



To meet tomorrow's challenges

How to increase resilience in international development today



Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused immense human suffering and has only increased the international development challenges facing those that deliver aid, including governments, donors, multilateral and bilateral development banks and agencies, NGOs, and other private and public development partners. Its magnitude, both for beneficiaries and donors, is unprecedented. First, it disrupted healthcare systems, then the damage quickly spread to economies, education systems and global supply chains. It also badly affected the flow of critical remittances to those families in need, as well as social cohesion and many other components essential to effective aid delivery.

Unfortunately, this is the latest of many such crises. Their increasing number and intensity, including conflicts, famines and natural disasters, and previous health crises such as Ebola and SARS, are threatening the work of the development community and progress towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, our society is also facing many structural trends such as an increasing digital divide and wealth disparities as well as climate change-related issues.

However, crisis also creates opportunity. The COVID-19 pandemic is providing the international development ecosystem a chance to redefine its vision and strategies, funding modalities and collaboration models. It is also allowing for a different approach to meet workforce requirements and delivery models, while reinforcing the imperative for trust and transparency expected by society. We believe that with the right focus and approach around these elements, the development community can emerge stronger, more resilient and better able to drive sustainable impact.

The process starts with asking the right questions. What is working well and needs to be accelerated? What needs to be done in a new and innovative manner? What will lay the groundwork for sustainable recovery from COVID-19? What actions can increase resilience to future crises? What are the roles of public- and private-sector partners? How can better reporting and accountability reduce the impact of fraud and corruption, and rebuild trust?

We hope the insights and case study examples in this report provide food for thought on how to increase resilience today so that the international development ecosystem is ready to meet tomorrow's challenges.



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To meet tomorrow's challenges:

How to increase resilience in international development today

Major crises continue to test governments, public agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across the world as they strive to ensure public safety and security, help those most in need and increase living standards. The impacts of challenging events such as financial market meltdowns, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and novel viruses can last for generations. Nowhere are these disruptions felt more acutely than in the developing world, especially in countries that are facing [food insecurity](#), conflict, extreme poverty and climate-related challenges such as drought, flooding and soil erosion.

Against this backdrop, we need new approaches to achieve the resilience in international development that can deliver on the promise of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This includes eradicating extreme deprivation, expanding opportunity and stemming climate change. According to [UN Development Program \(UNDP\) Administrator Achim Steiner](#), of the many crises that have affected society over the past 30 years, "each has hit human development hard but, overall, development gains accrued globally year-on-year. COVID-19, with its triple hit to health, education and income, may change this trend."

Resilience—the ability to maintain progress on the SDGs—in the midst of a pandemic means multiple interventions, implemented simultaneously. Healthcare systems still need strengthening, building or rebuilding. Cities still need solutions to reduce pollution and improve transportation and mobility. The growing youth population will continue to need education, training and jobs to give them hope for the future.

Addressing these challenges requires creative, holistic ways to fund and design initiatives that together make the difference. According to the UN 2030 Agenda, there is already a US\$2.5–\$3tn annual development [financing gap](#). And this was before the economic impact of COVID-19, which will lead to cuts across the board. In November 2020, for example, the UK said it will reduce its commitment to international aid from 0.7% of GDP to 0.5%, which is likely to result in a [£5 billion cut](#) compared to 2019. By extrapolation, many other countries will likely decrease their funding, and it may take several years to see an increase again.

But simply raising more money isn't the answer because, as economies struggle to recover in the face of the pandemic, the funds from governments, as well as some private donors, won't be there in the sums needed by the international community. The shortfall means it is critical to find [innovative, inclusive and sustainable](#) ways to tackle the world's development needs and ensure that the way development is delivered is efficient, equitable and effective.

Through our work around the world, we have identified five key areas that can help the international development community rethink how they build in the resilience not just to resume operating fully during and after the COVID-19 pandemic but to weather future disruptions:

- Strategy and funding
- Collaboration
- Capabilities
- Service delivery and impact
- Leadership and trust

These five areas are not silos but interdependent. They should be viewed through a wide-angle lens that combines innovation, technology, solution-sharing, modern management and strategy, along with international, national and local development experience.

Tomorrow's successes—the ability to innovate and adapt, thrive and grow—will be the result of decisions and actions taken today. Many large multilaterals have

built resilience into their functions as they have had to deal with catastrophic events in the past. This capacity to see projects through can be enhanced by new ways of working that involve a spectrum of stakeholders and an inclusive approach to problem solving.

This requires a high level of proficiency in delivering digital transformation; ensuring that citizens have the skills and capabilities they need to thrive; and a recognition that global solutions need local champions if they are to have an impact. To do this, there must be appropriate funding and dedicated financial instruments that allow public and private partnerships to succeed, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that build trust through transparency. None of this will succeed without the convening power to ensure the right decision-makers come to the table.

