Avian WE

DEVELOPMENT SECTOR:
ADAPTING TO THE NEW ECOSYSTEM IN THE COVID-19 ERA

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March 2021

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FOREWORD

In 2020, the world felt the damaging shockwaves that COVID-19 sent out. As we rebuild, it is fitting to acknowledge that the pandemic was not an "equalizer" by any measure. Lives and livelihoods were lost disproportionately, and we inched closer to greater inequalities. Our world has now changed, and become a lot worse for our marginalized and neglected populations.

The World Bank's biennial Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report of 2020 recorded these disheartening developments: gains in global poverty reversed for the first time in a generation, and that India alongside Nigeria houses the largest number of poor people in the world. For India to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #1, the status quo needs to be challenged, immediately.

A sense of urgency has certainly been felt by actors across the ecosystem – be it the national government, the private sector or NGOs, philanthropies and civil society organizations – causing them to pause and pivot towards rethinking strategies and approach. In the darkest of times over the course of the past year, we saw institutions unite and light the way ahead. If scientific and technological disruptions provided solutions to complex challenges, it was people and their empathy that served those right at the bottom of the pyramid. We saw that with a common motivation and by fanning sparks of innovation, truly brilliant things can happen.

This survey report "Development Sector: Adapting to the new ecosystem in the COVID-19 era" and its findings resonate with the philosophy that drives The Rockefeller Foundation. We have a decorated history of transforming the lives of all people and the planet, by accelerating breakthrough solutions and empowering populations. Even to meet this moment of extraordinary crisis presented by the pandemic, the Foundation convened unique and unlikely partnerships and spearheaded work towards achieving equity.

> "
> **By recognizing the hard – and often thankless – work undertaken by development institutions, this report is a resounding proof of the unbreakable human spirit.**

We commend the efforts of Avian WE's team in putting together this report. By recognizing the hard – and often thankless – work undertaken by development institutions, this report is a resounding proof of the unbreakable human spirit. While the pandemic may not have been an equalizer, it was certainly an enabler – of opportunities. The report showcases that while the transition was challenging for NGOs, they certainly optimized all their resources and forged collaborations to achieve excellent outcomes.

I am confident that the voices captured in this report will echo far and wide long after we overcome this pandemic. And I wish all the very best to all stakeholders interested in emulating these strategies, for the service of humanity.

Deepali Khanna
Managing Director of Asia Regional Office
The Rockefeller Foundation

ABOUT THE REPORT

COVID-19 has triggered an unparalleled level of crisis that has impacted every important aspect of our lives. Civil society organisations, working tirelessly to empower populations in vulnerable situations, found innovative ways to address the situation. With this survey, we are trying to gather relevant information that will be used to discuss new strategies, capacity building techniques and learnings in form of a survey report.

There are two parts of the report: **Section A** outlines the outcome of the survey, conducted in October 2020, of 101 individuals (middle-level to senior-level) from the development sector with credible years of experience. They were asked questions primarily on COVID-19's impact on organisational focus areas, how communications has streamlined their work and new opportunities that COVID-19 has created for their organisations in the form of adapting to new forms of digital tools, redesigning stakeholder communication, or using communications extensively for scaling impact.

Civil society organisations, working tirelessly to empower populations in vulnerable situations found innovative ways to address the situation.

Section B outlines in-depth interviews, conducted in October and November 2020, of leaders from organisations related to human rights, education, health and IT4D highlighting the change in paradigm of the development sector due to COVID-19, with special emphasis on how they have enabled partnerships, innovations and technology to redefine impact.

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SECTION A

Social Impact Study Results and Key Recommendations

SUMMARY

Section A of the report captures different experiences shared by middle-level to senior-level professionals in the development sector. These include organisational and financial challenges, programme and service delivery programme, employing different channels of communications and preference on authentic storytelling and new opportunities that COVID-19 created for them in the past few months. They have also shared a few recommendations that will be useful for similar organisations to continue their operations and adapt to the challenges that the crisis presents based on their learning. The key findings of the report are summarised into five main themes:

84%

agree that authentic storytelling can create an enabling environment for an organisation to accomplish its vision and mission.

1. Organisations face a financial challenge and predict it will continue in the long-run

The development sector has been deeply impacted by COVID-19. **63%** of the professionals indicated that their organisation will find it challenging to meet their donor retention numbers in the coming months and years, and **62%** say that they have already faced a decline in contribution from their major donors. But this has not stopped them from finding newer ways of fundraising to continue their passion of working for the society.

2. Programme delivery is not the same as before; there is an urgent need to build technical capacity

44% of the professionals have faced issues in delivery of programmes/services with their organisations and 38% of them have found difficulties in planning events/conferences with their internal and external stakeholders. Further, 36% said that jobs and salaries have been reduced. The professionals have prioritised expanding on their programme/service delivery (29%) channels for their beneficiaries and improving financial stability (29%), in addition to providing mental health support for their staff (26%).

3. Employed different channels of communication and storytelling as a preferred medium to accomplish its vision

Given the constraints due to social distancing and the impact of lockdown on mobility, these professionals took steps in finding innovative channels of communication for various stakeholders. 56% of them created learning spaces and webinars, and 46% of them increased the frequency of their communication to the stakeholders. It was interesting to note that 84% agree that authentic storytelling can create an enabling environment for an organisation to accomplish its vision and mission, reach out to its network and build allies to improve the programme's efficacy overall.

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4. New opportunities emerged in the form of partnerships, redesigning of stakeholder communication along with increased use of media

New working method opportunities emerged during COVID-19 and 42% of these organisations agreed that they have been successful in aligning it to the present times. Some of the opportunities included increasing use of media and social media to communicate with its stakeholders (41%), and new partnerships (36%) were also created.

5. Organisations have adapted to new digital tools and increased their partnership with other entities for knowledge-sharing to build its capacity

Organisations agreed to adopting new digital tools (59%), be it to conduct meetings or to implement its day-to-day programme service delivery. They have benefited from familiarising with tools enabling online meetings, as well as machine learning algorithms, to analyse data specific to their sector to a large extent. 44% of them agreed to have adopted in-building partnerships to share knowledge and enhance its own capacity, whereas 32% have agreed to have let staff undertake advanced training courses on data research and insights to plan better programmes.

> ## 59%
> of organisations agreed to adopting new digital tools, be it to conduct meetings or to implement its day-to-day programme service delivery.

Recommendations for the sector to adapt to the new normal

The professionals agree that they need to acclimatise to COVID-19 and in addition to agreeing to increase resources for fundraising (22%), they have opted to increase communication on social media as a key factor to continue operations and execute the vision of serving their beneficiaries.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

This section describes the impact of COVID-19 on the development sector around the five themes outlined above in detail:

1. Organisational and financial constraints

A large section of professionals (63%) agree that their organisation has faced challenges to meet their donor retention numbers. This concern is also reflected in their present state of finances within the sector. 62% agree that their organisation has already faced a decline in contribution from major donors (Figure 1). The other observation is when they have mentioned "overall decline in donations for the next financial year" (55%, sum of 18% + 37%; Figure 1). This is connected to the concern that there will be a long-term issue to meet donor retention numbers. However, we also see that a smaller proportion of professionals say that there will be an increase in the organisational budget for the next FY (41%), indicating that perhaps COVID-19 has led to a degree of pause on their organisational expansion (Figure 2). The present challenges have led to finding alternate methods of fundraising and 59% of them agree to this statement, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 1. When you think of the future of your organisation, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
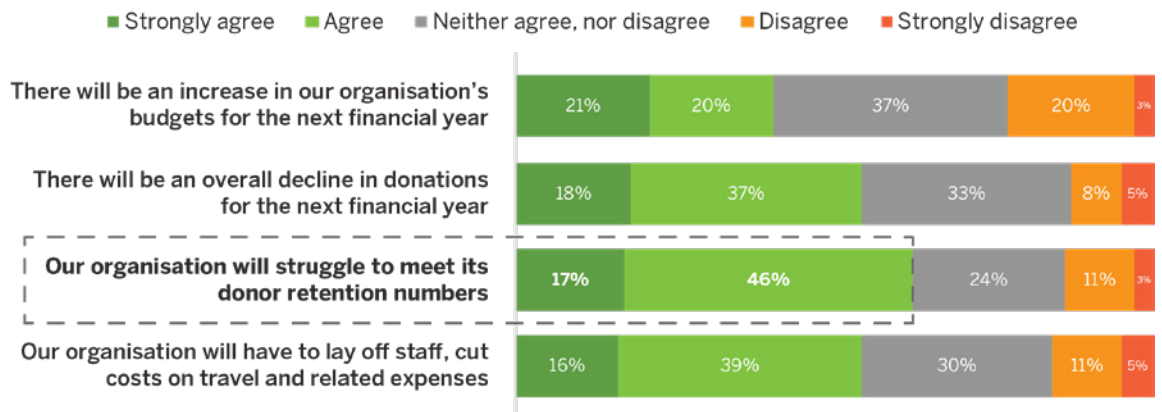
Figure 2. When you think of the current situation of your organisation, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
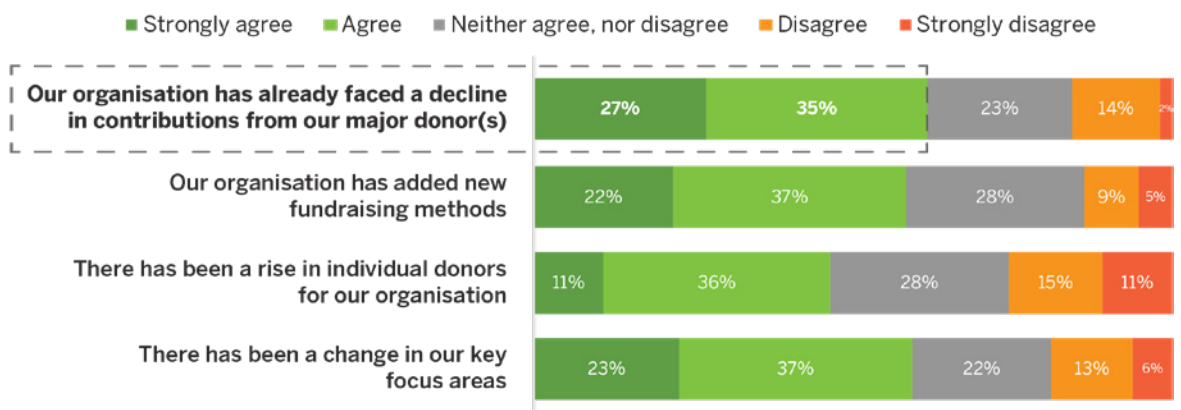
2. Affected and prioritised areas

In addition to financial challenges, organisations mentioned that their delivery of programmes and services **(44%)**, planned/calendared events/conferences **(38%)**, and jobs and salaries **(36%)** are the areas that were most affected by COVID-19 (Figure 3).
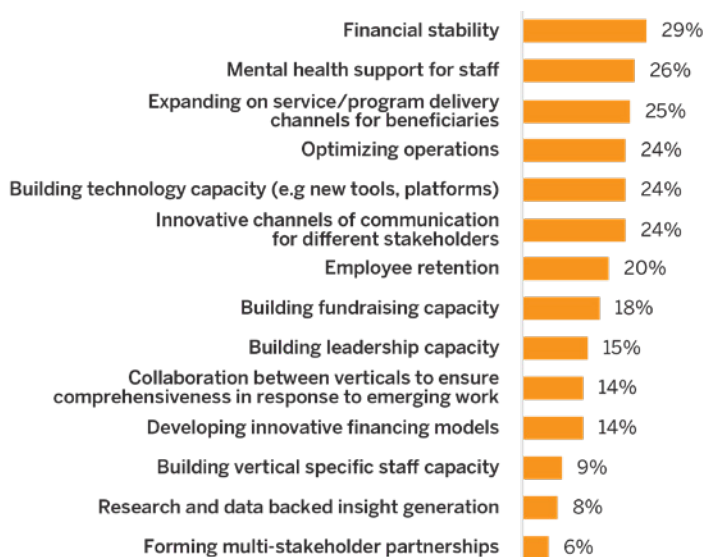
Corresponding to this, the priority areas for the organisations to sustain in the future are financial stability **(29%)** and expanding on programme and service delivery channels for their beneficiaries **(25%)**. Considering the lockdown and economic crisis have increased the uncertainty of day-to-day living, close to a quarter also indicates they have prioritised mental health support for staff **(26%)** and found innovative channels of communication for different stakeholders **(24%)** (Figure 4).

The lesser focus on research and data-backed insight generation, forming multi-stakeholder partnerships (necessary for scaling up) and ability to build fundraising capacity. This is perhaps indicative of their financial turmoil.

Figure 3. Which of the following areas in your organisation were affected due to the COVID-19 situation? Please select all that apply.

Delivery of service/functioning of programs	44%
Planned/calendared events, conferences	38%
Jobs and salaries	36%
Training of staff	34%
Donor engagement/fundraising	31%
Budget planning for the next few years	30%
Monitoring and evaluation	30%
Communications/outreach	24%
Ongoing partnerships	21%
Donations reaching on ground	21%
Strategic planning	20%
Corpus funds	17%
Not applicable, no area in our organisation was affected due to COVID-19	9%

Figure 4. Which among the following, if any, would you say have been prioritised in your organisation due to COVID-19? Select up to 3 responses

|	
Financial stability	29%
Mental health support for staff	26%
Expanding on service/program delivery channels for beneficiaries	25%
Optimizing operations	24%
Building technology capacity (e.g new tools, platforms)	24%
Innovative channels of communication for different stakeholders	24%
Employee retention	20%
Building fundraising capacity	18%
Building leadership capacity	15%
Collaboration between verticals to ensure comprehensiveness in response to emerging work	14%
Developing innovative financing models	14%
Building vertical specific staff capacity	9%
Research and data backed insight generation	8%
Forming multi-stakeholder partnerships	6%

3. Employing different channels of communication and story-telling as a preferred medium

Given the need for customised channels of communication, it is to interesting to see that more than half (56%) (Figure 5) indicate that their organisation has employed different channels of communication for various stakeholders through webinars and unique learning spaces. While **27%** indicate that their organisation has employed storytelling in their communications, **84%** (Figure 6) agree that authentic storytelling can create an enabling environment for an organisation to accomplish its vision and mission. This is a positive trend to note. As more organisations are becoming proactive in their outreach to stakeholders, there is scope of information to be shared around successes and learnings with like-minded organisations. This could indeed lead to future partnerships and collaborations in the sector and attend to beneficiaries' needs in these difficult times.

Figure 5. Thinking specifically about the role of communications with your donors and stakeholders,which of the following steps has your organisation already taken? Please select all that apply.

Figure 6. To what extent do you agree with the statement that authentic storytelling can create an enabling environment for an organisation to accomplish its vision and mission?
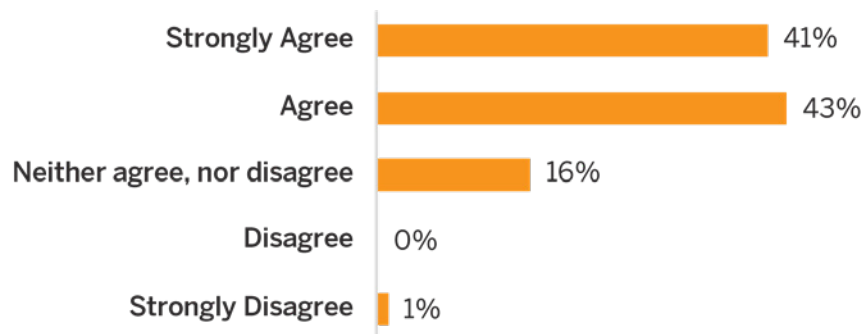
iStock / WINTERLINE PRODUCTION

4. Emergence of new opportunities for programme delivery and stakeholder communication

While challenges have emerged, COVID-19 has also created new opportunities. Organisations indicate that they have designed programmes that are aligned to COVID-19 (42%), redesigned stakeholder communication (41%) and increased strategic engagement on social media (39%) (Figure 7). This is largely because, although organisations located in urban areas could swiftly coordinate with their stakeholders despite the lockdown and restrictions, in rural areas, connectivity was limited and connecting with stakeholders was challenging, as programme delivery is mostly on ground. These nonprofit organisations were quick to fill this gap by leveraging social media to seek support from their network, and moved a portion of their programme service delivery online using WhatsApp, voice recordings and other platforms. The digital transformation has kept the organisations safe and healthy, and has continued to work by using technology from home, utilizing it to the fullest. They advocate that with a comparable strategy and investment in digital capabilities, the nonprofit sector has reaped substantial benefits.

Figure 7. Which among the following new opportunities, if any, would you say emerged because of COVID-19? Please select all that apply.

