

# International Development Issue Focus

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Good Neighbours' International Development Issue Focus shares key issues in international development cooperation around the world. Issue Focus aims to raise awareness to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reduce poverty and inequality in all its forms around the world, and share best practices to improve international development projects, policies and systems.

## International Development & COVID-19: Lessons Learnt and Implications from Good Neighbours' Global Response to COVID-19



**Purpose** This edition surveys the efforts Good Neighbours has been making to protect the vulnerable, and promote resilience within communities and countries worldwide against the protracted COVID-19 pandemic situation. It also proposes recommendations for effective response to the virus and strengthening partnerships in the international community.

Good Neighbours is an international humanitarian development NGO founded in 1991 to make the world a place without hunger, where people live together in harmony. Good Neighbors has attained General consultative status with United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) in 1996.

## Key message |

With the COVID-19 pandemic likely to be protracted, Good Neighbours has established a Global Response Plan against the virus and implemented various activities in partnership with international organisations, local NGOs, and communities. Good Neighbours' focus has been on ensuring community livelihoods, and improving health systems, and social policy measures in developing countries along with the three key principles of 'inclusivity', 'safety and security first', and 'partnership'. For effective response to COVID-19 and mid- to long-term recovery of local communities, Good Neighbours proposes the following recommendations:

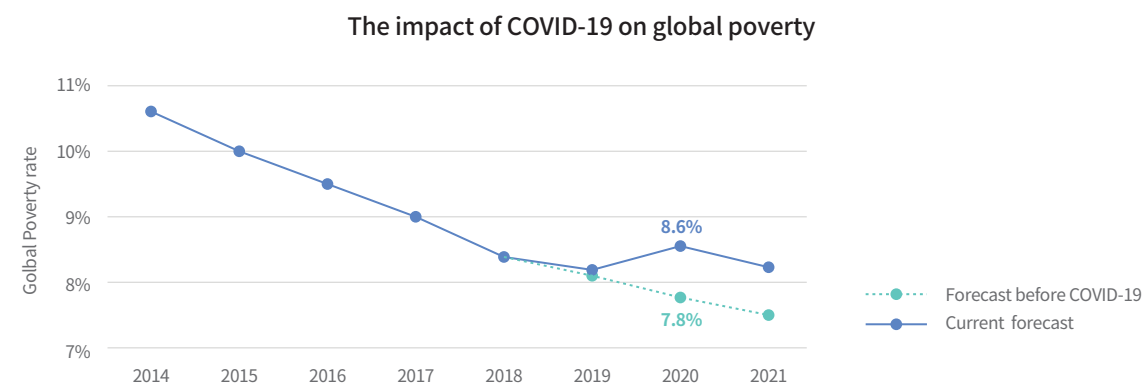
- The international community as a whole ought to engage in acts of global solidarity and partnership with diverse actors to ensure efficient response to the pandemic.
- Expand H-D-P practices and development financing in response to a protracted pandemic situation
- Bolster field- and community-based response and partnership with civil society for the protection of the vulnerable
- Enhance local community capabilities and communication along local networks and channels

## Background |

### 1. International Development and COVID-19: A Global Look

Since outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first reported in December 2019, the disease has spread worldwide at an astonishing rate. In just nine months, the cumulative total number of confirmed patients has exceeded 28 million, with a total death count of 908,000 (as of September 10, 2020). The pandemic has not just occasioned a health crisis, but is exerting far-reaching and profound impacts on all aspects of life and society, including negatively affecting employment, food supply, and schooling. The social and economic crises created by the pandemic will continue to spread and worsen at an accelerated rate worldwide.

