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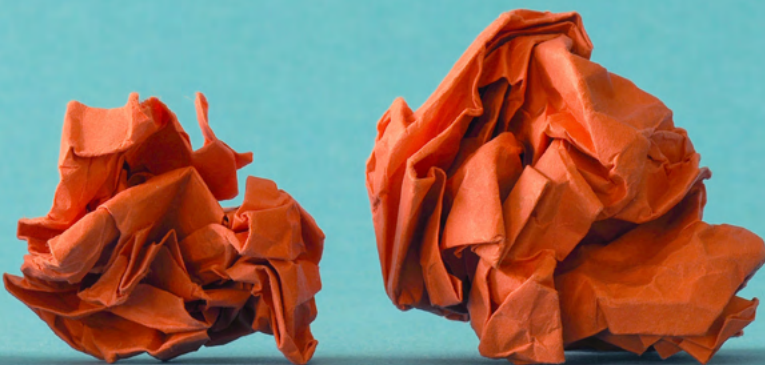
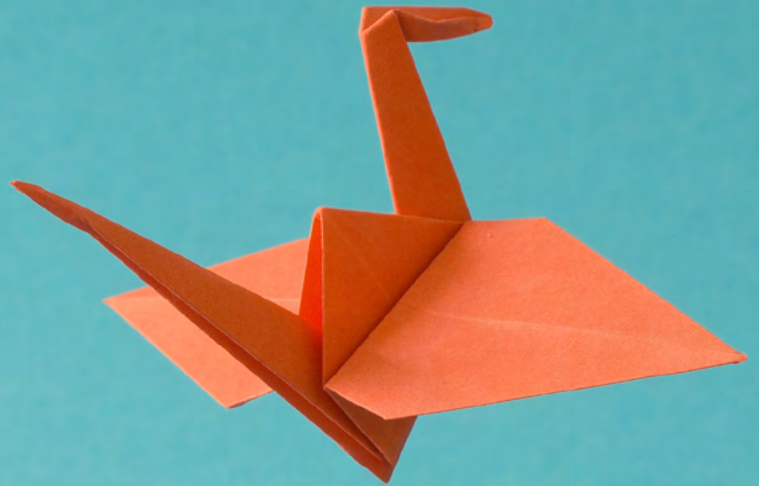
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► Driving up Resilience

A Guide for Employer
and Business Membership
Organizations



Driving up Resilience

A Guide for Employer
and Business Membership
Organizations

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First published 2021

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ISBN: 978-92-9049-883-4: "Driving up Resilience. A Guide for Employer and Business Membership Organizations" (web PDF)

ISBN: 978-92-9049-884-1: "Driving up Resilience. A Guide for Employer and Business Membership Organizations" (print PDF)

Also available in:

French:

ISBN: 978-92-9049-885-8: "Favoriser la resilience. Guide destiné aux organisations d'employeurs et d'entreprises" (web PDF)

ISBN: 978-92-9049-886-5: "Favoriser la resilience. Guide destiné aux organisations d'employeurs et d'entreprises" (print PDF)

Spanish:

ISBN: 978-92-9049-887-2: "Impulsando la Resiliencia. Una Guía para Organizaciones Empresariales" (web PDF)

ISBN: 978-92-9049-888-9: "Impulsando la Resiliencia. Una Guía para Organizaciones Empresariales" (print PDF)

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Design and layout by the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin – Italy

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Foreword

The environment in which companies are operating is constantly changing – climate change, digitalization etc. are increasing the need for them to constantly adapt and realign. Unexpected crises such as the financial crisis of 2018 and the Covid-19 pandemic have tested the resilience of companies even further. In order for Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs) to be able to support business in addressing these challenges and to represent the collective voice of business to the public authorities even in difficult circumstances, EBMOs need to give due attention to building their own resilience.

This Guide aims to support EBMOs aiming to increase their resilience by sharing with them practical examples and key lessons learnt, from a wide range of EBMO experiences around the world. In this way, it complements others recent ILO Guides in areas such as better membership strategies, digitalization, and using data as a strategic asset. Together, these materials are intended to help EBMOs be better prepared to face crises and other challenges in the future.

Building EBMO resilience requires a comprehensive approach and constant work. The building resilience methodology presented in this Guide recommends considering at least 12 dimensions, with a combination of defensive and progressive measures in each of those categories. While there is no one-size-fits-all formula, resilient EBMOs tend to share common characteristics, such as: a solid governance structure; a high degree of member centricity; valuable services which address clients' most pressing needs; multi-skilled staff who can move between different roles; strong alliances with other key-actors; functional risk management systems; as well as research, leadership and communication capacity on key business environment issues. This Guide aims to provide practical knowledge in each of these categories.

We thank those who worked on the production of the Guide, including the EBMO leaders who took the time to participate in the interviews and gave us relevant examples and practical insight. We are very grateful to Kanishka Weerasinghe and Pedro Espallat for their valuable research work, as well as to Jorge Ramírez Mata from the ITCILO ACT/EMP Team, who led the process. Thanks are also due to all ILO ACT/EMP colleagues who contributed to this Guide in various ways and suggested numerous improvements, especially to Christian Hess, who came up with the idea for this guide and initiated the production process.

Deborah France-Massin

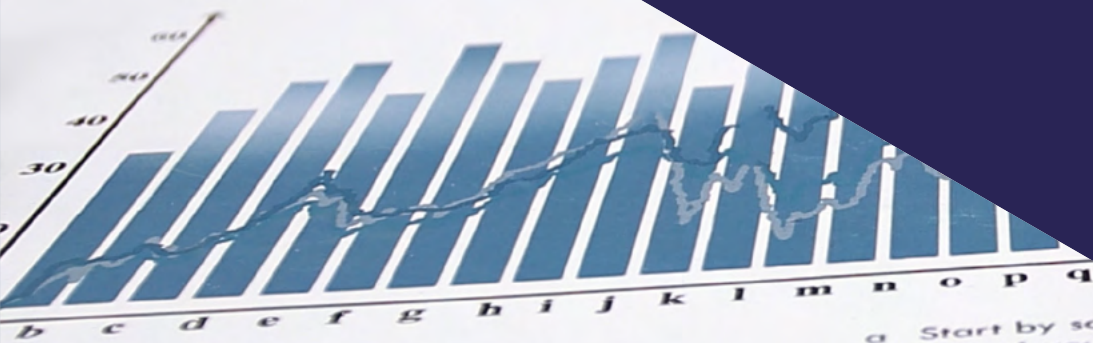
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction



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▶ Chapter 1: Introduction

The global economy has recovered from multiple types of crises in the recent decades. During these periods of economic hardship, Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs) have played a key role in safeguarding themselves and their members, highlighting their historical capacity to be resilient against unexpected challenges.

In 2008, the financial crisis derived in a global economic emergency without precedents. The consequences for the world of work were such that the Director-General of the ILO at the time described the unfolding impact of the crisis as “a global jobs catastrophe in the making”.¹ EBMOs were at the forefront of staging recovery interventions for their members and communities. At the time, employers, mainly represented by EBMOs, supported the Global Jobs Pact (GJP) proposed by the ILO, which included relevant policy guidelines for economic recovery.²

As another global crisis has emerged, EBMOs are again at the forefront of response and recovery actions. Since the beginning of 2020, the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic has led to an array of preventative measures, such as lockdowns and social distancing, resulting in a general economic slowdown. As a result, the income of many enterprises either dried up or came down to a trickle. During this period, EBMOs had to drastically adapt their operations. Research conducted by the ILO and the IOE³, as well as the case studies of this guide, found that EBMOs around the world have worked in partnership with national governments to raise awareness, manage immediate health risks, support businesses, and safeguard jobs. At the same time, EBMOs have stepped up to deliver crucial services and amplify the business voice during the COVID-19 crisis.

According to the ILO/IOE survey conducted between May and June 2020, it is estimated that 8 out of every 10 EBMOs across the world renovated and adapted their service delivery model. Furthermore, 8 out of every 10 EBMOs had continued to offer advisory and consulting services, by working digitally. More than half of the EBMOs surveyed (54%) had already moved their training services to online platforms. Finally, as a sign of support to their members, the majority of the EBMOs (60%) offered financial flexibility to members despite the economic and social crisis. These actions included temporarily suspending or postponing the payment of membership fees, allowing payments to be made in instalments, and offering additional free services.

However, not all EBMOs have felt prepared to achieve resilience during the crisis. Only 36% of EBMOs surveyed by June 2020 were operating at full capacity, less if looking at Africa (25%) and Americas (31%). Despite 6 out of 10 EBMOs not having experienced loss of members, only 2 out of 10 expected this reality to remain in the next 12 months. Furthermore, a majority (83%) of EBMOs had already reported income decline due to the crisis and only 37% had financial reserves or access to alternative funds. The EBMOs interviewed for this guide, more than a year after the survey, have reported similar realities, with weakened financial and operational capacities, difficulties to retain staff and ensure continuity of services, and challenges to maintain membership levels.

This guide aims to provide useful experiences and takeaways from EBMOs’ case studies from around the world. In this regard, this document explores how different EBMOs have faced adversity and demonstrated their capacity to be resilient, as well as the different solutions that they have implemented to help their members and communities during these difficult times.

¹ ILO (2009). The Financial and Economic Crisis: A Decent Work Response – ILO / International Institute for Labour Studies – Preface, p.8.

² From Global Jobs Pact page ([link](#)).

³ ILO/IOE (2020). A global survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside impacts and responses to COVID-19 ([link](#)).

▶ 1.1 Objective of this Guide

The guide aims to support EBMOs seeking to increase their resilience. For our audience, composed of EBMOs' representatives, reading this work can be taken as an exercise to 1) understand crises' resilience and identify their gaps towards this goal, 2) learn and be inspired from other EBMOs around the world, and 3) improve their own resilience capacities.

The guide is based on recent EBMOs' experiences around the world, including actions implemented before and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, it presents practical examples and lessons from diverse types of organizations, including EBMOs with relatively high access to human and financial assets, as well as smaller organizations with fewer resources. Furthermore, the guide includes cases of organizations operating at national and local levels. While these case studies were the basis of this guide, the analysis also considered other relevant ILO's publications and research. In essence, the material seeks to inform on overall crises' resilience, beyond the ongoing pandemic.

EBMOs' representatives are encouraged to use this guide following a sequential approach. The reader should consult Chapter 1 to learn more about organizational resilience. Then, browse the multiple resilience elements and their practical examples contained in Chapter 2. Next, the reader is encouraged to read and consider the list of concrete steps towards increasing resilience in an EBMO, suggested in Chapter 3. For this section, EBMOs' representatives can find useful checklists in Annex A and B. Finally, if there is particular interest in one of the examples presented in the guide, the complete case studies are included in Annex C.

▶ 1.2 Why is EBMOs' Resilience relevant?

▶▶ **Be a natural disaster, such as a tsunami, earthquakes, or floods as in the case of Serbia in 2014, or more recently a virus, key lessons remain to face periods of crisis and uncertainty.**

▶ Serbian Association of Employers (SAE).

Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs) must be able to adapt to the ongoing changes in the business environment, as well as to unexpected crises on the horizon. While the current health crisis may defuse gradually, multiple other socioeconomic transformations and disruptions are already occurring at a fast rate, implying significant challenges for the organizational functioning and integrity of EBMOs worldwide. Such challenges could arise for instance from digitalization and other technological developments, geopolitical conflicts, climate change, rising inequalities, as well as the fiscal knock-on effects of high government expenditure. The past has also showed that severe crises can arise rapidly, demanding EBMOs' flexibility and creativity to protect their organizational stability and continuity of their operations.

EBMOs need to be resilient to navigate continuous changes in the business environment

The business environment is transforming rapidly, demanding resilient and flexible EBMOs. For instance, gender equality is now a greater priority for businesses and society, but some EBMOs are only beginning to adapt their operations towards this goal. Furthermore, climate change mitigation/adaptation is becoming a central piece for private sector operations. This focus will demand specific types of training and support from EBMOs. Moreover, millions of jobs worldwide are now performed digitally, with higher efficiency and a lower carbon-print, while another myriad of tasks are progressively being conducted by automation.

Consequently, EBMOs will need to be resilient and adaptable to these ongoing and changing demands. As it is not possible to anticipate which type of new crisis or disruption will occur next, EBMOs will need to be prepared to adjust their operations to any unexpected changes in the business environment and labor markets. Organizations that have not taken the necessary and possible precautions and do not possess a risk management strategy will struggle more when facing new periods of uncertainty.

EBMOs across the world have identified multiple areas in which they need to increase their resilience

EBMOs are key actors for the economy, as they provide multiple public goods such as business support services, trainings, and representation, including collective bargaining. However, according to the case studies presented on this guide, multiple EBMOs across the globe did not consider themselves sufficiently resilient when the pandemic started. Some EBMOs expressed that they had a limited number of staff and resources to be able to meet clients' outstanding needs during the crisis. For instance, in the case of CGEM in Morocco, only one person was available to adapt the organization's training material from a face-to-face modality to a digital one, with very limited time. Similarly, other EBMOs shared that their available hardware was not compatible with the crisis modality of working, which entails intermittent shifts between teleworking and office work, since they had equipped their staff with desktop computers only.

According to the ILO/ IOE survey,⁴ about one third of EBMOs see as a medium- and long-term priority to design internal policies to increase their resilience. In this regard, this guide provides practical examples and useful information for EBMOs that are embarking in the valuable effort of improving their resilience.

Resilient EBMOs benefit their communities



A strong collective advocate for the private sector is needed now more than ever: without effective and functioning EBMOs voicing the needs of business to decision makers, enterprise continuity, economic recovery and ultimately jobs will be at stake.

▶ Roberto Suárez Santos, Secretary General of the IOE.⁵

Resilient EBMOs produce a positive “snowballing effect” on enterprises, employees, consumers, and society. These organizations help firms to communicate a “collective voice” to the public sector, promoting policies and regulations that improve the business and social environment. Subsequently, the right business and social environment strengthens firms' operations, creates quality job opportunities, gives consumers access to a broader set of products and services, and advances social development of the countries and regions in which EBMOs operate.

⁴ ILO/IOE (2020). A global survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside impacts and responses to COVID-19 ([link](#)).

⁵ Ibid., Global Survey, p.III.

According to the recent ILO /IOE global survey conducted with EBMOs around the world, by June of 2020, virtually every EBMO had engaged in advocacy efforts with the public sector (97%). On a positive note, according to the same EBMOs' survey, such efforts have largely proven to be effective or very effective.⁶ Furthermore, resilient EBMOs have directly supported the business operations of firms. For instance, during the crisis, some EBMOs have assisted businesses in accessing digital markets (see Box 1).

Box 1. Benefits of Resilient EBMOs: Supporting Businesses and Consumers

The COVID-19 crisis in Chile demanded enterprises from multiple sectors to adopt digital ways of connecting with clients and circumvent the health emergency. A myriad of companies, especially smaller ones, had not developed a digital approach to their business model before the pandemic. Consequently, the National Chamber of Commerce, Services and Tourism, a branch of the CPC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economics and other partners created "Comunidad C"; a platform that supports companies to digitalize their business' operations and reach clients through digital markets. This initiative has already benefited micro, small and medium sized firms. Furthermore, consumers can now access products and services offered by such enterprises on a more efficient manner.

▶ 1.3 How can EBMOs' Resilience be defined?

Definition of Organizational Resilience

In order to understand and gauge resilience of EBMOs, this guide proposes that a simple yet well-composed definition of organizational resilience by the BSI and Cranfield University⁷ be adopted. Accordingly, organizational resilience is defined as: **the ability of an organization to anticipate, prepare for, respond, and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions to survive and prosper.** EBMOs can achieve organizational resilience by successfully following these four actions, as illustrated by Box 2. In addition, the elements can work in tangent with each other and some strategies or capabilities (e.g., financial health) can be deployed across them.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 14-21.

⁷ Denyer, D (2017). Organizational Resilience – A summary of academic evidence, business insights and new thinking. BSI and Cranfield School of Management. P.3.

Box 2. Example of a Resilient EBMO: The case of EFC in Sri Lanka

A good example of applying these actions is the case of the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) of Sri Lanka, an EBMO that have been able to anticipate, prepare for, respond, and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions. This organization has been in existence for more than 92 years and it has succeeded during the current health and economic crisis, despite the challenges.

Ability to anticipate: The EFC's "capacity to be in step" with member requirements as well as foresee future needs through a review of activities and services has been one of the main contributors of its relative resilience and has been crucial for its sustainability. For instance, EFC was able to formulate new services with the future of work in mind, offering a service to members to develop "work from home policies" since 2016, four years before the practice was forced to become a widespread convention by the health crisis.

Ability to prepare for: EFC has made conscious and key investments in having a multi-skilled staff that can adapt and be deployed into new opportunities and challenges. During the lockdowns, many staff that served on industrial relations were unable to continue such work and were reassigned into other areas and emerging services. EFC has also taken active steps to have financial health by conducting periodic assessments of its financial resources, having a responsible financial strategy of investing its savings in a diversified portfolio and accumulating reserves.

Ability to respond: The EFC's strong alliances with key-stakeholders provides it with a higher capacity to respond to unexpected crises. For instance, the EFC has a strong relationship with the International Training Center from the ILO, allowing this EBMO to upgrade its human capital skills. Similarly, the EFC has built long-term partnerships with IOE, the Malaysian Employers Federation, the Keidanren (Japanese Employers) and JILAF (Japan International Labour Federation). Such alliances with the "world of work" have increased EFC's internal capacity to deliver services, strengthened existing capacities (e.g., labour law and industrial relations), and improved research capability (e.g., partnering with ILO for the COVID-19 global survey). Furthermore, since 2016, thanks to support from ILO-ACT/EMP, EFC has in place a CRM system that it leveraged during the crisis to better assess the state and involvement of its members and its service performance.

Ability to adapt: The EFC's "capacity to adapt" to incremental change was founded on governance. Among the governance structures that have allowed the EFC to adapt to the crisis are: a) specific definitions of the roles and responsibilities of the board and the secretariat, b) the autonomy of the secretariat to carry its approved duties and functions in day-to-day operations and during crises until new directives are issued, c) the CEO being also a member of the board, and d) the capacity of the board to create ad-hoc committees and convene them. These governance structures allowed EFC to adapt its service delivery model to respond to the pandemic without the need of board approval. In instances in which approval or discussion were required, the CEO leveraged its dual role as member of the council to expedite approval, or ad-hoc committees were called to respond to specific requests.

Distinctions between Sustainability and Resilience

As in the case of all organizations, EBMOs must formulate strategies to conduct sustainable operations during the business-as-usual periods, as well as to be prepared for possible crises. In this regard, many crises have demonstrated that sustainability alone is unlikely to ensure survival of organizations, and that resilience is a crucial factor for the endurance of incremental change and sudden disruptions

Studies carried out reveal similarities, complementarities, as well as disparities between the concepts of sustainability and resilience. As highlighted in Marchese et al. (2018),⁸ one important difference between sustainability and resilience is the temporal scale of their implementation. Sustainability efforts are often understood on longer time scales than resilience. The primary objective of sustainability is to create desirable conditions for future generations and their needs.⁹ Thus, the effects of sustainability policies may not directly influence present situations but may have substantial effects on future conditions. Resilience, on the other hand, is understood in many situations to apply to more immediate temporal

⁸ Marchese et al. (2018). Resilience and sustainability: Similarities and differences in environmental management applications. *Science of the Total Environment*, 1275-1283. (Available at this [link](#)).

⁹ Meacham, B.J. (2016). Sustainability and resiliency objectives in performance building regulations. 44:474-489. (Available at this [link](#)).

scales^{10 11}. Actions that increase the resilience of a system will protect it in the short term from potential disturbances¹² and could lead or not to sustainability in the long term (see Box 3).¹³

Box 3. Disparities and Complementarities between Sustainability and Resilience for an EBMO

For multiple EBMOs, the COVID-19 crisis implied the need to conduct rapid changes and take on additional responsibilities, at times at the risk of diluting business-as-usual services. The case of the Confederation of Portuguese Business (CIP) is illustrative to highlight how sustainability and resilience can pursue different goals, while complementing each other.

As the health crisis unfolded, CIP, as the largest federation of EBMOs in Portugal, took a messenger role at a national scale. Within days of the lockdowns in March 2020, the EBMO started sending informative e-mails twice a day and set up a COVID-19 informational website with daily updates, even before the government launched theirs. Additionally, CIP's CEO took an active presence on national media, communicating the facts of the situation, advocating for businesses' interests, and serving as mediator with the government. CIP was able to take this role as it had existing advocacy and communication capacities, as well as national credibility with different interest groups.

The EBMO saw taking this role as vital to guarantee clear information flow to businesses and to help stabilize the country. It also did it to survive, as revenues were dwindling, it became clear to CIP it had to make its value added more salient. Nevertheless, while crisis appropriate, for CIP, with limited staff, dedicating that much of staff and financial resources to communication activities may not be sustainable in the long term. Nevertheless, it helped them in the short run to be resilient and impactful during the crisis. Furthermore, it honed existing advocacy and communication capabilities that will certainly prove beneficial for the EBMO in the future, increasing their chance to conduct sustainable operations in the long term and respond effectively to future crises.

The combination of progressive and defensive measures

According to the BSI/Cranfield University study, research and thought leadership on Organizational Resilience has developed over the last 40 years in several different fields, with two distinct 'core drivers'; being defensive (stopping bad things from happening) and progressive (making good things happen), as well as approaches that call for 'consistency' and 'flexibility'.¹⁴

The aforementioned study advocates for the notion that truly resilient organizations must manage and apply these strategies and the derived actions that emerge in their interaction (see Fig. 1). Thus, the Organizational Resilience Tension Quadrant is applied as the resilience lens of this guide to assess the effectiveness of the interventions made by EBMOs in enhancing their resilient capacities and to give a clearer understanding to readers in grasping EBMOs' resilience. The framework is further explained in the following chapter.

According to the BSI/Cranfield Framework,¹⁵ organizational resilience implies adding to the mindset of defensive and reactive strategies a forward-looking and progressive mentality. To have such a resilient mindset in place, organizations need to increase their flexibility, as well as their capacity to anticipate and take advantage of new opportunities in the business environment.

¹⁰ Lew et al. (2016). Community sustainability and resilience: similarities, differences and indicators. 18:18–27.

¹¹ Mejia-Giraldo et al. (2012). Sustainability and resiliency measures for long-term investment planning in integrated energy and transportation infrastructures. J. Energy Eng. 138:87–94.

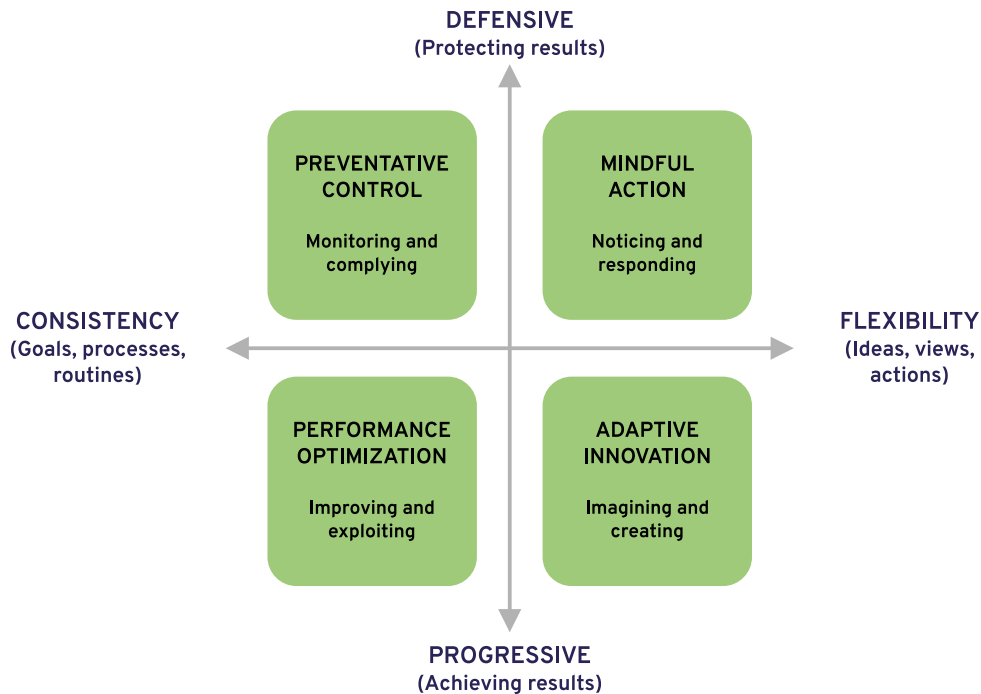
¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid., Marchese et al. (2018).

¹⁴ Denyer, D. (2017). Organizational Resilience – A summary of academic evidence, business insights and new thinking. BSI and Cranfield School of Management

¹⁵ BSI (2015). Organizational Resilience: Harnessing experience, embracing opportunity ([link](#)).

Figure 1. The Organizational Resilience Tension Quadrant.



Source: Adapted from Denyer, D. (2017). Organizational Resilience – A summary of academic evidence, business insights and new thinking. BSI and Cranfield School of Management

Currently, EBMOs are considering the new clients' requirements and the sociopolitical challenges in a post COVID-19 economy. In this aspect, organizational resilience also comes from experiences and the learnings derived from past actions.¹⁶ In writing this guide, the purpose is not on explicitly describing how EBMOs have faced the COVID-19 pandemic, but on providing lessons and takeaways for the next crises.

Lastly, according to the BSI/Cranfield Framework, resilience in an organization arrives from within, from the values, culture, and behavior of the organization. It comes from leaders, in a top-down direction, but also from a bottom-up engagement of employees and clients. At the individual level, recent research¹⁷ has found that strong relationships and networks, both personal and professional, can nurture resilience. This guide displays how employee's grit and strong networks and alliances were vital in building resilience for EBMOs.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Cross, R., Dillon, K., & Greenberg, D. (2021). The Secret to Building Resilience. Harvard Business Review, ([link](#)).

CHAPTER 2

▶ EBMOs' Resilience in Practice

RESILIENCE



▶ Chapter 2: EBMOs' Resilience in Practice

This chapter presents a list of elements that have enabled EBMOs to adapt to incremental change and disruptions and to become resilient during challenging times. The development of this chapter was supported by EBMOs' contributions from different parts of the world including Africa, Americas, Asia, and Europe. The complete case studies have been placed in Annex C of this guide. Readers who are interested in the nuances of each case can directly read the details in there. For didactic purposes, some of the main programs and actions implemented by these EBMOs are presented in this section, segmented in 12 simple categories.

While it is conceded that the subject of resilience, as well as the research associated with the concept, is still ongoing, this guide aims to create early awareness and prepare EBMOs for any future crises and the adversity they create. In this context, the following 12 resilience elements are presented:

- 1. Establish Good Governance**
 - 2. Nurture Transformational Leadership**
 - 3. Maintain Member Centricity**
 - 4. Achieve Financial Stability**
 - 5. Advance Service Agility**
 - 6. Recruit, Retain and Deploy Multi-Skilled Staff**
 - 7. Utilize Effective Communication**
 - 8. Speed-up the Digitalization Process**
 - 9. Form and Maintain Alliances**
 - 10. Engage Actively in Social Dialogue**
 - 11. Develop Capacity for Thought Leadership and Research**
 - 12. Apply Systemic and Conscious Risk Management**
-

It is important to mention that the resilience elements in this chapter seek to assist EBMOs to survive, recover and prosper in a sustainable manner without compromising their values and essential competencies. As elaborated in section 1.3., while resilience and sustainability can complement or deviate from one another, strategic organizations aim for the former.