Aligned programs in response to COVID-19	42%
Re-designed our method of stakeholder communication	41%
Engaged strategically with media/social media to reach a wider audience	39%
Designed innovative initiatives/programs	38%
Created new alliances/partnerships	36%
Moved a portion of our service/program delivery online	27%
Created/hired for new roles within the organization	26%
Established efficient ways of resource mobilization	26%
Moved the ENTIRE service/program delivery online	22%
Not applicable. Our organisation has had no new opportunities created because of COVID-19	11%

Stakeholders speak on the opportunities created during COVID-19

"

We have started using **online services** for payment, using Aadhaar Card to check the misuse of funds so that the right person receives financial help through our programmes."

"

We started to increase focus on and support children's health-related programmes more than their education. We started to give small scale finance loans to women in need, who found difficulty earning 'daily wages,' and **we have minimised our purchase and kept funds aside for some more essentials** like medical expenses and food."

"

We channelised our resources to the worst-affected communities during the lockdown. We did receive some individual donations that helped us bridge gaps between the administration and public. That gave us an opening into government projects."

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5. Adoption of capacity-building techniques

COVID-19 has also ushered in other positive changes within the organisations. Adaptation of new digital tools (59%) and increased partnership for knowledge-sharing with organisations (44%) are among the top capacity-building techniques that emerged, as shown in Figure 8. We are seeing organisations' increasing interest in using tools and platforms such as webinars, video conferencing tools, machine learning and insights-gathering, as well as advanced training courses for staff on data research and future programming.

We can infer that there has been a significant development in staff and personnel knowledge of how to organise and conduct a webinar, or which online tools to use to collaborate with like-minded organisations. COVID-19 has, in a way, enabled organisations' interactivity, ability to respond swiftly in times of distress and foster peer-to-peer exchange.

Figure 8. Which of the following capacity building techniques, if any, have been adopted by your organisation during COVID-19? Please select all that apply.

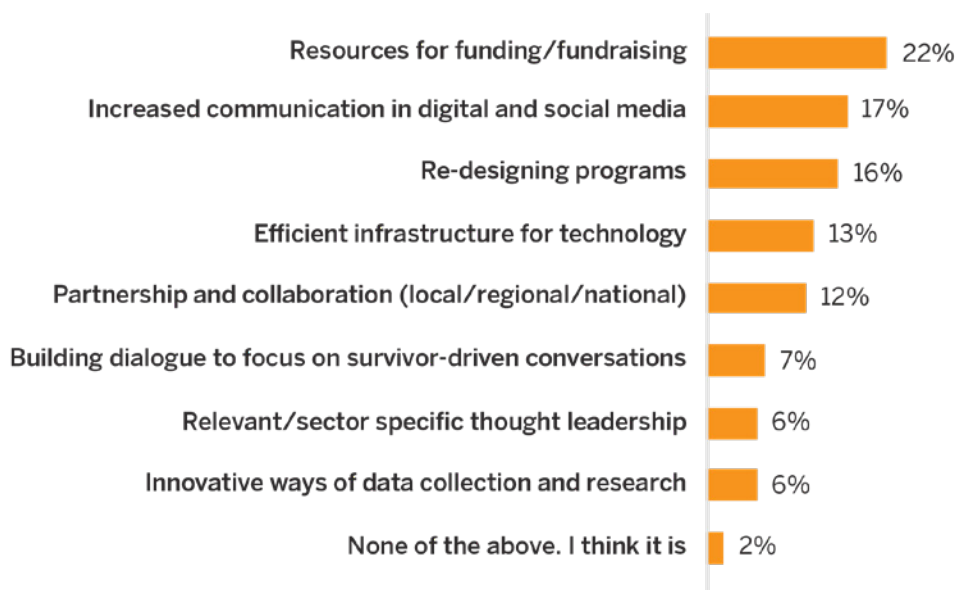| Technique	%
Adapting to new digital tools (e.g. Webinars, Microsoft teams, Zoom, gain insights using data, machine learning algorithms to detect diseases etc.)	59%
Partnership and cross sector collaboration for knowledge sharing with other organisations	44%
Advanced training courses for staff on data research and insights for future programming	32%
Adopting risk framework mechanism to detect early signs of distress to the organisation	32%
Providing financial management to use funds effectively	31%
Collaboration with partners to deploy emergency responses using radio and broadcast channels	29%
Others, please specify	2%
Not applicable. Our organisation has not adopted any capacity building techniques during COVID-19	15%

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Recommendations by the sector to adapt to the new normal

While COVID-19 has led to new opportunities and capacity-building exercises, 22% of the organisations reinforce that they would still need resources for funding and fundraising to emerge in the post-COVID-19 world. Additionally, 17% of these organisations also agree that increased communication on social media will be one of the key elements that would be needed to sustain communications in the long run (Figure 9).

We sense fear around limitations on funds by these organisations in the future. As the focus is more toward COVID-19 relief, donors and corporations are channelising their resources largely into this aspect, making it difficult for organisations to raise funds specific to their needs. They will continue to prioritise this over areas of operations. But not all is grey; the powers of digital and social media are of prime importance now. Organisations are leveraging it to its maximum potential to increase their communication with stakeholders, as well as sharing their learnings. The development sector largely works on community networks, and social platforms have proven to be more than just technology. It has enabled a shift in the way organisations are communicating, in terms of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Their approach is to be faster, work seamlessly, and as frontline workers, reach out to the community for aid and comfort.

Figure 9. Keeping in mind the current times, what do you think the non-profit world needs the MOST in order to emerge in the post-COVID-19 era? Please select only ONE response.

Resources for funding/fundraising	22%
Increased communication in digital and social media	17%
Re-designing programs	16%
Efficient infrastructure for technology	13%
Partnership and collaboration (local/regional/national)	12%
Building dialogue to focus on survivor-driven conversations	7%
Relevant/sector specific thought leadership	6%
Innovative ways of data collection and research	6%
None of the above. I think it is	2%

QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATIONS
OF OPPORTUNITIES CREATED DURING COVID-19

This section captures the opportunities that were created by few organisations across sectors in four areas:

1. Organisational (youth empowerment, education and child development sectors)

- Few organisations have launched an entrepreneur structure in which programmes and instructions are led by a single person in the state. The person then uses the organisation's existing network for support from volunteers and to execute the project. Organisations have become technologically efficient and have developed different financial strategies. They have also focused on building partnerships with different stakeholders.
- Some organisations have started to focus on and support children's health-related programmes followed by their education. They have also provided financial loans to women in need, who didn't receive daily wages. They have minimised expenses and kept money aside for essential needs, such as the hospital and food.
- Some channelised resources to the worst-affected communities during the lockdown. They did receive some individual donations which helped bridge gaps between the administration and the public. These led to an opening in government projects.

2. Training (public healthcare, early education)

- Trained all staff on different themes to make them collaborative in their work approach
- Provided regular technical support for the care of staff

3. Programmes/Service delivery (education)

- Organisations prepared and customised every module according to each stakeholder, resulting in easy delivery of lectures

4. Digital (women and gender, education)

- They have started online services for payment, using Aadhaar Card to check the misuse of funds to ensure that the right person is financially supported
- Most organisations have adopted digital technology with cultural programmes, online teaching and online training

Additional support

- Few organisations have helped people to quarantine in their establishment, due to classes being held online, the cost per session has been reduced by some organisations

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RECOMMENDATIONS
AND INFERENCES

COVID-19 made it difficult for all organisations, across sectors, to continue their operations smoothly on the ground. In most organisations, frontline workers were paid from their own pockets for services and rent. Considering these organisations do the maximum work at the grassroot, the absence of internet connectivity made it difficult for the frontline workers to connect and reach out to their beneficiaries. There were hurdles at the organisational, resource, technical and financial level. But, as we note from the interviews above, these senior professionals turned this difficult phase into an opportunity to collaborate and develop new partnerships, implementing work on ground, innovating programme delivery using technology, and increasing the use of media and social media to communicate their experiences, learnings and recommendations. Almost all have agreed that communication will be a significant and a prioritsed tool for the development institutes, mobilising programme delivery and sharing best practices. They have also employed storytelling as a part of their work model to showcase their outstanding efforts on service delivery, as well for support outreach. Some of the trends we see in the sector are highlighted below:

Almost all have agreed that **communication will be a significant and a prioritsed tool** for the development institutes, mobilising funds, executing programme delivery and sharing best practices.

Optimising use of technology to empower communities for social good

Technology has played an important role in executing the necessary work for social good — be it video communications for a webinar, mobile technology or even rural radio technology. All that was required was internet connectivity, a laptop or a

phone, and Microsoft Teams to connect, communicate and act across locations. A few examples are cited below:

> **It was never possible for me to meet everyone when I had visited any of the intervention regions earlier but now this has changed for the better. Conversations on the phone and digital media are more productive than ever before."**
>
> **Simran Shaikh, RWS**

Simran Shaikh of Rajmala Welfare Society said, *"COVID-19 brought them together virtually which had never happened in the past. Today, I can connect with the last-mile beneficiary, all the trainers, the frontline workers and the stakeholders. It was never possible for me to meet everyone when I had visited any of the intervention regions earlier, but now this has changed for the better. Conversations on the phone and digital media are more productive than ever before."*

Jyotsna Govil of Indian Cancer Society said, *"We had thought we would have time to contemplate and reorganise ourselves, but all the virtual activity has taken up our time. However, we are engaged in a major shake-up of ICS, with the aim of bringing all activity into alignment and consonance. COVID-19 has further highlighted technology's role in improving healthcare delivery and patient outreach. So, yes, technology has helped our Communication and Awareness groups. We are investigating the avenues for self-screening in cervical and oral cavity cancers."*

Geeta Dharmarajan of Katha said, *"Electricity or technology is not an option anymore. We must be disruptively innovative in whatever we are doing. Katha is working with raspberry file (it is like a hard drive with a monitor on top, and it has a Wi-Fi connection and a solar panel attached to it). We have tied up with an organisation in Bangalore to see how this can work. Katha aims to install these in the MCD schools we are working in, within the robotic labs which we have set up in schools. It will cost 900 rupees per piece. They will be loaded with content and will be given in all the areas we work, such as the tribal villages or remote areas where there is no electricity. This will be done until the government takes more decisive steps towards having the fibre optics in place and makes digital and internet services in learning a reality."*

Vijay Sai Pratap of Gram Vaani said, *"Our discussion relies on reports and testimonies of hundreds of users of the Mobile Vaani platform, a voice-based participatory media service running in several districts in rural North India and urban industrial locations."*

Also, an official from a social venture focused on environment and climate change issues said, *"In India, thousands of villages depend on forest resources for livelihood. But many of them will be displaced and have already been displaced due to deforestation. To address this, we are creating a database and groups for tribal communities through satellite imagery, which will help them prove their identity, ownership over land and social entitlements. So, we are using technology to empower communities. There is a possibility that the wetlands and mangroves can be protected through digital and satellite mapping to prevent encroachment. There are some organisations working to showcase real-time air quality through monitors and providing information through digital devices. This is helping in decision-making for people. Thus, advanced technologies will help us advance the efforts to bring about social good."*

"

To ensure our children continue to have access to learning, we set out to secure devices for 1500 students. 66%, or 1000, of our students now have a device provided by iTeach Schools. This was achieved through the support of both new organisations and earlier funding partners, who believe that education cannot wait and have recognised our commitment and efforts for the most under-resourced children in Pune."

Soumya Jain
iTeach Schools

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Collaborations and partnerships are key to ensure impact at scale especially during crisis

The response to provide relief measures has been a collaborative effort. The way in which civil society, stakeholders and non-government organisations have responded to COVID-19 reinforces the power of partnerships. COVID-19 has been a phase of learning in understanding the gaps in our society. The efforts taken by all are a testament to the collective articulation of social responsibility towards targeted beneficiaries. A few examples are cited below:

Anjali Gopalan of Naz and All Creatures Great and Small (ACGS) said, *"Collaborations have been an integral part of our way of work. We partner with regional NGOs and organisations to carry out programmes on ground. For example, we were lucky enough to be able to raise ration support from new donors for those from the communities we serve."*

Neelam Makhijani of ChildFund India said, *"At the field level, collaborative work took place with the panchayats and the district government. ChildFund India's frontline workers worked with the district government. At a strategic level, it was working with larger platforms such as COVID Action Collaborative, American Chamber of Commerce in India (AMCHAM), Niti Aayog and Sphere. Our COVID-19 intervention was implemented in close collaboration with the local government authorities, especially panchayats and district administration. We have implemented all our activities with prior information and permission from the district administration. The delivery has been done with the support of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and its members. It has also been developing local capacities of mothers, teachers, village committees and panchayats so that children know where to go for support by closely working with the community-based organisations such as youth groups, mothers' groups, disaster risk and resilience (DRR), child protection committees and local governance structures. This strategy is sustainable and locally viable with cost effectiveness."*

Soumya Jain of iTeach Schools said, *"To ensure our children continue to have access to learning, we set out to secure devices for 1500 students. 66%, or 1000, of our students now have a device provided by iTeach Schools. This was achieved through the support of both new organisations and earlier funding partners, who believe that education cannot wait, and have recognised our commitment and efforts for the most under-resourced children in Pune. We have also worked closely and learnt from educators in our partner organisations in the region. They have immersed themselves into our iTeach Master Classrooms as students for 60-minute workshops and taken back the best practices. We have also showcased our expertise at national and international platforms earlier in this month."*

> **Collaborations have been an integral part of our way of work. We partner with regional NGOs and organisations to carry out programmes on ground. For example, we were lucky enough to be able to raise ration support from new donors for those from the communities we serve."**
>
> **Anjali Gopalan**
> **Naz and ACGS**

Emphasis on storytelling to effectively communicate organisational learning

Geeta Dharmarajan rightly said that "Communication is key and not just limited to raising money." Collaboration will happen only when organisations communicate effectively about its work to others. From our findings, we see that senior professionals have emphasised the importance of communication, whether sharing their challenges, their experiences on ground or to bring attention to issues that they believe in. During COVID-19, NGOs have realised that working in silos is not feasible in the long run and collaboration is possible when organisations stay in touch. Communicating effectively during a crisis provides another opportunity to remove any public mistrust associated with the development sector. Some specific insights on storytelling are as follows:

> Geeta Dharmarajan rightly said that "Communication is key and not just limited to raising money." Collaboration will happen only when organisations communicate effectively about its work to others.

For Soumya Jain of iTeach Schools, using the right platform to speak about his organisation's challenges and opportunities is beneficial, as it spreads awareness among stakeholders and the public. He said that advocacy, reforms, and positive impact will be delayed if there is no awareness about the education crisis in India. It is important to get the government's attention to speed up reforms, and that is possible if organisations are actively sharing their stories. Proactive communication leads to hands-on work, considering this sector is perennially under-resourced. iTeach and other organisations have benefited from hundreds of volunteers who contributed their time and skills to considerably reduce the workload during crisis

For Geeta Dharmaraj, "Storytelling is an ancient communication mode of our history and going back to history is important. It is the story that is important for Katha and storytelling is a tool used to put that across. Listening, speaking (storytelling), reading and writing are the four metrics for learning in Katha. Katha has added storytelling because it is the basis of all learning."

Sumathi Rao of Arogya Trust echoes the part that communications are integral for knowledge-sharing. She believes that localised content can highlight challenges and solutions in a transparent manner, and support private companies and government in aligning their programmes with community needs.

NGOs are facing multiple dilemmas during COVID-19. As Vijay Sai Pratap of Gram Vaani rightly puts it, "Sharing our learnings, failures and achievements, be them big or small, would be extremely important," as communication can pave the way for collective action to support in times of distress. Most sectors are finding it challenging to be sustainable during unprecedented times, and besides depending on general survival strategies, no organisation has any former experience of handling this situation. Sharing learnings for the interest and well-being of other institutions in this ecosystem is critical. The role of communications will be increasing for organisations, and as they continue to access positive and inspiring stories, they will benefit, saving resources and time. Now is the time for organisations to huddle; together they can surmount the uncertainty with a combined approach of "empathy, collaboration and co-opetition."

"Sharing our learnings, failures and achievements, be them big or small, would be extremely important," as communication can pave the way for collective action to support in times of distress. Most sectors are finding it challenging to be sustainable during unprecedented times, and besides depending on general survival strategies, no organisation has any former experience of handling this situation. Sharing learnings for the interest and well-being of other institutions in this ecosystem is critical."

Vijay Sai Pratap
Gram Vaani

Getty Images / Yawar Nazir

LEADING THE WAY FORWARD

Since India had imposed stringent restrictions, the development sector faced issues and was lending support on the ground within manageable limits. The repercussions of limited funds, resources and physical mobility have had a severe impact on their existing problem areas.

With the idea of better understanding the crisis and to inform the larger audience on the sector's learnings within and beyond COVID-19, we undertook this survey. We assessed the impact of the crisis on these organisations, their perception of the efforts undertaken to resolve the crisis, either with collaborative partnerships or technology, and lastly their perception of storytelling as a key model for external support, as well as a method of driving impactful work.