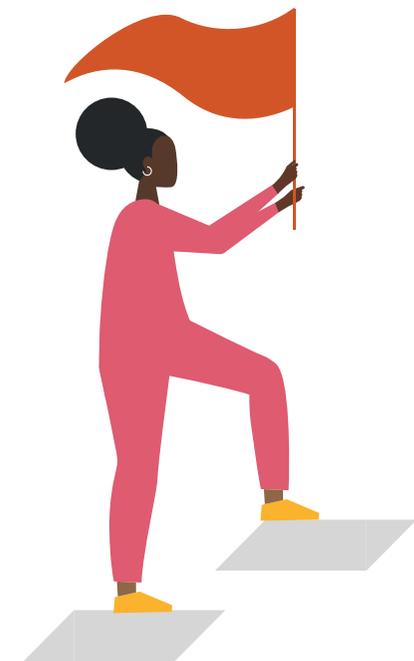
It's possible to see examples of this coming together today. The [Green Horizon Summit](#) in November 2020 brought together multilateral banks, private-sector players and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to look at innovative ways to reach a net-zero carbon emissions target by 2050.

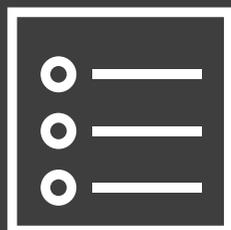
For collaborations like this to happen more broadly—at the international, regional and national level—to tackle a broad range of global challenges, the resources of governments, private funders, multilaterals and bilaterals, development banks and agencies, NGOs and local services must be marshalled, simultaneously and in harmony. In this report, we pose some important questions to help concentrate on the right steps that

we believe will deliver a more forward-looking, agile and impactful international development ecosystem. We include supporting examples, including case studies drawn from PwC's experiences across the world, that tackle different development challenges.

What works best is a combination of skills, innovation and experience. When relationships between public and private players are enhanced and systematised, the ecosystem for international development is strengthened, shoring up the resilience that will help people overcome challenges big and small.

We offer this report, with its examples and commentary, to start the conversation.





Agenda for action

Strategy and funding

Better alignment of strategy and funding is key within and across organisations. This helps meet local needs and drives towards the vision of the SDGs. Innovative finance programmes, such as new forms of **public-private partnership**, will provide much-needed access to funds as government budgets shrink.



Collaboration

Development challenges need comprehensive, multipronged approaches to balance competing needs. Deeper collaboration among donors, governments, the private sector and civil society widens perspectives, reduces gaps and overlaps, and improves the consistency and effectiveness of interventions.



Capabilities

Developing the skills to handle both short-term crisis management and longer-term preparedness requires a focus on improving practical capabilities in all areas, including management, operations, financial and strategic risk analysis, and planning. Digital skills and scenario development techniques are equally important.



Leadership and trust

In today's environment of public protests and COVID-19 responses, leaders must deliberately shape actions and messages that build trust. This requires effective accountability systems that thwart corruption, fraud, waste and abuse at local, regional, national and international levels, with clear messaging to allay citizen concerns.



Service delivery and impact

Digital transformations will help organisations become more agile and effective. They require an adaptable, upskilled workforce. New ideas can originate anywhere, so organisations should adopt best practices from other sectors to help deliver programmes that have an impact and are in line with donor aims and objectives.





Strategy and funding

With signs that progress towards some of the SDGs is stalling due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgency to redesign all manner of aid projects, not just for quick fixes but for sustainable development needs and resilience against future shocks. The agility and creativity needed to address the current crisis—both the strategy to mitigate its effects and the financing required to implement the strategy—will likely need to be deployed for future crises. This has never been more important as the nature of crises is intensifying.



There is evidence that the process of alignment is starting. In 2019, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) reported on its [Program Cycle approach](#). This emphasises aligning resources, budgeting and policy based on continual monitoring and interpretation of evidence. And in its programme budget for 2020–21, the World Health Organisation (WHO) also stresses the need to pay close attention to [aligning resources with accepted strategic goals](#): “Our established partners are increasingly shifting to a more coordinated and strategic engagement approach; as well as contributors, they are also considered to be partners who guide WHO’s work going forward, seeking to make the most of policy alignment with their priorities and ambitions to accelerate our collective progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.”

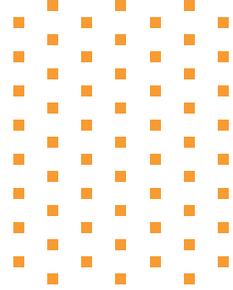
Performance-based funding—a pillar of next-generation financing models—will form a part of this realignment. However, establishing universally accepted metrics is easier said than done due to both real and perceived

barriers and the metrics’ qualitative nature, according to the [Center for Global Development](#). Funders must confront decisions on how to select indicators, design payment mechanisms and verify performance. Public bodies and donors will know if value for money has been delivered only if they have the systems in place to measure outcomes and progress towards key milestones.

