COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #35: Civil Society Responses

Understanding the migration & mobility implications of COVID-19

These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as analysis develops. If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.

New research & analysis on civil society responses & COVID

First, Save Lives: Solutions for the COVID-19 Pandemic and New Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees-A Global Civil Society Statement from the Civil Society Action Committee. For the list of signatories, click here.

Coronavirus: civil society’s role in West Africa by Ayisha Osori

Civil Society and the Coronavirus: Dynamism Despite Disruption by Saskia Brechenmacher, Thomas Carothers and Richard Youngs

Civil Society and COVID-19 in India: Unassuming Heroes by Mohammed Sinan Siyech and Naeeda Jouhar

Civil society responds to COVID-19

Many civil society organizations working with migrants and refugees have contributed to the response to the dual public health and economic shocks caused by COVID-19. In many cases, this has meant advocating against xenophobia, providing research and analysis to ensure inclusion of vulnerable populations, filling in the gaps in social protection systems and removing the barriers that prevent migrants’ access to essential health services.

UN-civil society briefing

On 18 May, the United Nations will host a civil society briefing entitled “Fighting Stigma, Xenophobia, Hate Speech and Racial Discrimination related to COVID-19.” Separately, the UN has issued a call for stories of CSOs responding to the effects of COVID-19.

Civil Society Survey on misinformation about COVID-19

The UN is requesting feedback on its communication and the topic of misinformation from the perspectives of CSOs who are responding to the crisis. Click here to access the survey.

Civil society statements on migration and COVID-19

The Global Forum on Migration and Development has published two webinars and compiled the public statements issued by various civil society organizations in response to the pandemic. To access the page, click here.
**Combatting xenophobia and disinformation**
Racist abuse and violence against perceived foreigners has proliferated in parallel with the pandemic. Many CSOs have begun countering these trends, such as Art.1 MN, a Dutch anti-discrimination organization that launched a campaign against xenophobia and abuse. A Polish NGO is producing material to counter conspiracy theories about the virus.

**Filling gaps in social protection**
CSOs continue to fill gaps in public service delivery around the world. Médecins Sans Frontières has dispatched medical teams around the world to support clinics in providing specialized COVID-19 health care for elderly, homeless and migrant populations. In India, over 90 CSOs have coordinated their extensive networks to distribute food and masks to millions of people, including many migrant labourers.

**Community organizing and advocacy**
For years, NGOs in Singapore have been advocating for improved migrant worker living spaces, but with the recent outbreak resulting from inadequate public health measures, this work has now received greater recognition. A coalition of migrant collectives in Brazil have pushed for increased access to basic public services for migrants living in Brazil, regardless of status.

**Joint Civil Society Statement on Digital Surveillance**
Surveillance technology has been repurposed for contact tracing and monitoring mobility during the pandemic. In a joint statement, over 100 organizations urged governments to show leadership in tackling the pandemic in a way that ensures that the use of digital technologies to track and monitor individuals and populations is carried out strictly in line with human rights.

A key role of CSOs is to collect, analyse and present data on topics of importance to the public. Civil society groups in the United States have chronicled, tracked and collected data on the labour conditions of migrants in the agricultural and livestock sectors. A number of Nepal based-CSOs have developed apps and applied analyses to ensure inclusion of vulnerable populations in health policy responses.

**Analysis on critical issues**

Source: DD4Dev