

# DanChurchAid position paper for COVID-19 crisis and response

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## #1: Localization. A pandemic requires localized action in complementarity with global approaches.

1. The Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) to COVID-19 has recognized the vital role of local civil society actors, including faith-based groups. Their role becomes even more pertinent, as international staff are restricted from travel or unable to freely deploy to field operations. It also notes that increased funding should be channeled as directly as possible to local and national actors, in line with Grand Bargain commitments. Consortiums and twinning approaches should be encouraged as these will engage smaller local and national NGOs and women's rights organizations in design and delivery of response work. **We ask donors and UN agencies to increase support to civil society actors through the GHRP (e.g. through country-based pool funds), and we ask donors to require that funds channelled through the UN goes to civil society actors enabling local and national NGOs to access significant volumes of direct funding.**
2. Local responders are hit hardest by COVID-19 with limited support systems available to cover salaries, health insurance and medical assistance. **We ask donors to provide adequate flexibility and support for overhead costs to cover safety, health insurance and other risk management priorities.** This needs to be packaged with support for capacity-strengthening to acquire the new skills, technology and equipment required to meet the new kinds of risks – known and unknown – that the COVID-19 crisis presents.
3. From the Ebola crisis we know that engaging families, communities, community and faith leaders early on – and engaging them in the right manner - is of paramount importance. In situations where government movement restrictions are very strict, communities themselves may be the only responders. It calls for new funding modalities for communities e.g. through a model of pooled funds directly supporting community-based organizations. **We ask donors to support flexible financing mechanisms for community-led action initiatives.**

## #2: Flexibility across the nexus and support for continuity. The importance of a common donor approach to flexibility across humanitarian and development sectors.

1. The COVID-19 response calls for an integrated multi-sectoral approach that addresses both the health needs of people as well as the longer term economic, social and political consequences of the pandemic. COVID-19 risks deepening existing inequalities in already fragile contexts. The crisis already has significant economic implications with a direct impact on food security for the poorest. Civil society's room for maneuvering may will be further

limited under the guise of crisis management. It is essential that additional funds are mobilized to support the GHRP for COVID-19 and not diverted from ongoing humanitarian operations and development projects, and that future humanitarian and development funding allocations are not compromised by the COVID-19 response. **We ask donors to acknowledge the immediate implications on food security and to integrate crisis response with ongoing long-term efforts including with the aim to support civil society and mitigate violations of human rights.**

2. The COVID-19 pandemic will be stretching the capacity of the aid community in delivering on existing programs as well as preparing to tackle the pandemic. **We ask donors to exert flexibility in these unprecedented times, including to secure programmatic and organizational continuity for international and local civil society partners, and enhance quality funding, i.e. increase multi-year, collaborative and flexible funding in line with the Grand Bargain commitments. We ask all donors in general to adopt common approaches to flexibility in dialogue with their civil society partners as well as with their multilateral partners.**
3. Innovative financing mechanisms such as crisis modifiers should be deployed in the COVID-19 response to better manage shocks and stresses, protect development gains and encourage early action. **We ask donors to support crisis modifiers in proposals and ensure that crisis response is not just a matter of concern for humanitarians but needs to also be a priority for development actors.**

### **#3: Faith actors. Rationale for greater involvement of faith actors in a rights and gender sensitive COVID-19 response.**

1. Faith actors are deeply rooted in the communities they serve. Local faith institutions, religious leaders and other faith-based organizations are responding to the humanitarian as well as long term needs of their communities as agents of change. They play an important role to support communities, regulate behaviour and foster resilience. They can reduce stigmatization and protect people from discriminatory practices arising from prejudices, disinformation or hysteria due to the COVID-19. **We ask donors and UN agencies through the GHRP and other funding packages to intentionally include local faith actors as actors and partners in localized COVID-19 response and to fund their contributions.**
2. Experience shows that public sharing of credible evidence-based information and guidance is key to limit spread of virus and destructive consequences. Faith actors can have an obvious complementary role in sharing credible information and countering fake news – because they have access and are trusted. **We ask donors to support such effective faith messages.**
3. Local faith actors are also influential voices in protecting and reclaiming rights. For example, in relation to the threat faced by women and girls in quarantine or ensuring humane curfew management by police. **We ask donors to support the role as watchdog that faith actors can take when extraordinary COVID-19 laws risk undermining human rights or shrinking civic space further.**

#### #4: Human rights. COVID-19 responses should respect basic freedoms and human rights principles.

1. The Covid-19 response has led governments around the world to impose severe restrictions on basic civic and human rights. Freedom of assembly and movement has been most severely restricted. Many countries have allowed tracking of people's movement through monitoring their use of mobile technology. Freedom of speech is also under threat as we have experienced doctors and journalists are pushed back by authorities for voicing their views and analysis of the corona and Covid-19 response and consequences. According to human rights law all these rights can be derogated from in a state of emergency, however, it must be recognized that it is has severe impacts on millions of people, and that the negative consequences differs across nations. **We ask that states and donors cooperate and support civil society in safeguarding basic civic and human rights. We ask that measure for social distancing with less interfering means are put in place and that restrictions are lifted as soon as it is safe to do so.**
2. COVID-19 responses e.g. isolation and quarantine policies are already having severe implications. In many countries citizens may only leave their house for essential purposes. This has led and will lead to thousands of people losing their income, housing and thus not being able to provide shelter, food and basic education for themselves and their families. There is no-size-fits all response to COVID-19. Measures in one country might not be the right measures in another country. Each response must apply a context-specific approach that acknowledge specific needs of people of that country. **We ask donors and states to support and promote a context specific and rights-based COVID-19 response in partner countries.**

#### #5: Climate change. COVID-19 response should promote synergy with the Paris Agreement, and its associated national commitments.

1. Climate change continues to be a challenge, and an increasing risk for security, development and growth in the world. The decisions governments make to stimulate the economy in response to the COVID-19 crisis may amplify or mitigate the climate crisis. All governments have committed to embark on a transition towards low carbon and resilient development. **We ask states and donors to make their COVID-19 response truly transformative supporting economic recovery while promoting synergy and co-benefits with climate action.**
2. Despite a fall in expected carbon emissions due to COVID-19 the crisis is likely not to have any impact on climate changes. **We ask states and donors to continue to invest towards achievement of the national climate commitments under the Paris Agreement and to accelerate the transition to low carbon, climate resilient societies.**

## #6: The role of women in COVID-19

1. Women are heavily at risk of COVID-19 and impacted both economically and socially. Women constitute a large percentage of the informal economy in informal markets and agriculture around the world. Almost 70 % of the global health force is women (UN Women). Gender based violence and intimate partner violence have increased due to COVID-19. **We ask donors and state to give special attention to female responders, including nurses and carers, and women-led organisations and integrate them in decision-making bodies and coordination of the response.**
2. Gender-based violence is seeing an unprecedented rise due to the COVID-19. The combination of economic and social stresses brought on by the pandemic, as well as restrictions on movement, have dramatically increased the numbers of women, girls and boys facing abuse, in almost all countries. In fragile contexts and conflict women, girls and boys are even more exposed. **We ask donor and states to put women's, girls' and boys' safety first when they respond and support the COVID-19 response.**

## #7: Peacebuilding. The current COVID-19 crisis bears witness to heightened conflict dynamics globally.

1. The current crises prompted by COVID-19, can trigger potentially violent tensions. The UN secretary general is calling for global ceasefire in conflict areas. Some actors are using the crises as a pretext for crackdowns on 'dissidents' or an increase in military offensives. Furthermore, already fragile governance structures face potential collapse of barely functional healthcare systems and other valuable services. **We ask donors and states to support the call for global ceasefire and to provide a crucial window for inclusive peacebuilding working with civil society actors to build sustainable peace.**

## #8. The impact of COVID-19 on the economic resilience and employment situation in marginalised communities

1. The COVID-19 response of governments across the globe have resulted in lockdowns and restrictions on movement. Depending on the duration of the situation, these measures risk leading to a sharp rise in unemployment rates and to cause tremendous harm to livelihoods and food security. The lockdowns have caused a halt to economic activities of women, men and youth in communities in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, many of whom operate their businesses as one-person micro-enterprises in the informal economy. As such, the economic resilience of marginalised communities is at stake. **We ask donors and states to ensure that a revitalisation of the economy will prioritise market systems that benefit marginalised communities and populations.**