

14 April 2020

Dear heads of state and government of G20 countries,

CALL FOR A COORDINATED, EQUITABLE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED GLOBAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

We, the undersigned 99 organizations and 40 individuals, call upon you to ensure a robust, coordinated global response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that is humane, equitable, based in the universality of human rights, and meets the needs of countries and people who are most vulnerable and have the fewest resources.

We recognize that we are in an unprecedented situation of a colossal need for sharing and solidarity even as many of world's wealthiest and best-resourced nations are experiencing their own severe public health emergencies. And we applaud governments that, even with domestic health emergencies, have offered support to other countries.

Yet these actions are far from commensurate with the scale of the pandemic and global need, especially of the most vulnerable people and people in the most vulnerable countries. We fear a looming catastrophe, especially in countries where even before COVID-19, health systems were overstretched, and for populations who were already highly vulnerable to health risks, including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, the elderly, and refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants.

Accordingly, we issue this urgent call for coordinated global action, undertaken through the leadership of your governments, and working closely with civil society organizations, the public health community, and international organizations to:

1. Provide countries with the financial and expert resources required for a response that is maximally effective and protective of vulnerable populations

Many lower-income countries will require significant external support to effectively contain, respond to, and recover from COVID-19, and to mitigate its social and economic cost. We therefore call upon your governments to:

- Immediately fully fund COVID-19 humanitarian appeals, including:
 - The UN emergency appeal for \$2.01 billion – less than 0.1% of what wealthy countries are spending on emergency domestic COVID-19 responses – and any future such appeals. This should not reduce support for other humanitarian appeals, which also require full funding.
 - WHO's COVID-19 appeal, and any future such appeals.
 - National COVID-19 response plans and any other national funding requests.

- Provide the necessary funding to meet the urgent needs of health, social, and economic systems in lower-income countries, as called for by the 6 April 2020 letter sent to you by Gordon Brown and 164 other global leaders¹
- Provide significant new resources to international, national, and community-based civil society organizations responding to COVID-19
- Ensure full transparency of contributions and their use
- Make available technical expertise to support international and national need

2. Suspend debts of lower-income countries and increase debt relief

Countries need all available domestic resources to respond to COVID-19, and will need significant funding for their longer-term recovery. We therefore call upon your governments to:

- Immediately suspend debt payments of countries eligible for International Development Association financing, as called for by the World Bank and IMF; all African countries, as requested by African ministers of finance; and other countries experiencing extraordinary circumstances
- Provide significant, sustained additional debt relief to countries eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative

3. Maximize supply and share health resources globally, equitably and based on need

Higher-income countries have insufficient necessary medical supplies and equipment, yet shortfalls in lower-income countries are far greater still, with a lack of personal protective equipment putting large numbers of health workers at preventable risk, and causing countless avoidable COVID-19 patient deaths. We therefore call upon your governments to:

- Use the full authorities under your law to demand the utmost efforts of manufacturers to maximize the supply of critically needed medical supplies and equipment
- Support WHO in developing a global pool of intellectual property rights for technologies for preventing, detecting, controlling, and treating the COVID-19 pandemic, to make the intellectual property needed to manufacture these technologies and secure their regulator approval freely accessible or available through licensing at reasonable and affordable terms, as proposed by the government of Costa Rica

¹ The funding called for in the 6 April 2020 letter (<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-letter-to-g20-governments-by-erik-berglof-et-al-2020-04>) includes:

- An immediate COVID-19 response package of \$100 billion, including new financing and debt relief, plus \$50 billion for 2021, as requested by African finance ministers
- \$35 billion that WHO estimates is required to support countries with weak health systems
- \$8 billion that the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board estimates is required for vaccines, therapies, and WHO
- \$7.4 billion that Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, requires for its next replenishment

