

## Triangular Cooperation Facing Poverty, Hunger and Inequality



This newsletter is the second of a four-part series summarizing the discussions and recommendations from the **1<sup>st</sup> Asian Conference on Triangular Cooperation (ACTrC)**, held in November 2023 in India.

This issue offers you an overview of the plenary session 'Facing Poverty, Hunger and Inequality', as well as the breakout sessions on '*Triangular Partnerships for Sustainable Rural Development*' and '*Vocational Training to Reduce Inequalities*' with project examples to tackle malnutrition, inequality and rural development. One suggestion of the practitioners is that beneficiary institutions should express their demand for technical know-how very clearly in a triangular cooperation (TrC) and request the inclusion of domestic experts to exchange experiences (e.g., in policies, processing, or marketing).



*A cheerful trio: Ulrich Müller, Lucky Chhetri and Christof Kersting.*

In the first speech, **Lucky Chhetri** (Director of Empowering Women of Nepal) discussed why TrC is a helpful modality for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to tackle gender inequalities. For example, in Nepal, it was culturally forbidden for women to work in the tourism sector until Lucky Chhetri founded the CSO 'Empowering Women of Nepal' in 1994. During the last 30 years, 'Empowering Women of Nepal' has regularly trained women to become tour guides for tourists in the Himalayas. The business model has been successfully copied in different countries, for example through a TrC with the *Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC)*, they shared its business model

with the *Society for Underprivileged Families* (SUF) in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi partner learned how to become self-sufficient after first being founded as a donor-driven organization. Therefore, both partners set up international exchanges for female employees, including safety training, cultural exchanges and language courses.

**Aziz Arya (FAO)** shared a number of lessons learned from FAO's engagement in TRC based on several evaluations:

1.

The beneficiary partner must define their need for technical know-how. In addition, all three partners must evaluate the demand jointly and determine the project structures.

2.

Expert exchanges between partner countries are very effective for adapting abilities to the given possibilities and evolving visions based on the partners' level of progress. For example, this could be a medium-term employment opportunity in the partner organization or a shorter training course.

3.

If the partners are interested in extending the project work, pivotal partners and beneficiaries should discuss in advance the question of continued cooperation before the end of the project.

4.

All partners should describe the project challenge in a manageable manner to include broader functions (like marketing, processing, and legislation) more effectively.

5.

It is essential for the government organization of the beneficiary partner to own the transferred know-how, as this will allow them to adapt and further innovate it to their needs.

6.

A coordination unit between the facilitating and pivotal partners is vital in getting political support for the project goals.

7.

When exchanging knowledge, partners should ensure that the added value is not dependent on individuals but is anchored institutionally. In this way, the cooperation among institutions remains intact, even if individuals leave the organizations.

**Zhang Chuanhong** (Professor, College of International Development and Global Agriculture, China Agricultural University) provided a historical overview of China's involvement in international cooperation to address hunger, poverty and inequality issues in the Global South. In 2009, China implemented its first TrC project through the



FAO SSC Trust Fund. Since then, China has donated USD 130 million to the Fund and realized 200 TrC projects. In recent years, Germany has become the most critical partner for China in TrC in various projects (e.g., *sustainable textile investments and operations in Ethiopia*) through a long-term partnership at the [Sino-German Center for Sustainable Development](#).

Zhang Chuanhong gave prominence to three features of the Chinese involvement in TrC:

1.

Mutual learning and creation of synergies based on the complementary of different stakeholders as the critical target.

2.

Coordinated with principles of South-South cooperation (e.g., projects are based on the request of the partner country and characterized by a demand-driven implementation grounded on mutual respect and benefits).

3.

China shares developing experiences similar to the partner countries' challenges (e.g., eradicating extreme poverty, promoting agriculture development and food security, social security systems, public health coverage, and green technology).

Her research also shows that the Chinese government prioritizes TrC projects linked to the agriculture sector because they seem less sensitive on a political level and contribute to poverty reduction, food security and equality. Additionally, Zhang highlights that:



*"TrC has huge comparative advantages in terms of harmonizing different efforts aligning with higher global standards in ESGs. However, TrC lacks visibility, and its significance is undermined. An innovative approach to report TrC and the creation of a new narrative are the top priorities to draw international attention to this cooperation modality."*

