

# Global Trends of Triangular Cooperation

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Triangular cooperation is a transformative modality that provides innovative and flexible solutions to rapidly changing development challenges. It is no longer just a partnership between OECD-DAC members and developing countries and is not a replacement for North-South or South-South cooperation. It is an additional effort in terms of reinforcing international cooperation for development.

## Introduction

In 2015, the international community agreed to embark on a journey towards global sustainability, as outlined in Agenda 2030 and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and towards addressing the challenge of climate change, as outlined in the Paris Agreement and the international community reaffirmed in Buenos Aires at the BAPA +40 conference that triangular cooperation contributes to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The outcome document (BAPA +40, paragraph 12) also recognises triangular cooperation as a complementary effort to South-South cooperation. It recognised the potential of triangular cooperation to provide a “broader range of resources, expertise, and capacities,” which is being driven by the demand of developing countries

for assistance on their development trajectories, for national development and to meet their international commitments. Triangular cooperation is a dynamic concept that is constantly evolving<sup>1</sup>. It offers an opportunity to move beyond the traditional provider-recipient dynamics by creating innovative partnerships and repositioning the roles of cooperation partners. It can be an avenue of mutual learning and knowledge sharing between developed and developing countries. In this context, this write-up examines the global trends of triangular cooperation as well Southern perspective on Triangular cooperation.

## Global Trends of Triangular Cooperation

As we are aware, the BAPA 40+ outcome document mentioned that multilateral, regional and bilateral development cooperation providers

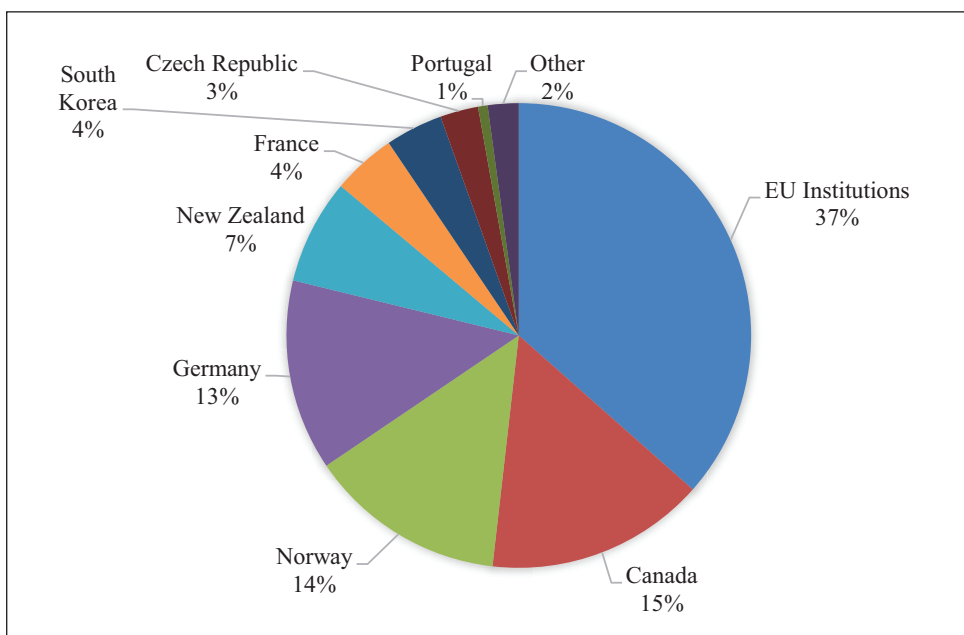
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should consider increasing financial resources and technical cooperation to promote South-South and triangular cooperation. Figure 1 shows the share of DAC member countries in funding Triangular cooperation activities. It shows that between 2016 and 2021, EU institutions accounted for 37 per cent (USD 165 million), followed by Canada 15 per cent (USD 69 million), Norway 14 per cent (USD 62 million), and Germany 13 per cent (USD 60 million). It is important to mention that total funding from DAC member countries between 2016 and 2021 was USD 451 million, which accounted for 0.24 per cent of the total funding of ODA (Only two DAC members reported in 2016 that they disbursed USD 26

million through triangular cooperation (at constant 2021 pricing). In 2021, 13 DAC members reported disbursing (OECD/IsDB, 2023). As the BAPA 40+ outcome document mentions, triangular cooperation is an important modality of development cooperation to achieve the Development Agenda 2030. In this context all development cooperation partner countries including DAC member countries<sup>2</sup> (and multilateral institutions need to increase the funding for triangular cooperation activities to overcome the development challenges in the beneficiary partner countries, which helps them to enhance their capacity to achieve their national development goals.