This chapter presents some recommendations using recent examples of EBMOs that have conducted resilient operations in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. For our audience, composed of EBMOs' representatives, reading these elements can be taken as an exercise to identify their gaps and build their resilience capacities. In addition, while each element can be read and understood individually, they work best when taken holistically and seen as complementing each other.

The 12 elements and their practical examples are built using the BSI/Cranfield University Framework¹⁸ that highlights, many organizations build resilience based on "two core drivers", complemented with approaches that call for organizational 'consistency' and 'flexibility'. These core aspects have been categorized as defensive measures (stopping bad things from happening) and progressive measures

¹⁸ Denyer, D. (2017). Organizational Resilience – A summary of academic evidence, business insights and new thinking. BSI and Cranfield School of Management.

(making good things happen). In this sense, this guide explores the defensive and progressive measures taken by EBMOs that enhance “the ability of an organization to anticipate, prepare for, respond, and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions”. Additionally, it places these strategies on their consistency with the organization’s competencies and way of operating (e.g., goals, processes, routines) and their ability to be flexible (e.g., in terms of ideas, views, actions) (see table below).

Resilience is then achieved by balancing the implementation of these measures (preventative control, mindful action, performance optimization and adaptive innovation). In particular, the defensive measures are a crucial starting point for EBMOs. Members and other stakeholders who rely on these organizations would expect EBMOs to possess the necessary infrastructure and capabilities to function smoothly, ‘come rain or shine’.

In fact, many EBMOs have encountered their membership demanding more services and better performance during the crisis and its recovery stage than during normal times. Similarly, workers, and the trade unions that represent them, expect employers’ organizations to be more active in giving inputs for policies addressing crises and their recovery. These aspirations can only be achieved if defensive measures have been afoot to acquire the needed infrastructure and, at the same time, if progressive actions can be leveraged to enhance capacity and effectively respond to emerging challenges.

For ease of our readers, the below table presents in detail the BSI/Cranfield University Framework and its different categories that are used in this guide to understand and explain organizational resilience.

Name	Type of Measure	Definition
Preventative Control (monitoring and complying)	Defensive/ Consistent	Risk management, physical barriers, redundancy (spare capacity), systems back-ups and standardized procedures, among others that protect the organization from threats and allow it to ‘bounce back’ from disruptions to a stable state.
Mindful Action (noticing and responding)	Defensive/ Flexible	Noticing and reacting to threats, responding effectively to unfamiliar or challenging situations.
Performance Optimization (improving and exploiting)	Progressive/ Consistent	Continually improving, refining, and extending existing competencies, enhancing ways of working and exploiting current technologies to serve present customers and markets.
Adaptive Innovation (imagining and creating)	Progressive/ Flexible	Creating, inventing, and exploring unknown markets and new technologies. Organizations can be the disruption in their environment.

Source: Denyer, D. (2017). Organizational Resilience – A summary of academic evidence, business insights and new thinking. BSI and Cranfield School of Management.

This guide has endeavored to analyze salient features of organizational decision-making that leads to resilience, based on the *defensive and progressive measures* framework described above. In the 12 elements below, there is a mix of *theory and practice*, displaying examples that EBMOs themselves have shared. The intention is to illustrate practical measures that have helped EBMOs to be resilient against this crisis and beyond.

▶ 2.1 Establish Good Governance

Considered as the 'backbone' of an EBMO, 'good governance' will not only contribute to enhance its capacity to provide leadership but also become a catalyst for overall success. The difference between governance and management is explained on the basis that governance determines the "What?" (what the organization does and what it should become in the future), while management determines the "How?" (how the organization will attain those goals and aspirations).¹⁹ In a nutshell, the board makes the decisions and management implements them.

Similarly, governance is about how power is distributed and shared, how policies are formulated, priorities set, and stakeholders made accountable. Governance systems set the parameters under which management and administrative systems will operate. Among the board's typical governance functions are to approve major policies, make vital decisions, oversee performance of the organization, advocate for the EBMO externally, and choose the CEO. Boards function best when they focus on higher level, future-oriented issues and take a long-term view of how the EBMO will look five or ten years into the future, keeping also in mind the need to strengthen organizational resilience in possible crises. They set goals and then objectively measure them by establishing key indicators.²⁰ In practice, good governance of EBMOs that builds resilience translates to:

- I. A well-defined vision and mission of an EBMO that also covers its reputational values and social responsibilities – e.g., social dialogue.
- II. Well defined set of norms (e.g., separation of roles, powers, conflict of interests, etc.) that are aligned to the vision and mission of the EBMO.
- III. Clear and transparent rules on competences and procedures for decision making, including reserve competences in case the appointed person/bodies are not available, as well as flexibility to adjust protocols during exceptional circumstances
- IV. Terms to elect and remove board members. This would include the chairman and other officials of the executive committee.
- V. Establishment of standing committees that would meet year-round and strengthen management and tasks' completion. Ideally, the statutes should also provide for the establishment of ad hoc standing committees that dissolved once their objectives are met.
- VI. Provisions for a secretariat headed by a CEO with sufficient technical and operational autonomy, knowledge of the EBMO's values, and capacity to steer the EBMO during crises.

For a more in-depth view of overall good governance practices for EBMOs, refer to the ILO Guides: ["Good Governance – Designing and implementing sound governance practices in Employers' and Business Organizations"](#) and ["Governance in Employers' Organization"](#)

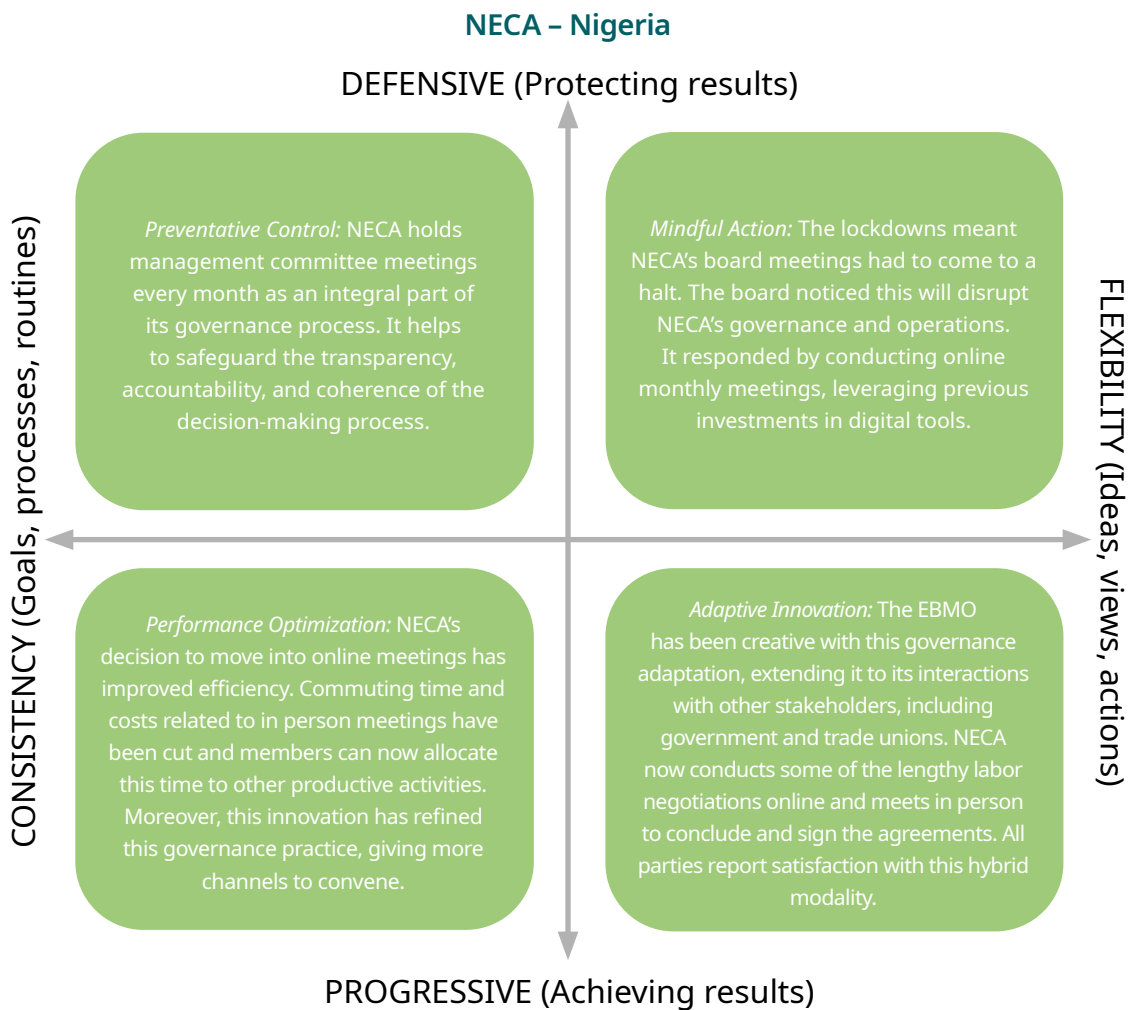
¹⁹ ILO (2017). "Good Governance designing and implementing sound governance practices in Employers' and Business Organization", p. IX.

²⁰ Ibid., p.1

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences - Good Governance

The **Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA)** – like other EBMOs - places a **great degree of importance on governance** and prides itself in that its management committee has met 'face to face' every month since its inception in 1957. **Such process is considered to be an important part of demonstrating accountability and transparency to its members and other stakeholders.**

As a governance cornerstone for NECA, the choices taken by the 'council' have to be understood by every member even in the remotest corners of the country.



▶ 2.2 Nurture Transformational Leadership

The management literature highlights that leadership can come in multiple styles.²¹ Nevertheless, two broader categories are predominant: transactional and transformational leadership.²² Transactional leadership reflects a contractual exchange in which expectations and goals are defined by the leader (e.g., performance), and followers agree and comply with them. It is a type of leadership that requires constant monitoring, in which employees are rewarded or sanctioned accordingly.²³ It is a style more predominant in performance and profit-oriented organizations.

On the other hand, transformational leadership is about growing and stimulating colleagues and followers. It seeks to “generate an awareness of the mission or vision of the organization”,²⁴ to grow followers into leaders. According to leading scholars in transformational leadership, it exhibits the following characteristics: *idealized influence* (leaders are trusted, respected, share risks with followers, and followers want to emulate them); *inspirational motivation* (motivates and inspires); *intellectual stimulation* (fosters innovation and creativity); and *individualized consideration* (supports and is attentive of individuals' needs).²⁵ Transformational leadership became salient in the interviews with EBMOs worldwide, and therefore, has been selected as a leadership style to be nurtured by EBMOs for crises resilience.

Leadership in general is a relevant element of organizational resilience. According to the BSI/Cranfield University study,²⁶ leaders are the ones who possess the ability to think “paradoxically” and have the ability to achieve organizational resilience by “balancing preventative control, mindful action, performance optimization and adaptive innovation, and managing tensions inherent in these distinct perspectives”. In a nutshell, these are leaders who have the ability “to think outside of the box” and find effective solutions despite the disruptions around them. More specifically with transformational leadership, this style has been linked with building resilience in organizations that pursue a social mission (e.g., nonprofits).²⁷ The following practical example illustrates how elements of this leadership style were present across EBMOs and used to manage the tensions between defensive and progressive actions.

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Transformational Leadership

The BSI/Cranfield University study highlights the importance of leaders in balancing the tensions among the different resilient building strategies. During the COVID-19, EBMOs' leaders around the world played a key role in defending members' interests, working with multiple stakeholders, serving their communities, empowering and taking care of their employees, among multiple other actions. The below examples highlight some of these leadership driven actions.

²¹ From michiganstateuniversityonline.com/resources/leadership/qualities-of-a-visionary-leader/

²² Bass, B.M., Avolio, B.J., Jung, D.I., & Berson, Y. (2003). Predicting Unit Performance by Assessing Transformational and Transactional Leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(2).

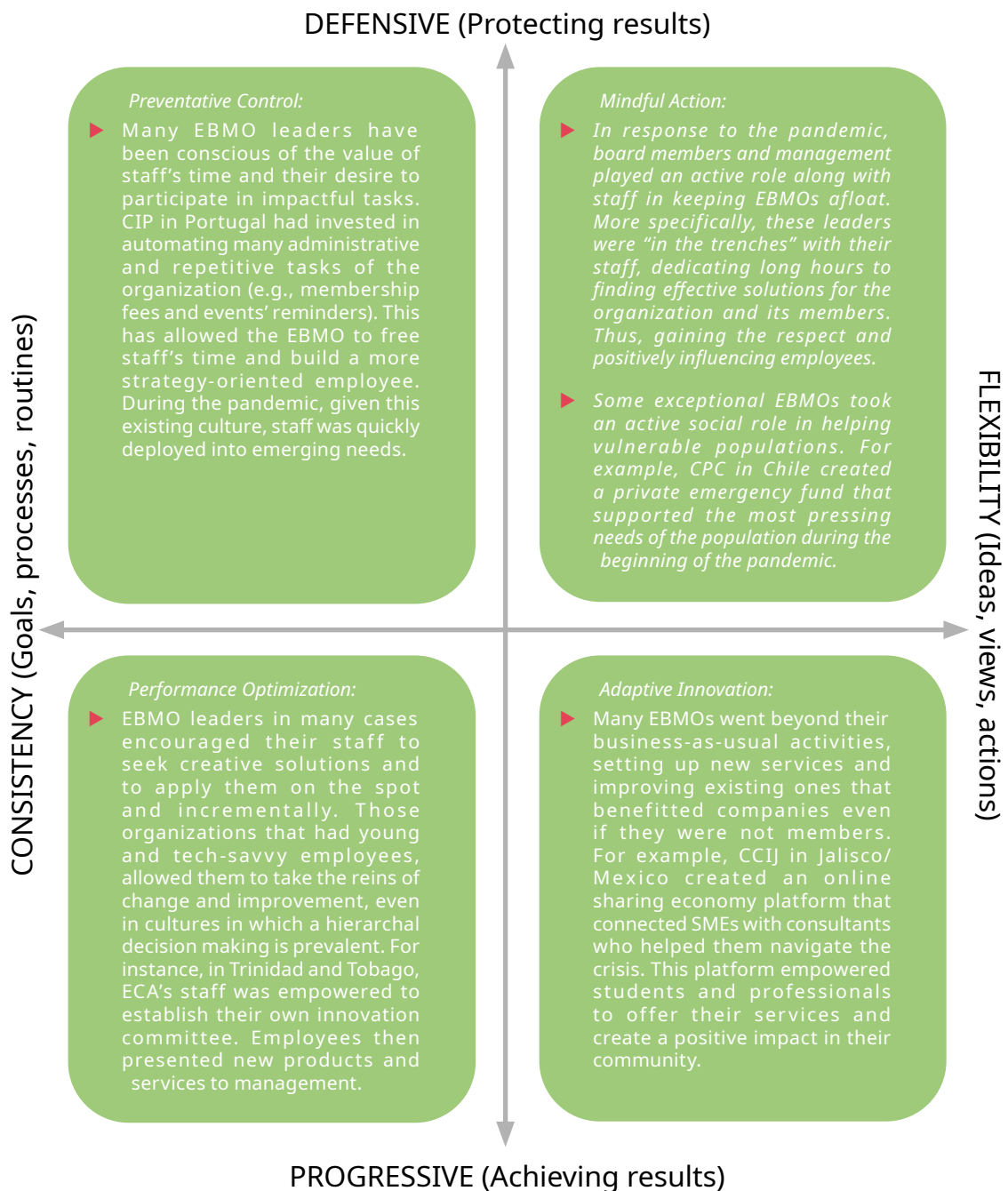
²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Mandell, B. & Pherwani, S. (2003). Relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style: a gender comparison. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 17(3).

²⁵ Avolio, B. J., Bass, B. M., & Jung, D. (1999). Reexamining the components of transformational and transactional leadership using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 7, 441–462.

²⁶ Denyer, D (2017). Organizational Resilience – A summary of academic evidence, business insights and new thinking. BSI and Cranfield School of Management.

²⁷ Valero, J.N., Jung, K. & Andrew, S.M. (2014). Does transformational leadership build resilient public and nonprofit organizations? *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 24(1).



EBMOs looking to further develop their transformation leadership capacities should follow a simple premise of this style: to make followers leaders. Transformational leadership is about inspiring, empowering, being attentive, and co-creating with staff and allies. This translates to:

- ▶ Investing in training staff and developing their skills.
- ▶ Involving employees in activities that bring them closer to the vision of the organization (e.g., participate in social dialogue; take a leadership role on certain activities).
- ▶ Placing special attention to stakeholders' needs. For staff in terms of their mental health, increased responsibilities, and ability to work from home (i.e., kids or physical space). For members, in being flexible and conscious of their financial conditions and immediate needs.

- ▶ Bringing the human element and connection to certain interactions as many feel it has diminished with the pandemic.
- ▶ Engaging multiple stakeholders in creating the vision of the organization and compiling the lessons learned from this crisis.

▶ 2.3 Maintain Member Centricity

Customer-centric (also known as client-centric) is a business strategy that is based on putting the customer first and at the core of the business in order to provide a positive experience and build long-term relationships. Being client-centric, or member-centric for EBMOs, is an element applicable across business areas and initiatives. The biggest strength of an EBMO is its membership and hence the reason why they invest heavily on staying relevant and dependable for members.

Successful and resilient EBMOs deploy customer-centric strategies.²⁸ For starters, EBMOs need to anticipate members' concerns and needs by using industry experience and having feedback loops. Existing services and products also need to be customized in a manner that aligns organizational and members' interests. Furthermore, EBMOs need to provide effective and timely solutions that meet members' demands, especially in times of crises. In this regard, resilient EBMOs managed to maintain member-centricity during the crisis by:

- a) Staying Connected with Members.
 - ▶ Deploying different modes and touch points to interact with members allows connectivity to remain and member-centricity to strengthen. Recently, EBMOs have deployed several digital tools and strategies to stay connected and increase feedback loops. Among them: social media groups, weekly meetings, increasing the number of free webinars, setting informational websites and daily informative emails, and establishing working groups with members that were crisis specific.
- b) Implementing and leveraging Customer Relationship Management systems (CRM).²⁹
 - ▶ A CRM enables EBMOs to have a better understanding of the composition of its membership, nature of their contribution to the economy (employment, contribution to GDP, business sectors, etc.), and their services' needs. This better understanding allows to increase customer satisfaction and provide a better customer experience.
- c) Monitoring Service Delivery Quality
 - ▶ Offering higher quality services increases members' satisfaction and retention. Learnings from this and previous crises show that dwindling membership can be mitigated with better and useful service offerings (e.g., COVID-19 OSH webinars).
 - ▶ Having tools such as an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and a CRM, facilitates EBMOs' capacity to monitor and improve the quality of their services – for example, the number of consultations, time taken, calls answered, process / procedures compliance, members' feedback, among others. Fortunately, EBMOs without these systems can still apply quality monitoring and corrective actions.

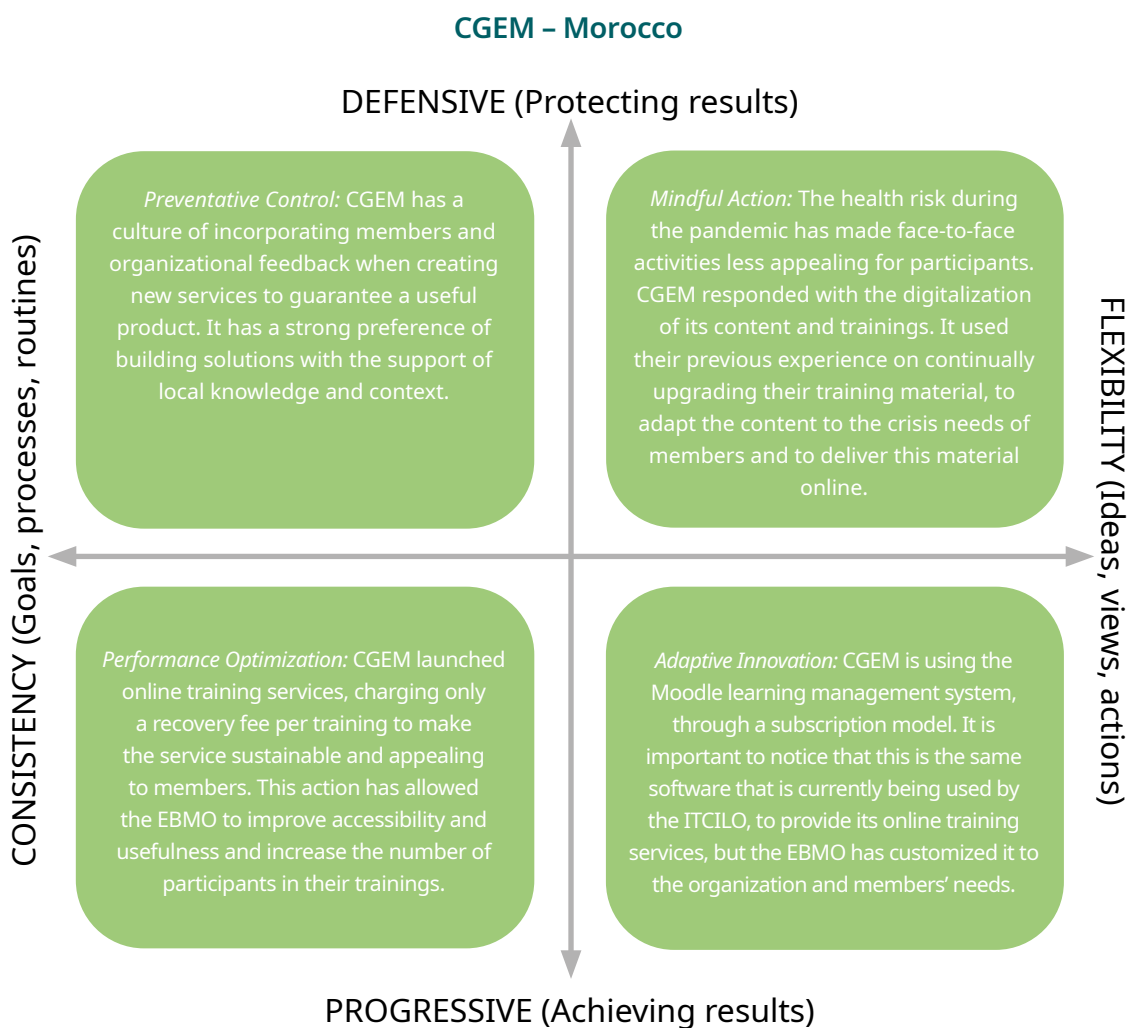
²⁸ ILO (2021) [Membership Strategies and Policies – A manual for Employer and Business Membership Organizations](#).

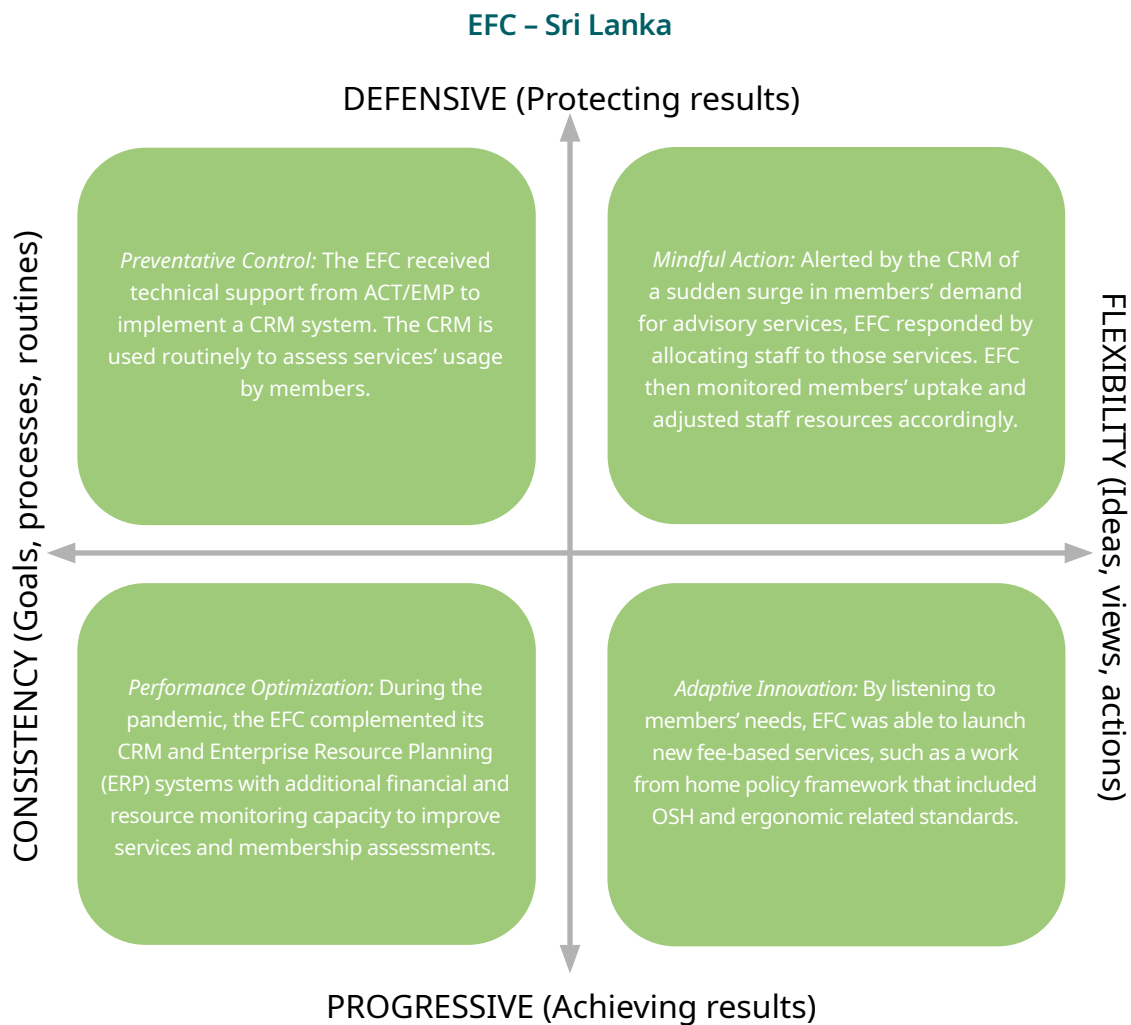
²⁹ Ibid, chapter 8.

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Member Centricity

1. In Morocco, the Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc (CGEM)'s capacity to assess the requirements of its 90,000 plus members was crucial to deploy a digital solution that fit clients' technical competences. CGEM as an organization takes a skeptical approach to off-the-shelf solutions that do not incorporate the organizations and its members' specific needs and feedback. It prefers to contract locally or at minimum **complement international expertise with local knowledge.**

2. In Sri Lanka, the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) decision to invest in a CRM system developed with the ACT/EMP office in Turin enabled the EBMO **to assess member requirements as well as gauge the use of the portfolio of services** it offers (see Box 4).





Box 4. Customer Relations Management System (CRM)

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) in Sri Lanka implemented a CRM system in 2016 with the assistance of ILO-ACT/EMP. This system enhanced EFC's capacity to manage members' needs and make data-driven decisions.

This CRM provides useful features in relation to member centricity. It maintains an accurate database of members and membership fees. Furthermore, it allows visualization of each member's service preferences, utilization, and demand. In addition, the system facilitates contacting members, conducting assessments (e.g., surveys) and soliciting services' feedback.

