

PARTNERSHIPS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19: BUILDING BACK BETTER TOGETHER

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Prof. Xiaolan Fu
University of Oxford





Partnerships in response to COVID-19

Building back better together



Partnerships in response to COVID-19

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the international community has made significant efforts to mobilize partnerships to accelerate the global response - providing urgent health and socio-economic responses and supporting communities to live with the pandemic, as well as working towards post-pandemic recovery and ensuring we “build back better”.

During COVID-19, partnerships were built up rapidly in just a few weeks or months.

- Typology of the range of partnerships;
- Impact;
- Formation and driving forces;
- Enabling conditions;
- Challenges;
- Success factors;
- Lessons-learned



Methodology

36 cases are collected, 9 have been interviewed

Partnership	Description	Initiator
The ANTICOV clinical trial	The ANTICOV consortium is mobilizing a wide network of public sector, civil society, academia and private sector partners with recognised experience in clinical research.	Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (NGO)
International Initiative on COVID-19 in Yemen	The International Initiative on COVID-19 in Yemen (IICY) is a collaborative partnership of businesses and international organizations united by a desire to support Yemen's response to COVID-19, at a critical time for the country and its people.	Hayel Saeed Anam Group (Private sector)
The GCRF UKRI GCRF/Newton Fund Agile Response	The GCRF UKRI GCRF/Newton Fund Agile Response is a funding call of public-public partnership that supports research into COVID-19 and its impact on some of the world's most disadvantaged people	BEIS (government department)
UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund	The United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund is a UN inter-agency fund mechanism established by the UN Secretary-General to help support low- and middle-income programme countries the COVID-19.	The United Nations (The UN)
Global Partnership for Education (GPE)'s COVID response	This work aims to provide rapid support and funding to GPE partner countries to respond to the challenges presented by the COVID epidemic and enable continuity of learning.	Global Partnership for Education (International organization)
Tencent Foundation – private sector funded partnership	The Tencent Foundation has launched many partnerships between private sector, NGOs and local governments, and facilitated donations and crowdfunding to support various responses to the COVID crisis through an innovative online donation platform and innovative charitable fund-raising models.	Tencent (Private sector)
COVID-19 Women & Children Safe at Hotel, Mexico	In response to the increase in domestic violence generated in the context of COVID-19, UNICEF and UNFPA, national and local governments and a hotel corporation have begun implementing a strategy to provide safe, temporary and free hotel accommodation for women and their children who are victims of violence, for a brief period while their cases are studied and different support networks or shelters are located.	UNICEF and UNFPA (The UN), within the Spotlight Initiative
IOM partnership on filter hotel for migrants, Mexico	The IOM in partnership with the government, civil society, academia and private sector of Ciudad Juarez, implemented a program to give temporary accommodation to migrants to prevent infection.	International Organization for Migration (The UN)
COVID-19 Women safe at Home	The project has been implemented in alliance with Mexico City Government, UNDP and UN Women, reinforcing institutional capacities to respond and support incidents of violence against women.	United Nations Development Programme (The UN)

Key findings -1:

A wide range of partnerships have been formed during the pandemic, most focusing on the immediate response to COVID-19.

Partnerships have provided financial support and technical assistance; supported project implementation and delivery; facilitated research, data collection and analytics; and coordinated various response actions.

The United Nations, civil society and the private sector are playing a key role in initiating partnerships.

A shared sense of urgency, pre-existing networks, partnership experience, flexibility, and use of digital technologies are key factors that contributed to the speedy formation of partnerships.

Key findings -2:

Vision, trust, alignment of interests, flexibility, commitment, and adaptive governance structures and leadership are key success factors.

Major challenges include communication between partners, access to resources, and uncertainty given the rapidly changing conditions.

