

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351608627>

Initiatives Taken by NGOs and Private Companies to Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic

Article in *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* · January 2021

DOI: 10.1504/IJWOE.2021.10038012

CITATIONS

0

READS

916

3 authors, including:



Afsana Akhtar
BRAC University

7 PUBLICATIONS 13 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



S.s.M. Sadrul Huda

34 PUBLICATIONS 84 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Initiatives taken by NGOs and private companies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic

S.S.M. Sadrul Huda*

Department of Management,
School of Business,
North South University,
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: ssadrul@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Afsana Akhtar

BRAC Business School,
BRAC University,
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: afsana@bracu.ac.bd

Syeeda Raisa Maliha

Re-think, Re-search
Basundhara, Dhaka 1229, Bangladesh
Email: maliharaisha7799@gmail.com

Abstract: In times where all other companies are on the verge of shutting down, app-based companies have found new meaning to their businesses through helping people. They have risen from the ashes like a phoenix and have set a marvellous example for all other companies about the meaning of life and how the goal of every company should be set. There is a saying that everything has a bright side, even a life-threatening pandemic like COVID-19 has a bright side to it. And one of those is the new definition of business and partnership. The outbreak of Coronavirus, countrywide lockdown and people in need has taught companies that making profit is not the only goal of business and partnerships. Helping people in times of crisis is even bigger than profit. You go after doing good for the people, profit will follow you anyway, and that trend has been initiated by app-based companies in Bangladesh.

Keywords: NGO; private companies; COVID-19; initiatives; collaboration.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Huda, S.S.M.S., Akhtar, A. and Maliha S.R. (2021) 'Initiatives taken by NGOs and private companies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic', *Int. J. Work Organisation and Emotion*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp.86–92.

Biographical notes: S.S.M. Sadrul Huda is an Associate Professor at Department of Management, School of Business at North South University. His current research interest is entrepreneur and entrepreneurship.

Afsana Akhtar is an Assistant Professor, BRAC Business School at BRAC University. Her current research interests are love, emotion and wellbeing in organisations.

Syeeda Raisa Maliha is currently working with Re-think, Re-search as a Research Associate. Her current research interests are non-profit marketing and management.

1 Introduction

If anyone told us a few years or even a few days ago that some invisible organism is going to tear the whole world apart and encapsulate everyone in their homes, we probably would have laughed it off. Here we are, today, stuck at home, worrying about our death, worrying about the economy, all because of that tiny organism- Coronavirus.

Let it be this prediction, or the movie ‘Contagion’, or the book ‘The Eyes of Darkness’, all of them had the exact same prediction that around 2020, the world will be hit by a pandemic (Koontz, 2011), which today, we call Coronavirus or COVID-19. Not only is this virus causing the deaths of thousands of people worldwide, but also, it is bringing a catastrophic downfall in the economies around the world. A halt in productions, countrywide lockdowns and travel bans have made it almost impossible to continue work. So, the outbreak of Coronavirus is not just a pandemic, it is also the reason behind the greatest economic risk the world is about to face.

The situation becomes worse when necessary, things to fight this pandemic like personal protective equipment (PPE), masks and sanitizers have started to become scarce, resulting in a shortage of protective gear for the frontline warriors like health service providers (Huda et al., 2021). Even without Coronavirus, the many people of this country suffered from poverty, starvation and lack of treatment. The arrival of COVID-19 has become the worst curse in their lives. Overall, we are a poor country, where majority of the people belong to lower middle or lower class. So, we cannot afford long time lockdowns like other countries. What are we going to do with hand sanitizers when we do not even have food to eat? If we do so, starvation will kill us before Coronavirus even gets the chance.

2 Initiatives taken by NGOs and companies

We are going through a tough time right now. The world is almost shut down. The world economy is going down due to COVID-19 pandemic. Luckily, humanity is still alive. Giant organisations are partnering with NGOs to help these unfortunate souls. Like government and health organisation, some other organisations are working at this tough time.

