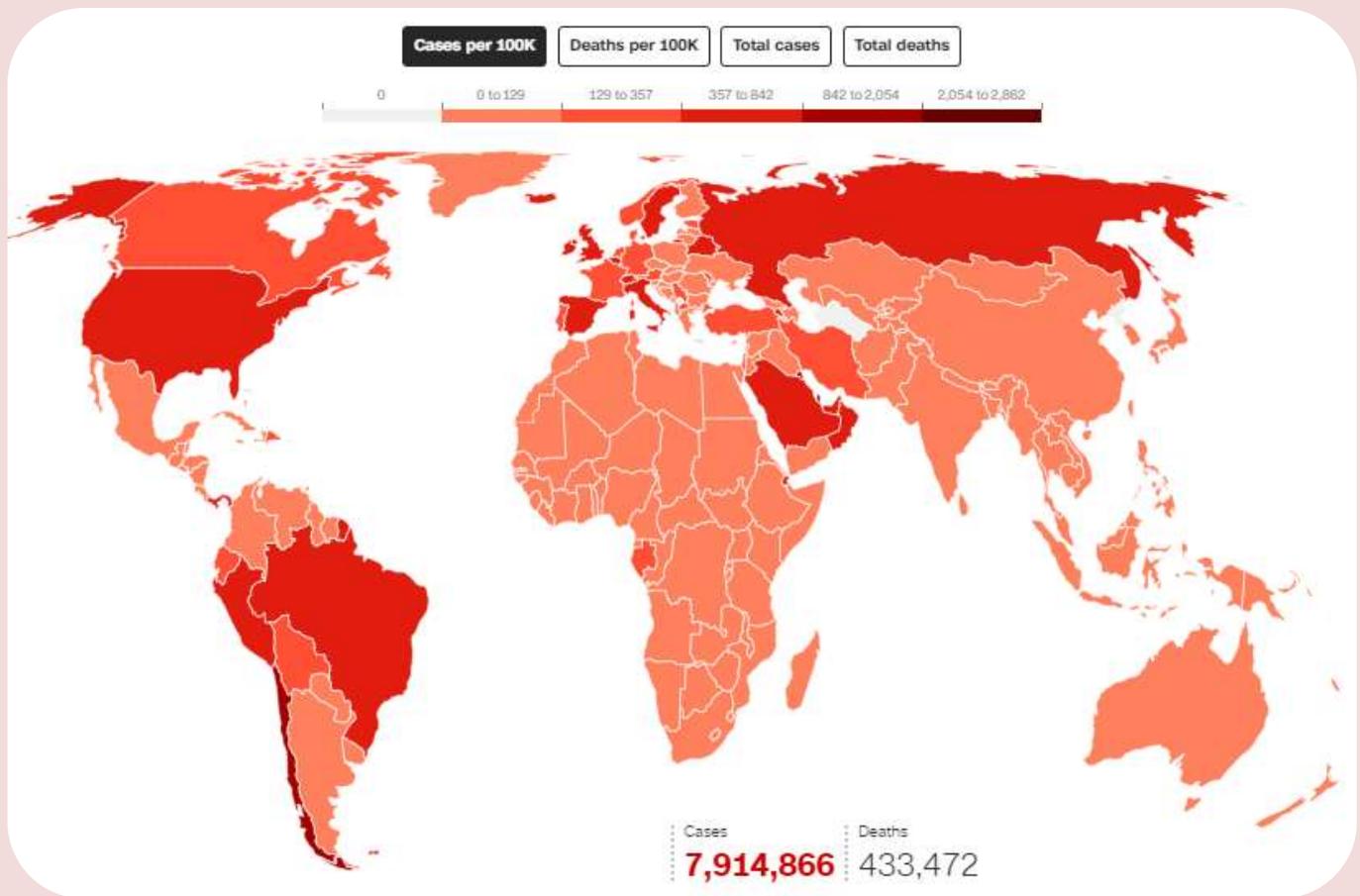


## The Role of Civil Society Organizations during and in Post-COVID 19 World



	Cases (24 HRS)	Deaths (24 HRS)	Tests (24 HRS)	Total Tests
<b>CORONAVIRUS IN PAKISTAN CONFIRMED CASES</b>	5,358	118	31,500	982,012
<b>160,117</b>	<b>3,093 DEATHS</b>	<b>59,983 SINDH</b>	<b>9,637 ISLAMABAD</b>	<b>19,613 KP</b>
	<b>59,215 RECOVERED</b>	<b>60,138 PUNJAB</b>	<b>8,794 BALOCHISTAN</b>	<b>740 / 1,213 AJK / GB</b>

## Editorial

Human Rights provide us with a sophisticated tool to guide responses during crises and social upheaval. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, was itself a response to half a century of turmoil: two world wars, a pandemic & economic depression. It drew on previous charters & aimed to provide a broad framework covering all aspects of life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has launched another period of crisis and uncertainty. In a short time, our lives have changed. Globally there are over eight million cases and nearly half a million have so far perished, a significant loss of life.

