

## Title

The use of digital platforms for sharing learning on maintaining essential health services in the context of North-South partnerships.

## Author

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## Organisation

The ESTHER Alliance for Global Health Partnerships is an alliance of governments and non-governmental organisations which facilitate health institutions to engage in effective global (mainly North-South) partnerships.

## Key learning points

- International partnerships can play a crucial role in developing and maintaining essential health services in LMICs.
- The adoption of digital learning strategies during the pandemic was an important element in maintaining essential health services in diverse settings.
- The development of webinars centred on the needs of participants, combined with an integrated social media campaign, were effective in driving engagement.

## How has COVID-19 impacted your organisation in delivering essential health services?

Institutional North-South partnerships play an important role in developing essential services in low and middle income countries (LMICs). Due to travel restrictions and reduced availability for collaboration, COVID-19 has disrupted North-South institutional partnership programmes addressing essential health services.

### This includes:

- Disruption to capacity building workshops
- Reduced networking opportunities and sharing of learning between healthcare organisations and workers in different countries
- Reduced opportunities for collaboration with other health organisations



Photo Credit: ESTHER

## What was the intervention to mitigate this impact?

With disruption to travel caused by COVID-19, partners used innovative approaches with digital platforms to share learning on maintaining essential services.

The ESTHER Alliance and Irish Global Health Network launched a webinar series 'Conversations on COVID-19' via Zoom with a specific focus on LMICs. The webinar series was aimed at healthcare and development workers, serving to educate, inform, share best practice and evidence-based responses around COVID-19 in LMICs. Most topics directly or indirectly addressed the challenges of maintaining health services in the context of the pandemic.

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## How did this intervention help in the maintenance of essential health services?

Eighteen weekly webinars have been held with more than 92 speakers from different backgrounds and a range of countries. Online views to the series have amounted to more than 14,500. Reports on participant demographic revealed audience came from 52 countries worldwide.

Topics relating to essential services included: Funding Challenges; Hospital Readiness; North-South Partnerships during COVID-19; Lessons learned from HIV & Ebola epidemics; Leveraging Research and Evidence; Protecting Health Care Workers; Health Systems Impacts of COVID-19; Essential Services for NCD Patients in Ethiopia; Malnutrition.

The series was by nature very participatory with a regular anchor and an average of five speakers who spoke to their area of expertise, sharing best practices, experiences and learning. Monitoring and Evaluation submission forms were used to collate participant feedback on perceived content gaps in order to plan topics for future webinars.

### Other outcomes included:

- Supported countries in maintaining essential health services.
- Responded to travel restrictions with alternative way for partners to meet and share learnings.
- Webinars were effective in capturing and sharing learning at sub national level.
- Demonstrated value of North-South partnership model at a time of significant disruption.

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## What were the key challenges involved?

### • Sourcing speakers was challenging due to competing demands:

Speakers were identified through personal connections and networks.

### • Covering multiple themes in response to audience demand:

To respond to this need, we recruited speakers from a range of backgrounds to respond to questions from healthcare workers.

### • Sharing information in a timely manner in a rapidly evolving environment:

We promoted webinars widely via bi-weekly newsletters and an integrated social media campaign. Webinars were supplemented with an online repository of curated COVID-19 information.

### • Disseminating the information in a digestible format to maximise engagement on recorded views online:

Developed dedicated web pages with speaker summaries, video contributions by speaker, resources shared in downloadable format, and online links posted.

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## Further reading

[Link to ESTHER alliance / website video](#)