They understand what these people are going through and are doing everything possible from their position to make sure they survive this nightmare. Because these are the situation where giant businesses must show their gratitude to the people who were behind making them rich in the first place. According to some authors, the running COVID-19 pandemic has given established companies a perfect opportunity to indulge

into genuine CSR activities and help the ones in need (He and Harris, 2020). They do not need to commit to these voluntary activities just because they have to, rather, they should do it out of genuine emotions to bring out the maximum outcome. When their customers or other civilians see this sort of warm and emotion-based response to this pandemic, they will not only develop a positive image about them, but also become more active in donating themselves (Huang and Liu, 2020). So, huge companies must come forth in helping people and alleviating poverty from the country (Kolk and Van Tulder, 2006).

Some app-based companies are spreading their helping hand and collaborating with NGO other organisations. App-based companies like Pathao, FoodPanda, Uber Eats are working like a partnership with other organisations at this bad moment. The objectives of this paper is to present this social scenario where private organisations especially the App based enterprises who are continuing their door to door services even during the pandemic collect individual donation and hand it over to the charity organisation for distribution among the families who are facing economic hardship due to loss of job and/or shut down of their business due to COVID-19.

3 Renata-SAJIDA partnership

SAJIDA foundation is a family created non-profit organisation that aims to bring sustainable improvement in the lives of the less fortunate. Founded by Syed Humayun Kabir, this foundation carries the torch of this incredible man in reaching out to the ones in need. They do not think of it as charity, rather, they think of it as their responsibility to take care of those people.

Another organisation founded by the same man is Renata LTD, which is known for its pharmaceutical and animal health products. This company is the 4th largest pharmaceutical company in Bangladesh and in case of animal health products, it's the leader. Also, they export their products to countries like Afghanistan, Belize, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Guyana, Honduras, Hong Kong, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Vietnam. The company has a market capitalisation of almost BDT 87 million.

Now that the country is facing a huge catastrophe because of Coronavirus, Renata Ltd and SAJIDA foundation has collaborated to fight the virus and aid the people of Bangladesh. They have already reached 516,534 people so far. They have turned their hospitals into isolation units and ICU centres to help the COVID-19 patients. They have also distributed 9,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) units as well as food and hygiene packages to almost 10,000 people. Apart from that, they have also established a 24/7 counselling centres over phone and reached 120,000 people through that.

4 Action Aid Bangladesh

This particular organisation is providing money assistance to the marginalised people as well as food support. They are helping a wide range of people like daily-wage earners, street children, construction workers, and other informal workers. Most organisations help the poor people living on the streets but tend to ignore socially-excluded groups like Dalits, sex workers, persons with disabilities, and transgender people. That is why Action Aid makes sure that they are also getting proper donations at this time of crisis.

5 Jaago foundation

Jaago foundation, collaborating with the Ministry of Education, ICT, and A2i are working to find probable solutions for the Bangladeshi students. In this time, where Bangladesh is going through a crisis, Jaago has stepped up to help the people who are having a hard time because they cannot earn due to the lockdown. Their volunteers are distributing rice, pulse, salt, oil, potato, common medicine, soap, sanitary napkins, and some basic items so that these people can survive.

They are funded by donations that they use to carry out activities like

- Sending doctors, nurses, and other frontline responders to communities in need
- Providing masks, ventilators, and other lifesaving medical tools to hospitals
- Delivering essential items to marginalised families and refugee camps
- Spreading awareness among people

6 Pathao

Pathao is basically a ride sharing service which is founded in Bangladesh. They have basically come up with the bike ride sharing service for the first time in Bangladesh. After that they have expanded their service into car ride sharing, courier service, food delivery service and grocery shopping.

The government has ordered to open the grocery stores, restaurants and pharmacies. But it is unsafe for people to gather somewhere and to go out. So, the app-based companies are collaborating with those stores to serve the people. These app-based companies are delivering foods to the people. If anyone orders food via Pathao, they deliver the food to that person's location. Pathao is also collaborating with super shops like Agora, Meena bazar and some other grocery stores and pharmacies. If people order daily groceries and medicines via Pathao app, they send these items to that person's location. It is their new feature. They are also offering to their customer that, if they pay their Pathao Food, groceries and pharma through digital payment with LankaBangla, Visa or MasterCard, they will get cashback up to 200 Taka. This is how they are collaborating with LankaBangla, and other financial organisations.

