

Leveraging  
triangular  
partnerships  
to respond to  
COVID-19 and  
build back  
better from  
the pandemic



GLOBAL  
PARTNERSHIP  
INITIATIVE ON  
**EFFECTIVE  
TRIANGULAR  
CO-OPERATION**

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## ABOUT THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE ON EFFECTIVE TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

The Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Co-operation (GPI) is a global platform to advocate for triangular co-operation supporting the 2030 Agenda. The GPI brings together development stakeholders to promote and ensure that triangular co-operation projects and initiatives are effective, country-led and involve inclusive partnerships for sustainable development.

The GPI works at the policy level to mainstream triangular co-operation in development co-operation systems globally and to promote the Voluntary Guidelines for Effective Triangular Co-operation for governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to agree to and use in their triangular co-operation programming. At the operational level, the GPI compiles and, on-demand, develop better tools to ensure effectiveness in the implementation of triangular co-operation. GPI members advance these objectives through advocacy, analytical and operational workstreams.

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# Leveraging triangular partnerships to respond to COVID-19 and build back better from the pandemic

## Executive summary

The challenges posed by COVID-19 are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. In 2020, the global community suffered a severe setback in the progress made towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Millions of people lost their incomes, and the SDGs financing gap, already significant before the pandemic, may increase by 70%. The challenges related to COVID-19 are numerous, the resources available to both developed and developing countries are stressed, and financing for sustainable development is on edge. The pandemic's consequences substantially altered life throughout the world, and thus focus the priorities of the development co-operation agenda and discussions towards more global solidarity. More vital and strategic partnerships are crucial to overcoming this crisis in an effective, just, and equal way. Against this background, the present brief has two main objectives:

- *To analyse the impacts of the pandemic on existing triangular co-operation programmes; and*
- *To explore how partners can leverage triangular co-operation to catalyse resources and efforts tackling the development challenges triggered by COVID-19, during and after the pandemic.*

#### KEY MESSAGE 1

### **There is a pressing need to foster effective partnerships for development**

*The COVID-19 global emergency highlights similarities of development challenges among different countries and, concurrently, the existing inequalities across the world. The pandemic has also reinforced the importance of strategic partnerships to prepare and overcome crises in an effective, more just and equal way. No co-operation modality alone is a silver bullet to tackle the complexity of the challenges aggravated with the outbreak of the pandemic. The development co-operation community is at the edge of a moral failure if it misses this opportunity to help. This is a strategic moment to harness effective triangular partnerships for horizontal knowledge sharing and innovative thinking.*

#### KEY MESSAGE 2

### **Triangular co-operation is an effective modality in promoting robust partnerships and innovative solutions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic**

*The regulatory measures of COVID-19 require flexibility and adaptability to continue development projects planned before the pandemic and to establish new partnerships. Triangular co-operation, being dynamic and flexible, is a key modality in the development co-operation landscape to foster capacity building, joint learning, promoting complementarities and increasing co-ordination to tackle the development challenges in various sectors.*

There is increasing evidence of the value-added of triangular co-operation as a modality that unlocks a broader range of financial resources, technical expertise and human capacity by stimulating innovative solutions to overcome development challenges. The results of triangular partnerships contribute directly to tackling the current crisis. The laboratory in Ghana responsible for around 80% of PCR tests during the first several months of the pandemic in the country is an example of that. It is part of the “Partnership for Building Resilience against Public Health Emergencies through Advanced Research and Education (PREPARE)”, a triangular co-operation initiative with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and other African countries.

Triangular co-operation enables horizontal knowledge sharing and innovative thinking. Previous experiences of triangular programmes and projects provide evidence of the modality’s effectiveness in preparedness and response to transboundary emergencies and development threats. It provides an enabling environment for peer-learning among countries. Beyond the national level, triangular co-operation enables knowledge and experience at sub-national and city levels. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) promotes city-to-city collaboration for knowledge and experience sharing on sustainable urban food systems. In one triangular co-operation project involving Kigali, Nairobi, Milan and FAO, project activities initially planned for physical and in-person training and exchanges were adapted into virtual settings, because of travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, through an e-learning Platform established for this purpose.