**Figure 1: Triangular Cooperation by DAC Members, 2016–2021 (percentage share)**



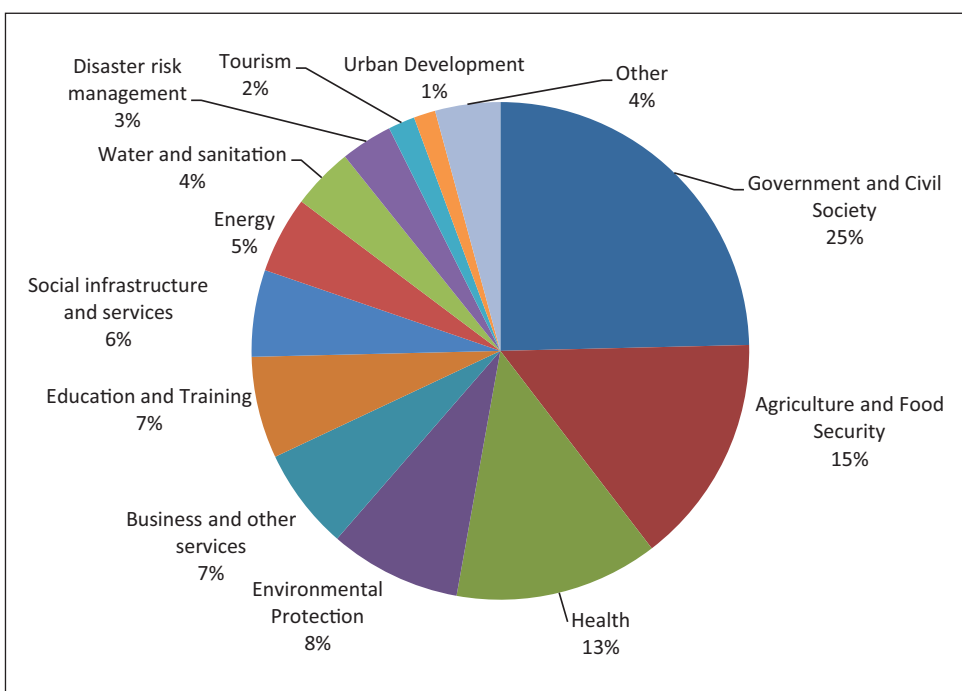
*Source:* Author's calculation data from OECD stat. Note other includes (Italy, UK, Slovak Republic, Luxembourg, Greece, Austria, Spain and Poland).

## Sectoral Distribution of Triangular Cooperation

In the context of the sector's share in triangular cooperation activities, the figure shows two that between 2003 and 2022 (OECD database on triangular cooperation) there were at the global level (including DAC member and multilateral institutions) were around

900 triangular cooperation activities out of these activities government and civil society accounted 25 per cent, followed by agriculture and food security (25 per cent), Health (13 per cent), environment protection ( 8 per cent), business-related activities (7 per cent), and education and training (7 per cent).

**Figure 2: Sector wise distribution of Triangular Cooperation (2003–2022), (percentage share)**



Source: Author's calculation based on the data from OECD stat.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of the Southern perspective of triangular cooperation, major southern providers, namely India, Brazil, China, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa, followed the SSC principals (namely demand-driven, mutual benefits, noninterference in the domestic affairs of

partner countries, non-conditionality and sustainability) in their triangular activities as a pivotal partner. For instance, ABC (2019) mentioned that Brazil's contribution to trilateral technical cooperation initiatives is steered by the principles of South-South cooperation;

namely, it is driven by demands from developing countries, noninterference in the domestic affairs of countries benefiting from trilateral technical cooperation, non-conditionality and non-association with trade operations (ABC, 2019) and the main principles of China's tripartite cooperation are mutual respect, mutual learning, and enhanced mutual understanding and trust. The goal of tripartite cooperation is to benefit the recipient countries. Thus, it is necessary to fully respect their sovereignty and controlling voice based on the principle that the recipient countries should propose, agree upon, and lead projects. Cooperation should focus on the localisation of development (State Council, 2021), and India follows the development compact approach in their triangular cooperation activities as a pivotal partner. A successful example of triangular cooperation is the IBSA fund launched in 2003 by the IBSA member countries (India, Brazil and South Africa). It has emerged as a unique expression of Southern solidarity and helped partner countries to achieve sustainable and inclusive development. Towards this end, the IBSA Fund has played a vital role in strengthening South-centric developmental cooperation and also brought new gravitas to the IBSA partnership. Since the inception of the Fund, 42 development projects have been supported in 36 countries through allocations totalling USD 46.5 million. Projects ranged from enhancing food security to developing livelihoods through entrepreneurship to expanding access to sanitation and renewable energy (UNOSSC, 2022).

The analysis shows that global funding for triangular cooperation is low and should be increased to achieve the desired development goals. For example, in 2022, triangular cooperation accounted for 0.24 per cent of DAC members' ODA disbursed, and the important sectors of triangular cooperation are global governance, agriculture, health, and the environment. The outcome document of the G20 Development Ministerial Meeting, Varanasi, (India), 2023, also emphasized the need to enhance North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation. It is no longer just a partnership between OECD DAC members and developing countries and is not a replacement for North-South or South-South cooperation. It is an additional effort in terms of reinforcing international cooperation for development. This year, the Brazilian G20 Presidency has also set trilateral cooperation as one of its priorities since it can boost cooperation for development.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UN recognise that triangular cooperation complements and adds value to South-South cooperation by enabling requesting developing countries to source and access more, and a broader range of, resources, expertise and capacities, that they identify as needed in order to achieve their national development goals and internationally agreed sustainable development goals (UN, 2019) <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/N1911172.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> In 2022, the flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA) as a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI) in DAC countries was approximately 0.38 percent. This figure is significantly lower than the commitment of 0.7 percent. If DAC countries were to meet their obligation

of providing 0.7 percent of their GNI as ODA, it would result in an additional USD 183 billion in resources for developing countries.

<sup>3</sup> <https://web-archiver.oecd.org/temp/2019-10-07/420179-triangular-co-operation-repository.htm>

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