

IFAD,-PROCASUR AND THE COLOMBIAN AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

AN EXAMPLE OF TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

A. Introduction

The following note has been prepared by Procasur at the suggestion by IFAD to further the analysis of its Learning Routes (LR) approach and methodology, now in the context of South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), understood along the lines of the definition of the process adopted in the final communique of the First High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation: Building Towards an Inclusive Post-2015 Development held in Mexico in April 2014¹. *Triangular cooperation is an innovative way of inclusive partnering, which puts the role and will of the recipient countries at the core and provides an opportunity to bring together the diversity and richness of the experiences, lessons learned and different assets of Northern and Southern partners, as well as multilateral, regional and bilateral development and financial institutions, by maximizing, through well-supported cooperation schemes, the use of effective, locally owned solutions that are appropriate to specific country contexts.*

The note presents the experience gained by IFAD and Procasur in furthering the SSTC approach following a request by the Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia under Colombia's International Cooperation National Strategy (ENCI)²

The Colombian Agency for International Cooperation

Colombia's International cooperation activities are framed by the National International Cooperation Strategy (ENCI). Since 2006, Colombia strengthened its SSTC by assigning specific resources through establishment of an International Cooperation and Assistance Fund (FOCAI) for its Spanish acronym). To date, Colombia has quadrupled the financial resources assigned for SSC. In 2008, Colombia initiated regional cooperation strategies with countries of the Caribbean Basin and in 2010 with countries of the Mesoamerican region. These two initiatives are the result of a comprehensive cooperation strategy for countries that share a similar context, with the objective of accomplishing sustainable results. These strategies are carried out taking into consideration the following components: social promotion and protection, security, among others. To date, Colombia has advanced in the development of regional strategies for Asia-Pacific, Africa and Eastern Europe. Colombia also promotes cooperation initiatives in the framework of regional consultation mechanisms such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Pacific Alliance which includes Chile, Peru and Mexico.

¹ <http://effectivecooperation.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/FinalConsensusMexicoHLMCommunique.pdf>

² http://www.apccolombia.gov.co/recursos_user/ENCI-2012-2014/ESTRATEGIA%202012-2014-eng.pdf

B. Background

In September 2011 the APC requested IFAD's assistance in furthering its South-South cooperation activities in accordance with government policies to boost knowledge sharing based on bilateral and regional strategies. The APC underlined IFAD's role in development indicating that it could become a strategic player by working together in promoting SSTC in the region and elsewhere. The request asked for support in the identification and documentation of good practices in South-South cooperation in rural development that would help supplement the efforts the Government had been leading to consolidate a Guide to Good Practices. Additional support was requested for identifying collaborative efforts particularly in areas such as microfinance, the production of tropical fruits, coffee, biodiversity and mobile technologies.

More specific support was requested on a number of issues including: a) culture and food security under the APC's cooperation strategy with 25 countries of the Caribbean Basin, b) promoting social development, local governance and support to small and medium enterprises under its Mesoamerica cooperation strategy and c) furthering joint initiatives in the African continent.

IFAD responded by suggesting involvement of Procasur through its grants for knowledge sharing using the Learning Routes approach and methodology. This approach and methodology has been defined as a continuous process of training in the field that seeks to value the best experiences and knowledge of institutions, associations, communities and rural families. Each Route is organized thematically around experiences, case studies and best practices on innovative rural and local development in which local actors themselves become trainers. Through workshops, interviews, conversations and other field activities the Learning Route generates a space for individual and collective learning for both participants and their hosts. Upon completion of the Route participants prepare innovation plans to carry back with them with the hope of implementing them with their organizations.

The APC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Procasur in June 2012 stating that both organizations would aim to increase the impact and strengthen the effectiveness of Colombia's South-South Cooperation strategy by implementing a knowledge sharing approach that would value local knowledge and local talents developed by IFAD and Procasur for implementation by APC-Colombia. A total of US\$ 150 000 was committed for this purpose. The MOU included capacity development of APC-Colombia for the formulation, design and implementation of management tools for enhancing local knowledge and talents and implementing three LR's. "

C. Implementation.

The cooperation agreement addressed the challenge of disseminating results of successful development experiences which could be adapted to specific conditions in different locations, recognizing the contribution of local actors either as organizations or individuals.

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In order to implement the agreement, Procasur and APC jointly organized three workshops to further understanding of the LR approach and methodology with participants of APC and other Colombian ministries and relevant departments and carried out three LRs.

(a) **Capacity building workshops.** In order to further capacity building Procasur and APC organized three workshops: (i) "The Learning Routes Approach" in June 2012. (ii) "Introduction to Mapping and Systematization of Experiences for South-South Learning" in November 2012 and, (iii) Participatory Systematization of Experiences and Strengthening of Local talents," in, April 2013, involving an average of 20 participants from APC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Planning Directorate.