- Implement your 26 March 2020 commitment to ensure medical supplies are widely available at affordable prices, on an equitable basis, where most needed, and as quickly as possible, through all necessary actions, which may include:
 - Supporting WHO in developing guidelines to determine where supplies and equipment should be distributed based on these principles; supporting WHO in developing a platform to facilitate needs-based, equitable distribution; and adhering to WHO guidelines
 - Agreeing to donate a significant proportion of any procurements of these supplies and equipment available to WHO, for it to distribute equitably, based on need
- Regularly, publicly report on how you are meeting your 26 March 2020 commitment
- For countries past the peak of their epidemics, or with sufficient levels of supplies and equipment, share not presently needed supplies and equipment based on the same principles of need and equity

4. Distribute therapies and vaccines equitably, based on need

Once developed, COVID-19 therapies and vaccines for COVID-19 must also be distributed equitably, based on need, and not on where they are manufactured or what country can pay the most. We therefore call upon your governments to:

- Work with WHO to develop a plan for manufacturing and distributing any COVID-19 vaccines globally, equitably, based on need, and free at the point of use; and commit to following this plan
- Immediately provide the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations the \$2 billion it requires to support developing a vaccine
- Require any vaccines developed with public funding to be available to governments and international organizations at affordable prices

5. Remove export controls, reform sanctions, and revise travel restrictions that hinder the global COVID-19 response

Dozens of countries have imposed export controls on medical supplies and equipment, preventing them from being distributed equitably, based on need. Sanction regimes on several countries, notably Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe are impeding their ability to respond to COVID-19. And travel restrictions may prevent health and humanitarian workers from traveling to countries to assist in the COVID-19 response or meet other humanitarian needs. We therefore call upon your governments to:

- Remove export controls, at least to the extent they prevent needs-based, equitable distribution
- Reform sanctions that may hinder national COVID-19 responses, at a minimum to ensure prompt, flexible authorization for medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and other humanitarian needs
- Exempt health and humanitarian workers from travel restrictions

6. Protect people who lack protection from own governments

Refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, stateless people, and other migrants living in camps or other situations highly conducive to the spread of COVID-19 and with limited access to health care require extra support. We therefore call upon your governments to:

- Fully and rapidly meet all UN humanitarian appeals
- Prioritize these populations for distribution of medical supplies and equipment and COVID-19 related health technologies, including vaccines and therapies when available, due to their heightened vulnerability
- Ensure that all migrants, regardless of status, and stateless people have equal access to all COVID-19-related health services and social supports as their own citizens

Lastly, we implore you to take all possible measures to protect members of your own countries who are homeless, living with a disability, elderly, children, living with HIV, low-income, in confined settings (including prisons, nursing homes, detention centers, psychiatric or social care institutions or institutions for people with disabilities, and orphanages), or in any other way marginalized and extra vulnerable, ensuring robust health and social support, protections from discrimination, and any special measures that may be needed to protect their health and well-being. And we call for you to support other countries in doing the same to protect their own marginalized and vulnerable populations.

The only way to protect the health of people in all countries will be to protect the health of people in each country – all the people. A response to this pandemic based in social and global solidarity, that equally values poor and rich, and is grounded in the equal rights of all people will most quickly get us through this crisis with the least possible human devastation. The global coordination of such a response could launch a new era of global collaboration to move us nearer a world that fully respects each person's dignity.

Sincerely,

Organisations

Action for Humane Hospitals
Cameroon

AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA)
Namibia

Aidsfonds
Netherlands

AIDS Foundation South Africa
South Africa

African Youth and Adolescent Network
Lesotho

Alianza Colombiana por la Salud Alimentaria/Colombian Alliance for Food Health
Colombia

Alianza Latinoamericana de Salud Global (ALASAG)/Latin American Alliance of Global Health
Costa Rica

Alianza Libre de Humo Argentina/ Alliance of Smoke Free Tobacco Argentina
Argentina

Alliance for Surgery and Anesthesia Presence (ASAP)
USA

American Heart Association
USA

Asociación Argentina de Salud Pública (AASAP)
Argentina

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
Bangladesh

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network | Réseau juridique canadien VIH/sida
Canada

