



How mission-driven organizations responded and changed as a result of COVID-19



Global development professionals and organizations are on the cusp of making crucial decisions in light of COVID-19. Unlike most industries, global development is spared from the immediate effects of COVID-19. NGOs and fundraisers may still benefit from the release of donor funds towards addressing the pandemic in the short term but may feel the decline in longer term programmatic funding. Several NGOs have rolled up their programs and scaled down on both their workforce and programs. Consultants and contractors that make up a majority of the global development industry are facing project cuts, delays or cancellations altogether. Foreign aid and corporate philanthropy are also likely to diminish as a result of the pandemic¹. This is the foreseeable landscape for most development institutions as more and more resources are directed towards addressing and surviving the pandemic².

Yet as overall global giving is expected to fall, meeting the funding needs to combat COVID-19 will continue to rise along with “the curve”. The World Health Organization requires US\$675 million from February to April and roughly a third of this amount (US\$ 274 million) has been received³. This does not include the funding gaps faced by individual governments struggling to address COVID-19 in their own national contexts.

Ultimately, COVID-19 pandemic will change how global development organizations do their work. Beneficiaries served by these organizations will be among the most susceptible to these changes. Those most left behind by these changes are individuals that will continue to have the greatest needs while organizations that have historically helped these individuals are already struggling or are at risk of dwindling development financing.

• O’Connel, S. April, 2020. “How to reform NGO funding so we can deal with threats like COVID-19”. Mercy Corps Europe on World Economic Forum (WEF), Development Finance
• Kumar, Raj. April, 2020. “For the global development community, COVID-19 poses big questions”. From the Editor-in-Chief, Inside Development, Devex.com

• World Health Organization, April 2020. “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) donors & partners: WHO says thank you!.” Funding, Coronavirus disease. World Health Organization

Which raises a critical question:

How will global development organizations navigate this “new normal” and what will the landscape and future of development look like after COVID -19?

This fireside chat aims to explore and unpack questions around how mission-driven organizations have changed, responded, and adapted to the effects of COVID-19.

Through the perspective shared by experts representing diverse contexts, the conversation is designed to create a greater and more holistic awareness and exchange of knowledge around navigating the world during and after COVID-19.



First, a little about our expert panelists



Bo Percival

Director of Technology
and Innovation
at Humanitarian
OpenStreetMap Team



Greg Auberry

President and CEO
Consuelo Foundation



Manmeet Mehta

Director of Program
Operations & Impact
at Ashoka



David Mikhail

Communications Specialist
at United Nations Capital
Development Fund (UNCDF)



Jessica Herrera

Youth Employment
Solutions - Regional
Officer for Americas
at Plan International



Suneet Bhatt

President and
Board Chair
at Boldr



Bo Percival

Director of Technology and Innovation
at Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team

Sitting at the junction of technology and development, Bo Percival is a self-proclaimed 'geek for good', dedicated to uncovering insights at the intersection of behaviour, economics, technology and development. Bo has worked extensively in digital development for Gender, Education, HIV, LGBT rights, Youth Development and WASH; providing support to over 25 countries worldwide.

Bo has a Ba. in economics and marketing, diplomas in interpreting and development and is currently completing his masters in psychology and behavioural science. He emphasizes the interaction between humans and information technology in a big way. His current role as Director of Technology and Innovation at HOT is a perfect collision of passion and profession.



Greg Auberry

President and CEO
at Consuelo Foundation



For over 27 years, Greg has held numerous management level positions at Catholic Relief Services (CRS), one of the world's largest private international relief and development organizations. He oversaw operations and offices in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, China, Mongolia, Japan, Oceania, North Korea, and in Eastern Europe. Most recently Auberry served as CRS East and South Asia Regional Director based in Cambodia. He was in charge of humanitarian and social development programs valued annually at \$50 million in 15 countries stretching from India to the Federated States of Micronesia, and including the Philippines.

Greg also managed CRS start-up welfare programs and projects that prevent human trafficking; support women and youth with HIV and tuberculosis; assist women, children and youth in education, rural livelihoods and agricultural programming. He also handled major disaster management and relief efforts in various countries in Asia, including Super typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Greg received a Bachelor's degree from the Catholic University of America and completed graduate work in international development at American University, Washington, D.C.



