

Event Highlights

Development Cooperation in North-East Asia in Addressing COVID-19 Pandemic: Initiatives by Development Cooperation Agencies in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea 30 July 2020

The above webinar was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) East and North-East Asia Office, China International Development Research Network (CIDRN), College of International Development and Global Agriculture, China Agricultural University (CIDGA, CAU), and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). Over 200 participants attended the webinar comprising Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav, Head, UNESCAP East and North-East Asia Office; Ms. Sook Hee Baek, Vice President, KOICA; Mr. Lin Tian, Director General, International Cooperation Department, China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA); Mr. Yuanshi Gong, Vice President, CAU; and representatives from the CIDRN, CAU, Seoul National University, Korea Association of International Development and Cooperation (KAIDEC), Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan Society for International Development (JASID), Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), and Asian Development Bank (ADB). The webinar aimed to understand how the region's development agencies are helping other countries to respond to the pandemic, and how they see the future of development cooperation on health post-COVID.

UNESCAP serves as the UN's regional hub that promotes cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. CIDRN is an open platform for sharing and disseminating international development knowledge and experiences among academic institutions, international organizations, government agencies, and individuals. CIDGA is CAU's platform focusing on international development and new agricultural science based on the university's long development research and training within the country and abroad.

Highlights

Below are some key highlights:

- Countries have helped each other to fight COVID-19. However, Ganbold Baasanjav stressed that while emergency humanitarian assistance is important, countries should also focus on long-term development. If budget for development cooperation is reduced, it may threaten future development prospects.
- COVID-19 has caused a public health crisis and indebted many countries. Northeast Asian countries which have fared better should do more to help other countries according to Sook Hee Baek. She highlighted that about half of the world's population lacked access to necessary medical services, and two-thirds of the population experienced worsening of socio-economic conditions. And the funding gap of 45 low-income countries could reach US\$90 billion.
- Regional cooperation initiatives have helped countries to address the pandemic and remain important in tackling human livelihood and development issues. Yuanshi Gong pointed that CAU has built new platforms based on international development cooperation and south-south cooperation research to address food security, poverty reduction, and employment.

- The PRC received aid from the international community in early days of the pandemic, but has since given back in many ways. Lin Tian mentioned that the PRC has provided various assistances to other developing countries, such as, funds, medical supplies, dispatching medical teams, and conducting virtual trainings for medical professionals. The PRC has also adopted the G20 agreement on debt freeze for the world's poorest countries. It has also helped African countries to build medical facilities and improve their medical management capabilities. The PRC is also committed to provide \$2 billion worth of aid to countries hit by the pandemic within two years.
- The Republic of Korea has established a resilience agenda (the ABC Program) to fight COVID-19. Hyunwon Kim mentioned that under the "Action on Fragility, Building Capacity, and Comprehensive Cooperation" (ABC) Program, the country has provided vaccine and treatment support to organizations, such as, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization), World Health Organization (WHO), and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation.
- Control measures have been adopted to minimize the spread of COVID-19, while social safety net programs have supported economic activity, but more is needed. Hyunwon Kim stated that countries have implemented prevention and control measures, such as, international travel restrictions, large-scale testing and tracking, and quarantine to contain the spread of the virus. In addition, the Philippines' conditional cash transfer program are helping 18 million poor families, while Mongolia's children program, 900,000 children. Still, moving forward, developing countries need to improve their pandemic prevention capabilities, help migrant workers, and rebuild the global values chains to better support economic activity.
- ADB has launched a US\$20 billion package in response to the pandemic. This includes concessional and grants in emergencies; quick disbursing budgetary support; trade and supply chain finance; wage, cash transfer, and other social protection supports according to Marzia Mongiorgi-Lorenzo. In addition, ADB has provided policy advice, analysis, and tools to address the economic slowdown. It has organized COVID-19 knowledge sharing events among developing countries, such as, the ADB-Center for International Knowledge on Development Webinar Series on Lessons and Experiences from the PRC. ADB has also worked closely with other international institutions, such as WHO, UN agencies, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, World Bank, and World Trade Organization. Within ADB, business processes have also been simplified, and special and greater sharing of staff have been introduced.

Next Step:

To further organize regular seminars to promote south-south cooperation, and safeguarding multilateralism through the cooperation with universities and development agencies.

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