During crises, having such system in place has proven to be useful. In the case of EFC, the CRM system alerted the EFC's secretariat about an increased demand in advisory services – from approximately 60% to 95%. The system then allowed EFC to make an informed decision of deploying staff and other resources to address this immediate need of members.

▶ 2.4 Achieve Financial Stability

According to KPMG, the financial effects of the pandemic are causing previously healthy businesses to suddenly enter under acute financial pressure. Without financial resilience, commercial and operational resilience cannot be maintained.³⁰ In this regard, ensuring there are sustainable sources of income during a period of crisis can be a significant challenge for EBMOs, especially considering that most of them are non-profit organizations, offering services at discounted rates.

An EBMO's capacity to maintain financial stability is a vital resilient element, from having diversified and stable sources of incomes to being able to plan for crises and set aside reserves to meet contingencies. It is a matter for concern that less than 40% of EBMOs - who responded to a recent ILO/IOE survey - stated that they have financial reserves or have access to alternate funding sources. At the same time, membership fees represent on average 57% of total income of EBMOs.³¹

Several EBMOs consulted for this guide highlighted that at the beginning of the pandemic, as revenue sources depleted, many were weeks or months away from a serious internal crisis. Thus, looking forward, EBMOs would need to improve their financial health to become resilient. Some key actions to pursue in this regard are: increasing risk management capacity, establishing processes that encourage financial discipline, revising investments and debt recovery policies, diversifying income sources, and reducing dependency on a single income source (e.g., membership fees).

Achieving financial stability allows EBMOs to be more responsive to their members and staff. Abundant examples exist in this guide of EBMOs reducing membership and trainings' fees, as well as accommodating staff's wages to avoid layoffs. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, all resilient elements presented here complement each other. Nevertheless, having financial stability can serve as the cornerstone to deploy and develop the other resilient elements presented in this guide and special attention should be given to it.

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Financial Stability

1. The Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) in Nigeria has been successful in diversifying services to an extent that it only draws 40%³² of its income from member subscriptions, well below the 57% global average and the 60% regional average.³³

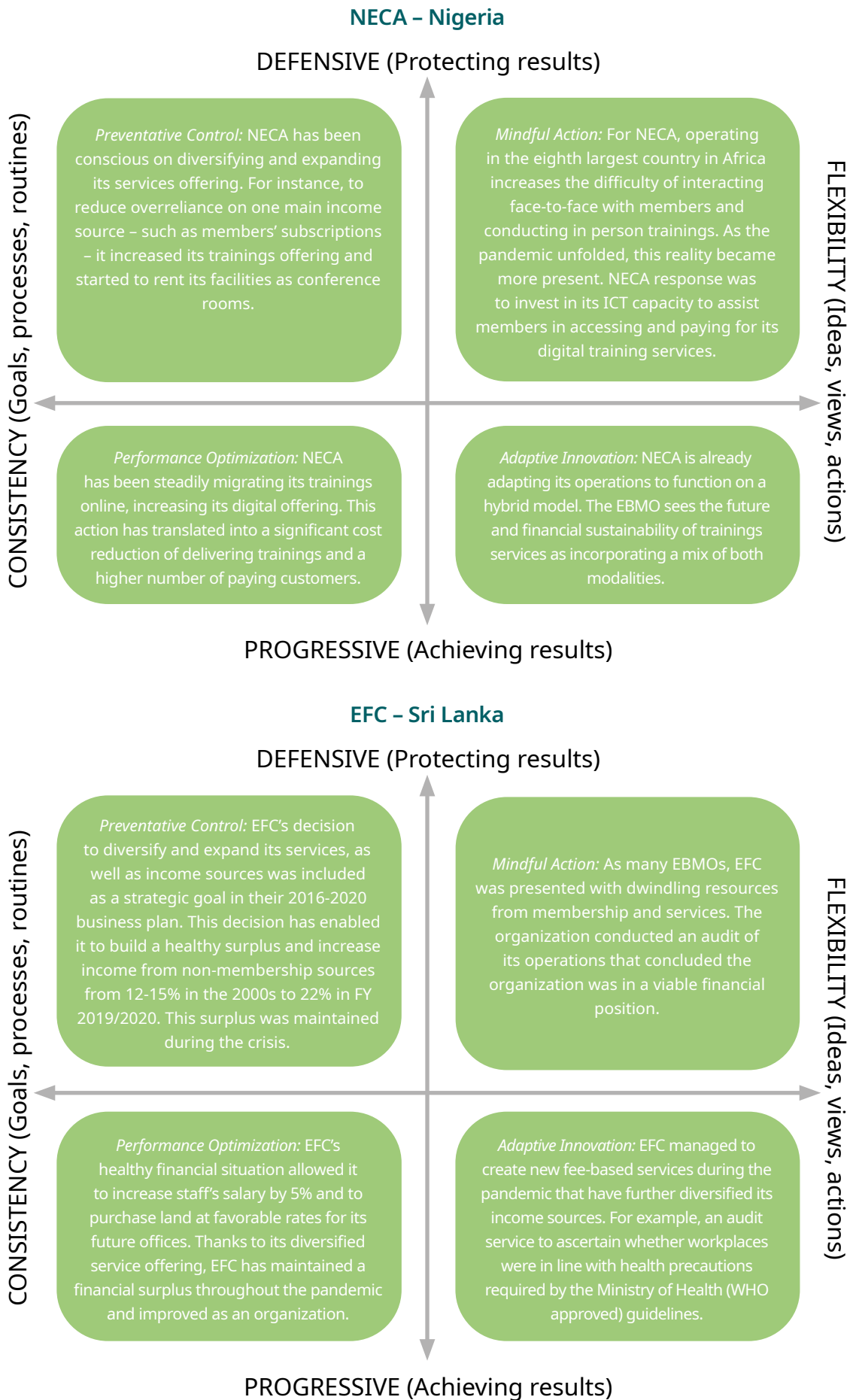
2. The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) in Sri Lanka has been able to build up reserves due to prudent management of its finances, including diversification of services and basing employees' rewards on operational surpluses and performance.

³⁰ KPMG UK – COVID-19: Financial Resilience, ([link](#))

³¹ ILO/IOE (2020). A global Survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside Impacts of and responses to COVID-19, p. 19.

³² As reported by NECA in case study interview.

³³ ILO/IOE (2020). A global Survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside Impacts of and responses to COVID-19, p.7.



▶ 2.5 Advance Service Agility

The capacity to innovate and continuously offer a diverse and relevant portfolio of services (e.g., advisory, training, research, etc.) remains a major condition for EBMOs' resilience. In this regard, EBMOs need to **renovate or formulate new services that suit the requirements of members**. This is a crucial factor to maintain the EBMOs' service agility. For instance, the ability to combine training material with 'social dialogue tools' that focus on OSH practices and COVID-19 prevention. During the crisis, EBMOs have been able to identify these new services opportunities (or re-launch them) that meet members' needs. Examples of these services are: producing remote working guidelines and policies, launching free webinars that are complemented with paid trainings, curating governments' policies and health measures, and offering consulting and auditing services for companies in COVID-19 preparedness checks for the "new normal".

In this regard, EBMOs needs to **make sure that the required systems are in place**. For starters, having a good CRM system is a key step, since it enables the assessment of services and gives the ability to find appropriate things to act on. CRM allows to rapidly assess services' demand, delivery frequency, and clients' feedback/satisfaction. Such information can be used to make decisions regarding deployment of staff, content of trainings, services gaps, as well as to define the type of research to conduct that is useful for members. Second, a knowledge management system, be it as a platform or a set of practices, that organizes the knowledge of an organization, can greatly increase the capacity to re-learn and re-deploy effective strategies. Organizations with functional knowledge management systems can effectively disseminate information for the development of new products and services and allow staff to access the overall knowledge, tacit and explicit, of an organization.³⁴

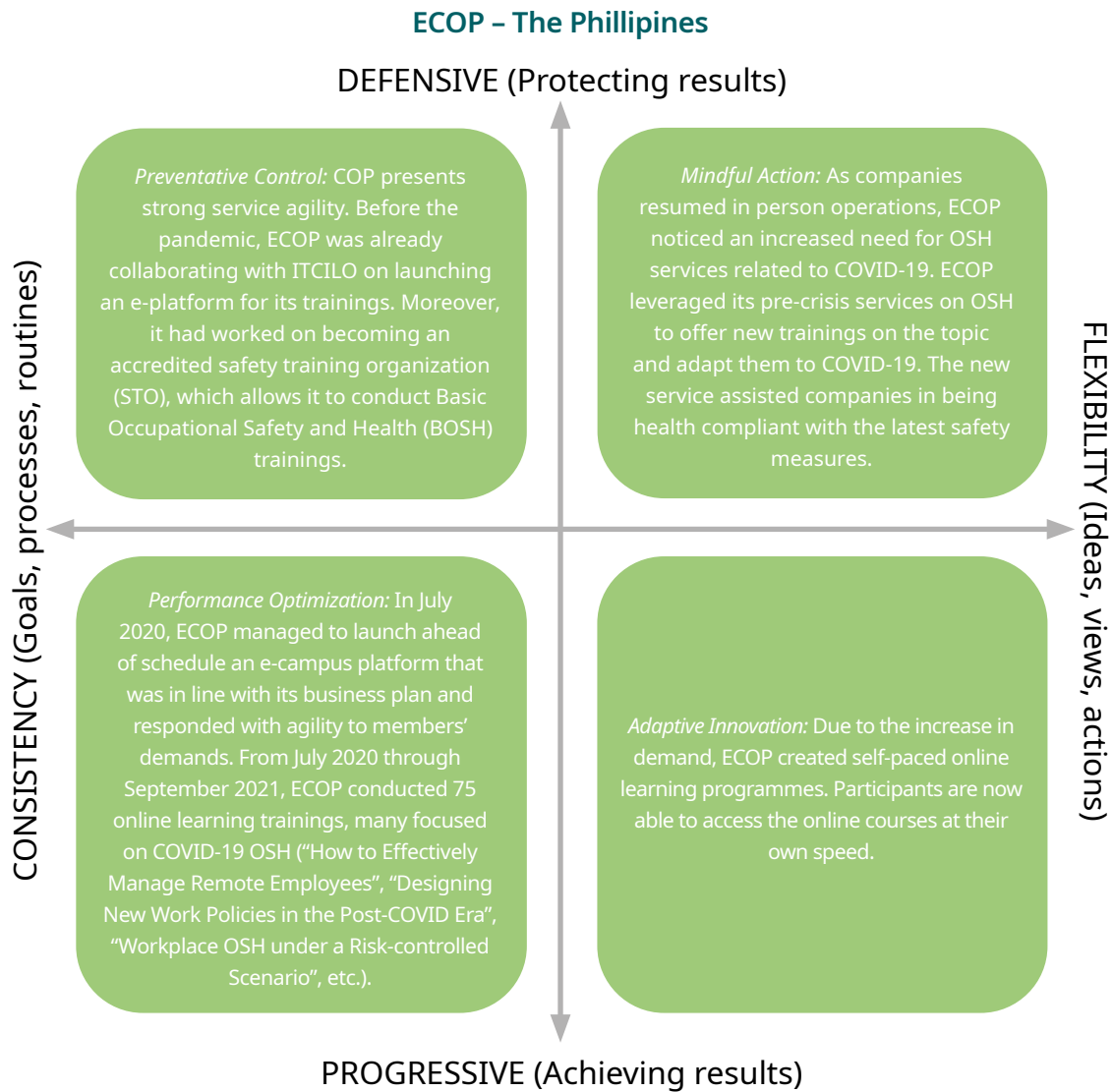
Based on recent case studies conducted in the making of this guide, service agility requires EBMOs to remain flexible, and create new responses to the changing problems that their members face. During the pandemic, EBMOs and business in general faced unforeseen demands and challenges. They had to be flexible in terms of allocation of resources, work arrangements, and performance expectations. Furthermore, they had to be responsive to this new reality and agile in deploying services that leveraged emerging opportunities and addressed members' demands.

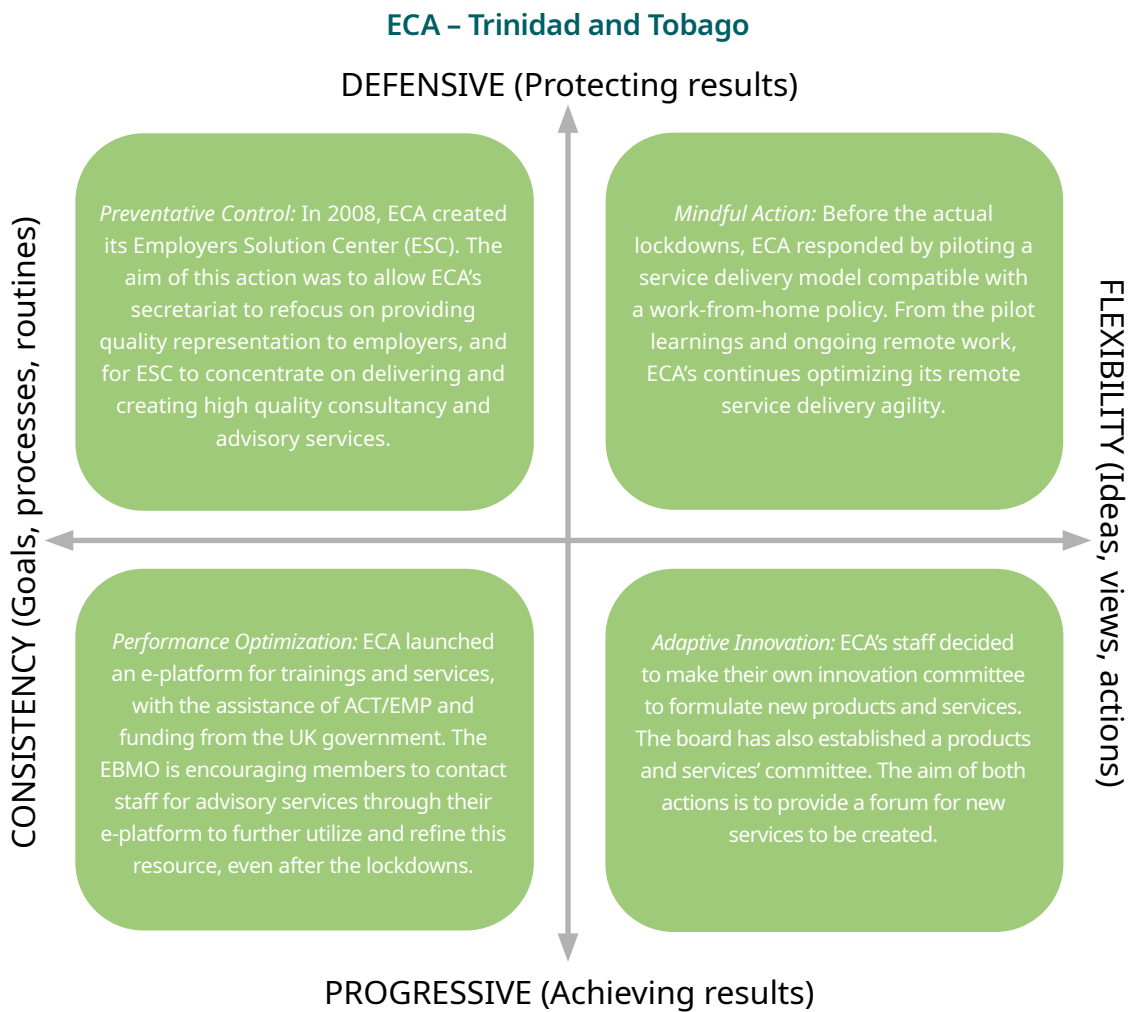
Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Service Agility

1. The **Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP)** leveraged its existing consulting capabilities on OSH to offer similar services adapted to COVID-19 safety and preparedness in resuming businesses' operations.

2. The **Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECA)** was able to prepare early and assess the possible impact of the crisis on its services' delivery. Utilizing recently enhanced digital capacity, ECA has facilitated its employees to work from home and offer consulting services digitally.

³⁴ Hansen, M.T., Nohria, N., & Tierney, T.J. (1999). What's Your Strategy for Managing Knowledge? Harvard Business Review.





▶ 2.6 Recruit, Retain and Deploy Multi-Skilled Staff

Multi-skilled staff is a term that is commonly used to refer to an employee that possess numerous abilities and can perform a variety of tasks. To achieve it, it requires promoting a wide range of skills and knowledge into workers to make them capable of participating on diverse projects. Managed well, these arrangements help both employees and employers to achieve mutually satisfactory goals. During crises, multi-skilled staff can: take over functions of staff that is no longer available (e.g., COVID-19 infection, sickness of a family member, layoffs as part of crisis response, etc.), be moved from services/areas no longer operational in a crisis to services which are in high demand by members, be reemployed into new services that have been created in response to a crisis (e.g., virtual trainings), be quickly trained to learn new and related skills, among others.

Thus, the recruitment, retention, and deployment of multi-skilled staff are essential to the core of an EBMO and to its competencies (such as its ability to provide a portfolio of services as well as engage in social dialogue and advocacy). Consequently, it is quintessential to the very functionality of an EBMO to be mindful of these human capital management foundations. A Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) survey³⁵ found five factors that boost employee's satisfaction and retainment:

³⁵ SHRM Survey (access at <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/managingforemployeeetention.aspx>)

- I. Respectful treatment of all employees at all levels.
- II. Adequate compensation and pay.
- III. Trust between employees and management.
- IV. Job security.
- V. Opportunities to use and hone their skills and abilities at work.

Retaining such staff requires constant attention to their needs, which in turn should be aligned to organizational objectives. According to SHRM, “managing for employee retention involves strategic actions to keep employees motivated and focused so they elect to remain employed and fully productive”.³⁶ During the current economic and health crisis, some EBMOs were forced to downsize, but a majority looked for solutions to retain staff.³⁷ Among the measures taken by EBMOs are pay cuts, reduced working hours, remote work, mandatory leave, and pausing incentive programs. Many EBMOs were also mindful of staff mental health during the pandemic and while remote working (see Box 5).

Box 5. Mental Health Optic for Employee's Wellbeing and Retention

An interesting effort in employee wellness during the pandemic is the one conducted by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), in the UK. This EBMO approached the health crisis with a mental health optic, aiming to provide guidelines related to how to mitigate the mental health consequences of the pandemic on private businesses' operations and their employees. While certain workers have had the chance to work from home for more than a year now, reducing their chances of contracting the virus, the pandemic has had a collateral damage to the mental health of some of this working-from-home population. The CBI has recommended undertaking 3 actions:

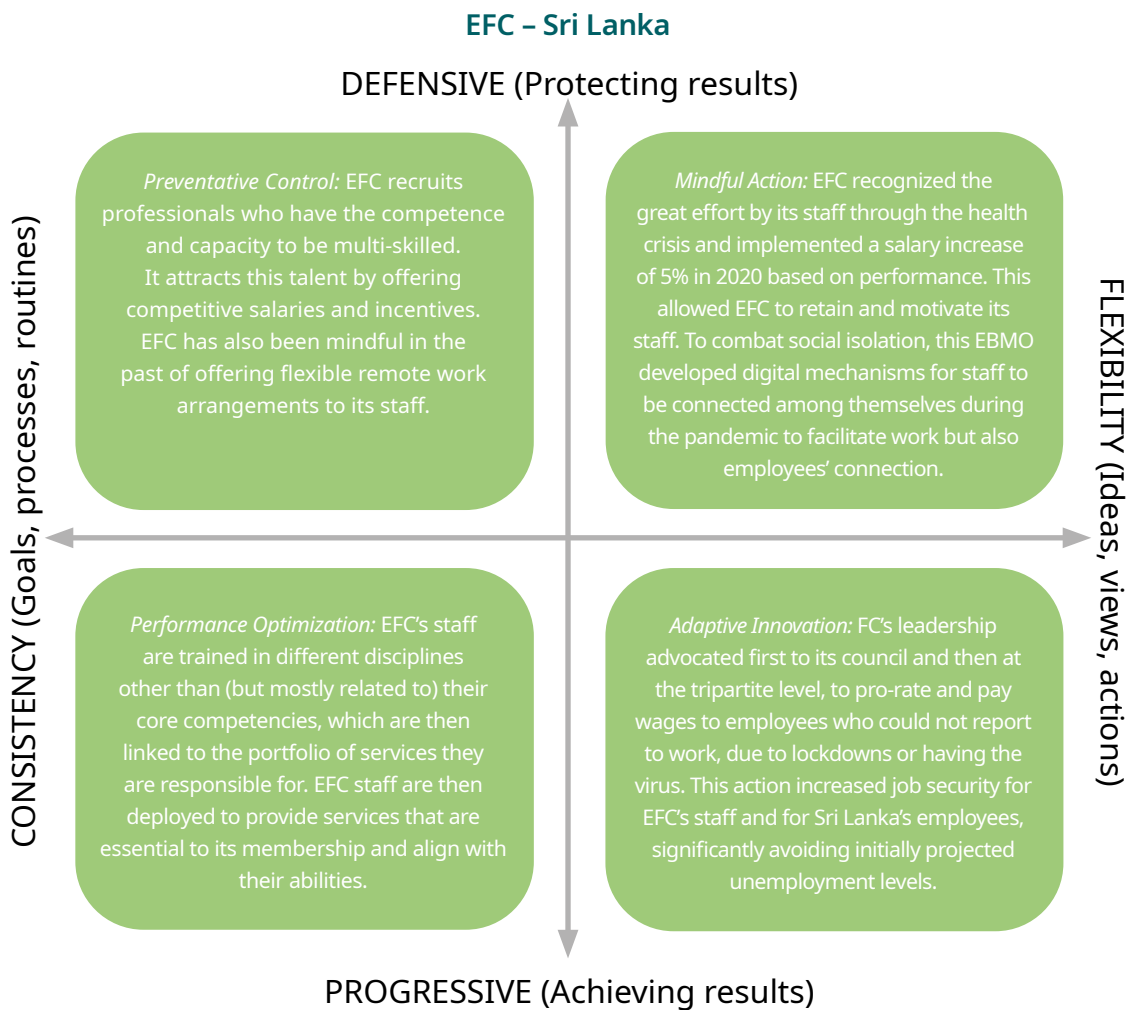
- ▶ **First**, ask employees to share their mental health experiences. For instance, via an anonymous survey.
- ▶ **Second**, work with employee groups to understand the key factors impacting mental health and identify those you have the agency to change.
- ▶ **Third**, understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected various areas of the workforce in different ways. For example, working parents.

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Multi-Skilled Staff

EBMOs rely on staff trained in multiple disciplines to provide a portfolio of services to its members. The efforts taken by EBMOs around the world to retain their staff is exemplary. This is despite the many obstacles they have had to contend with, including dwindling financial resources. A successful EBMO in this resilient element is the **Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) in Sri Lanka**, with its continuous quest to improve professional competencies and capacities of its employees and its achievement of retaining its staff throughout the pandemic.

³⁶ Ibid (SHRM).

³⁷ ILO/IOE (2020). A global Survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside Impacts of and responses to COVID-19.



▶ 2.7 Utilize Effective Communication

▶ You have to prioritize, but you have to respond in a timely manner. If you miss it, [communications] loses any sense.

▶ Interview with representatives from SAE - Serbia

Communication plays a key role for EBMOs and is essential to achieve their mission and vision. As organizations that represent and advocate for members' interest, conduct and publish research, provide trainings and educational information, and engage in social dialogue, EBMOs depend heavily on their communication skills. In essence, **EBMOs are in the communication business**.³⁸ Thus, they need effective strategies, techniques, and tools of communication to successfully engage internally (e.g., staff, secretariat, board) and externally (e.g., members, government, trade unions, social partners). Reputational value is also increased by having effective communication in place.³⁹ Moreover, communication plays a key role in crises management; as how you react and communicate can have

³⁸ ILO (2010). Persuasive communication. Making the voice of business heard. How to design and implement more efficient strategies, techniques and tools of communication.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

lasting benefits or consequences.⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, this guide through its case studies has found that effective communication is a vital element of EBMO resilience.

EBMOs need to improve communication aspects both internally and externally to be resilient. In terms of **internal practices**, EBMOs need to have the proper tools and channels for in-house communication. Some key points of internal communication are:⁴¹ 1) access to information (e.g., knowledge management system, intranet); 2) share information (e.g., weekly staff meeting, internal newsletter); and 3) exchange of views, opinions, and feedback (e.g., anonymous survey, 360-performance review, town halls). During the crisis, multiple EBMOs realized their high dependence on face-to-face communications. As the pandemic boosted teleworking, this important communication channel was disrupted. A lesson moving forward for EBMOs is to have in place multiple channels of communication, including an organized digital channel for internal exchanges.

Regarding **external communications**, EBMOs engage with a wide range of actors, among them members, government, unions, civil society, their communities, and the media. It is important to have clear and concise communication and a set of strategies and practices. In terms of the former, EBMOs should define their target audience, the goal of the message, and keep communication simple and tailored to such audience.⁴² The same elements apply when developing trainings, publishing research, and giving guidance to members (be concise, clear, targeted, and have a goal). For strategies and practices, EBMOs should have a strategic communication plan that structures its communication activities. Within this plan, communication objectives must be defined and follow a SMART approach,⁴³ with a clear timeline on when certain information and advocacy campaigns will be deployed.⁴⁴ For external contact, EBMOs must also have resilient channels of communication. As with internal channels, deploying or having in place digital tools during the lockdowns to stay connected with members and other stakeholders was essential.

Many EBMOs have shown effective communication throughout the COVID-19 crisis. They have set-up informational websites, sent daily COVID-19 summary emails, and conducted virtual webinars and meetings. During the lockdowns, members' inquiries and demand for communication increased and EBMOs had to deploy more resources into those areas. Additionally, multiple EBMOs were attentive of their social media since these accounts have served as direct contact mechanisms and are places where information gets shared rapidly. In the same vein, EBMOs must invest in their media strategy. Nowadays information and news are abundant and is necessary to convince the media on the importance of disseminating your information (see practical examples below).⁴⁵

Most importantly, for communication to be organizationally effective, be internally or externally, it should be aligned with the mission and vision of the organization. The mission and vision should be succinct, comprehensive to everyone, set out formally, be explained to all staff and members, and be reinforced with each communicative action of the organization.⁴⁶ When done correctly, utilizing effective communication leads to many benefits: generates community spirit, builds trust, motivates employees, increases participation, reduces uncertainty, increases job security, adds feedback, among others.⁴⁷ For EBMOs in specific, it increases reputational value, saliency to current and potential members, and has proven to be vital for social dialogue during crises.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 36.

⁴² Ibid., p. 22

⁴³ Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound

⁴⁴ For more information access the guide: ILO (2010), Persuasive communication, pp. 17-28.

⁴⁵ Ibid., ILO (2010), Persuasive communication, p. 42.

⁴⁶ Ibid., ILO (2010), Persuasive communication, p. 14.

