



Summary of Side Event: How collaborative innovation can upscale partnerships for an inclusive global recovery of COVID-19 and drive action on sustainable development

Hosted by the Imperial College [Global Development Hub](#) on January 31st, 2023

Full presentation available on [YouTube](#)

Background on the event

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the need for wide-scale cross-sectoral partnerships to rapidly manage and mitigate an unprecedented viral spread. At the beginning of the pandemic, Imperial College London engaged with governments, researchers, and global public health agencies to work towards solutions, both in terms of health impacts, as well as the interconnected resonating effects that the pandemic had on other aspects of life and society.

Now in conversations about advancing equitable pandemic recovery, Imperial recognises again that collaborative innovation and partnerships are just as imperative. Mobilising partnerships to accelerate COVID-19 recovery while advancing progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) was a central theme of the [2023 Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\) Partnership Forum](#).

The event provided an overview of how some of the key economic and social challenges posed by the pandemic can be tackled with research and innovation with contributions from Marisa Miraldo, a Professor in Health Economics and Policy at Imperial College London, Katharina Hauck, a Professor in Health Economics and Deputy Director of the Jameel Institute at Imperial College London, and Alex Bond, the Co-Founder and CEO of Fresh Check.

Key Issues discussed

- **Professor [Marisa Miraldo](#), Professor in Health Economics at Imperial College London**
 - Explored how different groups in society were differentially impacted by Covid-19 based on factors including unequal exposure determined by an individual's workplace, levels of transmission influenced by housing, vulnerability linked to non-communicable diseases and susceptibility as a result of stress.
 - Siloed approaches to promote health or economic prosperity strengthened pre-existing inequalities whereby individuals belonging to groups with greater housing, food, financial and employment insecurity were impacted more severely by Covid-19 and the interventions in place.



- Health was described as function of lifestyle, social and community networks, living and working conditions, built environment and educational levels which however, was not incorporated into policies.
- **Professor [Katharina Hauck](#), Professor of Health Economics at Imperial College London and Deputy Director of the [Jameel Institute](#)**
 - Discussed interdisciplinary research at the Jameel Institute using the DAEDALUS model developed during COVID-19 which combines epidemiological and economic modelling.
 - These interdisciplinary models were used to inform key decisions globally including the decision to extend lockdowns in a LMIC in South-East Asia as well as in Indonesia's first booster vaccination campaign and for evaluating different hypothetical scenarios of pandemic preparedness such as the Spanish flu in Singapore, in order to combat future disease threats.
- **Alex Bond, Co-founder and CEO of [FreshCheck](#)**
 - Fresh Check offers affordable solutions to verify hygiene in the food, hospitality in the healthcare industries including a colour-changing spray used to detect the presence of bacteria on surfaces as well as a swab with an app to record results and then analyse them online.
 - As a result of the pandemic, global supply chains were no longer reliable and therefore Fresh Check developed a local supply chain using multiple networks which provided financial, manufacturing and technical expertise which were fundamental for the launch of their swab.
 - There is a gap affecting the ability of small companies to respond to emerging global challenges. Small companies can often quickly develop new technological solutions to match the issues, but scaling up is problem – they inherently lack resources and infrastructure to meet high level demands in a timescale.

Key recommendations for action

- There is a need for whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches using triangulated data which captures the complexity of social, economic and health outcomes and produces smart interventions that are personalized, tailored to the different needs of society and adaptive to continuous data updates.
- It is important not to distract funding from other urgent health issues, instead look at models that can offer simultaneous support to emergency and baseline health challenges.



- The lack of trust in science and government is a serious issue that hampers progress, and this requires further research
- More efforts required in science communication skill-building and engagement, as messaging during the pandemic caused discontent and social disapproval of behaviours, which were perceived as taking control of personal autonomy and led to undesired policy outcomes in different parts of the world. It must also be communicated that science changes as circumstances change - projections are not forecasts, and as such are not always reality.
- Messages to the public should ideally have strong graphics and simple language, using layperson terms to get points across
- Integrated systems of data collection and model libraries must be in place and be regularly updated to ensure pandemic preparedness. Those were missing at the start of the pandemic, which led to time being lost.