Mitigating COVID-19 Crisis towards Positive Impact on People's Lives

Last updated 16th April 2020

COVID-19 is a challenge of an unprecedented magnitude. The disease is having a devastating impact on communities and health systems. Since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, the virus has spread across continents causing numerous deaths and untold disruption. The disease has burdened and overwhelmed healthcare systems, affected the social, mental health and well-being of people, and disrupted day to day activities and economies. The impact of the disease is alarming.

We, therefore, acknowledge and appreciate efforts that governments, private sector, development partners and communities are putting in place in response to COVID-19. We also applaud Africa Union's joint continental COVID-19 strategy, which aims at preventing severe outbreak and death; and to minimize social disruption and economic consequences of COVID-19 outbreaks.

During this very challenging time, we **recognize** and are grateful to all frontline health workers. Their efforts and sacrifice continue to save thousands of live and inspire hope.

Noting the urgent need to stop deaths and the spread of the disease, we are looking up to our leaders to do what needs to be done quickly and decisively so as to mitigate the crisis in a way that has demonstrable positive impact on people's lives.

We ask that:

1. Strong multi-disciplinary partnerships be established for robust coordination at national, regional and global level. Researchers, social scientists, civil society organizations, academia, private sector, individuals, governments and financial institutions must be seamlessly coordinated to tackle the disease.

2. Ensure the safety of health workers by providing them with the personal protective equipment they need so that their own lives are not at risk.

3. Testing is scaled up through adequately equipping decentralized rapid testing centers and the procurement of enough rapid testing kits.

4. A human right framing for COVID-19 response is considered and that the principle of 'leave no one behind' is applied and that gender dynamics are factored and addressed accordingly.

5. Continuity of care. Continue with service provision and ensure continuum of care, so that essential and emergency healthcare services including maternal health, AIDS, TB and malaria services continue without interruptions.

6. A people centered approach using existing community systems and learning from previous experiences of interventions such as in HIV, TB and malaria responses.

7. Ethical research for COVID-19 solutions in line with this call by concerned civil society and communities.

8. Strong community engagement and systems; strong data systems and data use, skilled healthcare personnel and integrated service delivery are all critically necessary - to ensure that people receive comprehensive care.

9. People are protected financially through robust national mechanisms that can help minimize the economic impact of the pandemic on the economy and on individuals.

We stand in solidarity and with resilience in the fight against COVID-19.