Manmeet Mehta

Director of Program Operations & Impact
at Ashoka



Manmeet Mehta is the Director of Program Operations and Impact for Ashoka U.S. She has more than 15 years of experience in the corporate and social sector, working on issues of improving access to philanthropic capital, strategy consulting, strategic philanthropy, and grantmaking. She founded GlobalGiving's online crowdfunding program, "The GlobalGiving Accelerator" in 2007. The Accelerator was the first globally accessible mechanism for social entrepreneurs and nonprofits to access funding from the \$270 billion US philanthropic market.

She has worked with funders like USAID, The Rockefeller Foundation, and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on developing a systems-driven strategy for finding and funding transformative solutions globally. She grew up living in many cities across India, holds an MBA, and a degree in Masters in International Relations and Public Policy from the Maxwell School in Syracuse, NY.



David Mikhail

Communications Specialist
at United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)



David Mikhail currently serves as the Communications Specialist at the United Nations Capital Development Fund. Before joining the UNCDF, David worked as the Director of Executive Positioning and Thought Leadership for Mitchell, a Public Relations and Communications firm operating out of Arizona. David also held several positions in government as Senior Advisor and Chief Speechwriter-International Trade Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce. He was also the Deputy Director of Global Communications and Media Relations for the Council on Foreign Relations after serving as Associate Director of the same department.

David holds a Master's Degree in International Law and Legal Studies from the New York University, School of Law, a Juris Doctor from the American University Washington College of Law, and a Bachelor's in Political Science and Government from Rutgers University - New Brunswick.



Jessica Herrera

Youth Employment Solutions - Regional Officer for Americas
at Plan International

Jessica has over 7 years of experience as a youth advocate, with an and expertise in youth engagement, capacity building, youth employment, skills development and gender transformative programs. She has conducted more than 200 workshops and training at a local and international level reaching out to over 5,000 young people and professionals. Before joining Plan, Jessica served as the Youth Partnership Manager for AIESEC at the Asian Development Bank. Jessica holds a Bachelor's in Architecture from the Universidad Veritas and University of Santo Tomas.



Boldr.

Suneet Bhatt (Host)

President and Board Chair
at Boldr

Suneet Bhatt serves as both President and Board Chair of Boldr Impact, a mission-driven outsourcing company operating out of Manila, Philippines. Suneet also founded Dream Village, a for profit social enterprise dedicated to helping kids explore global issues through educational materials and picture books. Suneet Bhatt previously served as the General Manager of Crazy Egg for two years, and prior to that, a user for nearly a decade. He's shifted his time and energy to bringing his 20 years of product, marketing, and leadership experience to more mission-driven work.

Suneet holds a Master's in Business Administration and Management from Duke University's - The Fuqua School of Business, and a Bachelor's in English from Rutgers University.

Want to go straight to a certain topic?

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Acknowledging



Suneet Bhatt

“Let's talk about the first time people confronted it. Can you talk to us about the first time your organization started thinking about COVID-19?”



Manmeet Mehta

"It became clear quite rapidly that [having fellows around the world was] going to allow us a bird's eye view into community response...the fellows became really powerful nodes around the world of lifting up the voices of communities and how communities are springing into action points in response to COVID-19."

Manmeet shared how Ashoka responded to the initial impact of COVID-19 to their organization by serving as supplementary sources of reliable information for the communities they served. It was precisely the decentralized nature of Ashoka's network of fellows that allowed them to connect with the communities while representing their needs especially where they are least noticed or recognized. Manmeet also talked about the amazing synergies that came about across their global networks to create support systems for Ashoka fellows in different regions.



Jessica Herrera

"Our security advisor is Italian so from the moment that this exploded in Italy he was very aware of trying to implement all these early measures. This also made us return to our strategy because PLAN's mandate is to be with the most vulnerable and the core of our work is to be able to support girls and young women and to make sure they're safe. This meant finding ways that we could still support them without putting them or exposing them to risk."

