



Triangular Cooperation

Building Inclusive Futures: Empowerment of Women and Youth

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This newsletter is the third 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. This issue offers an overview of the plenary session 'Building Inclusive Futures: Empowerment of Women and Youth' and the breakout sessions on 'Women Entrepreneurship' and 'Enhancing Sustainability through Inclusiveness in ESG.' It includes project examples of an export-oriented green industrial park for women, an e-commerce training for SMEs, a sustainable textile operation, and a gender-based violence helpline.

Key Messages:

- Awareness-raising campaigns have effectively promoted positive behavioral changes in society to strengthen women's rights, resources, and representation. However, we must enhance gender diversity in policy-making to reflect female perspectives for gender-responsive policies. Women's empowerment is a cross-cutting topic with links to all sectors. Therefore, policies must eliminate stereotypes and gender biases and create equal opportunities and equal pay for equal value.
- Triangular cooperation (TrC) is an excellent mechanism for sharing resources and establishing a more significant impact locally, nationally, and globally. Mutual learning is a crucial characteristic of TrC, in which all parties contribute and learn. In the project design, we must shift from transmitting knowledge to sharing it, overcome the mindset of individual advancement, and value the exchange of experiences and insights.

Plenary session III: 'Building Inclusive Futures: Empowerment of Women and Youth'

This plenary session highlighted the potential of triangular cooperation (TrC) for more inclusive, future-oriented, and horizontal partnerships that overcome gender biases and colonial legacies. In the opening of the session, the moderator, Ulrich Müller (GIZ), drew attention to the linkages between gender equality and other challenges for social inclusion and the potentials of cooperation forms, such as TrC, in which all parties contribute and all parties learn. Instead of asking who is ahead and who is further developed, such an approach creates an ambiance that makes empowerment easier and carefully avoids creating dependencies.

Through TrC, we aim to remove key barriers preventing anyone from accessing education, health care, and work (e.g., by identifying unconscious biases, strengthening the inclusion

of women and people with disabilities, and acknowledging different cultures and religions through mutual learning).



A powerful panel: Ulrich Müller (Germany), Novi Yanti (Indonesia), Sheela Bhide (India), and Nguyen Thi Minh Thuy (Vietnam).

In the first speech, **Nguyen Thi Minh Thuy** (Chairwoman Businesswomen Science Council, Vietnam) addressed persistent gender inequalities that hinder women's access to education, economic opportunities, and public life. Thuy Nguyen expressed that gender-based discrimination and traditional role patterns, especially in rural areas, hold women back from self-determined life planning. The predetermined life for women as mothers without economic self-realization leads to an under-representation in decision-making processes in politics and business development. As a result, women's needs are not heard in these areas and therefore less active efforts are made to fulfil them. Unpaid care work remains a burden for women in developed and developing countries because it limits their chances for employment, education, and participation in public life. Therefore, all partners should be interested in eliminating stereotypes and gender biases and instead create equal opportunities and equal pay for equal value.



If we want to create equal gender opportunities, we must develop more inclusion and tackle persistent gender inequalities and gender-based violence. We must eliminate stereotypes and create favorable conditions for equal pay and diverse representation."

- Nguyen Thi Minh Thuy



For example, Sweden and Norway have achieved progressive policies to support the inclusion of women in the workspace (e.g., through parental leave and affordable child care). Especially, the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (*Norec*) is keen on sharing its experiences of empowering women in joint triangular projects with other countries.



"Let the governments discuss as much as they want; we, as women have to lead the movement to create an inclusive workplace."

– **Sheela Bhide**

At the beginning of her speech, **Dr. Sheela Bhide** (Chairperson, Women Entrepreneurs International Trade and Technology Centre (WEITTC), India) introduced the fact that less than 5 percent of the foreign direct investment (FDI) in each of the South Asian countries is from the South Asian countries in the region. Dr. Sheela Bhide underlined that South Asia is one of the least integrated markets worldwide regarding intra-regional trade and investment. Due to the non-cooperation of the regional governments, it remains challenging for the private sector to deal with the lack of infrastructure, logistics, diversified standards, and complicated bureaucratic procedures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many small manufacturers were able to sell products in the region through simplified export procedures. A World bank [study](#) shows that if some tariffs on products of particular interest to women are reduced, women's incomes could increase by 2.5 percent per year in the South Asia region.



