**PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS (IRD 202)**

**COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

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

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The pandemic of coronavirus (COVID-19), is one that has been ubiquitous to all and sundry, and is the defining global crisis of our time. Breaking out in late 2019, purportedly from a seafood/wild animal market in Wuhan (a city in the Hubei province of China), it has now spread throughout many areas of the world, leaving tens of thousands of people dead or incapacitated, while the rest of the world has come to a halt—either through one form of quarantine or self-isolation or the other as measures of combating the highly contagious disease.

This disease has sparked up international concern and has been affirmed by the World Health Organization as a global health emergency. As at the time of this research (March 14th), statistics have estimated that there are about 231 countries/regions affected, 1,783,941 people infected 109,312 deaths and fortunately, 405,972 recoveries (*WikiData*,2020).

As this is evidently a transnational issue, multiple countries and international organizations of diverse kinds are on their toes in response, doing all at their disposure to mollify the societal, political and economic effects of the epidemic. Many governments have effectively frozen social and economic activity in all or parts of their countries to contain the outbreak, shuttering businesses and ordering residents to stay at home for weeks or months. International organizations on their end, have played a seminal role in dealing with this pandemic by providing emergency packages, loans and other forms of other assistance to countries, businesses, and workers during this period. To delve more into this, with the use of some organizations as examples, let’s examine the part played by these institutions in the wake of COVID-19.

**THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

As expected from an inseparable component of world affairs and a known lifeline for states, International organizations all over the world have devoted resources to ameliorate the efforts against this global problem. We can then look at some of the activities of organizations like United Nations, International Rescue Committee, International Organization for Migration, Direct Relief, [Médecins Sans Frontières](https://www.devex.com/organizations/medecins-sans-frontieres-44566) and International Monetary Fund as apt viewpoints for this discourse.

**UNITED NATIONS**

The United Nations is a highly acclaimed institution when it comes to handling a plethora of issues in the world and in the area of disease control and prevention, it does not falter either. In fact, in the 1950’s and 1960’s, through its different agencies it helped to end the Smallpox and Tuberculosis pandemics that were killing millions all over the world. More recently, in the early 2000s, it played a vital role in ending SARS, Swine Flu and the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Africa. (*UNDP*,2020)

Despite initial lack of cooperation and accountability from the Chinese government, this organization is working hard in over 120 countries to contain the spread of this disease alongside its various economic, societal and political reverberations through:

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres launched a US$2 billion global humanitarian response plan in response and knowing that the developing countries could lose at least US$220 billion in income, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has called for [US$2.5 trillion](https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2315) to support them. Also, on 1 March 2020, it[released US$15 million](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/01-03-2020-un-releases-us-15-million-to-help-vulnerable-countries-battle-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus) from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to help these same vulnerable countries battle the spread of the COVID-19.(E&E News,2020)

**HEALTH** **AID**

The UN has been supporting countries since the very early stages of this crisis, donating more than 2 million surgical masks and providing life supporting medical equipment such as X-ray machines, infrared thermometers,gloves and hand sanitizers. Its supporting health systems in countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Madagascar, Nigeria and Panama.

**INFORMATION/STRATEGY DISSEMINATION**

In these times of a pandemic, knowledge is not only power, but apparent survival. To keep people safe and less anxious, the UN has been sending out guidelines, advice and scientifically backed myth-busters to help in these times. On 10 January 2020, WHO published an [advice for international travel and trade](https://www.who.int/ith/2020-0901_outbreak_of_Pneumonia_caused_by_a_new_coronavirus_in_C/en/)in relation to the outbreak of pneumonia caused by the new coronavirus. It has also set standard recommendations for the general publicto reduce exposure to and transmission of the illness which include hand and respiratory hygiene, safe food practices and rules on physical contact.

**INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE**

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a global humanitarian aid, relief, and development nongovernmental organization. It was founded in 1933 as the International Relief Association, at the request of Albert Einstein. Since then, it functions to provide emergency aid and long-term assistance to refugees and those displaced persons. Consisting of first responders, health care providers, and educators, the IRC has assisted millions of people around the world since its founding. In 2016, 26 million people in about 40 countries and 26 U.S. cities benefited from IRC programs. (*IRC,*2020)

With the recent development of the coronavirus, which continues to spread globally and has reached countries with weak health systems, this is where the IRC seeks to come in. They have coronavirus preparedness and response programs in over 40 countries, including the United States, Syria and Yemen. Let’s look more into the different roles of this particular international organization.

**EDUCATION/TRAINING OF HEALTH WORKERS**

Health workers all over the world are trained by the IRC conduct and education sessions are held for members of health communities in Somalia, Kenya, Syria and also in many refugee camps in Africa e.g. the Za’tari Refugee Camp in Jordan and the Kukuma Refugee Camp in Kenya in order to help create more effective response systems for this pandemic. (*IRC,*2020)

**REFUGEE CARE/PROTECTION**

During this period, people in refugee camps all over the globe face a heightened risk of COVID-19 due to more densely populated conditions and a lot of governments are against this. Also, statistics has it that during these times, more than 70 million people globally have been forced by persecution, violence or human rights violations to flee their homes. Of those, more than 29 million are refugees. So, despite a lot of these displacements been made, the IRC makes sure that people don’t go homeless. Right now, IRC’s team in Kenya's Kakuma camp, is home to some 194,000 refugees, helping them stay safe. (*IRC,*2020)

**CONCLUSION**

Some refer to it as mankind’s most global problem since World War Two. Coronavirus has taken a huge toll on the international system inexplicably. By examining two case studies in this paper, I can deduce that international organizations have invested a lot tackling this disease through medical aid, mass media campaigns, refugee protection, etc. to make sure it becomes a thing of the past.

A lot of analysts and experts have also posited that if there is a synergy of state efforts with the roles which international organizations play, then there is ray of hope for this phenomenon still in progress, implying the need for a lot of international co-operation to be able to respond effectively to this situation at this time.

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