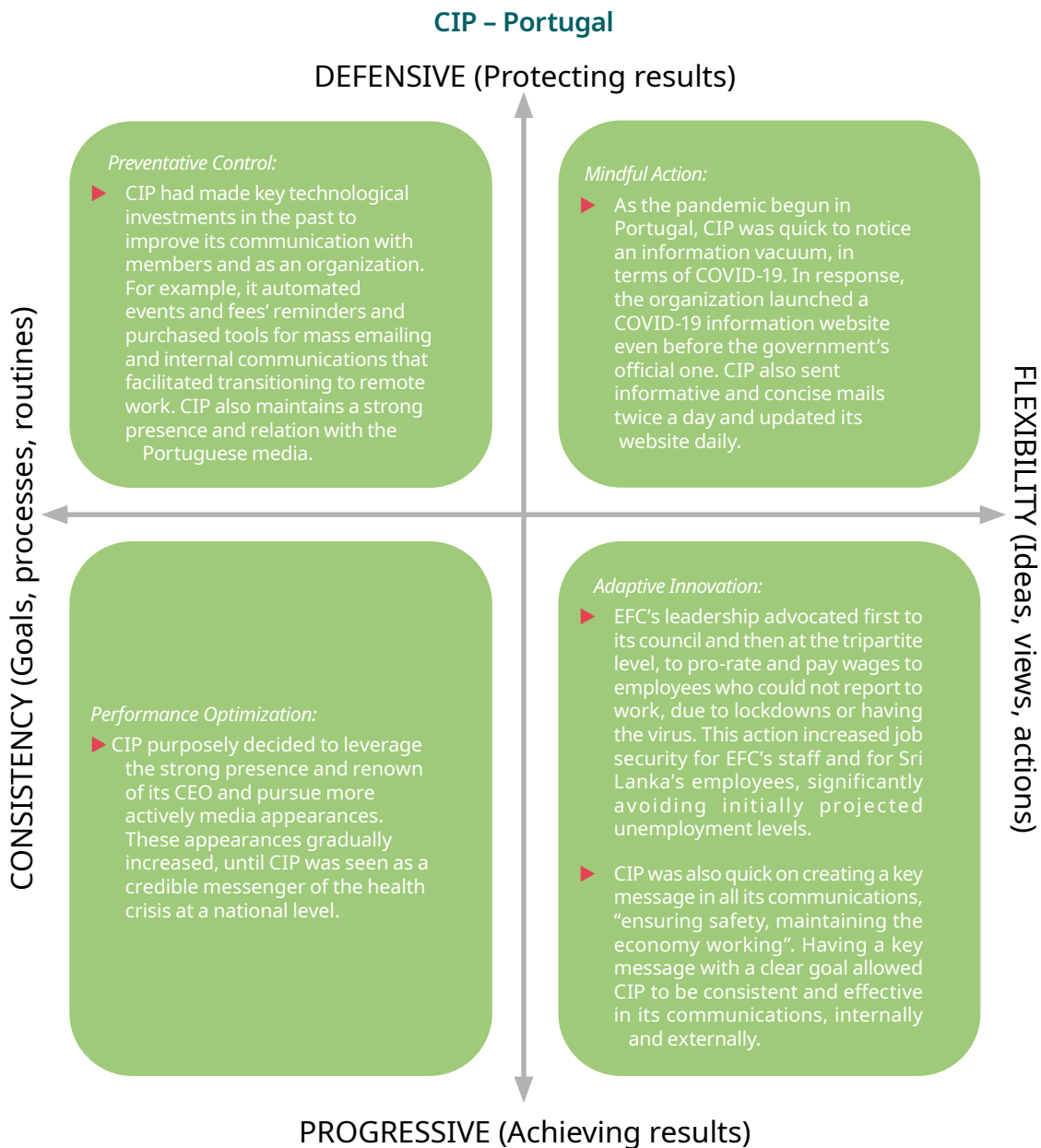
⁴⁷ Rene, J. U. (2013). Effective communication brings successful organization change. *Business and Management Review*, 3(2).

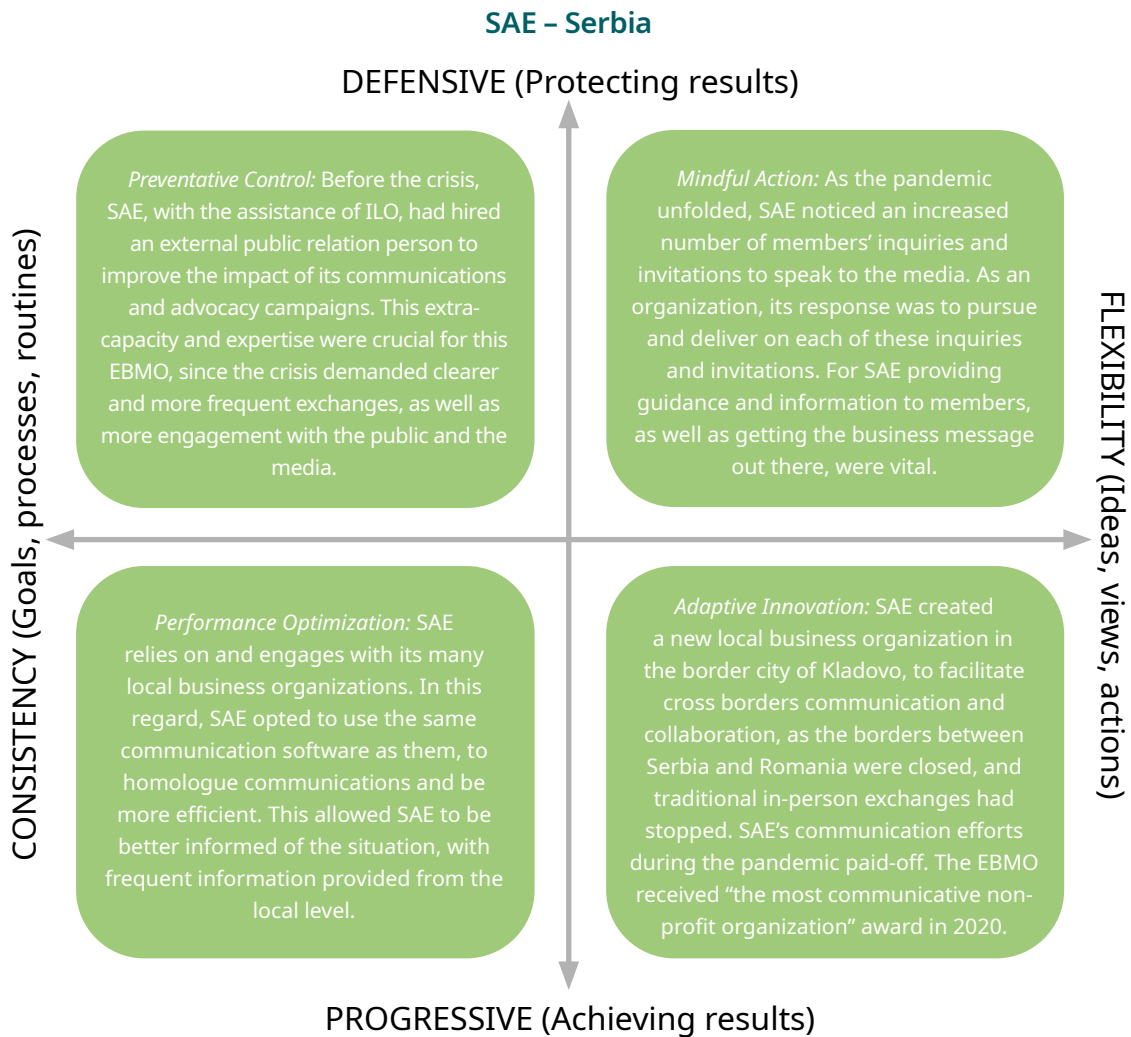
Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Effective Communication

Effective communication during the crisis helped to maintain operations of EBMOs, provide guidance to members, and engage in social dialogue and with their communities.

The case of **Confederation of Portuguese Business (CIP)** illustrates how this EBMO played a key messenger role during the pandemic, raising its added value to members and its community. CIP was able to reach this role given previous investments in digital communication tools, as well as having communication as a strategic capacity of the organization.

The case of the **Serbian Association of Employers (SAE)** is also a remarkable one, boosting effective communication by hiring external support to improve communication capacity, and purposely deciding to prioritize different demands of communication, during the crisis.





▶ **2.8 Speed-up the Digitalization Process**

▶▶ **If anything, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated by three years our digitalization process, what was already in discussion moved to be implemented.**

▶ ECOP – Philippines

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a wakeup call towards digital transformation. A recent ILO/IOE survey reports that eighty percent of EBMO renovated and adapted their service delivery model in response to COVID-19. A majority (83%) are offering advisory and consulting services virtually, with over 50% providing training services online.⁴⁸

Digital transformation, is the "transformation of an organization's business model, strategy and organization around digital technologies, thereby fundamentally changing how organizations operate

⁴⁸ ILO/IOE (2020). A global Survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside Impacts of and responses to COVID-19, p. 16.

and deliver value".⁴⁹ As a result of the push by the crisis to go digital, EBMOs are already seeing the value of digitalization: increased participation in trainings, membership engagement, new revenue sources, wider audiences (e.g., non-members), grow in reputational value, enhanced communication, and ease of business.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented different experiences for EBMOs' resilience in terms of digitalization. The most resilient organizations were those that had already invested in digital tools before the pandemic or that managed to launch their digital transformation at the onset of it. These investments allowed EBMOs to have less hurdles in switching to remote work, remaining operational, and having the bandwidth to quickly launch new services virtually (see the cases of CGEM-Morocco, NECA-Nigeria, COSEP-Nicaragua, and ECOP-Philippines). EBMOs are also conscious of the need to assist members in their own digital transformation and have begun to offer guidelines and trainings in the topic (see ECOP-Philippines and EFC-Sri Lanka cases).

For multiple EBMOs, the digitalization journey has been puzzling, and the COVID-19 mandatory switch to remote working has brought up unearthed challenges. In the ILO/IOE survey, 41% of EBMOs reported the need for "guidance on digital services for members".⁵⁰ Many EBMOs report not having sufficient resources to migrate services to a digital world, such as the right equipment to support staff working from home, or the right software to provide online services.⁵¹ In the case of SAE-Serbia, the staff was equipped with desktop computers. This type of hardware was useful for employees who only work from an office location. However, it was not a good match for employees who had to continuously switch between office work and teleworking. In these cases, where hardware and software equipment were not optimal, the staff's grit was vital to resume full operations, become as digitalized as possible, and in some instances launch new virtual services.

Moving forward, EBMOs will need to continue with the digitalization of their services and operations. The upcoming ACT/EMP guide on digitalization (Taking Stock of the Digital Dividend) offers practical areas of focus and reflection for EBMOs. Among them:

- ▶ *Internal procedures*, is digitalization improving secretariat processes as well as project management?
- ▶ *Member services and engagement*, is the EBMO innovating and adapting services to digital? are members engaging more and new communication avenues being created?
- ▶ *External impact*, is a wider audience being reached, reputational value increasing, and the advocacy voice being amplified?
- ▶ *Business intelligence and data collection*, is data being collected and exploited in decision-making and launching new services?
- ▶ *Risk and crisis management*, is digitalization being implemented in a way that facilitate crisis response and services adjustments and mitigates identified risks?

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences - Digitalization

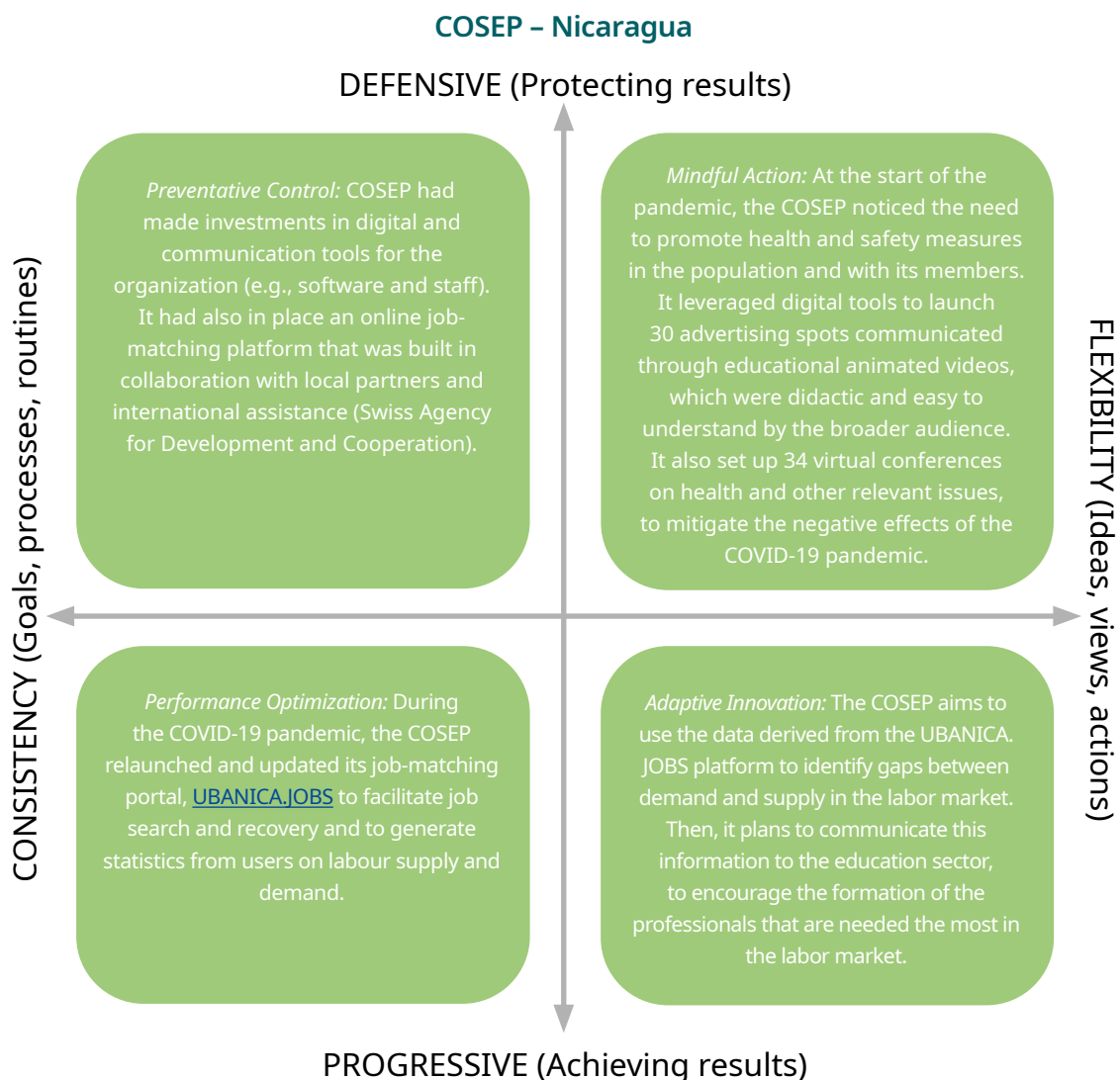
Though it continues to remain as a capacity issue that requires attention of EBMOs, the crisis appears to have hastened investments to improve digitalization processes and made apparent their benefits.

The **Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) in Nicaragua** has invested in the past in building digital capacities, including having a job matching platform. These capacities allowed COSEP to quickly deploy information and resources digitally to face the crisis.

⁴⁹ ILO (2021). Taking Stock of the Digital Dividend (Link is not currently available since this is an upcoming ILO-ACT/EMP publication)

⁵⁰ ILO/IOE (2020) Global Survey, p.35.

⁵¹ A Remote-Work Ready checklist is available in Annex B for EBMOs that want to improve their capacity and infrastructure for remote work.



▶ **2.9 Form and Maintain Alliances.**

Forming and maintaining alliances is essential to the resilience of an EBMO. In this regard, the pandemic demonstrated how alliances are important to overcome unexpected challenges in the business environment. For instance, EBMOs around the world joined forces with the public sector authorities and health-care professionals to disseminate health guidelines to businesses, and the communities they operate in. EBMOs also successfully fundraised members and non-members and collaborated with NGOs to assist vulnerable populations (see Chilean case). They also leveraged existing partnerships with universities to improve trainings and advisory services (see Jalisco/Mexico case).

The pandemic and other crises have highlighted the importance of alliances with diverse partners and groups. EBMOs should build alliances with at least the following *five broad groups*: Government Agencies, Development Banks, Academia, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and International Organizations.⁵² Each of these stakeholders has its own internal structure, closeness to relevant policymakers, potential synergies, or even time horizon that need to be evaluated separately by EBMOs

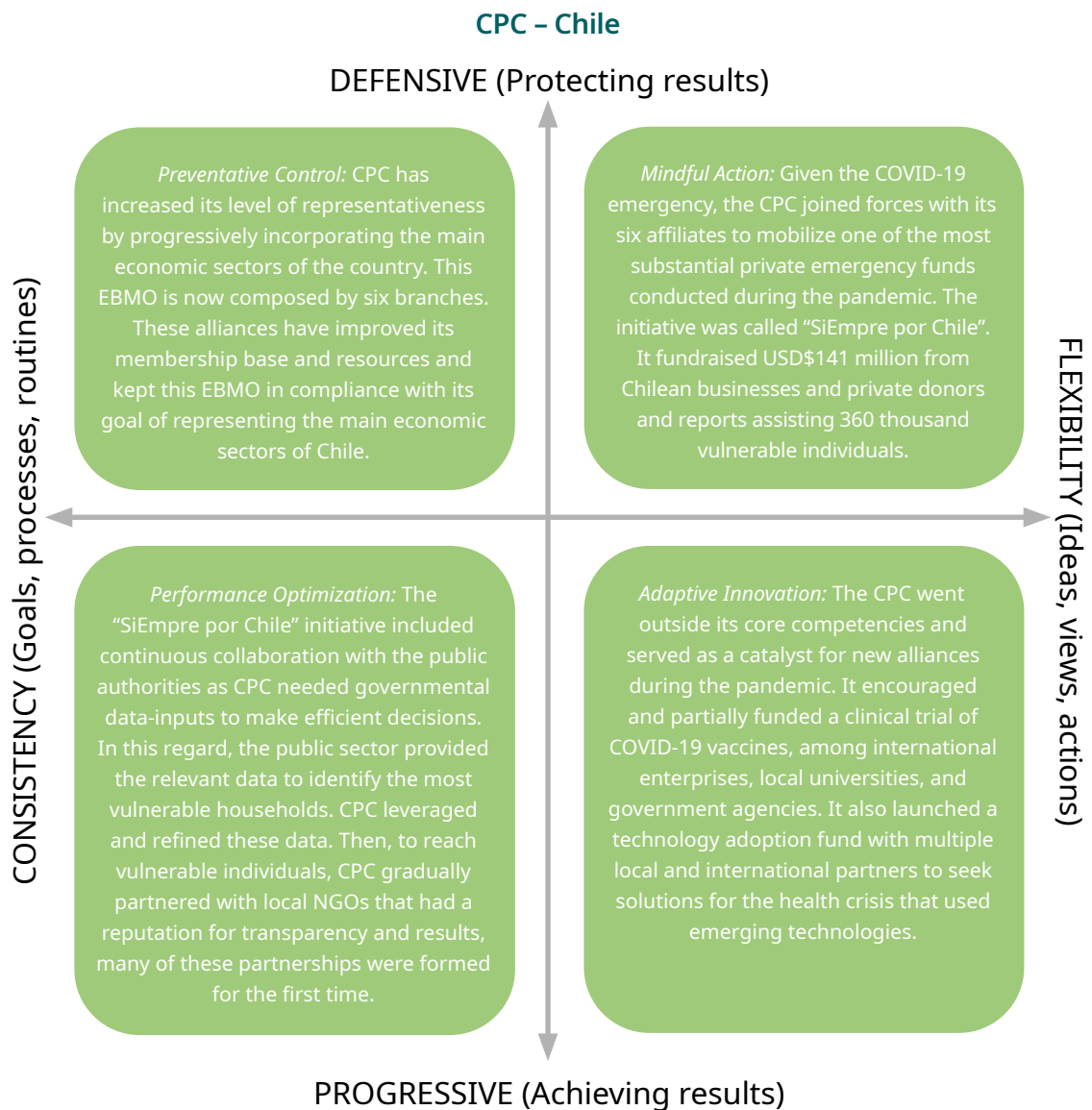
⁵² ILO (2020). Driving Up Productivity ([Link](#)).

when seeking alliances.⁵³ Partnerships formed with the above entities will enable EBMOs to increase their resilience and provide comprehensive support to members in challenging and normal times.

A most important alliance for EBMOs is with its members and other EBMOs. EBMOs, as business associations, must consider their members as a network of like-minded partners, whose knowledge and expertise can be valuable, even more during periods of crises. Chile's CPC was able to assist hundreds of thousands of vulnerable individuals with aid packages in part due to its members' logistics capabilities. The SAE in Serbia quickly adopted a communication tool to engage with local chapters as one of its members provided the software freely. CIP in Portugal, despite being the largest EBMO in the country, still relies on its ongoing partnership with Business Europe to have a regional voice and source of knowledge.

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences - Alliances

With limited resources available to them and the 'over-riding challenge to do more with less', many EBMOs have succeeded in developing strong partnerships. The Chilean experience, as reported by the **Confederation of Production and Commerce (CPC)**, is a remarkable case, which exemplifies how EBMOs can contribute to the well-being of society and enhance their reputational value.



⁵³ Ibid., p. 68

▶ 2.10 Engage Actively in Social Dialogue

Given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 crisis, social dialogue, involving governments, employers, and workers' representative organizations, is more important than ever.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, 94% of EBMOs surveyed⁵⁵ has stated that they had increased their advocacy activities during the crisis, despite having to curb financial and human resources.

To engage actively in social dialogue is a core competence associated with resilient EBMOs. "Social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, workers and employers on issues of common interest in the areas of economic, labour and social policy. It can take place at the national, sectoral and enterprise levels".⁵⁶ In order to achieve effective social dialogue, EBMOs need to:

Remain Representative:

Representativeness of an EBMO is its ultimate strength. As a national, regional, or local EBMO, being representative in terms of diverse sectors, as well as the number of members, enhances organizational reputation and credibility. The representativeness of an EBMO can be defined in multiple manners, such as its members' contribution to employment (i.e., out of the national workforce) or to the national GDP. A higher level of representation enhances EBMOs' ability to effectively promote policy proposals to the public sector as they are seen as legitimate voices of businesses.

EBMOs looking to maintain or improve representativeness must take active and conscious steps. First, include membership retention and expansion in their strategic plan. Second, keep under review the evolving economic structure to take advantages of opportunities for new membership (e.g., newly emerging sectors) and to ensure membership reflects such structure. Third, revise membership fees, as well as service offerings to accommodate small, micro and start-up enterprises. Forth, establish mechanisms to include non-members or underrepresented business sectors in social dialogue, especially in tripartite conversations. Fifth, form and maintain alliances with other EBMOs to be their voice or lend yours.

Engage Actively:

Engaging with traditional stakeholders, such as labor unions, was essential to address relevant economic issues. In some cases, when the lockdowns started, EBMOs engaged in online bipartite conversations with the labor unions, so they could reach the government with consensus-built initiatives (see Serbian case). Looking forward, social dialogue will remain a key factor in the resumption of economic activities after the COVID-19 crisis, especially in terms of new support measures for businesses and workers. In this regard, social dialogue can help reach collective solutions that consider the needs of enterprises and employees.⁵⁷

Social dialogue is vital in formulating immediate responses to shocks, but also in building resilience for future crises. EBMOs and social partners should not just engage in such dialogues when there is a looming crisis or issue, it should be pursued continuously.⁵⁸ EBMOs, governments and other social partners should strive to not only have a social dialogue, but a national dialogue that is consensus-built and human-centered, and that takes into account and includes the view of diverse stakeholders. During crises, the integration of social partners is key to accelerate the path towards recovery.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ ILO Policy Brief on COVID-19 ([link](#)).

⁵⁵ ILO/IOE (2020). Global Survey COVID-19, p.19.

⁵⁶ ILO – Work Areas: Social Dialogue ([link](#))

⁵⁷ ILO: [Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism](#). International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva, 2018.

⁵⁸ ILO (2020). The role of social dialogue in formulating social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis.

⁵⁹ Ibid., ILO (2020). The role of social dialogue.

Develop Structures:

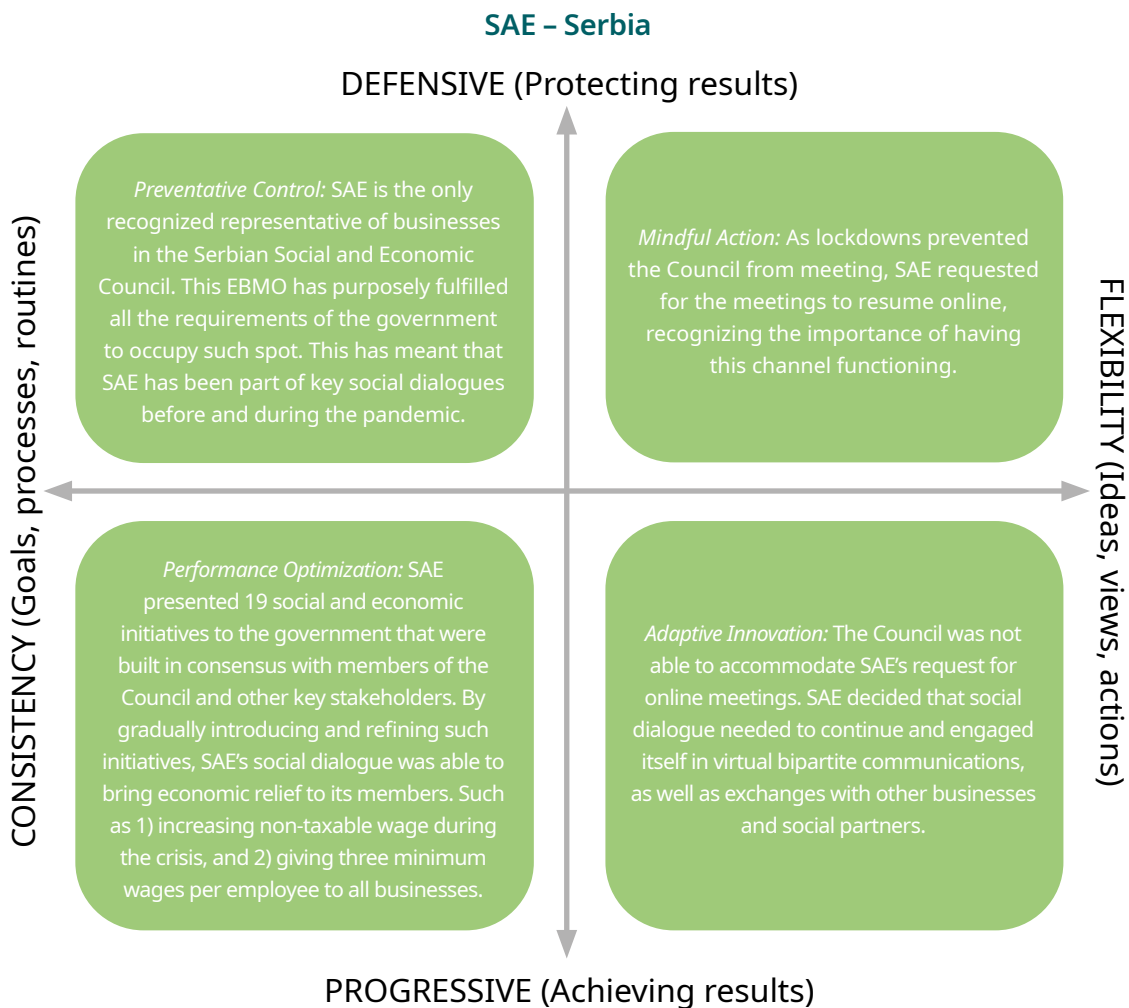
An ILO 2018 resolution highlights that having “free, independent, strong and representative employers’ and workers’ organizations, together with trust, commitment and respect by the governments for the autonomy of the social partners and social dialogue outcomes are key conditions for effective social dialogue”⁶⁰ Those guiding principles have not changed and must be achieved by EBMOs.

