

# COVID 19: Lessons for International Development Cooperation

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The role played by international development cooperation through the various international, bilateral and Non-Governmental Organizations in promoting global diplomacy, trade, health, technology and skills transfer cannot be overemphasized. I am working as Technical Advisor-Climate Change for the German Development Cooperation (giz).

As the world grapples with the devastating impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic, it would be hard to imagine a full recovery of many economies without the intervention of development cooperation agencies. Worldwide, the virus pandemic has brought to light inefficiencies in public health systems, public and business administration, governance, etc. for various public and private sector entities. As a practitioner in development cooperation, disruption in our project activities has brought me to question the modes of delivery that have been employed in executing development work in the past. For a long time, physical workshops and conferences necessitating frequent international travels have been synonymous with development cooperation. Personally, I travel abroad averagely every 8 weeks for a work related workshop, conference or training thanks to my project scope that covers 6 African countries and the many thematic international conferences relevant to the subject of our project focus, climate change mitigation!

Following the pandemic, my project like many others in the development space have had to suspend earlier planned physical gatherings which for a capacity building project like mine makes at least 70% of the work activities! In the looming uncertainty of when it will be next safe to hold physical gathering, we have proactively redesigned our workshops to be deliverable using digital online platforms. As I write this, we have successfully completed two of such workshops that formerly would have necessitated tens of thousands of Euros in travel, accommodation and related logistical expenditure not to mention travel risk and time! At this point, one can't help but wonder if the physical gatherings were ever worth the expenditure. Now don't get me wrong, of course it is never only just about money, indeed the in-person interaction that comes with physical workshops is likely to enhance the activity's effectiveness. Plus physical presence facilitates building and strengthening of human networks which in turn facilitate implementation of related activities. The question however still stands, are the volumes of money spent to facilitate logistical arrangements especially for regional and international workshops being utilized in the most technically rewarding and cost efficient way?

As the saying goes, adversity is a classroom! The inability to hold physical meetings during this time has helped us appreciate that there was always a less time consuming and cost efficient alternative for which especially regional and international workshops could have been delivered. The time and financial resources saved with this alternative can now be channelled to support on ground activities for which digital formats are currently not an option due to lack of infrastructure among other challenges. In fact, to make our support available to stakeholders with infrastructure challenges, we have availed internet packages and trainings on use of digital meeting tools to such stakeholders.

Personally, the need to adjust to conducting capacity building activities and meetings through digital platforms has necessitated me to hone my skill in the use of various digital meeting platforms as well as polish my ability to draft up knowledge products that are shareable through online mediums. For instance, during this lockdown, I challenged myself to write my first thematic article convincing enough for an international media platform to publish: "OP-ED | How COVID-19 is impacting finance flows for climate resilience in Africa, By John Kasiita Ssemulema. Opinion. Published May 1, 2020 on [www.africannewspage.net](http://www.africannewspage.net) Africa Newspage is a continent-wide digital news platform

I have come to realize that there was always an alternative way of conveying my knowledge on the subject of climate change to guide the policy makers as well as public and private sector entities without waiting to have them in one big! Indeed if COVID 19 doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger!