



Summary of Discussion

Webinar: Promoting South-South Solidarity for SDG3, 30 September 2020

Background:

Earlier this month, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) in collaboration with its development partners launched the 3rd Volume of the '[Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development](#)'. The volume features innovative solutions from the Global South that are relevant to the implementation of the SDGs. The objective is to demonstrate how South-South and Triangular Cooperation support countries to overcome shared challenges and accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

The publication includes a dedicated chapter on SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being which bring together a collection of 30 good practices in the areas of provision of quality essential health services, including reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH). To this end, UNOSSC, jointly with UNICEF, UNFPA, PAHO/WHO jointly organized this virtual event to showcase the health-related solutions featured in the new volume.

The event enabled the sharing of success stories, and experiences, which are also relevant to the unprecedented global health crisis triggered due to COVID-19 pandemic. These solutions demonstrate measures to improve access and outcomes of health services through the use of innovative techniques and replication measures.

Proceedings of Discussion:

Dr. Guillermo Mendoza, Senior Country Program Advisor, PAHO/WHO moderated the session and expressed gratitude for partnership with UNICEF, UNFPA and UNOSSC. He highlighted WHO's mission for strategic and collaborative efforts among member states and other partners.

Mr. Adel Abdelatif, Director of UNOSSC, in his opening remarks, highlighting the importance of South-South Cooperation to address the challenges of southern countries. He also referred to WHO recognition and acknowledgement of good practices on COVID-19 response of countries from the south such as Thailand, Mongolia and others from Latin America and Asia. Therefore, demonstrating the need to harness the lessons and good practices from countries in the South.

Ms. Naa-Amy Wayne, Youth Leader and founder of the FHL (Faith, Hope and Love) Group, Ghana presented the Good practice on: [Youth4Youth Forum – Creating Youth-Led Avenue for Dialogue and Creating Solutions](#). She stated that Africa's young population estimated at 226 million in 2015, is expected to double by 2055, hence there is a strong need to harness the demographic dividend. South-South cooperation plays a vital role in achieving this. Africa's youth can be viewed more as an advantage. She highlighted that African youth should be used as an advantage and a laid-back approach can lead to risk of addressing gender issues, unavailability of youth-friendly spaces and inadequate knowledge in such as reproductive health issues which can result in poor reproductive health.

She further explained that the Youth4Youth (Y4Y) forum, organized on the margins of the China Africa Conference on Population and Development, provided an avenue for a youth-led dialogue and creative solutions by young people as forerunners of horizontal development. The forum's encouraged young people to lead their own dialogue to foster relationships, build networks, resourcing opportunities and share knowledge between Africans and the Chinese. She also presented the three phases : the pre-forum awareness activities, the forum and the post-forum follow up. As it is organized along with the main conference which has been running for three years, it adds to the sustainability of the event. The documentation of the event, compiled through various innovative means is made available, both, in video and reports that can be replicated for other regions. The Y4Y forum was successful in yielding results in terms of generating connection across the Global South, intergenerational dialogue, exhibit innovative approaches delivered by youth and highlighted integral partnerships and initiatives with UNFPA, Africa Youth and Adolescence Centre (AFriYAN) and Young Leaders Fellowship programme.

Moving forward in the spirit of South-South Solidarity, the forum also set up a framework for exchange of programs among developing countries to share ideas, best practices. The forum aims to further promote South-South Cooperation by initiating community and business cooperation projects. It will also include building and strengthening capacity in the field of social practice, academic research etc. to better contribute to South-South and development cooperation. She emphasized leveraging the digital technologies including social media and available platform such as South-South Galaxy for development cooperation and to deal with the impact of COVID-19.

Ms. Belén Bogado, Director General of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Argentina, presented the Good practice on [Strengthening Antimicrobial Resistance Detection and Surveillance in CARICOM](#). She highlighted that South-South and Triangular Cooperation is a key part of Argentina's foreign policy. Through these modalities of cooperation, the country has been able to build alliances for over three decades with other states, multilateral institutions and civil society organizations towards sustainable development.

She explained that the WHO's declaration of antibiotic resistance as threat to global health, food security and development become even more relevant in the context of COVID-19. In that context Argentina, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and 14 independent CARICOM states signed a commitment to implement this triangular cooperation project. It aimed to provide tools and capabilities to CARICOM member states for the detection for integrating surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) both in human and animal health, and establishing national quality control programs on AMR. This will generate a database that will collect and systematize essential data crucially needed among health professionals on antimicrobial prescription. The information will be also used in decision making on monitoring resistant trends within the veterinary and the agriculture sector.

The project also represented the first initiative in the region aligned with Argentina's commitment to the implementation of the WHO Global Action Plan for AMR. The trainings received under this initiative will improve their ability to deal with this COVID-19 emergency. She informed that project is already being extended and will also help to respond to the disruption and challenges caused by the pandemic and overcoming climate change and other challenges as outlined in BAPA 40+ Outcome document.

She concluded that going forward, this project is committed to demonstrating how South-South Cooperation and triangular cooperation support countries to overcome shared challenges and accelerate progress towards sustainable development and continue on the path to fulfill commitments on the 2030 Agenda.

Ms. Sirithon Wairatpanij, Minister Counsellor, Partnership for Development Bureau, Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) highlighted how South-South and triangular cooperation has been the cornerstones of Thailand's development Cooperation policy and serves to strengthen their capacity as a knowledge hub in its areas of expertise including medical and public health. It is in this context that Thailand was also recognized as one of the countries which has provided the most effective response to COVID-19. She further added that these two good practices represent a very fundamental principles of South-South cooperations where solidarity's and ownerships and demand driven elements are matched with a good management of expertise of South-South cooperation providers.