Over three billion people are living under some form of lock-down. Businesses, schools and cultural centers have been forced to close. The ramifications will be severe, and call for concerted efforts from all players of society for a joint response, nationally as well as globally.

Whether as individual organizations, as part of networks or within the broader ecosystem of civil society, the CSOs and individual human rights defenders bring a range of skills and expertise. Drawing on the detailed framework of rights developed since the adoption of the UDHR, CSOs help guide societies and leaders through difficult questions, a role heightened in times of crisis: are emergency powers allowed, for how long and under what conditions? How can equal treatment be assured and how can we guarantee that temporary measures don't become entrenched?

Globally some governments are using COVID-19 to further crackdown on independent voices. Authoritarian leaders are ruling by decree. Dozens of countries have adopted emergency laws with no sunset clause. Many countries have criminalized the publication of 'distorted facts or inauthentic news' and have censored, arrested and intimidated journalists, healthcare workers and other individuals for criticizing their response. CSOs are concerned about the

use of emergency measures to limit and impede their work in promoting rights. Besides, many organizations are worried that the economic fallout of the crisis, will have severe economic repercussions on their revenues, jeopardizing their subsistence and, with that, their capacity to provide services for marginalized and vulnerable populations and to engage with governments and institutions to secure rights-respecting responses.

Coronavirus updates		
Confirmed cases	Deaths	Recovered
<b>7,871,613</b>	<b>132,211</b>	<b>2,930,679</b>
<small>Data correct at 06:25 UTC 15 June</small>		

Civil society organizations are fundamental in building a rights-based post-coronavirus world. They are playing a remarkable role during the pandemic by providing the necessary guidance on the protection and promotion of human rights; monitoring and tracking compliance, urging governments to fulfil their human rights obligations and providing services, being among the first responders in crisis situations.

At the end of this crisis, there can be no return to business as usual. An urgent, comprehensive public debate and transparent consultations on exit strategies and recovery measures are highly needed. The question of whether recovery will lead to more inclusive, just, sustainable and democratic societies depends fundamentally on the participation of civil society in this process.

As a community of CSOs and organizations, HRDN has compiled resources from our members, partners and international organizations to help guide crisis responses, monitor, inform & assess the impact of COVID-19.



**Mazhar Iqbal**

**Head of Programs**

## ***The Pandemic COVID 19: Challenges and Opportunities for Civil Society and NGOs***

The crises are generally viewed as dangerous, expensive, and detracting from other agendas and priorities. However, a look back in global history illustrates that crises and extreme threats can be useful for directing individuals, a country, and even the world to a solution.

emergency and the opportunities arising resultantly on the horizons.

The civil society cannot rule out the chances of misappropriations and opaque accounting practices and irregular rules in the management of funds as well as other aid received from

***Out of crises can emerge new and incredible opportunities, particularly if traditional approaches & paradigms are questioned & challenged. During a crisis, incentives & motivations change, potentially leading to new cooperative behaviors & even to the creation of new systems or structures.***

The COVID-19 crisis has affected societies and economies around the globe and will permanently reshape our world as it continues to unfold. While the fallout from the crisis is both amplifying familiar risks and creating new ones, change at this scale also creates new openings for managing systemic challenges, and ways to build back better. The national and international funding agencies, public and private sector organizations have gradually begun announcing mammoth funding opportunities: both 'Government-to-Government', as well as 'bilateral and through INGOs'. It is expected that once the 'life resumes to normal, later this year in all probabilities, there would be an unprecedented economic and development upsurge to make up the losses to the economy and all other walks of societies across the globe.