One thing is clear: donors, delivery agencies and beneficiaries must work together. More sophisticated skill sets are required, both where programmes are developed and where they are delivered. Smart funding needs to be combined with effective financial management to ensure funds are spent on the right things, with clear accountability and transparency. This remains one of the key challenges facing service delivery over the next few years, especially as budgets tighten.

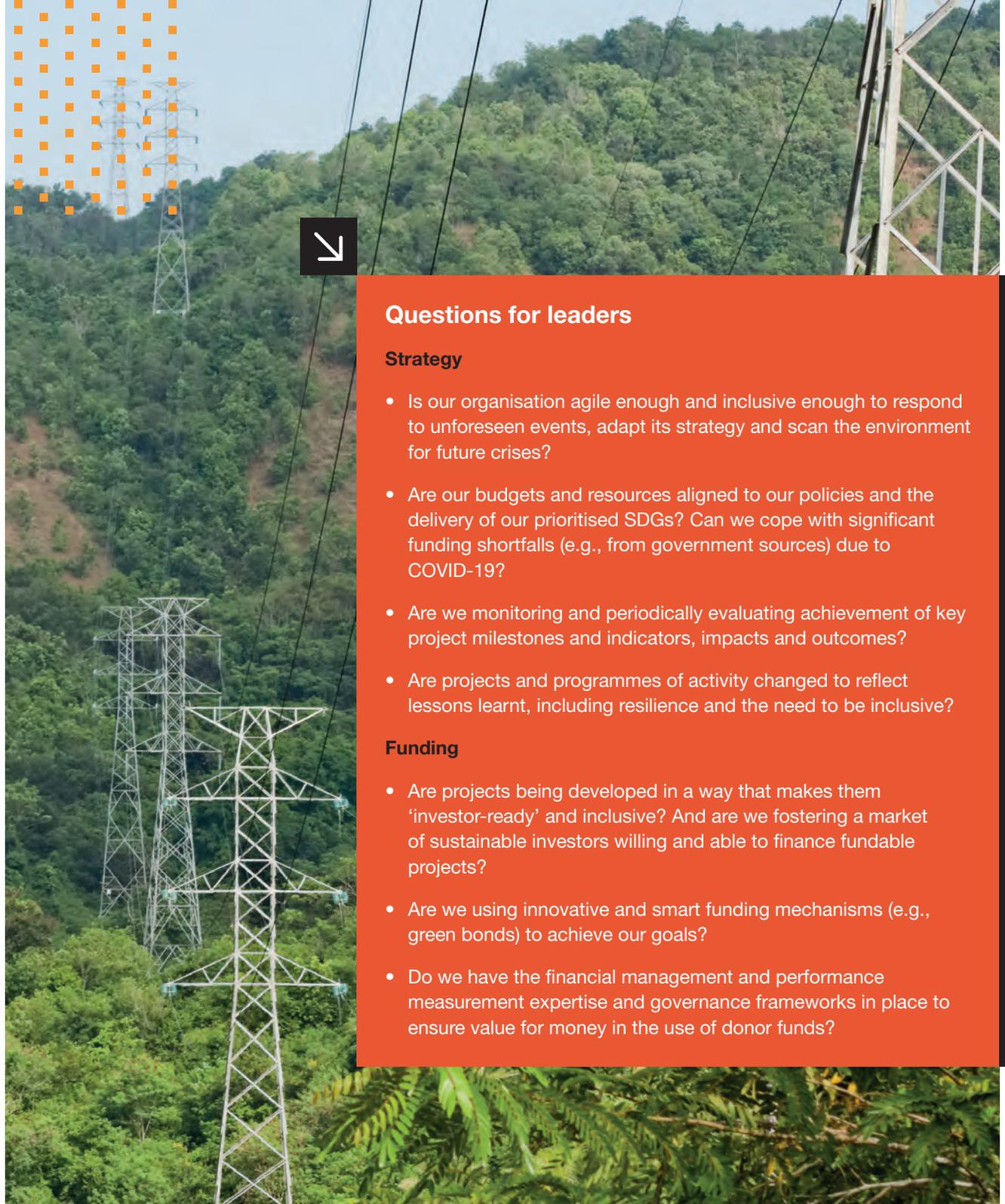
By *smart funding*, we mean the need to explore innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships with private and not-for-profit stakeholders while judiciously allocating state resources to targeted areas resulting in maximum impact. The former includes, for example, the development of a social investment market that blends financial return with positive social impact, and financial instruments such as social impact bonds.

While discussing the need for new types of funding, countries should not forget what has become a significant resource for treasuries across the world: remittances. In many countries, remittances account for more than 30% of GDP and fund key sectors including healthcare, housing, education and infrastructure. Because of the pandemic, the World Bank is predicting [the sharpest decline in recent history](#) this year. Remittances to South Asia are projected to decline by 22% to US\$109bn in 2020, after growing 6.1% in 2019. The poorest countries in Africa will suffer, too, down 23.1% to US\$37bn in 2020.



