

**2020 UN High-level Political Forum side event**  
**Emerging Stronger after COVID-19: Science, Technology and Innovation for**  
**Sustainable Development**  
**Questions and Answers from the Public**

**Discussion 1: The COVID-19 outbreak: How has COVID-19 affected the world, and how are governments acting to fight it?**

Panelists:

- The strategy on rapid containment- how Taiwan maintained routine daily life during universal lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Yi-Chun LO**, Deputy Director-General, Centers for Disease Control, Ministry of Health and Welfare, R.O.C. (Taiwan).

- Diversified views towards the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Guillermo SEQUERA**, Director General, Health Surveillance, Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, Paraguay

**Question to Dr. Lo:** Use of smartphones proved to be one of the measures Taiwan implemented that actually reduced contact and hence helped reduce the rate of transmission. However, what other measures were most successful in helping Taiwan contain the outbreak? Daily conferences by Taiwan's CDC were a great way to create awareness.

**Answer:** The basics "TTI" are still key to success: *Test, Trace, and Isolate*. Regular transparent public communication and Taiwan CDC's longstanding preparedness are also very crucial. Please refer to a JAMA article for more details (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2762689>)

**Question to Dr. Lo:** More and more countries have decided to reopen society for economic reasons instead of easing the pandemic. If these countries that have decided to just live with the virus instead of beating it are the majority, what should countries that have been successful in containing the pandemic do?

**Answer:** Based on recent examples of reemerging epidemic in Japan, Korea, Australia, and Hong Kong, we think it's still important for Taiwan to keep the chance of community transmission as low

as possible through border and community control measures until a vaccine is available. Our ideas are in line with New Zealand, Vietnam, and Thailand. However, Taiwan has stepped forward a little bit to open our border to non-citizens on essential travel, and those from lower-risk countries can undergo shorter quarantine as explained in my presentation. We are taking a careful approach to balance the need between economics and health security.

**Question to Dr. Lo:** Have organized sports in Taiwan resumed? For example, baseball, soccer, etc. If so, what precautions are being taken? Thanks.

**Answer:** Yes, all big or smaller sports events have resumed after June 7. The organizers are required to follow hygiene and sanitation guidance. Participants are encouraged to wear a mask and maintain social distance. Please refer to this news report: <https://focustaiwan.tw/sports/202007110017>

**Question to Dr. Lo:** How did you manage political interference and build Taiwanese people's trust in the measures you were implementing?

**Answer:** I have to say we are lucky that our president and prime minister fully authorize the Minister of Health to be the commander of the response, so as to minimize the political interference throughout the period. In terms of building trust, regular transparent public communication and Taiwan CDC's longstanding preparedness are crucial. Please refer to a JAMA article for more details (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2762689>)

**Question to Dr. Lo:** Other countries such as the US have ramped up testing and are finding many cases. Taiwan's case count is very low but as is its testing approach per capita. What is Taiwan's testing philosophy?

**Answer:** Our number of tests per confirmed case is quite high, actually ranking the third (only after New Zealand and Australia). Please refer to the website <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/number-of-covid-19-tests-per-confirmed-case>. We have maintained a targeted testing approach – we test those who have had symptoms or those who are high-risk contacts based on contact investigation findings. The reason is because we find

false-positive PCR not uncommon in our low-prevalence setting (false positive rate estimated by WHO to be ~50% in low prevalence countries) if randomly sampled.

**Question to Dr. Lo:** Technologies have played a very important role in managing COVID-19 contact tracing. How can countries better manage individual privacy so that we are not compromising privacy in the name of efficiency?

**Answer:** Please refer to this article for relevant privacy issues and management in Taiwan:

<https://international.thenewslens.com/article/133095>

**Question to Dr. Lo and Dr. Sequera:** How are you planning to adapt social distancing measures, for instance to account for the fact that SARS CoV-2 remains viable beyond 2 meters?

**Answer:**

Dr. Lo: Based on practical concern, we have established “1.5 meters indoors” and “1 meter outdoors” as our social distancing criteria and are still using these in Taiwan, not even 2 meters. The “beyond-2-meters” study findings need more scientific evaluation.