Dr. Sheela Bhide (left) represents the South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF) and the Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of India (ALEAP), which founded the Women Entrepreneurs International Trade and Technology Centre (WEITTC) collectively. WEITTC increases the outreach of women entrepreneurs in South Asia through the provision of technologies, skills, market

WEITTC is making every effort to encourage South Asian women entrepreneurs to adopt Green Manufacturing Technologies and to ensure Sustainable Production. WEITTC, SAWDF, and ALEAP are together pursuing a Mission called "Women Entrepreneurs for a Green Planet. Furthermore, WEITTC supports women in setting up e-commerce

structures free of cost (e.g., unified payment interfaces for instant money transfers) and fosters female cooperation on an individual level. The engagement has established a network between research development institutions in South Asia to empower each other. Additionally, Sheela Bhide introduced a TrC project proposal for 'export-oriented green industrial parks for women' in Nepal.

Novi Yanti (Head of Bureau for Foreign Technical Cooperation, Ministry of State Secretariat, Indonesia) explained that Indonesia has been engaged in TrC for more than 40 years. Several TrC projects focused on the inclusiveness of youth and women (e.g., a project implemented in Afghanistan together with Germany on women's economic empowerment, a project on gender-responsible budget planning with USAID in Fiji, or a partnership with UNFPA and Muslim religious leaders on preventing violence against women and child marriage taking up perspectives of Islam).



TrC is an effective diplomatic tool for being politically involved, as well as economically and socio-culturally for all involved stakeholders.

At this point, we need to improve the branding and expand the use of the modality. Right now, no single website collects data about Indonesian involvement in TrC."

– Novi Yanti



Novi Yanti demonstrated that TrC is an excellent mechanism for sharing resources and establishing a more significant impact locally, nationally, and globally. Indonesia finances TrC mainly through co-funding schemes with partner countries. For example, the government sponsors scholarships for people-to-people exchanges and community development projects. Since 2015, the Indonesian government has set up structures for monitoring and evaluating TrC projects, for example, with open questions that analyze how capacity development training has promoted gender equality in the beneficiary partner country.

Last, **Neni Marlina** (Advisor for South-South Triangular Cooperation, Gender Focal Point Energy Programme, GIZ, Indonesia) introduced the new German Feminist Development Policy as an essential incentive to dismantle discriminatory and patriarchal structures and strive for societies where women and men can participate equally. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is convinced that societies where women and men can participate equally are more stable, peaceful, resilient, and economically prosperous.

During the discussion with the audience, Neni Marlina highlighted that awareness-raising campaigns have effectively promoted positive behavioral changes in society to strengthen women's rights, resources, and representation. To create inclusive futures, we must mainstream structures that foster inclusion in all sectors, such as energy. However, the critical success factor would be gender diversity in policy-making to reflect female perspectives for gender-responsive policies.

Ulrich Müller (GIZ) closed the session by emphasizing the shift from transmitting knowledge to *sharing* it, highlighting the importance of overcoming the mindset of individual advancement and valuing the exchange of experiences and insights. He appealed to the participants to redefine the understanding of development by embracing a more open and collaborative approach, stepping away from entrenched beliefs, encouraging open discussions, and celebrating achievements through various forms of expression.

Breakout Session C: Women Entrepreneurship

In Breakout Session C, moderated by Lucy Yang (GIZ), several successful stories of female businesses were presented, underlining women's empowerment as a cross-cutting topic with links to agriculture, food security, poverty elimination, supply chains, and many other areas.

The first speaker was **Sambuunyam Zolzaya** (Project Expert on Regional Cooperation and Integration, GIZ, Mongolia), who introduced a TrC project that supports women entrepreneurs in Mongolia. The project includes capacity training for 200 women on e-commerce, digital marketing, and product development, steered by Chinese and German experts of women enterprises in Mongolia. Additionally, study tours to China and Vietnam were conducted to further exchange knowledge at SME supporting centers.

Chau Lon Molika (CEO & Founder of Cambodian Standard Development & Supply Co., Ltd. So-called CSDS Cambodia) shared her experiences with public-private partnerships in the agriculture sector. After two years of growing salads and herbs on a five-hectare farm and selling it to HORECA (modern market), her family venture joined other



TrC is a great modality for Mongolia, a landlocked country, to strengthen its economy and deepen its relationship with more countries. I hope that the Indian partners see the potential to create new TrC projects with us."

- **Sambuunyam Zolzaya**



smallholder farmers to conclude the agricultural agreements (farming contracts). What started as a small group of 60 families in Kampong Speu province, now includes an ecosystem of three unions and 29 agriculture cooperations with over 5,390 farmers countrywide. In the 15 years of business since 2009, CSDS has encouraged women to be educated about safety standards for cultivation processes, supply chain management, climate change risks, and access to finance possibilities. USAID Feed the Future's Harvest III program has granted the award to CSDS in February 2023, US\$150,000 will support CSDS: (i) set-up and install a standard cold warehouse; (ii) improve cold transportation and packaging; (iii) co-funding with farmers to build net-houses and solar system for improving irrigation system at the farms; and provide training to farmers on good agricultural practices (CAM-GAP).