Cancer Alliance
South Africa

Centre for Applied Legal Studies
South Africa

Centre for Environmental Rights
South Africa

Centre for Health and Resource Management
India

Centre for Law and Policy Research
India

Centre on Law & Social Transformation
Norway

Centro de Estudios para la Equidad y Gobernanza en los Sistemas de Salud (CEGSS)/Center for the Study of Equity and Governance in Health Systems
Guatemala

CHESTRAD Global
Global

Children's HeartLink
USA

Communication for Development Centre
Nigeria

Disability Rights International
USA

Division of Social Accountability, University of Saskatchewan
Canada

EducAR Consumidores/Educate Consumers
Colombia

Equal Education Law Centre (EELC)
South Africa

Every Girl in School Alliance
Malawi

Framework Convention on Global Health Alliance
Switzerland/Global

Frontline AIDS
UK

Fundación Interamericana del Corazón Argentina/Inter-American Heart Foundation – Argentina (FIC Argentina)
Argentina

Fundación para el Desarrollo de Políticas Sustentables / Foundation for the Development of Sustainable Policies
Argentina

Fundación Salud Ambiente y Desarrollo (FUNSAD)/ Environment, Health and Development Foundation
Ecuador

Global Health South
Nigeria/Global

Health Economics and HIV and AIDS Research Division
South Africa

Health-e News Service
South Africa

HealthGap
USA

Healthy Living Alliance (HEALA)
South Africa

IFHHRO | Medical Human Rights Network
Netherlands

Imamia Medics International (IMI)
USA

Institute of Analysis & Advocacy
Ukraine

Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ)
South Africa

Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
USA

International Alliance of Patients' Organisations
United Kingdom/Global

International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO)
Canada/Global

International-Lawyers.Org (INTLawyers)
Switzerland/Global

International Rescue Committee
USA

International Treatment Preparedness Coalition
South Africa

Joep Lange Institute
Netherlands

Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN)
Kenya

Light of Hope
Ukraine

Living Goods
USA

MADRE
United States

Management Sciences for Health
USA

medica mondiale
Germany

Médecins Sans Frontières South Africa
South Africa

Mesa Colombiana por las Enfermedades Crónicas/Colombian Board for Chronic Disease
Colombia

Ndifuna Ukwazi
South Africa

Operation Smile

USA

Oxfam South Africa

South Africa

Partners In Health

USA

People's Health Movement

Global

PharmAccess Group Netherlands

Netherlands

PharmAccess Group Nigeria

Nigeria

PharmAccess Group Tanzania

Tanzania

Policies for Equitable Access to Health

Italy

POSITIVE-GENERATION

Cameroon

Positive Vibes

Namibia/South Africa

Prayas

India

Probono.org

South Africa

Public Affairs Research Institute

South Africa

Public Health Foundation of India

India

Public Service Accountability Monitor

South Africa

Rare Diseases South Africa

South Africa

ReSurge International

USA

Rural Health Advocacy Project

South Africa

Sala de Derecho a la Salud de la

Universidad Blas Pascal/Right to

Health Room, Blas Pascal University

Argentina

Salud y Fármacos (EE.UU)

USA

Saluteglobale.it Associazione di

Promozione Sociale

Italy

Save the Children South Africa

South Africa

Schweizer Partnerschaft Hôpital

Albert Schweitzer Haiti (SPHASH)

Switzerland

SECTION27

South Africa

Seed Global Health

USA

She Decides

South Africa

Siasa Place

Kenya

Smile Train

USA

Sonke Gender Justice

South Africa

South African Non Communicable

Diseases Alliance

South Africa

STOPAIDS

UK

Sustainable Resource Foundation

Pakistan

TB Proof
South Africa

The Center for Law, Justice and Society – Dejusticia
Colombia

Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)
South Africa

Viva Salud
Belgium

Wemos
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What To Expect Project
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White Ribbon Alliance
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Switzerland/Global

World Heart Federation
Global

Youth Wave
Malawi

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