



Common Charter – Indian Donor and Philanthropic Community

CONTEXT

The Coronavirus global pandemic is not only a public health crisis, but also an economic and social pandemic, the impact of which is widely expected to be felt for a long time in future, probably creating an entirely 'new normal' in the professional, personal and civic lives of all people.

Extraordinary and urgent measures are needed to address the emerging crisis. These measures must protect the people, in particular the most vulnerable—including the elderly, the sick, the physically challenged, the poor and informal workers—who constitute the backbone of the Indian economy. While the current focus is understandably on health responses and social distancing, public health risk would soon descend into a full-scale economic and social risk to working households. Workers fearing job retrenchment, working without economic and social support, and worrying about how to feed their families and earn an income, are struggling to practice social distancing, maintaining human dignity and responsible health practices.

Philanthropic organisations, and corporate social responsibility initiatives are not spared of adverse impact of global pandemic either; suffering not only economic losses, weakened grant-making mechanisms, stretched technology infrastructure with offices shut-down but also challenges of team-work, productivity and outreach. However, it is precisely at such times of crises that their contribution assumes a heightened and urgent significance. As funders rally around the public health response and drug development, we must also help workers and their families ensure they can continue to put food on the table, economic opportunity on hand, have the ability to stay home from work when they or a loved one are sick, and weather the economic and social storm that lies ahead. This will call on all of us—philanthropy, government, business, and community and non-profit groups—to act in extraordinary ways, calling on muscles we have not used since the Great Recession, Global Financial Crises, or perhaps never have in recent history.

TWO-FOLD ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We recognise the critical need for funders to act with fierce urgency, to support those hit hardest by the impacts of COVID-19, and invite them to be a part of the National Philanthropy Community (NPC) for COVID19, as a platform, to mitigate the immediate distress, support long-term recovery, and to hold themselves collectively accountable to the Pledge below.

The Pledge

Over the days, weeks, and months ahead, each of the foundation pledges to:

1. Loosen or eliminate the restrictions on current grants. This can include converting project-based grants to a framework funding or unrestricted support; accelerating payment schedules; and not holding grantees responsible if conferences, events, and other project deliverables must be postponed or cancelled.
2. Make new grants as unrestricted as possible, so non-profit partners have maximum flexibility to respond to this crisis. We will also support organizations created and led by the communities most affected that we may not fund currently.
3. Reduce what we ask of our non-profit partners, postponing reporting requirements, site visits, and other demands on their time during this challenging period.
4. Contribute to community-based emergency response funds and other efforts to address the health and economic impact on those most affected by this pandemic.
5. Communicate proactively and regularly about our decision-making and response to provide helpful information while not overburdening grantee partners.
6. Commit to actively listening to our partners and especially to those communities least heard. Recognize that the best solutions to the manifold crises caused by COVID-19 are not found within foundations.
7. Support, as appropriate, grantee partners advocating for important public policy changes to fight the pandemic and deliver an equitable and just emergency response for all. This may include its economic impact on workers, such as expanded paid sick leave; increasing civic participation; access to affordable health care; promoting innovation and technology solutions and expanded income and rental assistance. It should also include lending our voices to calls to action led by grantee partners as requested.
8. Learn from these emergency practices and share what they teach us about effective partnership, building local capacities and philanthropic support, so we may consider adjusting our practices more fundamentally in the future, in more stable times, based on all we learn thus help build a more responsible localised humanitarian ecosystem.

1. The term 'Indian' here refers to India as a country. Hence, Indian Philanthropic Community refers to all philanthropic organisations/foundations that have an interest in India, regardless of their home country.

2. This pledge is taken from the "A Call To Action: Philanthropy's Commitment During Covid-19", available at Council of Foundation website <https://www.cof.org/news/call-action-philanthropys-commitment-during-covid-19>. They also closely reflect the actionable items for Indian funders as espoused at India Development Review article by **Ingrid Srinath**, published on 24 March 2020 and available at <https://idronline.org/how-funders-can-respond-during-covid-19/>