As remittances begin to pick up again, however, it will behove governments to work with financial institutions to create the regulatory environments that ensure remittances' potential for funding important parts of the economy is achieved. This means, in some countries, reducing the impact of intermediaries that can siphon off large sums. The World Bank is working with the G20 to try to solve the [problem of high costs](#) of remittances. In 2019, [PwC undertook a feasibility study](#) as part of an effort by the United Nations International Organization for Migration to look at how the Government of Ukraine could channel migrant remittances, which totalled US\$11bn in 2018, towards local business development to boost sustainable economic development. The study concluded that channelling remittances in this way can be effective, but doing so requires a rethinking of financial structures and the development of a strategy to win over the trust in government of those sending back money. There is much work to do.

According to the [Government of Indonesia's SDG Roadmap](#), the country requires an estimated US\$4.0–\$4.7tn to achieve the SDGs by 2030. To reach this target, the Government has designed the SDGs Financing Hub, which is intended to play a key role in integrating Indonesia's development finance framework. PwC assisted the UNDP and the Government in designing this hub, which will have three primary functions: the coordination of financing for the SDGs from government and non-government sources, the management of funds dedicated for SDG projects (funds to be raised from non-government sources), and a technical role to improve project preparation and financing with viable sources. The hub is expected to become operational in 2021 and close in 2030. Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning will oversee its implementation.



Questions for leaders

Strategy

- Is our organisation agile enough and inclusive enough to respond to unforeseen events, adapt its strategy and scan the environment for future crises?
- Are our budgets and resources aligned to our policies and the delivery of our prioritised SDGs? Can we cope with significant funding shortfalls (e.g., from government sources) due to COVID-19?
- Are we monitoring and periodically evaluating achievement of key project milestones and indicators, impacts and outcomes?
- Are projects and programmes of activity changed to reflect lessons learnt, including resilience and the need to be inclusive?

Funding

- Are projects being developed in a way that makes them 'investor-ready' and inclusive? And are we fostering a market of sustainable investors willing and able to finance fundable projects?
- Are we using innovative and smart funding mechanisms (e.g., green bonds) to achieve our goals?
- Do we have the financial management and performance measurement expertise and governance frameworks in place to ensure value for money in the use of donor funds?

Case study

Filling the financing gaps for the SDGs in Nigeria through collaboration

The problem: Even before COVID-19, Nigeria knew it [needed help](#) financing its efforts to meet the UN's SDGs. In 2017, the [Nigerian Private Sector Advisory Group](#) (PSAG), a multi-stakeholder initiative with a mandate to mobilise the private sector to help fill the SDG financing gaps, was established. PwC Nigeria is included in the inaugural group of key organisations that make up the PSAG and serves, pro bono, as the SDG watchdog providing research and administrative support.

Where we helped: To date there are 40 PSAG members working across nine clusters with a budget of US\$77m, two of which have implemented joint projects. One focus for PwC is education. The International Monetary Fund [estimates](#) Nigeria will have to spend 7.7 percentage points of GDP to achieve the education SDG goals by 2030. Today, that figure is 1.6% of GDP. PwC is part of a PSAG group looking at ways to regenerate basic education, including giving tax rebates as an incentive to spend on training.

The impact: The [key comments](#) in Nigeria's *2020 Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals* note that the country is making progress on its funding strategy and conclude that the private sector has a key role to play. Close to half of the PSAG funds have been spent on children and youth. The PSAG is also contributing to core initiatives related to delivering the SDGs by 2030.





Collaboration

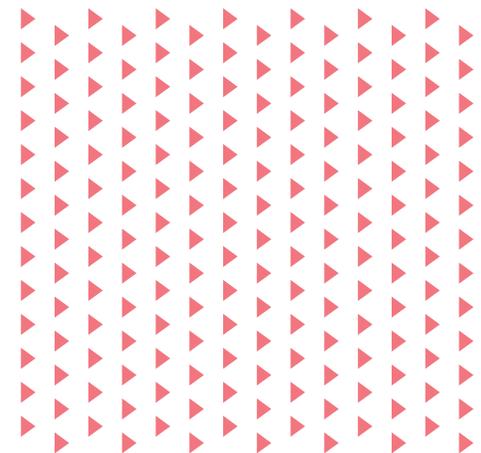
The largest, most pressing problems, such as hunger, poverty, disease and the environment, are inextricably intertwined, requiring coordinated responses. Whether public–private, agency–agency or country–country partnerships, most successful efforts will be collaborative. Encouraging partnerships that make the best use of each partner’s strengths remains a critical enabler for tackling problems in an effective way. With increasing resource constraints due to the pandemic, the imperative for partnering and co-venturing to secure outcomes across the international development ecosystem is stronger than ever.