The civil society as a whole and the NGOs in particular have to play a key role in the "building back better" efforts. Unfortunately, the NGOs in Pakistan have been stigmatized for using nontransparent measures during funds management in emergency situations which has shattered the belief of masses as well as donor community and demands have arisen for enhanced transparency. It is, therefore, of paramount significance that the civil society at large upholds transparency, accountability and responsiveness while responding to COVID 19

donor agencies. Civil society has an important role to play in ensuring funds and the aid to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic reach their destination. Donors and multilateral organizations would expect the CSOs/NGOs establishing digital accountability networks to support this effort. Therefore, the current crisis presents challenges for civil society; however, there are also new opportunities for it to embrace digital civic engagement as an anti-corruption initiative

There are some key points that the Civil Society and NGOs in Pakistan, and elsewhere, should consider:

- ✚ There are risks of misappropriation of funds, they are always there during crises times. The Bottom-up accountability approaches are, therefore, crucial for ensuring funds allocated for the pandemic reach their intended destination;
- ✚ It is tempting to view the current lockdowns & restriction of movement as a global paralysis. However, whilst challenging for civil society, the current situation may stimulate creativity & offer new opportunities for it as a watchdog; The present urge to participate, to share information and to organize assistance could be channeled into constructive support and alternative forms of civic engagement to combat corruption;

- ✚ Development practitioners can support civil society by drawing upon the many existing – but untapped – resources to mobilize digital civic engagement. By establishing digital accountability networks, there is potential to increase awareness of corruption risks, build new alliances and promote accountability initiatives;
- ✚ Online collaborations have the capability to contribute to anti-corruption initiatives. However, limitations and challenges faced by Pakistani civil society include: poor technology infrastructures, lack of access to mobile devices or the skills to communicate, cyber security issues, misuse of data, and a reluctance to engage at a time when organizations are at risk.

### **Current Challenges for the Civil Society**

The CSOs and the NGOs, as watchdogs in particular as well as recipients of the funding assistance in general, are confronted with some unorthodox and unconventional challenges. The current crisis poses several challenges to the role of civil society: monitoring, accountability, advocacy, and promoting citizens' participation.

Some of the key challenges that CSOs shall have to tackle during current emergency situation as well as in managing the emerging opportunities are:

#### **1. Asymmetry of Power between Executive and Civil Societies**

In some contexts, the legitimacy of executive power of the government may increase. It is the executive that is largely responsible for setting policies & an agenda for action to deal with the crisis. Executive rhetoric that emphasizes that now is a time for action may resonate with the public. This could make it more difficult for both vertical and horizontal accountabilities

mechanisms, the CSOs, watchdogs to carry out their functioning and gain momentum;

#### **2. Restrictions of Movement Prevents Activities that require Meeting.**

This is particularly the case for civil society's social accountability role, as most social accountability tools require engaging local communities to come together to participate in initiatives. This is not possible when social distancing measures are in place. Community meetings, social audits, and group sessions – the mainstays of most social accountability initiatives – are difficult to achieve under strict distancing or quarantine measures.

#### **3. Access to Information**

In some communities, especially interior Sindh, South Punjab, Balochistan and Newly Merged Districts of FATA, lockdowns also prevent access to information if this access was previously available from work, an educational institution, a library, or an internet café. Thus, the ability to engage digitally is reduced to access via mobile phones.

#### **4. Gaining Momentum for Civic Initiatives is Difficult**

During times of crisis it can be very difficult to gain momentum and participants for a cause, in the human rights movements, as media and public orientation are focused on responding the emergency. Methods for reaching out have also moved online, which may reduce the potential for broader engagement. The civil society can, therefore, lose the strength it used to gain under normal situations.

#### **5. Reduced Space for Civil Society**

Activists in developing countries are seeing civic space shrink as the pandemic take hold. Government responses to the new coronavirus pandemic are disrupting civil society globally. Lockdowns and physical distancing measures are confining people to their homes and upending their ability to meet, organize, and

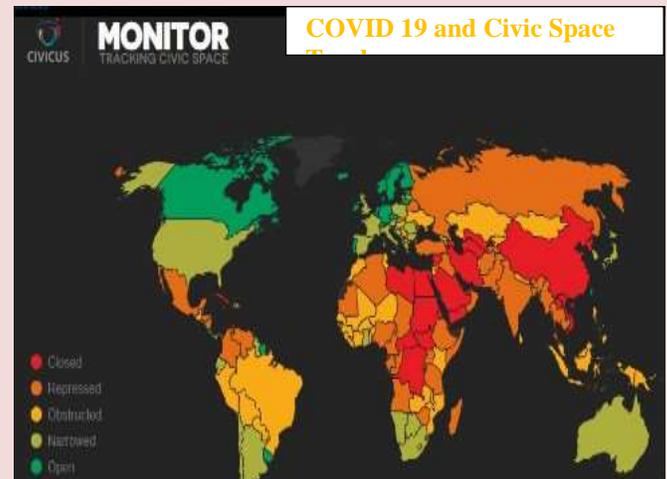
advocate. Many civil society organizations have been forced to put planned activities on hold; others are scrambling to shift their work online<sup>1</sup>.

