

***Summary of Side Event:*** From COVID-19 to Climate Change: How can we turbo-charge collaboration to build forward at speed?

2 February 2022, 8:00-8:50 am (EST)

## **Background**

What can we learn from rapid partnerships convened during the pandemic and how can this be applied to support those working on climate action partnerships and connected fields? This event was hosted by the global partnering specialist NGO [The Partnering Initiative](#) (TPI) with [Partnerships 2030](#)<sup>1</sup> and the [2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator](#), moderated by Dr Darian Stibbe. Jenny Ekelund from TPI shared emerging insights from the [Rapid Partnering for Climate Action programme](#), which is developing accelerated partnership protocols to support climate action practitioners and their partners to initiate, implement and iterate climate action partnerships far faster. Panelists Susanne Salz from Partnerships 2030, Zainab Aliyu from Climate2025 and Yukiko Yamada Morovic from World Vision contributed their own experiences of partnering at speed for climate action, and what is needed to accelerate progress.

## **Key Issues discussed**

- While there is a sense of urgency around all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the climate crisis has the unique and powerful potential to derail every other goal if the global community cannot act decisively in the next decade to halt emissions. There is a need for a model of accelerated, ‘rapid-partnering’ that can be readily applied to mobilise collective action on the scale required and ensure that the global community can advance the full implementation of the 2030 agenda
- There is an opportunity to learn from rapidly convened COVID-19 collaborations– from the most local level (such as community groups partnering with shops to fill food banks) to the global (such as FCDO and Unilever’s £100M collaboration on handwashing). These new partnerships moved rapidly through, or completely bypassed, ‘normal’ partnering processes
- [TPI’s research](#) from pandemic collaborations shows that 80% of partnerships set up to respond to the crisis were quicker to get off the ground compared to previous experiences. A shared sense of urgency gave a laser focus and senior leadership buy in was easier to come by. It was easier to obtain internal approvals, and that there was a willingness to skip, streamline or postpone internal procedural steps. Crucially, it was easier to build trust in this context
- TPI’s rapid partnering protocol for climate action, currently in draft form and being tested with a peer group of climate practitioners, seeks to reinvent existing partnering tools and approaches, combining them with other disciplines such as rapid prototyping to reflect the agility and unprecedented speed of collaboration required. Alongside the protocol, the programme will support the development of a pro-partnering enabling environment in

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<sup>1</sup> a project hosted at GIZ and commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

which organisations optimize their internal processes and build a culture and mindset to support fast partnering, funders adjust the way they fund to reduce risk and incentivize rapid deployment, and in which potential collaborators can rapidly find each other

- Climate practitioners have identified strong personal relationships as the primary enablers for rapid climate partnerships, alongside the importance of well-respected, senior level champions to ‘bring people along’
- Lack of trust among partners was cited as the primary barrier to rapid climate partnering. Slow internal processes, lack of internal skills on partnering, competition among partners and lack of clarity on goals were also factors slowing progress, as well as disagreements over technical definitions, lack of a common language, bureaucracy and siloes/fragmentation
- Access to fast, flexible funding pots was cited as the key factor that would enable climate partnerships to move faster. Support to optimize internal organisational systems to partner well and investing in movement building were also identified
- Practitioner experiences demonstrated the importance of inclusion from the start when setting up a climate partnership- this is the right thing to do from a climate justice perspective, and will ultimately speed up implementation

### **Key recommendations for action**

- **Learning by doing:** Where there is a clear and compelling case, nascent climate partnerships should ‘just do it’ – hugely accelerate the design phase and prioritise working together and building trust ‘on the hoof’ through a rapidly iterating approach (similar to start-ups), rather than overdesigning the partnership. This also means being prepared to fail faster, and learn from that
- **Individual passion:** Individual determination to tackle the climate crisis should be viewed as a critical success factor when working in partnership. If the imperative to partner is urgent enough, there will be sufficient energy dedicated by the partners to overcome barriers (as demonstrated by the rapid partnerships developed around Covid-19)
- **Collaborate not compete:** It is critical to move beyond a competition mindset to collaboration. Strong personal relationships are especially critical to climate action partnerships and trust building should be invested in from the outset
- **Courage and creativity:** To co-create effectively and swiftly, climate and partnership practitioners need to take risks and move outside comfort zones. The promise of sufficient financial resources from enlightened funders allows organisations to take these risks, even before high trust has developed between partners
- **Language is critical:** In order to work together effectively partners must acknowledge up front where climate jargon can create misunderstandings. It is worth investing time on common definitions of terms such as ‘net zero’, particularly where non-environmental specialist partners are involved, rather than assuming all organisations are aligned
- **Build on existing climate initiatives where possible:** New climate collaborations can often be effectively ‘docked’ onto existing partnerships to speed up set-up and impact, as seen with multiple initiatives during the pandemic