



# The Development Triangle

– on how partners can combine advocacy, organisational capacity building and strategic deliveries in their cooperation

## 1. WHY THE DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE MATTERS

Erfaringer Experience shows that development and humanitarian work has the greatest and most lasting effect when advocacy combined with capacity development of civil society organisations (CSOs) is underpinned by relevant strategic deliveries. This linkage between advocacy, capacity development and strategic deliveries forms the Development Triangle.

The Development Triangle is at the heart of CISU's strategy and fund guidelines aimed at achieving sustainable and poverty-reducing results for vulnerable groups. It also features prominently in Danida's "The World 2030: Denmark's strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action", with its focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the leave no one behind principle, and in "Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society". This makes it important for CSOs to integrate advocacy, capacity development and strategic deliveries when planning and implementing development interventions.

The thinking behind the Development Triangle is that strategic deliveries and organisational capacity are not just supplementary to advocacy, but rather the foundation for good advocacy to occur. Looked at the other way around, successful advocacy can also widen a CSO's sphere of influence and boost its capacity, thus improving its chances of providing more strategic deliveries and of getting authorities to take on responsibility for the issues being addressed.

## 2. WHAT IS THE DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE?

The Development Triangle shows how the interaction between strategic deliveries, organisational capacity building and advocacy serves to address fundamental causes of poverty and denial of human rights.

Strategic deliveries are those that the partners in an intervention contribute to the target group in a direct fashion, encompassing technical and professional inputs in their favour. These can be professional methods and processes, such as the development of innovative pedagogy, training of farmers in new agricultural methods, or specialist lessons in new healthcare practices. However, strategic deliveries can also, to a limited extent, consist of more tangible goods and services, such as renovation of buildings, provision of equipment, etc. though only when this serves a strategic purpose as regards the local partner's role as a civil society organisation.

The core of the matter is that making such deliveries must be seen from a long-term perspective as a means of advancing sustainable development rather than as an end in itself. Strategic deliveries can give the organisations involved more in-depth knowledge of the context as well as local support for systematic advocacy either together with or on behalf of the target group.

Organisational capacity building has two main dimensions. The first is about organising the target group in its ability to carry out activities and to use and maintain the results in a sustainable manner. This may encompass, for example:

- Organising target group members into self-help groups.
- Strengthening farmers organising themselves in agricultural groups or cooperatives.
- Organising young people into a student council.

The second dimension is to develop CSOs' professional and organisational capacity in order to enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of the target group. This is about the extent to which the organisation has an adequate legitimacy and sufficient knowledge to act and conduct advocacy together with or on behalf of

the target group. Organisational capacity can include local partners' knowledge and ability to:

- Develop professional knowledge in their fields of work.
- Develop participatory approaches to supporting poor target groups' own efforts to organise, and their ability to bring about change and champion their own cause.
- Work responsibly in relation to target groups, partners and donors regarding context analyses, strategic planning, as well as implementation, monitoring and reporting of interventions.
- Avoid discriminatory practices against particular target groups and live up to the leave no one behind principle.
- Ensure transparent financial and administrative procedures.
- Network with like-minded organisations and launch cooperation with other actors, such as businesses, think tanks and broader, more informal forms of organisation.

Danish organisations can help strengthen the organisational capacity of their partners and their target groups through well-targeted capacity building, thus contributing to creating a strong civil society.

Advocacy consists of systematic interventions that, by influencing decision-makers or the general public, seek to secure the rights of target groups in order to bring about lasting change. Advocacy may target duty bearers responsible for fulfilling people's rights, such as politicians, local authorities, school boards or businesses either locally or internationally. Advocacy will often contain:

- The setting of a clear goal regarding the rights to be invoked and the kind of change to be achieved.
- Argumentation based on rights or documented factual knowledge.
- Analysis of relevant decision-makers and the political context.
- Forging alliances with other organisations.
- Strategy and methods, for instance, based on negotiations and use of media

De danske organisationer kan være med til styrke målgrupper og deres partners organisatoriske kapacitet gennem målrettet kapacitetsopbygning og således bidrage til at skabe et stærkt civilsamfund i Syd.

