



Triangular Cooperation LiFE, Economy & Environment

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This newsletter is the final edition of a four-part series summarizing the discussions and recommendations derived from the **1st Asian Conference on Triangular Cooperation (ACTrC)**, held in November 2023 in New-Delhi, India. This issue offers an overview of the plenary session 'LiFE, Economy & Environment' and the breakout sessions on 'Promoting LiFE Economy' and 'Focus on Biodiversity', held on 3rd November 2023. It includes project examples of an Agri-Business Incubator Model for Women in Agriculture and Food Systems in Malawi, Bamboo-Based Enterprises for Sustainable Livelihood in Ghana, and a Marine and Coastal Biodiversity program in Brazil.

Key Messages

- The Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) approach promoted by the Indian G20 presidency can bring transitions in accelerating the SDGs while focusing on humanity's denominators for economic growth and development. A transition towards a 'LiFE' economy with sustainable impact includes individual behavioral change and institutional adaptations that align with the planetary boundaries regulated in the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015.
- Capacity-building training increases the efficiency of developing best practices and rule adaption within organizations, especially through the ownership of all partners in a triangular setting.
- Bamboo-based business models provide examples for the 'LiFE' approach through its support of landscape rehabilitation, prevention of soil erosion, absorption of CO₂, and its versatile usage in the construction sector.

Plenary session IV: 'LiFE, Economy & Environment'

The panelists discussed issues as diverse as sustainable consumption and production, the need to create finance investments that increase the impact of sustainable development, the importance of emphasizing ethics in the TrC modality, and the benefits of bamboo as a resource-friendly material. Opening up the panel, the moderator, **Sachin Chaturvedi** (*Director General, RIS, India*), introduced India's G20 initiative, the 'Lifestyle for Environment' (LiFE), which aims to encourage the adoption of sustainable lifestyles on the community level to tackle the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change. While all 193 UN member countries have committed to the 2030 Agenda with interconnected policies that promote sustainable changes, only 12 percent of SDG targets are on track. That's why the Think20 group of leading G20 think tanks promotes a "LiFE for sustainable development" during the Indian presidency of the G20, which recalls all owners of the SDGs' general concept to achieve renewed personal conviction.

Sachin Chaturvedi explained that the approach of 'LiFE' offers a personal connection for individuals with the SDGs:



However, we should focus on matching sustainable consumption and production in a circular economy. The private sector can aim for additional funding to create a sustainable ecosystem steered by the LiFE principles."

Consequently, during the Indian G20 presidency, RIS invited large private companies to contribute to the concept of 'LiFE.'



Sachin Chaturvedi illustrated that the 'LiFE' concept prioritizes sustainability and well-being goals within economics.

The first speaker, **Nicolas J. A. Buchoud** (*Senior Advisor to the Dean, ADBI, Tokyo Fellow, Global Solutions Initiative*), demonstrated that the 'LiFE' initiative is a fruitful strategy to revise the discussion on the limitation of the SDGs. During the G20 presidencies of Indonesia, India, Brazil, and South Africa (between 2022 to 2025), the Think20 group envisions that the 'LiFE' initiative will connect the different threads of transformation to convert specific standard operation procedures (SOP) that have evolved over decades and are difficult to change during a single G20 presidency:



LiFE is an approach that fosters systemic transformation in existing policy tools. In the Think20 working groups, we utilize existing policy tools for global agreements and think forward regarding sustainable transformation."

– Nicolas J. A. Buchoud

Furthermore, **Nicolas J. A. Buchoud** pointed out that over half of the world's low-income countries are at high risk of debt distress or are already in debt, and several have defaulted. However, despite a G20 Common Framework [plan](#) of 2020 to smooth the process of restructuring loans that governments could no longer afford to service or repay, progress toward providing relief has been slow. World Bank [data](#) shows that the 75 poorest nations owed their creditors about \$1.1 trillion at the end of 2022, more than double the 2012 level.

Nicolas J. A. Buchoud said, "African countries are paying 8-10 times more interest than countries like Germany, which pays 0-2% interest." Therefore, he called on the G20 countries to create policies that overcome the asymmetry between economic growth and



debt accumulation, supporting finance investments that benefit the climate and increase the impact of sustainable development.