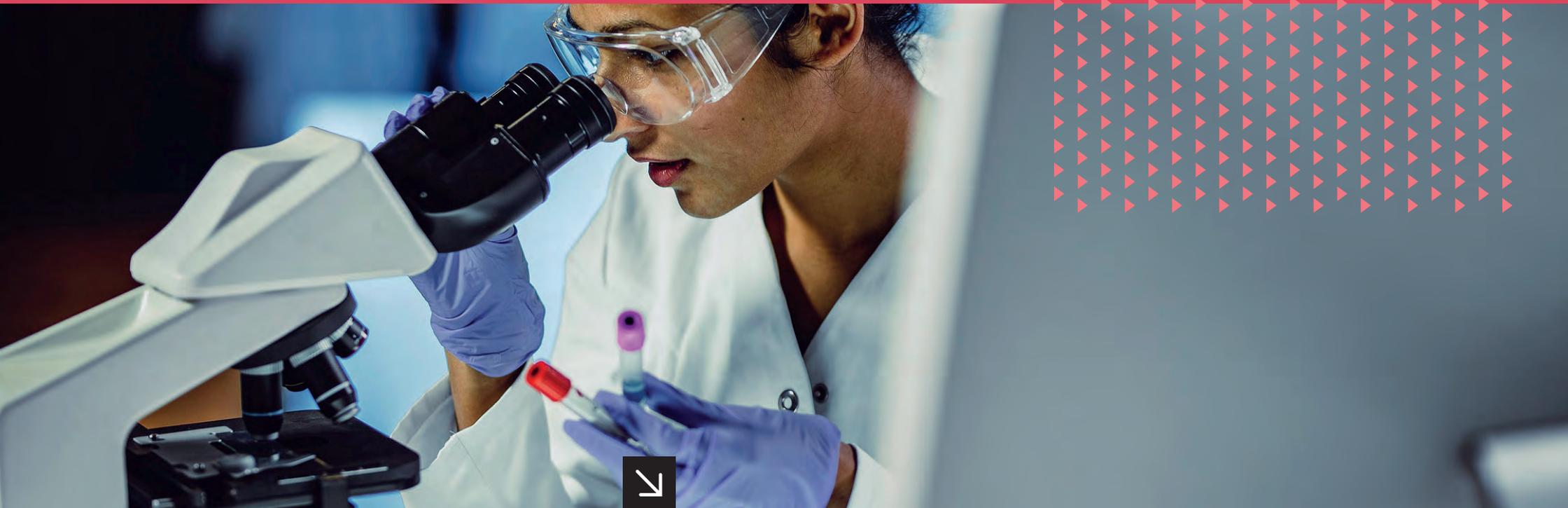
Collaborations, such as public–private partnerships (PPPs), outsourcing and shared services, can also both reduce costs and increase revenues. A [2019 report](#) by the World Bank on PPPs shows how governments and the private sector can collaborate successfully to improve the return on investment for citizens, particularly in large infrastructure projects (though it is still a learning process, as the first PPPs emerged in the 1990s, and some are more successful than others).

Collaborative networks have the advantage of being able to reach out across organisational levels (local, regional and national), borders (geographical and sectoral) and stakeholders (especially citizens). They are formed by bringing together what has been called the ‘penta-helix’ of stakeholders in society: universities, the not-for-profit sector, citizens, the private sector, and national, regional and local governments. This entails a shift away from standalone business models towards strategic alliances or a distributed network of international development organisations across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Decentralised networks, when working effectively, become like starfish—able to regenerate severed limbs—which enhances their capacity to be resilient in a complex and uncertain world.

During the Ebola response, for example, PwC was part of an ambitious ‘helix-style’ approach coordinated through the African Union that brought together regional private-sector companies and experts to form the [Africa Against Ebola Solidarity Trust](#) in November 2014, which aimed at financing the deployment of African medical workers into hot zones. Private-sector organisations were more agile than official donor assistance, and African medical workers, who were more immediately trusted in smaller communities, were able to go places other international medical workers could not.

Maintaining resilience at times of crisis means having resources in place on the ground and available to help bolster the development ecosystem. This is where networks come into play so that expertise can be linked to on-the-ground support where it is needed. The World Bank commands such a network, as does the UN. In the private sector, several large engineering and professional services firms are similarly globally networked, with offices in hundreds of countries providing complementary capabilities, including digital skills and project management, to public sector counterparts to support effective collaboration in local and regional ecosystems. In 2017, for example, our [Sustainability Network](#) was aligned with teams working with governments and partners such as the [World Economic Forum](#) to provide complementary skills and experience in such areas as finance, risk management, artificial intelligence, strategic planning and digitalisation in pursuit of the SDGs.





The current crisis introduces an unexpected risk to global efforts to deliver the SDGs. In the UK, for example, according to a report from the UK's [All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development](#), it will be important for the Government to keep the SDGs at the centre of its development agenda and not react solely to the threat of the virus: "There is a risk that the response to the virus will undermine global collaboration, with countries failing to work together around a potential vaccine and treatments for COVID-19." The report was published before the announcements in November of successful global vaccine trials, but significant collaboration will be required in the rollout phase in 2021.