### 3. USING THE DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE IN PRACTICE

The Development Triangle is used in various ways. Humanitarian interventions often spring from strategic deliveries, such as relief aid, serving to strengthen CSOs' capacity and advocacy in favour of persons affected by a humanitarian disaster. Development work, on the other hand, tends to focus more on capacity development and realisation of advocacy. In practice, the three points of the Development Triangle reinforce one another:

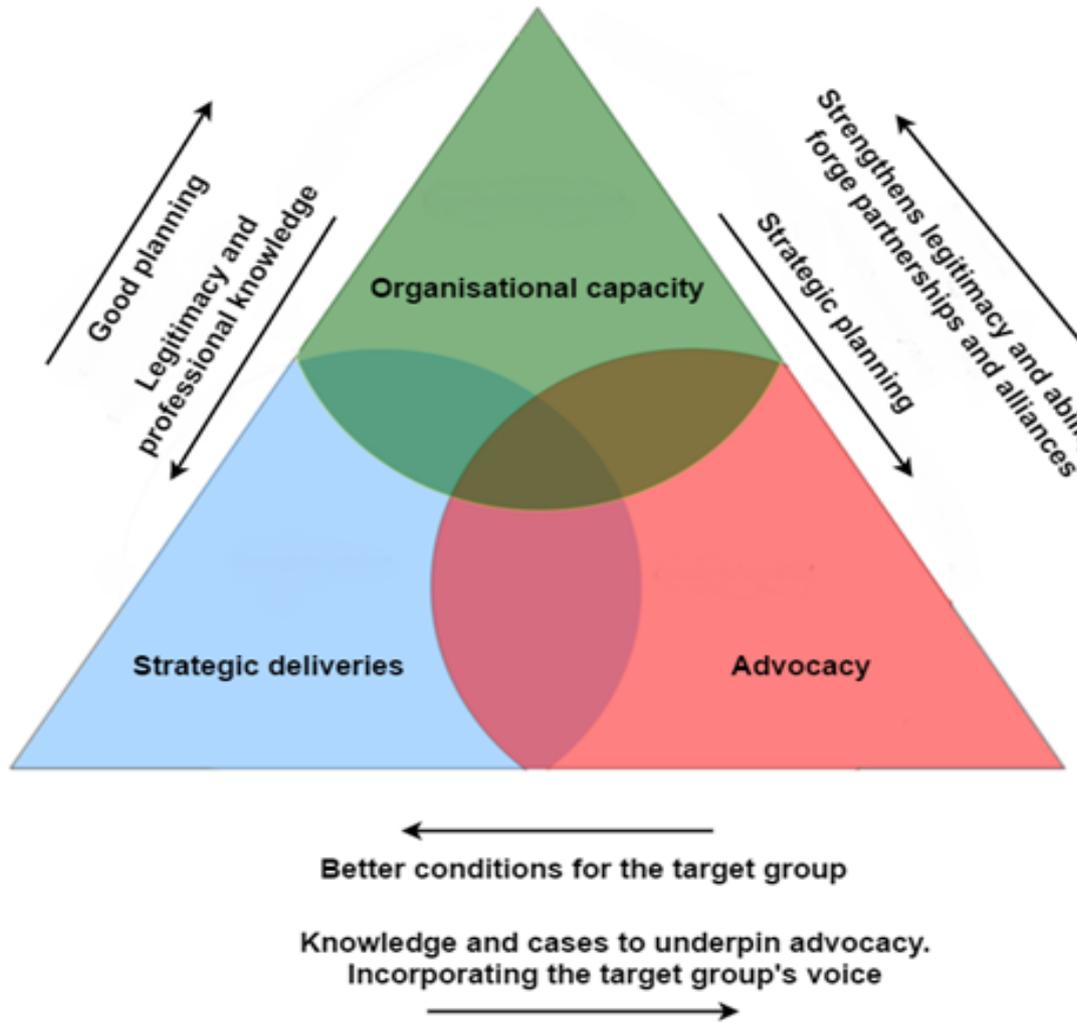
- Strategic deliveries can give an organisation greater legitimacy and professional expertise as regards its target group, members and field of work. Moreover, good organisational capacity will improve both the planning and the quality of strategic deliveries.
- Good organisational capacity also serves to substantiate good strategic planning of advocacy activities. Successful advocacy will in turn strengthen the organisation even more, setting the stage for expanding the scope of its strategies, possibly by means of new alliances and networks.
- Effective advocacy can lead to decision-makers improving conditions for the target group. Meanwhile, a project making strategic deliveries will generate knowledge and case stories contributing to the advocacy.