Nicolas J. A. Buchoud discussed ways to de-risk investments in the Global South and emphasized the need to develop a broader vision of sustainable transformation.

What is the role of ethics in sustainable development?

The second speaker, **Doris Schroeder** (*Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Central Lancashire, UK*), acknowledged various references to ethical values in the G20 high-level principles on lifestyles for sustainable development, which she describes as uncommon for a G20 economic concept. Delighted, Doris Schroeder noted,



Bringing ethical values into unknown territory can stimulate mutual learning and catalyze innovative action."

In the past seven years, Doris Schroeder has led large international research teams analyzing how to increase equity and trust in global research. The research results show that building trust across power imbalances and cultural differences can best be done well with reference



to four moral values: **fairness, respect, care, and honesty**. When these four moral values govern relationships, trust will also follow, and the ownership of beneficiary partners will likely increase as well. Mainstreaming sustainable production and consumption patterns through the LiFE concepts will generate trust in international partnerships, for example, in modalities like TrC. However, after reviewing many documents on TrC (e.g., from OECD, BMZ, and IDOS), Prof. Schroeder was astonished that almost none included any form of the words "ethics" and "moral values". Therefore, she suggested that ethical values should be explicit in discussions about TrC and other forms of international partnerships to generate trust and build long-term equitable relationships.

During the discussion, **Ulrich Müller** (GIZ, Germany) agreed with Doris Schroeder that "we have an economization of language in the field of development cooperation, where ethics has no place." However, in the planning, implementation, and assessment phase of TrC, ethics are already "strongly present": "We see the ownership in TrC because we take the effort of upfront negotiating the contents, without coming to the table with a fixed solution." Doris Schroeder underlined that the emphasis on values that community members easily understand will help the facilitating partner and the pivotal partner to receive more helpful feedback on existing triangular initiatives.

The third speaker, **Andrews Okrah** (Forestry Commission Training Centre (FCTC), Ghana), brought the LiFE principles to action by introducing bamboo as an eco-friendly alternative for designers and homeowners to create furniture instead of traditional hardwood. Bamboo is a grass plant that grows fast without fertilizers or pesticides and needs less water than trees.

Did you know that bamboo has been used in technological evolution for ages?



When Thomas Alva Edison invented the light bulb (1879), the wires used to emit light in those incandescent lamps were made of bamboo fibers, a unique bamboo from Kyoto, Japan. In addition, Alexander Graham Bell (1877) created a voice recording device called the phonograph, which used needles made from bamboo.

Andrews Okrah presented the TrC pilot project 'Developing Bamboo-Based Enterprises for Sustainable Livelihood & Income Generation,' a collaboration between the Ghanaian FCTC, International Bamboo and Rattan Organization (INBAR), the Indian government, and GIZ. During the pilot phase, the partners established a Bamboo training hub that impacted 45 micro and small bamboo enterprises in Ghana. First, a FCTC delegation undertook a study tour to India to learn more about the domestic bamboo ecosystem. Second, two Indian Bamboo design experts spent four weeks in Ghana, offering training for local



artisans and jointly developing new bamboo designs and product ideas, like building materials, furniture, and souvenir handbags. At the end of the pilot phase, FCTC signed a memorandum of intent with key capacity-building institutions in India.

Andrews Okrah introduced the work of the FCTC. This Forestry Commission training center provides capacity training to staff and industry players to promote appropriate technologies in the forestry, wildlife, wood, bamboo, and rattan industries.

Currently, FCTC is looking for opportunities for advanced professional skills development in countries with cutting-edge bamboo and rattan processing and production technologies. To diversify its activities, the Centre seeks partners to establish a West Africa Innovation Bamboo Training Hub similar to the one in Guwahati (India). During the discussion with the participants, moderator Sachin Chaturvedi highlighted that Germany and Japan have been the forerunners in spreading the idea of the TrC modality worldwide. He assured that the Indian government is fully committed to the concept of TrC, to overcome the polarization that the global development finance ended up with. **Sameer Valdiya** (*GIZ India*) stressed that the current TrC pilot projects of the Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Asia achieved huge successes despite minimal resources, primarily through the extent of autonomy the beneficiary partners had in leading the processes.

