Press Release

Covid-19 vaccines must be free for all

we are calling the Cambodian community to stand up with us to send a strong message to world leaders that there must be an equitable approach to access to the free vaccine for all including developing and poor countries like Cambodia.

Phnom Penh, 21 May 2020— The Coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on all our lives in Cambodia and around the world. While we are each doing our part to prevent the spread, and while frontline healthcare workers risk their lives to care for the sick, researchers are racing to find the one thing that will protect all of us in the long run – a vaccine. The vaccine will become the currency of life and death especially for a country like Cambodia where the healthcare system still need to be improved.

The greatest challenge is ensuring everyone on the planet gets the vaccine as quickly as possible and free of charge. This is the only way to protect us all from another COVID-19 pandemic. However, the risk is extremely high that the richest will be allowed to buy themselves protection, while the rest of us particularly women, girls and the poorest get pushed to the back of the line.

Oxfam together with Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), NGO Forum, Health Action Coordinating Committee (HACC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), jointly organize a month long social media campaign starting from 21 May 2020 to 20 June 2020 to mobilize a million supporters to send message to world leaders that **When a COVID-19 vaccine is found, it must be free and fairly distributed to everyone on the planet.**

Ms. Solinn Lim, Country Director of Oxfam, said: "To end this pandemic and save millions of lives, we need a safe and effective vaccine that is delivered for free to everyone on earth who needs it, as soon as possible. The world must urgently agree on a fully funded plan to develop, produce and fairly distribute a safe and effective vaccine as a global public good. Patents and profit cannot in anyway block the distribution of vaccines and treatments to all who need them."

Mr. Soeung Saroeun, Executive Director of Cooperation Committee for Cambodia noticed the principle of "**Leave No One Behind**" that world leaders promised in the Sustainable Development Goals. The development, the production, and the fair, safe and effective distribution of vaccine for all is a testament for the above principle implementation. Vaccine is for all and we all are fighting this covid19 pandemic.

Mr. Tek Vannara, Executive Director of the NGO Forum on Cambodia, said: "All world leaders need to pay more attention to ensure that the world has an adequate flow of resources, including financial, technical, equipment, research expertise on vaccines, medicines and information to prevent and fight against the Covid-19. Upcoming vaccines must be distributed or provided on a fair and equitable to everyone, especially those suffering from the disease, and those vulnerable people at risk of the spread of this disease."

In 2009, during the swine flu pandemic, rich nations made large advanced orders for the vaccine from manufacturers, meaning that the rest of the world received the vaccine in much lower quantities and much slower. They were unable to vaccinate their citizens.

Since the outbreak of Coronavirus, rich nations have been trying to monopolise access to other vital supplies, such as oxygen, diagnostic tests, ventilators and personal protective equipment (PPE). The head of the African Centre for Disease Control (CDC) has written about how African nations have found themselves forced to the back of the queue, being told they will have to wait six months for vital equipment as it has all been bought by rich nations.

All of this suggests that the risk that a vaccine, when discovered, will only be available to the lucky few, and tailor-made for profit, not for the people who need it most.

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