Questions for leaders

- How can we become a more inclusive organisation and improve collaboration across public institutions and with the private and not-for-profit sectors to increase resilience and achieve the SDGs?
- Are we looking widely enough across the international development ecosystem and beyond to identify local leadership well-placed to achieve our goals?
- Do we have a resilient network of leaders among our partners?
- Is our organisation making effective use of our collaborative partnerships and maximising the value of stakeholder relationships to drive achievement of the SDGs?
- Are we using technology providers as best as we could?



Capabilities

At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, world leaders, multilateral organisations, and for-profit and not-for-profit organisations came together to agree on an agenda for humanity. One core pillar was the need to invest in local capabilities and local leaders. Today, this is more relevant than ever because the pace of technological change, evolving demographics and climate change is reshaping societies. Local leaders will have to react quickly, and this will require a fundamental shift in the way programmes are designed and delivered. Soft and technical skill sets in many areas need to be updated to ensure that technological potential is used to the full. It's something that the Girls' Education Challenge (see case study, next page) has been doing for more than a decade.

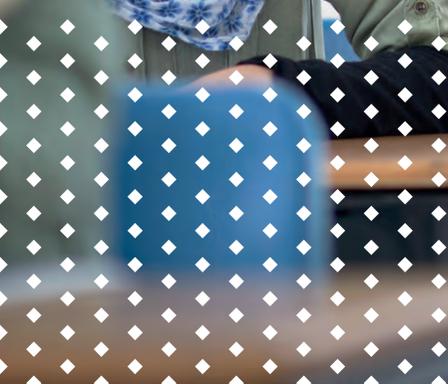
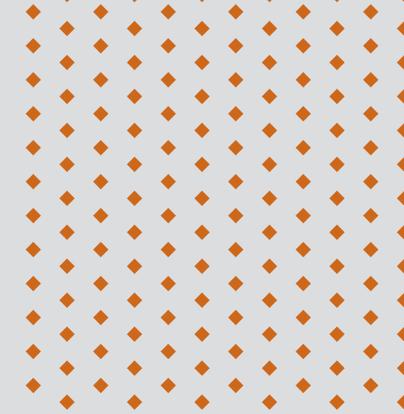
Case study

Building capacity and capability: The Girls' Education Challenge

The problem: According to UNESCO estimates, around the world, [132 million girls are out of school](#), including 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age and 67.4 million of upper-secondary school age. Reducing that number by 2030 is part of the SDGs.

Where we helped: In 2012, the UK government set up the [Girls' Education Challenge](#) (GEC) fund with USAID. Funded by UK Aid (formerly the Department for International Development), it has an £855m budget that promotes girls' education in some of the most challenging environments. This includes projects in Pakistan, Ethiopia and Somalia, and an initiative co-funded with USAID in [Afghanistan](#). The aim is to reach more than 1 million of the most marginalised girls (and some boys) and improve their life chances through education. Since its inception, it has been managed by PwC, which brings together a [network of participating organisations](#) that deliver projects on the ground.

The impact: In the first phase, from 2012–17, the GEC funded [37 projects in 18 countries](#), and there is a second phase to 2025 that expands to 41 projects. These are good examples of cross-border collaboration. Through this second phase, the GEC is ensuring that more than 1.4 million marginalised girls and 230,000 highly marginalised girls continue to learn, complete primary school, transition to and through secondary education, and then enter further education, training or employment. [The data explorer](#) on the GEC website shows the progress of the first phase of projects.





Digital technology is opening new opportunities to involve citizens in the design and delivery of services, increasing opportunities to [engage people](#) in helping to produce innovative services and outcomes. Contactless deliveries, increasing use of cash transfers, virtual training: all these will become a greater part of the future of international development. Technology is creating more secure methods for delivering the services that citizens need most, especially in times of crisis. For example, during COVID-19, [virtual supervision of projects](#) is reducing the need for air travel for staff. This model aligns with the universal intention to digitise operations, reduces carbon emissions and provides a foundation of experienced local talent.

The WHO has created partner engagement teams to [better coordinate resource mobilisation](#), opting for a more centralised headquarters model to build out the use of analytics. One aspect of this is to boost investment to upgrade customer-experience management software. This was a work in progress when the pandemic struck. Although the WHO was initially criticised for its response to COVID-19, it has been able to help countries that lack

basic medical and public health infrastructures. It has sourced critical supplies and provided [technical training courses](#) on COVID-19. In collaboration with the World Economic Forum, the WHO set up the [Pandemic Supply Chain Network](#), a public-private collaboration to address global supply chain issues and the scarcity of essential equipment. These collaborations and capabilities-building exercises are an example for the future.

Indeed, the pandemic has demonstrated yet again the importance of having formal and well-defined processes for continual intelligence scanning of the environment for emergent threats and opportunities, as opposed to an ad hoc, informal approach. The more situational awareness built into all levels of an organisation or network, the quicker it can respond to emerging problem areas before they become pervasive. That can enable early intervention and prevention of issues before they get out of hand. The Global Public Policy Institute's [Global Governance Futures 2030 Final Reports](#) describe the potential effects of risks, such as climate emergencies and the geopolitical impacts on migration, and propose potential solutions.