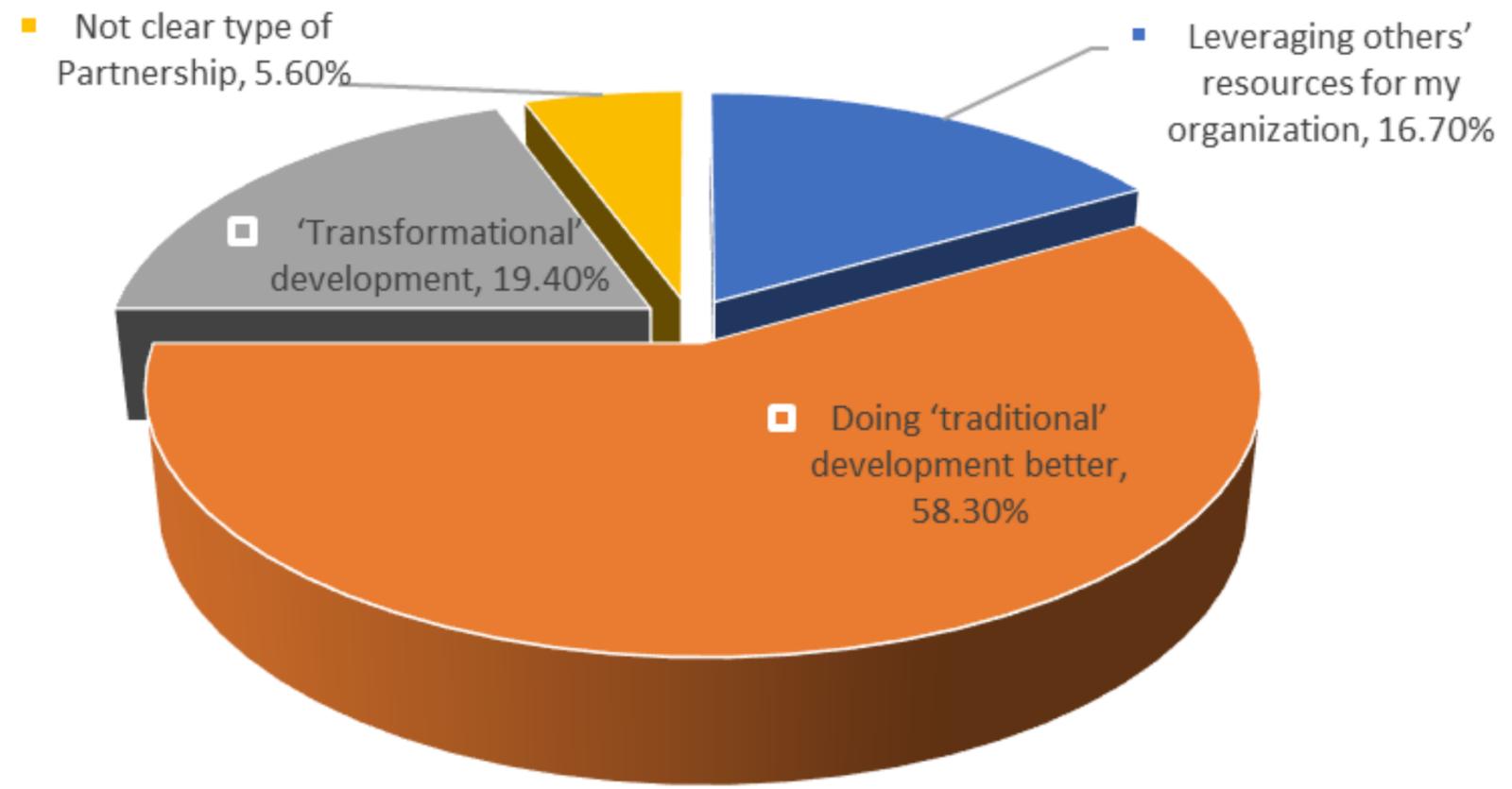
There is a need to rethink procedures deemed necessary for formalizing partnerships.

Partnership Spectrum



Source: SDG Partnership Guidebook (TPI & UNDESA, 2020)

Distribution of partnerships by spectrum



Source: UNDESA (2021)

Type of partnerships

Phase 1

Immediate response to the pandemic.