- **Zhang Chuanhong**

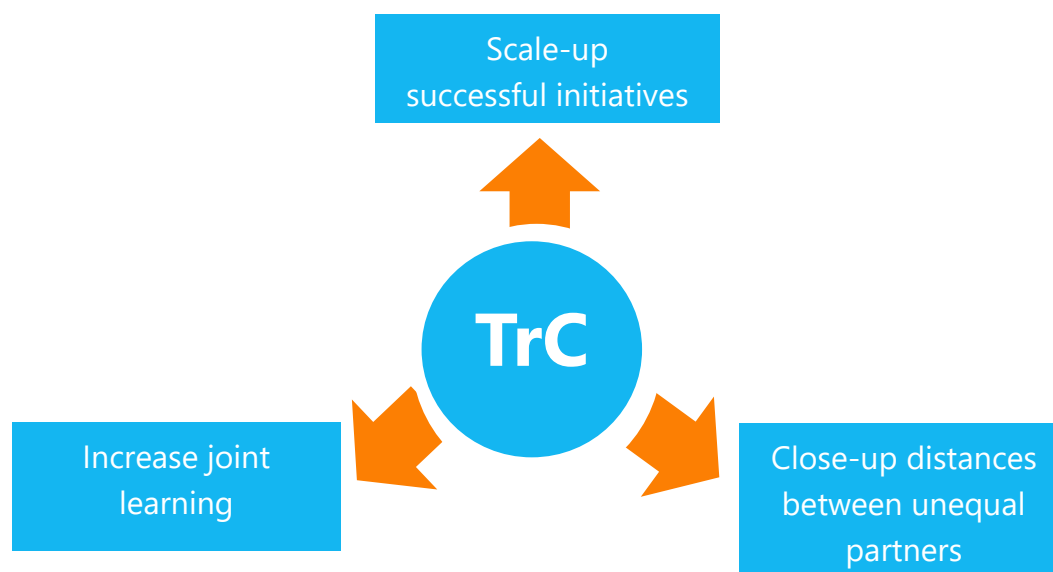
**Christof Kersting** (Project Director of the Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean, GIZ, Germany) pointed out that we work in a turbulent situation shaped by multiple, interconnected crises and complex global challenges that transcend borders. The interlinked challenges make it necessary to overcome deep-rooted ways of thinking and bilateral development cooperation processes. Based on extensive experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean, the GIZ has proven that TrC effectively provides partners with resources, expertise and capacities. The modality promotes cooperation, mutual learning and inclusive partnership on equal footing, aligned with goal 17 of the SDGs. Hence, he claimed that all practitioners must think beyond the conventional bilateral North-South or South-South arrangements to implement TrC based on joint planning, financing and implementation among three or more partners.



*“TrC promotes cooperation, mutual learning and inclusive partnership on equal footing, aligned with goal 17 of the SDGs. Evidence shows that TrC projects and their broad approach lead to better cooperation in small-scale but essential actions.”*

**– Christof Kersting**

He pointed out that each TrC project of the regional fund for Triangular Cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean is externally evaluated in terms of sectors and specific objectives. The results show that if all partners (including ministries, institutions, and CSOs) are involved in an organized and committed way, the TrC engagements are overcoming some of the long-standing development constraints and biases (*e.g., vertical relations and the 'I know what you want' approach*). In addition, most TrC projects go far beyond their respective project objectives, strengthening horizontal relations, involving local and non-state actors, fostering mutual learning and knowledge transfer between regions, and building trust and solidarity, leading to further and larger projects.




Furthermore, Christof Kersting mentioned the new Feminist Development Policy of the German government, which aims to combat poverty, hunger and inequality. This policy involves, among other things, transforming towards sustainable agriculture and food systems and tackling the unequal distribution of assets: *"TrC can transform the approach of development policies into very concrete projects and structures in which people can learn together and take responsibility for larger projects."* For example, Brazil, Ethiopia and Germany created a TrC on the pluralistic extension system to increase agricultural productivity as a significant contribution to Ethiopia's 10-year agrarian plan. The project is based on the lessons learned from the Brazilian pluralistic extension system, focusing on private-sector engagement.



In a written note delivered to the ACTrC, **Christine Nkulikiyinka** (CEO of the Rwanda Cooperation Initiative) pointed out that Rwanda Cooperation Initiative has an interest in sharing 'homegrown initiatives' through TrC, which are solutions that come from the cultural heritages, partly lost over colonial periods. For instance, a program called 'One Cow for a Poor Family' shows promising results in combating extreme poverty. She expressed that a pre-defined solution approach fails in international cooperation. In contrast, the joint development of priorities by all partners is much more effective when combined with joint contributions, including shared capacities and technologies. In response, the audience highlighted that TrC projects should only focus on agricultural solutions that are accessible, affordable and available.

### **Breakout Session A: Triangular Partnerships for Sustainable Rural Development**

In Breakout Session A, moderated by Geovana Zoccal (GPI), three speakers presented their experience on either a concrete project or their general work on triangular partnerships for sustainable rural development. The first speaker was **Nkimih Clinton** (Researcher Chief of Antenna IRAD, Cameroon), who spoke about the project *"Potato seed production through rooted apical cutting (RAC) technology in Cameroon."* This project took place from August 2022 to March 2023 and aimed to transfer knowledge and technology (RAC) from India to Cameroon. The implementing partners included the University of Horticulture Sciences of Bangalkot in India as the pivotal partner, MINRESI through IRAD Cameroon as the beneficiary partner and the GIZ as the facilitating partner. After giving an overview of the modality and context of the project, Nkimih Clinton pointed out that the project managed to train over 200 farmers and over 25 seed producers, deliver technical support as well as a regular supply of in vitro plants. The



mutual visits have, for example, allowed farmers and researchers from Cameroon to gain first-hand experience in India.