(b) **Learning Routes** Three LRs were planned and implemented in June 2012 - May 2013.

i. *Sustainable music schools* which included 12 participants from 6 countries (Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and the Dominican Republic). The objective of this LR was to Identify innovations and good management practices and promotion of musical cultural assets linked to local contexts, including the identification of actors and synergies that have contributed to these processes, identifying success factors, obstacles and lessons learned by participating actors in recovering and strengthening collective musical practices and adopting strategies and tools for the management of cultural assets and strengthening collective musical practices with impact on cohesion and dynamism of given territories.

ii. *"Youth Entrepreneurship for Africa"* including 12 participants from 6 countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Botswana, and Colombia). The objective of this LR was to further understanding of the Colombian experience, methodologies and impact based on evidence of productive projects that generate youth employment and help to strengthen the skills and knowledge of young people. Specific objectives included: a) encouraging the adoption of new methodologies and strategic alliances that would enable participating institutions to adopt innovative solutions that motivate and encourage rural youth entrepreneurship while analyzing individually and collectively the experiences of productive projects visited, b) assessing difficulties and opportunities that young people face in implementing their projects and discuss relevant cross-cutting issues of each experience in order to guide decisions or public initiatives to support rural youth entrepreneurship in a local, national and international context.

iii. *"Best practices in territorial governance"* with 25 participants from 6 countries (Panama, El Salvador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Costa Rica. The main objective of this LR was to contribute towards strengthening the processes of territorial governance and promoting ownership of practices and tools successfully applied in the context of the national government's "Implementation of Quality Management Systems" in two municipalities of Colombia. More specifically the LR

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aimed to: (i) further better understanding of policies and the programmatic framework that guides and facilitates the decentralization of public services in Colombia, including budgetary processes on a territorial basis and encourage the adoption of new practices and tools that would allow participants to develop innovative solutions to improve provision of public services.

D. Model of SSTC intervention:

The SSTC model reviewed herein fits the definition of the SSTC model in which a national international cooperation agency develops plans and implements activities jointly with international donors and financial institutions and other counterpart organizations and entities in a recipient country or group of countries which are part of regional groupings. Implementation of this model has been possible by virtue of the long standing collaboration between IFAD and Procasur in implementing the LR approach and methodology in Latin America, Eastern and Southern Africa and Asia. Collaboration with APC has been possible based on IFAD and Procasur initiatives related to youth entrepreneurship and development of local talents and learning territories which have been implemented in the country.

The LR approach and methodology has been well documented including a comprehensive analysis prepared for IFAD in 2011³. The document provides a step by step description of the model and makes suggestions for its scaling up. The experience with APC may be considered as an element in this process and provides some insights for its use in SSTC. As the scaling up paper recommended, and the APC experience confirms there is more work to be done in assessing impact mainly in terms of the adoption and applicability of the innovations plans which are an essential element of the LRs. A separate study on the implementation of the innovative character of Local Resources Allocation Committees resulting from experience gained in Peru in Vietnam and Rwanda provides for a more in depth analysis on necessary conditions for adoption, adaptation of what is learned during a LR.

E. Achievements and Lessons learnt

Outputs, outcomes and impact. Implementation of the agreement with APC resulted in the training of more than 20 staffs of Colombian government officials in understanding and implementing the LR approach and methodology, more than 50 government and non-government officials of 15 different countries in the Caribbean, Central America and Africa acquired knowledge on Colombia's initiatives in cultural assets, youth entrepreneurs and decentralized provision of public services. A total of 8 innovation plans were prepared by participants in the Sustainable Music Schools and Youth Entrepreneurship for Africa LRs.

Participants in the Sustainable Music School LR prepared five innovation plans. The Cultural and Arts Secretariat of the State of Oaxaca in Mexico outlined an innovation plan on recognizing the cultural value of the wooden xylophone or *marimba*, the *Empresa de Grabaciones y Ediciones Musicales* (EGREM) of Cuba on the education of

³ Scaling up "Learning Routes" as a knowledge management and capacity building tool

school children using oral poetry represented by the *décima* a ten-line stanza of poetry, the Cultural Secretariat of El Salvador considered professionalization of the Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Ministry of Culture of Guatemala establishing music schools in two municipalities, the *Casa de la Cultura* in the Dominican Republic supporting school bands and the Cultural, Arts and Sports Secretariat of Honduras involving youth and music in a social development context.