The situation in Pakistan for Civil Society is not so bright. Pakistan falls among those countries where space for civil society is considered “Repressed” during COVID 19 period.

In a study undertaken by the GCAP<sup>2</sup> through Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA) and Parliamentarian Commission for Human Rights (PCHR), the Pakistani CSOs and the civil society, in a joint statement, shared the response of the executive and legislators, parliamentarians and other decision making authorities was not up to the mark as they are not providing required guidance and leadership.

The situation would further aggravate, adding to the miseries of Pakistani Civil Society which is already enduring hard times due to shrinking space in the backdrop of “National Security and the NGO’s Regulatory Regime” introduced by the Government of Pakistan in last several years. Many leading national and international NGOs were compelled to either scale down or windup their operations, especially in the security prone areas of Pakistan.

The situation calls for concerted efforts on the part of civil society to handle these multidimensional challenges and tap the emerging opportunities.



## Opportunities for the Civil Society

In the midst of all these mounding challenges, there are still new emerging opportunities in the post COVID 19 times that the civil society and NGO fraternity need to wisely tap. Here are some of the new opportunities arising on the horizons:

### 1. Potential to Increase Legitimacy of the Civil Society

In recent years, questions have been raised regarding the legitimacy, accountability, and relevance of CSOs. A 2017 report by the Center for Strategic & International Studies<sup>3</sup> provides examples of some of the challenges facing civil society. The current crisis may offer opportunities for CSOs to respond to some of these criticisms through building broader participation by a network of online reporters and activists with strong links to the communities in which they live. This may counter the tendency of NGOs to be driven by donor demands and the need to secure funding.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/covid-19>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gcap.global/news/pakistan-csos-statement-on-covid-19-response-by-government/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/171012\\_Green\\_CivilSocietyCrossroads\\_Web.pdf?CLFnRWYASKYtclD48YQ9liLNb1mK1RSc](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/171012_Green_CivilSocietyCrossroads_Web.pdf?CLFnRWYASKYtclD48YQ9liLNb1mK1RSc)

## 2. Potential for Widespread Engagement

The current situation has released an urge to participate, demonstrated by the hundreds of Social Media groups or crowdsourced mapping projects<sup>4</sup> sharing information or organizing assistance. Some of this engagement could be channeled into constructive support and alternative forms of civic engagement to combat misappropriation and fraudulent practices and to contribute to the responsiveness of the civil society, if the framework to do so is created and made known to the right audience.

## 3. Increase in the Knowledge Body and Information

As 'whole' societies have begun to interact digitally, information is more likely to be available online, either through official web portals and social media or distributed via closed networks. Tech giants have joined forces to, for example, filter out misinformation<sup>5</sup> and remove advertisements for fake protection gear. Such interventions from the platform providers are of some help, but do not remove the need for the specialized skills needed to harvest and properly verify and validate information. There are NGOs engaged in such projects, and many of them are organized under Humanitarian2Humanitarian network<sup>6</sup>. In a global crisis, giant corporations, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google, gear up to be present and active. These networks facilitate information sharing and monitoring options, but only to a certain extent.

## 4. Building of New Alliances

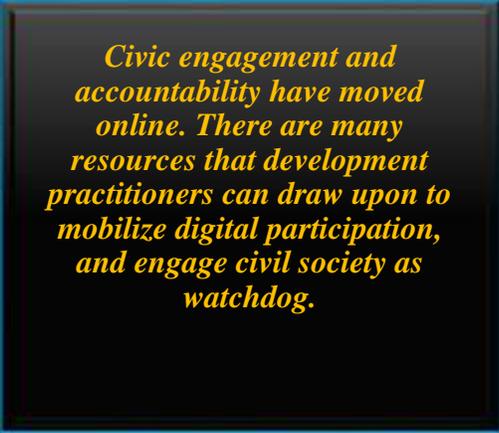
The current situation provides opportunities to engage with other types of civil society organizations beyond NGOs, such as churches, Scouting groups, professional associations (e.g., doctors, nurses and labor unions etc.) and other

membership-based organizations and networks.

These different forms of CSOs often have good communication structures and can engage different people in the monitoring and oversight of Covid-19 responses alongside civil society and NGOs. Reaching out to these organizations for wider mobilization can occur through existing local NGO partners that may have broader links with unions and membership organizations. Donors can also liaise with their own domestic unions which may have international links.