In order to fulfill these guiding principles, EBMOs must pursue actions that make them “free, strong, and independent” such as financial stability, establishing good governance, forming alliances, and other elements touched under this guide and throughout the ILO’s work. The appropriate channels for social dialogue must also exist and be strengthened. Governments should present these enabling conditions and environment for dialogues to take place such as establishing official entities (e.g., Economic and Social Councils) that include EBMOs and other stakeholders. EBMOs that have managed to be recognized as representatives in tripartite conversations have already an effective channel for effective social dialogue.

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs’ Experiences - Social Dialogue

Social dialogue was crucial during the pandemic, with the majority of EBMOs increasing their advocacy efforts. EBMOs around the world were at the forefront of proposing and building consensus for economic relief.

The **Serbian Association of Employers (SAE)** is highlighted as a “free, independent, strong and representative” organization that kept this important channel going and proposed consensus-based policy recommendations.



⁶⁰ Ibid., ILO (2018). Resolution on Social Dialogue.

▶ 2.11 Develop Capacity for Thought Leadership and Research.

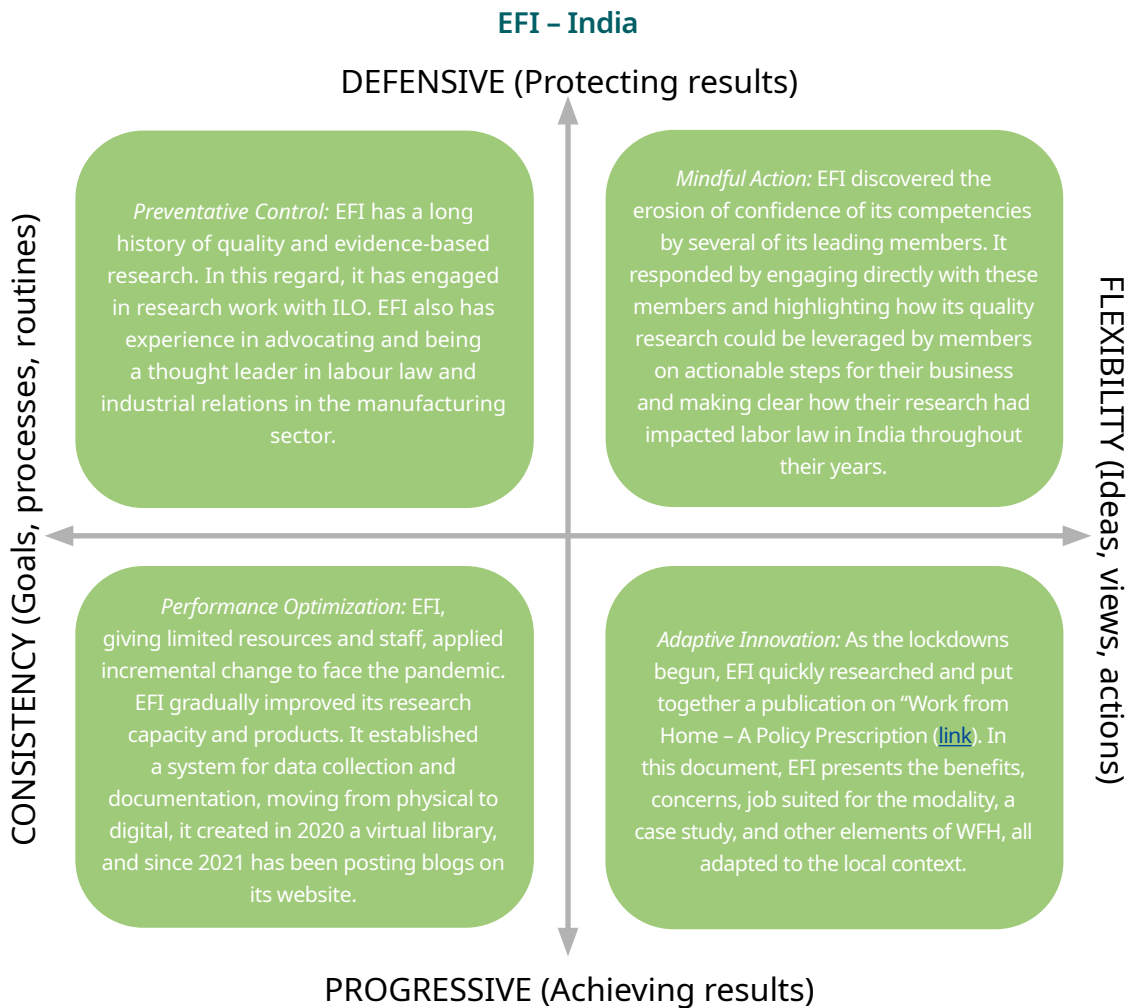
It is crucial for an EBMO to be seen as a thought leader, particularly in its capacity to influence policymaking. In this regard, advocacy needs to be accompanied by sound research or key partnerships that provide needed information and expertise. Multiple EBMOs have recently become aware of this and have taken steps to build these research and alliances capacities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, EBMOs presented sound economic research that advocated for lifting certain restrictions and providing financial relief to businesses. EBMOs also commonly partner with local think tanks (see Portugal case) and universities (see Mexico/Jalisco case), regional EBMOs, and international organizations to have access to key information and expertise. It is not a coincidence that many of the EBMOs in this guide were also ILO's partners in its global survey on the effect of COVID-19 on EBMOs and the world of work in their countries. On the contrary, by having been recognized by local and international partners as thought leaders and producers of quality research, these EBMOs were better positioned to act on and leverage information during the crisis.

EBMOs that present strong research capabilities leveraged them to provide guidelines for members on remote work and what the future of work will look like (e.g., EFC in Sri Lanka), and to offer new services such as COVID-19 OSH (e.g., ECOP in the Philippines). Many are already thinking on what areas of research they need to focus on to provide quality publications to members and to create new training and advisory services. In this regard, an emerging topic has been mental health awareness by companies. Furthermore, research capacity is important as members of EBMOs expect to be presented with accurate information and data, as well as with sectorial and topical analysis. Such information enables employers to make vital decisions on business strategies and enhances the value they see on EBMOs.

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Thought Leadership and Research

The Employers' Federation of India (EFI) leveraged its research capacity and reputation as a thought leader to advocate on behalf of businesses. It also prevented membership exit by presenting how its research products can be used in concrete actions in business operations.



► 2.12 Apply Systemic and Conscious Risk Management

Most organizations carry out risk management to anticipate, respond and mitigate risks. Common frameworks used by EBMOs are SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal).⁶¹ Nevertheless, lessons from this and previous crises have taught us that organizations still do not engage in assessing risks at the length, depth or breadth required.

The reality is that many of these risk management and assessment frameworks can be detrimental if used incorrectly, becoming a feel-prepared ritual. They can also produce a list of threats that is not insightful for the organization.⁶² After all, risks are abundant (e.g., market, credit, financial, asset-liability, technology/cyber, human resources, natural disasters, strategies, competitor, reputational, regulatory, health, others). Nevertheless, when used properly, having these tools in place and periodic risk assessments can make what seems like a daunting task more approachable. However, these risks' evaluations need to be done in a conscious manner that does not conform to just a ritualized practice. In other words, risks should be assessed to “identify a wide range of actionable outcomes”.⁶³

⁶¹ An introduction on the tool can be found in Business-to-you [link](#):

⁶² Minsky, L. & Aron, D. (2021). Are You Doing the SWOT Analysis Backwards? Harvard Business Review.

⁶³ Ibid., Minsky & Aron (2021).

Risk management should be holistic, looking at the whole system and its parts. A recent HBR article⁶⁴ recommends starting assessments by looking at external factors first and then paying attention to internal ones. The rationale being that it is external factors that create the conditions in which business operate. Thus, this approach gives the opportunity to think more broadly and discover previously unconsidered internal realities. An example given by the COVID-19 crisis is how many organizations, despite recognizing that remote work was becoming a normal practice for multiple companies, were far from implementing teleworking as a common arrangement in their own organization. When lockdowns required employees to operate remotely, companies that had considered a remote world of work and invested in it (e.g., IT infrastructure, guidelines, and existing remote work arrangements) were better prepared to face the crisis. Thus, risk anticipation and response planning are a must for EBMOs looking to build resilience.⁶⁵ Without forgetting, that after anticipation and preparedness comes actually coping and responding to risks.⁶⁶

The resilience elements of this guide can be crucial steps in building the capacity to effectively cope with crises and the risks they surface in organizations. Two areas that were evidenced as lacking by most EBMOs were Financial Stability (see section 2.4) and Digitalization (see section 2.8). Multiple EBMOs do not have diversified sources of revenues, being mostly dependent on membership fees⁶⁷ that were dwindling during lockdowns. Furthermore, few EBMOs had made the necessary technological infrastructure investments and readiness checks to migrate into remote working and provision of services. In this regard, EBMOs can use Annex B, as a checklist to evaluate their readiness for remote working, be for the current or future crises or to become more agile organizations.

Another area of risk management to be improved by EBMOs, highlighted by the pandemic, is having Business Continuity Management (BCM) and a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for the organization and its members. A BCM's goal is "to build the organization's resilience and to ensure the delivery of essential goods and services even after an external shock"⁶⁸. Essential components of BCM are to have preventative measures, preparedness arrangements, and response options. While it is not sensible to expect organizations to have predicted the magnitude and extend of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several other examples, such as natural disasters, that have been highlighted in ILO-Crisis' publications.⁶⁹ that would have served EBMOs in crisis readiness and business continuity (see Box 6).

⁶⁴ Ibid., Minsky & Aron (2021).

⁶⁵ ILO/IOE (2020). A global survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside impacts of and responses to COVID-19, p. 25.

⁶⁶ Mucharraz y Cano, Y. (2021). How Businesses Can Brace for Catastrophe. Harvard Business Review.

⁶⁷ ILO/IOE (2020) COVID-19 Global Survey.

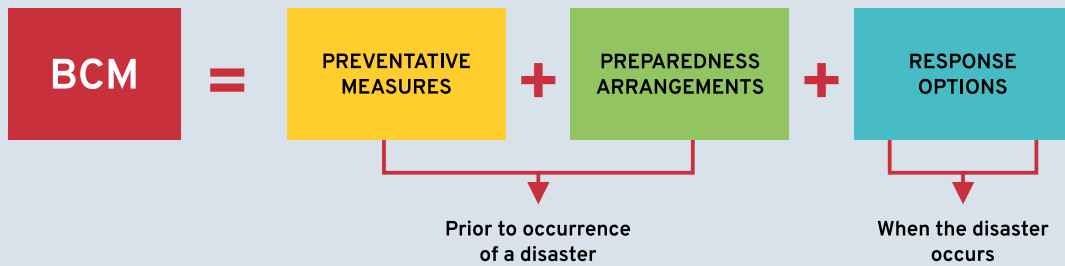
⁶⁸ ILO Crisis/IOE (2011). Multi-hazard Business Continuity Management ([link](#)).

⁶⁹ ILO Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction.

Box 6. Business Continuity Management (BCM)

Based on ILO (2011) Multi-hazard Business Continuity Management – Guide for SMEs.⁷⁰

Business continuity management (BCM) is a management process aiming to counteract the negative impacts of possible threats on the continuity of organizational activities. BCM is made of **preventive measures** as well as **preparedness arrangements** and **response options**. While prevention is to reduce the likelihood of a risk, preparedness is to stand ready in case the risk realizes and to control/minimize damages and losses. Response options are those that you roll out after the disaster hits.



What are the Key Steps to Manage Business Continuity?

- Step 1:** Determine your business priority
- Step 2:** Identify critical assets and inputs for your priority
- Step 3:** Identify the time-critical operations
- Step 4:** Map-out internal and external risk areas impacting the necessary inputs
- Step 5:** Prepare a set of possible threat scenarios
- Step 6:** Design and validate the business continuity plan (BCP)
- Step 7:** Design and roll-out communication procedures
- Step 8:** Design and deliver training on BCM
- Step 9:** Activate and close the BCP
- Step 10:** Gather lessons learnt and adjust the BCP

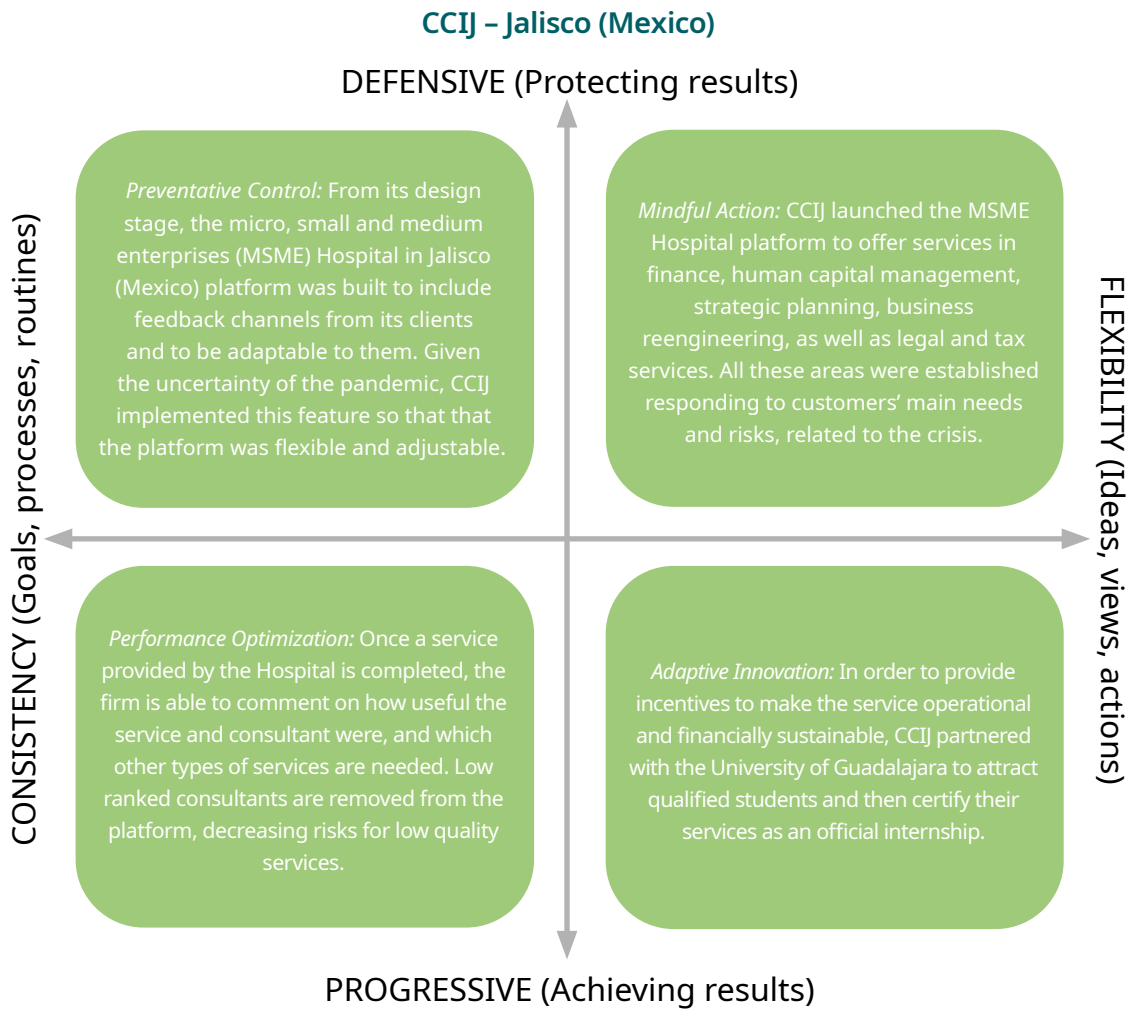
Step 1-8 take place before the risk occurs; step 9 during the crisis and step 10 after the crisis. As evident, most of the BCM efforts is to be carried out prior to the disaster.

Further information is available in the cited guide

⁷⁰ Ibid., ILO Crisis/IOE (2011).

Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs' Experiences – Risk Management

Risk management is an essential element for EBMOs as they navigate the constant changes and uncertainty in the business environment. The learnings from the **Council of Industrial Chambers of Jalisco (CCIJ) in Jalisco/Mexico** show how to mitigate risks, by employing the latest technology solutions and constantly adjusting services to fluctuating members' needs.



CHAPTER 3

▶ Concrete Steps for EBMOs



▶ Chapter 3: Concrete Steps for EBMOs

After the first two chapters, the reader of this guide is aware of the different factors that enabled EBMOs to be resilient in the face of a crisis. Thus, at this stage of the guide, EBMOs' representatives have already learned about some of the most important resilience elements and actions, illustrated by practical examples from their peers. This final chapter aims to provide EBMOs' representatives with clear steps to start upgrading their organizational resilience, and to begin testing and implementing new solutions towards this goal.

Step 1. Start the process by defining roles and responsibilities. In this regard, it is crucial to get concrete support of key EBMO's representatives towards allocating time and resources. In this regard, it is vital to approach the CEO and active members of the board. From here, it is useful to create a resilience subcommittee within the board, as well as a project-team in its secretariat. While the board subcommittee will function as the sponsor and steering committee, the secretariat's project-team will take ownership of the actions needed to improve organizational resilience. The project team should be comfortable and free to express their views. There should also be frequent channels of communication and formal check-in with the board resilience subcommittee.

Step 2. Reflect on your EBMO's most recent strategy and actions. The COVID-19 pandemic gives a unique opportunity to evaluate organizational resilience. A write-up of what has or not been achieved and done in respect to the crisis is a crucial step in understanding resilience. The templates set out in Annex A should be considered as an initial exercise to get conversations and reflections going on the organization's recent actions (Annex A, part 1) and to identify along team members and diverse stakeholders the resilience gaps in relation to the elements of this guide (Annex A, Part 2). The team should reflect on the elements presented on the checklist and start to identify gaps and actions to implement. Additionally, Annex B can prove helpful for those EBMOs that did not feel successful at working remotely during lockdowns and need to improve such capacities.

Step 3. Identify and manage the most relevant external and internal risks. Conducting an evaluation of the business environment, with a risk management perspective, will allow EBMOs to identify areas in which it must take special attention. This step makes EBMOs apply the learnings from section 2.12. such as looking outward and then inward. A practical way forward is to conduct the opportunities and threats component of the SWOT analysis first, to gather an inventory of these factors and risks without being influenced by a myopic focus.⁷¹ Then, using this external inventory to look inwards, leveraging the work from Step 2 and to identify other organizational strengths and weaknesses. For a more in-depth external look, EBMOs can rely on frameworks such as the PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal)⁷² analysis. EBMOs should complement these analyses with a risk assessment matrix that maps risks on their likelihood (very low to very high) and vulnerability (very low to very high),⁷³ to better anticipate risks and build resilience.

Step 4. Understand what other EBMOs have done when facing similar challenges. Once the organization has increased its understanding from its business environment, its internal outlook, and the most relevant external and internal risks associated, the EBMO will need to implement new alternatives and solutions. This implies identifying resilience gaps and implementing forward-looking actions. In this regard, the organization should consider the practical content and examples presented in Chapter 2, as well as the complete case-studies from EBMOs around the world, presented in Annex C. These sections provide practical actions and strategies conducted by EBMOs facing common challenges, such as financial stress or the lack of sufficient digital infrastructure in place.

⁷¹ Recommended in Minsky, L. & Aron, D. (2021). Are You Doing the SWOT Analysis Backwards? Harvard Business Review.

⁷² An introduction on the tool can be found in Business-to-you ([link](#)).

⁷³ Several models of risk assessment matrix (RAM) exist. It is recommended that EBMO uses the tools they are already familiar with. A starting point can be this Deloitte white paper, "[Risk Intelligent enterprise management: Running the Risk Intelligent Enterprise](#)".

Step 5: Consider your EBMO's mission and members' needs. Measures for implementation should be aligned with the EBMO's governance structures, as well as the business plan and strategic objectives, to ensure transparency and accountability. Hence, for those responsible for this process, it is necessary to obtain authorization from the governing council and communicate it to members. In other words, the actions and recommendations to improve organizational resilience should be grounded on the EBMO's mission, vision, strategic objectives, and members' interests.

Step 6. Test new solutions. Implementation of any measures to enhance resilience does not have to imply long-term irreversible changes; new solutions can be implemented gradually or be tested without compromising the ability to adjust the strategy down the road. In this regard, piloting can be a good approach to test new ideas. After all, to be resilient requires being agile and adaptable. In this vein, EBMOs can take an agile approach with frameworks such as SCRUM⁷⁴ that advocate for incremental change, without the need for a final solution. For simplicity, EBMOs can move past the frameworks, and adopt this agile mindset of delivering incremental change to build resilience, always with the approval of project sponsors.

Step 7. Define concrete actions to implement in order to increase resilience. As the EBMO's project-team concludes the above steps, it should distill the information into concrete actions to be presented to project sponsors (e.g., steering committee, CEO, managers) and members. A possible way forward will be to rely on the 12 resilience elements, thus presenting a list of actions that consider such fundamentals, at the very least. In presenting these concrete actions, a good practice is to present each action in one simple sentence. A model recommended by a HBR article⁷⁵ is:

 **Given the condition of [external factor], our ability to [internal factor] leads to our recommendation that we [recommendation].⁷⁶**

Step 8. Get feedback. Different areas of the organization should have an opportunity to freely express their ideas and reflect on organizational resilience-related actions. Furthermore, members' voice should make it not just at the end of the process but throughout it. A possible action is to bring selected members to discuss ideas and solutions to implement, and then present the final recommendations to the broader membership. Resilience should be built in an open, transparent, and inclusive manner. In this step, Annex A can guide the discussion with other staff and membership, related to resilience gaps. For example, asking them to reflect on defensive and progressive actions taken by the EBMO during the pandemic, as well as how useful they were (Annex A, part 1).

A note on anonymity and engagement: there are times when staff or members do not feel safe to share their candid opinions and sentiments. In this regard, many solutions can be explored. First, conducting an anonymous survey to collect information and feedback. For this purpose, EBMOs can use Annex A as a starting point to elaborate survey questions. Second, the project team can create safe spaces for staff to share their feedback, taking attention not to have direct managers of the individual, not recording the conversation, and verbally guaranteeing anonymity. Finally, by hiring an external consultant to conduct these interviews.

Step 9. Periodic Review and Iterative Process. As in the case with all interventions, the lifespan of measures implemented are limited and will need periodic review. Hence, it is recommended that those responsible in this process (e.g., project-team and the board) be tasked with the responsibility of conducting periodic reviews and monitoring the progress of the recommended actions. The exercise of building resilience should not be seen as a one-off checkbox, but as constant process that needs to be revisited at key moments (e.g., business plan development, launching new services, staff recruitment, membership expansion). Furthermore, the above steps while presented linearly, can happen simultaneously, or result in going back to previous steps. For instance, an idea piloted, or a member's feedback can unearth a new unthought challenge, that the project-team needs to reflect and respond to. In a nutshell, the process toward upgrading resilience should be seen as an iterative journey.

⁷⁴ An introduction to SCRUM can be accessed at <https://www.scrum.org/resources/what-is-scrum>

⁷⁵ Recommended in Minsky, L. & Aron, D. (2021). Are You Doing the SWOT Analysis Backwards? Harvard Business Review.

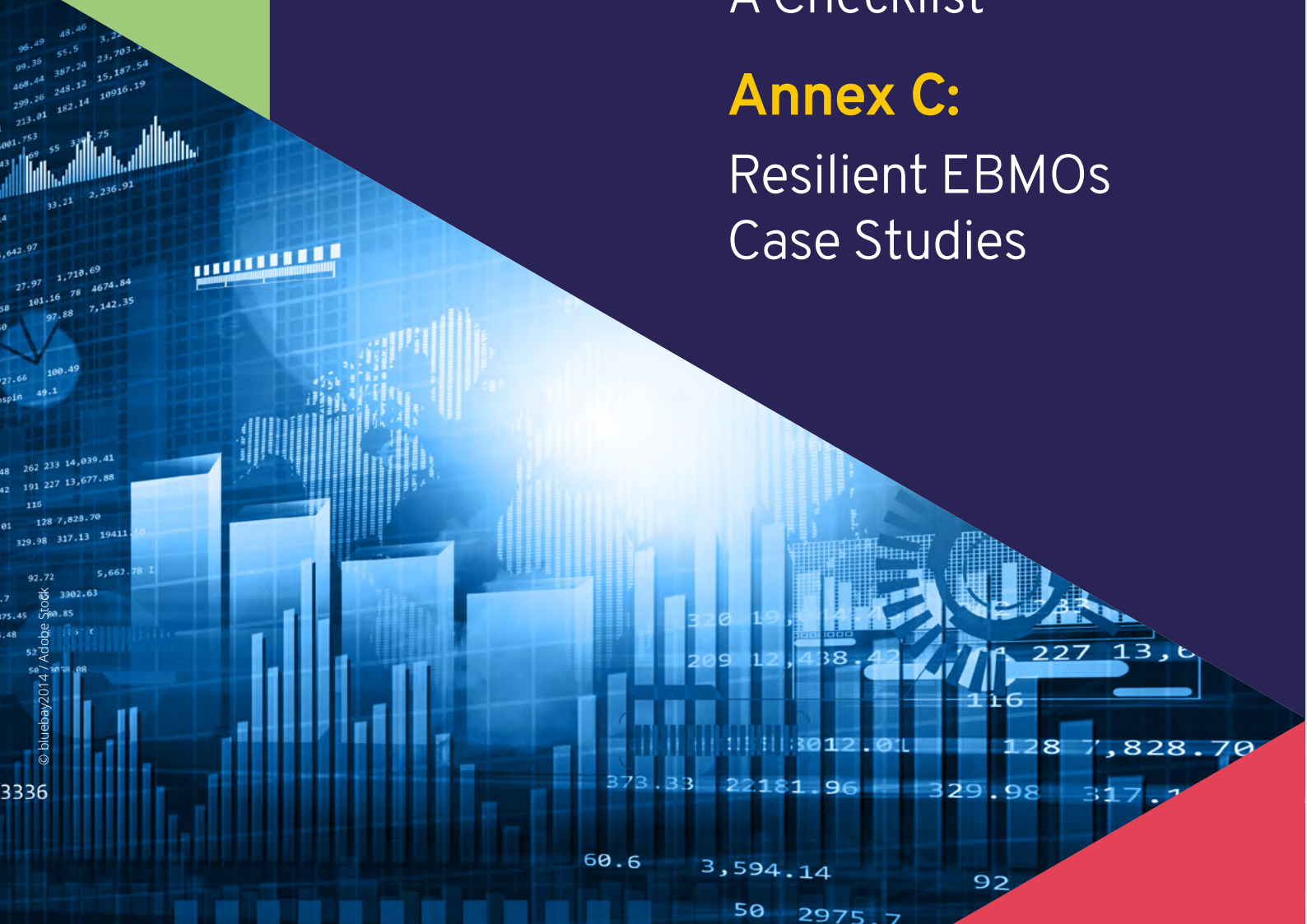
⁷⁶ Self-adapted from Minsky & Aron (2021).

ANNEXES

▶ **Annex A:**
Resilience Gaps
Templates

Annex B:
Remote-Work Ready:
A Checklist

Annex C:
Resilient EBMOs
Case Studies



▶ **Annex A: Resilience Gaps Templates**

Template – Part 1, Actions your EBMO recently conducted to increase resilience

Instructions: The template below serves as an exercise to reflect about the actions your EBMO recently conducted.