The spread of COVID-19 is also exacerbating poverty worldwide. The World Bank estimates that the pandemic will increase the global poverty rate from 8.2 percent (2019) to 8.6 percent (2020), and the world's population subsisting on USD 1.90 or less per day from 632 million to 665 million. In 2020 alone, 49 million people worldwide are likely to be driven into extreme poverty, with 23 million of those concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, and another 16 million in South Asia.<sup>1</sup>



\* Source: CCSA. How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective. p.60

With the pandemic suspending every normal human activity, the international plan to realize the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 will too inevitably be interrupted. The Sustainable Development Report 2000 finds that COVID-19 will affect, whether directly or indirectly, all 17 SDGs, but will especially exert “highly negative impacts” on SDGs 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Health and Well-being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality) in the short run.<sup>2</sup> As food shortages, poverty, health, and economic difficulties deteriorate worldwide, the socio-economic inequality and discrimination situations are expected to be protracted in fragile countries and vulnerable populations already suffering.

The international community ought not to neglect the already dire state of health resources and infrastructure in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to health crises, and the need to strengthen support for vulnerable groups and the least developed countries by bolstering global solidarity, increasing ODA budgets, and expanding the participation of civil society and private sectors. More local humanitarian action and leadership must be cultivated to ensure the effective recovery of communities against the current humanitarian crisis in the long run, with more complementarity between international and local actors.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Poverty and COVID-19: Impact on Local Communities and Vulnerable Groups

COVID-19 is a crisis on a global scale, but its impact is not felt equally by everyone. The pandemic has served to expose deep-seated inequality crisscrossing economic and health systems and social structures around the world. Especially, its effects have been far more fatal towards people already vulnerable to humanitarian crises and populations in developing countries.

In a recent report on health and education systems in 188 countries worldwide, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found a pronounced lack of capabilities in the developing countries to manage the COVID-19 crisis. Thus, the disease is revealing how the chronic shortages of financial resources, infrastructure, and manpower for healthcare is devastating societies in these countries. Low-income countries, defined as having a gross national income (GNI) of USD 995 or less per capita as of 2017, spend an average of USD 41 per capita in health spending, disproportionately lower than USD 3,024 per capita spent in high-income countries.<sup>4</sup> As of 2015, the number of internists in low-income countries numbered a meager 0.3 per 1,000 persons—only one-tenth of the 3.0 per 1,000 persons in high-income countries.<sup>5</sup>

Local communities play a pivotal role in ensuring the safe delivery of essential medical services and the effective communication of information during crises like a pandemic.<sup>6</sup> The Ebola outbreak in 2014 highlighted the importance of local communities in controlling epidemics and providing treatment.<sup>7</sup> As developing countries are riddled with widespread shortages of local infrastructure, it is critical to enhance local community capabilities to respond to natural disasters and infectious disease. At government level, institutional measures are also needed to improve and strengthen nationwide health systems in the intermediate to long run so as to equip them with effective public capabilities for managing crises.

The pandemic has deepened the vulnerabilities and marginalization of the poor and the vulnerable. We especially need to understand how COVID-19 has affected children, women and girls, and refugees worldwide.

2) Cambridge University Press (2020). Sustainable Development Report 2020: The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19.

3) Humanitarian Policy Group (July 2020). 'All eyes are on local actors': COVID-19 and local humanitarian action.

4) WHO (2020). Global Health Expenditure Database (retrieved May 7, 2020); World Bank classification of economies by income (as of 2017).

5) World Bank. World Development Indicators (as of 2015).

6) WHO (2020). Community-based health care, including outreach and campaigns, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

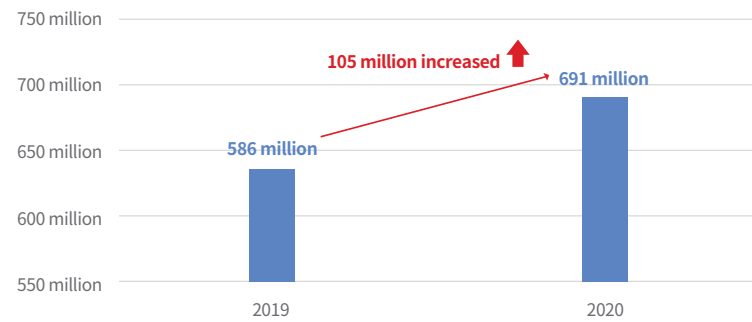
7) World Bank (2020). Community response to COVID-19: The resilience of Indonesia.

1) The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA), How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective. p. 60.

