

## Statement of International Development NGOs of Korea on the Global Fight against COVID-19

April 8, 2020

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 has become a global crisis. Since the WHO declared it as a pandemic on March 11, we've seen an exponential growth of the numbers of confirmed cases and deaths across the world. No one can predict a peak or duration of the crisis at this point. The coronavirus is penetrating all corners of the world, including China, Korea, European countries, the United States, and numerous others in Asia and Africa. In particular, it is increasingly affecting many countries lacking adequate healthcare system and basic social infrastructure.

As the U.S. and European countries with relatively effective healthcare infrastructure are also struggling with the pandemic, the magnitude of damages on developing countries would be unimaginable. Even if Korea and developed countries survive the crisis and restore stability, another global crisis could be triggered from developing countries with inadequate response capacity and huge population, where the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to get worse. It would be extremely difficult for vulnerable states to tackle the crisis by themselves. Now is the time that we forge international solidarity and find solutions together. **If Korea decides to start supporting developing countries only after our domestic situation is under control, it would miss the critical golden time to save lives. Moreover, supporting developing countries for infection prevention and treatment also means protecting Koreans and taking proactive and necessary measures.**

Despite the ongoing fight against COVID-19 in Korea, the international community is paying close attention to its preemptive responses. More than 100 countries across the world have requested Korea's test kits and advice from the public health authority and experts on infectious diseases. In addition, international media highly appreciated the openness, transparency, and democratic nature of the government's responses as well as the active participation of the Korean public. **We hope that the Korean government will meet the requests and appreciation of the international community with active sharing of its experience and support for vulnerable countries together with the international community.** President Moon has already expressed his commitment to international cooperation on March 26 at the special video conference of G20, stating "Korea will actively join the efforts for capacity building in developing countries to tackle infectious diseases". It was followed by the decision of KOICA to actively incorporate the Korean model of infectious disease response in its programs.

We, the civil society organizations of Korea on international development led by the Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC), welcome the commitment and

policy of the government and KOICA, and request the following to ensure a meaningful impact on the ground in developing countries.

First, **streamline the support process as much as possible and rapidly transfer necessary resources** to developing countries so that they can establish protective measures for their citizens as soon as possible and support vulnerable groups.

Second, prioritize **the least developed and vulnerable countries** based on their needs, as they largely rely on international support.

Third, **establish special sources of finance for humanitarian assistance** as well as the quick process and system in which emergency support can be provided immediately.

Fourth, **establish a consultative body of the government and the civil society on fighting COVID-19 in developing countries** and engage in close consultation on response measures, based on the Framework Policy on Government-Civil Society Partnership in International Development Cooperation of 2019.

Meanwhile, we'd like to note that international development NGOs of Korea, which regularly support 96 developing countries across the world, actively took part in tackling the coronavirus outbreak in Korea for the last three months based on the guidelines of the government, providing resources worth KRW 14 billion. In particular, we provided professional healthcare support to the seriously affected areas of Daegu and North Gyeongsang Province, establishing facilities for serious cases, providing medical equipment for treatment, and dispatching medical professionals. We also prioritized marginalized groups in the blind spot of the welfare system, providing personal protective gears, livelihood support and psychological counseling. It was part of our efforts to let them feel the compassion of their fellow citizens, when the government sometimes fails to reach out. Moreover, we sustained the employment of international development staff, contributing to the government's measures to stabilize the labor market.

We have also received requests for advice and support to deal with the crisis from governments and communities of developing countries, just like the Korean government has. We decided to join the efforts of developing countries to fight the COVID-19 pandemic based on the experience of Korea, now preparing for 133 projects in 46 countries on preventing further spread of the coronavirus, capacity building for healthcare system and medical workers, protection of vulnerable groups, etc. We hereby commit to the following to make sure that the projects to tackle COVID-19 in developing countries are people-centered, non-discriminatory, safe and effective.

First, we will prioritize and empathize with the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, including **women, children, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and refugees.**

Second, the process and results of projects will live up to global standards, in compliance with **internationally agreed humanitarian principles and human rights-based standards**.

Third, we will closely work with the governments, civil society and communities of the partner country and **make sure that the responses are owned by local actors**.

Fourth, we will **ensure high levels of transparency and accountability** by closely cooperating with the international community and actively communicating and coordinating with donors in the process.

Fifth, we will make all necessary efforts to accurately assess the situation by country and provide effective joint support, based on our **strong cooperation and solidarity**.

This is a critical moment for fighting COVID-19 in developing countries.

We hope that the government and people of Korea will show their solidarity to the international community struggling with the crisis, as they have always provided compassionate support to alleviate the sufferings of the world. Korea's solidarity will hopefully help people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America facing extreme difficulties return to their normal, everyday life without losing hope, and contribute to sustainable development and peace of the international community.

\* The KCOC, Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation, is an alliance of more than 140 NGOs working for international development, relief and humanitarian assistance. KCOC member organizations implement projects worth KRW 700 billion annually for international development and relief, home and abroad. The KCOC served as secretariats for civil society forums in the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit and 2011 Busan HLF-4. It currently represents the civil society on the Korean government's International Development Cooperation Committee, and the Committee on the Operation of the Global Disease Eradication Fund.