- 1.1 Start by defining such actions acknowledging the 12 resilience elements presented in this guide:
 - ▶ Governance, leadership, membership centric, financial stability, service agility, multi-skilled staff, communication, digitalization, alliances, social dialogue, research capacity, and risk management.
- 1.2 Please remember that you can categorize actions in defensive and progressive, using the following categorization:

Defensive Actions

- a. Preventative control (monitoring and complying)
- b. Mindful Action (noticing and responding)

Progressive Actions

- c. Performance optimization (improving and exploiting)
- d. Adaptive Innovation (imagining and creating)

For further reference go to the BSI/Cranfield Framework explained in Chapter 2, of this Guide or refer to their own executive summary [here](#).

- 1.3 Finally, reflect on these actions. Consider how they can help your EBMO to be resilient in the future.
 - * Note: EBMOs representatives can refer back to Section 2 of this guide, especially in terms of the “Practical Examples based on Recent EBMOs’ Experiences”, at the end of each resilient element, to find examples from peers, about the four different types of measures. Do not worry if certain actions taken by your EBMO fit in more than one category, please place them under the action category you consider has the best fit (i.e., do not repeat).

Template – Part 2, Checklist to brainstorm on crisis-related resilience gaps.

Instructions: Template – Part 2 serve as a resilient readiness checklist. It has been constructed based on the interviews with EBMOs around the world, as well as other relevant ILO publications. Some actions have further questions/recommendations in brackets [] to help in discussion and reflections.

1. Establish Good Governance

- a. Our EBMO has been incorporated under relevant legislation in our country and it is in compliance with it.

- b. Our EBMO has been granted a mandate by its membership to represent their interests.

- c. In case of emergencies and exceptional circumstances, the competences and responsible persons/bodies and the modes of convening have been defined. The EBMO has also specified substitutes in case the responsible persons/bodies are not available or indisposed.

- d. The vision and mission of the EBMO are in alignment with the aspirations of the membership, are forward looking and adaptable to changes in the world of work and cover the social responsibilities and functions of the EBMO (e.g., social dialogue).

- e. Our EBMO has well defined set of rules (e.g., separation of roles, powers, conflict of interests, provisions to elect or remove board members, etc.).

- f. Our EBMO has oversight committees appointed to oversee management and organizational performance and to ensure that the organization is working in the best interests of its stakeholders.

- g. The oversight committees and the officials in charge of the secretariat have set business plans / strategies and conduct all affairs in alignment to the EBMO's mission goals. Such plans/strategies include organizational resilience and risk management considerations.

- h. The organizational plans / strategies are followed in planning activities annually and there are mechanisms in place to review organizational plans/ strategies periodically.

- i. A special oversight committee is in place to assess risks posed to the EBMO and keep EBMO's resilience under regular review. This committee has the proper resources and mandate to submit proposals and recommendations to the board for improvements.

2. Nurture Transformational Leadership

- a. The EBMOs leadership see staff's training and development as a strategic practice. They have ensured the implementation of policies that encourage quality recruitment, development, and career progression of staff.

- b. In normal times, leadership acts with foresight and has put mechanisms in place that help anticipate developments that could challenge or weaken the EBMO [Reflect on leadership actions that helped be resilient during the pandemic].

- c. During crises situations, in addition to addressing immediate EBMO resilience needs, our leaders apply a long-term perspective of organizational needs/challenges and take timely measures to safeguard the EBMO's resilience.

-
- d. Our leadership leads by example and inspires us to action. During the crisis, there was a feeling of “leaders were in the trenches with us”.

 - e. Leaders have open and transparent communication with all stakeholders, soliciting and including their feedback. They maintain us informed and share the challenges faced by the organization. Dissenting views are allowed to be discussed and taken into account.

 - f. Our leadership is representative of the vision of the organization and builds it by engaging multiple stakeholders (e.g., members, staff, allies).

 - g. Our leadership gives special attention to individuals’ needs. During the crisis, for staff in terms of their mental health, increased responsibilities, and ability to work from home, and for members in relation to flexibility with membership fees and listening to their service needs.

 - h. Our leadership has always respected the different roles played by the board and staff of the secretariat and works collaboratively with them.
-

3. Maintain Member Centricity

i. **Staying Connected with Members.**

- a. Members interaction with the staff and services is high. During the crisis, interaction and communication with members has been even higher.

 - b. We actively pursue members recommendations/feedback/inquiries/issues and include them in our business / strategic plan processes and when developing / upgrading services.

 - c. During the crisis, we have responded with services that meet members’ needs (e.g., COVID-19 OSH, remote work guidelines, financial relief advocacy, etc.). During normal times, we try to anticipate the needs of members and make decisions based on them.
-

ii. **Implementing and Leveraging CRM.**

- a. We have a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in place to assist us. Specifically, we are able to know: membership composition, contribution to the economy (by employment, GDP), and track members’ needs and services’ demand.
-

iii. **Monitoring Service Delivery Quality.**

- a. We can access key statistics such as the time spent by staff in providing services to members and the utilization of the portfolio of products and services offered (using CRM or other tools).

 - b. We carry out annual / periodic check-ins, including surveys to obtain information relating to employers’ needs and satisfaction with the organization and its services.
-

-
- c. An oversight committee carries out an annual / periodic audit to assess quality and standards of advisory and other services offered.
-
- d. We are not deterred to remove services and products from our portfolio that are not in favour with members [Reflect on a service that was removed or upgraded given members' feedback, before or during the crisis].
-

4. Achieve Financial Stability

- a. Our EBMO has a special oversight committee to monitor and manage finances. It oversees annual budgets and monitors income sources and expenditure heads.
-
- b. Annual Budgets are ultimately approved by the membership at the annual general meeting.
-
- c. Special approval processes are in place for un-planned expenditure.
-
- d. The organization is audited regularly and in compliance with national laws and regulations applicable to the legal form of the organization. Auditors are external, qualified, and independent, and appointed by the membership.
-
- e. Our organization follows-up on weaknesses identified in the audits in a systemized way and with the approval of the oversight / management commi.
-
- f. Our EBMO strives to achieve income diversification and to avoid single-source dependency (e.g., membership fees) [Reflect on how revenue composition looks now in comparison to April 2020].
-
- g. Our EBMO has taken steps to build financial reserves: 1) Making such action a priority of the organization and assigning the needed resources, 2) Putting in place competent and certified people/financial institution to invest the financial reserves, and 3) Defining an oversight committee to determine its uses.
-
- h. All financial policy, including procurement policy, follows clear internal rules and regulations to avoid misuse of funds and is in compliance with applicable laws.
-
- i. There are rules and policies in place to ensure that expenditures are within reasonable limits (e.g., travel expenses, petty cash, salary advancements, incentives, etc.).
-
- j. The organization has accounting/financial software that allows for adequate accounting records and financial health monitoring (*An Enterprise Resource Planning system could further enhance this element*).
-

5. Advance Service Agility

- a. Our organization takes a proactive role in anticipating members' needs and launching new services (e.g., new trainings and advisory topics). During the crisis, we were able to identify topics, such as remote working guidelines and COVID-19 safety readiness, as services needed by our members.

 - b. We listen closely to members' feedback and the overall business environment to identify potential opportunities and threats and be responsive to members' demands. During the crisis, we have listened to members' requests and deployed in a timely manner new services and advocacy campaigns to meet their needs.

 - c. We constantly innovate and renovate services and products. For example, keeping training material updated and seeking friendlier delivery interfaces and product design.

 - d. Our organization has knowledge management (KM) in place (system or processes) that allows to effectively disseminate information in developing new products and services.

 - e. There is a culture of tolerating risks and encouraging new ideas.

 - f. We have systems in place (e.g., CRM, KM) that allows us to identify demand and uptake gaps in our services. We deploy staff and other resources to address those service gaps.

 - g. We are familiar with and use agile methodology that seeks to deliver products and services quickly by deploying in incremental change. We feel comfortable with agile/lean methods such as SCRUM and KANBAN and management has encouraged such practices.

 - h. Our EBMO has emerged from the pandemic with a new service or delivery model that will be continued as part of our ongoing operations.
-

6. Recruit, Retain and Deploy Multi-Skilled Staff

- a. Our EBMO recruitment policies aim to hire multi-skilled staff. In other words, to hire individuals with a wide range of skills and knowledge that can be integrated into different projects [Reflect on recent hires and their skills. Are they multi-skilled staff?].

 - b. Staff training policies seek to develop a multi-skilled staff that grows competences and evolves in tandem with the organization and can meet external environment demands (e.g., digitalization of the way of doing business). The EBMO not only invest in up-skilling but in re-skilling employees.

 - c. Staff feel motivated and are encouraged to innovate and share their ideas / concerns.

 - d. There is buy-in from staff on the EBMO's vision and mission and was reflected during the pandemic.

 - e. Staff feel they have the opportunity to hone their skills and grow in the company.
-

-
- f. Staff are properly rewarded and compensated by their efforts and work (e.g., adequate compensation, benefits plan, incentives, other perks such as reduced workdays).

 - g. The organization had already remote / flexible work arrangements in place.

 - h. Mental health awareness and policies are present in the organization. During the pandemic, management was aware of staff's mental and physical health and unique circumstances (e.g., home situation, childcaring, sick family members), and was flexible on re-arranging responsibilities and tasks to safeguard employees and business continuity.

 - i. During the pandemic, many solutions to challenges faced by the EBMO and members have come from staff at different levels and areas of the organization. During normal times, innovation and solutions emerge in a similar manner.

 - j. In general, staff feel the organization provides job security. During the pandemic, the EBMO has maintained a policy of staff retention and communicated/negotiated with staff for arrangements that ameliorated financial strain such as pay cuts, pausing incentives, using reduced unpaid working hours, mandatory leave, etc. Those arrangements were already allowed by clauses in employees' contracts.

 - k. Our organization has a policy of deploying staff to handle a multitude of services [Reflect on re-arranging task and responsibilities of staff during the pandemic and its end-result].

 - l. Client satisfaction is not dependent on interaction with a particular individual. Members feel comfortable with the skills and competences of all our staff.
-

7. Utilize Effective Communication

- a. Our EBMOs have in place multiple channels of communication, including digital, for both internal and external exchanges [List channels and reflect what value or information is transmitted in them].

 - b. During lockdowns, as we migrated to remote working, we were able to maintain similar levels of communication externally (e.g., with members and government) and internally (e.g., secretariat, board) or even increase them.

 - c. For internal communications, our staff has **access to information** via [Discuss how information gets accessed by staff, such as intranet, repositories, knowledge management systems]. To **share information** staff can rely on [Discuss how information gets shared among staff, such as weekly staff meeting, internal newsletters].

 - d. Our EBMO pursues the feedback and inquiries of all staff, members, and other stakeholders. We have effective feedback channels in place.

 - e. Our organization has staff resources dedicated to communications. We count with a communication budget.
-

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- f. We have in place a strategic communication plan or similar that outlines our organization's communication objectives, target audiences, key messages and their goals, and a timeline for the release of key messages, information, and campaigns.

 - g. Our communication strategy is aligned to the mission and vision of the EBMO. This mission and vision have been formally communicated to all staff and members.

 - h. Our communication strategy expands to our services (e.g., training, advocacy, research), from how we market to design them. In other words, we are mindful that every external facing product is also a communication tool and need to be strategically aligned.

 - i. We sometimes collaborate or have contracted the services of communication providers such as: public relations firm, web designer, community manager.

 - j. Our organization has an updated website and a social media presence that we monitor closely and engage with [Reflect on the EBMO's use of these platforms during the crisis].

 - k. We engage and communicate with diverse partners such as: government agencies, unions, NGOs, our communities, academia, international organizations, other EBMOs and business organization.

 - l. The media invites us to engage with them and disseminates our information.

 - m. We consider our communication to be clear, concise, goal-oriented, and tailored to the respective audience.
-

8. Speed-up the Digitalization Process

- a. Our organization is offering services virtually such as training and advisory. Before the pandemic, we were not offering such modality or were at a lesser scale [Reflect on why services were not being offered digitally].

 - b. Our organization has embraced the digital culture, and fully understands how technologies are changing how we respond to customers' needs.

 - c. Digitalization has had an impact in the following areas:¹
 - i. *Internal procedures* such as finance/accounting, HR/recruitment, and marketing/communications, as well as using project management tools.

 - ii. *Member services and engagement* including trainings and advisory services, existence of self-serving facilities, online purchases, feedback, and communication channels (websites, apps), videoconferencing, and having in place a Customer Relations Management (CRM) system.
-

¹ Adapted from the upcoming ILO Guide on Digitalization for EBMOs

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- iii. *External impact.* The organization has been able to reach wider audiences given digitalization (e.g., non-members, training participants). It has leveraged digital tools to become more representative by facilitating feedback via virtual means. Partnerships and coalitions have been built around launching digital services and advocacy campaigns.

 - iv. *Business intelligence and data collection.* The EBMO is making data-driven decisions, collecting **regularly** key information from functional areas (accounting, marketing, operations), as well as from other business areas (membership, training department).

 - v. *Crisis and risk management.* During the pandemic the EBMO was able to leverage digitalized systems to better understand, anticipate and respond to members' needs.

 - d. Digitalization has enabled us to redefine our business model, rethink our value proposition and determine new strategies to generate income while reducing costs.

 - e. Digitalization has improved and enhanced the customer experience.

 - f. We had updated ITC infrastructure (e.g., hardware, software, supporting IT capacity) that made it easier to transition to remote work during the lockdowns (For EBMOs that had issues with remote work, Annex B can serve as a readiness checklist for future crises).

9. Form and Maintain Alliances

- a. Our EBMO's strategic alliances seek to achieve common objectives.

- b. We are mindful that alliances create advantages to enter new markets and source resources.

- c. Alliances have widened our representativeness by increasing the diversity and composition of our membership or allowing us to represent other businesses' voices (e.g., small businesses, new industry sectors).

- d. We have alliances with each of the following broad groups: 1) Government Agencies, 2) Development Banks, 3) Academia, 4) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), and 5) International Organizations.

- e. We see our members and other business associations as allies and partners and work together with them to achieve common goals. During the crisis, these partnerships were more present and stronger, with members and partner EBMOs becoming more involved.

- f. Alliances have given us some of the following benefits: 1) access and improvement of research capacity, 2) financial resources, 3) an ecosystem of exchange of ideas and innovations, 4) access to new knowledge and best practices, 5) the formation of other alliances and networks, 6) stronger relations with the communities in which we operate in, 7) increased reputational value, 8) a stronger voice when interacting with the government [Reflect on the benefits that have not been achieved and why].

- g. During the crisis, existing alliances were vital [Reflect on those existing alliances].

-
- h. New alliances emerged during the crisis. Among them: [list new alliances] and they helped in [elaborate on how they helped].
 - i. During the crisis, it became apparent that there were too many voices representing different businesses' interests. EBMOs and other business association were not successful at partnering and becoming a stronger and unified voice during the pandemic.
-

10. Engage Actively in Social Dialogue

- a. Our EBMO considers social dialogue as a fundamental competence that distinguishes our organization from others and actively engage in it before and during the crisis.
 - b. Our EBMO participates as an official business representative in social dialogue at the national level with the government and workers' representatives (e.g., tripartite). During the crisis, such dialogues were maintained or even increased. (Alternatively, our EBMO is represented at the national level by an ally (e.g., confederation) and we engage in social dialogue more at the local and sectorial level).
 - c. In social dialogue, we strive to include other voices that are part of the business community but might not be our members or have representation (e.g., micro business, informal sector, entrepreneurs) [Reflect on steps being taken by your organization to include, partner, or represent these groups in social dialogue].
 - d. Our members expect us to engage in social dialogue and find solutions on their behalf and such dialogue is consensus-built with them and other stakeholders (e.g., staff, social partners).
 - e. Over the years we have improved our social dialogue mechanisms to take on subjects related to socio-economic development as well as emerging issues such as mental health of employees.
 - f. During the pandemic, we relied on social dialogue to advocate for key measures to the government (e.g., businesses' financial relief) that aided our members.
 - g. We consider ourselves a "free, independent, strong and representative" organization, meaning that is respected by the government, has autonomy (i.e., free from the influence of others), and represents a relevant portion of businesses.
 - h. We represent a diverse set of businesses and/or associations which has led to better recognition and social dialogue.
 - i. We have taken active steps to increase our representativeness by including more members, increasing the diversity of our membership, and pursuing and accommodating (e.g., reduce membership fees, free selected services) groups traditionally not interested in being represented by EBMOs (e.g., micro enterprises, startups). [List some of the active steps taken to include these groups in your membership].
 - j. We constantly invest in training opportunities for staff to gain insights and competence in relation to this element.
-

11. Develop Capacity for Thought Leadership and Research

- a. Our EBMO has earned a reputation for thought leadership and quality research [Reflect if this has translated into increased membership, effective advocacy and social dialogue, and increased reputation].

- b. We have in place staff that conducts research and have invested in research tools and staff development (e.g., access to databases, subscriptions to journals, budget for attending conferences and trainings, staff with research skills, etc.).

- c. For our research and to stay current, we partner with international organizations, regional EBMOs, local and international think tanks, academia, and renown experts/consultants.

- d. As an organization, for our research and forward thinking, we [Pick one and discuss]: a) depend more on external partnerships, b) rely on our own research capabilities, or c) strike a balance between external partnerships and internally conducted research.

- e. As an organization, we stay current on the world of work research, topics of interest to our members, and government policies [Discuss one example as a team].

- f. As an organization we have been able to anticipate members' needs and be prepared for them. For example, we had conducted research on remote working best practices before the pandemic [Reflect on any other example about anticipating and preparing using research that fits your EBMO].

- g. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our EBMO presented sound economic and policy research that strengthened our advocacy.

- h. Our members use our research products in keeping themselves informed and making vital decisions for their businesses. [On a scale from 1 to 7 (lowest to highest), how relevant do members find the EBMO's research products? Reflect on it].

- i. We use our research throughout the organization: to launch and identify new services and trainings, to improve our internal practices and operations, to understand members' needs, and in our advocacy and social dialogue efforts.

- j. We conduct yearly surveys of our membership as a research tool and leverage that information.

12. Apply Systemic and Conscious Risk Management

- a. We regularly assess risks to the organization such as market, credit, financial, asset-liability, technology/cyber, labour, natural disasters, strategy, competitors, reputational, regulatory, membership, health, etc. [Reflect generally on financial risks for your organization and ease in adapting to digital technologies during the lockdowns].

- b. We feel our EBMO is effective at risk-management, being able to anticipate, respond, and mitigate risks [Reflect how this has been true during the pandemic in terms of actions that helped anticipate, respond, and mitigate risks].

- c. Our organization also considers how the above risks and business environment can affect our members in general and in their commitments/engagements with us.

- d. EBMOs staff are very much part of the Risk Management Methodology implemented. Members and other stakeholders are also consulted when assessing and responding to risks.

- e. We approach risk assessment in a systemic way (periodic and holistic analysis) following known frameworks such as SWOT, PESTEL, Porter Five Forces, and other tools developed to meet our EBMO's specific needs.

- f. When we conduct risk assessment it does not feel as a ritualized, check the box practice that is not insightful. Instead, we are conscious in assessing risks and identifying a wide range of actionable outcomes that are taken on by the organization and communicated to stakeholders.

- g. Our EBMO has in place Business Continuity Management (BCM) and a Business Continuity Plan (BCP)² [Reflect on how having or lacking BCM and BCP played a role in business/operational continuity during the pandemic and its lockdowns]

- h. As an organization we have learned from previous social and economic crises and have leveraged such experience in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Moving forward, we plan to conduct a lessons-learned document for future crises responsiveness and readiness check.

- i. Management and the board are aware of their responsibility for drawing up appropriate and adequate risk management policy.

- j. We have appointed a special oversight committee to monitor and assess risks to our EBMO.

- k. The management / special oversight committee regularly checks the effectiveness of the risk management system/processes in place.

² For more information on developing a BCM and BCP, refer to the ILO guide 'Multi-hazard Business Continuity Management' ([link](#))

► Annex B: Remote-Work Ready: A Checklist

Building on the experiences of EBMOs interviewed for this Guide, as well as the ILO's "[an employers' guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of COVID-19](#)," a checklist with a set of basic assessments on remote work and solutions are presented. EBMOs should take this information as an initial step to improve remote working in their organizations and for their members, and complement it with other sources, experts advise, and their own country and organization's context. It is also recommended to consult the aforementioned guide on remote working. An experience identified by many EBMOs is the lack of readiness for remote work at the onset of the pandemic. This checklist aims to prevent similar future situations for EBMOs.

In terms of terminology, remote working is being used here as an umbrella term for working arrangements in a location outside the office that uses information and communication technology (ICT) to fulfil a worker's responsibilities¹. While during COVID-19 remote work was conducted from home, at times in spaces and circumstances not proper for this modality, moving forward the term remote work is more appropriate as these arrangements will remain for many organizations without the home confinement aspect. Nevertheless, EBMOs, and organizations in general, need to be conscious of staff that works from home and the challenges it presents.

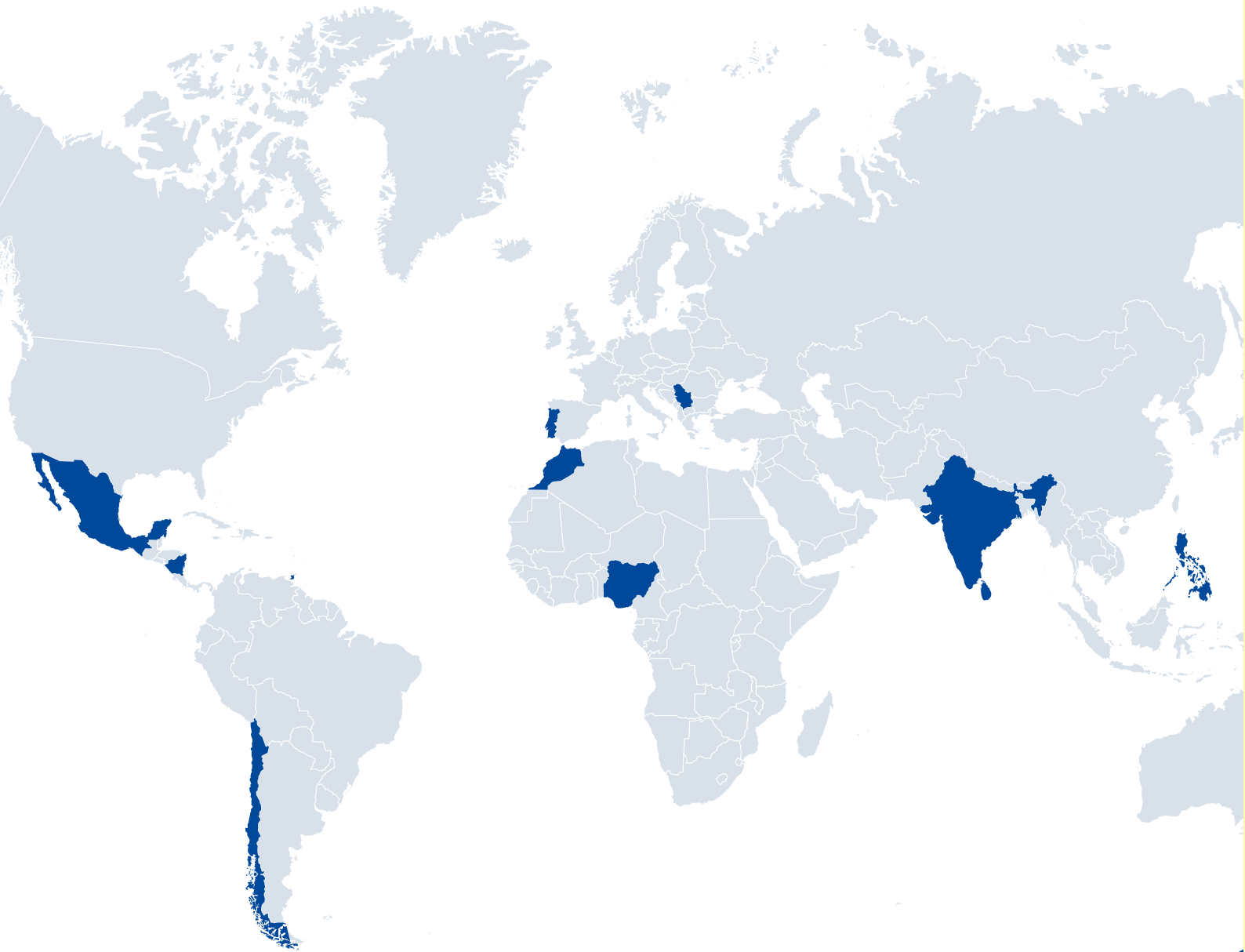
Assessments	Possible Solutions
a. Can staff remotely access needed documentation and software to fulfil their responsibilities?	Cloud storage, remote access software, digitalizing key documents, knowledge management system.
b. Does the organization have access to software that allows for remote working? (Such as videoconferencing, live collaboration on documents, email, channels for interaction with clients).	Invest in such digital tools or explore free options that could accommodate the needs of the organization.
c. Are staff trained in remote working practices and are digitally literate?	Conduct individual trainings and whole office remote-work days regularly to test readiness and troubleshoot.
d. Is there staff or an external provider capable of providing remote work assistance and troubleshooting?	Hire staff with these skills or identify an external provider that offers the service.
e. Does staff have the proper hardware for remote working? (e.g., mobile phones, computer, screens, router)?	Lacking legislation on cost reimbursement for remote working, organizations should look at their own reimbursement practices to facilitate this work arrangement.
f. Do staff's localities for remote work present hurdles to accomplish their work? (e.g., internet connectivity, reliable power supply, sharing spaces with others, caring for children or others, disabilities, comfort, OSH compliant).	Conduct an internal assessment of experiences of WFH in the pandemic. Deploy solutions such as company-owned internet devices and vouchers to upgrade working spaces at home or to be used in renting spaces that cater to remote workers. Explore mechanisms to be OSH compliant (see cited guide).
g. Are the organization's critical systems and information protected from cyber threats?	Remote access through secured channels or virtual environments detached from main servers. Implement password access and require updating it regularly (>3 months). Plus, have data back-ups in safe storage.

¹ Adapted from ILO (2020): An employers' guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of COVID-19.