### Children

According to the latest analysis by UNICEF and Save the Children reveals that COVID-19 threatens to increase the number of children living in monetary poor households by up to 117 million worldwide by the end of the 2020. Parental unemployment and abrupt drops in household income due to the pandemic will make it increasingly difficult for these households to satisfy even the most basic needs, such as food and drinking water. Furthermore, it will reduce their access to health services and education, while rendering children all the more prone to violence, exploitation and abuse.

Number of children living in monetary poor households (projected)



\* Source: Children in Monetary Poor Households and COVID-19: Projections as of 29 June 2020.

Education is the area where the impact of the pandemic is felt most acutely on the younger age groups. Children around the world now face a learning crisis due to their reduced access to schools. Governments in 188 countries have closed down schools, denying proper education for over 1.6 billion children and youth.<sup>8</sup> The adverse effects of such disruption in learning may be felt throughout childhood or even throughout life.

### Women and Girls

The social and economic devastations wrought by COVID-19 underscores society’s reliance on women. In a crisis situation that accentuates the scarcity of resources and limits the institutional capacity, women and girls are often the hardest hit.<sup>9</sup> Households in developing countries rely disproportionately on the labour of women and girls for income, but the pandemic has effectively reduced working opportunities for these groups. This reduction and quarantines increase the risk not only of poverty for women and girls, but also of domestic violence. According to UN Women rapid assessment and findings, there is an increase in calls to helplines/hotlines in the majority of the countries. 80% of the countries who provided information and data reported an increase in calls after the pandemic outbreak. It is also reported that COVID-19 has an impact on survivors’ limited access to a range of essential services such as social, health and legal services.<sup>10</sup> Domestic violence is indeed a pernicious problem as it is more difficult to detect and manage than other problems exacerbated by the pandemic.

### Refugees

Refugees and the displaced are also among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, whether in a pandemic or not. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 80 percent of world’s refugees and nearly all the internally displaced persons from around the world are hosted in low- and middle-income countries and are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.<sup>11</sup> Refugee camps have high population densities, which make social distancing all but impossible. And those especially undocumented do not have access to medical and healthcare services they need,<sup>12</sup> while also disadvantaging them in terms of access to drinking water and sanitation measures.

8) UNICEF: COVID-19 and Children <https://data.unicef.org/topic/covid-19-and-children/>  
 9) UN Women: How Covid-19 Impacts Women and Girls, <https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html>.  
 10) UN Women (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls and service provision: UN Women rapid assessment and findings.  
 11) UNHCR: Coronavirus outbreak <https://www.unhcr.org/coronavirus-covid-19.html>.  
 12) UNDP (2020). COVID-19 and social protection of poor and vulnerable groups in Latin America: a conceptual framework.

## 3. The Response of International Organizations to COVID-19

As the virus rapidly spread into regions beyond Asia, WHO declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020, a decision that has since shaped the responses of other international organisations as well. The UN introduced ‘Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19’ in April 2020.<sup>13</sup> The Framework is centered on five main pillars: ‘protecting health services and systems during the crisis’, ‘social protection and basic services’, ‘protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the informal sector workers’, ‘enhancing macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration’, and ‘strengthening social cohesion and community resilience’. It has also introduced the ‘Response and Recovery Trust Fund’ for low- and middle-income countries. The underlying principle of the UN Framework is ‘leaving no one behind’, the central message of the SDGs. Accordingly, the Framework emphasizes the need to protect the vulnerable, and to strengthen the resilience of local communities and social cohesion toward ensuring effective pandemic response and sustainability.