Jessica explained the tension PLAN faced with regard to remaining true to their mandate which was to serve vulnerable communities, without being exposed to all the risks that came with working within a COVID-19 context. How COVID-19 has also pushed PLAN to revisit its strategy in both theory and practice was pivotal for the organization and highlighted the importance of building resiliency in every sector and sub-sector they support, whether it's in health, youth employment, women empowerment, and so on.



David Mikhail

"We're talking not just about the immediate economic impact but really the potential to undercut the SDG agenda. If we don't get the economic growth that we need, we're looking at a future world where maybe a third of the Least Developed Countries' (LDCs) population will live in extreme poverty. From an agenda that was focused on eliminating extreme poverty we now have to consider interventions to ensure that we don't have in fact for the maintenance if not due to the uptick of it because of COVID-19."

David framed UNCDF's role and value proposition through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a broader global agenda, and the UN's larger concerted efforts towards addressing COVID-19. David's key point about LDCs being among the hardest hit and possibly the hardest to recover economically and therefore creating a new layer of complexity to eradicating poverty emphasized the importance of repurposing ongoing programs and interventions to ensure these countries can sustainably withstand and recover from both the health and economic impact of the pandemic.



Greg Auberry

"It was mainly just sharing information with people and making sure they felt comfortable doing their own personal risk analysis with travel and how comfortable they felt. It was important for us to reassure our partners because I think they're very worried about their funding and their communities, so just taking a reassuring tone with them and really letting them know there's flexibility in how we're going to get to the end mark."

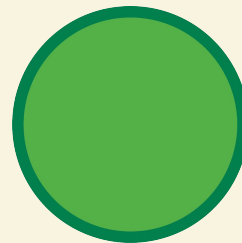
Greg approached and acknowledged COVID-19 with a mindfulness of how their organization's beneficiaries and partners would feel. Greg recognized the real anxiety around potentially losing the support these partners were receiving but tackled this from a values-centered approach and first created a sense of safety and reassurance regarding how the organization and the programs will navigate COVID-19 with much flexibility and understanding.



Bo Percival

"I think the thing that really caught us off guard was we were very good at fast response and this was a slow burn, so it was very much like "when do we get into it"? Knowing that everybody is responding we also didn't want to do anything that was redundant or duplication. Since now we're in a full activation, the difference for us with this one is it's a very extended one. A normal activation for us would be like six months we react and help mobilize really quickly. But for this we have announced twelve months. So it's kind of like it's a slow burn and has taken off and we're just trying out to be there for the long term."

Bo's perspective echoes the sentiment possibly shared by most development organizations or programs that are accustomed to responding to problems and situations in an agile manner. Bo also expressed that while there was an influx of interest from various stakeholders and communities to support and contribute in the fight against COVID-19, it was critical that these efforts weren't redundant and that these truly reflected both the real needs of the communities as was met with sustainable solutions that the organizations knew how to do best.



To watch the discussion on acknowledging, click below:



To watch the full, hour-long discussion, click [here](#).

Taking Action (External)



Suneet Bhatt

“What were some of the first actions taken when you first learned about the vastness of the COVID19?”



“What is the value we can contribute, in this moment? We really wanted to identify solutions and find ways to lift them up.”

Manmeet Mehta

Manmeet emphasized the importance of Ashoka taking a pause, gathering their team and their community of fellows to ask a simple, yet such a crucial question. This holistic approach allowed Ashoka not only to stay on top of the wellbeing of their fellows but also to ensure their relevance in the middle of a fast-growing, unprecedented crisis. As Manmeet so eloquently said.



“You can be in home quarantine and still be a tangible contribution to the solution!. With Digital street mapping, anyone can contribute!” “We want to say, Hey, we know you have a lot of time on your hands, why don’t you help map a community that “does not exist”

Bo Percival

The deep desire of people to help when his own family was affected in the bushfires in Australia, was something Bo and the Humanitarian Open StreetMap wanted to take into the digital space. The fact that people truly want to help is becoming a challenge, and with digital Humanitarianism, you can help, from home! It is more relevant now than ever and you can be at home, quarantined, and still map areas providing crucial information for health services, enabling them to go in and help.