Our findings show that the change-makers, as well as the survey respondents, have led the way ahead, carving their own path, despite the hurdles. There were some who managed fixed costs, being judicious and conserving money, keeping in mind this was going to be a long haul. They decided to take a step back and learn from the present situation, knowing that it will help leadership build muscles for the future. Others learnt that their strategies can never be static, and they need to have their ears on the ground constantly to stay in sync with ever-changing market dynamics, adapting fearlessly. Like leaders across different industries, many in the development sector realised the importance of technology and how, if used appropriately, they can reduce disparity and asymmetry in access to information and services. They realised that online sessions helped them connect with different volunteers and beneficiaries across the country, and saved travel and coordination time, increasing productivity. Above all, what stood out was keeping the humanitarian perspective when making decisions, catering to the new normal. There is a deep-rooted concern that the inhumanity and indignity faced by the underprivileged in this situation should not be repeated.

Above all, what stood out was keeping the humanitarian perspective when making decisions, catering to the new normal.

Still, while change-makers do not know what the future holds, they are willing to build a resilient network of partners to share common learnings, working together for vulnerable communities and providing a safety net from COVID-19's impact. They are on the frontline and their contribution, to meet the needs of beneficiaries across sectors of education, health, environment, gender, community rights and others, will always be immeasurable. The takeaways from this crisis will remind change-makers about the constancy of change, and how necessity is the mother of invention when it comes to being innovative in uncertain times. As we know, the lesser traveled road sometimes leads to beautiful destinations, and this time, hopefully, it will be for the underprivileged, too.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Contribution of survey respondents and interview participants

This report presents the perspectives of prominent professionals belonging to NGOs, social enterprises, foundations and international organisations in the development sector across major cities and networks in India. We would like to thank each one of them for participating in the survey and sharing their experiences with us. The names of respondents that filled the survey (Section A of the report) are confidential. We are also grateful to the following for sharing their valuable perspectives with us through an in-depth questionnaire that is detailed out in Section B of the report: Aniket Doegar (Haqdarshak), Anjali Gopalan (Naz Foundation, All Things Great and Small), Geeta Dharmarajan (Katha), Jyotsna Govil (India Cancer Society), Neelam Makhijani (ChildFund India), Somya Jain (iTeach Schools), Vijay Sai Pratap (Gram Vaani), Sarita Yadav (UNESCO), Sumathi Rao (Arogya World, Tamahar Trust), Baidurya Sen (Alokit), Simran Shaikh (Rajmala Welfare Society), Sudarshan Suchi (Save the Children), and a senior official from an environment and social venture firm. All responses are views of the organisations and respondents we collated for the survey report.

Contribution to survey and data analysis

YouGov is an international research data and analytics group headquartered in London, with a fully-fledged online panel across 42 countries. We would like to express our gratitude to the team for lending their support in administering a detailed survey questionnaire to 101 individuals, primarily from sectors of public health, environment, skill development, livelihood, agriculture, youth development, environment, governance, gender, migrant workers, relief and rehabilitation, and disability and education. This report has been substantiated with key findings and recommendations, using the team's expertise on data and response analysis.

AVIAN WE'S WORK
IN SOCIAL IMPACT

When COVID-19 hit last year, few could have fathomed the large-scale social and economic disruption it would cause. It exposed the inequalities of the world, bringing into focus issues such as a lack of access to human rights, financial aid, livelihoods and basic entitlements. At the same time, the pandemic brought people together, nurturing empathy and fostering partnerships and coalitions. It allowed for the development of a collaborated movement wherein civil society organization, subject-matter experts, citizens and governments came together to contribute in an impactful and measurable manner, enabling change wherein it was most needed.

In this context, Avian WE, a global communications organization working in the space of social impact over the past 10 years, connected with NGOs to understand the pandemic's challenges. The results of this survey and one-on-one in-depth interviews of development professionals have been captured in this report.

At the same time, the pandemic brought people together, nurturing empathy and fostering partnerships and coalitions.

Over the last 10 years, Avian WE's social impact practice has had a good fortune of working with organisations addressing a plethora of issues:

• Health - nutrition, mental health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, WASH and road safety

• Environment - e-waste management, plastic waste management, air pollution, sustainable production of tea and biodiversity

• Human rights - leprosy affected people, people living with HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, child protection and LGBTQIA rights

• Education and livelihood - women empowerment and girl child education

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Avian WE

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SECTION B

Change-makers stepping up to respond to new normal

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

This section showcases responses from 13 leaders from India's credible development organisations on questions related to their organisational challenges and the measures taken to address them. They shared information about their ability to cope with the situation, the importance of communication in conveying the right message to stakeholders, garnering support and sharing their success stories, and lastly, recommending ways to pause, pivot and act as per the situation. These professionals have been chosen for their outstanding dedication and continued passion on sectors related to health, ICT4D, education, gender rights and the environment. All interviews were conducted in October and November 2020.

ANIKET DOEGAR

Designation: CEO and co-founder
Organisation: Haqdarshak Empowerment Solutions Private Limited
Sector: Civic tech

हक़दर्शक
Haqdarshak

1. What is your present sector of work?

Haqdarshak enables easy access to welfare schemes at the last mile; it leverages technology and community-based field agents.

2. Which areas within your organisation were affected due to COVID-19?

Our organisation was affected on-field and at the team front. Field delivery is most important for our organisation — all our deliverables, growth and payments are linked to our on-field delivery. Most team members were used to working from the field, so sudden restriction on movement and working solitarily created adaptability issues and affected morale.

3. What measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

We had to consider alternative strategies for completing our targets, like online applications and outreach via the helpline we set up. We also launched our Haqdarshak app on the Google Play Store; this allows citizens to get scheme information in 11 languages and reach out to us for more information. In terms of keeping up team morale, we strengthened communication across verticals. We started daily calls about various themes so the information flow was consistent.

4. What effective strategy do you recommend to the rest of the stakeholders in the development sector so they can emerge from organisational, resource or technical challenges?

Adopting technology is nonnegotiable — we need to be agile and think on our feet with multiple strategies and innovations. Working as a team with common goals is key. For this, the communication across the team needs to be fluid.

5. What opportunities, innovations, disruptions OR positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID-19?

We were able to launch our app on the Google Play Store due to citizens' demand for scheme information during COVID-19. We diversified our offerings and launched our MSME-focused services during COVID-19. This was also a result of the massive business degrowth that micro and small enterprises experienced due to multiple lockdowns across the country.

6. Give us an example of the work undertaken by your organisation on collaborations or partnership efforts and define its success or learning.

Haqdarshak is working with the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) to link 50,000 women beneficiaries with eligible welfare entitlements. The focus is to enable women's ability to unlock benefits of schemes to support themselves and their families during COVID-19. Although the project is ongoing, the total benefit value unlocked by women as of October 2020 was Rs.81.56 crores. In the process, we have also built a cadre of women support agents and created livelihoods for over 210 women. The project locations include Delhi NCR, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Odisha, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh.

> "
> We think that following COVID-19, NGOs and civil society organisations will have an increased responsibility in creating tangible impact for the underserved.

7. Please share your views on the possibility of NGOs' role expansion in civil society post-crisis.

We think that following COVID-19, NGOs and civil society organisations will have an increased responsibility in creating tangible impact for the underserved. Innovative, sustainable models with a focus on livelihood and income generation in rural areas, affordable healthcare, and social security will be critical and the need of the hour.

8. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes and learnings with like-minded organizations. What are your views on the role of communications in showcasing the development sector's learnings to the larger network?

Communicating the on-ground impact is very crucial for the development sector. Also, collaborating with other ecosystem participants for communication assets gives leverage to organisations trying to increase their reach.

9. How much emphasis does your organisation put on communications, and what are your suggestions to storytellers looking to create social impact during COVID-19?

Our communication strategy is focused on showcasing impact straight from the ground. We also focus on numbers and quantitative impact like the return on investment, number of livelihoods we are creating and the actual value of the tangible impact our work creates for our clients.

ANJALI GOPALAN

Designation: Founder & Executive Director (Naz Foundation), Managing Trustee (AGCS)
Organisation: Naz Foundation and All Creatures Great and Small (ACGS)
Sector: Health and animal rights

1. What is your present sector of work at Naz Foundation and All Creatures Great and Small?

At the Naz Foundation, we continue to do our HIV prevention and care related services. One piece is the orphanage and care home for HIV-positive children, and the other is advocacy, which includes sensitisation of stakeholders and counseling for those seeking guidance and support. We also have a flagship programme titled "The Young People's Initiative" (YPI) which uses sport and life skills education to transform the lives of economically disadvantaged adolescent girls and young women. The programme empowers adolescent girls living in urban areas by ensuring their personal and economic development, offering them knowledge and a safe place to play. At ACGS, we continue to provide care to the in-house animals in distress.

2. Which areas within your organisation were affected due to COVID-19?

Naz: Considering the YPI programme is mostly sports-based, it has come to a standstill. Sessions and meetings for young girls in schools have halted due to school closures. Regarding funding, our donors have been supportive and committed to the cause. This has really helped ensure there are no job losses, salary holds, etc.

ACGS: Due to COVID-19, the influx of animals (old, sick and abandoned) has increased dramatically. Lockdown resulted in the closure of a lot of hotels and restaurants, affecting the food supply for animals on the streets. So, the operational costs of providing quality care and nutrition have skyrocketed.

3. What kind of measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

Naz: We have upgraded to conduct HIV and sexuality counseling sessions and advocacy on online platforms. For the YPI programme, we are conducting life skill sessions for young women on digital media, covering financial literacy, health and peer pressure. Although I prefer physical sessions for better engagement and understanding, the digital medium of connection has become the new norm and we have to manage it.

ACGS: The operations at ACGS are being taken care of largely by my personal resources, so the costs are being met. In addition, we have launched a crowdfunding fundraiser on Milaap to raise funds, providing for the existing, as well as the recent influx, of abandoned and distressed animals. We are also switching to sustainable ways of energy consumption, so we can cut our monthly operational costs without worrying about financial support in the years to come.

4. What effective strategy would you recommend to the rest of the stakeholders in the development sector for recovery from organisational, resource-related or technical challenges?

For most NGOs, organisational resources are difficult to raise and often donor-dependent. We must find ways to survive in the situation arising from COVID-19, and the rapidly changing political scenario that is making it difficult for NGOs and civil societies to function. A lot of CSR funding is going to PM Cares, so outreach for donations

must be stepped up. We have to change the mode of delivering services in order to convince donors that the work is still continuing, and that their support is critical in providing ongoing services to marginalised communities. It is important to be prepared for the upcoming challenges that we might face at the operational level.

5. What kind of opportunities, innovations, disruptions OR any positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID-19?

With COVID-19, we learnt to work differently. We now know it is possible for us to deliver programmes and services in the situation created by the lockdown. The world has gone digital, which has saved a lot of travel and physical coordination time. I had never thought of conducting online sessions or meetings, because personal or physical sessions are always more effective and engaging. However, we are doing our work using digital mediums now, as this is what it takes to survive in the current situation, and digital communication is the future for most industries. In addition to this, a lot has changed positively in the way people maintain hygiene and social distance, which could not be thought of without COVID-19.

> **It is important to be prepared** for all the upcoming challenges that we might face at the operational level."

6. Give us an example of the work undertaken by your organisation on collaborations or partnership efforts, and define its success or learning.

Collaborations have been an integral part of our work. We partner with regional NGOs and organisations to carry out programmes on ground. For example, we were lucky enough to raise ration support, for those from the communities we serve, from new donors.

7. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes, and learnings with like-minded organisations. What are your views on role of communications in showcasing development sector's learnings in the larger network?

We have closely worked with media, as their role is imperative in showcasing the truth. We all agree that the NGO sector could have a bad reputation. However, like any other sector, there is the "good" and the "Bad." I believe good stories need to be reflected through all kinds of communication channels. For example, look at the way stories were reported on homosexuality in the early '90s reflecting homophobia, and how they have transformed over the decades. It has helped us a lot in bringing an attitudinal change to the masses.

8. How much emphasis does your organisation put on communications and what are your suggestions for storytellers so they can create social impact during COVID-19?

Whether during COVID -19 or not, the role of communications is eternally important when it comes to presenting the reality of any system. There is a prevalent belief that NGOs are corrupt, but it is not fair to tar the entire sector with one brush. Given the scope of the problems one has to deal with, NGOs can only show what will work. To take programmes to scale, we need the buy-in of the government. Very often, people hold themselves back because they see the problem as being too huge. Storytellers can make them understand that change is possible through individual efforts.

MS. GEETA DHARMARAJAN

Designation: President
Organisation: Katha
Sector: Education

1. What have been the key focus areas for Katha this year since the beginning of COVID-19? Were there any changes made to your organisation's objectives and deliverables?

At Katha, our key focus areas are publishing quality books for children, especially from underserved communities, and working in education with children living in poverty. Yes, there have been several changes due to COVID-19, and the categories are as follows:

Publishing: Working with technology has been the main change, as all books have been converted to e-books. On April 2, 2020, Katha published a book called "The Mystery of the Missing Soap" in five languages. It taught children how to make their own soap; the book went viral and was later turned into a film. This was also given out to the community by Katha. We started by giving out essentials, such as soap and other provisions, in the community by collecting money.

Work with the government: Katha also worked with the government to provide provisions, which is now happening on a regular basis.

Changes in the educational approach: There were changes in imparting education, but this has happened over the last four years, as Katha has been trying to use technology as a lever. Our teachers and volunteers have learnt how to use technology in community schools to address existing challenges. Based on the surveys we conducted in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi, solutions were worked on. Hence, when COVID-19 hit us, Katha was immediately able to swing into action. The teachers were also trained accordingly via Zoom. The manner in which faculty club meetings were held swiftly changed from on ground to online. At present, Katha is working with 15,000 children in Delhi and Haryana, and with UP government school students.

New initiative for migrant workers: Katha started a centre in Tamil Nadu that became active in helping migrant labourers travel from their existing locations to their native villages. We helped in procuring food and water packets for the workers if they were going by train. When it was by foot, we provided them with food and also found places for them to stay. In addition, permissions for them to enter an area were taken care of by Katha.

Engaging with tribal communities: The Irulars of Tamil Nadu were completely left out because they did not belong to any political party and were not getting food supplies. So, Katha adopted three Irular villages, planted 250 trees, and each village was also given a small vegetable patch to cultivate. The Katha School of Entrepreneurship and Katha Lab School are being set up there in coordination with the district collectors. We have started the Katha Irular Network of Storytellers to revive their identity, as most of them were bonded labourers who have never gone to school, and their children have also not gone to school.

Changes in learning with technology: The 300 Million Challenge has partners across the country and it is helping children learn. The first learning has been about COVID-19 and how to keep yourself safe; this connected children and communities across the country using radio channels and web platforms. The strategy that is being used here is called LEAP (leverage, engage, advocate and partner). The strategy is being used to ensure

the resources developed over the last 30 years are being leveraged, put into the hands of people who really need them, and are translated into as many languages as needed. Katha now has more than 100 partners.

2. As a development sector leader, what do you think, in general, are the disruptions or opportunities that have emerged during this time?

Disruption: We have understood that we need to share and be more caring. While preparing to be a country leading change in the world, we forgot about basic humanity and being humanitarian. The inhumanity and indignity faced by the people who are poor should never happen again. That is one disruption that happened, and we have learned that this is not the way to go. Even as organisations, we are chasing money, and we had forgotten that our basic principle must be about being humane and wishing peace and wellness for all, "Lokaa Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu." This realisation has been enlightening and is creating the opportunities, as well as disruptions.

> "
> We have understood that we need to be more caring and sharing and while heading towards becoming a country that is preparing to be leading change in the world, we forgot about basic humanity and being humanitarian."

Opportunity: Opportunities have happened as people have started working from home — more time is being given for work and creative thinking. This is a good opportunity, and innovation is encouraged more frequently. Now, we have more time to focus on knowledge, action and collective innovation.

New National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: The NEP was announced, and Katha has started NEP compliance, or readiness, and training for the people involved with us.

It is happening in English and Hindi and will be translated into different languages. While, in many ways, it looks like NEP is for people who have the money for training, Katha aims to initiate it at the grassroots and change things around. NEP has stated a good things and to put them to action, a huge shift must happen; such seismic shifts will take a few years.

3. As an organisation working in education, as you know, many children do not have access to learning tools, mobile phones or computers. In what ways are they being assisted?

