

People's Statement on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Responses in Sri Lanka

As communities and civil societies, we unite to declare our unwavering commitment to equitable and effective pandemic prevention, preparedness, and responses (PPPR) in Sri Lanka. This People's Statement embodies our shared vision for a safer, fairer world that leaves no one behind.

As a United Nations member state, Sri Lanka has committed to international declarations that address critical global health challenges, including Universal Health Coverage (UHC), PPPR, and the fight against existing epidemics such as HIV and Tuberculosis (TB). The principles of our People's Statement align with these global commitments. We embrace the PPPR's emphasis on equity, social justice, and universal access to quality health services, particularly for the vulnerable. We support women's participation in health leadership, gender mainstreaming, and sexual and reproductive health services, echoing the PPPR declaration. Our commitment to stakeholder engagement and collaboration in addressing global epidemics, mirrors PPPR's spirit of cooperation. Furthermore, our People's Statement resonates with the UHC declaration's vision of equitable access to essential health services without financial hardship. We're dedicated to building strong health systems, addressing health inequities, human rights, gender equality and equity, and ensuring social justice and protection, in line with the UHC declaration. Through our People's Statement, we are committed to a healthier and fairer world, aligned with global standards and resolutions. Together, we can work to make this vision a reality, leaving no one behind in our pursuit of a healthier future.

Human Rights and Equality: We strongly advocate for the unequivocal recognition and protection of the rights of all individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, place of birth, income status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression (SOGIE) and status of their different abilities. Our focus extends to everyone's imperative need for their safety, dignity, and inclusion. We firmly stand for the safeguarding of the rights of individuals with disabilities and various marginalized communities, including adolescents, young people, aging populations, women & girls, key and vulnerable populations to HIV and Tuberculosis among others. **We call that all PPPR interventions take in to significant consideration the human rights of every one everywhere.**

Gender Equality: We demand swift and comprehensive measures to rectify the disproportionate impact of pandemics on women, girls and gender diverse persons, particularly those grappling with poverty. We call for the promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and the enhancement of women's representation and rights across all spheres of society in relation to all PPPR interventions. **We call for comprehensive revision of laws affecting different communities, ensuring that they adhere to the principles of inclusivity, non-discrimination, gender equality and human rights. This encompasses a thorough re-evaluation of relevant laws and policies.**

Community Engagement: We recognize that community engagement is the linchpin of effective pandemic responses. We ardently support community empowerment initiatives that enable individuals and communities to actively participate in decision-making processes. We endorse the establishment of community-led monitoring mechanisms to foster accountability and transparency in pandemic response endeavours. We underscore the critical importance of targeted research to discern the specific needs of vulnerable communities, allowing for tailored responses and interventions. It is essential to gain insight into the distinct requirements of diverse communities and tailor our interventions through differentiated approaches to address their individual and unique needs effectively. We stress the urgency of raising awareness, identifying and augmenting the capacity of community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), and crafting policies that facilitate effective collaboration between CBOs, CSOs, and government bodies for the seamless delivery of services and community empowerment. We insist on a comprehensive definition of "community" that leaves no one behind in pandemic response endeavours. **We call for the creation of differentiated community engagement plans that account for geographical disparities and the inclusion of marginalized populations.**

Resource and Financial Investment: We recognise the need for adequate resources to respond to pandemics and health emergencies and urge for public-private partnerships to mobilize additional resources for PPPR efforts. We underscore the paramount importance of transparent audits, resource management, and accountable fund allocation in pandemic response activities. We advocate for the mapping of existing resources and the implementation of effective resource management to optimize PPPR activities. We demand transparency and accountability, necessitating state parties to declare their assets and resources while

enhancing institutional transparency and accountability policies. **We call for the identification of specific budget allocations within the national budget and resource allocation strategies during emergency situations to ensure prompt and effective responses.** This approach acknowledges that different geographic areas may face distinct challenges, and they actively consider and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized populations, thereby promoting more effective, inclusive, and equitable pandemic prevention and preparedness.

Information and Communication: We emphasize the vital significance of research and data gathering to inform evidence-based decision-making in pandemic response efforts. We fervently advocate for accessible and transparent communication channels that deliver relevant information to the public promptly. We recommend the development of differentiated communication approaches to effectively reach diverse audiences. In light of the widespread misinformation during the height of COVID and other health crises, we ardently call for efforts to enhance the confidence of communicators. This involves strengthening their capacity to provide accurate and trustworthy information to the public. It also encompasses promoting responsible reporting practices that prioritize accuracy and integrity. **We call for the establishment of a streamlined process for distributing essential information during pandemics, prioritizing evidence creation and supporting CSOs in their communication endeavours.**

As communities and civil society, we are committed to collaborating with the government, private sector and all other stakeholders to ensure equality, equity, non-discrimination in pandemic and health emergency responses. We are committed to a safer and more equitable world that leaves no one behind. Together, we can strive for a future where every individual's well-being is protected and upheld, advancing toward a healthier and more equitable world that leaves no one behind.

This Statement is collaboratively developed by;



The development of this statement was led by DAST. DAST is a community-led technical support facility providing services on addressing meaningful community engagement and participation, strategic information development, capacity building, and advocacy for effective, rights affirming, gender transformative and sustainable HIV, SRHR, and Human Rights responses in Sri Lanka. DAST envisions that marginalized and vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka including but not limited to those living with, affected by, and vulnerable to HIV, TB, LGBTIQ communities, young people, and women and girls are at the centre of health, SRHR, and Human Rights responses.

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