She presented two good practices. The first good practice: [Towards the Elimination of Mother-To-Child Transmission \(EMTCT\) of HIV and Syphilis](#) is implemented together with UNICEF based on Thailand's success in validations of EMTCT on HIV and syphilis. Thailand is the second country in the world with this validation coupled with universal health coverage and maternal child health services in place. Thailand has been sharing its good practices and lessons learned through South-South Cooperation. Soon after the validations in 2016, the Thai Ministry of Public Health teamed up with UNICEF Country Office in Thailand and also its Regional Office for Asia & Pacific and other partners to facilitate several capacity development and experiences by sharing initiatives to promote EMTCT with its partners countries. In 2019, this partnership was formalized between UNICEF and TICA to leverage the power of South-South Cooperation and to make it a more systematic. It served two purposes: to integrate the EMTCT into Thailand's South-South Cooperation agenda and also facilitate partner countries to access Thailand's experience, knowledge and expertise.

Under the initiative, workshop and exchange visits were organized for the countries from Central Asia and also from China. These workshops enabled collecting feedback to reinforce local capacity and show the effectiveness of Thailand's delivery in the long run. A global needs assessment was also conducted using the network of UNICEF country offices and the survey results were analyzed against valid indicators to assess the levels of interest of the partner countries in these subject matters. The results also contributed to the planning process for the joint work plan with UNICEF. The planned activities in this joint workplan included sharing of experiences with Lao PDR, Vietnam and a few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. This will help in the elimination of mother to child transmissions of HIV and syphilis. South-South Cooperation can support other countries to achieve EMTCT elevation and strengthen their health system and social protection programs in the long run.

The second good practice was presented on [Calculating the Social Return of Investment in the Thailand-Lao PDR Partnership on Midwifery](#) (SROI). TICA has a longstanding partnership with UNFPA on South-South Cooperation on sharing Thailand's good practices on sexual and reproductive health, particularly on maternal health care and services. Thailand has been successful in reducing the maternal mortality rate which is almost three times over the SDG-3 benchmark. This included a project with the Government of Bhutan on institutional capacity development in maternal health and also with the government of Laos on the national midwifery education program. She added that since 2012, the Thai Government is spending approximately US\$ 60,000-80,000 annually on this SSC activity.

Together with UNFPA, the effectiveness of the project was also evaluated to understand the importance of South-South Cooperation and the sustainability of Thailand's knowledge sharing. SROI assessments are important for accountability for TICA and UNFPA and provide comprehensive cost benefit analysis to review the efficiencies and effectiveness of project operations. The quantitative analysis of surveys and key informant interviews conducted showed that investing in South-South Cooperation projects provides high returns to the public with a ratio of 1:4 i.e. every dollar yields a return of social investment equivalent to \$4. It facilitated evidence-based policy development and informed partners about outcomes and addressed the issues of relevance and sustainability of Thai South-South Cooperation projects.

She concluded by commending the UNFPA partnership and highlighted next steps focusing on providing an effective learning online platform (in the context of COVID-19) and continuing with the SROI projects for capacity development through South-South Cooperation.

Dr. Juan Carlos de Jesus, Director of Maternal and Child Health from the Ministry of Health in the Dominican Republic presented the good practice on [Improvement of Maternal and Child Health on the Northern Border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti](#) - a collaboration between the Ministry of Health of Haiti and the Ministry of Health of Dominican Republic and other partners. Dr. Carlos explained the background and problems related to maternal and child mortality and its causes. An analysis conducted showed that 80 to 85 percent of these causes are avoidable and caused mainly by the poor quality of care due to non-adherence to protocols and the weakness in primary care. With this background, the project focused on improving the portfolio of maternal and child services in the selected region of both countries and promoting community and health interventions.

The project resulted in reducing the number of maternal deaths by 23 percent and reduction in neonatal deaths by 26 percent. Health workers, mainly from the community, were trained on triage, emergency and obstetric urgency, improvement of health service capacity, blood supply and management, compliance with protocols etc. In terms of good practices and lessons learnt, he highlighted that for the first time, both countries sat down to plan impactful actions for maternal and child health and carefully analyze the variables and determinants for each country which led to results in the selected areas. High level officials were engaged through working groups and regular communication was ensured. Interactions were facilitated between the care centers and communities in the formulation and evaluation process. The Government is also considering the potential for replication given the synergies required for the project.

Ms. Shams Banihani, Knowledge Management Specialist from the UNOSSC commended the work presented by the speakers and the results achieved. She further highlighted that these good practices have been published in recently launched 3rd Volume of the “[Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development](#)” also available on the [South-South Galaxy Platform](#), the global digital knowledge sharing and partnership brokering platform. September 2020 marks the one year anniversary of the launch of the Galaxy. Since its launch, the platform has emerged as a one-stop shop to communicate and share solutions. It is increasingly serving as a space for all partners to communicate and share solutions to address common challenges, acting as a matchmaker by connecting solution providers and seekers. The platform, so far, has a digital repository of over 500 good practices, covering all of the 17 SDGS, and has over 270 organizations registered. The platform allows organizations to connect with each other directly, making it easier to build partnerships digitally and connecting solution providers and solution seekers. The platform is contributing to the democratization of access to information and horizontal development. The platform has been enabling tangible interactions and collaborations between southern partners. She encouraged participants to their actively engage on the platform.

This was followed by a short video, showcasing perspectives from partners currently utilizing and benefiting from the platform.

Followed by a Q&A session, the meeting ended with the vote of thanks to all the speakers and the participants.