Dr. Sequera: We request citizen to wear masks in public and working areas, we also use all kinds of social medias to promote the hygiene measures to the public; we also implemented smart quarantine, which has 4 different phases, each phase has different protocol to follow.

**Question to Dr. Sequera:** Paraguay has performed outstandingly in pandemic prevention compared with its neighboring countries such as Brazil. Do quarantine measures and practices vary between cities in Paraguay? How do people in Paraguay view mask-wearing?

**Answer:** We implemented smart quarantine, it has total of 4 phases, and the phases can be different between cities in Paraguay, depends on the COVID-19 situation of the cities. The Government also force people to wear masks in working areas and public areas, people have high awareness of using masks to protect themselves.

**Question to Dr. Sequera:** What are the details of Paraguay’s COVID-19 action plan? How did the

lockdown measures for citizens and foreigners differ from the early stages of the outbreak to now?

**Answer:** As we mentioned about our smart quarantine, the idea is to protect the citizen while also open up the economic activities progressively, however, even if we progress to later phase of smart quarantine, social distance and wearing masks are still required.

**Discussion 2: Life in lockdown under COVID-19: How is STI bridging distances and bringing us closer together?**

- STI for better regional coordination.

**Amit CHANDRA**, Senior Emerging Health Challenges Advisor, United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

- STI in WASH for health emergencies.

**Patrick ENGLAND**, Technical Specialist and Knowledge Management Lead, WSSCC/ Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF).

- E-learning and distance education under lockdown.

**Cecilia V. SORIANO**, Programmes and Operations Coordinator, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education; co-presented with **K.M. Enamul HOQUE**, Deputy Director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

**Question to Mr. England:** Why the most vulnerable less likely to receive public health information?

Thank you.

**Answer:** On one hand, some people may not be able to receive public health information in the first place, such as those living in extremely remote areas or those who cannot afford access to telecommunications technologies. On the other hand, the information being delivered may not be in a format accessible for different types of vulnerable people. There is currently a massive gap in the dissemination of information of COVID-19 for people who are deaf (ie. in sign languages) and for people who are blind (ie. braille in different languages) which WSSCC is helping to address in several countries. People with learning disabilities may also better understand information displayed as pictures. Many minority groups also do not speak the national language – especially older women. This is the case in Nepal, where many older women in the Terai do not speak Nepali and therefore

rely on community volunteers to help deliver that information.

**Question to Mr. England:** Connecting to the topic of sustainable development, how has Nepal faced COVID-19 with a low-cost system? Thank you so much.

**Answer:** I don't believe that the overall cost has necessarily been low for Nepal. As it has been for many countries, the burden of lockdown measures, and the subsequent economic toll, has carried a very high cost for the poorest. However the cost of prevention outreach efforts to households, especially in the context of the mobile-based platform used by the WSSCC-supported programme, has been reduced due to previous investments in strengthening the capacity of local government coordination bodies and in expanding a network of community-level facilitators that can reach a large number of households very quickly. The WASH sector has also promoted low-cost options for handwashing accessible for the poorest (eg. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/handwashing-compendium-for-low-resource-settings-a-living-document>)

**Question to Mr. England:** There has been excellent use of cell phones for collecting and disseminating info. How comprehensive is the Nepal telecomm network? It is a very mountainous country; do cell towers reach all villages?

**Answer:** Nepal has 3 geographic zones: mountains, hills, and plains (or *terai*). The WSSCC-supported programme in Nepal has not rolled out the mobile-based data system at national level. It is largely focused in the plains region, which has good cell coverage. In the other regions, most of the population live in areas with decent cell coverage. If a mobile-based data collection system was scaled up across the country, data collection systems in extremely remote communities would rely on the sanitation campaign's broad network of community facilitators and volunteers to help collect information and deliver messages.

**Question to Mr. England:** Agriculture is the main source of livelihoods for 90 percent of the population in Nicaragua. How can the country increase sanitary measures and awareness in agriculture, of both personnel and products?