Five Pillars of the UN Framework for the Response to COVID-19



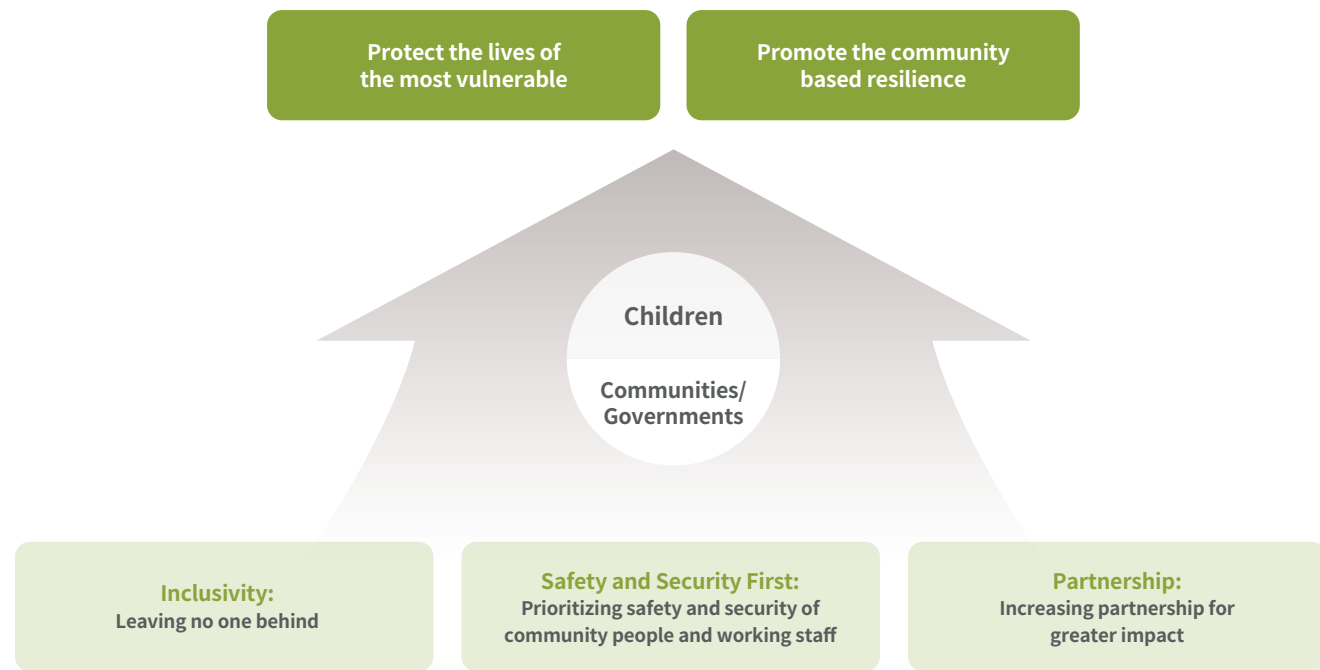
13) UN (2020). A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.

# Issue Focus I

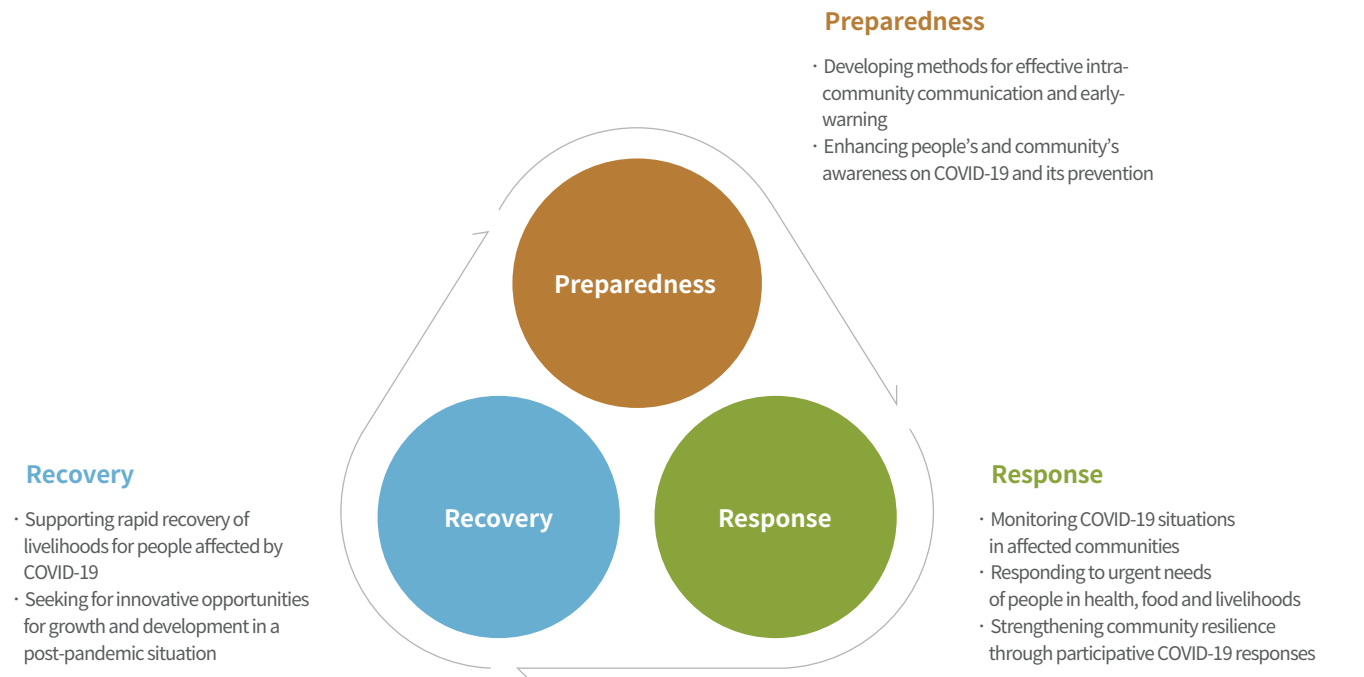
## 1. Good Neighbours' Response to COVID-19

