



SOCIAL FORUM
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“GOOD PRACTICES, SUCCESS STORIES, LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY, AND FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE”

Interactive Dialogue: COVID-19 and Groups in Focus

Oral statement delivered by: Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

APG23 would like to raise its concerns on the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic onto two vulnerable groups: people affected by the neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and the migrants. The large-scale impacts and consequences that the pandemic has had and is still having on the world, are undeniable and incessant. The pandemic has clearly shown social disparity, systemic human rights violations and a lack of a social safety net, aimed at particularly protecting and supporting these people in need.

Precisely, in the world, 1.7 billion people live with neglected tropical diseases¹. According to the WHO these: “persist under conditions of poverty and are concentrated almost exclusively in impoverished populations in the developing world.” Further backlashes have been^{2 3}:

- 1) Medical staff and Community Health Workers being redeployed to COVID response
- 2) Disruptions in surveillance, diagnosis treatment, care support at community level and at health care facilities
- 3) Possibly alarming number of unused drugs blocked in warehouses
- 4) Diversion of funds

Alongside migrants, IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers, are “disproportionately affected [...] and too often left out of the pandemic response mechanisms” as IOM Dr. Poonam Dhavan said, further suffering from overcrowding housing conditions, social and mobility restrictions with net repercussions on employment opportunities, denied access to health facilities, barriers in vaccinations, and lack of proper information.

¹ <https://rstmh.org/news-blog/blog/wash-and-ntd-collaboration-no-more-excuses>

² <https://rstmh.org/news-blog/blogs/modelling-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-ntd-programmes>

³ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WER9638-eng-fre.pdf>

This crisis has debunked the rising of discrimination attitudes, depicting migrants as disease-spreaders, as enemies to be fought instead of humans to protect. Social restrictive measures to contain the virus have been used to deny human rights, to criminalize and segregate people living in precarious conditions, already.

This crisis should be the wake-up call for all countries to work towards long term durable solutions aimed at everyone's well-being. If our goal, as a global human family, is to "build back better" it is imperative to shift our lenses, to translate words into facts, to make solidarity rights and international solidarity our leitmotif of this crucial time.