

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP) TO FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

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The World Health Organization (WHO) announced COVID-19 can be characterized as pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. We have already been through the impact of this pandemic before the outbreak hit our own lands. When it does happen, the government is the first to respond in any country. As the virus is new, we still have a lot yet to learn over time. This is a long term battle for the human being and the sector of PPP plays a key role to fight against COVID-19.

As the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said, **“People are the Key”**.

We would like to mention that we all need to know the 5As to fight against COVID-19: Asymptomatic Carrier, Avoid Crowded Places, Activate Immunity, Active Community Participation and Attitude towards using Masks, Handgel, Handwashing and Physical Distancing.

To implement 5As, the role of PPP is very important. One way to prevent this catastrophe is to reduce the number of new cases per day by preventing people from being exposed to infected individuals through physical distancing, thereby reducing the probability of new infections. Moreover, taking private healthcare providers into confidence, training them where necessary and planning a cost-cutting strategy to relay the benefit to the people may lighten the burden on public healthcare system in such scenarios. Such a symbiotic association will benefit the general public greatly in the face of a healthcare emergency.

PPP have demonstrated successful containment of infectious disease outbreaks in the past. In 1985, Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore established a cell to investigate the outbreak of HIV in India. Findings of this cell led the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to establish a task force to design a strategy to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. “In any outbreak, government laboratories are the first to respond. The same procedure is followed in most countries,” Abdul Ghafur, a Chennai-based infectious disease expert says, “The ICMR has now announced that it will allow private laboratories to test for COVID-19. The government labs have done

a good job so far and there has been no harm to the country by not involving private laboratories in the beginning. We have not lost any time yet and now is the right time for private entities to participate.”

Today’s growing global health crisis not only highlights the urgent need to leverage the private sector for its speed and implementation capacity, but it also draws attention to the critical role of the public sector in terms of emergency measures—in particular waiving federal regulations and laws, and giving doctors flexibility to treat affected patients.

South Korea can also be looked to for some early lessons in light of its early successes in containing the spread of COVID-19. Its dynamic model has led to recovery cases outnumbering new cases in a short amount of time due to its emphasis on public-private partnerships, transparent communication, and data-based technology-backed measures. For example, South Korea has leveraged the innovative technology expertise of KT, a company that developed the Global Epidemic Prevention Platform (GEPP), a smart phone application that allows users to reach out to authorities regarding their health condition in an effort to combat the spread of infectious disease. It is fair to say that the COVID-19 crisis cannot be looked at or combatted with a myopic mindset, nor can it be resolved by solely relying on the public sector. As seen in the case of South Korea, it is essential for the public sector to partner with the private sector to ensure a successful and timely end to this pandemic.

A growing wave of technology entrepreneurs and companies has been harnessing their skills over the past couple of years to collaborate with, and better serve, government. Now, during this critical moment, they are mobilizing and joining the call to partner with cities in the unified fight against the spread of the virus.

In Myanmar, the mobile application, Sawsawpyaw(<http://www.sawsawpyaw.com>) has been developed in collaboration with the Government and Technomation for faster and easier COVID-19 Contact Tracing and Reporting. Public can also collaborate with the Government in getting information, reporting and tracing contacts of COVID-19 via website <http://www.mohs.gov.mm> and internet address <https://www.mohs.gov.mm/Main/content/page/covid-19-contact>.

Most recently, in an effort to help monitor and slow the spread of COVID-19, [Google](#) and [Apple](#) joined forces to provide a cross-platform contact tracing Application Programming Interface (API) for app developers to help public health agencies track

potential exposure to the virus among communities. Government health organizations can also automate timely updates and responses to the public via a partnership between chat marketing platform [ManyChat and Facebook Messenger](#), which are offering a free program that includes customizable tools to help reduce response latency for state and federal call centers.

On 27 April 2020, the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry issued “Overcoming as one: COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) which sets out goals and action plans covering a broad range of fiscal and monetary measures and policy responses in relation to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said in the foreword of CERP, “While we must come together in the fight against COVID-19, our past offers us no blueprint for the future. Our collective response must be both comprehensive and well-coordinated. I draw strength from the knowledge that both our public and private sector will rise to this new challenge, sustained by, and working in partnership with, individuals and communities, both regional and international.

Therefore, the role of public private partnership is very important in mitigating the dire consequences of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. While the international leaders are feeling the weight and severity of COVID-19’s impact during this new, unstable reality, we believe that we will meet this crisis and create a new normal life together.

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