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Dear Colleagues, Partners and Friends,

The world is passing through a difficult time. COVID-19 is disrupting our lives and work as we know it. We are all focused on how to best protect and support our families, employees, partners, and communities in the face of this unfolding crisis. On behalf of the COHRED team, please know that our thoughts are with all of those who are affected.

Science and research, real facts and solid information are now at the heart of controlling this pandemic. Today, scientists and research networks across the globe have quickly mobilized to develop vaccines and identify potentially effective drugs to counter the virus. The national monitoring and evaluation services, epidemiology and public health groups are working tirelessly to provide up-to-date information to our populations.

At the same time, the COVID19 pandemic shows up major science system deficits in many low and middle-income countries (LMICs). The solutions that may work in high income environments to safeguard their populations often do not work, are not available or affordable in low income countries, populations and emergency situations such as in many informal settlements and refugee camps worldwide. Yet, local research systems are not geared or able to find local alternative solutions, or simply do not have the human, financial or technical resources to do so. For example - what does one do when there is a lack of clean water, when living quarters make it impossible to implement social distancing, when there are marginal sanitary facilities, unavailability of masks to reduce spread, even the absence guaranteed supplies of food so that 'lock downs' can work - and more. In the European Union, essentially all research has been halted and research institutions are focusing on any research that may help in reducing the impact of COVID19. That does mostly not include research to reduce the impact of COVID19 in low income and vulnerable populations specifically nor the finding of practical situations that are implementable in less-than-optimal living and working circumstances.

*Dr Ghebreyesus (WHO's Director -General ) stressed that: many questions remain about how the pandemic will evolve in Africa. He voiced particular concern for potential vulnerability of some 26 million people living with HIV, and the 58 million children with malnutrition on the continent.*

We call on all researchers, research institution and research funders to not forget our responsibility and obligations to these populations - and contribute to their needs for data, facts and solutions as well. While our small team will certainly not be able to change the course of this epidemic, as others may, we are standing ready to assist where we can. Perhaps, finding technical or other support for research questions that will impact COVID19 in low and middle income countries and that are not addressed by global research efforts - may be the best support we can give at this time.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any suggestions, thoughts or questions to share.

Stay well and connected – wherever you are.

Prof Carel IJsselmuiden  
Executive Director : COHRED