**Opportunities in the times of Pandemic**

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Almost one year after COVID -19 seems like ages. This new era has brought new dimensions to the world which were pretty alien before pandemic. Nevertheless, half of the population wants to reinvent 2020, without the haunts of its economic, social and political recessions.

Apparently pandemic has paralyzed global economy and has taken thousands of lives across the world. However, it is still too early to estimate its actual social, political and economic impacts. However, as projected by IMF, 2020 will shrink global economy by almost 5 percent which will ultimately give rise to the percentage of population living below poverty line specially in countries like Pakistan. Country has already asked for 6 billion dollars’ bailout package from the IMF, in exchange of tough austerity measures.

This could lead to the unprecedented effects on the fate of already struggling democracy in the country as even most developed countries caught unprepared thus affecting existing world order and democracies. If used as to centralize the power and for democratic freedom, already stretched public health system with ratio of one hospital bed for 1608 people could collapse further.

However, this pandemic could be an opportunity and a wakeup call to address the injustices of our economic and societal systems. Specially in context of Pakistan, where remittances play important role, Idea of virtual family can help marginalized unemployed people while also helping state with the revenues. This virtual family system could be explained if overseas Pakistanis can take one very worthiest family and then can send money every month to the family directly. Money can vary from person to person depending on how much he or she can afford. Government has to play an important role is this startup by providing data and registration of the families or by incorporating this idea in Pakistan Ehsaas program.

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Similarly, decentralized online shopping system could be an added game changing opportunity for a country like Pakistan. For instance, after Lockdown percentage of population doing online shopping through centralized channel such as Amazon, Daraz.Pk increased drastically. Introducing decentralized online shopping system (DOS) could help local or small business owners to grow and ultimately will help with the livelihoods of the people in crisis or in future lockdowns. By DOS, means increasing sale of a particular area by using apps or technology like WhatsApp, promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems.

Furthermore, pandemic has changed outlook of working. For instance, work from home is a new normal now. This is a great opportunity for the Women who want to work by staying home. Idea of Virtual women jobs can be phenomenal in case of Pakistan by providing them with the raw materials at home and later collecting a final product once done and helping people cope through social protections and ensuring basic services and food security.

Another example is shifting doctor consultation from in person to the digital opinion. This can also help with the shortage of 0.2 million doctors and 1.4 million nurses in the country. Usually, people visit hospital for normal flu or seasonal infection but ultimately contract COVID-19 due to the exposure to unsafe environment.

One of the most pressing issue corona has brought in Pakistan is closure of education institutes. And students have compromised their studies for months with still ongoing uncertainty. Education institutes should offer trainings for the students to cope with the remote learning in case of future lockdowns. Furthermore, introducing public private partnership in education sector can improve availability of soft and hard infrastructure for students specially in public schools.

Here comes a question that how we see infrastructure? COVID-19 offers an opportunity to change our vision of infrastructure. The governments and their corporate partners can shape bold, rapid interventions to increase business activity with more emphasis on a circular economy that can support the health of the ecosystem as well as infrastructure with “build back better” approach.

The COVID-19 pandemic offers countries an opportunity to build recovery plans following on the path of sustainability by increasing resource efficiency and promoting sustainable lifestyles and economic growth with a transition towards low-carbon economies. Regardless of its cause or origin, the emergence of COVID-19 has underscored the mutually-affective relationship between people and nature and how the ecosystem is interlinked.

Our needs don’t have limits but the earth has a capacity, therefore we must try to identify opportunities this crisis has offered to rethink our development path. We can only hope that current government will learn from the crisis and will invest more towards more resilient state, recognizing dangers of rising nationalism and inequality.

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