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QUESTION: IDENTIFY THE ROLES OF SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC GLOBALLY.

The COVID-19 is a pandemic that resulted from the spread of a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more deadly ones like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). This pandemic has had an all-round effect on all countries in the world leaving none unnoticed and unaffected. These effects range from financial, social and of course health. The international Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations (UN), World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO) to name a few are international organizations that have been on the forefront of the pandemic searching for ways to bear the brunt of the pandemic’s effect. The World Health Organization is the most active organization and has played the most crucial role in attempts to tackle the pandemic since the identification of the first case in Wuhan in December, 2019. The organization has issued a COVID-19 ‘Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan’ which highlights the steps and precautions to be taken by countries as well as the resources necessary to carry them out. The plan improves the organizations understanding of the behavioral pattern of the virus and helps guide developing countries specific plans. WHO along with its partners have set up a COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund which is intended to ensure patients get the care they need and workers get the supplies, equipment and information needed to speed up research for the generation of a vaccine for those infected.

The internet is usually a carrier of false and alarming information and in times of crisis and instability like this, the spread of falsified information has been more aggressive than ever. In light of this ‘Infodemic’, WHO has been the provider of accurate and up to date information and guide lines that will help save lives. In order to ensure the credibility of the information the organization has set up a team to release timely and easy to comprehend advice from trusted sources to the general public. In addition to the provision of information, daily situation reports and press briefings as well as briefings with governments, are keeping the world informed on the latest evidence and data. Social platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, Tik Tok and chatbots on WhatsApp and Viber have teamed up with the organization to ensure the flow of credible information. Recently the WHO has been accused by the United States for falsifying information on the developments and data of COVID-19 as such, the US has put a halt to funding the organization and is channeling funds to other organizations to tackle the pandemic. WHO is aiming to train millions of health workers through its open WHO platform which gives out lifesaving knowledge to frontline medical personnel. The most critical and grueling function being carried out by the organization is the continuous research put into the invention of a vaccine. Laboratories around the world are working tirelessly by running tests in hopes of creating a vaccine as fast as they can. In February, WHO brought together 400 of the world’s leading researchers to pin point research priorities. It has also launched a clinical trial in 90 countries to find a potent treatment in an attempt to identify any existing drug to slow down the aggression and progression of the disease. The agency is involved in other initiatives but the aforementioned are the most important to the organization with special emphasis on its aim being ‘on working with countries and with partners to bring the world together to confront this common threat together’ (Tedros, April 8th, 2020)

The International Monetary Fund is known for being the main body for financial assistance for nations whose economies are dwindling and the provider of loans so it is of little or no surprise that the organization has stepped up to assist through the provision of support to member countries through policy advice, technical assistance and financial resources. The institution is working closely with its development partners—World Bank, World Health Organization, and Asian Development Bank—and other health officials to provide timely policy advice, technical assistance, and financial support. The fund is at its maximum performance level as it has deployed its entire lending capacity of 1 trillion dollars to the service of its membership. The IMF has been responding to emergency calls for funding and has doubled its access to emergency facilities. The executive board of the Fund recently approved immediate debt service relief to 25 countries under its Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust as its way of easing the effects of the pandemic, this helps providing funds to the most poor and vulnerable members to help cover their debt obligations for a phase over 6 months which will allow them to channel their resources to providing relief materials. The Fund has also approved the establishment of a Short-term Liquidity Line (SLL) to further strengthen the global financial safety. The facility is a revolving and renewable backstop for member countries with very strong policies and fundamentals in need of short-term moderate balance of payments support. By doing the fore mentioned the Fund has aimed to release the economic burden on its member countries while giving them space and capability to use funds to tackle the virus. The Fund is also augmenting existing lending programs to accommodate urgent new needs arising from the coronavirus, thereby enabling existing resources to be channeled for the necessary spending on medical supplies and equipment and for containment of the outbreak. Although the IMF may be providing relief and funding to countries the countries are saddled with the main responsibility of channeling their resources to health sectors by providing equipment for health care workers and purchasing medical equipment.

The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans and grants to the governments of poorer countries for the purpose of pursuing capital projects. It comprises two institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Development Association. “The World Bank Group is putting its full capacity to work for people across Africa as they fight this pandemic,” said World Bank Group President David Malpass. “The world has rarely seen a crisis of this magnitude, and no one can stand on the sidelines; we cannot leave any country behind in our response. We have provided emergency support to 30 countries across Africa so far, with more to come, and will continue to advocate for debt relief and increased resources, especially for those countries hardest hit by COVID-19.”

The current pandemic proves a huge problem to the whole world as such, it is the responsibility of individuals as well as organizations to pool together all resources in an attempt to put an end to it as it poses a great threat to all of humanity.

REFERENCES

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