Pathao have taken several initiatives for their customers as well as employees. They have implemented work from home policy for their employees, with a few exceptions. They have also canceled all unnecessary travels and events.

They are providing groceries, essentials and medicine through Pathao Tong. Through Pathao parcels, customers can send and receive parcels anywhere in Dhaka. The delivery persons maintain a contactless delivery system so that it is safe for both the employee and the customer. The riders also have protective gear as they have to stay out all day long.

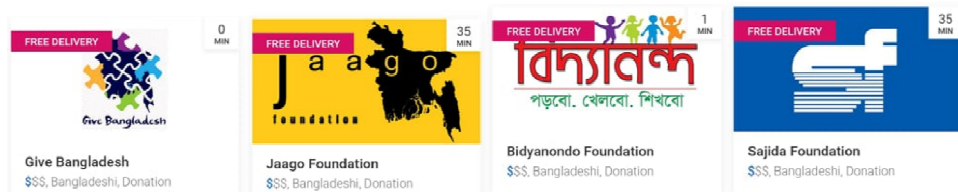
They have also collaborated with ICT Ministry, a2i, other government bodies, e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (eCAB), and other industry members to help them maintain their supply chain. In a time where going out is so risky, the supply chain is bound to be at risk. That is why the service provided by Pathao is so critical at this point of time.

7 FoodPanda

FoodPanda has started with a mission of bringing food into its customer's every day. This app-based company is serving in eleven country including Bangladesh. In this country, it is one of the pioneers of food delivery services. One can order any types of food from his favourite restaurant. This ordered food can be served in any given locations like home, office etc. this app-based service is getting more popular nowadays.

In this pandemic situation, people have to stay inside home. They can only go out if it is too much necessary. But it is a matter of risk because there is a possibility of getting infected with Corona virus if someone goes out. So, people can use FoodPanda app to order food from restaurants. The delivery man collects the food form the restaurant and sends it to the customer. This is how FoodPanda is collaborating with local restaurants. There is also a feature in this app called 'Panda mart shops'. Here you can get your shopping goods delivery from Bengal Meat Gourmet Butcher Shop, Nirvana Explore, Natural Tea Shop, Unique Sweets and Cakes, Shwapno, Buname Fruits, Mtro Coverage, Mohua Puspalay, Rowza Pure Foods Ltd. Lazz Pharma Ltd, Dhaka Barnyard. This is how FoodPanda is collaborating with these organisations. There is a new feature in this app called 'Donate now'. Here they are collaborating with different charitable organisations like Footsteps, Give Bangladesh, Biddyanondo Foundation, Sajida Foundation, JAAGO Foundation, ActionAid, It's Humanity Foundation. They are basically collecting donations from people and send it to these charitable organisations so that they can hand it over to the needy people. There are different types of options like you can donate for one day meal to one family, seven days meal to one family, meals for several family, 5–10 days groceries for one family, groceries for several families, PPEs for doctors, family grocery pack, Lunch for one family. Some of them have some donating packages like package 1 for 5 kg rice, package 2 for 2 kg flour etc. this is how FoodPanda is doing a partnership with these organisations.

Figure 1 Non-profit organizations that helped the unfortunate people in the COVID-19 pandemic (see online version for colours)

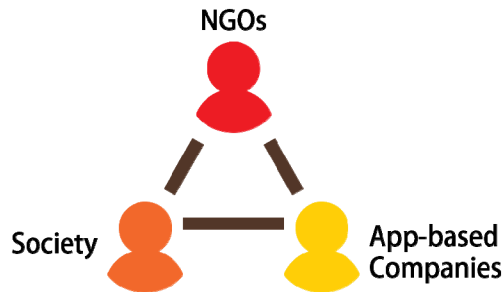


8 A unique form of partnership to fight the pandemic

There's a saying that you find the best version of yourself and the people around you at the brink of danger. This is exactly what has happened in this case. These NGOs and app-based companies would have never thought of coming together and forming a partnership if it was not for the lockdown. Not only if this new and sophisticated form of

partnership helping the people stuck at home who are unable to fend for themselves, this has opened up a new door of partnerships and all of that came from the idea of helping people in need. According to Newell and Frynas (2007), helping a countries poor and unfortunate people is beyond CSR activities. Not only does it help a country meet gaps between the social classes, but also, it helps businesses grow through doing something good.