Good Neighbours' Global Response Plan against COVID-19 has been guiding the pandemic responses in each of its partner countries worldwide. All Good Neighbours' partner countries, whether on the receiving or donating end, are required to present Weekly Situation Reports on their respective societies and communities to share information and coordinate effective and timely responses to the virus.

Good Neighbours COVID-19 Global Response Goals & Key Principles



Good Neighbours COVID-19 Global Response envisions three stages of response: preparedness, response, and recovery. In the first stage, **preparedness**, members of local communities receive accurate and timely information on COVID-19 by enhancing awareness of people and communities on COVID-19 and its prevention. In the second stage, **response**, emergency assistance is geared toward preventing spread of the virus, while efforts are made to provide immediate response to confirmed patients and respond to urgent needs of people in health, food and livelihood. In the third stage, **recovery**, support focuses on enabling local communities and their members to return to normal life and livelihood, as well as seeking for innovative opportunities for growth and development in a post-pandemic situation. 'Inclusivity: leaving no one behind', 'Safety and security first: prioritizing safety and security of community people and working staff' and 'Partnership: increasing partnerships for greater impact' are the three key principles that guide all three stages. Every Good Neighbours partner country is doing its best to identify and consider all potential risks and threats to the rights and safety of the vulnerable in affected communities, including children, women, the disabled and the elderly throughout all the stages, while planning response programs and ensuring protection of the most vulnerable.



Likewise, Good Neighbours has set out its mid- to long-term policy and strategies so as to enable all local communities and countries to remain resilient and self-sufficient in the face of a protracted pandemic, rather than providing temporary emergency relief only.

“ We faced insufficient budget to cope with COVID-19 prevention. Without Good Neighbours' great support to the community, we could not have provided any COVID-19 prevention education to our people. ”

- Sorth Song, a member of Women & Children Committee at Cambodia Community Development Project (CDP).

“ With Good Neighbours' support, our local people have realised the importance of washing hands and wearing masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. ”

- Songhy Sokeheng, a director of Community Development Project (CDP) health care center.

“ In Madagascar, where the medical facilities are not well developed, timely provision of critical COVID-19 equipment is an example of K-defense remarkable practices. Under the situation that other developed countries cannot support developing countries in need to cope with the COVID-19 situation in their countries, Good Neighbours' support became a great hope for Madagascar. ”

- Lim Sang-woo, Korean ambassador to Madagascar.