## 5. Exploring Platforms for Digital Civic Engagement

There are several examples of how civic engagement and accountability have moved online, with many untapped resources to draw upon to mobilize digital participation. These provide different ways in which development practitioners could engage and support the watchdog function of civil society to enhance transparency and accountability.



*Civic engagement and accountability have moved online. There are many resources that development practitioners can draw upon to mobilize digital participation, and engage civil society as watchdog.*

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<https://www.usahidi.com/blog/2020/03/30/ushahidi-in-the-era-of-covid-19>

<sup>5</sup> <https://misinfotrackingreport.com/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.h2hworks.org/>

## Benefits and Privileges on Joining HRD Network as a Member!



As leading Network of the Development Sector in Pakistan, the HRD Network (HRDN) offers a range of benefits and privileges to its valued members which are enlisted below:

### 1. Networking, Information Exchange & Exposure Opportunities:

- ✚ Networking & linkages development opportunities with leading Development Professional, donor agencies, and stakeholders from public and private sector;
- ✚ Opportunities to liaise with a 'knowledge body' of leading professionals at different levels, disciplines and organizations dealing with human resource development and capacity building;
- ✚ Opportunities to share professional and organizational experiences, achievements, plans and gain wider recognition in the development sector;
- ✚ Obtaining peer & professional support and expert opinions, consultancies and advice on complex development issues;
- ✚ Joint opportunities to "Work for a Cause" on events such as national emergencies, advocacy campaigns, wider information dissemination and awareness raising etc.;
- ✚ Free participation in constructive policy dialogue, seminars, monthly forums and a wide range of workshops;
- ✚ Opportunity to represent HRDN at city chapters – both national & international levels;
- ✚ Opportunity to attend Seminars, Thematic Forum, Summit of Member Organizations, All Members' Meeting, International ATR Conference (ATR), Annual JAM (Join A Movement), International HRD Congress,

Pakistan Development Expo and other National and International events;

- ✚ Opportunity to avail participation in international networking events and international travel on discount rates;
- ✚ Access to HRDN's periodic publications, reports, and other informative material on various development issues and interventions for learning purposes;
- ✚ Opportunity to share/ publish/ contribute for HRDN's research work and publications;
- ✚ Networking externally with HRD peers and development professionals – exchanging best practice, learn new methods, and get inspiration for new ideas;
- ✚ Introduction to new technologies and emerging successful development models on national and international level;
- ✚ A forum for raising collective voices on matters affecting civil society and NGOs.



### 2. Capacity Building and Human Resources Development:

- ✚ Opportunity to become part of the 'resource pool of expert resource person's trainers' in

a wide range of development disciplines and key capacity areas;

- ✚ Participate in training events at subsidized rates on courses offered by HRDN member organizations;
- ✚ Access to HRDN Digital Resource Centre to gain information & for capacity building purposes;
- ✚ Access to national level Trainer's Database for organizing training events;
- ✚ Accessing free of cost Digital Training opportunity offered by HRDN from time to time by networking with other members;
- ✚ Hiring expert trainers from HRDN's "trainer pool" for organizing organizational level training events on discounted rates
- ✚ Career growth by participating and excelling in a wide range of programs and professional development initiatives offered by HRDN periodically;
- ✚ A platform for professional and organizational members to announce and organize trainings.

### **3. Resource Mobilization, Business Development and Projection:**

- ✚ Access to information for consultancies on national and international training programmes, seminars, courses and job opportunities by accessing to Information Clearing House and HRDN's Job Portal [www.pakdevjobs.com](http://www.pakdevjobs.com);
- ✚ Offering services to HRDN member organizations as well as professional members for enhancing their professional competence and job skills through exchange of latest information, IT related skills & experiences, latest techniques for resource mobilization & business development, best practices and human resources;
- ✚ Accessing to periodic updates on HRDN's website pertaining to business development opportunities upcoming projects, call for proposals etc.;

- ✚ Availing HRDN website for announcing business services, skills and purpose-specific interventions for a wider audience across Pakistan;
- ✚ Opportunity to win freelance short & long term consultancies/ assignments through/from HRDN;
- ✚ Consortium building for joint ventures and collective bidding to national and international funding opportunities for consultancies, research projects, training assignments etc.;
- ✚ Access to HRDN members Database and profiles for headhunting purposes