#### The context

It is important to determine whether the context is fragile or stable, and whether or not there is a humanitarian crisis. Since the possible scenarios fall along a continuum, the difference is not necessarily clear-cut, just as the context can change during the realisation of an intervention. In general, however, development interventions in stable contexts tend to work in the green-red or in the red zone in accordance with the model illustrated here. While grants of up to DKK 1 million make it possible to develop advocacy potential, those over DKK 1 million make it obligatory to conduct actual advocacy. In fragile situations, it is not always possible to work with advocacy, where the partnership tends to unfold in the blue-green zone with its stronger emphasis on deliveries to vulnerable target groups and building of capacity. Pure delivery of services should not take place on a wider scale, except in a humanitarian crisis.

Each partnership is unique and evolves over time

When interventions are designed together with a partner, it is important to have a keen eye for how to integrate the three elements of the Development



Triangle in view of the context and the objective set for the intervention. During a start-up phase, a partnership may focus on building the local partner's organisational capacity. This will often be done through strategic deliveries (e.g. training) and thus take place in the blue-green zone of the triangle. At a later stage, this capacity-building may enable the partner to work systematically with advocacy, thus moving the partnership into the green-red zone. Another partnership may focus on a time-limited, well-targeted advocacy campaign, thus working in the red zone of the triangle.

**Bringing several partners into play**

Different organisations can implement different aspects of the Development Triangle. In a project dedicated to sustainable forestry development, local co-operatives may be in charge of training forest workers in new working methods and FSC certification, while a national CSO can draw on the cooperatives' experiences in efforts to influence national forestry legislation.

Focusing on the balanceThe Development Triangle is a good analytical tool for the planning of a development activity. However, the proper balance between the three elements hinges strongly on the objective of the activity concerned. If it is to organise target groups in a grassroots organisation, the emphasis will tend to be on organisational development and strategic deliveries. If it is to secure the rights of target groups, such as their access to education or the rights of persons with disabilities, the emphasis will rather tend to be on building organisational capacity in strategic planning and practical implementation of specific advocacy efforts.

**4. WITH THIS THEMATIC PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT TRIANGLE, CISU WISHES TO PROMOTE** at that Danish civil society organisations and their partners use the Development Triangle as a tool of analysis and planning of their interventions. This also means:

- Partners getting an understanding of advocacy, organisational capacity building and strategic delive-

ries as three important components of interventions that reinforce one another and prepare the ground for change to take place.

- Partners working together to clear up expectations as regards the balance between the three elements.
- Partners being encouraged to consider the strategic links between the three elements in their preparation of joint activities, and to use them in the realisation of actual interventions.
- Partners using the interaction between strategies deliveries, organisational capacity building and advocacy in their development activities in order to promote the rights of target groups, thus contributing to poverty-reducing and sustainable improvements in their favour.

## 5. HOW TO USE CISU

Funds: Danish organisations can apply to CISU's funds for support for cooperation based on the Development Triangle together with their partners.

Capacity services: CISU's member organisations may turn to CISU for advice on how to use the Development Triangle. They may also attend CISU's courses or suggest subjects to be addressed by CISU.

## 6. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW AND DO MORE

To learn more: <http://www.cisu-dk/værktøj-metoder/>

CISU has two fundamental recommendations for work with the Development Triangle:

- Make sure that there is a common understanding of the strategy to strike the right balance between strategic deliveries, capacity development and advocacy in your partnership.
- Make sure that this strategy is developed in dialogue with the target group chosen for the partner's interventions.

---

### CISU'S THEMATIC PAPERS

CISU draws up thematic papers setting out our view of how our member organisations may understand, interpret and apply various key concepts in civil society cooperation.

The thematic papers are based on our practice and experience of member organisations' international work, our advisory services and courses, as well as our administration of funds open for applications.

The thematic papers are approved by CISU's Board. They are not carved in stone, but will be revised at appropriate intervals in view of experience gained. Moreover, new position papers will be drawn up on other issues.

See the latest version and other position papers at: [www.cisu.dk/værktøj-metoder/cisus-temapapirer](http://www.cisu.dk/værktøj-metoder/cisus-temapapirer).



CISU – Civil Society in Development  
Klosterport 4x, 3rd floor, DK-8000 Aarhus C, Denmark  
Telephone: +45 86120342, open weekdays 10 am to 3 pm.