**Answer:** I'm not intimately aware of the sanitation and hygiene situation in Nicaragua, but globally

untreated sewerage is frequently used in agriculture and poses significant health risks. WHO's sanitation safety planning ([https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/171753/9789241549240\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/171753/9789241549240_eng.pdf?sequence=1)) is a comprehensive manual on how to ensure that the agricultural application of sewerage is done safely. Overall, one of the most important measures is improving national guidelines and regulations, improving government monitoring/inspection systems, and working with communities so farmers understand when its safe (and not safe) to use faecal sludge on fields.

**Question to Ms. Soriano and Mr. Hoque:** How do we protect children from screen or tech addiction, viewing unauthorized contents and their negative effects on the children in the quest of e-learning?

**Answer:**

**Ms. Soriano:**

- To ensure the balance between online and offline learning, subject content, learning materials and pedagogy should be discussed at the onset with curriculum developers. Often, the pressure to understand content at a short period (or to catch up with lessons) results in more time spent by learners online.
- Use of and further development of apps for educational use that can prevent viewing unauthorized contents
- Aside from tech addiction, learners must be protected from cyberbullying and identity theft. Teachers, parents, educators and caregivers must be given ample training on this aspect to guide learners. At the same time, countries must put in place and enforce cyber laws to protect learners.

**Mr. Hoque:** Well, this is one of the key concerns from the parents and caregivers about the tech-edition by the children. First of all, we need to re-affirm that the teachers play a critical role in education and due to pandemic the technology has demonstrated that it can help in enhancing learning achievement which needs to continue even after the pandemic. However, the teacher, parents and caregiver need to be aware of the challenges associated with ICT, including tech addiction, including inadequate participation in physical and social activities and the tendency for more introvert.

Our key recommendation would include the use of the blended teaching-learning process by the school or teachers that combined with lots of sports, physical activities and social work as appropriate.

Enhance teachers capabilities, particularly in the mainstream schools where teachers are not using the ICT at the desired level. The equity issues needs to be considered as the key to reduce the digital divide and reaches the services to the most marginalized.

At the parental end (i) agree on the common goal of using the internet and other ed-tech, (ii) parents should have a conversation and maintain transparency in decision making so that there is no room for emotional exploitation, (iii) demonstrate the parental willingness and role as caregiver and set a rule as boundaries for limited internet use, (iv) as a parent need to learn modest use of technology to monitor the performance like checking the logs, folders and time spent in different activities, etc. or find a knowledgeable one as a neighbor, particularly for the non-literate or neo-literate parents or caregivers, or use of cyber security programmes to limit searing to unsafe sights.

There are some good practices developed in different countries, for example, in Bangladesh the government provides some short certification programme for the children on safe internet use which contribute to build the confidence of the learners and encourage them to follow certain norms in internet use. In many countries, there are programmes like the 'hole in the wall' where, the computers are placed in an open space, and children use those in groups, and mostly under the supervision and for a limited time. Often they are given some assignment or keywords, so that use of techiest regulated at the early grades.

**Question to Ms. Soriano and Mr. Hoque:** We now have a new normal for daily life, will we also have a new normal for international cooperation, especially for cross-border personnel exchange? If so, what would the system look like? After all, some types of capacity building do require practices in the field under instructor guidance in-person, and e-learning won't be a perfect solution to all types of training.

**Answer:**

**Ms. Soriano:**

- There are different knowledge portals currently in place and many more are being developed for exchanges of expertise and knowledge.
- There are also communities of practice that focus on specific work such as on Education for

Sustainable Development, education financing, adult learning and education and so on. These communities of practice provide an avenue for reflecting on one's work and sharing these to a larger/global audience for enhancing one's work at the country level and knowledge production across countries. This model of communities of practice is also being done within ASPBAE.

- Digital platforms may not be enough. Given the limited mobility across countries, one idea is to connect community learning centers, higher education institutions and other training institutions that do education provision at the field or country level and then collaborate to provide sustained trainings and mentoring for specific work.

**Mr. Hoque:** In our opinion, there is a high demand for both knowledge and technology transfer. As part of the knowledge transfer, there could be some fellowship programme, scholarship and research projects for transfer of knowledge and lessons learnt to the developing countries with a view to systemic reform and scaling-up plan.

Besides, there could be some collaborative work by the national education coalitions, where the regional coalition, like ASPBAE could play a coordination role. Cross country learning and in-country good practices could be shared and used as evidence for advocacy and influencing the policymakers and for mainstreaming ICT in education at a scale.

