

Committee: Environment

Topic: The question of protecting citizens of LEDCs from the COVID pandemic

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Summary

While the COVID-19 crisis is sending shockwaves around the globe LEDCs are in a particularly difficult position to respond. LEDCs have limited resources and weak institutions constrain the many governments to support their economies.

One of the main difficulties being providing PPE as with less than a third of clinics and health centres in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nepal, and Tanzania showing not having any face masks. In order to guarantee these resources for their own nation's health workers, governments around the world are bargaining for their share in a strangled global supply chain. For example, countries such as Taiwan, Thailand, Russia, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Kenya have blocked the export of all face masks. There have additionally been reports of PPE and ventilator exports being intercepted and delivered to the country with the highest bid, aptly referred to as acts of "modern piracy". Supplies can take months to deliver and market manipulation is widespread. This is causing healthcare infrastructure to become unstable, thus reducing the quality and quantity of care available and since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, prices have surged. Surgical masks have seen a sixfold increase, N95 respirators have trebled and gowns have doubled. Undeniably, securing PPE for health workers and respiratory devices for patients is a critical part of overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic yet LEDCs are falling into more debt trying to provide its country with the necessary protection.

Additionally, more than two thirds of the world's poor depend on agriculture for income so it is important to understand how policies implemented to prevent a further spread of the disease affect smallholder farmers' livelihoods. Those with labour jobs, unable to work from home, will cause huge losses and make living in the pandemic even harder and business such as those will be more costly to run. LEDCs dependant on tourism are also being severely hit by COVID 19 containment measures. For LEDCs, tourism is approximately 7% of total exports of goods and services. It is now imperative that action is taken to ensure the protection of citizens in LEDCs who are more vulnerable than the citizens of MEDCs

Definition of Key Terms

LEDCs – less economically developed country

Pandemic - (of a disease) prevalent over a whole country or the world.

WHO – world health organisation

MEDCs – More economically developed Countries are countries which have a high standard of living and a large GDP

Background Information

Innovative solutions are urgently needed for LEDCs. The added challenges posed by the informal nature of economies of many LDCs also means they can't simply import other countries' models for fighting the coronavirus so it will almost certainly wreak havoc in countries with underdeveloped health systems as there are on average only 113 hospital beds per 100,000 inhabitants in LEDCs.

While social distancing has been encouraged in many countries and have been advising no contact and no travelling outside of essential necessities, for many of the world's most vulnerable, this is simply not possible. Shared, multi-generational family living spaces, lack of adequate water and sanitation facilities and access to reliable energy resources are some of the additional burdens facing the LEDCs. This only ups the risk factor facing citizens.

Manufacturing, in particular of garments, has been a main development driver for LDCs approaching graduation, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, or Myanmar. These countries benefit not only from low production costs and effective domestic policies supporting the sector, but also from trade preferences in most developed and major developing markets. Covid-19 has caused a demand shock through a massive cancelation of orders as fashion retail in developed countries collapsed. At end of March 2020, a quarter of the 4 million mostly female Bangladeshi garment workers had been fired or furloughed.

Moreover about 80 million more people in low- and middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific were pushed into extreme poverty because of disruptions in economic activity due to COVID-19 last year.

MEDCs were hoarding doses of Covid vaccines and people living in poor countries were set to miss out on a lot of doses come the first flurry of vaccines being released. Canada, for example, has ordered enough vaccines to protect each Canadian five times. The People's Vaccine Alliance said nearly 70 lower-income countries will only be able to vaccinate one in 10 people even though Oxford-AstraZeneca is pledging to provide 64% of its doses to people in developing nations. This vaccine commitment, known as Covax, has managed to secure 700 million doses of vaccines to be distributed between the 92 lower-income countries that have signed up. The People's Vaccine Alliance is calling on all pharmaceutical corporations working on Covid-19 vaccines to openly share their technology and intellectual property so that billions more doses can be manufactured and made available to everyone who needs them.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

LEDCS

- Angola
- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- Chad
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ethiopia
- Gambia
- Guinea
- Haiti
- Liberia
- Madagascar
- Mozambique
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Niger
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Togo
- Uganda
- Yemen
- Zambia

ORGANISATIONS

The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA)

As the pandemic spread, IDA redoubled efforts by providing a significant and speedy upsurge in financing for the 74 IDA countries, and front loading almost half of IDA19's \$82 billion resources.

IDA continues to step-up its financing to IDA countries to sustainably respond to COVID-19, while pursuing a greener, more inclusive, and resilient recovery towards their long-term development goals.

The Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project

They expanded to respond to COVID-19, is improving access and learning for children with disabilities.

The Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project

Focuses on adolescent girls and their communities in countries that are vulnerable, fragile, or may be at risk of violence.

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, countries that have received WHO PPE supplies include:

- Western Pacific region
- Southeast Asia region
- Eastern Mediterranean region
- Africa region

COUNTRIES THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED HELP

United Kingdom (over \$1 billion)

Germany, (\$618 million)

Canada, (\$290 million)

Japan (\$229 million)

France (\$147 million)

For ACT acceleration

Timeline of Events

31st December 2019 - COVID 19 is identified

10th January 2020 – WHO issued a comprehensive package of technical guidance online with advice to all countries on how to detect, test and manage potential cases, based on what was known about the virus at the time.

11 March 2020 -Deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction, WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

Sept. 3 2020 — AstraZeneca will deliver 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines

June 3rd 2021 - France donates 10 million doses of AstraZeneca and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines over the next three months to African Union member states.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

COVID 19 solidarity response fund

Everyone can now support directly the response coordinated by WHO. People and organisations who want to help fight the pandemic and support WHO and partners can now donate through the COVID-Solidarity Response Fund for WHO.

The ACT accelerator - led by WHO and partnering with the world's leading international health organisations, is a unique global collaboration which supports the development and equitable distribution of the tests and vaccines.

G20 Summit on COVID-19 -where developed country leaders agreed to “fight, unite, and ignite together against COVID-19”.

UNCTAD, the International Monetary Fund and others - have echoed the need for support to developing countries, with a focus on the plight of LEDCs.

World Bank Group - Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Bank Group has deployed over \$157 billion to fight the health, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

- To limit the spread of the new coronavirus, LEDCs have resorted to similar measures to other countries: imposing states of emergency, prohibiting public gatherings, closing schools and universities, banning international and often also domestic travel, and closing non-essential businesses (These measures save lives but also force economies into recession.)
- COVAX and the World Bank will accelerate COVID-19 vaccine supply for developing countries

Possible Solutions

- ❖ Guaranteeing essential health supplies, including cures and vaccines
- ❖ Protecting critical supply chains, especially for food and medicines
- ❖ Avoiding protectionist measures
- ❖ Ensuring that developing economies can finance critical spending through grants and concessional financing.
- ❖ Donating doses of vaccines
- ❖ Large scale testing

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