Bag of happiness and solo flyers: This is going to take some time, but technology is being used to the fullest by TV and hand-held speakers, among other items. Katha has introduced "a bag of happiness" which has five books in it, some worksheets and crayons. We have trained 40,000 women in the communities; when they have their phones with them, out of the 40,000, those who came forward were trained to be "solo flyers" (self-learning orbits) and have one learning orbit. This means that if one is good with preschool children, or on issues such as cleanliness, then they are in that learning orbit. They are being trained by a mentor, and once they are prepared, they move to the next circle. This way, one person teaches another within the community. If each child can teach another child, transforming that child's life by bringing learning into their life, then our country can quickly implement universal primary education.

4. In your view, how can technology be harnessed for social good and community empowerment?

Leveraging the raspberry file: Electricity or technology is not an option anymore. We must be disruptively innovative in whatever we are doing. Katha is working with raspberry file (it is like a hard drive with a monitor on

top, and it has a Wi-Fi connection and has a solar panel attached to it). We have tied up with an organisation in Bangalore to see how this can work. Katha aims to install these in the Municipal Corporation Development (MCD) schools we are working in, within the robotic labs which we have been set up in schools. It will cost 900 rupees per piece. They will be loaded with content and will be given in all the areas we work, such as the tribal villages or remote areas where there is no electricity. This will be done until the government takes more decisive steps towards having the fibre optics in place and makes digital and internet services in learning a reality.

5. We have seen that many organisations have been struggling with funding, as most of the funding and focus has gone to COVID-19 relief. What are the areas in resource allocation that need to be looked at now, and what do people giving aid need to look at now?

The primary focus areas are multi-fold and are as follows:

Climate change: Climate change needs to be a focus and has to be tackled immediately, as that is what is creating COVID-19 and COVID-19-like diseases. Tomorrow, climate change could lead to other diseases. A lot of money in India does not go there because we are in the middle of charitable mode of thinking and want to invest little amounts into the same old initiatives. Children need to inherit a world where climate change is not an issue. We need to trust people will invest in larger focus areas.

Compassionate government: Second, is the need for a compassionate society where there is kindness. A compassionate society is not visible today, even though there is talk about the presence of such a society. Our government needs to show more compassion and there needs to be more engagement from the government. Also, it is not government's responsibility alone, every single political party should be handling this situation. There are people without jobs and there needs to be equal distribution of wealth. This is why we have the **300 Million Challenge,** a citizen's initiative, because unless the citizens come together, we cannot be more caring, and unless we have a caring government, the last mile cannot be reached.

6. The story is at the core of Katha's ideology; and as Katha works both in the areas of the story and storytelling, do you believe that communication is an important part of the outreach for Katha?

Storytelling is an ancient communication mode of our history and going back to history is important. It is the story that is important for Katha and storytelling is a tool used to put that across. Listening, speaking (storytelling), reading and writing are the four metrics for learning in Katha. Katha has added storytelling because it is the basis of all learning. Story pedagogy is extremely important. Many aspects of NEP suggest that we go back and see how India, communities and children learned. Research needs to be done on this to understand how storytelling became so important in our lives, by building value systems or building character. Today, Social media has gone back to storytelling. Everyone, whether it is McKinsey or Harvard, is talking about storytelling. Historical, vertical and linguistic culture-linking is important. Everything, including dance, theatre, visual and performing arts, has storytelling involved. Therefore, we need to go back and say that our storytelling is our USP. Katha's storytelling is based on the Bharata's Natyashastras, which are 2,000-year-old treaties. We can go back and find what is relevant for today's world; there are solutions within the story.

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Listening, speaking (storytelling), reading and writing are the four metrics for learning in Katha.

Katha has added storytelling because it is the basis of all learning. Story pedagogy is extremely important. Many aspects of NEP suggest that we go back and see how India, communities and children learned."

Ms. Geeta Dharmarajan
President of Katha

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MS. JYOTSNA GOVIL

Designation: Vice Chairman
Organisation: Indian Cancer Society, (ICS) Delhi
Sector: Health

1. What have been the key focus areas for the Indian Cancer Society during COVID-19?

ICS Delhi works on three verticals: awareness, cancer screening and patient support. During COVID-19, the following digital mediums were used to carry out our areas of work:

- We switched rapidly to using digital technology — Zoom for meetings, webinars and office consultations became the order of the day to spread knowledge on cancer awareness.

- Two 6-week internship programmes were carried out. One was for the students of Business Management, and the second was on social media for younger students on technical aspects of campaigns.

- Our annual school competition on World No-Tobacco Day was also organized online for the first time. On May 31, 2020, 153 students participated in poster and poem competitions in three age groups.

- We used Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. actively to spread cancer awareness messages.

- Our annual seminar was converted into three webinars titled The Enigma of Cancer. Each one handled one of our three major concerns — breast, cervix and oral cavity.

- Ongoing patient engagement.

Additionally, with hospitals shut in March and April, and limited clinics for only present patients, our hospital visitor teams have not been allowed to visit. As cancer survivors themselves, their immunity has already been compromised.

We also carried out activities in the following areas:

Telecounseling: This included giving information on hospital transport and living accommodation for outstation patients. None of these facilities are directly provided by us.

Medical assistance: We offer a small amount of financial assistance to patients. This covers surgery, radiation and chemotherapy drugs. It also caters for initial diagnostic tests.

- Medical bras and prosthesis for women who have undergone mastectomy. Any woman can come to our facility, Prashanti, for these services at highly subsidised prices.

- Cancer-screening

- We have been unable to conduct screening camps in Delhi and in the NCR region. Our outreach programme in Vrindavan is also on hold. However, our Cancer Detection Centre at Babar Road, Delhi has been open and operational since June, with strict sanitisation and distancing measures. Clients have been visiting in large numbers.

2. Please share any information regarding collaborations or partnership efforts undertaken by your organisation in the last seven months.

Our awareness team, Cancer Jagriti, has collaborated with girls from Lady Shri Ram College (LSR) to educate a larger group, including their alumni, on women's cancers. Jagriti speakers have participated in webinars at Miranda House (DU), as well as other cancer organisations.

- Several speakers have worked with IHC on cancer-related webinars.

- Senior management from companies who sponsored our webinars also participated.

- As members of Healthy India Alliance, the India Branch of NCD[1] Alliance, we are constantly in touch with sister organisations.

3. In your opinion, what kind of opportunities, innovations or disruptions emerged in the healthcare or oncology/cancer management space because of COVID-19?

We had thought we would have time to contemplate and reorganise ourselves, but all the virtual activity has taken up our time. However, we are engaged in a major shake-up of ICS, with the aim of bringing all activity into alignment and consonance. COVID-19 has further highlighted technology's role in improving healthcare delivery and patient outreach. So, yes, technology has helped our Communication and Awareness groups as highlighted above. We are investigating the avenues for self-screening in cervical and oral cavity cancers.

> "
> The pandemic has further highlighted the role of technology to improve healthcare delivery and patient outreach."

4. With the uncertainty of the new-normal era, please share a few recommendations that could guide organisations in continuing their operations with minimal difficulties?

We are preparing for the long haul of the new normal. Our team is preparing cancer awareness videos for upload on YouTube, and our social media is active. We are conducting specific area-based screening, working with a single community-based service. We anticipate that with restrictions in place, we can undertake such a programme. Other activities can carry on as of now.

5. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes and learnings with other stakeholders. What are your views on the role of communication in showcasing the healthcare sector's learnings in the larger network?

ICS will be happy to be part of a larger group for learning best practices and sharing our own.

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NEELAM MAKHIJANI

Designation: CEO and Country Director
Organisation: ChildFund India
Sector: Early education, maternal and child health

1. What is your present sector of work?

We work in the area of child development, primarily focusing on health and nutrition, education, livelihoods, youth empowerment, child protection, disaster relief and resilience-building.

2. Which areas within your organisation were affected due to COVID-19 situation?

ChildFund India is operational in 15 states across the country and all our operational areas have been affected by COVID-19. ChildFund supports and works with marginalised communities, and the impact of COVID-19 is severe for communities that find it difficult to make ends meet on a daily basis. All our regular programmes, group work, trainings, activities, community work and awareness events have been impacted due to this crisis.

3. What kind of measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

ChildFund India was one of the first COVID-19 responders. It was not able to implement its regular programmes as it does generally. Teams in the field did work differently while handing out hygiene, food and education kits. A significant amount of work was done virtually, including one-on-one counseling over WhatsApp, or calls for children and their families.

It reached out to half a million population by extending the following support which included:

- Provided food baskets to cater to an average family of 5. The food basket contains locally preferred food items to maintain minimum diet for an entire family.

- Hygiene kits to maintain improved hygiene practices with hand-washing materials, masks and sanitisers for families.

- Due to schools being closed, ChildFund India got creative and developed an innovative kit to support children. Inter-Generational Coping and Learning (IGCL) kits were provided to engage children, parents and caregivers in a meaningful way to cope with the anxiety and stress imposed by COVID-19. These home-based activity kits are useful for supporting children while at home.

- Frontline workers kits to support frontline workers such as Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Anganwadi workers, PRI members, etc., who are leading COVID-19-related government health interventions at the community level.

- Dissemination of awareness materials to sensitise communities on the prevention and management of COVID-19, and how to keep themselves safe from the virus.

- Livelihood support to migrants and marginal farmers, with a specific focus on people who have lost their livelihood.

- Child protection-related services to address and mitigate child abuse and exploitation. We have reached out to our target communities with messages on supportive behaviour for children during COVID-19 to avoid any kind of abuse and exploitation.

4. What effective strategy would you recommend to the rest of the stakeholders in the development sector to emerge from organisational, resource-related or technical challenges?

One is collaboration should be done between organisations within the development sector as we work on silos. The other is strengthening local capacities of the communities at the grassroot level, with mothers, panchayats, teachers, village committees and police, so that children know where to go and seek support. Leveraging local capacities is an effective strategy when reaching out to needy families and communities during COVID-19, especially considering the travel and field movement restrictions. ChildFund India has been developing local capacities by closely working with community-based organisations such as youth groups, mothers' groups, Disaster Risk and Resilience (DRR), child protection committees and local governance structures (Panchayati Raj Institutions). This strategy is sustainable, locally viable, and cost-effective.

5. What kind of opportunities, innovations, disruptions OR any positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID-19?

As explained, we have a network of local implementing partners and community-based organisations supporting our cause. We reached over 5 lakhs using emergency assistance and local support systems in the fight against COVID-19. COVID-19 has certainly disrupted our regular operations, however, ChildFund India came up with an alternative plan of delivering programmes at community level, utilising existing capacities. Schools were closed, so online education kit emerged and virtual counseling also took place. We have introduced some innovative approaches such as the Inter-Generational Coping Learning (IGCL) intervention, which includes a socio-emotional learning component, particularly in remote areas where smartphones and online classes are a distant dream. This approach has helped us reach out to vulnerable children and parents during the lockdown and support them in coping with the situation, building back better. However, due to challenges, earlier provided soft skills and negotiation skills have been affected, and so has livelihood training.

> **COVID-19 has certainly disrupted our regular operations, however, ChildFund India came up with an alternative plan of delivering the programmes at community level, utilising the existing capacities."**

6. Give us an example of the work undertaken by your organisation on collaborations or partnership efforts and define its success or learning.

At the field level, collaborative work took place with the panchayats and district

government. ChildFund India's frontline workers worked with the district government. At a strategic level, we were working with larger platforms such as COVID Action Collaborative, American Chamber of Commerce in India (AMCHAM), Niti Aayog (understanding work from the field) and Sphere. Our COVID-19 intervention was implemented in close collaboration with local government authorities, especially panchayats and district administration. We have implemented all our activities with prior information and permission from the district administration. The delivery has been done with support from PRIs and its members.

7. **Please share your views on the possibility of NGO role in civil society to expand post-crisis.**

NGOs have played a very crucial role in COVID-19 response activities, which were also highly appreciated by the central government, especially the Union health minister. I believe NGOs can continue to play an important role in the post-crisis phase, as well. However, in the current scenario, no sector can think of expanding. Resources are tighter and NGOs will not be able to expand. Corporations are not contributing like before and PM Cares is not supporting NGOs either. The pot has shrunk, so it is difficult to expand.

8. **Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes, and learnings with like-minded organisations. What are your views on role of communications in showcasing development sector's learnings in the larger network?**

Communication is key, and it is not just limited to raising money. Collaboration will happen only when communication is utilized. Communication is important for all stakeholders. NGOs must communicate more with stakeholders about their challenges, otherwise there is mistrust in the public. There are also resources to communicate.

9. **How much emphasis does your organisation put on communications and what are your suggestions for storytellers so they can create social impact during COVID-19?**

Communications are prioritised based on resources. All NGOs need to be storytellers, COVID-19 or not.

> **Communication is key,** and it is not just limited to raising money. Collaboration will happen only when communication is utilized. Communication is important for all stakeholders."

Neelam Makhijani
CEO and National Director of ChildFund India

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SOUMYA JAIN

Designation: Founder and CEO
Organisation: iTeach Schools
Sector: Education

1. What is your present sector of work?

Education for the most unprivileged children of our country. iTeach Schools is a community of transformational schools that fundamentally empower the most under-resourced children to create a destiny of their choice. Our schools operate in Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, much like the charter schools in other parts of the world. When a student in our feeder government schools finishes Grade 7, s/he enrolls for Grades 8-10 with us, with no selection bias. Our Student Alumni Wing then supports these students to complete college and start off with sustainable employment. Since 2015, iTeach Schools has expanded to 9 schools in Delhi and Pune, and is serving 1,600 students and 900 alumni, with a team of 170 full-time staff members.

2. Which areas within your organisation were affected due to the COVID-19 situation?

Our core operation of running schools, the delivery of excellent education to most under-resourced students in the city, was affected. Schools were shut and we were not able to conduct regular classes. Additionally, because of a lack of peer community and safe sharing space, being stuck in 10-square-foot houses with parents thrown out of their jobs, our students also suffered from far more mental health issues than before — and still do!

There was a significant, but lesser impact, in other areas. These include having to move all our new teachers' training virtually,

fundraising for new projects becoming tougher, all volunteering needing to shift online, processes of government permissions and compliances taking a lot more time, and inability to reach college students for internships and future recruitment.

3. What kind of measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

We have moved classes online. In April, we ran a pilot for virtual classrooms for a few grades, which has now evolved into 4 hours of live classes and 2 hours of self-learning packets for both academic and cocurricular subjects. High-quality teacher training and adapting the curriculum for online mediums has ensured that classrooms stay engaging as ever.

We have managed to provide devices to 1,000 out of 1,500 students already, who have had restricted access. This has resulted in an increase in attendance over the past four months, currently at a 70% average across schools.

Since the lockdown, we have been distributing food packets every month among students' families. Our teachers are calling each student's family once every week to check on their well-being and learn if they need any kind of support.

We are running our entire new teacher training programme virtually on the same platform as student classes are conducted (Google Classroom). We now have volunteers in our classrooms from across the country, where earlier the pool was only from Pune

city. We are also creating virtual immersive experiences for our donors, government, and potential recruits to ensure consistent communication and engagement.

4. What effective strategy would you recommend to the rest of the stakeholders in the development sector for recovery from organisational, resource-related or technical challenges?

- Do what your beneficiaries need — we exist for them. Given that COVID-19 and consequent lockdown have disproportionately affected the weakest sections of society, the development sector has to adapt and pivot to deliver solutions to emerging needs.

- Don't be afraid to ask your staff to learn new skills with the steepest learning curve possible. Very often, we are hesitant to ask our staff to diversify quickly, especially those who have more specialised focus areas. However, these are war times, and people must step up to do what's most needed; we have found our staff is rising to this challenge admirably and wholeheartedly.

- Keep in close touch, be transparent and vulnerable with your donors. Most likely, our donors are going through similarly tough times, and willfully understand the constraints and need to adapt very well. We've found every single one to be vastly supportive, in fact hugely helpful, with strategic advice and even emotional strength.

- Keep in close touch, be transparent and vulnerable with your staff — the same point as above, but for your team.

5. What kind of opportunities, innovations, disruptions OR any

positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID-19?

Classroom innovations: We have seen our teachers innovate with learning techniques and student engagement in classrooms. They have done it all — audio book clubs, feedback via WhatsApp voice notes, experiments at home, investing parents through student activities, virtual competitions and hobby clubs. This has led to an increase in attendance since we started in June and is currently at a 70% average across schools.

Contributions for tabs and ration: We have also witnessed greater engagement from the community. Many corporations and individual donors have come forward to support us with monetary contributions. We are confident that we'll provide devices to all our students (1,500) before the end of the year.

Online volunteering and internships: Compared to last year, we have 10 times the number of volunteers and interns in our classrooms. Bachelor of Education students from across the country are interning in our classrooms, only because the classes are running online. Both new and existing donors have come forward to volunteer as well.

6. Give us an example of the work undertaken by your organisation on collaborations or partnership efforts, and define its success or learning.