## 2. Good Neighbours' COVID-19 Main Activities at a Glance (as of the end of June 2020)

· 39 Good Neighbours' partner countries participating in COVID-19 response



### Good Neighbours have reached

1,828,645  
children

2,588,923  
community members

### Impacts of COVID-19 response

**1,114,739**  
Beneficiaries received education for COVID-19 awareness

**574,384**  
Beneficiaries received Psycho-Social Support (PSS)

**458,271**  
Hygiene kits provided

**2,835,962**  
Masks distributed

**267,022**  
Persons supported with emergency food kits

**93,414**  
Test kits supplied

**56,728**  
Beneficiaries received alternative education

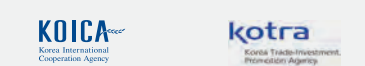
**170**  
Partner organisations including UN agencies

### Main partners

· International organisations



· Government agencies



· Embassies



### 3. Main Program for Protecting the Vulnerable and Community Resilience

#### Producing an Educational TV Program for Children in Paraguay

In an effort to protect children’s access to learning amid COVID-19-induced school closures, Good Neighbours has begun to support programs that utilise multimedia and information & communications technology (ICT) to reduce education gaps. As Paraguayan children have been unable to attend schools since April 27, when the nation announced a school lockdown protocol that is to last until the end of this year, the Paraguayan government proposed to Good Neighbours a partnership for producing public TV educational programs.

Good Neighbours Paraguay thus partnered with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), EBS (Korea’s educational broadcasting corporation), and the Paraguayan Ministry of Education and Science to produce 'Good Kids' as part of the existing ODA program. The program, consisting of 103 films and 95 episodes in total, is to provide elementary-school Spanish and Guarani lessons as well as education on children’s rights. This TV program has been on air since May 1, providing daily lessons for children in Paraguay.

“ Due to the COVID-19, our school has been closed. I was bored because I couldn’t go to school. However, I am having fun watching TV and learning! I learned that I have to wash my hands well. Also, I learned some difficult words in a very easy way. ”

- Sisters Mitica Milagros (10 years old) and Rosa (5 years old)



Children watching 'Good Kids' at home in Paraguay



'Good Kids' credit

#### Supporting Women’s Savings Group in the Philippines

Acknowledging the fact that women are especially vulnerable to various aspects of the current pandemic, Good Neighbors supports to strengthen their financial capability. Manila’s recent announcement of its Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) measures is further threatening the livelihood of people across the Philippines who have already been suffering from the long-term lockdown of the economy.

Good Neighbours Philippines organised Women’s Savings Group (WSG) in San Pedro with 20 women in May 2019 to enable participants to raise the funds they need for themselves and their community. The unabated spread of COVID-19, however, has halted all forms of social gatherings and organised activities, drastically reducing income for women. The WSG members nonetheless drew upon the social fund they had already saved to put food on their tables and sustain their livelihoods. They have also recently agreed to launch the Micro Business Pandemic Loan to provide emergency financial relief for local women struggling with COVID-19’s economic impact and support their livelihood.



San Pedro Women’s Savings Group holding their meetings

#### Supporting Refugee Women and Livelihoods in Uganda

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, Good Neighbours is distributing hygiene kits to refugees and supporting income-earning activities among refugee women. Good Neighbours Uganda has been supporting children and women in refugee camps and enhancing their capabilities for self-sufficiency since August 2018. Kyaka II Refugee Settlement is currently suffering from shortages of goods and cash to support all refugee population. Children, the disabled and the elderly who are incapable of working to earn income are all the more at risk. Good Neighbours worked with Resident District Commissioner to identify people at the greatest risk of food shortage, and distributed food and sanitary items to 1,100 households in total.



Distribution of Food and sanitary items for 1,100 households in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement

Good Neighbours constructed Women's Development Center (WDC) in Uganda in 2019 in partnership with KOICA's humanitarian assistance program to support the enhancement of capabilities among refugee women. COVID-19 has brought the Women's Group, local NGOs and the UNHCR together to organise a tailoring training program for making quality and clean face masks at WDC. The 12 refugee women who completed the training are working with local NGOs to create 5,600 face masks to be distributed to refugees.