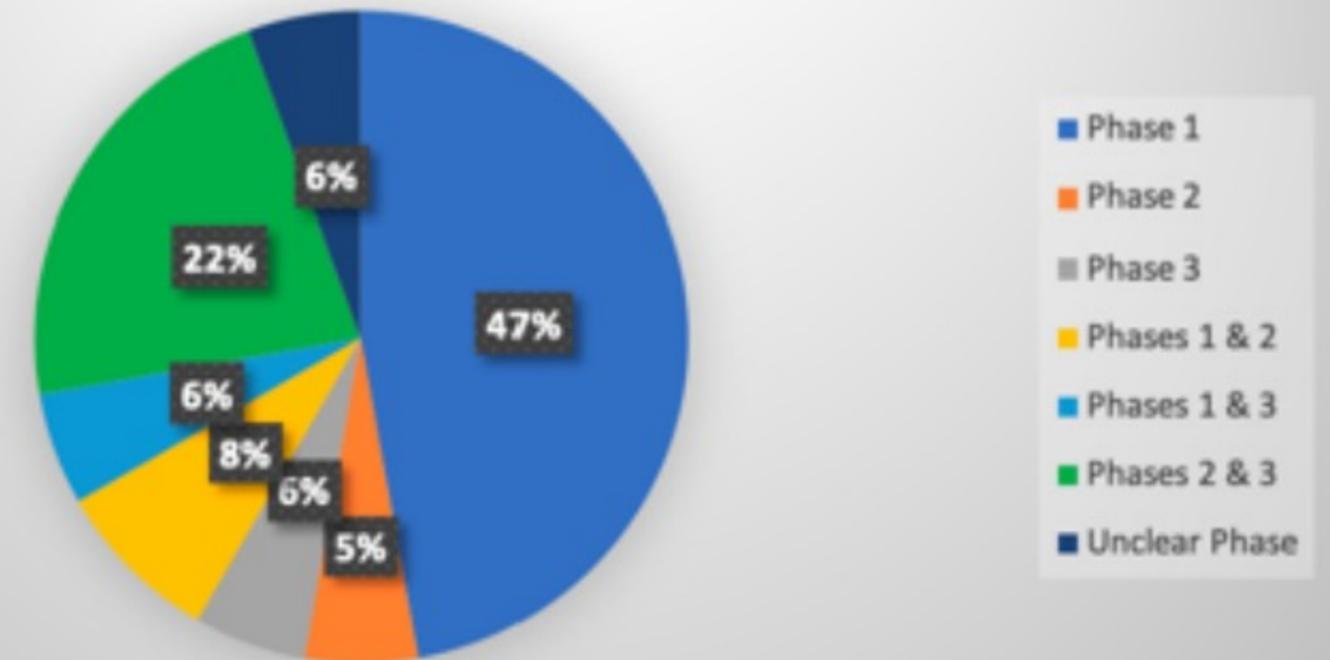
Phase 2

Living with the pandemic. Mitigating the incremental burden of the COVID-19 crisis through global and coordinated efforts supported by regional initiatives and institutions. Partnerships in this phase are looking beyond the immediate response to plan for systemic change to fit the "new normal".

Phase 3

Building back better - a shift to sustainable practices. Partners engage in longer-term multilateral arrangements, involving both local and cross-border flows and linkages that utilize resources and competences from partners, for the joint achievement of collective goals.

Distribution of Partnerships' Pandemic Response by Phase



Source: UNDESA (2021)

Formation of partnerships during the pandemic

There is a wide range of initiators of the partnerships. Most of the partnerships studied were initiated by the United Nations and the private sector.

Distribution of Initiator of Partnerships by Geographical Orientation

Initiator's type by SDG partner guidebook	Domestic	International	Total	Proportion
Government	1	2	3	8.3%
International organization		3	3	8.3%
International organization and Private Sector		1	1	2.8%
NGO	1	3	4	11.1%
Other stakeholders		1	1	2.8%
Private sector	4	3	7	19.4%
Private sector and the United Nations		1	1	2.8%
Private sector, Foundations and Government		1	1	2.8%
Private sector and Government		1	1	2.8%
The United Nations	3	5	8	22.2%
The United Nations and Government		1	1	2.8%
No information	1	4	5	13.9%
Total	10	26	36	100.0%

Source: UNDESA (2021)

Rapid partnering

Important factors that contributed to the speedy formation of the partnerships:

- 1 the emergency nature of the crisis,
- 2 the use of technologies to overcome barriers imposed by the crisis,
- 3 adoption of innovative practices in the partnerships,
- 4 building partnerships based on trust and existing networks,
- 5 flexibility of partners and the partnership to face the crisis uncertainties.

Can this be replicated for other global crises or SDGs?

- The urgency of the pandemic, the fact that it directly affects many people's lives, and the rapid and global spread are unique factors that enable quick action.
- One interviewee drew a parallel to climate change
- - “if its urgency can be raised to this level and achieve wide public consensus, quick partnership development may enable positive actions concerning this, as well other pressing global challenges”.

Success factors

1. Forward planning

'I believe the first success factor is to plan ahead the collaborations. Our planning took only 2 weeks as we think this has to be really quick'.

2. Trust between partners and existing networks – All mentioned trust is key.

Partnerships 'move at the speed of trust'. There may already be a pre-existing level of trust between partners, and many leveraged on their existing networks.

3. Alignment of interests towards a shared vision – All mentioned.

Starting from a basis of existing relationships can help organizations achieve this quickly.

4. Commitment

5. Governance structure and leadership

- 1) a joint steering committee based on contracts and involves all; 2). complex systems of explicit rules.

Challenges

- **Crisis uncertainty.** Dealing with uncertainty, unpredictability and unexpected issues
- **Access to key resources.** Some started without external or additional funding. Successful partnerships all acknowledged funding support.
- **Communication between partners.**

Enabling Factors

1. The emergency conditions created by the pandemic pushed all types of institutions to be flexible, to commit their resources and experience, and to solve problems promptly.
2. The MSP model is an important factor for success, since it is appropriate to combine multiple resources and to use the partners' social capital not only to design a partnership model quickly, but also to make it viable in practice.
3. Technologies, and in particular digital technologies, were a crucial enabler of the partnerships during the pandemic..

Lessons Learned

- a) Some areas of the bureaucracy of organizations, especially governments and international organizations, can be modified to accelerate the creation of partnerships.
- b) Allowing for flexibility within an organization can generate a fast process of partnership creation. It can also facilitate innovative ways of creating and delivering solutions.
- c) Digital technologies play a crucial role in the communication and management of modern partnerships and create innovative solutions for them.