

BACKGROUND NOTE

Building resilient communities through direct engagement of Civil Society Organizations in the COVID-19 Response and beyond

BACKGROUND

The European Region recently reached a grim milestone: two million deaths to COVID-19. This is a stark reminder that this disease can be deadly and the millions of people suffering from long COVID. COVID-19 cases in the European Region have passed 200 million. In the last three months alone the Region has seen 100 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, largely due to the widespread circulation of the highly transmissible Omicron variant. This is coupled with a near regionwide easing of the public health and social measures known to reduce virus transmission. Having lived with COVID-19 for more than two years, there is a need to engage communities in ongoing efforts to promote the uptake of preventive measures, including vaccination; tackle harmful dis- and mis-information; and reach the most at-risk groups with needed support.

The WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 (SPRP) highlights the importance of engaging all sectors and levels of government and of society to take ownership of and participate in the COVID-19 response and of establishing a partnership among them.

Ensuring direct participation of civil society from the planning through to the implementation and evaluation stages of the response increases the legitimacy of governments' actions. At the Regional level, this initiative will provide grants to selected CSOs in 5 Member States in the Europe Region to implement community-level health measures aimed at containing the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare communities future emergencies.

Priority will be given to projects focusing on:

- Engagement with health and other frontline workers
- Promoting preventive measures with people with underlying conditions
- Youth engagement

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Community structures and systems for health authorities to hear community concerns directly. In the short-term
- Strengthening civil society by investing in high-impact actions at the community
- New models of partnership for emergency response that involve civil society with a transformational impact.



OBJECTIVES

- Engage, enable and empower civil society to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and future emergencies with a ‘whole of society’ approach and direct investment;
- Build on existing community networks and mechanisms to achieve a systemic bottom-up governance change, and develop inclusive approaches to emergency response that can benefit future community resilience and readiness; and
- Share best practices internationally, and network with community groups globally.

WHAT TYPE OF PREJECTS WE ARE LOOKING FOR (see examples below)

- Empowering communities, including the most vulnerable and marginalized ones, to be involved in capacity-building activities and have access to essential health services and vaccine roll out;
- Promoting recognition, engagement and skill development of health mediators or community health workers working with local and national authorities;
- Improving capacity of health, social and frontline workers, as well as interpreters on communications skills, working with vulnerable groups, and coping with the impact of the COVID-19 on health and wellbeing;
- Engaging community members in contact tracing, establishing community surveillance systems and implementing prevention measures;
- Empowering community members in supporting their peers, including through production of masks, soap, or sanitizer;
- Empowering insider mediators (e.g. community leaders) in tackling misinformation and vaccine hesitancy, supporting vaccine roll out, or addressing the social impacts of the pandemic and emergencies;
- Conducting or building skills and mechanisms for community insights, such as community dialogues;
- Establishing innovative ways for CSOs and communities to participate in local operational committees and other governance mechanisms for emergency response, such as community advisory boards.

WHAT IS OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

- Awareness raising - think instead how you can **promote behavioural change**;
- Not taking stock of your current work - think instead of an initiative that can help your community be resilient for **future emergencies**;
- Stand-alone meetings and conferences - think instead of how to create **a culture of collaboration** between health authorities and community groups; and



- Filling a gap left by other donors - think instead of what **systemic change or involvement in a decision-making process or governance mechanism** could help your community;
- Only creating a series of communication tools - think instead of **empowering members of your community**;
- Procurement - think instead how you can **establish mechanisms to ensure access to services** and needed supplies and how to make use of them.
- Research – think instead how you **consult with members of your community**.

PROJECT BUDGET AND DURATION

Maximum of \$30,000 | 4-5 months (31 December 2022)

PREPARING FOR THE INTRODUCTORY CALL WITH WHO

The WHO Regional Office for Europe together with the WHO Country Office where existing will reach out to you. This call will allow for you to present the mandate of your organization, previous successes, and what experience your organization had in the COVID-19 and/or other emergencies response. **To prepare for this call, we ask you to be ready to present an initial idea for 2-5 minutes.** If your idea is a new approach in your country or being applied for the first time to your community, please explain this. The call also provides an opportunity for WHO to learn more about your organization and country context.

STAGE 1: PREPARING A TWO PAGE CONCEPT NOTE

Please submit a two-page concept note. To help ensure that your project is reviewed in a timely manner, we kindly request that you carefully proofread the proposal. We would ask you keep in mind the focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, future emergency resilience, and community empowerment. The concept note should also explain the capacity of your organization to successfully deliver a project.

STAGE 2: INTRODUCTORY CALL WITH WHO

The WHO Regional Office for Europe together with the WHO Country Office will reach out to you. This call will allow for you to present the mandate of your organization, previous successes, and what experience your organization had in the COVID-19 and/or other emergencies response. This call will be an opportunity to present your ideas and explain the context of the project. The call also provides an opportunity for you to ask Questions to the WHO. **Please submit this proposal by 24 July.** You can submit your proposals either in Russian or English (or in both) languages at eukgz@who.int



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

DUE DILIGENCE

The WHO has stringent policies regarding collaboration with Non-State Actors. You will be asked to provide proof of your non-profit status and explain decision-making processes. Part of this process is also vetting for partners and funders. **Per WHO policy, if you have financial links with the tobacco industry or arms industry, you are not eligible to be a WHO partner. If you receive support from the food, drinks, alcohol or pharmaceutical industries, we ask you to inform your WHO contact in a timely manner.** The WHO will also ask about your sexual exploitation and abuse prevention policies and sexual harassment reporting mechanisms.