Many countries have developed or considering developing ICT for Education Masterplan. The new normal after the COVID-19, the ICT for Education Masterplan, needs to be revisited along with a new framework, costed action-plan, and M&E framework which could be an entry point for the civil society to engage with the education sector plan for ICT.

Countries who have developed their ed-tech in improving teaching-learning process, as well as the education sector management, can help in extend ODA support to the developing countries and engage the CSOs so that the benefits of the state interventions reach to the most marginalized.

In this regard, some institutional partnership could be initiated at a small scale so that the government in developing countries gains the confidence to scale-up the initiatives.

**Discussion 3: Post COVID-19 and beyond: Reducing pandemic impacts and rebooting SDGs through STI.**

- Post pandemic resilience through STI: Practices in food, health and education system.

**Pai-Po LEE**, Deputy Secretary General, TaiwanICDF.

- Innovation on women's economic empowerment in the post COVID-19 era.

**Durreen SHAHNAZ**, Founder & CEO, Impact Investment Exchange (IIX)

- STI mitigation of COVID-19 economic impact.

**Fernando RIVAROLA**, Main Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Paraguay.

**Question to Dr. Lee:** These projects have been tailored to the COVID-19 pandemic, but could you see your project being applied to other situations or implemented more generally in the future? Is STI a trend that you would hope to pursue in a post-COVID-19 world?

**Answer:**

STI is definitely a trend and tool which cannot be ignored in the post-COVID era. Digital engineering will be a basic skill. When the TaiwanICDF provides STI education and environment to primary schools in developing countries, the digital capacity would be built and students wouldn't be left behind by the modern world. Under the concept of big data and open data, STI could be applied to smart agriculture, health systems, environmental prevention, and economic development. For instance, the tracing system for COVID-19 can also be applied for monitoring dengue fever, the flu, and even chronic diseases as well.

**Question to Dr. Lee:** What kind of STI-related synergies have you discovered between stakeholders for your project?

**Answer:**

STI is a fundamental tool for moving the world onto a sustainable path, and it can bridge diverse sectors, topics, and targets, and benefits multiple SDGs, for example:

- a) The Health Information System Project is originally designed for enhancing health management, but now the system is also applied to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following that, the tracing function could be used for monitoring both communicable and non-communicable diseases.
- b) Besides that, the STI for Education Development Project not only improves the digital environment of schools in St. Lucia, but it also provides an opportunity of international

interaction to both St. Lucian students and Taiwanese students. We have invited an elementary school in Taipei city to build a sister school partnership with a primary school in St. Lucia. Through STI, these children will grow up with better international perspectives.

- c) In addition, the application platform for sales of aquaculture products can also be used for other livelihood supplies, including fruits, vegetables, and dairy, or commercial products such as handicrafts. Based on STI development, an ecosystem economy will be established for the MSME and local market.

**Question to Dr. Lee:** This conference is well organized, and we can learn from the experts with multiple backgrounds. All of you have shown the STI-related solutions to accelerate the progress of the SDGs. But, STI won't be the only key element, what do you think is another critical strategy for achieving the SDGs by 2030?

**Answer:**

STI is one of the key tools for moving the world onto a sustainable path. However, we need all stakeholders to work together especially in the next decade. We need to break down silos between different sectors and institutions to create profound impacts to our world. Today, we have representatives from governments, aid agencies, and civil-society to share our best practices, but we may need to emphasize an international partnership. As an aid agency, the TaiwanICDF recognizes itself as a platform for integration of inputs from all stakeholders, including from the public and private sectors and people as well. To us, that's another critical strategy to better achieve SDGs by 2030 with limited resources and time.

**Question to Mr. Rivarola:** The three pillars are very strategic. What will be in future recovery plans for Paraguay with respect to your river traffic, especially concerning shared borders?

**Answer:**

The Recovery Plan only contemplates those actions related to Social Protection, Public Infrastructure, and Capitalization for Development. However, Paraguayan Government is committed to fight river traffic and smuggling. As those are bi-national problems, the strategies are coordinated at the highest level with our neighbours and among the authorities of those institutions responsible for control and security.