

## COVID-19: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS

Church leaders can play an important role helping communities build their resilience and preparedness. They have the established trust and lasting presence in communities to share God's compassion and equip households with information and tools to maintain agency in this crisis.

### How can you do this?

#### **Establish a committee or crisis group** (at any level: province, diocese, parish):

- Develop a plan
- Assign roles for tasks (such as liaising with government, organising messaging, mobilising church groups)
- Ensure the group is diverse: women and men, youth and older people

#### **Connect with the health department:**

- For up to date local information on virus prevalence and for their health and behaviour advice
- Invite them to use your networks to share health and behaviour advice
- Collect and distribute posters and other material in local languages

#### **Network locally:**

- With other church and faith leaders, government and civil society leaders, leaders of groups such as women's, youth and disability
- Find out what they are doing, who they are working with, what resources they have, how you can work together

#### **Assess the situation so you can determine your priorities for increasing resilience and preparedness:**

$$\text{Resilience} = \frac{\text{Capacities}}{\text{Hazards} \times \text{Vulnerabilities}}$$

- Capacities: what are the strengths, resources and assets of the church that can be used to help during the crisis? These might include: relationships; church institutions; the skills of groups and individuals.
- Hazards: as well as the threat of COVID-19 itself, what other threats does the epidemic bring? These might include: loss of income or access to food and water due to lockdown or curfew; school closure; discrimination; domestic violence; loneliness; mental health crises.
- Vulnerabilities: who is particularly at risk of the different threats?
  - COVID-19 infection – older people, people with disabilities or chronic conditions, health workers, care givers, marginalised groups such as homeless people, prisoners, refugees and migrants.
  - Loss of income – people on low income, seasonal and migrant workers, daily wage earners
  - Lockdown or curfew – single people (loneliness) women and children (increased risk of domestic violence due pressure on relationships particularly in cramped conditions)
  - Lack of information – non-native speakers, people with disabilities, homeless people (limiting their ability to follow health advice and government restrictions)
  - School closures – children from low income families (hunger due to loss of school meal; cramped conditions can increase risk of domestic violence due to pressure on families)
  - Stigmatization – health workers, “the stranger”

**Establish a resilience strategy and develop a resilience plan based on your priorities** (what you can realistically and distinctively do as the Church) that builds resilience and preparedness by:

- **Increasing capacities:** draw on your church's strengths, resources and assets, which you identified at the assessment stage - such as people to share health messages, buddy system, prayer cells
- **Decreasing hazards:** minimize exposure to, and impact of, the virus by sharing information and public health advice; minimize exposure to, and impact of, other hazards by providing support - such as pastoral support to those in lockdown or curfew
- **Decreasing vulnerabilities:** target those who will be disproportionately affected by the hazards – for example by: providing soap to vulnerable groups; providing food support during lockdown or curfew; providing pastoral care

**Develop key messaging to share with the community and plan other resilience activities**

**Develop a communication strategy** (phone, text, WhatsApp):

- To stay in touch with your team and key network
- To engage with targeted groups
- Update contact information so you are ready to disseminate information

*Remember that an epidemic can go on a long time and the situation can change rapidly.*

*It is important to keep in touch with your team and keep up to date with current information to ensure that you all stay safe and do not burn out.*

*Make sure that you care for yourselves. Take time to eat, to sleep, to pray, and also ask others to pray for you and your work.*