"We have to keep the autonomy of all partners in mind when we design TrC interventions."

– Sameer Valdiya



Wófsi Yuri G. de Souza (*Coordinator-General, Brazilian Cooperation Agency*) announced that the concept of 'LiFE' would be carried out into the next G20 presidency of Brazil. Furthermore, he highlighted that mutual learning and sharing values and principles are central features of the TrC modality to build partnerships, which outlast single projects.

Breakout Session E: Promoting LiFE Economy

In Breakout Session E, moderated by **Sabyasachi Saha** (*Associate Professor, RIS, India*), the panel discussed how to promote a 'LiFE' economy with long-lasting impact. Sabyasachi Saha started with input on planetary boundaries, mentioning just transition, shifts from mitigation to adaptation, promotion of a circular economy, and responsible water usage. He highlighted the need for a paradigm shift and expressed that understanding institutions is critical to foresee producers' and consumers' preferences.

Heerad Sabeti (*Co-Founder and CEO of The Fourth Sector Group, USA*) expressed that while humans are constantly coming up with innovations, we must foster systemic changes to bring innovations to a scale that benefits everyone. Although the G20 reached a consensus of facing a systemic global crisis under the Indian Presidency, the nature of cooperation is still based on exploitation of human and natural resources that only benefit a few. Heerad Sabeti requested a paradigm shift of international collaboration to achieve the SDGs. TrC can be seen as a "macro strategy" that reorganizes the

collaboration process in a mutually beneficial way. At the same time, TrC projects must embed the 'LiFE' principles.

Second, **Liberty Neba** (*Director of Planning and Development, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Institute, Malawi*) presented a TrC pilot that established an Agri-Business Incubator Model for Women in Agriculture and Food Systems in Malawi. The incubator offers support to start-ups led by female farmers. Neba shared that 49% of the Malawi individual micro, small & medium enterprises (MSME) owners are women. While men own 90% of high-impact SME owners are men, most informal enterprises are owned by women with less impact. The pilot was implemented by the *National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Access Livelihoods Consulting India, NITI Aayog, the Government of India, the Small & Medium Enterprises Development Institute (SMEDI), and the GIZ*. During the pilot phase, the TrC built the skill competencies of more than 50 women entrepreneurs, facilitated exposure visits of multi-stakeholders from Malawi to India, and implemented several 'training the trainers' (TTTs) online sessions. The training focused on refining validation, design thinking, prototyping, marketing, and pitching.



The unique feature of TrC is the collaboration between the partners. For instance, we are getting more expertise from India based on our needs in the country. Through the facilitation of capacity-building training, GIZ Germany has provided Malawian women with access to Indian expertise."



The third speaker, **Julius Christian Adiatma** (*Research Manager, Institute for Essential Services Reform, Indonesia*), introduced a transportation and decarbonization strategy for an Indonesian province that was developed through a TrC pilot project with Global Environment Institute (GEI), (China) and GIZ (Germany). In his presentation, he addressed the following questions: How can behavioral change be facilitated toward adopting new practices for transformative ecosystems? How should a government promote electronic vehicles (EVs) production through policies? Do governments have to subsidize the producers (risk of trade policy issues) or the consumers (risk of import dependence)?

The Indonesian government is promoting EVs as a low-cost opportunity to reduce oil consumption and decrease urban pollution. Despite government incentives and regulations, the growth of EVs has been slower than expected due to the lack of

electricity access. Public surveys indicate that people are reluctant to switch to EVs due to the lack of charging infrastructure, higher upfront costs than traditional vehicles, and limitations in driving range. However, the audience seemed undecided about whether the EV industry deserves to be part of the LiFE approach since the environmental costs of battery production and the end-of-cycle issues still need to be solved.

Breakout Session F: Focus on Biodiversity

In Breakout Session F, moderated by **TC James** (*Visiting Fellow, RIS, India*), three speakers presented initiatives to expand biodiversity through TrC. In its input, TC James said that the term 'sustainability' is used in an inflationary way, but a 'sustainable' approach must meet the criteria of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Paris Agreement of 2015, and the Agenda 2030. Therefore, when we foster 'one health' in TrC project designs based on the 'LiFE' concept, we must remember that this includes the health of all species and the environment.



