

Pakistan CSOs Statement on COVID-2019

For Immediate Release

March 24, 2020 at Islamabad

Humanity as a whole, is facing one of its worst crisis with COVID-2019 outbreak, making us shut down all businesses and even basic human interactions. In these terribly difficult times, we call for the formation of national, provincial and state level coordination and relief committees comprised of experts, elected representatives, civil and military authorities, CSOs and media to tackle this acute crisis.

We the undersigned on behalf of CSOs all across Pakistan share the solidarity with the actions of governments across Pakistan and around the globe.

We appreciate the

- Measures taken by all the governments across Pakistan including lock down of public life and seeking military assistance to curb the further spread of COVID-2019.
- Initiating special measures to make sure availability of food and necessary medicines in the markets
- The campaign and measures of government of Pakistan for social distancing to minimize further spread of COVID-2019.
- The statement of United Nations' Secretary General for global ceasefire amid COVID-2019 crisis. We call for the government of Pakistan to use its political influence to make sure the possibility of global ceasefire in all regions.

We call for the following immediate actions by the governments and citizens' individually & jointly,

- A lot of people are out of work and hence a moratorium to be passed on all forms of evictions; be it due to non payment of rents, confiscation or other punishments due to non payment of loans especially for poor strata of the society. State Bank of Pakistan and other Banks should be asked to be extremely lenient towards small scale borrowers, and Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs), including minimum balance penalties and waving of banking charges. A call should come to surpass the technicalities and make help reach people at this point.
- Government social welfare schemes like Ehsas Program, Benazir Income Support Program and other companies, institutions, private sector organizations and charitable organizations to be directed to pay at least part of their salaries to all their employees, particularly daily wagers, in form of cash grants.
- Federal/ provincial and state governments (AJ & K and Gilgit Baltistan) should come up with a subsistence scheme for the poor and needy families across the country
- Make a commitment and declare that no one will suffer without food or medicine in the country. Establish small enquiry teams to make sure home food delivery to the needy families.
- Create storage system for agricultural produce along with a system to curb hoarders and make sure the availability of food items and required medicines, sanitizers and other necessary items
- There are various issues on which struggles are going on in different parts of the country. The government need to address all protestors and give an assurance to each and everyone of them that it will keep all continuous issues out till the Corona Virus emergency is over. The government should also keep aside all decisions that might create fear or antagonism in the

minds of the people for now. The entire government machinery of the people should work to keep the people of the country together. Thus the environment that necessitates protests will cease to exist up to the point that the deadly condition is alive.

- Introduce innovative digital means of making up the loss of schools' days in a safe and confidential manner using services of Digital Pakistan
- We are certain that if the government takes the lead in all sincerity, people will respond- it is the easiest, most ethical and effective way ahead.
- Federal and provincial government should open more testing centres both in public and private sectors and give a clear set of instructions and confidence to those who on self quarantine and those who are tested positive. If needed, government should take over the infrastructure of the private hospitals, start special units and recruit more people for the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled works involved in this health emergency. Ensure utmost care and safety of the health professionals. Come out with clear instructions for home quarantine and sanitization of public spaces and vehicles, public transports etc.
- Governments should provide immediate health care services at door steps for pregnant women and especially to those who may seek labour assistance during delivery / birth of a child. Special helpline should be introduced to provide necessary health care services for new born and maternal health care.
- People should be strictly prohibited to visit their worship places like mosques, churches, shrines, temples and others.
- The growth of Corona Virus in Pakistan will become completely out of hand if it gets out among the urban slums / poor localities and in to the rural areas. Before that we need to work on pre-emptive strategies seriously.
- If there are short of funds start collecting money by calling for relief fund and form a contingency fund dedicated just to address COVID-2019 Outbreak.
- Facilitate INGOs/ NGOs/ CSOs, bilateral and multilateral donors and programs by addressing the unnecessary delays in transfer of funds and receipts of foreign contributions to those organizations who have already abide by the desired procedures as required by the Economic Affairs Division.
- Equip and strengthen local government systems and put in place accessible and people friendly complaints and grievances registration and redressal mechanisms like Citizens' Portal under the designated local authorities to provide and ensure immediate support and humanitarian relief.

None of us want our fellow human beings to feel helpless and lost. "Being together while staying apart" is the magical mantra of survival now

In solidarity with war against COVID-2019

- 1- Awaz Foundation Pakistan Centre for Development Services
- 2- Ujala Network
- 3- Pakistan Development Alliance