Numerous ongoing triangular projects were adapted, and new projects have started during the COVID-19 crisis. Flexibility and shared responsibility have been key to adapt triangular co-operation projects and respond to partners’ priority and needs due to the outbreak of COVID-19. In a survey conducted by the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) on Effective Triangular Co-operation with its members between August and September 2020<sup>1</sup>, many partners indicated the need to adapt ongoing programmes and projects, as the “Structured Mechanism for the Exchange of South-South Cooperation Experiences (MECSS)” of the Ibero-American Program for Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS), and the “German Regional Fund for Triangular Co-operation with Latin America and the Caribbean”.

Triangular co-operation complements North-South and South-South co-operation, fosters equitable partnerships and provides a space for creative solutions and innovation. On the one hand, triangular co-operation

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1 The GPI conducted a survey with its members between August and September 2020, including questions related to triangular co-operation and the COVID-19 pandemic. It received 24 responses from its members (20 national government of 16 countries, 3 international organisations and 1 local government).

is usually not taken into account when it comes to quick action, and immediate rescue was and still is needed. On the other hand, the majority of GPI members reported fostering triangular partnerships in response to the current crisis, as the triangular co-operation project between the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Sudan and the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA) to support the national laboratory and blood bank through knowledge-sharing and the provision of medical equipment.

Developing countries have found innovative local solutions to overcome the negative impacts of the pandemic. The crisis has aggravated many existing challenges but concurrently catalysed better planning, contingency strategies, new approaches for building partnership and trust. We are in a strategic moment for the development community to accelerate triangular co-operation and leverage better outcomes to all people. International co-operation is crucial to advance the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines and triangular partnerships can catalyse these processes, as the partnership between Mexico and Argentina to produce, bottle and distribute vaccines<sup>2</sup> to Latin American and Caribbean countries.

## **Recommendations to leverage triangular co-operation during and post the pandemic include:**

### ***Ensure that good practices and solutions are replicated and scaled up in and beyond the context of COVID-19.***

*COVID-19 is generating an extensive amount of knowledge, innovative solutions and examples of how governments and communities are responding and adapting to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Triangular co-operation plays a vital role in the replication and scaling up of these solutions and good practices. It will help build a society and economy that are more resilient to external shocks in the long term.*

*Triangular co-operation enhances the technical capacities and resilience of developing countries to COVID-19 or other transboundary threats. Collaboration and networking of technical institutes, centres of excellence and universities through triangular co-operation arrangements (e.g. joint research, scholarships, exchange programmes, etc.) contribute to enhanced technical capacities of all countries responding to the impacts of COVID-19 and other transboundary threats.*

*Furthermore, tackling the resilience of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) will be critical in future triangular co-operation. MSMEs*

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<sup>2</sup> The governments of Argentina and Mexico, with the assistance of the Slim Foundation, agreed with British laboratory AstraZeneca and Oxford University, to produce, bottle and distribute its vaccine in Latin America and Caribbean countries with purchase contracts with them.



account for a large part of employment and GDP in most economies. Helping them navigate through the pandemic is key to building a resilient economy and society. Online training and business matching events, which have become popular with the pandemic's outbreak, will continue to serve as an effective tool to connect MSMEs with international markets and clients in the long term.

**Incorporate triangular co-operation components, as sharing of knowledge and experience, into COVID-19 response programmes.**

Different stakeholders can collaborate in dealing with the practical difficulties in implementing COVID-19 response programs and adapt existing triangular co-operation programmes during the era of the pandemic. For example, providers delivering online capacity-building programs have similar difficulties in altering their program to a virtual setting due to partner countries' digital environment. Partners can collaborate on resolving such challenges through triangular co-operation.

Additionally, regional financial institutions and development banks play an essential role in curbing disruptions on trade and supply chains, including food and agricultural commodities, by providing the necessary short-term liquidity for recovery as well as long-term finance. Fostering intra-regional co-operation, financing and investment is critical for short-term recovery and laying the foundations for resilience in many countries, increasing opportunities to find synergies and exploring complementarities across the different funding streams globally.

**Promote triangular co-operation to leave no one behind.**

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development urged stakeholders to take action and ensure no one is left behind. The Leave No One Behind (LNOB) approach goes beyond the inequalities among countries and challenges the conventional vertical growth-based development perspective.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the persisting inequalities across the world, among and within countries. The direct and indirect consequences of the pandemic do not affect humanity in the same way. Older people, women, young and unprotected workers, migrant households, the homeless or people living in informal settlements, and other vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected in all countries and societies. Triangular co-operation promotes inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships, fostering horizontal relations among partners, mutual benefits, knowledge sharing and innovative thinking. Through this modality, partners can include stakeholders that support the most vulnerable and reach the ones further behind.