Ensuring access: We set out to secure devices for 1,500 students. 1,000 (66%) of our students now have a device provided by iTeach Schools. This was achieved through the support of new organisations and earlier funding partners, who believe that education cannot wait, and have recognised our commitment and efforts for the most under-resourced children in Pune.

> ❝
> Storytelling is an important component for us and like-minded organisations. Everyone is doing their best on the ground. **The work, however, is lost if the community and the stakeholders do not get to hear about it.**"

Continuous learning: We have worked closely with and learned from educators in our partner organisations in the region. They have immersed themselves in our iTeach Master Classrooms as students for 60-minute workshops and taken back best practices. Earlier in October, we showcased our expertise at national and international platformas well.

Galvanising the next generation of educators: We have organised masterclasses for Bachelor of Education college student groups, from where we intend to recruit later. The sessions highlighted the key knowledge, skills and mindsets required by educators in the classrooms. This has helped us secure a pipeline of interns until the year-end.

7. With the uncertainty of the new normal era, share a few long-term suggestions that could guide organisations in continuing their operations with minimal difficulties?

We have been constantly refining our understanding of what our beneficiaries need and focusing on creating value in those areas. Moving the operations to a model with as many small, fixed costs as possible also worked to our advantage. And speaking of suggestions, stepping back often and learning from the present times will ensure leadership will add muscle to continue those practices.

8. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes, and learnings with like-minded organisations. What are your views on the role of communications in showcasing the development sector's learnings with the larger network?

Storytelling is an important component for us and like-minded organisations. Everyone is doing their best on the ground. The work, however, is lost if the community and the stakeholders do not get to hear about it. Broadly, communications have led to:

Greater awareness and momentum: Advocacy, reforms and positive impact will be delayed if nobody is aware about the education crisis in India. It will help if the government can expedite reforms — that can only happen if organisations are actively putting out stories.

More hands on the job: The sector is perennially under-resourced. We, and other organisations, have benefited through hundreds of volunteers and pro bono folks who contribute their time and skills.

Core programme learning: We have learned a ton from other organisations and have brought the best practices to our fold. Our College to Career Programme, which ensures that our students from low income communities make it to the colleges of their choice, is heavily inspired by the Knowledge is Power Programme (KIPP) in in the U.S. We heard about them because they made an effort to communicate their stories to the world!
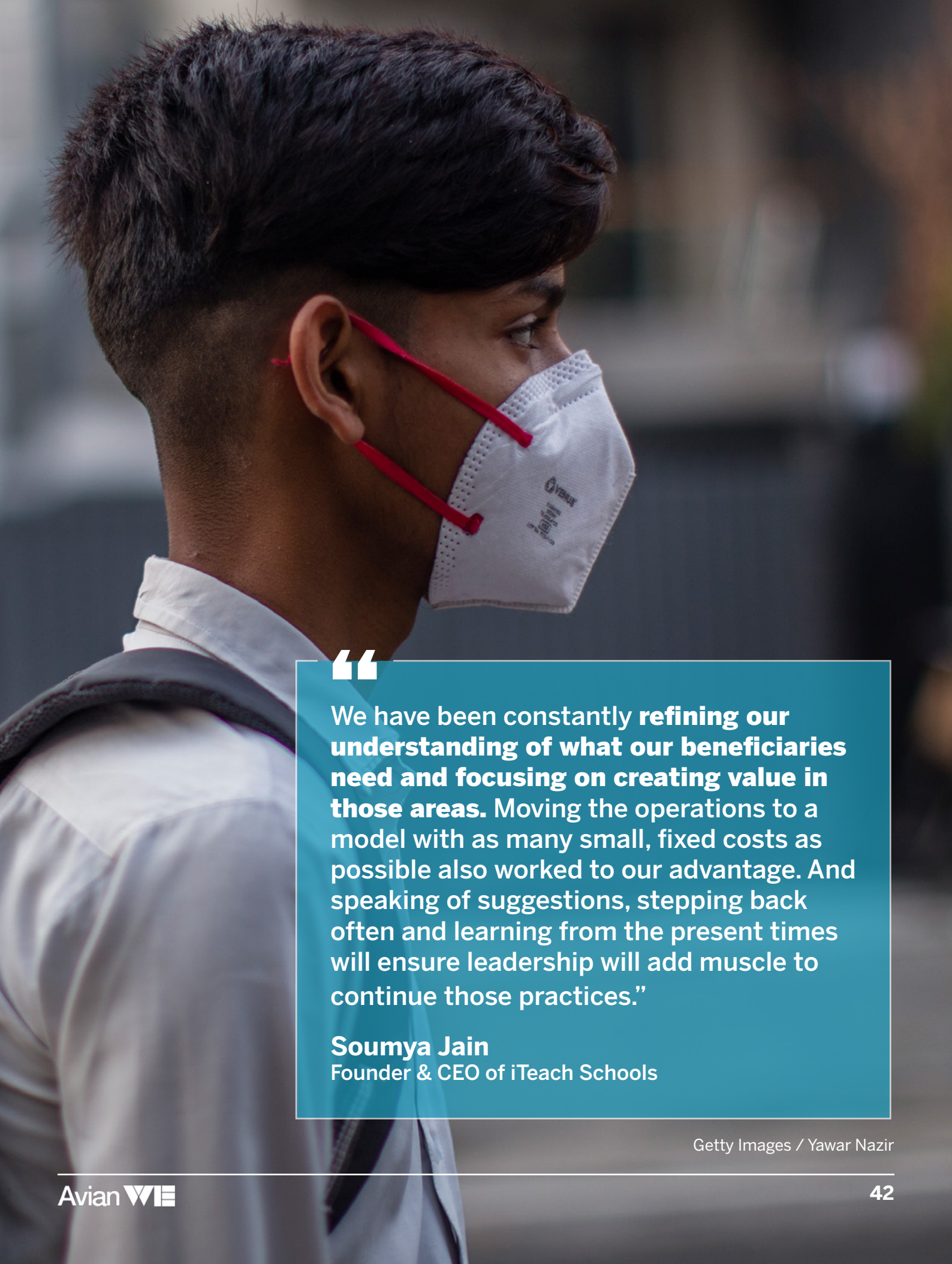
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Soumya Jain
Founder & CEO of iTeach Schools

Getty Images / Yawar Nazir

VIJAY SAI PRATAP

Designation: Co-founder & CEO
Organisation: Gram Vaani (OnionDev Technologies Pvt. Ltd.)
Sector: ICT4D

1. Could you share insights into Gram Vaani's work around COVID-19 response service?

At the onset, in March of this year, to help combat COVID-19, our organisational priorities were realigned. Along with ensuring the safety of our staff and volunteer teams, we leveraged our platforms and capabilities to support communities, especially hard-to-reach (rural and low-income) communities. Over the last six months (since the fourth week of March), in partnership with a network of social sector organisations, we have leveraged our technology to drive and support a collaborative effort in response to COVID-19 by building community awareness. helping identify at-risk people and provide associated counseling support. We also addressed key issues faced by communities, like facilitating access to ration, cash and work-related relief services provided by the government. A few campaigns that we have been working on, as part of our COVID-19 response efforts are as follows:

- **Midday meal and Anganwadi centre provisioning of take-home ration/ cooked food/cash in August**
  The Mobile Vaani clubs are also campaigning for child nutrition entitlements. Through three rounds of surveys, we have tracked midday meal and Anganwadi centres' provisioning of food for children and escalated these issues to the district administration.

- **Resumption of Gram Sabhas: July to present**
  In the Tamil Nadu districts of Virudhunagar, Madurai and Dindigul, we have collaborated with several partners on petitions for the resumption of Gram Sabhas. People have reported many issues related to street lighting, drinking water, sanitation, roads, electricity, etc., that are not attended to because of the lockdown. We have conveyed people's needs to the panchayats and are advocating for the resumption of these crucial citizen forums so that other problems can be raised, as well.

- **Health-related awareness messaging: March to present**
  With about 2.5 million calls, almost 800,000 individuals have received awareness messaging related to COVID-19 precautions, home care, hospitalisation procedures and countering misinformation. We also built an innovative symptom checker Interactive Voice Response (IVR) survey for people who were anxious about their symptoms and wanted to seek counselling with health care workers. This was especially useful during the initial days of COVID-19, when significant discrimination emerged against specific religious groups and migrant workers — consequently, they were apprehensive about contacting the government health system. Our network of partners provided them with discrete support and counselling service.

- **A sample policy brief to illustrate how the Mobile Vaani platforms can facilitate a channel to reveal ground realities:**
  In India, Gram Vaani assessed the impact of COVID-19 on the poor in the first 100 days.

The Gram Vaani COVID-19 response network included more than 26 civil society partner organisations across 10 states — more than 80 districts — and had logged over 1 million phone calls and 18,000 user-recorded messages. The audio recordings made by

network users spoke of profound distress over struggles to secure survival necessities. The analysis of these recordings shows that, for a large segment of Gram Vaani's network callers, the main factors driving vulnerability during COVID-19 are preexisting development deficits and weak social safety nets. For effective COVID-19 response and recovery, these must be addressed through inclusive policy design and institutional reforms.

The main COVID-19 platform has also serviced more than 2.4 million calls from more than 800,000 callers from across the country, and around 25,000 user voice recordings, since the launch of the campaign.

2. Please share information about the work undertaken by Gram Vaani in the last seven months on collaborations or partnership efforts

Gram Vaani has partnered with over 30 NGOs, grassroot organisations and agencies in its efforts to strengthen the COVID-19 response services launched in March 2020. We are

also part of the COVID Action Collaborative (https://covidactioncollab.in/) and other collaboratives working on COVID-19 response efforts.

We strongly believe in collaboration. All our COVID-19 responses were delivered in collaboration with a host of development sector partners, and we continue to seek more partnerships specifically for the following:

- Communicate about emerging issues that we hear on Mobile Vaani. Get feedback from a wider group of organisations and discuss strategies for effective campaigns

- Facilitated joint campaigns especially related to policy advocacy, to amplify our collective voice.

- Support other organisations to facilitate Mobile Vaani platforms among their communities.

- Discuss how community voices from across multiple platforms and helplines can be collated to draw attention to different issues.

3. What kind of opportunities, innovations OR disruptions or any positive changes have emerged in the development space because of COVID-19?

COVID-19 has significantly impacted field and community focused activities for organisations in the development space, and the role of technology has become even more pronounced in the present context. Organisations are looking for solutions to help them connect with their target communities for outreach, information dissemination and engagement. There are many opportunities for collaboration that need to be leveraged extensively at all levels development sector, social enterprises, government and private sector.

> "Using the context of the COVID-19-related lockdown, we suggest that empathy is crucial for the state to design policies and systems that work for the poor, and for the members of society to understand one another."

4. COVID-19 has further strengthened the role of technology to improve efficacies of programmes. What are your views on how technology can be harnessed for social good and community empowerment?

As we have also written several articles about how we would like to highlight the need for the state, and society, to be more emphatic when learning and fixing systems. Using the context of the COVID-19-related lockdown, we suggest that empathy is crucial for the state to design policies and systems that work for the poor, and for the members of society to understand one another. Building an empathetic state and society requires a communication infrastructure that supports feedback processes and ensures fair representation of diverse viewpoints. The crisis during the lockdown ushered the provisioning of such an infrastructure in a temporary and rudimentary form. We

argue that going forward, this must now be strengthened and institutionalised. Our discussion relies on reports and testimonies of hundreds of users of the Mobile Vaani platform, a voice-based participatory media service running in several districts in rural North India and urban industrial locations.

Many technology systems for welfare delivery and social security have ended up disempowering many people, although aiming to solve problems for them.

5. With the uncertainty of the new normal era, share a few long-term suggestions that could guide organisations in continuing their operations with minimal difficulties?

As mentioned above, the role of technology is even more pronounced in community-focused initiatives and can be used effectively in addressing information asymmetry, knowledge gaps and behavior change objectives. However, the need for empathy in technology and programme design is critical.

i. The aim of appropriate technology should be to reduce disparity and asymmetry in access to information and services. This requires the values of empathy and integrity to be embedded in the technology and programme design processes of the organisation.

ii. With the desire to create visionary products, systems and long-term impact, we often undermine and miss out on fundamental and seemingly trivial, redundant activities that need to be focused upon to strengthen the foundation of any system or organisation. Engaging with people (internal), accounting and finance, and compliance and legal sections are all critical pillars of every organisation and should not be neglected.

iii. Cash in hand is extremely valuable, especially in these times, so it is okay to be conservative. Be judicious and conserve cash at every opportunity and during an expense decision.

iv. A famous quote states, "Everyone has a plan till they get punched in the mouth." We have learned strategy is never static; it requires us to have our ears to the ground at all times, be nimble, and strategise to stay in sync with ever-changing market dynamics. This is critical to survive and thrive. It is important to learn from our mistakes, and mistakes happen only when we act and take risks. Practical and field experience are indispensable and invaluable.

6. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes and learnings with like-minded organisations. What are your views on the role of communications in showcasing the development sector's learnings with the larger network?

Sharing our learnings, failures and achievements, be them big or small, would be extremely important. In these hard times, when funding channels are limited and tighter, or at least repurposed towards certain domains, and regulatory changes are expected to impact collaboration opportunities, organisations will need to evolve and adopt new ways to survive and thrive. A lot of it is going to be through a trial and error approach, considering the situation and the challenges it has brought forth are the same for every organisation, and definitely the first. So besides generic survival strategies, no organisation can claim to have any experience of dealing with such a situation. However, organisations which move quickly, experiment and are willing to fail, will learn quickly and either pivot or perish; either way, for their own good. Playing a waiting game, lying dormant, or hoping for COVID-19 to subside and the situation to improve will, in our humble opinion, be an unwise approach. So, sharing these learnings in the broader interest and well-being of other ecosystem players is critical. Sharing will help organisations avoid making the same mistakes, save valuable resources, including time, and also benefit from the positive, inspiring stories of others. The need of the hour is empathy, collaboration at all levels, co-opetition, and not competition, to address the scale of challenges the ecosystem faces.
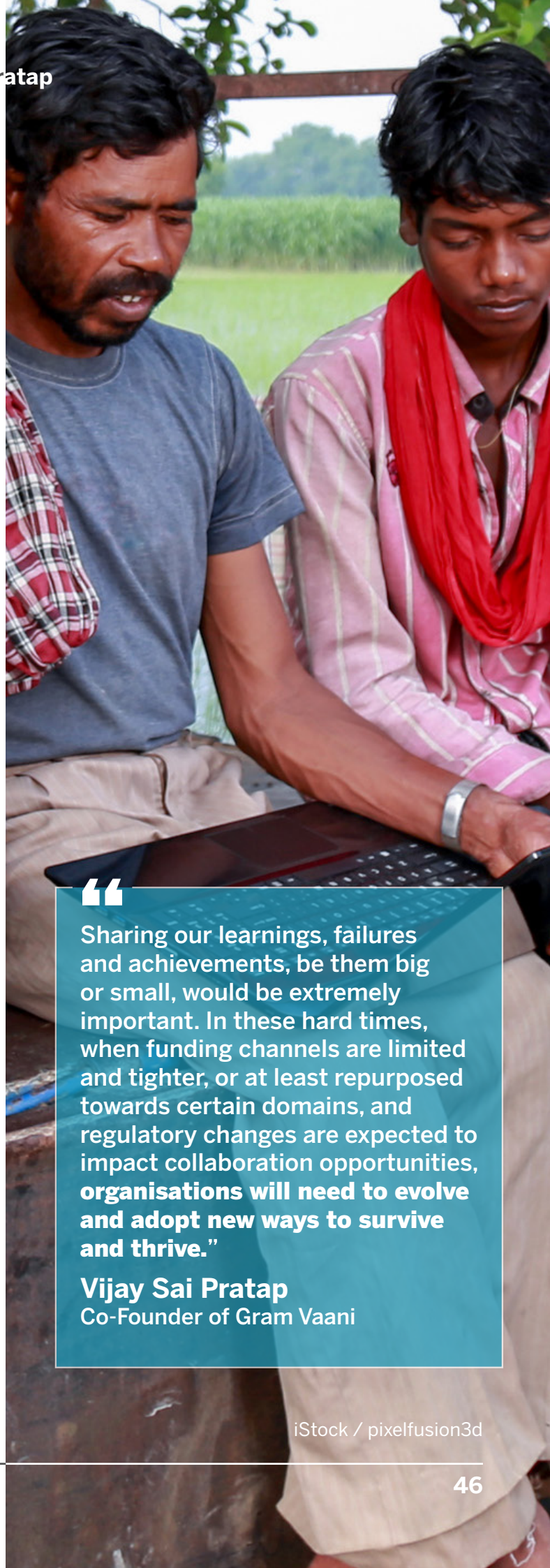
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Vijay Sai Pratap
Co-Founder of Gram Vaani

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Avian W

SARITA JADAV

Designation: National Programme Officer
Organisation: UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office
for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives
and Sri Lanka
Sector: Education, health and well-being, elimination
of gender-based violence in schools

1. What is your organisation and your present sector of work?

I work with the UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office, which covers six countries of South Asia — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The UNESCO Cluster Office in New Delhi works in all areas of UNESCO's expertise — education, the natural and social sciences, culture, communication, and information. This work is done in consultation with the National Commissions of the Member States, regional bureaus, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders and partners. My main area of work is on education for the health and well-being of adolescents and young people. I also work on prevention and elimination of gender-based violence in schools. Recently, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, launched the School Health Programme, aiming to raise awareness on the health and well-being of school-going children. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) developed a curriculum framework jointly with experts from Ministry of Health, UNESCO and other UN agencies, civil society organisations, academia, etc., focusing on enhancing life skills to promote responsible and healthy behavior among children from upper-primary to senior-secondary stages.