Participants in the Youth Entrepreneurship for Africa LR prepared three innovations plans. The participant from the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture Department of Botswana proposed addressing the issue of youth offenders in the Okavango Delta in the context of better management of natural resources while the representative of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development of Kenya saw furthering youth entrepreneurship in the context of the banana value chain and the Association of Microfinance Institutions of Uganda (AMFIU) contemplated promotion of youth financing among microfinance institutions through public private partnerships.

As a result of the experience, it is possible to say that the LR approach and methodology has been scaled up by involving bilateral agencies and that in the particular case being reviewed, the APC has been able to assess its merit and southern partners have acquired knowledge on successful experiences developed in Colombia which may assist them in adopting or adapting them to their own situations. Assessing the final impact of implementing the approach, especially in terms of the innovation plans would require additional effort on the part of APC and Procasur.

Lessons learned. Implementation of the agreement has provided a number of lessons which may assist in replicating this initiative with other bilateral cooperation agencies. It must be recognized at the outset that the overall framework is essentially “country owned and supply led”. With this in mind it is necessary to build capacity of the bilateral agencies, clearly defining responsibilities within the organizational structure of the agency and above all building an evaluation culture.

The capacity development dimension of the experience indicated consensus on the relevance and appropriateness of the methodology in the context of the APC’s mission and its organizational and programmatic structure. The capacity development workshops provided useful insights for furthering the use of the LR approach and methodology in the context of SSTC with national international cooperation agencies. Worth noting are recommendations made during the workshops which may be consider for lessons’ learning: (a) the selection of key experts to support the diagnosis stage, selection of cases in terms of assessing the potential for innovation and educational experiences and to provide key information and the design of the route concepts is crucial (b) defining competencies including knowledge, skills or abilities and attitudes to be developed among those participating in the educational process should be linked to their practical needs .

A self-assessment by Procasur indicates the need to further support APC in including in its "Good Practice Guidelines for SSTC" the importance of valuing local knowledge and

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talents. The assessment underlined the need to monitor and/or evaluate scheduled and planned SSTC activities as being of paramount importance.

Scalability and sustainability. The new development architecture as Homi Kharas of the Brookings Institutions has pointed out ⁴ augurs well for scaling up the approach advanced jointly with the APC as *“developing countries themselves have become far more capable of articulating and implementing their own development strategies. “Country ownership” is the new normal for development, implying that cooperation must take place at the country level as well as in international spheres. Many developing countries are also simultaneously recipients and providers of development cooperation and are bundling political, trade, investment and development objectives together in new ways”*. There are now several countries such as Brazil, China, and Mexico among others which could benefit from the experience gained with the APC. The sustainability of the Colombian initiative is assured as long as the country’s international cooperation policies remain unchanged and budgetary allocations are concurrently put in place.

F. Conclusions

It is possible to conclude that: (a) national cooperation agencies such as the APC are willing and able to further triangular cooperation albeit with the proviso that measures for ex post follow up are instituted especially in terms of implementation of innovation plans, determining their success or failure in furthering the LR approach and methodology and b) triangular cooperation needs broadening and strengthening in the context of the new international development architecture.

APC is continuing to implement the LR approach and methodology under different modalities. In the context of its Africa Strategy, it is involving the National Training Service (SENA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) in furthering exchange of Colombia’s experiences and good practices on rural entrepreneurship involving staff from rural development programs in Africa and Latin America. It will also implement a LR in Asia under its Asia Cooperation Strategy on “How to boost development in rural areas and overcoming extreme poverty through business management and local knowledge”. This initiative will also include participation of the National Agency for Overcoming Extreme Poverty (ANSPE) as well as MARD and SENA seeking to promote articulation between programs of the participating institutions towards construction of a rural development approach in the context of the national strategy for overcoming extreme poverty led by ANSPE.

These initiatives build on the experience gained under the APC–Procasur MOU including recognition of the importance local knowledge and experiences. There is commitment towards furthering management strategies within partners in exchanging developmental experiences and cooperating with other developing countries, especially through infrastructure and economic development, public services and social protection,

⁴ <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/11/international-architecture-kharas>

resilience building, knowledge sharing, and regional cooperation and integration initiatives.

On a global perspective, the need to continue broadening and strengthening SSTC is clearly spelled out in the Final Communique of the Mexico meeting which welcomed *the initiatives undertaken by Southern partners to deepen the understanding of the nature and modalities of South-South cooperation and the ways and means to enhance its developmental impact as well as its potential synergies with the efforts of other development cooperation partners and modalities*. The communique further *encouraged the development of networks for knowledge exchange, peer learning and coordination among all development partners. In this context and ... the active promotion of voluntary technology transfer, on mutually agreed terms and conditions, and the enhancement of capacity building in support of developing country efforts to address inclusive and sustainable development challenges*".

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