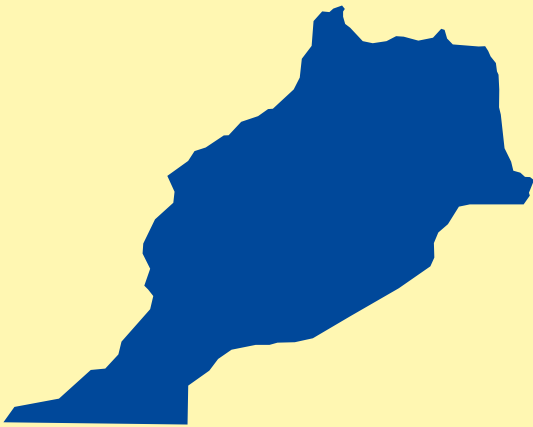
<p>h. Is the organization ICT infrastructure in the office or at an external provider protected against hazards that can interrupt remote working? (e.g., water damage, electrical outages, fire).</p>	<p>Evaluate safety policies of ICT infrastructure (e.g., servers) in the office and at providers.</p>
<p>i. Do workers understand their responsibilities under remote work arrangements? (e.g., working hours, availability, data protection, intellectual property, use of company equipment, etc.).</p>	<p>Prepare an informative document for staff on their responsibilities when working remotely. They should closely match existing office policy.</p>
<p>j. Does the organization have guidelines on performance management for remote staff?</p>	<p>Set clear performance standards for remote staff (e.g., work plans, clear goals, track achievements).</p>
<p>k. Is there a sense from management on what roles, tasks, and services can be done remotely?</p>	<p>Elaborate internal guidelines that define what tasks can be done remotely in normal times and crisis times. Make a distinction between roles and responsibilities that can be done fully remote or in a hybrid format.</p>
<p>l. Are there digital communication channels in place to maintain effective information exchange with remote workers?</p>	<p>Keep up-to-date registry on staff's contact information. Facilitate channels for communication and ideas exchange.</p>
<p>m. Does the organization have procedures in place to check on the mental health of staff during prolonged remote working periods or in general given the social isolation that can accompany this arrangement?</p>	<p>Ask staff to share mental health experience via a survey. Regular check-ins, create spaces for teamwork development and engagement.</p>
<p>n. Is the organization familiarized with existing legislation and labour laws on remote work and in compliance with it?</p>	<p>Review existing laws on workers' rights and responsibilities when working remotely, as well as occupational safety and health concerns. If lacking such legislation, consult national bodies on the topic, follow international best practices, ILO resolutions, and national labour laws. Keep in mind that employers are still responsible and liable for their workers.² For example, workers can be entitled to injury compensation when working remotely.</p>
<p>o. Does the board have protocols in place to meet virtually under exceptional circumstances or allows for those arrangements on an ongoing basis?</p>	<p>Revise bylaws, internal manuals, and other internal protocols to address virtual meetings of the board.</p>

² Information on some of these responsibilities as understood by ILO can be reviewed in pg. 9-12 of the ILO (2020) "[an employers' guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of COVID-19.](#)"

▶ **Annex C: Resilient EBMOs Case Studies**



AFRICA



1. Morocco

Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc (CGEM)



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The CGEM (*Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc*) is the official representative of the private sector to the public authorities of Morocco. It speaks on behalf of 90,000 direct and affiliated members and ensures a favorable economic environment for business development.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started in Morocco, it demanded the fast digitalization of services and a move

to the virtual world. Thankfully, key previous investments by the CGEM in becoming a more digital organization were vital in their resilience during the crisis. The CGEM has been progressively digitalizing itself and its training services. Originally, the CGEM was producing and delivering practical guides to companies on a paper format, which implied significant logistical and transportation related

costs. Subsequently, the organization started to distribute such publications on compact disks, using a more friendly and interactive type of format. Then, the CGEM created a website to compile the practical guides on an online format and make them available to the relevant audience, wherever they were located. The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic created the need to accelerate and upgrade the

digitization process. Nevertheless, the CGEM had a head start.

The health risk during the pandemic made face-to-face activities less appealing for participants. Consequently, the digitalization of its content and trainings was a necessary step for the CGEM. This involved making changes in a relatively short time. New solutions and new learning models had to be implemented. Despite having access to international experts, the hard work of this transformation had to be carried out by the employees of this organization, since it was also necessary to have prior knowledge of the clients and the business environment, to design relevant solutions for them. Through this process, various CGEM representatives have strengthened their skills around online training.

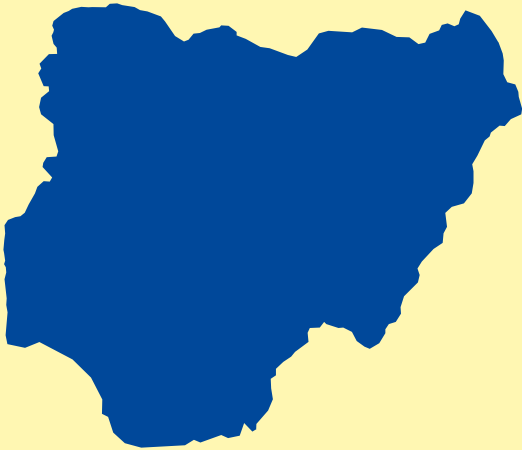
The digital evolution of training services has been more than simply changing the delivery mechanisms; it has also implied the need to evolve radically in terms of the content and the learning programs, offering more choices and flexibility to participants. A key lesson of this process, according to the interview with a representative from CGEM, is to conduct the process gradually, systematically, always looking for improvements, and learning every day. Such process is still developing since the organization is still trying new methodologies and continuously innovating.

The transformation has been gradual, and now the CGEM is offering new digital training services, such as an academy for entrepreneurs. On the technical side of things, CGEM is using the Moodle learning management system, accessed through a subscription model. It is important to highlight that this is the same software that is currently being used by the ITCILO, to provide its online training services. In the future, the CGEM is aiming to provide training services on a hybrid format, maintaining digital training, with some activities on a face-to-face format.

The business model in place aims to achieve the financial sustainability of the new training services, by charging a fee, which is sufficient to recover the costs. It is important to highlight that the CGEM does not aim to make a profit with these services; it only aims to make them financially sustainable, so that participants can continue to take this type of trainings. According to the interview with the CGEM representatives, one of the main challenges comes down to whether businesses are prepared to pay the fees for the online training. The focus for EBMOs has been on reframing this debate and demonstrating the benefit that participants are gaining from online and hybrid learning models. On a positive note, the new digital modality of training has allowed the CGEM to multiply the number of participants on the courses.

The CGEM presented key strategies that helped in achieving resilience during the pandemic:

- ▶ **Have vision to invest in key technologies for the organization.** For the CGEM, digitization is a necessary step for training services, and it is now an absolute prerequisite for a successful training strategy .
- ▶ **Remain flexible and adaptable.** For the CGEM, the pandemic required reducing the time intervals to develop, adjust and deploy services and resources.
- ▶ **Built locally and around clients' needs.** For the CGEM there is a risk in picking digital solutions 'off the shelf' that do not really reflect the needs and priorities of their clients. The case of the CGEM shows that it is difficult to find international experts or consultants who can conduct this process, since there is a need of both technical experience and local knowledge related to the work culture and clients' needs.



2. Nigeria

Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA)



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NECA is the umbrella organization of employers in the organized private sector of Nigeria. This EBMO has been conducting sustainable operations since 1957, demonstrating its resilience against different crises, including the current COVID-19 pandemic. NECA represents employers from multiple sectors in Nigeria, on a broad range of economic matters.

NECA provides the forum for the government to consult with private sector employers on socio-economic and labor policy issues. During

the lockdowns, this type of forum has been conducted using online modalities, reducing the health risk for the participants, and increasing operational efficiency by lowering transportation and logistics costs associated with face-to-face meetings. The government also consults NECA directly for their input in the design of public policies. In this regard, NECA aims to promote policies that enable the best business environment, so that companies can conduct sustainable operations and increase

their long-term profits. During the health crisis, NECA has engaged in social dialogue with the government to promote policies that support the economic sectors that were highly impacted by the pandemic, which were the majority, only excluding a few sectors such as the pharmaceutical. In this regard, financial credit support was given to companies in need, to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19. Currently, some of the companies are still facing the impact of the pandemic and, on top

of that, they are dealing with the debts acquired at the beginning of the crisis, leaving such enterprises in a highly risky financial position. NECA remains vigilant of their condition and continues advocating on their behalf.

In terms of the internal operations of NECA, this organization faced a convoluted scenario during the current health and economic crisis. First, a major challenge for the internal operations of NECA was engaging with businesses online, given the fact that regular operations (technical committees, meetings, and retreats) used to take place on a face-to-face modality. This forced NECA to redesign its operations and, specially, the way it engaged with companies during this crisis. Second, another major obstacle for the operations of this EBMO was the fact that companies were having less income to pay membership fees, given the economic downturn in the country and the lockdown in multiple areas. This unexpected situation derived in remarkable financial challenges for NECA. Forth, part of the income stream from this organization came from renting its facilities as conference rooms. Given the lockdown and restrictions on face-to-face meetings, this source of revenue significantly decreased. Fifth, NECA puts great importance in holding its management committee meetings every month as an integral part of its governance process. It helps to ensure transparency, accountability, and coherence of the decision-making process. During lockdowns, this governance process was continued online, safeguarding NECA's commitment to good governance.

Despite its financial struggles, in a matter of empathy to its members, and knowing that the survival of multiple companies was at stake, NECA started to connect to its members via online tools and continue offering support at discounted rates.

In the case of trainings, the lower fees reduced the income received by NECA, however, the number of participants increased, compensating the income lost due to the lower prices paid by participants.

NECA now relies more on digital communication to connect to members, instead of face-to-face meetings. According to interviews with members of this EBMO, online communication has been proved to be efficient, with the downside of losing the human element that is only present when people meet in person. Now, even retreats are organized using a digital modality, such as weekly retreats with 3 hours of training per day that allow participants to continue their jobs during the rest of the day. These retreats have gathered participants from different areas of the country, saving valuable financial resources associated with trips and other costs related to a face-to-face modality. Furthermore, the negotiations with unions have also been conducted via digital platforms. Only meeting in person to sign the agreements and, according to the interviews with representatives from this EBMO, so far this modality has worked for both parts.

The virtual modality of work also resulted in benefits for NECA's employees who used to commute every week between Lagos, the city hosting the central offices of NECA, and the capital of the country, where the government offices are. Before the digital way of working started, employees from NECA would have to go on a weekly basis to meet with the government to discuss topics that are now being discussed using online platforms. According to the interviews with representatives from this EBMO, this has created significant savings in terms of time, transportation costs and has reduced the health risk associated with traveling. During the interviews,

the representatives from this EBMO mentioned that this process has been an upgrade in terms of efficiency, but that the "human element" is also missing in such interactions. Going forward, the challenge remains for those who operate in areas with lack of connectivity or with low internet connection quality. In this regard, NECA has invested to reinforce the capacity of its Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) team, to increase its responsiveness and face this digital transition inside the organization and for its members.

Since the pandemic started, NECA was obliged to provide online learning services, as there was not a demand for a face-to-face modality of training. Even before the pandemic, NECA was already combining online learning with face-to-face training, because some of the participants did not have the luxury of leaving their offices, given their day-to-day requirements or their lack of financial resources to travel.

Because of the new training modality, the costs of delivering training services decreased dramatically, and the amount of people that NECA could reach also increased significantly. Consequently, NECA was able to benefit from reducing the fees per participant, given the higher number of people paying for the courses and the lower costs associated to delivering the training. Going forward, some of the courses are expected to take place on a face-to-face modality, and some others will continue online, since a good portion of employees are and will continue working remotely. This hybrid modality seems to be the future model of operations for trainings, but the final aim will continue to be supporting companies during these challenging social and economic times in ways that meet their needs.

AMERICAS

3. Chile

Confederation of Production and Commerce (CPC)¹

In March of 2020, Chile had its first confirmed case of COVID-19, resulting in multiple social and health challenges for the country. Subsequently, the Confederation of Production and Commerce (CPC) and its six Branches (CNC, SNA, Sonami, SFF, CChC and ABIF) that represent the main economic sectors of the country, joined forces to respond to the most pressing needs of the population, specifically in terms of the health emergency. The CPC relied on the support from its different branches to put together a coordinated initiative, “SiEmpre por Chile (Always for Chile)”, as a private emergency fund to be mobilized in response to the crisis’ urgent needs.

According to an interview conducted with a representative from this initiative, organizing this private emergency fund was challenging, given the uncertain social and health situation of the country. Under this context of uncertainty, the CPC had to prioritize its efforts. Initially, in March of 2020, the most critical needs were in terms of medical equipment and the health of vulnerable groups. The CPC was able to quickly raise funds from the private sector to attend these demands, and to coordinate with the public sector

in delivering this assistance where it was needed the most.

It is important to notice that the active role of the private sector helped accelerate the delivery process of medical equipment, as the Fund purchased it directly from international providers. The urgency motivated this initiative to start operating as soon as possible. At the end of March of 2020, the same month when the first case was detected in Chile, *SiEmpre for Chile* was already operational and raising funds. *SiEmpre por Chile* was created to support the most pressing needs of the population in the health emergency, looking to act collaboratively and innovatively, and to increase businesses’ solidarity. The 2020 report of this initiative shows meaningful results achieved, such as importing 515 mechanical ventilators for the treatment of patients with COVID-19, purchasing 200 thousand COVID-19 PCR tests, as well as 700 thousand rapid diagnostic tests. In addition, this initiative financed clinical trials of vaccines against COVID-19 and the development of locally manufactured ventilators.

The development of the pandemic in Chile, as in the rest of the world, was not predictable. Thus, the process of

¹ [SiEmpre for Chile 2020 Report on initiatives \(link\)](#)

Locally manufactured ventilators, financed by the SiEmpre por Chile Initiative
Source: SiEmpre por Chile



improving and adjusting of the *SiEmpre por Chile* initiative had to be flexible, amending the strategy according to the changes in the health and social context. In order to maximize the efficiency of this Fund and boost its impact, an organized structure was created that included representatives of the main contributors to the fund and met multiple times per week.

A key point related to this initiative was the collaboration with the civil society. Because of the dialogue conducted with relevant actors, it became clear that there was an increasing need of supporting the delivery of food-supplies to the most vulnerable population. Consequently, the *SiEmpre por Chile* initiative started a dialogue with the public authorities to analyze the best forms of aiding the populations in need of food-supplies. The public sector then provided the data required to detect the most vulnerable households. This database was then used to identify the beneficiaries. Next, the *SiEmpre por Chile* initiative contributed resources and logistic support to bring food-supplies and other critical needs to thousands of vulnerable families, in a coordinated effort with the Ministry of Social Development and civil society. In its 2020 report, it discloses reaching 360 thousand vulnerable individuals.

The food-supplies delivered to each household were expected to fill the food needs of a household of 4 members, during a period of 15 days. This initiative attracted the support of multiple private sector companies including non-members. In addition to the programs supporting health and food supplies, another emblematic initiative supported by *SiEmpre* was

a technological one. In this line of action, CPC joined efforts with the public sector to promote the adoption of disrupting technologies in Chile to face the crisis. It set up a sub-fund on technological innovation that resulted in locally designed ventilators and COVID test machines and kits, as well as supporting clinical trials of vaccines and plasma studies by Chilean Universities and international partners.

The communication aspect of this initiative is also worth being analyzed. The *SiEmpre por Chile* initiative served as an umbrella mechanism grouping the private sector's actions in support of the needs of society during the crisis. The actions supported by this Fund were proactively communicated to the population, which is beneficial for the relationship of the private sector and the community, since it conveys the holistic value of companies, and it strengthens their link with the civil society. Furthermore, this initiative was a useful internal exercise for the business community in Chile to acknowledge its potential to generate a positive impact in society.

The *SiEmpre por Chile* initiative helped organize the efforts of the private sector in supporting its community, and it displayed the business community as an actor that can cooperate effectively with the civil society and the public sector. As further show of its strong communication and transparency emphasis, by the beginning of 2021, *SiEmpre por Chile* had already published its 2020 report and a documentary on the initiative's impact, highlighting the contributions of businesses, public sector, and civil society.²

CPC and its initiative *SiEmpre for Chile* played a key role in building resilience not only for the EBMO itself but also for the whole country. CPC has key pillars and capabilities as an organization that allowed it to reach this level of impact and resilience.

- ▶ **Solid reputation and credibility.** CPC works as a reliable umbrella of EBMOs, representing the main economic sectors of Chile. Furthermore, it has a long history of advocating on behalf of its members, mobilizing alliances and co-creating policies with the government.
- ▶ **Alliances with key stakeholders.** CPC highlights that the impact of *SiEmpre for Chile* was possible due to how quickly the government, civil society, businesses, and individuals joined the initiative. Some of these alliances were formed during the crisis.
- ▶ **A spirit of solidarity.** This EBMO conducted the *SiEmpre for Chile* initiative with the aim to support its community, during a health and economic crisis.

² *SiEmpre por Chile* Documentary ([link](#))

Food, kitchen equipment
and hygiene kits financed
by the CPC
Source: *SiEmpre por Chile*





4. Jalisco (Mexico)

Council of Industrial Chambers of Jalisco (CCIJ)



© krakenimages / UNSPLASH

The project of the MSME¹ Hospital in Jalisco emerged during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to explore new ways of supporting the smaller companies in this State. The project has been sustainably operating since then, and it has been adapted and refined based on the multiple experiences so far. Currently, this project has become one of the most well-known cases of EBMOs' services

during the COVID-19, and it has been presented in multiple international forums, to promote similar efforts in other regions.

In a nutshell, the MSME Hospital is a free service offered by the Council of Industrial Chambers of Jalisco (CCIJ) and the University of Guadalajara (through the CUCEA²), with the support of the Bureau for Employers' Activities

(ACT/EMP) of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The objective of the project is to support the urgent needs of the micro, small and medium enterprises. Such goal is achieved by providing professional advisory to these companies on the most vital business emergencies that they are facing. The MSME Hospital provides advisory on many topics, such as:

¹ Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

² University Center for Administrative and Economic Sciences

- ▶ Finances
- ▶ Marketing
- ▶ Human capital management
- ▶ Strategic planning
- ▶ Business reengineering
- ▶ Legal, tax and social security matters
- ▶ Coaching for better decision-making

Given these diverse topics, companies have received support in multiple areas. In some cases, companies have been assisted to redefine their leasing contracts and, in others, businesses were given advice to be able to boost their online sales. The common factor in all cases is that all the advisory services are determined by the main and most urgent needs of the client. In this manner, the MSME Hospital processes have been constantly improved, to increase its added-value and make its operation sustainable across time.

The operation of the MSME Hospital is a collaboration among multiple actors. The CCIJ oversees the project and coordinates all the parties involved. It is important to mention that the financial support for the digital platform of the MSME Hospital, which is needed for the operation of this project, was provided by ACT/EMP. Similarly, a good part of the success of this initiative is due to the good state of the relationship between the CCIJ and other relevant actors in Jalisco. For example, at the beginning

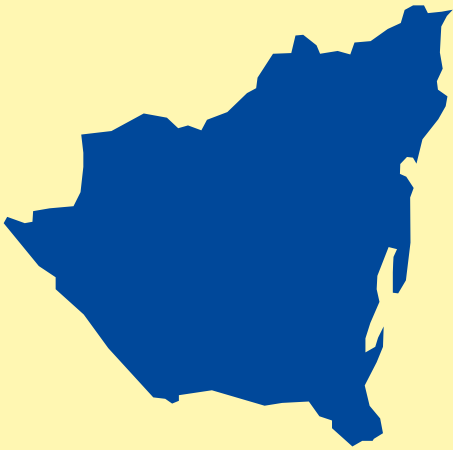
of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCIJ had already been working with the University of Guadalajara for about a year. This close relationship facilitated the dialogue between both actors to implement the project more rapidly and efficiently.

Companies can access the [MSME Hospital Website](#) to fill out the application form, from which the main need and urgency of the company is detected. Based on this information, the company is assigned to a consultant who oversees the case. Once the assignment has been made through the platform process, the consultant books an appointment with the company and verifies that they are truly a good match. If this is the case, they can proceed with the service, which is free of charge. Moreover, companies can also access the Hospital platform to observe the list of available consultants, and their experience, including the services that they have provided before through the MSME Hospital. Within the Hospital, the company can receive up to 5 advisory sessions from the consultant. After this number of sessions between the company and the consultant, the free service offered by the Hospital ends, but both parties are allowed to reach a private agreement outside of the hospital platform and continue their collaboration.

Additionally, students from the University of Guadalajara directly support companies through the MSME hospital. These students do not receive a salary, but the university validates their service as an official internship. In this sense, this MSME

Hospital has also become a hands-on school for students. It is important to notice that the consultants are rated by the company. In the case of extremely low ratings, the consultant is removed from the platform, which has already been the case for some. The MSME website also provides educational material on the topics that have emerged to be the most relevant ones for companies.

In conclusion, one of the foundations for the success of this project is the set of solid strategic alliances that the CCIJ has built with key stakeholders in Jalisco. These alliances allowed the CCIJ to implement this service in a relatively short period, meeting the urgent needs of companies. Finally, it is important to mention that this project has generated significantly higher traffic at the CCIJ's social media platforms, meaning that now there is a higher number of companies that perceives the work and the added value of the CCIJ. This recognition is useful to generate a greater level of representation for this EBMO, as well as to boost the value of its brand. It is also important to recognize that these existing strategic partnerships allowed CCIJ to not only be resilient during the crisis, but to innovate and establish a useful and new service that has gained this EBMO international recognition.



5. Nicaragua

Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP)



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The COSEP, Superior Council of Private Enterprise in Nicaragua, is an EBMO with notable resilience against socioeconomic and political changes in the business environment. When faced with the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, the COSEP took a proactive communication role to disseminate best practices in preventing the spread of the virus among the population. In this regard, the COSEP implemented **34 virtual conferences on health and other relevant related-issues**, to mitigate

the negative effects of the COVID-19 health-crisis. These webinars had the participation of health professionals and various international experts. As a result, these virtual conferences allowed for the dissemination of multiple international experiences and calls for the implementation of similar actions in Nicaragua. The webinars were conducted on a weekly-basis and invited the civil-society to connect.

The virtual conferences also considered the perspective of the

economy, and how to mitigate the economic crisis derived from the drop in consumers' demand. Additionally, the COSEP made 30 advertising spots to promote the health measures recommended by the World Health Organization, such as washing hands on a regular basis. This information was communicated through educational animated videos, which were didactic and easy to understand by the broader audience. Furthermore, the COSEP developed a guide on teleworking

to provide certain procedures for workers and employers on the new digital way of working. Such guidelines were designed based on the recommendations generated by the International Labour Organization. The COSEP highlights that before the pandemic it had limited experience with remote working themselves but were able to be agile and adapt on the go.

In parallel to the implementation of these proactive actions, this EBMO also started certain strategic long-term actions, to boost the efficiency of the labour market in Nicaragua, for companies and workers. In this regard, in 2020, the COSEP, in collaboration with multiple national and international organizations (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), updated and improved an existing **platform to match employers and workers: [UBICANICA.JOBS](#)**. The COSEP aims to use the data derived from the [UBANICA.JOBS](#) platform to identify gaps between demand and supply in the labor market. The platform contains a dashboard that allows the generation of statistics related to the labour supply and demand, which will be used to facilitate the efficient design of education and training' strategies.

This platform seeks to make the most efficient connection between labour supply and demand. Based on the searches carried out with the tool, both by employers and workers, the current gaps between labour supply and demand will be highlighted. With this information, educational programs can be designed based on

the current training needs, to avoid making investments in certain areas that may not be needed in the future of work. Additionally, this platform will seek to provide this information to companies, to guide their decisions in terms of technical trainings.

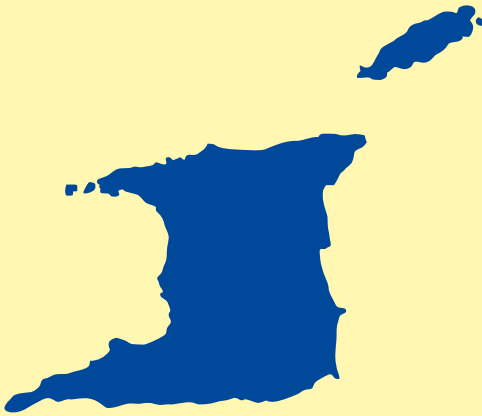
Given the political and social situation in Nicaragua, the work of the COSEP is vital for its members and business in general. Since 2018, the COSEP has broken relations with the government and the tripartite negotiations that were the norm in the past are now non-existent. Thus, the COSEP has had to advance and support members' interests without relying on direct social dialogue before and during the pandemic. When the COVID-19 hit, the EBMO organized its response operations into three work areas: health, food and medical supplies, and employment preservation and business continuity. It aligned its members and staff and cooperated with other organizations to work on these key areas. As highlighted before, the COSEP took an active role in disseminating information on the virus to members and the population in general. It also provided guidance to companies on remote working and business continuity of key sectors (e.g., food and medical).

In reflecting on the pandemic, the COSEP highlights the following elements for their resilience during the crisis, and, in their case, the overall sociopolitical situation in their country.

▶ **A culture of problem solving:** COSEP uses the following approach when facing a problem, "To inform

itself, understand the problem, and act". When the pandemic hit, COSEP recruited local and international medical experts to better inform itself, and better understand the virus transmission mechanisms. From there, it acted by providing educational animated videos, which were didactic and easy to understand.

- ▶ **Quickly defining working areas and groups:** When faced with a new challenge, COSEP relies on organizing itself in working areas and groups to provide an effective response. For COSEP this practice is something that has worked well in the past and during the health crisis. For the pandemic, work was broken down into 1) health, 2) food and medical supplies, and 3) employment preservation and business continuity. From there all actions were coordinated and aligned under these three working areas.
- ▶ **Agile mindset:** COSEP highlights how it had minimum experience with remote work, when the COVID-19 pandemic started. However, when remote working become mandatory, this EBMO deployed technological solutions for its staff and for external communications. In this regard, COSEP developed internal remote working policies and updated them gradually, considering ILO recommendations. Then, this EBMO provided guidance externally, to members conducting teleworking arrangements.



6. Trinidad and Tobago

Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECA)



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The Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECA) was formed with 21 companies in 1960, to assist and support employers in industrial relations and to create an association that would speak on behalf of their interests. The ECA continuously grew in its portfolio and service offerings, which led to the birth of the Employers Solution Centre (ESC) in 2008. The ESC primary aim is to be the leading consulting agency for industrial relations, human resources, and training solutions for

employers in Trinidad and Tobago. This strategic move allowed the ECA to refocus its resources on providing quality representation to employers, while still fulfilling the request of its members for consultancy and advisory services through the ESC.

Since then, the ECA has built a strong reputation for handling all issues concerning employers in Trinidad and Tobago, and today, the ECA is a full-service, not-for-profit enterprise whose membership grows yearly and

includes companies that belong to a variety of sectors and industries.

The ECA is a representative body whose board comprises professionals from its member organisations. Representation, however, is not confined to a voice on the board, as the ECA, unlike similar umbrella bodies, adopts a hands-on approach in dealing with its membership. As an advisor and consultant to members, the ECA's focus is on partnering with companies through the process of dialogue with interest

groups -- internally facilitating the cooperation of employers and employees, and externally through a tripartite mechanism that includes employers, unions, and government.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, ECA started early preparations for eventualities. In this regard, this EBMO assembled a special team comprising staff from different areas (including HR, finance, and IT departments) to assess how to proceed. In preparation for lockdown, the secretariat piloted a work from home strategy, which was a success due to employee's agility and cooperation. When the lockdowns took place, the financial department was affected, mainly due to members not being able to meet their dues. As a response that relieved financial stress but kept staff employed, employees were placed on half day's wage. Similarly, many other cost-cutting measures were implemented. Fortunately, the legal and consultancy services were continued and thus were able to keep revenue streams alive. Members were also offered discounted rates, allowing for some revenue sources to remain.

ECA has continued to guide members on industrial relations and legal matters involving employment during the crisis. However, relationships with unions have not been easy. Furthermore, ECA has relied on its relationship with the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on how to deal with this crisis and has leveraged their publication and resources. ECA has also increased its communication and advocacy efforts. A bulletin was developed to convey COVID-19 related information to members.

ECA has continued its dialogue with the government and managed to get several advocacy points accepted. During the pandemic, members had

difficulty in obtaining government relief, given the lack of systems in place, financial records, procedural capability, among other hurdles. This created opportunities for ECA to carry out virtual trainings on these issues. ECA has also set up an e-platform for trainings with the assistance of the ACT/EMP office at the Turin centre and resources from the UK government. As a result, digitalization is high and ECA is presently encouraging its members to contact staff for advisory services through the e-platform.