The School Health Programme will be rolled out in 1.5 million government schools, and two teachers from every school will be designated as "Health and Wellness Ambassadors." These teachers will conduct age-appropriate, culturally sensitive activity-based sessions in the classroom. The government of India has shown remarkable leadership and commitment to highlighting the need to focus on health and wellness of adolescents and young people. One in five people in our country is in the age group of 10 to 19 years; it is critical to invest in their health and well-being.

There are 11 themes of the School Health Programme: Growing Up Healthy, Emotional Well Being and Mental Health, Interpersonal Relationships, Values and Citizenship, Gender Equality, Nutrition, Health and Sanitation, Prevention and Management of Substance Misuse, Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle, Reproductive Health and HIV Prevention, Safety and Security Against Violence and Injuries, and Promotion of Safe Use of Internet and Social Media Behaviours.

2. What kind of measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

For successful implementation of the School Health Programme, the Ministry of Health and Education has constituted a National Resource group composed of 30 to 40 people from NCERT, UN agencies, academia, experts, civil society and government — UNESCO is part of this group. In the past three to four months, we have provided online health and wellness training and capacity-building to state resource persons in schools. Over 1,800 officials have been trained from all states and union territories,

trained by masters in both health and education departments. In the current context of COVID-19, the training was held virtually and it was challenging to conduct virtual trainings, especially when modules are activity-based. However, it's the new normal and we have to rely on ICTs. Almost 3 million teachers will be trained, and everything will be done virtually. So, the success of this programme depends on the quality of the training.

3. What effective strategy do you recommend to stakeholders in the development sector so they can emerge from organisational, resource or technical challenges?

COVID-19 is more than a health crisis. It is an economic and humanitarian crisis. It has also impeded security and human rights. It has affected all of us — as individuals, families or societies. COVID-19 has also highlighted the fragilities in systems, whether education or health. I think coming out of this crisis will require an approach to the whole of society, including the government. It requires all stakeholders coming together, driven by compassion and solidarity.

> I think coming out of this crisis will require an approach to the whole of society, including the government. It requires all stakeholders coming together, driven by compassion and solidarity."

Given the current scenario of COVID-19, the health and well-being of our students is of utmost importance. UNESCO and NCERT remain committed to fostering the growth, development and educational achievement of school-going children by promoting health and well-being. Jointly, we developed animated videos and training and resource materials to make the learning process for all students fun and interesting. The animated videos on health and well-being match the aspirations of the New Education Policy of India. The videos were launched by the Hon'ble Minister of Education, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank, in September 2020.

With COVID-19 closing schools across all states, education departments made efforts to ensure continuity of learning through various digital platforms. Millions of learners turned to online education, and there was an exponential increase in use of electronic devices to access education. This placed learners at risk of online abuse, increasing their vulnerability to cyberbullying and infringing on their rights to education, health and well-being.

4. Can you elaborate on cyberbullying? What exactly do you mean by cyberbullying? How do you identify it? What does cyberbullying entail?

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature, and is a punishable offence under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indian Penal Code. It also involves posting pictures or videos to harass another person. A whole gamut of social platforms, including chatrooms, blogs and instant messaging, is used for cyberbullying. It can entail posting hurtful rumors or comments on updates, pictures and videos shared by an individual on websites, uploading embarrassing photographs online without the person's permission, stealing someone's account password, or sending unwanted or inappropriate messages from that account to harass other individuals.

5. Was cyberbullying always part of the organisation's focus? Or has it been an added element because of COVID-19?

Bullying at school, including cyberbullying, is an infringement of children and adolescents' rights to education, health and well-being. Bullying is a serious issue, and we all need to deal with it. Various research studies done by UNESCO and other experts have highlighted that globally, one in three students have been bullied by their peers at school at least once in the past month, and a similar proportion were affected by physical violence. Due to COVID-19, cases of cyberbullying have increased considerably and need urgent attention.

6. What opportunities, innovations, disruptions OR positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID -19?

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, life came to a halt for many people in India and across the world. Factors like social and physical distancing, travel restrictions, school and university closures, and work from home have really impacted us. It also distanced family, friends and communities from each other. To highlight the impact of COVID-19 and the present lockdown on the mental health of marginalized communities, UNESCO New Delhi developed awareness posters titled "Minding Our Minds," showing how women, girls, youth, migrants, internally displaced groups and children with disabilities can cope with their anxieties surrounding COVID-19. The poster also showed how they can operate and stay connected within the limitations of the lockdown, and most important iterated to them that what they are feeling is okay and they are not alone.

7. Give us a few examples of the work that has been undertaken by UNESCO on collaborations and partnership efforts.

UNESCO's Comprehensive Partnership Strategy is firmly anchored in the 2030 Agenda. At its core lies SDG 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. The SDGs can only be realized with strong global partnerships and cooperation. They are the blueprint for achieving a better, sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. A successful development agenda requires inclusive partnerships — at the global, regional, national and local levels — built upon principles and values, a shared vision and goals, placing people and the planet at the centre.

Recently, in collaboration with Facebook, UNESCO in New Delhi launched an online resource tool for educators to collaborate on and continue the learning process. In addition, we developed the information resource "Minding Our Minds" and information booklet "Safe online learning in the times of COVID-19." In collaboration with UNICEF and many other international agencies, we conducted a survey on COVID-19 and early childhood education. We developed a framework for reopening of schools in collaboration with UNICEF, World Food Programme and the World Bank. To roll out the School Health Programme, we collaborated with NCERT, MoHFW and MoE for the training of resource persons.

8. What are your views on the role of communications in showcasing the development sectors' learning to the larger network?

Communications have an essential role in our day-to-day lives. Due to COVID-19, there is information and misinformation. Communications are crucial when we talk about controlling the spread of COVID-19. It's a global health crisis and it's imperative to convey actions that can be taken by different sectors. At UNESCO, we have a dedicated communication and information team, as well as a documentation and public information unit. We have a significant social media presence, and most of our events and knowledge resources are uploaded to our website. It is not only important to develop materials and knowledge products, but it is important to disseminate them and make them available to our partners and networks.

> ❝
> **Communications have an essential role in our day-to-day lives. Due to COVID-19, there is information and misinformation. Communications are crucial when we talk about controlling the spread of COVID-19."**

to finding solutions to global problems, from the fight against discrimination and climate change, to gender equality and many other issues. During this unprecedented health crisis, youth are once again on the front line — particularly when it comes to inventing new forms of solidarity. As part of UNESCO's response to COVID-19, a storytelling initiative was started, putting the spotlight on young people — how they feel, act and thrive during these challenging times. "My COVID-19 Story" is an open invitation to young people, an opportunity to share their stories by means of written testimonial or video recording. Stories expand our perspectives, inviting us to worlds we have not yet imagined and helping us identify problems and implement solutions, so we can learn what is productive and possible.

9. Any suggestions to other organisations regarding storytelling?

Storytelling is a powerful communication tool and serves as an important catalyst for change. It has many purposes, challenging us to examine our contributions to the world we know. Many young people are — day in, day out — proving to be key actors when it comes

SUMATHI RAO

Designation and organisation: Country head, Arogya World
Designation and organisation: Advisory Board, Tamahar Trust
Sector: Health, Nutrition and Rehabilitation Services

Arogya World: A global health nonprofit organisation working to prevent non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Tamahar Trust: Helping children with development disabilities

1. What is your present sector of work?

Public health (Arogya) and rehabilitation of children with special needs (Tamahar Trust).

2. Which areas within your organisation were affected due to COVID-19 situation?

One of the significantly affected areas was fundraising. Operations were also affected, as the funding for ongoing projects was reduced due to donors shifting to COVID-19-related work. Implementation of interventions was disrupted due to the lockdown.

3. What kind of measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

To ensure that our interventions are relevant during the outbreak, we included COVID-19-related work in our existing programmes. We have also moved the delivery of majority of our programmes online to reduce disruptions during the lockdown.

4. What effective strategy would you recommend to the rest of the stakeholders in the development sector for recovery from organisational, resource-related or technical challenges?

It is critical for the development sector to redefine programmes, keeping in mind the new challenges that will arise following COVID-19. Organisations in the development sector must identify innovative tools and techniques to reduce funding requirements, and scale up interventions at the same time.

5. What kind of opportunities, innovations, disruptions or any positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID-19?

The only positive outcome of COVID-19 is that people have put the focus back on their health. People are becoming more aware of their own health. This has helped us move forward with creating awareness about adopting the best health practices for better health outcomes.

6. Give us an example of the work undertaken by your organisation on collaborations or partnership efforts and define its success or learning?

The lockdown has affected people at different levels, and issues related to mental health came to the forefront for us. We partnered with Librum to create a framework for workplaces to assess the mental health of their employees and take adequate steps whenever an intervention is required. The framework was launched during the Healthy Workplace summit in November.

7. With the uncertainty of the new normal era, share few long-term suggestions that could guide organisations in continuing their operations with minimal difficulties?

Organisations must look at widening their areas of focus and offer comprehensive services so that they do not lose out on any opportunity to empower the community in a holistic manner. Due to the funding crunch, there is going to be limited opportunities for capacity building. Development sector organisations that offer more, moving beyond their traditional areas of focus, will be in a better position during these turbulent times.

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> Storytellers should use the power of communications to bring social and behavioural change, which can positively impact the community."

8. Please share your views on the possibility of NGO roles in civil society to expand post-crisis.

The development sector should align with the Government of India's various missions. It can play a critical role in scaling up interventions by leveraging the existing resources and infrastructure, using their knowledge to create social impact. It is important that the development sector does not create parallel channels, but uses the existing channels that government has created.

9. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its

experiences, successes and learnings with like-minded organisations. What are your views on the role of communications in showcasing development sector's learnings with the larger network?

Communications is integral for knowledge sharing. Grassroot-level organisations can create localised content to highlight challenges and solutions in a transparent manner, but also help companies and government align their programmes with the needs of the community.

10. How much does emphasis does your organisation put on communications and what are your suggestions for storytellers so they can create social impact during COVID-19?

We believe communications are critical, especially during a crisis, to ensure communities are kept informed about any new developments. Storytellers should use the power of communications to bring social and behavioural change, which can positively impact the community. It is important to keep in mind socio-economic, and most importantly cultural, context to create social impact.

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BAIDURYA SEN

Designation: Co-founder (fund raising, product development)
Organisation: Alokit
Sector: Education

1. What is your present sector of work?

Education, as we work with school leaders from NGOs and affordable private schools. We provide them with training on student and community welfare, student engagement and learning, teacher support and school leader well-being, and professional development.

2. Which areas within your organisation were affected due to COVID-19 situation?

The areas that were affected most were delivery of programmes, fundraising and programme hiring resources.

3. What kind of measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

We revamped the programme by addressing the present needs using technology. For the funding aspect, we had to reduce our expenses, seeing funders and partners coming forward only three months after the lockdown. Prior to that, it was operating on a free model. Before COVID-19, we conducted physical workshops and coached the school leaders (headmasters, school principals). Now, it's mostly via Zoom, one-on-one coaching, etc. They have rated us 65 on the net promoter score.

4. What effective strategy would you recommend to the rest of the stakeholders in the development sector for recovery from organisational, resource-related or technical challenges?

Pause and pivot. Pause, because now is a good time to reflect and understand long-term strategies. Pivot, because there are unique challenges that need to be addressed to survive in the long run — hence, immediate needs require more focus.

A lot of private school teachers have been out due lack of salary, and teachers will not be back in full strength anytime soon due to the financial pressures that schools are facing, so volunteers are needed. I recommend those in this sector to design long-term methods, such as volunteerism and alternate ways of serving children, without losing sight of the immediate issues. Teachers will not be back (in full strength) in many affordable private schools before 2022. As the impact is long-term, all programmes need to be designed with this in mind. Alokit launched a girl-specific programme with Andhra Pradesh social welfare schools, a topic that emerged from their focused group discussions (FGDs), to protect girls from mental and physical abuse. The COVID-19 crisis may disappear in a year, but the impact is long-term, so providing training on gender safety to school leaders is an area that Alokit is looking at.

5. What kind of opportunities, innovations, disruptions OR any positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID-19?

Training school leaders remotely has reduced opportunity cost. It is more efficient now because earlier one could train only one batch, and now training is conducted in multiple batches, up to three batches, on the same day. Clients are not limited to any physical city or a state; they're from Himachal Pradesh to Northeast. These school leaders are from affordable private schools and government schools. Most of them have smartphones with internet connectivity, as Zoom is used.

> " Communication is very important because beyond the civil society, the larger audience will not know about the good work being carried out. School leaders from the education sector will be given more importance through storytelling initiatives."

6. Give us an example of the work undertaken by your organisation on collaborations or partnership efforts and define its success or learning.

Alokit has partnered with Telengana Social and Tribal Welfare Schools — and with the Central Tibetan Administration, running 50 schools across India — to train school leaders. One of the things that emerged during this era was school leaders wanting training on parent engagement, beyond the regular training. Alokit partnered with other nonprofits that work specifically with parents. So, a lot of collaboration enabled these changes in schools with partners such as Saarthi education and DOST education.

7. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes and learnings with like-minded organisations. What are your views on role of communications in showcasing the development sector's learnings with the larger network?

Communication is very important because beyond civil society, the larger audience will not know about the good work being carried out. School leaders from the education sector will be given more importance through storytelling initiatives.

8. How much emphasis does your organisation put on communications and what are your suggestions for storytellers so they can create social impact during COVID-19?

It is one of the topmost priorities of the organisation.

SIMRAN SHAIKH

Designation: Co-founder
Organisation: Rajmala Welfare Society (RWS) – India's Diverse Chamber and an influential transactivist
Sector: Gender rights

1. What is your present sector of work?

At RWS, India's Diverse Chamber, our objective is to empower the LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual) community of India and provide them equal opportunities as a part of the mainstream society. One piece of our work involves promotion of LGBTQIA entrepreneurs, connecting them to mentors and experts for support. We are also implementing advocacy programmes to support community causes. In addition, we have programmes in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh to promote basic education and health for the LGBTQIA and vulnerable marginalised communities.

2. Which areas within your organisation were affected due to COVID-19?

Due to mobility restrictions across the country, all our programmes were impacted. The LGBTQIA entrepreneurs and freelancers lost connections with corporations. For example, LGBT+ caterers could not get more contracts from their corporate customers because offices were closed and the supply chain was disrupted. The lockdown made it difficult to continue health and education programmes in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. Several times, frontline workers paid out of pocket for services, rent, etc. The absence of internet connectivity for teachers and beneficiaries in these areas resulted in loss of interest among students seeking education.

3. What kind of measures did you undertake to address the affected areas?

For our rural Uttar Pradesh programme, we took support from "Ambassadors" or "Community Influencers" to encourage beneficiaries to continue their educations and return to schools and training centres. To overcome health programme-related challenges, we reached out to our donors to work with allowances, such as medical and travel allowance, for frontline workers to meet the health needs of the community on time. Continuous engagement and sensitisation from communities produces positive results. As recent changes due to the new normal trickle down to implementation, we should be witnessing a change in attitude. Although, this would need to be catalysed by the communities themselves, one of the core areas of work for the project.

4. What effective strategy would you recommend to the rest of the stakeholders in the development sector for recovery from organisational, resource-related or technical challenges?

We are all sailing in the same boat. With the changing political environment, it is going to become difficult. Operating resources in these difficult times, and after COVID-19, is going to be a huge challenge. Earlier, we were reaching out to 100 potential donors for a specific need, now the efforts need to be stepped up to reach, maybe, 1,000 donors. However, in any sector, the magnum of humanity and faith is not lost. For our initiatives also, the donors and corporates have shown commitment. We have faith that things will change.

5. What kind of opportunities, innovations, disruptions OR any

positive changes have emerged in your organisation because of COVID-19?

