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Question:

Identify the roles of specific international organizations in responding to COVID-19 pandemic globally.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 crisis is now a global one that has also morphed into larger and more global economic and social crisis than the financial collapse of 2008-2009. High income countries have done well to backstop their financial systems and have also begun to advance bold stimulus packages for recovery. However, emerging market and developing countries lack the wherewithal for such a response and worse, they are experiencing flight of portfolio capital like in no other period in their memories. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented disruption for the global health and development community. Organizations fighting infectious disease, supporting health workers, delivering social services, and protecting livelihoods have moved to the very center of the world’s attention. But they find their work complicated by challenges of access, safety, supply chain logistics, and financial stress like never before.

The short-term implications of this global challenge are evident everywhere, but the long-term consequences of the pandemic how it will reshape health and development institutions, occupations, and priorities are still difficult to imagine. We will be using the World Health Organization and the United Nations as our case study for these discussion.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease, COVID-19, to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated that there is a high risk of COVID-19 spreading to other countries around the world. In March 2020, WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

WHO and public health authorities around the world are acting to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. However, this time of crisis is generating stress throughout the population. The considerations presented in this document have been developed by the WHO groups during the outbreak.

WHO is the Cluster Lead Agency and it provides secretariat support through the Global Health Cluster Team in the WHO Emergency Response Division, Health Emergencies Programme.

ROLES OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION IN THE CORONA VIRUS OUTBREAK

The Health Cluster is coordinating and supporting partners to implement essential health service to achieve Strategic Priority 1 and supporting inter-cluster action required to achieve Strategic Priorities 2 and 3.

To date, the Health Cluster has had the following role:

 ⁃ raising awareness and disseminating technical guidance (all levels);

 ⁃ aligning with national Incident Management Teams and multi-sector coordination platforms;

 ⁃ Preparedness and response planning to operationalize the strategic preparedness and response plan at country level;

* Partner mapping, training and simulation exercises with health actors (country, regional, global); and,

 ⁃ Business continuity planning for existing humanitarian action.

In countries with activated clusters, the Health Cluster will be the initial platform to coordinate the response with additional technical capacity to address the specific needs as required. Currently the degree of cluster integration and participation in COVID-19 preparedness and response varies depending on country contexts.

If Global Health Cluster partners have a presence in countries, they will be liaising with the designated multi-sectoral coordination platform for COVID-19 through already existing platforms such as the health cluster. Existing cluster capacities will be leveraged for COVID-19 preparedness and response.

THE UNITED NATION

The UN chief launched on Tuesday a new plan to counter the potentially devastating socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, calling on everyone to “act together to lessen the blow to people.

UN in Nigeria strengthens COVID-19 containment and care, mobilizes $2 million for key support to Government on the 24th March 2020.

The United Nations system in Nigeria has mobilized $2 million to help the Government’s efforts to contain the COVID-19 outbreak and care for those in the West African country stricken by the virus. The United Nations and its partners are doing their utmost to support a comprehensive, multi-pronged effort to stem the impact of COVID-19 in Syria, where the viral disease has claimed the lives of two people, sickened 23 others and presented epic challenges for ensuring the smooth delivery of life-saving assistance. They have been supporting countries since the very early stages of this crisis, donating more than two million surgical masks and providing life supporting medical equipment such as X-ray machines, infrared thermometers, infusion pumps, protective suits, gloves and hand sanitizer. The United Nations are supporting health systems in countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Nigeria, Paraguay, Panama and Ukraine.

 In China they launched a social media campaign to spread information about COVID-19 amongst vulnerable communities such as the elderly and other disadvantaged people in 40 different minority United Nations Development Program supported HIV treatment centers in Kunduz, Afghanistan take preventative measures for transmission of COVID 19, ensuring services for HIV clients are not interrupted. The UNDP supplied 100 sets of protective gear and 70 litres of highly concentrated antiseptic for ambulances and emergency facilities in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, Ukraine. Funding provided by the EU with support from UN RPP.

 In Lebanon, UNDP is supporting the government as it develops a Disaster Risk Management Plan. And in Viet Nam we’re working with the government to communicate with ethnic minorities and those with disabilities, with a focus on the rural areas on China’s border. Working with WhatsApp, WHO and UNICEF they have created an information hub that will get real time healthcare to billions around the world.

UNDP have teamed up with AMV, one of the world’s largest advertising agencies, and actor, writer and comedian Stephen Fry for the Tweet Zero campaign, which highlights the simple actions that can keep you safe; such as frequent hand washing, staying home when sick and not touching your face.

Partnering with the European Union in Serbia we have begun delivering and distributing vital medical supplies such respirators, protective equipment and diagnostic tests.

In the Arab states we are working with governments and citizens to deliver essential services, and fight misinformation.

It will require all of society to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to cushion the potentially devastating impact it may have on vulnerable people and economies.

We must rebuild trust and cooperation, within and among nations, and between people and their governments.

UNDP’s support will also help ensure that the responses of individual countries are comprehensive as well as equitable and inclusive, so that no one is left out and countries can continue to make progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion these international organizations are trying there very best to prevent global poverty, humanitarian assistance, and safety for the world in order to prevent worse crisis and also to curb the outbreak of the Corona Virus pandemic. International organizations should continue to use its networks of technical experts to assess how best this outbreak can be contained globally. They should provide intensified support for preparation and response, especially in vulnerable countries and regions. Measures to ensure rapid development and access to potential vaccines, diagnostics, antiviral medicines and other therapeutics for low- and middle-income countries should be developed. IGOs should continue to provide all necessary technical and operational support to respond to this outbreak, including with its extensive networks of partners and collaborating institutions, to implement a comprehensive risk communication strategy, and to allow for the advancement of research and scientific developments in relation to this novel coronavirus. International organizations and states  should also continue to explore the advisability of creating an intermediate level of alert and finally review the situation with transparency and update its evidence based recommendations in order to create a better environment for citizens globally.

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