However, they also encountered challenges during the implementation of the project, which included, amongst others, the socio-political crisis in the northwest region, which made it difficult to follow up in the area. Further challenges included the insufficiently trained personnel and the low or non-availability of, for example, substrates or nets. Often, the price for input from Cameroon, like trays, is very high, making continuing projects with local materials difficult. The key lessons learned regarding the implementation of the project are diverse. One vital lesson is the role of youths as the "true" frontline actors. Another is that direct visits of experts on site are success factors for effective knowledge sharing. However, the most critical factor was the solutions' adaptability in a bottom-up approach and the cost-effective use of locally available resources.


**Manish Kumar** (Senior Programme Coordinator, Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan, India) spoke about integrated village development services (e.g., Nepal and Norway (NOREC)), as strategies to mobilize youth in exchange programs and re-engaging women on the local level to raise their agendas. In addition, he mentioned that gender equality is critical for rural development. Strategies like 'Jal Saheli', 'Pani Panchayat' have been developed by the institution to build capacity among rural illiterate women.



*"TrC is able to level the playing field and create equal ownership of initiatives and development".*

**– Pablo Dourojeanni**

**Pablo Dourojeanni** (Programme Advisor, Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation, Norway) pointed out that NOREC is very active in several TrC because the modality can level the playing field and create equal ownership of initiatives and development. Through the mutual exchange of people, especially young people, TrC projects enable learning and development to strengthen knowledge, skills and competencies. Therefore, many of NOREC's projects focus on youth exchanges to foster agents of change with a sustainable impact on communities. Also, those projects can support young people in kickstarting their careers. On the other hand, the projects benefit from the perspective of creative young people who challenge traditional frameworks. NORECs exchange projects not only focus on technical capacities to impact local communities under topics like development and creating income-generating opportunities but also focus on individuals who can be change-makers for their communities and, in the long term, create an impact on a broader stage. Especially the long-term impact can be substantial. Through those projects, 10.000 young people went on exchange, which amounts to currently 70 projects per year.



The following discussion emphasized the importance of including young people in projects but also underlined that access to financial resources is a continuous obstacle. A solution is to help individuals gradually build capital by, for example, giving out small grants and instilling a sense of responsibility by including them in a productive project.

### Breakout Session B: Vocational Training to Reduce Inequalities

In Breakout Session B, moderated by Ejii Wakamtsu (JICA), two speakers presented their TrC projects linked to 'Vocational Training to Reduce Inequalities'. First, **Dorchanay Paykhar** (Research Expert, African Leadership University (ALU)) introduced a TrC pilot project between Rwanda (ALU), China (Nanchang University) and Germany (GIZ) on academic-industry collaboration to accelerate circular economy innovation in Rwanda. The collaboration enhanced awareness and understanding of circular economy principles among water and sanitation professionals in water reuse, wastewater treatment, sustainable infrastructure and resource recovery.

The capacity trainings were split into two stages to match the demand and skill level of the beneficiary partner with the skill level of the pivotal partner. The first training introduced the principles of circular economy in the water sector to Rwandan government officials to create a shared understanding and jointly discuss the next necessary steps on the transition to becoming circular in the water sector system. The second training focused on the institutional obstacles of the beneficiary to achieve the circular transition (e.g., lack of technical expertise, access to specific partners) to specify the demand in the TrC.

Second, Prof. **Yang Wenming** (UNESCO Chair on Digitalization in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) at the UNEVOC Center at Shenzhen Polytechnic University, China) presented a TrC project between China, Germany and Mongolia to implement a TVET Digital Transformation Framework. The framework includes:

1. The Identification of skills required for the transition to digital and green economies.
2. The reinforcement of digital governance.
3. Support mechanism for the teaching workforce.

The capacity building for Mongolia included two weeks of AI and Smart Building for 63 TVET teachers in six institutions and another ten days of a TVET leadership program on digital transformation for 50 TVET leaders. Leadership programs are meaningful to kick-

start the digital institutional transformation (e.g., to direct new regulations and mobilize teachers). By learning new emerging digital programs from the Chinese partners, the Mongolian partners received advanced training to create new courses for their students.

**We** hope you enjoyed this overview of the plenary 'Facing Poverty, Hunger and Inequality', and the breakout sessions on '*Triangular Partnerships for Sustainable Rural Development*' and '*Vocational Training to Reduce Inequalities*.'

The following issue of the ACTrC newsletter series will wrap-up the thematic sessions on '*building inclusive futures: empowerment of women and youths*,' '*women entrepreneurship*' and '*enhancing sustainability through inclusiveness in ESG*.'

Kind regards,

### **Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Asia**

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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](mailto:fondotriangular@giz.de).