Questions for leaders

- Do we have the capability to scan the environment, spot emerging trends and disruptive forces, and plan responses to certain scenarios to build resilience?
- Is our organisation future-proofed for resilience—e.g., is it the ideal size, shape and form to meet our stated vision, goals and impact on the SDGs?
- Have we mapped the skills needs in project management and local delivery organisations?
- Are we able to release and bring in capacity flexibly and in a timely fashion to meet current needs and anticipate future challenges?
- Are we developing the digital, data analytics and client management skills needed to run more decentralised, localised and resilient operations on the ground?



Service delivery and impact

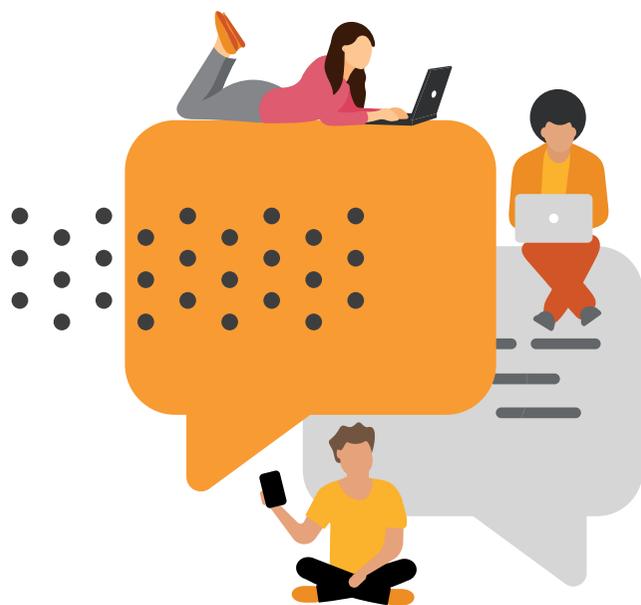
In many cases, partnerships among the private sector, governments and development organisations are helping to streamline operations to yield better results. Changing the way we work is never easy, but innovation such as technology or agile delivery models can help governments and public-sector organisations deliver services faster and cheaper. This will help address long-term challenges on the ground arising from social, economic, demographic and environmental change. With a technology-enabled agile approach and real-time monitoring, projects will become better managed, their impact measurable and accountability more transparent.

There are examples in which innovation plus technology are already delivering progress. In Rwanda, for example, at the start of the pandemic, [robots were deployed to take temperatures](#) at medical stations, and there is a [wide-scale push by start-ups](#) to develop new technologies such as mobile testing units and better protective equipment to help in COVID-19 response.

Facebook's Disaster Maps is another tech tool that has impacted disaster response. It shares real-time information with response teams and can help them determine whether communities have access to power and cellular networks if they have been evacuated, and what services and supplies they need most. And during a typhoid outbreak in Uganda, the Ministry of Health used

data-mapping applications that built on AI technologies to facilitate decision-making on the allocation of medicine and mobilisation of health teams. Its tech partner was Pulse Lab Kampala, part of the Global Pulse initiated by the UN Secretary General in 2009 to develop [AI and digital solutions using big data](#) to help achieve the SDGs.





Today, innovation is no longer a purely technological endeavour aimed at developing products and back-office processes: it can create services that are delivered through new channels and new ways of working that better meet the needs and expectations of those whom donors want most to help. It also includes encouraging an innovative organisational culture in the development ecosystem where ideas can be incubated, grown and allowed to flourish. Global Pulse is one example of this. The ideas it develops that have the greatest potential can be accelerated for execution and implementation. Its microsite now has more than 30 apps for tracking, tracing and analysing data sets.

Evidence helps move policy, which is where the increased use of technology and analytics will identify problems and help prioritise solutions. [In Nigeria](#), for example, to understand the key levers for improving the Human Development Index (HDI), PwC ran a cross-country regression analysis of the HDI on the key drivers of inclusive growth. Not surprisingly, ease of doing business, a key indicator, was a critical factor impeding Nigeria's development. Recommendations to improve this indicator focused on expanding access to electricity, simplifying the tax collection process and improving trading across borders.



Questions for leaders

- How are ideas for new projects and programmes being incubated in our organisation and with our partners across the international development ecosystem?
- Are the culture, leadership and processes in place to enable innovation to flourish? Are diversity of perspectives and inclusion encouraged?
- Are we investing in scalable ideas and prototyping those with the most potential through demonstration projects? Is this contributing to resilience in the sector?
- Have we considered an agile approach to development programmes and crisis management and an outcomes-based impact framework?
- Are we adding performance-based funding, staging loans in pieces based on progress and performance rather than full-scale financing?