A refugee woman making face masks

“Thanks to Good Neighbours, I was able to start working after completing the tailoring training for refugee women last year. I earned some money to pay for my children's education and purchase livestock. COVID-19 has limited economic and job opportunities, but I have been able to support my family by participating in the women empowerment program. I also plan to start my own small scale business to have enough resources to support my children's education with the upcoming support of making face masks.”

- A refugee woman who benefited from the income generating activities in Mukondo WDC

## Partnering with International Organisations for Capacity Building of Communities in Health and Medical Response in Myanmar

Good Neighbours is distributing COVID-19 diagnosis kits to developing countries as a way to help them prevent spread of the disease and strengthen the capacity of local health systems. Although the Myanmar government has adopted strong measures to contain the pandemic, many families in the country are still vulnerable to health risks due to their infection-prone housing structures and lack of public sanitation. The poor state of health infrastructure in Myanmar also means that many who develop symptoms cannot even get tested.

Amid the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the country, Good Neighbours Myanmar developed a dialogue with the WHO on effective measures for management of the virus and building partnerships. Having been selected as an implementing partner for the 'Strengthening the diagnosis capacities and local health enhancement project', Good Neighbours secured funding from the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and distributed COVID-19 diagnosis kits for a total of 25,000 check-ups across Myanmar. Good Neighbours also provided personal hygiene kits and COVID-19 information pamphlet to 30,000 households.



Good Neighbours Myanmar receiving the funds from UNOPS for COVID-19 response

## Recommendations |

### Strengthen global solidarity for effective pandemic response

International solidarity and partnership is crucial to the health, economic, and humanitarian crises on a global scale like the pandemic the world is presently dealing with. Infectious diseases like COVID-19 are no longer contained within a single country or region, and are, in fact, global problems that require the close cooperation of the international society. Strong multilateral and international partnerships enable all the stakeholders to mutually learn from best practices and share lessons learnt and resources for better solutions. Now that the virus has spread worldwide and will continue to exert its impact, it is critical for countries to develop a stronger system of international cooperation and response, and increase their partnerships with businesses, civil society and private institutions to respond effectively.

### Expand H-D-P practices and development financing in response to a protracted pandemic situation

With the impact of COVID-19 expected to continue, actors in international development worldwide ought to develop mid- to long-term strategies for implementing effective humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) practices over and beyond emergency relief, and establish specific action plans accordingly. COVID-19 should not be viewed merely as a temporary humanitarian crisis, but as a variable capable of shaping the long-term course of development. Through further in-depth dialogues among actors, development resources should be increased by mobilising not only ODA, but also private and innovative financing to ensure the reconstruction of the least developed countries and fragile states and realise the SDGs.

### Bolster field- and community-based response and partnership with civil society for the protection of the vulnerable

The COVID-19 crisis is revealing the inequality in social structures and throughout economic, health and medical systems around the world. Its impact has been especially devastating on the disadvantaged, particularly those in developing countries and involved in humanitarian crises. Vast percentages of the disadvantaged in developing countries, however, lack a secure legal status under their respective governments and are already denied public services. In order to identify those in need and tailor support to their needs, it is essential to work with community based organisations equipped with field-oriented systems and possessing local expertise. The international community and each government ought to expand their partnership with civil society and actively utilise their field expertise, resources and networks towards a truly inclusive COVID-19 response plan.

### Enhance local community capabilities and communication along local networks and channels

Good Neighbours has been able to provide timely support to the most needed despite COVID-19 thanks to its local-centered structure of project implementation. Good Neighbours conducts its projects via around 200 Community Development Projects (CDPs) in 37 developing countries, actively working with Community Development Committees (CDCs) made up of community members and other local organisations. Utilising local resources and organisations helps to identify the needs of locals as well as better understand their social dynamics and culture, thereby providing effective and timely support. Effective pandemic responses will require close cooperation from community members and local networks. It is also crucial to enhance capability of local communities themselves, particularly when infectious disease prevents external support from coming in.

### Abbreviations and acronyms

CDC	Community Development Committee
CDP	Community Development Project
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WHO	World Health Organization

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 WHO, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)  
 UNHCR, [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)  
 UNICEF, [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)  
 UN Women, [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)  
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