TC James, Sangeeta Agasty, Wofsi Yuri de Souza (from right to left) expressed that the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature & biodiversity loss, and pollution & waste, poses an imminent threat.

First, **Sangeeta Agasty** (*Regional Director, South Asia, INBAR, India*) presented how bamboo supports landscape rehabilitation, fosters biodiversity, and offers a versatile resource in the housing and construction sector. Bamboo can be used as a replacement for single-use plastic and also for packaging, pipes, and other utilities and crafts. INBAR actively supports Global Standards for production and ecosystems that foster the use of Bamboo and Rattan (e.g., organization of plantations, manufacturing technology, matchmaking supply and demand, setting sustainability standards).

Sangeeta Agasty highlighted that TrC is an effective modality for strengthening knowledge exchange in similar economies. For example, in the sector of bamboo-based ecosystems, a TrC project fostered access to benchmark practices, resources, and knowledge instruments. So far, the bamboo supply chain is still very niche

“We have learned that we should not shy away from cost of learning lessons in TrC, because these lessons increase efficiency in institutionalizing systems.”

– Sangeeta Agasty

due to different quality standards and production costs. However, knowledge exchanges, among all partners in triangular settings have been very effective.



Sangeeta Agasty presented the work of INBAR, a multilateral inter-governmental organization that supports its 50 member countries in creating effective policies for bamboo-based development in housing and construction.

Second, **Wófsi Yuri G. de Souza** (Coordinator-General, Brazilian Cooperation Agency, Brazil) shared information on two Brazilian programs: “the Atlantic Forest Challenge” and the “Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Challenge” that fosters marine conservation. For example, the Brazilian Atlantic Forest region – much less known as a carbon sink than the Amazon region – is home to over 120 million citizens, including large metropolitan cities, which accumulate more than 70% of the national GDP. Yet, the region plays a critical role in the global carbon sink and provides a wide range of ecosystem services to Brazilian societies.



When we talk about biodiversity, we must focus on the impact of people in cities, which causes enormous environmental degradation, mainly through the exploitation of natural resources and unplanned urbanization.”

– Wófsi Yuri G. de Souza

Third, **Li Diqiang** (Professor, Chinese Academy of Forestry, China) introduced the TrC project between China, Namibia, Zambia, and Germany, which aims to improve the quality of protected area management and governance by implementing the International Union for Conservation of Nature ‘Green List of Protected Areas and Conserved Areas.’ China and Germany support a peer exchange among African partners to adapt the IUCN standards to national conditions. For example, through site-level assessments of selected protected and conserved areas and jointly identify opportunities for improvement through exchanging experiences in governing protected areas.

Additionally, Li Diqiang presented how to improve the management effectiveness of protected areas in China. The Chinese government has established a new protected area system that distinguishes national parks, nature reserves, and natural parks. The

government selects national parks based on representative ecosystems, natural landscapes, and distribution of representative rare animal and plant species. The new policy puts the concept of respecting and protecting nature in an integrated and optimized approach, with national parks as the main body. The approach includes establishing a real-time monitoring system with satellite images for protected areas.

This newsletter dived into the “Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)” initiative, a values- and ethics-based approach that fosters lasting solutions to make our economic systems more robust, just, and inclusive. While our humanity pushes the planet’s boundaries to the limit through an accelerated loss of ecosystems, wild species, and natural processes, the panelists addressed changes in individual and societal behavior concerning sustainable consumption and production. Sustainability and circularity of resource utilization are crucial at a time when consumption patterns are contributing to environmental degradation and exacerbating social inequalities. Adopting triangular partnerships promotes awareness about sustainable development in a mutual learning environment. The project examples showed that our TrC community acts against environmental loss in diversified areas by implementing structures prioritizing resource efficiency, waste reduction, and product life extension.

We hope that you enjoyed our four-part series summarizing the discussions and recommendations from the **1st Asian Conference on Triangular Cooperation (ACTrC)**. Please find the [complete newsletter series on our website](#).

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 visit our website and [sign up](#) for the event.