“Repurposing. “Before COVID19 we where supporting companies creating chatbot capability so that someone in a last-mile market could get educated in financial health. So now we repurpose. Since we know this space, how can we do that in order for chatbot technology to advancing public health guidance?”

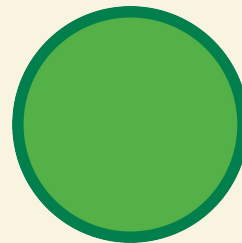
David Mikhail

Even a big, heavy institution as the UN, found the time and need to literally create new value propositions. David explains how there were two pivotal factors in doing this. David went on to give other extraordinary examples of quick repurposing in order for them to stay relevant and meet the need, right now.

The second part was speed.

“We had to craft solutions that could be deliverable and deployable in days, not weeks or months. We had to be able to deliver that as a value proposition.”

David then went to talk about the importance of reaching the SMEs that too often gets left behind, with speed being key as many are shuttering, right now. They want to have a capital deployment capability that goes from grant application to fund distribution in 14 days!



Taking Action (Internal)



Suneet Bhatt

“Could you talk to us about some of the first internal things you prioritized?”



Jessica Herrera

"In many cases, it's not about technology but rather simplifying things. How can we deliver the same services, even through text messaging and phone calls? It's been really like sticking to PLAN's core and what we do best, which is working with our communities, without all of us having to be there."

After deliberately taking a pause, communicating to their community and teams, that their mandate would not change, but our priorities might, PLAN went on to identify how they could continue serving their communities with no internet, but a strong and imminent need. Echoing David, Jessica also quickly identified the need of repurposing in order for them to stay relevant and remain true to their core.

Some PLAN staff are considered essential by certain governments, so this allows some of their staff to actually be on the front line, serving the community directly. Jessica emphasized the importance of having a mentality of constantly adapting and evolving to the changes that COVID19 is presenting us.



Greg Auberry

"Setting up systems like LinkedIn Learning for our teams and partners allowing them to focus on things they might not have had the time to do before, and shifting roles became important?"

Solving the real issues facing the team and their partners was of high priority. Solving payroll, banking needs and such. Greg went on to highlight the opportunity of capacity building and changing of roles and tasks of his team, in addition to enabling their partners to do the same.

To watch the discussion on taking action, click below:



To watch the full, hour-long discussion, click [here](#).

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Re-Emergence



Suneet Bhatt

“You have hope and you have optimism all bringing us toward this discussion on re-emergence. What does the future hold?”



"I think the definition of re-emergence is going to vary based on the organization, and your operations, and based on how your organization has changed. I think it's going to be gradual...our work might change every day."

Jessica Herrera

Jessica did an excellent job emphasizing the gradual, progressive, and constantly changing nature of re-emergence. Perhaps her most powerful statement was acknowledging that trust is going to be a critical part of this. Organizations, systems, governments may decide it's time for things to reopen and all of us to re-emerge; but it will be the people who ultimately decide when to participate.



"I think the thing we're thinking about are the principles. For example, connections. How do we make new and human connections; a principle we will be talking about. I think flexibility is another principle. We will need to think about flexibility in how we work. I think well-being. And I think the final one is sustainability."

Greg Auberry

Greg managed to bring every discussion back to values, and principles. One of the most powerful acknowledgements was emphasizing that the world we'll re-emerge into is ready for transformation. One that is more sustainable and resets the inequities we've tolerated for so long.



David Mikhail

"What do local governments need now? They need technical assistance so they can determine how they finance their COVID responses. We're doing that. What do SMEs in vulnerable communities need? They need digital payments so they can withstand the storm financially. We're going to continue to do the same thing, lean into our mission, with an eye toward helping countries not just move past COVID, but to be in position to experience sustainable growth in the future. What I'll be curious about post-emergence is the blending of capital and whether this will truly be a golden age for blended finance where concessional capital and commercial capital are coming together and driving impact in the world's toughest geographies."

David was able to encapsulate an important point -- the past month has been rapid and transformative for many organizations already. Plans have been reprioritized. Work has been repurposed and rethought from remote activity to remote deployment. The future is about maintaining this longer-term and well beyond the immediate; allowing long-term sustainability and recovery for all affected and in need.