Case study

Implementing a large-scale EU–Asia international trade programme from 2016–20



The problem: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent 99% of businesses in the EU and provide around three-quarters of all jobs. In search of growth, many SMEs try to expand and look for business opportunities outside their home country. However, accessing and entering new markets is challenging and risky for many SMEs, given the uncertainties about how to do business in foreign markets and the steep investments required. PwC supported the European Commission in implementing [EU Gateway | Business Avenues](#), an EU-funded initiative creating a path for SMEs to establish long-lasting business collaborations in China, Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia.

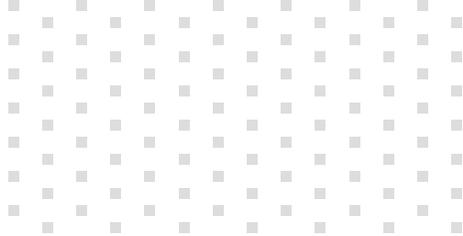
Where we helped: From 2016 to 2020, PwC implemented a coaching network for the programme that is supporting more than 2,600 SMEs across all European Union countries. Our role was to provide a link between the European and Asian SMEs. It involved the recruitment of thousands of SMEs in nine economic sectors in Asia, the assessment of more than 6,300 applications, the organisation of 56 full-service business missions and the delivery of coaching on how to enter new markets. We also performed matchmaking for all beneficiaries in the target markets, organising more than 30,000 one-to-one meetings. Participants believed these meetings added significant value, as they allowed SMEs to have access to local business partners in the target markets.

The impact: Since 2016, 56% of participants reported having concluded sales or signed a contract in an Asian market as a consequence of their participation in the business missions. Ninety percent of companies generated additional leads after the business meetings, and more than 80% are satisfied with the programme and have applied again.



Leadership and trust

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the already noticeable decline of trust in many governments, institutions, NGOs and organisations that the [Edelman Trust Barometer](#) has mapped over the years. Perceptions of corruption, nationalism, social justice inequities, wealth disparities and examples of systemic racism (most recently the global demonstrations that followed the killing of George Floyd in the US) are eroding faith in authorities. Leaders at every level will have to counter these trends by reestablishing or strengthening basic institutional norms. These include showing that legal systems are not subject to bribery and that policing is not biased. Governments that have the trust of their citizens may be better positioned to deliver a sustainable recovery from crises, including the pandemic, and this trust is indispensable to maintaining progress in delivering the SDGs.



For citizens to trust institutions, they need to feel engaged and connected to them. Good governance and transparent reporting create an environment of trust. This will be put to the test, for example, in the next stage of the pandemic response: delivering a vaccine. For many, reports of positive results in early clinical trials was good news. However, a growing movement against vaccines—based on misinformation and a lack of trust in leaders—will have to be overcome for the vaccine to be globally effective. [An article](#) in the respected scientific journal *The Lancet* noted that the rise of the anti-vaccine movement could seriously impede attempts at vaccination. [A poll](#) in the US suggested a third of people would resist being inoculated.

Technology, though, can play a large part in creating trustworthy systems. For example, in India, [blockchain](#) is being used to prevent fraud and corruption primarily in land ownership records, a significant source of disputes. But accountability and transparency reporting at a basic level is also a prerequisite. [In previous studies](#) of crisis management using the pandemic as a focus, PwC has argued for effective distributed leadership as a key driver of trust. Though not an example in healthcare,

[scenario planning](#) for terrorist attacks in Sweden brought together heads of services in 2017 that usually operated separately. This preparation helped in the response when there was an actual attack on the city only months later.

Although government has a key leadership role, it is not the only player. As we have proposed, tackling the challenges of tomorrow in international development requires leaders in the private sector, academia, not-for-profit organisations and citizens to play their part alongside governments. As the Center for Strategic and International Studies points out in a July 2020 [report](#), “Equipped with reliable data, civic technologists [civic-minded tech innovators] can leverage tools like artificial intelligence and machine learning to flatten the curve of COVID-19 and also the curve of inequity and unequal access to services and support.”

This is a strong message for international development agencies: the more collaborations, the more information-sharing and the better use of technology together create the opportunities for success.



Questions for leaders

- Have we identified the key leaders and forged strong communication procedures for stakeholders?
- Have we enhanced governance by developing transparent monitoring and accountability systems on the most current platforms?
- Are there areas where technology, such as blockchain, can bolster trust?
- Can our financial systems handle large and sudden influxes of cash assistance during crises?



The way forward

Global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic are reinforcing the reality that resilience isn't just a buzzword. In tomorrow's world, resilience must be embraced by all stakeholders in international development, at every level, not just the largest organisations. Going it alone won't work. Only by coming together and pooling expertise will we be able to overcome challenges that overwhelm our resources and threaten a sustainable future for all peoples.

From strategy and funding to service delivery and rebuilding trust, innovative solutions to enhance resilience in every aspect of development are out there to be found. These cross-disciplinary capabilities can help the international development community deliver on its promises today, and they are the model for tomorrow's success.



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**We would like to thank the following
PwC experts for their insights and
contributions:**

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Advisor to PwC

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