Figure 2 A three-way connection between the NGOs, app-based companies, and the society (see online version for colours)



Such cross-sector partnerships have several benefits. According to Heap (1998), NGOs can offer private sectors such as the app-based community a platform to demonstrate their philanthropic desire, a positive reputation, credibility, intelligence of the ongoing market and economic scenario and a dedicated human force. On the other hand, the private sectors can help the NGOs with pushing their philanthropic goal forward, financial help, promotion, access to more people and contacts, and technical expertise (Heap, 1998). So, ultimately it creates a win-win scenario for all three stakeholders involved in this partnership. From the learning these NGOs and App-based companies gained in this pandemic, they can develop this partnership to a next level in the future and create a new era or partnerships for the cause of humanity.

9 Conclusions

The ethics and moral that we have been taught throughout our lives, the lessons about karma, it's all true. The birth of a new form of partnership, a new door opening for the companies is the living proof of that. You do good for others and nature will return it to you. In a world where all businesses have come to a standstill, these app-based companies have found a new life only because they thought about the people before their business. They are a living role model of how the companies should set their goals. This is exactly how it should be and the whole world is following a similar model nowadays. Large businesses are coming forwards to lessen the sufferings of the unfortunate, giving a new meaning to business goals (Wankel, 2008). According to Steidlmeier (1993) many organisations are including such goals of helping others and alleviating poverty in their company policies. The time may not be the best right now, but we are indeed moving towards a better world where businesses care about people instead of only running after profit.

References

- Carras, C. (2020) 'In 2015, Bill Gates predicted an epidemic would kill millions. Here's what he says now', *The Seattle Times*, 13 April [online] <https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/in-2015-bill-gates-predicted-an-epidemic-would-kill-millions-heres-what-he-says-now/> (accessed 9 January 2021).
- He, H. and Harris, L. (2020) 'The Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on corporate social responsibility and marketing philosophy', *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 116, pp.176–182.
- Heap, S. (1998) *NGOs and the Private Sector: Potential for Partnerships?*, Intrac, Oxford.
- Huang, H. and Liu, S.Q. (2020) '“Donate to help combat COVID-19!” How typeface affects the effectiveness of CSR marketing?', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 32, No. 10, pp.3315–3333.
- Huda, S.S.M., Akhtar, A., Dilshad, S. and Maliha, S.R. (2021) 'An evaluation of factors affecting management of novel Corona', *Journal of Health Research*. Vol. 35, No. 3, pp.267–281.
- Kolk, A. and Van Tulder, R. (2006) 'Poverty alleviation as business strategy? Evaluating commitments of frontrunner multinational corporations', *World Development*, Vol. 34, No. 5, pp.789–801.
- Koontz, D. (2011) *The Eyes of Darkness: A Thriller*, Penguin, Hachette UK.
- Newell, P. and Frynas, J.G. (2007) 'Beyond CSR? Business, poverty and social justice: an introduction', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp.669–681.
- Steidlmeier, P. (1993) 'The business community and the poor: Rethinking business strategies and social policy', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp.209–221.
- Wankel, C. (2008) 'Introduction: a variety of approaches to alleviating poverty through business strategy', in *Alleviating Poverty through Business Strategy*, pp.1–4, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Websites

- ActionAid Bangladesh's Response to Covid-19 (2020) *The Business Standard*, 11 April [online] <https://tbsnews.net/coronavirus-chronicle/covid-19-bangladesh/actionaid-bangladeshs-response-covid-19-67912> (accessed 15 December 2020).
- FoodPanda [online] https://www.foodpanda.com.bd/?gclid=CjwKCAjw1v_0BRaKEiwALFkj5rYNE3iFyIq0AB9ok9fcQQ2s561GaGHAjdVejxaEI8L2m_U1TZAUrhoC5QEQAxD_BwE (accessed 17 December 2020).
- JAAGO Foundation [online] <https://jaago.com.bd/preventcorona/> (accessed 15 December 2020).
- Pathao [online] <https://pathao.com/coronavirus/> (accessed 15 December 2020).