Manmeet Mehta

"Someone said, never let a good crisis go to waste. And we're here. We're hearing different dates, and different timelines and they vary by country and context; and we don't know when this moment will pass. But we all agree it will. And I do think the time is now. We are in our Overton Window now, where we can consider truly radical ideas. We were talking about Universal Basic Income as a radical idea and now increasingly it's a real option."

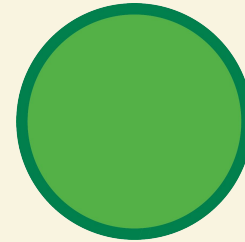
Manmeet's emphasis on the now was powerful and salient; but her examples around interconnectedness, incorporating studies and research that indicate how COVID-19 spread correlates to poor air quality which correlates to low-income areas was an excellent reminder of system and human interconnectedness especially in this time of sometimes extreme isolation. Reimagining is as much about what we face as it is about how we might build the future together.



Bo Percival

"One of the things that is unique about this is that normally when we have humanitarian crises, there is a surge and response, where there is a clear way out -- when you provide a response you move into recovery. Humanitarian organizations know the scale and can manage the response. With this one, nobody knows the scale; nobody knows the time bounds. So we're moving from a surge role to a longer-term support role. Another thing, what we've realized is that never before have these massive commercial organizations had to focus on a mission like this. Look at the contact rate app being worked on between Apple and Google. When has that happened before? What's really exciting about this is the reimagining of the new-new; organizations that haven't been mission driven are going to have to be ... which will be a really great twist of thinking for them."

Bo has a unique perspective on this having spent time at Plan and now working with HOT and global private sector partners. On one hand, his perspective on this being a true outlier, both in size and scale, was humbling. It's an important acknowledgement that even for the best prepared of us, we're in an unprecedented situation. His ability to transition from that uncertainty to the opportunity it's created, and specifically, to the twist it's had on priorities and the way commercial organizations are working, sparked true hope and optimism.



To watch the discussion on re-emergence, click below:



To watch the full, hour-long discussion, click [here](#).

Final Thoughts



Suneet Bhatt

“Any final takeaways? One piece of advice, or one ask you have of the people who watch this or read this after the fact?”



Don't forget what you've learned. Take what you've learned with you so you're ready and mindful when the next thing happens.

Bo Percival



We don't need to do everything. We don't need to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. We as people and organizations excel at certain things, and we should partner together on our collective strengths. Strengths we had, or strengths we learned about and built during these times.

Jessica Herrera



We're all aware of the collection of solutions in order to succeed and address COVID, a number of them will be innovative. But there are going to be a number of solutions that existed pre-COVID. Repurposing. We're all wrestling with the question of how we can bring value; and a lot of it will be repurposing the things that made us successful in the past, to this new normal and this new world we emerge into.

David Mikhail



Think strategically. Let's come to a common view of what that future looks like, and let's get there.

Greg Auberry



Collective strength; the era of the zero sum game is over. It's about how we can collectively thrive in the future.

Manmeet Mehta

To watch the full, hour-long discussion, click below:



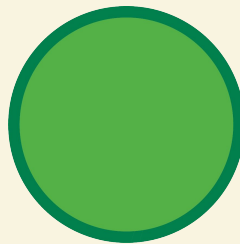
Thank You

We once again want to thank the panelists; for joining us with such energy on such a complex topic, so quickly, and with such a sincere willingness to share honestly. The diversity of experiences and organizations represented was vast; but even grander were the regions and populations served.

There is a window. We will re-emerge. We will bring the best of what we were with us. We will have the opportunity to reshape what lies ahead, with goodwill and the authority to remedy what ails us.

There is a window. With people like Bo, David, Greg, Jess, and Manmeet working on the frontlines at some of the most thoughtful, respected, and innovative organizations in the world – we see silver linings through that window. We see small rays of light and hope on the horizon.

Thank you.



Boldr.

Boldr is a purpose-driven outsourcing company. We invest heavily in our people and we give a percentage of our time and revenue back to NGOs in the communities where we operate and serve. We are committed to playing a positive role in the global economy by fostering economic development, emphasizing education, and equipping people around the world -- those looking to hire and those looking to do great work -- to access opportunities they never could have before.

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