In crises there are opportunities to advance and raise standards. The advisory service portfolio has gone up and several complex requests have been handled. For staff, the WFH continues with a 4-day work week being implemented. ECA was also mindful of employees' mental health and welfare during lockdowns; hence they allowed employees to report to the office on a few days and have also arranged a few social events but in strict compliance with health mandates. Staff have been committed and recently established an innovation committee to look at future services that can be offered by ECA.

The board has also established several committees -- on membership, finance, marketing, membership, products and services, and staff and accommodations -- to closely monitor each area. ECA has been on a crisis budget and has managed well. A SWOT was done to assess the current crisis and to determine what needs to be done to be more resilient.

Despite dwindling revenues, ECA has been able to remain resilient during the crisis and provide significant value added to members. In achieving this resilience key aspects are present in the ECA case:

▶ **Diversify revenue streams.** Since 2008, ECA has its consulting arm, the Employers Solution

Centre (ESC). As membership fees decreased during the pandemic, the ESC became instrumental in bringing additional income.

- ▶ **Have strong alliances in place.** ECA has been closely collaborating with IOE, ILO and the UK Government from before the pandemic, which allowed to quickly move some of its services and trainings to an e-platform.
- ▶ **Remain flexible and safeguard staff.** ECA has demonstrated its flexibility and adaptability both in terms of its staff and board. It quickly set up WFH protocols at the start of the pandemic and was able to maintain its staff and service levels despite decreasing financial resources.
- ▶ **Leverage existing credibility and competences.** ECA history of involvement in tripartite issues and advocacy capabilities allowed it to defend the interests of its members and help members navigate administrative hurdles.
- ▶ **Understanding risks.** ECA conducted a SWOT analysis of the crisis to identify resilience gaps in their business model and operations.

ASIA



7. India

Employers' Federation of India (EFI)¹



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The Employers' Federation of India (EFI) was established in 1933. This EBMO represents employers' concerns in the Standing Labour Committee

and is a key constituent of the Council of India Employers, the All-India Organizations of Employers, and the South Asian Forum of Employers.

Apart from relentlessly championing the cause of the employers in various forums, nationally and internationally, over the years, EFI has kept pace with

¹ <http://www.efionline.in/>

the changing business scenarios and has provided need-based services to the employers of India.

As one of the biggest countries and economies in the world, India has been in the spotlight of the COVID-19 crisis, presenting valuable lessons. As the pandemic unfolded, in March 2020 a national lockdown was in place and private businesses were forced to implement work from home practices, deeply changing the way they operated. As a long-term partner of employers in India, EFI quickly put together a guide on working from home, highlighting its benefits, drawbacks and which jobs were more suited for this modality. In this guide, EFI provided clear recommendations and steps for business to take when implementing remote work.² Interestingly, EFI recognized that during the pandemic it had difficulty itself in pursuing work from home arrangements due to the lack of digital capacity of the organization. Nevertheless, it was still able to offer members a product to facilitate their own transition to remote work.

EFI has a long history of quality and evidence-based research. As COVID-19 hit, EFI used its research capability and with the help of ILO developed a report titled “Developing a Business Case for Good Industrial Relations Practices in Response to COVID-19”.³ The document highlights best practices for small, medium, and large firms in the Indian context during the pandemic. EFI was also ILO’s partner in implementing in India a global survey on the impact of COVID-19 and the needs of businesses. The survey was conducted in April 2020 and provided EFI key information that it included in its conversation with members and the government, such as advocating for tax relief and government grants.

This EBMO is known for conducting important social dialogue processes with unions and public authorities, as

well as for reaching policy-outcomes that benefit the sustainable operations of their membership. EFI has also established a COVID-19 task force within its organization in consultation with ACT/EMP. The purpose of the task force is not to replace existing labour relations mechanism represented by EFI in tripartite conversations, but to offer guidance to business on safely returning to work and resuming operations.⁴ The task force relies on EFI research capability and engagement with international partners to offer key recommendations to businesses.

Despite managing to keep supporting and advocating on behalf of its member, EFI recognized the challenge the COVID-19 crisis has brought to the organization. During the pandemic, EFI faced serious challenges due mainly to limited staff, and lack of digital capacity. This resulted in a restricted service portfolio, difficulties to pursue work from home arrangements, and with that, a dwindling effect in both membership and income, as well as a reduction of rapport with members, government, and unions. Faced with these issues, EFI put several strategies in place that involved staff capacity building and digitalization of services.

Training opportunities were provided to staff to improve their knowledge base and understanding of EFI’s local and global assignments. They were also given the opportunity to deal with higher responsibilities and shift from individual responsibilities to shared ones. Regarding digitalization, EFI invested in infrastructure, established a connection with subject experts for project execution, shifted its system from physical data collection and documentation to digital, adopted a WFH format, created a virtual library in 2020, and published relevant blogs on EFI’s website starting on 2021.

In response to these interventions, multiple companies that had either left EFI membership or were about to

walk out decided to continue with their memberships and pay their pending dues. EFI management also directly engaged with companies that had left, or were planning to, in order to understand their situation and offer solutions and better services.

Another adaptable action by EFI occurred in May of 2021, as EFI conducted its Annual General Body Meeting (AGM). For the first time in the history of EFI, the AGM was conducted in a virtual format, and very successfully. Many members have appreciated the major change adopted by EFI in its method and manner of work. Additionally, this EBMO is currently working on starting a Legal Advisory Cell services to provide legal advice to members on employment law, give them written opinions and conduct periodical workshops, programs, seminars, and guidance to sort out many of the issues arising between employers and employees.

Finally, the EBMO is also keen to explore the possibility of starting an e-academy for HR professionals. The virtual teaching platform can be used not only for labour laws courses but also to conduct training of various subjects, in particular safety and health. EFI has emerged from the crisis with a look towards the future, focusing on what other services and actions it can take on behalf of its members and the organization to be prepared for whatever comes next. Despite several challenges faced by this EBMO during the pandemic, it managed to achieved resilience. In order to do so, EFI relied on the following strategies:

- ▶ **Maintain alliances and get support.** EFI has had a strong presence in India’s key conversations in labour laws and businesses’ interests. It also has a history of collaboration with ILO and other international partners. As the challenges

² Work from Home – A Policy Prescription ([link](#)).

³ Report [link](#)

⁴ EFI COVID-19 task force ([link](#)).

accumulated for this EBMO, it relied on these partnerships and external support to rapidly change the organization and its services.

- ▶ **Deploy core capabilities.** EFI has a long history as an organization that advocates on behalf of private enterprises successfully (e.g., reducing the employer's fee of social security fund for administrative charges, after the fund had accumulated enough wealth to meet administrative expenses). During the pandemic, EFI has served as a key partner in tripartite conversations in the country. Another core

capability deployed by EFI has been conducting evidence-based research and applying it to the COVID-19 pandemic and members' needs.

- ▶ **Learn and emerge with a vision.** As EFI looks to the future, it does so with gusto. It is already learning from its shortcomings during the pandemic and restructuring services and trainings to face the next challenges to come.
- ▶ **Build staff skills:** EFI realized it had shortcoming in terms of working remotely and collaboratively, as well on deploying new and needed services by members.

It quickly enrolled staff on digital skills trainings and paired them with subject experts for project execution.

- ▶ **Pursue member centricity:** As some members left EFI before and during the pandemic, the financial resources of the organization were in peril. EFI's management continuously approached members to understand their issues and work on solutions to keep them as members and increase the value delivered.



8. Philippines

Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP)



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ECOP's story of resilience during the pandemic is one of quick adaptation, embracement of technology, a supportive board, leveraging partnerships and core capabilities, and, above all, staff's grit.

In January 2020, the Taal Volcano, located around 100 km away from Manila, and in one of the most active economic regions of the country, erupted. The consequences were vast: thousands of lives lost, and livelihoods foregone. Two months after, the Philippines started implementing lockdowns due to the COVID-19 virus?

As an EBMO, ECOP had to navigate a natural disaster crisis, as well as a health and social one on behalf of its members, Philippines' businesses, and it had to do so quickly and accurately. But how?

As lockdowns started in March 2020 in the Philippines, ECOP's board quickly approved and moved all operations and work to be remote. Moreover, it tasked its secretariat with assisting members on adapting to this "new normal". Within days of the lockdown, ECOP had called members to submit COVID-19 workplace plans, and

quickly put together a pandemic-focused series on good business practices that displayed work arrangements, employees' benefits, occupational safety and health practices, communication strategies, among other key activities. ECOP also implemented a helpdesk and hotline to assist members in navigating health protocols and testing, as well as to provide needed information and clarification on the government's mandates.

However, on day one of remote work, ECOP's staff did not feel ready.

The organization's online presence was mostly its social media, having relied heavily on face-to-face in the past for most interactions. To meet the challenge of going virtual, **the board and secretariat embraced a culture of technological innovation** empowering young and tech savvy employees to implement the needed digital solutions: working groups in messaging apps, access to various videoconference software, and a e-bulletin with weekly updates on ECOP's activities and government issuances, among others.

ECOP had high ambitions to transfer to online operations fully and quickly. To achieve this goal, it relied on its existing partnerships. The Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA), the Dutch Employers Cooperation Programme (DECP), the International Labor Organization (ILO), among others, were key partners in providing technical assistance and financial resources in ECOP's pandemic-related activities and reforms.

With the help of the ITCILO, **ECOP introduced an e-campus in July 2020**. Through this platform, ECOP has conducted a variety of remote trainings, which have continued during the pandemic. ECOP has also scaled up its training offerings. In July 2020 through September 2021, ECOP conducted 75 e-training programmes. The most noteworthy COVID-related trainings include "Pandemic Preparedness and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Programming", "How to Effectively Manage Remote Employees", "Designing New Work Policies in the Post-COVID Era", "Workplace OSH under a Risk-controlled Scenario", "Fundamentals of Reputation and Crisis Management", and "Designing Climate Surveys to Assess Employee Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Pandemic". In 2020, the training department conducted 53 online training programmes. In 2021, due to the increase in demand, ECOP rolled out self-paced learning programmes through the eCampus

platform. Participants are now able to access the online courses at their own speed.

ECOP has also launched a new key service to help companies adapt to COVID-19 demands. This EBMO has a long history and credibility with its members on OSH, counting with a network of safety and health experts that assists member to obtain OSH certifications. ECOP quickly recognized that it could expand existing capabilities towards COVID-19 specific health protocols and launched a new service that has helped companies and given ECOP an **additional income source**. After years of hard work, ECOP is now an accredited safety training organization (STO), which allows it to conduct the Basic Occupational Safety and Health (BOSH) course mandated by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for safety officers. It also ushered the establishment of the ECOP OSH Academy, which will offer not only the BOSH and other OSH-related programs but also consultancy services to assist companies to install policies and programs consistent with the new OSH law in the Philippines.

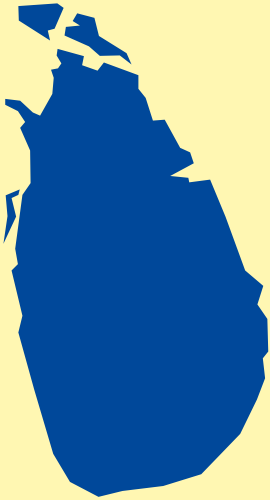
ECOP's resilience journey in facing the pandemic is filled with key elements that were present and further developed during the crisis:

- ▶ **A responsive and supportive board** that quickly guided ECOP towards a culture of technological innovation and trusted its secretariat on adjusting services and programs.
- ▶ **An agile staff** that adapted quickly to situations in the ground, to members' needs, and implemented technological and creative solutions.
- ▶ **Key partnerships** that assisted in accelerating plans, such as the e-campus, to better serve members and give the organizational financial health.
- ▶ **The expansion of existing capabilities** in terms of OSH

services, communication, and advocacy efforts to be crisis specific.

Nevertheless, some threats to ECOP's resilience for this and future crises remain. During the first two months of the lockdown, ECOP's revenue from membership and trainings went to zero. The organization adapted by providing free webinars that attracted participants to paid trainings, by offering companies the first participant slot for free and the second at a discount, and by moving to online services. However, in looking back, like other EBMOs' cases displayed in this guide, ECOP doubts that it could have been resilient for much longer given low financial resources.

Moving forward, ECOP's staff have three crisis-related recommendations: 1) **Re-skill and not just up-skill staff** to address the emergence of new technologies and ways of working, 2) **Increase SME membership as they are the companies most in need of assistance by EBMOs and account for half of the Philippine's economy,** and 3) **Remain proactive and future looking.** ECOP reflected on how, in the recent past, a work-remote law had passed but companies or the EBMO gave not much attention, for instance in terms of developing the related trainings. Now ECOP is remaining vigilant to avoid similar oversights. Thus, it is already engaging in vital forward-looking services, such as mental health focused trainings and resources, as the next thing members will be requiring.



9. Sri Lanka

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC)



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Representing employers for over 90 years, the EFC had transformed itself to be a model employer organization famed for its resilience. Such capacity was demonstrated by its overall performance in year 2020/21, when it managed to retain all its members and add a few more, despite of the health crisis. Its financial position was audited as being a “viable organization”, thus demonstrating its financial stability. EFC has maintained a fair surplus

from operations throughout the pandemic of USD\$210 thousand in FY 2019/2020 and approximately USD\$100 thousand in FY 2020/2021. Furthermore, its USD\$800 thousand in total savings meant that the organization was able to invest in land for its future office, even during the crisis.

Not a single EFC employee was laid off nor was there reason to trim their benefits or salaries. In fact,

the staff received a 5% increase in salary based on performance for the period. The EFC, led by its council/trustees, took several precautions to counter the effects of the crisis, such as establishing in-house committees to assess the impact of the pandemic. Moreover, its advisory services' demand had risen to over 95% during the beginning of the pandemic from the 60 % or so figure during normal times. The CRM system that was implemented

in 2016 with the assistance of the ACT/EMP office in Turin, enabled them to reach these insights. The follow-up ILO's training to staff, on the CRM, was key for the continuity of this member centric management system. In 2019, the EFC invested in an Enterprise Resource Planning platform (ERP) to enhance its financial and resource management capacity.

The multi-functionality and skills of staff were already at a high level before the pandemic. As the situation changed, EFC reassigned staff, whose work in litigation and industrial relations had decreased due to the lockdowns, into the highly demanded COVID-19 related advisory services. EFC has also a culture of operation planning. Since 2017, the EBMO has consistently developed bi-annual business plans. It also assesses periodically if resources – including human capital – are meeting the needs of the organization and its membership using SWOT and PDCA methodologies. The organization, however, mentions lacking a systematic approach to risk management.

EFC's future ready mentality allowed it to be resilient during the pandemic. Trainings and assignments to develop "work from home policies" were carried out and helped members to transition into such work modality with ease. EFC staff were already enjoying such arrangements on a regular basis and was a practice acknowledged to be of benefit by the staff with children. The framework that has been established in the months since, is likely to be the basis of legal reforms that would provide for such working methods to be formalized in the future. Similarly, work-life balance was catered to by issuing guidelines for employers on how they should manage employees using teleworking options. These guidelines gave directions related to working hours, breaks, holidays, as well as on health and safety issues.

These recommendations were first enacted in-house to ensure that employees were not over-worked and to lead by example. The EFC has followed in this vein by taking a central focus on issues related to mental health. Gender and disability access issues have also been front and centre.

To speed up the 'resumption of work', the EFC also launched a new fee-levying service. This service audits workplace's compliance with health measures of the Ministry of Health and in agreement with WHO's recommendations.

Another key resilience building action of EFC was to invest in IT infrastructure. Digital solutions meant that staff could be connected to each other as well as to the membership throughout the pandemic. This action made a big difference in addressing members' issues and assisted in the deployment of crucial client-centric interventions, including a vital survey done in partnership with ILO to understand membership's needs.

EFC had also invested in strengthening its research and knowledge management capacities. During the pandemic, these have been key capacities in assessing members' requirements but also EFC's operational and financial status. With this information, the director general briefed, effectively, its management council about the difficult unemployment situation that the country would have to face if a 'raft of assistance' in the form of fiscal and financial assistance was not offered to employers. The dissemination of this information has led to concessionary loans being offered to employers to address critical operating capital issues including the payment of wages.

Although the imposed lockdowns enabled employers to take up strict legally binding actions on employees' retention, the EFC nourished employers' sentiment to prioritize

jobs' preservation. In this regard, the EFC gave clear direction to the council, and entered into a national tripartite dialogue to pro-rate and pay wages to employees who could not report to work, due to the lockdowns or being infected by the virus. This strategy proposed by the EFC contributed to the unemployment levels being kept at approximately 8-10%, which was manageable compared to the 30-40% that was predicted by the labour authorities if no actions were taken.

This and other recommendations have proven effective. While many countries in the region reported double digits unemployment, Sri Lanka's levels were much better. Additionally, EFC advocated for other actions and accommodations to be given to the most vulnerable industries, such as tourism and hospitality, which were still struggling as of July 2021. Moreover, the wage agreement provided breathing space and improved business sustainability. The agreement has also been hailed internationally as a good example of social dialogue at work. In this regard, the consensus reached at the time enabled the country to avoid a socio-economic crisis, the magnitude of which has never been witnessed.

Important to note as well, is how the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the value of partnerships both old and new. New partners for EFC included the Ministry of Health, National Police Department, Universities as well as a host of organizations representing civil society.

EUROPE



10. Portugal

Confederation of Portuguese Business (CIP)



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Before the COVID-19 pandemic started, Portugal had just achieved four consecutive years with an annual economic growth beyond 2%, between 2016 and 2019 (World Bank Database). This trend was over with the beginning of the pandemic. During 2020, the

economy of Portugal contracted significantly, due to the health emergency.

For CIP, and the country, this crisis and economic downturn was not easy to handle. As a CIP staffer puts it, “no one was really prepared, anywhere”.

However, the case of CIP illustrates how an organization with a strong voice can re-deploy existing core capabilities in facing an emerging crisis, as well, as how past key investments play a vital role in achieving organizational resilience during challenging times.

For CIP, as with many other organizations, the COVID-19 crisis started with high uncertainty and with the hope that it will be a short one. In March 2020, when the Portuguese government mandated, where possible, companies to adopt teleworking, CIP quickly complied. As a small team of 22 people, including delegations in Porto, located 3 hours by train from Lisbon, and Brussels, CIP already had its feet in the water in terms of managing itself remotely. Moreover, as a small and lean organization, CIP had already automated communications distribution to members and invested in technological solutions that facilitated their transition into teleworking.

From day one, CIP saw its role as leveraging its information gathering and advocacy capabilities and applying them to the pandemic context. For CIP, these actions were crucial, to complement the work conducted by the public sector. In this regard, CIP became the messenger and advocate between government and businesses, and a strong distributor of information at a national scale. For instance, CIP sent informative mails twice a day and updated its website daily. The organization even launched its COVID-19 information website before the government's official one.

CIP was able to take on this messenger role at a national level because it had the right elements in place. This EBMO has historically had a strong media presence and **national credibility** on defending social dialogue. Furthermore, as the largest confederation of businesses in Portugal in terms of members, it **occupies a key position to help businesses and government navigate each other**. However, without its staff and board, these contextual elements would not have been enough. CIP highlights that its success lies in having a small and flexible team that adapted quickly. In addition, having a board that set a vision and work plan from the start of

the pandemic. The board mandated that CIP's services and advocacy efforts remain at full speed and even increase. From the on start, it set the vision for CIP, "ensuring safety, maintaining the economy working". Unlike many countries, most industries in Portugal remained operational and did not fully close at any point.

As with many EBMOs, a main concern of CIP was the loss of members. During the global financial crisis, CIP had faced a declining membership and, thus, the board had mandated a more active engagement of potential members as a strategic practice. When COVID-19 hit, potential members already knew of CIP and saw its strong advocacy efforts, which made the decision of joining more salient. As the pandemic continues, **CIP reports increased membership and testimonials from members that now more than ever see CIP's value added** in advocating for business and Portugal's future.

Other two key aspects allowed CIP to continue its work and increased its value added during the crisis: 1) **an open and digital government in terms of information** and 2) **the existence of a culture of informal channels to communicate**. While CIP and the government may disagree in certain political visions, as a country, Portugal has strong open information laws that allowed CIP to access documents and information on measures taken by the public sector. Moreover, as some face-to-face formal channels of communication became less efficient under a teleworking environment, other less formal channels of communication rose during the pandemic. For instance, it became more acceptable to call or text the businesses' CEOs and government officials to gather information quickly. If anything, both the government, and CIP and its members, welcomed this more direct communication, as all parties needed information swiftly from each other.

The CIP case provides the following learnings for EBMOs that helped CIP in

being resilient, in surviving and even thriving during the pandemic:

- ▶ **Remain flexible** to adjust to changing situations and deploy solutions quickly.
- ▶ **Set a vision** for the organization and always look ahead. In the case of CIP, it was "ensuring safety, maintaining the economy working". Also, having already invested in IT infrastructure to keep up with current technology trends.
- ▶ **Deploy existing capabilities** that for CIP translated in increasing its advocacy and communication efforts.
- ▶ **Listen to your members**. In CIP's own words, "decisions and actions come from listening to our base, to our members, and not from someone thinking hard behind a desk".
- ▶ **Context matters** in how you communicate, engage stakeholders and in which topics you have credibility.
- ▶ **Network locally, regionally, and globally**. CIP maintains key alliances at the local level with other confederations and business associations, it has presence in Brussels and works closely with Business Europe (i.e., a Confederation of European Businesses) and maintains a good relationship with ILO and other international entities.



11. Serbia

Serbian Association of Employers (SAE)



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The Serbian Association of Employers (SAE) has been operating since 1994. While multiple business organizations operate in Serbia, SAE is the only authorized EBMO in tripartite negotiations with the Social Economic Council of Serbia. As an EBMO, SAE represents close to 30% of total businesses in the country.

In Spring 2020, after the COVID-19 crisis had become global, Serbia held parliamentary elections, which derived in political unrest, followed by an announcement that

new elections were to take place in twenty months. For SAE that meant an environment of political leadership instability on top of the unprecedented health crisis. With a team of ten, SAE asked itself “what they could do? And, how could they go on?” The SAE case highlights key lessons for EBMOs looking to be resilient during periods of uncertainty. In their own words, “be a natural disaster, such as a tsunami, earthquakes, or floods as in the case of Serbia in 2014, or more recently

a virus, key lessons remain to face periods of crises and uncertainty”.

Lesson #1: Address the local challenges

SAE operates using a decentralized model. While SAE as an organization is based in the capital of the Country (Belgrade), throughout the years, it has adopted a system of local and regional chapters. One of SAE core activities is assisting local businesses to establish and maintaining such local EBMOs. For SAE, each

municipality and region possess its own idiosyncrasies in terms of businesses' needs and government regulations. With limited staff at HQ to respond to such local inquiries, SAE has focused on assisting the creation of local chapters by setting their governance mechanisms, advising on membership fees' structure, and providing technical, investigative and advocacy support. In turn, these local EBMOs offer SAE ears on the ground, a more representative structure, and membership fees. During the COVID-19 crisis, the capacity to establish local chapters was essential. An illustrative example is the case of Kladovo, which borders Romania and gives access to the Black Sea, a town with strong cross-border collaboration among businesses and high economic activity driven by tourism. As the borders closed, these exchanges were severed. Consequently, SAE assisted in setting a local EBMO to maintain and improve channels of communication across borders during the crisis and for the future, as well as to coordinate efforts in resuming operations and border movements.

Lesson #2: Acquire flexible hardware and software

For SAE, recognizing how vital the role of technology was in their survival and resilience was perhaps the clearest lesson. From March 2020 to June 2021, Serbia went in and out of lockdowns four times. SAE found itself lacking on certain IT processes that prevented it from a smooth transition to remote work. For instance, staff could not access the organization local server/database remotely and had to quickly contract the additional support of an external IT provider. Furthermore, SAE had recently renewed its staff's computers and working stations, given them the choice of laptop or desktops. Most of the staff had chosen desktops, which were hard to transport in the back and forward of the lockdowns. SAE is clear that

for its next computer renewal it will be more conscious on the mobility needs, which were harder to envision before the crisis. At the same time, not all staff, or members, had the same infrastructure at their localities, with steady supply of electricity and internet connection varying. Nevertheless, for SAE the pandemic allowed it to see that remote work is doable for organizations such as theirs that are less dependent on ground operations (e.g., manufacturing).

Lesson #3: Provide targeted support to your stakeholders

For SAE, flexibility and agility must be applied to all aspects of the organization during a crisis, from dealing with the board and members, to accommodating staff, deploying new services, and engaging in social dialogue. SAE, with direct engagement from the board, restructured its work by sectors as they learned of the different needs and requirements from members. SAE established four new sectors: trade, IT and telecommunications, real estate and marketing, and public relations and media. It also broke down its existing tourism work sector into tourism and hotels, and hospitality, to better accommodate diverse needs. In terms of staff and their responsibilities, SAE's management was fast in recognizing that not all employees had the same conditions at home to effectively work remotely (e.g., children, other family members, space) and worked with them to accommodate and assist.

As the recognized tripartite partner, SAE played an active role in social dialogue during the pandemic. As lockdown started, the Serbian Social Economic Council stopped meeting. SAE advocated for the resumption of such meetings and dialogue, but the Council was not able to accommodate virtual meetings for all its members. SAE acted by

having bipartite conversations with unions and other social partners and business stakeholders (e.g., chambers of commerce). This agility led to the presentation of 19 own initiatives to the government. Among those adopted were: 1) increasing non-taxable wage during the crisis, 2) financial relief to all businesses in the form of three minimum wages per employee, and 3) postponement of tax payments by two months in 2020 and allowing payment in 24 monthly installments starting from 2021.

Lesson #4: Multichannel communication based on knowing your members' needs

A cornerstone capacity and lesson for SAE was the ability to provide effective communication. As a SAE staffer puts it "you have to prioritize, but you have to respond in a timely manner. If you miss it, [communications] loses any sense". As the pandemic unfolded, SAE developed a prevention and control instructive document that was distributed to members to raise awareness about the virus, and to keep both workers and employers safe and informed. It also launched a COVID-19 specific website to keep relevant information and news. SAE highlights that during the most difficult months of COVID-19 for the country, while the organization was transitioning to remote work, it never stopped responding to members' inquiries or accepting invitations to speak to the media. SAE also conducted two surveys with ILO's assistance to better understand members' needs during the crisis. ILO have also assisted SAE in the past in hiring a communication firm to serve as spokesperson and media liaison. These efforts paid off, as in 2020 SAE was granted the "most communicative non-profit organization" award, competing in the same category as the Health Center of Serbia which is in charge of

COVID-19 information distribution (e.g., # of cases).

SAE, with its agile spirit, quickly adapted communication mechanisms to improve its operations. It learned that local chapters were using a specific communication software to exchange information. SAE adopted such tool among other communication apps. This allowed the EBMO to better understand the situation at the local level and raised it to national conversations.

Lesson #5: Learn from the past

In 2014, Serbia was hit by floods, registering the heaviest rains in more than 100 years. As the country recovered, ILO approached SAE to present their case on a similar effort

as this guide, titled “Multi-Hazard Business Continuity Management”. SAE sent the publication to its members as the COVID-19 crisis began and adopted its lessons itself on how to protect core business and services during hazardous times. Following the 2014 floods, SAE put in place Business Continuity Management (BCM) as a competency.

As an organization, SAE presents key lessons for EBMOs looking to improve their resilience. SAE emerged from the crisis stronger, increasing the rate of new members in 2020 by a factor of three and reducing loss of membership by a factor of five, while keeping revenues not substantially different from pre-crisis levels.

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