We hope that TrC will bring us opportunities to cooperate with other countries and learn from their experiences with new technologies in the agriculture sector."

– Chau Lon Molika

Currently, CSDS educates farmers about the benefits of the circular economy (e.g., improvements to cooling systems, sustainable packaging, and the installation of solar pumps) and consumers about food safety standards. In the next stage, CSDS aims to build an agriculture center for excellence to provide agriculture input (e.g., on seeds, fertilizer, and technology) from different countries.



Chau Lon Molika (here with Jochen Weikert, GIZ) campaigned that female consumers desiring change should join female associations to increase societal perception. As a CEO, she recommended spending at least 10% of her work time creating social impact.

The audience suggested that the GIZ could create a platform that lists successful women empowerment projects filtered by sectors to inspire potential partners to upscale solutions in new TrC projects. Providing the learning materials used through the platform could create learning programs at much lower costs.

Breakout Session D: Enhancing Sustainability through Inclusiveness in ESG

In Breakout Session D, moderated by **Djordjija Petkoski** (Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania), Yosef Hagos Abrha (Ethiopia) and Phary Vireakboth (Cambodia) presented their TrC projects tackling the environmental, social, and governance standards (ESGs) to encourage companies to act responsibly.



Yosef Hagos Abrha, Jochen Weikert, Phary Vireakboth, Djordjija Petkoski, Moses Wanyoike (from left to right) discussed numerous benefits of the ESGs in the textile industry.

Between 2000 and 2009, the German development sector worked in China to enhance social, environmental, and governance standards with the Chinese industry. Since 2015, Chinese investments have increased enormously in Ethiopia, so the GIZ contacted Chinese private companies from previous bilateral projects to discuss similar challenges with Ethiopian private sector companies.

Yosef Hagos Abrha (Expert, Ministry of Industry, Ethiopia) introduced a TrC pilot project that strengthens ESG practices to attract sustainable investments in innovative technology and knowledge transfer in Ethiopia's textile and garment sector. The project focused on local and Chinese textile industries as the first target group since they are Ethiopia's leading textile exporters. During the pilot project, a group of textile companies got support to adopt ESG strategies and upgrade their performances by:

1. Encouraging participation in international conferences to raise awareness of best manufacturing industries' ESG practices.
2. Taking part in a study mission in Vietnam to promote investment opportunities.
3. Offering technical capacity building to improve financial performance and build customer loyalties.

The collaboration enhanced access to best practices and implemented a mechanism to involve more textile factories in the ESG standards to become leaders for sustainable transformation. The participants discussed the criteria on how the TrC project selected textile brands for the partnership (e.g., degree of export volume of local industries) and which reporting standards have been used to assess the data (e.g., use of the global reporting initiative, follow-up mechanisms). Djordjija Petkoski highlighted the complex

nature of reporting since the suggested criteria contain often the danger of imposing standards on emerging actors.

The second speaker **Phary Vireakboth** (Programme Manager, Inno Community Development Org., Cambodia) presented a TrC project that created a gender-based violence helpline to address the hidden gender-based violence in Cambodian factories. The pilot project is a collaboration between Inno and GIZ, which includes the following activities:

1. A survey across the target group of 200 workers and factory management.
2. Analysis of data results.
3. Implementation of a mechanism that allows the workers confronted with sexual harassment to report the case.

The survey results showed that while 80% of the interviewed workers have no awareness of gender-based sexual violence, the factory management has been familiar with the issue in general but took no initiative for changes. Many female workers did not dare to report cases of sexual harassment because of fear of losing their jobs. Hence, the pilot offered consultation for the factory management and training for the workers and trade union leaders to prevent and address gender-based violence. Outside the training, the pilot created a mechanism to report cases of gender-based violence in each factory.

We hope this overview of initiatives inspired you to plan new TrC projects promoting women's rights, e.g., by creating access to financial instruments for women entrepreneurs. Equality requires continuous reflection on our privileges and the opportunities to use them for the benefit of others. Now, more than ever, we must overcome structural disadvantages and foster women's inclusion and a sustainable and equitable future for all.

The following final issue of the ACTrC newsletter series will wrap-up the thematic sessions on '*LiFE, Economy & Environment*,' with breakout sessions on 'Promoting LiFE Economy' and 'Biodiversity'.

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.