaboration across diverse regions. In 2023, UNOSSC partnered with UNDP and the GIZ to set up the Data to Policy Manager to strengthen the connections of evidence-based initiatives further. She also elaborated that it's critical to value the increasing importance of TrC for addressing development challenges by utilizing various actors' expertise, resources, and knowledge; synergies can be created to address the complex and interrelated challenges that all countries encounter today. Some of these findings can also be useful to implement the TrC modality more frequently and effectively. Moreover, Director Dima Al-Khatib announced that UNOSSC would establish a new Triangular cooperation window in 2024 (under the UNOSSC fund) to enable a more robust engagement of partners in triangular cooperation.



SK Mohanty, Nandita Baruah, and Wófsi Yuri G. de Souza discussing the involvement of CSOs in TrC.

Nandita Baruah (Country representative of India, Asia Foundation) underlined that we live in an interconnected world deeply polarized by political and economic factors. In response, international organizations that work on the ground must play a critical role in setting up structures collectively and inclusively. Therefore, Nandita Baruah stressed the advantage of CSOs in bringing multiple stakeholders to the table through their trustworthy position in society. She noted, *"We have to make sure that TrC is driven by the ground realities of the spaces we are working in."* The panelists agreed that from their experience, projects are more effective if CSOs are involved right from the planning



phase (e.g., defining the framework) of TrC projects and not just for implementation. She also highlighted the massive potential of Triangular cooperation to create frameworks for strengthening gender equality.

Nandita Baruah (Asia Foundation) highlighted that the trust deficit between government and non-government institutions can be neglected in TrC if the ultimate project goal is aligned): *“We have to frame our partnerships well, respond to issues and clarify, where CSOs should interconnect with governmental organizations and the private sector on pushing the implementation of international agreements. Often, CSOs have a say in defining frameworks, needs, and criteria or creating knowledge products.”*

Prof. SK Mohanty (Professor, RIS India) highlighted how India creates institutions and capacity for forging South-South and Triangular Cooperation. He also mentioned that India had been part of various capacity-building programs and had been transporting these programs to other developing countries and least-developed countries since independence. He also highlighted the need to create a common agenda/ framework for norm-setting for triangular Cooperation, South-South Cooperation, and North-South Cooperation. Additionally, SK Mohanty highlighted that non-conditionality has to be an integral part of effective TrC.



“With a mindset of solidarity, with shared objectives, we can learn from each other’s successes and challenges, to catalyze home-grown knowledge and solutions for a bright future for all.”

- **SK Mohanty**

The input from **Wófsi Yuri G. de Souza** (Coordinator-General, Brazilian Cooperation Agency, ABC) dealt with how we can build up structures from local agendas to the highest agendas of G20. During the G20 presidency of Brazil, ABC will showcase that the TrC modality is a crucial element in developing stronger global partnerships. Wófsi Yuri G. de Souza accentuated that Brazil is keen to strengthen inter-regional TrC through youth programs, *“we have to consider the perspectives of the younger generation with more emphasis.”* However, *“to support local institutions in building structures for accessing funds for development cooperation”* will be critical. Additionally, he shared that evaluations of TrCs had shown that the project’s results were more effective when the agency invested time in joint studies and knowledge exchanges to understand the partners’ ecosystem; *“even on the political level, we are creating a bigger buy-in of all involved actors that support the collaboration.”*



“We have to consider the perspectives of the younger generation with more emphasis.”

- **Wófsi Yuri G. de Souza**



In the last input, **Rita Walraf**, Deputy Head of Division, BMZ, Germany, emphasized the importance of institutionalizing strategies, structures, and financial mechanisms for TrC. The BAPA+40 conference and a comprehensive evaluation of TrC in the German development system have been the starting point for the BMZ strategy "TrC in the German development cooperation" (2022). The strategy guides the staff, partners, and implementation agencies and clarifies the TrC definition, objectives, standards, and best practices. Additionally, BMZ has integrated TrC in several sectoral and cross-cutting policy strategies (e.g., in the German feminist development policy) as a horizontal partner-oriented approach. Nonetheless, Rita Walraf underlined that TrC budgets often compete with bilateral funding. One of the reasons is the lack of knowledge that many policy advisors and practitioners have about the benefits of the modality. This results in a "bilateral bias" for traditional projects. Therefore, Rita Walraf requests a more effective way of presenting the successful results of TrC projects and exclusive budget lines for the implementation (e.g. fund structures). Additionally, Rita Walraf announced that the BMZ would start a new knowledge hub for TrC with the OECD in 2024.

The speakers' different perspectives are united in their goal of strengthening the institutionalization of TrC. We are excited about how these approaches will materialize in new initiatives in 2024 and look forward to further exchange to advance the modality of triangular cooperation.

The following issue of the ACTrC newsletter series will wrap up the thematic sessions on "facing poverty, hunger, and inequality," "partnerships for sustainable rural development," and "vocational training to reduce inequalities." Stay tuned.

Kind regards,

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The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) have the pleasure to invite you to the **7th Regional Conference on Trilateral Cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean**.

The Conference will take place in a hybrid format on **May 23rd and 24th, 2024** in Salvador de Bahia (Brazil). For more information, please contact fondotriangular@giz.de.