

# DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

29.06.20 | WEBINAR

# COPING STRATEGIES OF NGOS DURING COVID-19

## EVENT DETAILS

The CSSG held its 2nd webinar on Coping Strategies of NGOs during Covid19.

### Speakers included

- Megna Sundar, Student Volunteer in Peace Corp, Georgia and post graduate student at the University of Chicago,
- Anuradha Mohanty, Director at People's Cultural Centre (PECUC-Odisha), India,
- Le Van Son, PhD Student and Director at Gender, Family, and Community Development (GFCD-HaNoi), Vietnam,
- Newton Zulu of Alms Ovc Centre Vision (Ndola), Zambia,
- Samuel Blesson, PhD Student and Head of Emergency Relief at World Vision India.

The Chair and Moderator was Dr Ibrahim Natil of Dublin City University and the host was Dr Nita Mishra, University College Cork and Study Group Convenor.

## OVERVIEW

The focus of the webinar was to share NGO experiences in dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on their work, coping strategies adopted to continue/discontinue their work, and evidence-based suggestions for the sustainability of development interventions.

To have a continuity from the previous webinar on 'Do we still need NGOs?', Dr Natil chaired this webinar, linking both sessions through his own work and insights.

In Zambia, OvC was more concerned with impact of COVID-19 on their work, as below:

- During this period of COVID-19 the cost of running organization operations have gone up while our budget still remain the same and worse in most cases the funding has been cut or suspended. As a result this has constrained the organization staff to fail to meet the planned activities desired.
- Furthermore ALMS staff are affected with the high cost of living due to COVID-19 hence trickling down to the organization affecting their input as they are economically stressed.
- On the other hand due to restrictions posed by the government the communication mutual work relationship with the community and our organization has been cut since we are not allowed to gather or hold any meetings. This really has paralyzed our work as you know our communities can't afford even having phones.

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- Networking is another area our organization has been affected our work is interdependent with other institutions such as schools, clinics, police etc but during this period they have suspended operations with us shifting the attention to addressing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Donor funding has randomly been suspended or cut to half due to COVID-19 putting our organization under pressure resulting into reducing the number of staff or putting some staff on forced leave. In the daily run our programming is affected through in inadequate staff.
- Monitoring programs during this COVID-19 period is a challenge hence desired results are not been achieved.
- Referral and feedback in line of our stakeholders is ether delayed or not give due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- ALMS operations in the field fully depends on volunteers on the ground but due to COVID-19 this workable system has been temporary suspended hence it has put more pressure on the staff to try to narrow the gap which has been created.
- Inadequate or unplanned resources for acquiring gloves, masks, hand sanitizers has put our staff at risk as we don't have frequent supply and our budget line has nothing for COVID-19 protections.
- The government measures which have been put in place have badly affected our organization operations such as no gathering, social distance and the worst part is our communities are so much poor that they can't afford to buy face masks.

Le Van Son discussed the short-term and long-term impacts as follows-

- No project activities implemented from January 2020 to May 2020.
- All staff work from home (from 15 March – 1 May)
- High risk for reduction of funding from development countries.
- Jobless and reduction of incomes among migrant workers, they have low motivation to join the project activities.
- Pressure of local authority to address social issues and decrease the motivation to participation in the project activities.
- Risks to reduce funding from current project
- The withdrawal of Peace Corp volunteer staff impacted on the sustainability and capacity-building work in Georgia. These negative impacts are now mitigated through creative ways of online relationship building, e-organization and planning of activities.

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### Speakers discussed broad steps undertaken by them:

- NGOs stepped up efforts and were able to organize quickly and work with local governments to respond to the disease & the consequent socio-economic impact.
- Many organizations have reprogrammed & repurposed their human and financial resources for the emergency response work and recovery.
- Regular development programmes came to a halt due to critical needs that emerged from covid 19. Few programs planned previously became irrelevant.
- NGOs complemented the efforts of government, unique efforts taken to address stigma and discrimination, provision of health care supplies, screening symptomatic.
- NGOs prioritized initiatives for most vulnerable populations especially migrant informal workers without any social security cover or access to covid entitlements.
- Promoting preventive measures.
- Health systems strengthening and restoration of livelihoods top priority for next 12 months.
- NGOs adapted the situation by creating virtual platforms for providing care, awareness, education & other innovative mechanisms. Honourable SC, Niti Aayog, Government departments praised the work of NGOs.

### Others focused on nitty gritty details as outlined below:

- Awareness on safety measures at Community level
- Staff safety measures - Preparing guidelines & orientation to staffs & volunteers on safety measures for COVID19
- Information sharing on Govt. guide lines / safety measures at community level
- Psycho social counselling support to children, adolescents, youths, women, older persons at door step /Online Engagement of Children in creative activities
- Handling cases at community level – children & women
- Social Media Campaign
- Relief Operation
- Support to service providers - Masks, sanitizers, PPE kits etc.
- Linkage & convergence with Govt. provisionings.
- Coordination with Govt at each level, coordination with Local self-governance system i.e. Panchayati Raj institutions
- Support for income generation through supporting producing mask with persons with disability and women groups
- Networking & alliance building
- IEC material development & dissemination
- Honouring COVID19 warriors- Doctors/health professionals / Police/CSOs & own staff

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## COPING STRATEGIES

### Coping strategy for sustainability included:

- Build capacity to analysis of donors, and funding direction post COVID pandemic.
- Learning and sharing opportunities to understand key emerging issue and changing the roles of CSO post COVID pandemic.
- Facilitate CSO networks to share and learn experience and innovative globally and regionally to response COVID 19 from grassroots level.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Importance of nitty-gritty details was emphasized; for detailed discussions on coping strategies please refer to the resources.
- The role of affirmative actions taken by respective governments was discussed
- Suggestions for better policies were made based on evidence from the field were discussed.
- NGO participants decided to network to learn from each other.
- The Chair invited all panelists to contribute to his edited book on NGO interventions

## RESOURCES

- See resource web page for the power point slides of speakers for detailed information on the subject.
- <http://www.pecuc.org/>