COVID-19 has brought us together virtually, which has never happened in the past. Today, I can connect with the last-mile beneficiary, the trainers, the frontline workers and the stakeholders across regions. It was never possible for me to meet everyone when I had visited any of the intervention regions earlier, but now this has changed for the better. Conversations on phone and digital media are more productive than ever before, and a lot of time saved can be invested in more quality work.

6. **Give us an example of the work undertaken by your organisation on collaborations or partnership efforts, and define its success or learning.**

We have collaborated with the Mumbai-based Anam Prem Initiative, an organisation working towards the empowerment of the transgender community. Also, we are working with a legal advisory firm, Samana, which provides our entrepreneurs with strategies to expand their business and branding. These partnerships have been very useful in creating business models, mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs and managing crises. In the health sector, where we work in remote districts, our frontline leaders have undergone training on various health aspects, such as giving paramedic support or being the first-person contact for mental health cases. Such initiatives ensure that our employees support our beneficiaries,

> "Personally, I find listening to stories, testimonials, success stories and brave acts of others very inspiring and impactful. They serve as best practices in the sector. These stories inspire us to emotionally connect with our stakeholders, beneficiaries and team members, helping us build on new ideas for the future."

along with and our internal team and frontline leaders, while handling their own cases.

7. **Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes and learnings with like-minded organisations. What are your views on the role of communications in showcasing the development sector's learnings with the larger network?**

Storytelling is a phenomenal concept and an extremely powerful tool in the world of communications. During the lockdown, I have known so many individuals who have installed storytelling applications, like book readers, to keep themselves motivated and be inspired by the experiences of others. Personally, I find listening to stories, testimonials, success stories and brave acts of others very inspiring and impactful. They serve as best practices in the sector. These stories inspire us to emotionally connect with our stakeholders, beneficiaries and team members, helping us build on new ideas for the future.

8. **How much emphasis does your organisation put on communications and what are your suggestions for storytellers so they can create social impact during COVID-19?**

We emphasise communications a lot to engage in best practices, carry forward advocacy work and showcase the real impact of our efforts on the world. Presently, the world is full of negativity and toxic conversations. One strong positive story can reduce a lot of negativity around us. My suggestion for the storytellers is to present a wide range of positive stories in this situation. The focus should be on demonstrating the real testimonies of people's hard work, completed in an effort to make the world a better place.

SUDARSHAN SUCHI

Designation: CEO
Organisation: Save the Children
Sector: Child rights

1. What have been the key focus areas for Save the Children this year since the beginning of COVID-19? Were there any changes made to your organisational objectives and deliverables?

Children are always the most vulnerable in any humanitarian situation, and COVID-19 has been no different. COVID-19 has exposed children, both boys and girls, to multi-dimensional risks, with disruption to their healthcare, protection, education and overall well-being, including social interaction with friends, peers, family members, teachers and adult caregivers. In light of the same, we created a COVID-19 response across 13 states (Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu) and two Union Territories (Jammu and Kashmir, and National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi). We have reached over 12 lakh people[2] through various response mechanisms during these past six months. Outreach included provision of non-food items (hygiene kits, dignity kits, protective equipment, learning kits), livelihood support (distribution of pump set, mason kit), sanitisation of neighbourhoods, awareness on WASH, food items (dry ration kit, cooked food), mental health interventions and psychosocial support, provision of menstrual hygiene products, and tele-counselling and awareness generation.

A strong element of the disaster preparedness is to build the resilience of communities, and a lot of work has been undertaken in India by Save the Children towards this end. Strategic partnership and innovative practices have been an integral part of the COVID-19 response. Some key examples include: Sustained interaction and engagement with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to reach children, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed with Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society, Government of Jharkhand, to support migrants stranded in different states, collaboration with Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) to reach 42 child care institutions in 5 districts with personal hygiene kits, set up of a helpline at SCPCR, Rajasthan, for children needing psychosocial support, and mask making processes according to government guidelines with 8,000 masks made for distribution in Bihar. Adaptive interventions have been undertaken to ensure a safe return to school and continuity of learning, protection of children, and ensuring nutritional outcomes and social protection interventions. Additionally, a series of policies and programme influence interventions have been undertaken at the national, state, district and local level.

2. What impact do you see from COVID-19 on children from vulnerable communities, such as migrant workers and the economically weaker sections of the society?

In order to understand the challenges and needs of the most vulnerable sections of the population, especially children, Save the Children, India, undertook a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA). The assessment focused on procuring information with respect to the vulnerability status of households, livelihood and food security, distress measures undertaken by the households, migration,

service utilisation, awareness of COVID-19 symptoms, children's education and child protection.

The survey revealed that livelihood and food security issues had a cascading effect on children. Findings of RNA 2.0 revealed around two-fifths (39%) of households did not receive Mid-Day Meal (MDM) and close to one-third of households (31%) did not receive Take Home Rations (THR) following the closure of schools and Anganwadi centres (AWCs), respectively. The findings of survey also indicated that food insufficiency seems to be a cause of concern across households. Close to 45% of households reportedly had food supplies for less than 2 weeks in June 2020. Findings, related to access of basic health services, revealed that immunisation (42%) was the most utilised health service followed by IFA/calcium during antenatal care (ANC) and prenatal care (PNC), (21%), antenatal care (10%) and postnatal care services (11%).

> **Against the backdrop of COVID-19, children have been adversely affected due to a lack of education opportunities."**

Against the backdrop of COVID-19, children have been adversely affected due to a lack of education opportunities. The survey also explored the support from school or education departments post-closure of schools. The survey findings indicated that around 41% of the households reported that their children did not receive any support from school, and another 16% households reported that their children could not avail the benefits of online education due to the lack of mobile or network connections. In addition to this, information was collected regarding key primary concerns that households had, particularly with respect to the children. The three major concerns as reported were "fear of getting infected by COVID-19" (81%), "children being out of schools with a lack of learning opportunities at home" (67%) and "not being able to provide adequate meal" (40%).

Some of the critical challenges that a family was facing due to COVID-19 could be considered as indirect impacts on children. The findings indicated that a lack of or limited cash for day-to-day expenses (80%), a lack of livelihood or job opportunities (74%) and a lack of sufficient food supplies (50%) were three primary challenges that a family was facing. The survey also provides valuable evidence to influence and support effective measures by the government to mitigate the challenges faced by vulnerable families, especially the children, in context of COVID-19.

3. Over the past six months, we have seen that child labour and child marriage have become coping mechanisms for families who have fallen into debt and poverty during COVID-19. How has your organisation dealt with this challenge?

As earlier stated, through our RNA 2, we observed that limited cash for day-to-day expenses (80%), lack of livelihood or job opportunities (74%) and a lack of sufficient food supplies (50%) were three primary challenges faced by families. These challenges also made families give away their girls inmarriage at an early age or push their children into the workforce as labour or domestic help. The lack of easy and trusted avenues for alternatives against limited economic opportunities, local community structures, trusted and accountable reporting system, timely justice, access to technologies, quality education, proper mechanisms for continuing education for children in lockdown, no or less peer social interaction, etc., are other causing factors that compel vulnerable families into doing so. The centre said that they received as many as 5,584 phone calls to prevent child marriage during the COVID-19-induced lockdown. In our project locations of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Bihar, Rajasthan, etc., we also received several calls reporting child marriage during the COVID-19-induced lockdown.

While it was a nearly impossible task to go to these households during the lockdown to intervene, we activated legal and social institutions like police, local panchayati raj members, Child Protection Committee and Childline headmen, or village mukhia to meet and convince the families to stall such incidents. Looking at the root cause of food security as a major issue, Save the Children provided food relief kits to vulnerable families. We also ensured learning continuity for children via low tech models like video classes and volunteer visits. We also galvanised a watch dog mechanism through village-level child protection committees and school management committees, where student members, guardians and teachers were continuously providing required support.

4. As a development sector leader, what do you think, in general, are the disruptions or opportunities that have emerged during this time?

COVID-19 crumpled and interrupted normalcy, but it also built resilience and agility amid disruption to emerge stronger through any crisis. It turned massive challenges to meaningful changes.

The unprecedented threat of COVID-19, specifically for Save the Children, India, has been an opportunity for us to reinvent ourselves and charter new terrains. We've ensured humanitarian aid reaches households and we uphold children's rights in every way, all while raising resources for the same. For instance, since COVID-19, we have utilised several digital platforms and adapted to new technology to encourage our ongoing and new supporters to stand with us during this time. We also strongly believe that communities' current urge to participate, to share information, and to organise assistance should be channelised into constructive support and alternative forms of digital-civic engagement.

5. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes and learnings with other stakeholders. What are your views on the role of communication in showcasing the education sector's learnings with the larger network?

COVID-19 has shaken the world, coercing everyone to innovate with available resources. Communication and technology are the two most important tools that used to create what can be termed as an "infodemic." In the education sector, we analysed the lessons learned during this time to determine what will have to change, beginning now. From high-tech methods to maintain learning continuity, to using low-tech approaches, digital communication bolstered capabilities and augmented our ways of reaching out to the disadvantaged. We saw an upsurge in unique partnerships, offering local educational broadcasts and powering virtual learning. However, while lamentable, we also learnt about the challenges faced by a majority of children who were on the wrong side of the digital divide, which led to exploring other ways to communicate with children and students. Some prevalent outcomes that came to light were:

- The digital divide needed to be addressed as an urgent requirement. The necessary digital capabilities required infrastructure and connectivity, and still needed to reach the poorest and remotest communities.

- It was time to reimagine education, curriculum and pedagogy to cultivate creative, critical thinking and resilience

- Communication put a spotlight on the role of community in facilitating learning and teaching

Beyond the uncertainties and fragility of the new normal, the world saw new opportunities for innovative effective solutions. Credible communication galvanised these ideas to bring about sought after changes in the education sector and bridge inequalities.

"

In the education sector, we analysed the lessons learned during this time to determine what will have to change, beginning now. From high-tech methods to maintain learning continuity, to using low-tech approaches, digital communication bolstered capabilities and augmented our ways of reaching out to the disadvantaged."

Sudarshan Suchi
CEO of Save the Children
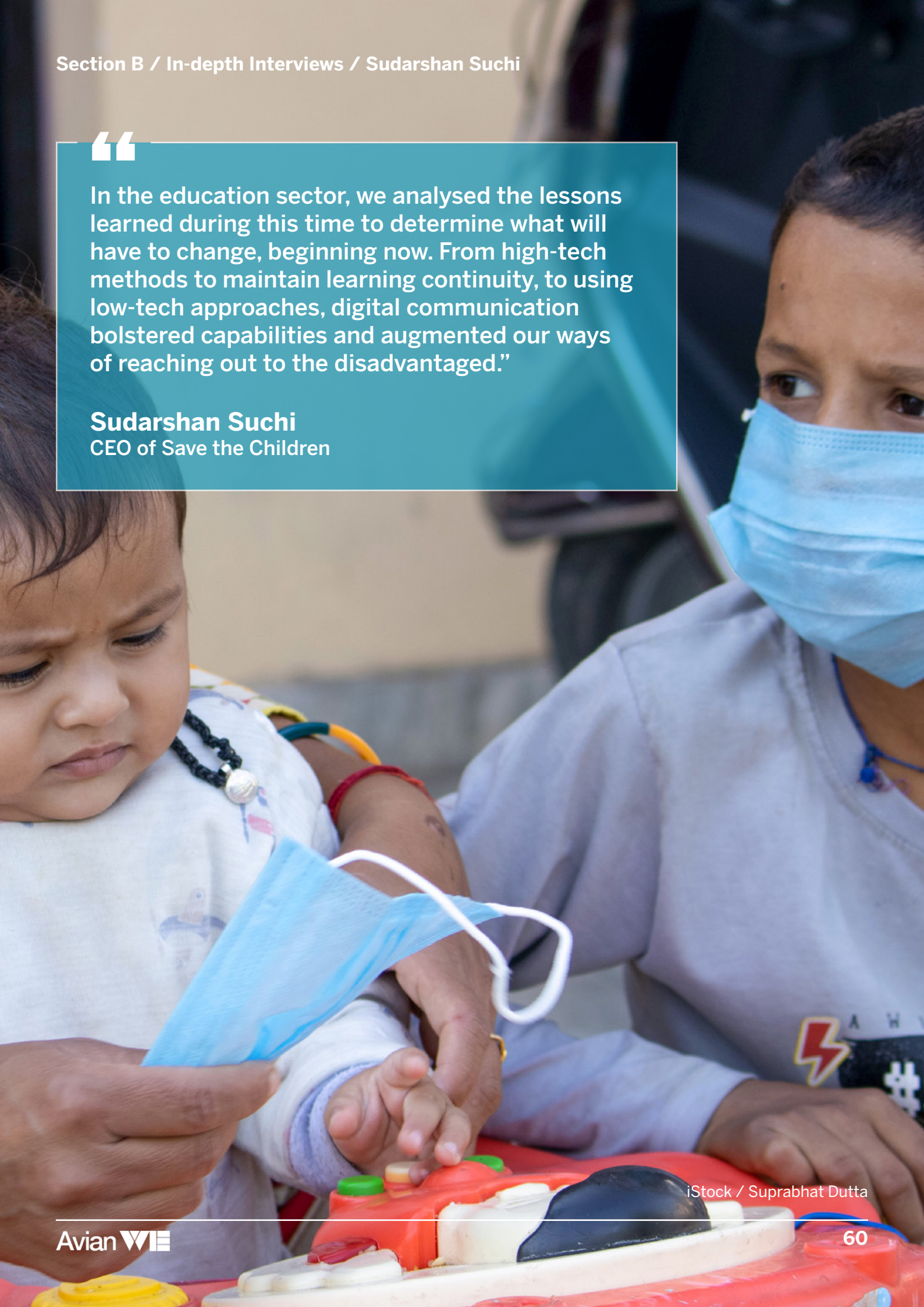
iStock / Suprabhat Dutta

ANONYMOUS

Name: Respondent wishes to remain unnamed
Designation: Founder
Sector: Environment

1. What have been the key focus areas for your organisation this year during COVID-19? Were there any changes made to your organisational objectives and deliverables?

Clean air, protection of biodiversity and preserving forest areas for tribal communities were the key focus areas for us this year. We haven't changed our objectives due to COVID-19. However, since funding has been impacted, we have not been able to undertake as many interventions as we would have liked.

2. In your view, what is COVID-19's impact on advocacy and activism in the environment sector? What has changed?

COVID-19 has impacted our work in the environment sector. Our work on the tribal forests has been delayed by 6 months, along with our engagement with policymakers, beneficiaries, etc. However, the lockdown has given an opportunity to witness the environmental benefits of stalling industrial activity and vehicular movement.

3. What do you think, in general, are the emerging disruptions and opportunities of this time?

As mentioned above, funding has certainly created disruption in undertaking interventions. But most importantly, the lockdown has provided an opportunity to showcase the possibility of climate recovery if industrial activity and vehicle movement are stalled. It is a case study highlighting that environmental issues can be addressed if the right measures are taken.

4. Climate change is a global issue. Do you think COVID-19 has also had an indirect impact on the environment? What might be the long-term impact of suspension of recycling, waste management and waste segregation? What would be the impact of increased medical waste during this time?

The inability to manage medical waste because of COVID-19 is an area of concern. The fear is that the medical waste will end up in our oceans and landfills, contaminating water bodies and land masses, especially in urban centres. This is going to impact the biodiversity of marine life, and the hazardous waste will affect communities living near these landfills. There is a need to strategise a plan of action to safely recycle this waste.

5. In your view, how can technology be harnessed for social good and community empowerment?

In India, thousands of villages depend on forest resources for livelihood. But many of them will be displaced, and have already been displaced, due to deforestation. To address this, we are creating a database and groups for tribal communities using satellite imagery. This will help them prove their identities, land ownership and social entitlements. So, we are using technology to empower communities. There is a possibility that wetlands and mangroves can be protected through digital and satellite mapping to prevent encroachment. There are some organisations working to showcase real-time air quality with monitors and providing information using digital devices.

This is helping in decision-making for people. Thus, advanced technologies will help us advance the efforts to bring about social good.

6. We have seen that many organisations have been struggling with funding, as most of the funding today has gone into COVID-19 relief. What are the areas in resource allocation that need to be looked at now, and what do people giving aid need to keep in mind?

Addressing deforestation, improving air quality and water security are the three areas that need maximum funding in the environment space. These are critical areas and we are at a stage where urgent resource mobilisation is required.

7. Storytelling enables an organisation to share its experiences, successes and learnings with other stakeholders. What are your views on the role of communication in showcasing the environment sector's learnings with the larger network?