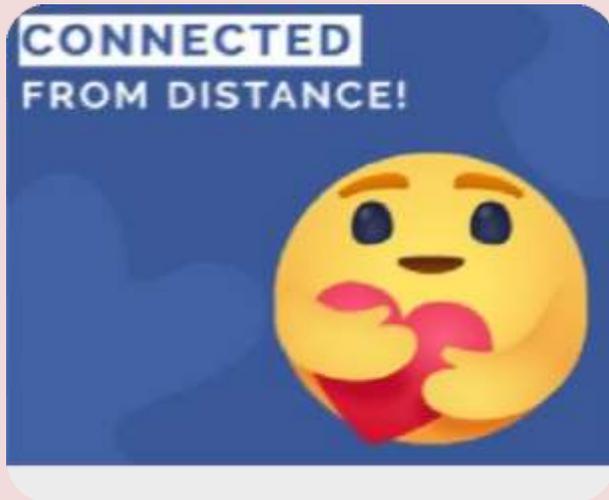
**So, get your membership with  
HRDN right away! The  
membership is open for all**

For membership, please visit HRDN's website [www.hrdn.net](http://www.hrdn.net) and access further guidance!

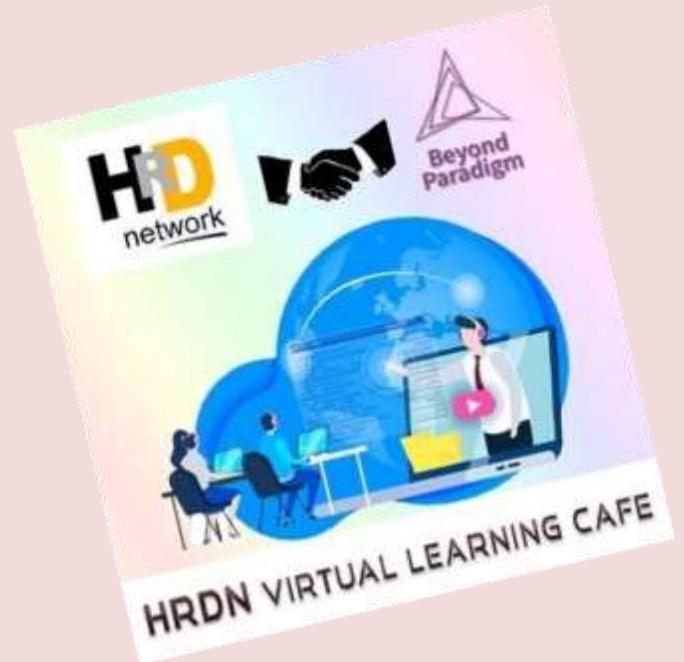
## The Launch of HRDN's Virtual Learning Café

In the midst of challenging times of COVID 19 with limited mobility and options to interact, explore & learn, the HRD Network plans to roll out a multidimensional 'knowledge outreach campaign' for its valued members through **Digital Learning Solutions** to keep the members abreast of latest situations and "developments in the Development World". Another key objective of initiating such brainstorming interactions is to keep ourselves ready to embrace challenges in the post-COVID 19 times. We believe life will never be the same as it used to be before this pandemic!

In this quest, HRDN is pleased to announce the launch of its "**HRDN Virtual Learning Café**" for its members as well as other interested professionals, organizations and wider communities. It offers a user-friendly and cost-effective learning opportunity with flexibility & convenience as built-in features. The Virtual Learning Sessions or Webinars will be held



twice a month where HRDN will identify and invite Subject Matter Experts (SME) from



HRDN member organizations as well as from the market to deliver interactive sessions on a wide range of issues relevant with current situation and the state of affair of the civil society at large.

This Virtual Learning initiative is being offered in partnership with Beyond Paradigm (Pvt.) Limited, one of the learned and active member of HRD Network. Please click on the below link to give consent of your participation in the upcoming Webinar at HRDN Virtual Learning Café. It would help us to send you details to join the virtual session. The Link

is: <https://forms.gle/XYyoky3cdH82coAb9>

**So, get yourself  
registered with  
HRDN as well  
as with its  
Virtual Café!**

# The Quarter under Review!

**HRDN continued exploring funding options to respond COVID 19**



**HRDN entered into a Consortium to jointly bid for funding opportunity from Europe Aid**



## **Completion of Lincoln Corner's Project with U.S. Embassy.**

**Project completion Report was developed and submitted!**

**Launch of HRDN Virtual Learning Café**  
with the technical assistance of its member organization Beyond Paradigm (Pvt.) Limited.

