

# South-to-South and triangular cooperation in a post-COVID context

Robert Odedo and Patrick Kadama report on the International Inter-Ministerial Conference of November 2021

The International Inter-Ministerial Conference on South-South Cooperation in Population and Development is an annual fixture that serves as a global platform for member countries and development stakeholders to peer review, exchange knowledge and experience, networking, policy dialogues, bilateral commitments and to contribute towards the achievement of the unfinished agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development and Sustainable Development Goals through South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC).

The conference, jointly organised by the Partners in Population and Development (PPD) and the United Nations Population Fund, was held virtually through two panel sessions and one plenary session in November 2021. The conference deliberated on the relevance of SSTC in a post-COVID context.

Conference objectives were to provide renewed commitments for: (1) strong national leadership and ownership for the improvement of adolescents' access to sexual, reproductive health and family planning services; (2) the mobilisation of resources at all levels; and (3) partnership-building for global solidarity, multilateralism and SSTC for the post-COVID era. The conference was organised under the following three themes.

## 1. Accelerating unfinished agendas

The discussions centred on challenges faced due to COVID-19 in achieving the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), SDGs and 2030 Agenda response in light of the COVID-19 crisis and on ways to strengthen the capacity and knowledge management systems through partnership.

## 2. Triangular cooperation post-BAPA+40

This session built on the discussion on the same topic at an earlier meeting of the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation. The panel composed of experts from the Global South and Global North. It deliberated on how to expand the PPD's network of partners, including considerations of working with like-minded partners from the North, towards a triangular cooperation that includes the Global North in working on shared goals. Panelists shared knowledge and lessons learned on successful triangular cooperation in relevant thematic areas to demonstrate the importance of Triangular Cooperation in working towards the ICPD and SDG goals.

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## 3. Promoting South-South Cooperation

This ministerial session reaffirmed the commitment of the PPD member countries to implement the ICPD and SDGs through SSTC. Discussions in this session included: national-level COVID-19 crisis and its implication to the investment in the achievement of the SDG 3 and ICPD; analysis of gaps and needs and domestic investments in the response to the COVID-19 crisis; integrating ICPD unfinished agenda into national development plans to achieve 2030 agenda; high-level political support and support from partnerships towards addressing COVID-19 challenges and, SSTC as an accelerator in advocacy, knowledge exchange, technical cooperation and capacity development towards achieving ICPD and SDGs.

### Call to action for country leaders

1. To speed-up the process of strengthening and building-back-better, resilient networks of health services outlet systems, based upon existing capacities of indigenous institutions.
2. To invest in and advocate for member country experiences, knowledge, and innovation, as a meaningful vehicle for bilateral entrance.
3. To allocate fixed funding streams for the promotion of services and cooperation in productive health, youth and population development regionally and globally.
4. To establish a national task force as an entry point toward the institutionalisation and integration of SSTC into national development programmes.
5. To identify or nominate a national focal person to coordinate the institutionalisation and integration of SSTC initiatives and programmes.

### Call to action for capacity development

1. To build and strengthen centres of excellence on SSTC as an immediate priority. This requires medium- to long-term joint research programmes.
2. To invest in population and system data modalities of SSTC to generate data for decision making and for tracking of progress of SSTC on accelerating performance on moving towards ICPD and SDGs.
3. To conduct as priority research for explicit evidence, to guide the range of skilled cadres required at the very minimum, to deliver SRHR, adolescents and youth health services.

### Call to action for strengthening PPD

1. To facilitate the mapping and establishment of centres of excellence and networks for SSTC and to promote health professional and exchange.