The present trends and topics in the media are largely issues around influencers, political parties and corporations. They are taking up most of the space in media and communications. It leaves very little space to talk about issues that really matter, such as the environment. Communication must play a role in educating people and news selection must happen based on the needs of communities — not political and business agendas. Communications can play a significant role in highlighting the challenges that we have, and in showcasing solutions to ensure collective action.
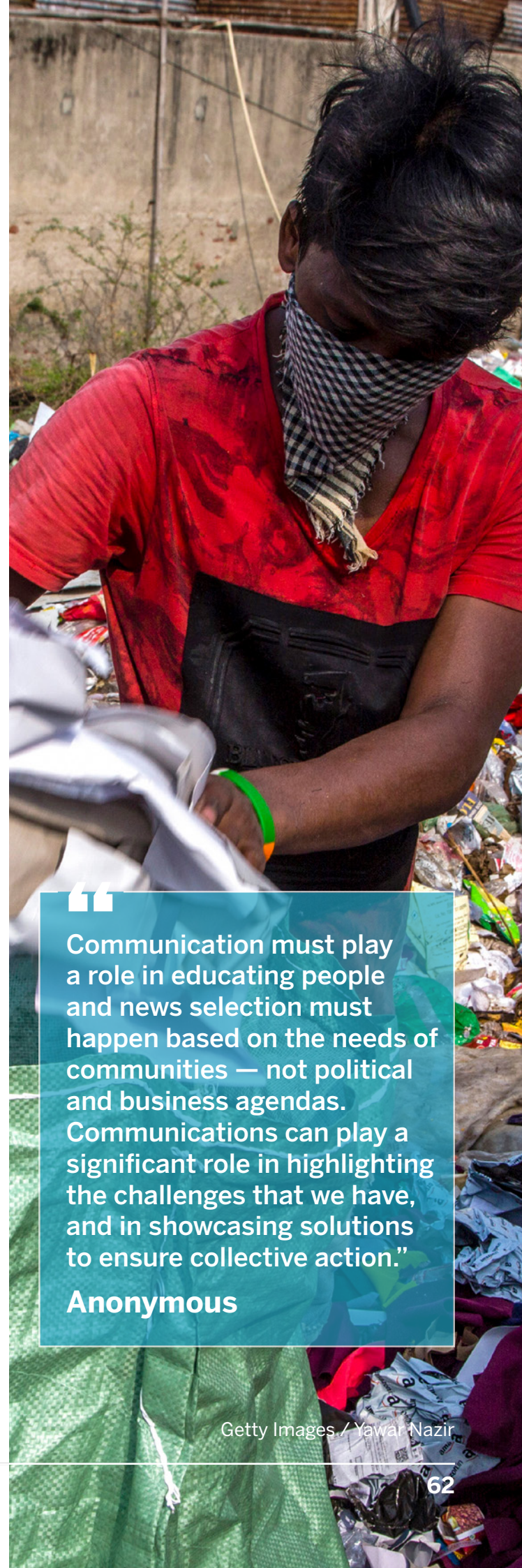
> **"Communication must play a role in educating people and news selection must happen based on the needs of communities — not political and business agendas. Communications can play a significant role in highlighting the challenges that we have, and in showcasing solutions to ensure collective action."**
>
> **Anonymous**

Getty Images / Yawar Nazir

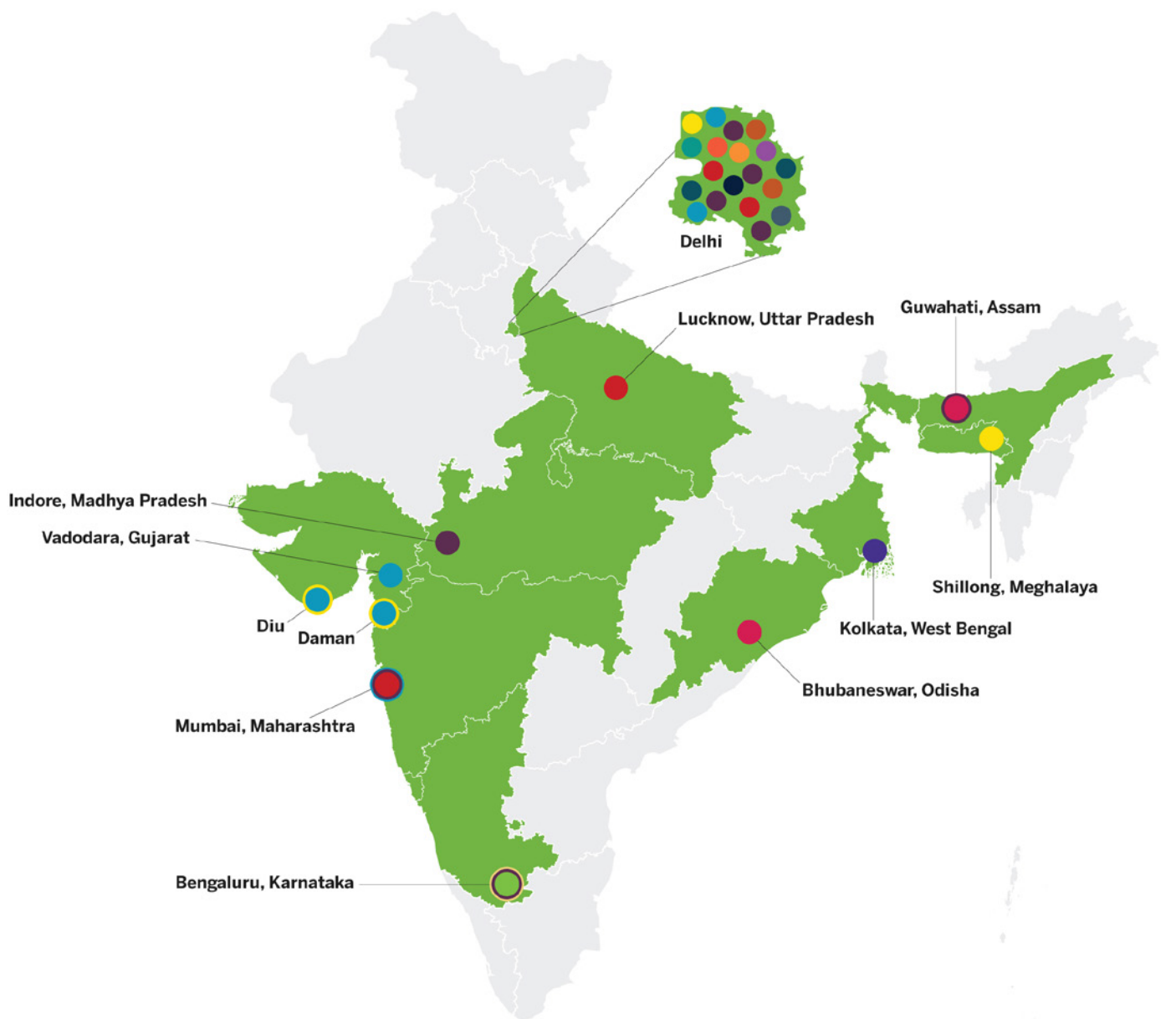iStock / Suprabhat Dutta

TECHNICAL
APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted in October 2020 and was administered by YouGov India's panel.

As part of the survey, each respondent answered 11 questions, centred on their opinion about how COVID-19 affected the development sector. The scales were designed to avoid respondent bias to the best extent, and response codes were rotated and randomised wherever applicable.

Given that all results are based on a sample, data is subject to statistical errors normally associated with sample-based information.
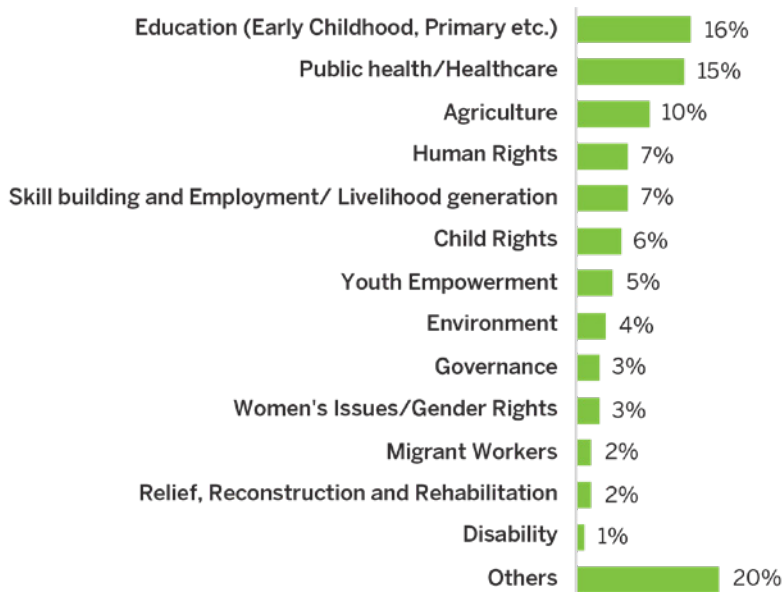
A SNAPSHOT OF THE ORGANISATIONS LOCATED IN INDIA

Delhi

Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Guwahati, Assam

Indore, Madhya Pradesh

Vadodara, Gujarat

Diu

Daman

Shillong, Meghalaya

Kolkata, West Bengal

Mumbai, Maharashtra

Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Bengaluru, Karnataka

Map Legend

Education	Human Rights	Poverty Reduction	Socio-Emotional Learning
Health	Child Development	Emergencies	Disaster Management
Child Rights	Community Development	Safety	Protection and Livelihood Opportunities
Livelihood	Philanthropy Market Place	Volunteerism	ICT4D (Information Communication Technology for Development)

Avian

COMPOSITION OF
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Our sample included 101 respondents, primarily middle-level to senior-level professionals from a range of 13 development sectors as illustrated in Figure 10, and within these sectors, they are working in specific areas as illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 10. Sector of work

Sector	%
Education (Early Childhood, Primary etc.)	16%
Public health/Healthcare	15%
Agriculture	10%
Human Rights	7%
Skill building and Employment/ Livelihood generation	7%
Child Rights	6%
Youth Empowerment	5%
Environment	4%
Governance	3%
Women's Issues/Gender Rights	3%
Migrant Workers	2%
Relief, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation	2%
Disability	1%
Others	20%

Figure 11. Area of work within the organisation

Area	%
Technology	16%
Communications And Advocacy	14%
Research And Data Analysis	12%
People And Culture	10%
Project Coordination/Management	8%
Monitoring And Evaluation	7%
Finance	7%
Development And Fundraising	5%
Partnerships	5%
Law And Legal Affairs	2%
Program Design	2%
Operations	2%
Others	11%

QUESTIONNAIRE OF SURVEY REPORT

1. Among the following, which, if any, is your current sector of work?

<1>   Agriculture
<2>   Youth Empowerment
<3>   Human Rights
<4>   Disability
<5>   Education (early childhood, primary etc.)
<6>   Environment
<7>   Migrant Workers
<8>   Relief, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation
<9>   Governance
<10>   Skill Building and Employment or Livelihood Generation
<11>   Public health or Healthcare
<12>   Women's Issues or Gender Rights
<13>   Child Rights

2. Among the following, what is your area of work within the organisation you work for?

You may have responsibilities that cover multiple areas, but for the purpose of this survey please select the one where you spend most of your time.

<1>   Communications and Advocacy
<2>   Law and Legal Affairs
<3>   People and Culture
<4>   Programme Design
<5>   Development and Fundraising
<6>   Operations
<7>   Partnerships
<8>   Monitoring and Evaluation
<9>   Technology
<10>   Project Coordination or Management
<11>   Finance
<12>   Research and Data Analysis
<99>   Others, please specify

3. Which among the following areas in your organisation were affected due to the COVID-19 situation? *Please select all that apply.*

<1>   Delivery of service or functioning of programmes
<2>   Strategic planning
<3>   Jobs and salaries

<4>   Training of staff
<5>   Planned or calendared events, conferences
<6>   Ongoing partnerships
<7>   On ground donations
<8>   Communications or outreach
<9>   Donor engagement or fundraising
<10>   Corpus funds
<11>   Budget planning for the next few years
<12>   Monitoring and evaluation
<13>   Others, please specify (fixed)
<14>   Not applicable, no area in our organisation was affected due to COVID-19 (XOR, fixed)

4. When you think of your organisation's **current** situation, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Rows
<1>   Our organisation has already faced a decline in contributions from our major donor(s).
<2>   Our organisation has added new fundraising methods.
<3>   There has been a rise in individual donors for our organisation.
<4>   There has been a change in our key focus areas.

Columns
<1>   Strongly agree
<2>   Agree
<3>   Neither agree nor disagree
<4>   Disagree
<5>   Strongly disagree

5. When you think of your organisation's **future,** how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Rows
<1>   There will be an increase in our organisation's budgets for the next financial year.
<2>   There will be an overall decline in donations for the next financial year.
<3>   Our organisation will struggle to meet its donor retention numbers.
<4>   Our organisation will have to lay off staff or cut costs on travel and related expenses.

Columns
<1>   Strongly agree
<2>   Agree
<3>   Neither agree nor disagree
<4>   Disagree
<5>   Strongly disagree

6. Which among the following, if any, would you say have been **prioritised** in your organisation due to COVID-19? *Select up to 3 responses.*

<1>   Mental health support for staff
<2>   Expanding on service or programme delivery channels for beneficiaries
<3>   Research and data backed insight generation
<4>   Collaboration between verticals to ensure comprehensiveness in response to emerging work
<5>   Optimising operations
<6>   Building vertical specific staff capacity
<7>   Building leadership capacity
<8>   Building technology capacity (for example, new tools and platforms)
<9>   Building fundraising capacity
<10>   Financial stability
<11>   Innovative channels of communication for different stakeholders
<12>   Developing innovative financing models
<13>   Forming multi-stakeholder partnerships
<14>   Employee retention
<99>   Others (fixed)

7. Which of the following **capacity-building techniques,** if any, have been adopted by your organisation during COVID-19? *Please select all that apply.*

<1>   Adapting to new digital tools (or example, webinars, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, gaining insights using data or machine learning algorithms to detect diseases)
<2>   Advanced training courses for staff on data research and insights for future programming
<3>   Providing financial management to use funds effectively
<4>   Adopting risk framework mechanism to detect early signs of organisational distress
<5>   Partnership and cross sector collaboration for knowledge sharing with other organisations
<6>   Collaboration with partners to deploy emergency responses using radio and broadcast channels
<99>   Others, please specify (fixed)
<999>   Not applicable. Our organisationhas not adopted any capacity building techniques during COVID-19 (XOR, fixed)

8. Which among the following **new opportunities,** if any, would you say emerged because of COVID-19? *Please select all that apply.*

<1>   Moved the ENTIRE service or programme delivery online
<2>   Moved a portion of our service or programme delivery online (#exclusive from 1)
<3>   Aligned programmes in response to COVID-19
<4>   Engaged strategically with media or social media to reach a wider audience
<5>   Redesigned our method of stakeholder communication
<6>   Created new alliances or partnerships
<7>   Created or hired for new roles within the organisation
<8>   Designed innovative initiatives or programmes

<9>   Established efficient ways of resource mobilization
<999> Not applicable. Our organisation has had no new opportunities created because of COVID-19. (XOR, fixed)

9. Please take some time and elaborate in a few points how your organisation has created or taken advantages of new opportunities that the pandemic has created.

Please be as descriptive as possible.

10. Keeping in mind the current times, when you think of what the nonprofit world needs the MOST in order to emerge in the post-COVID era, what would it be? *Please select only ONE response.*

<1>   Partnership and collaboration (local, regional or national)
<2>   Efficient infrastructure for technology
<3>   Relevant or sector-specific thought leadership
<4>   Redesigning programmes
<5>   Resources for funding or fundraising
<6>   Increased communication on digital and social media
<7>   Innovative ways of data collection and research
<8>   Building dialogue to focus on survivor-driven conversations
<9>   None of the above. I think it is _____ (# allow space, text, special characters and number) (#fixed)

11. Thinking specifically about the role of communications towards your donors and stakeholders, which of the following steps has your organisation already taken? *Please select all that apply.*

<1>   Employed storytelling in our communication
<2>   Ensured open and frequent communication from the leadership team
<3>   Created separate communication channels or talking points for different stakeholders
<4>   Created a COVID-19-specific communication task force or team
<5>   Employed different channels of communication (for example, webinars or learning spaces)
<6>   Increased frequency of communication to stakeholders
<7>   Decreased frequency of communication to stakeholders (#exclusive from 6)
<99>   Others, please specify (fixed)

12. *To what extent do you agree with the statement* Authentic storytelling can enable an organisation's ability to accomplish its vision and mission.

<1>   Strongly Agree
<2>   Agree
<3>   Neither agree, nor disagree
<4>   Disagree
<5>   Strongly Disagree

TERMINOLOGY AND
ABBREVIATIONS

- The terms "professionals" and "respondents" have been used interchangeably in the report to avoid repeated usage and imply the participants of the online survey.

- The term "organisation" implies all the categories (nonprofit, foundations, charities, international organisations) for the reader's easy reference.

- IT4D means Information and Communications Technology for Development

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