



KELIN convenes a Multi-stakeholder rights-based response to curbing COVID-19

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nairobi, 28 March 2020 – KELIN and over 50 stakeholders sign an advisory to the Government on a rights-based approach to management of COVID-19, titled “*People - not Messaging - Bring Change*”

In response to the Ministry of Health and National Government Directive on the steps being taken to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Kenya, KELIN convened a multi-stakeholder response to provide a rights-based approach to policy makers, the Judiciary, Kenya Police Service and the Ministry of Health among other relevant stakeholders.

The stakeholders being representatives of health and human rights, civil society and non-governmental organisations, community based organisations and representatives, professional bodies, informal sector actors, economic and governance experts are eager to put collective expertise to solve this problem in a way that fits Kenya’s unique situation, respects the Constitution, and ensure the public health and safety of all.

In this Multi-stakeholder Advisory Mr. Allan Maleche Executive Director of KELIN along with the signatories state that, “*Past experiences in the Public Health space, adopting a rights based approach in the response to the COVID 19 pandemic will alleviate public fear and hysteria, promote trust in the Government’s public health measures, safeguard the citizens’ human, social and economic rights and ensure that access to health services, housing, sanitation, food, clean and safe water, social security and education is not compromised.*”

Building on the contribution of the over 50 stakeholders, the advisory points out a number of pertinent issues:

Right to information and transparency: Timely, accurate and transparent information on our risk as a country, and how we are managing it, is essential during an emergency. The benefits include, increased trust in government, and elimination of stigmatization, among others. The advisory opinion makes request for specific information relating to health inputs and processes to be availed as a matter of right.

Right to health: Every Kenyan has the right to the highest attainable standard of health, which the government is under an obligation to progressively realise. We urge the Ministry of Health to work with County Governments and other actors to scale up preparedness by doing a number of things including:

- Increasing surveillance to affected ‘hotspot’ counties as well as neighbouring counties.
- Increasing testing in the communities for all suspected cases.
- Scale up communication while tailoring it to the needs of the underserved populations and those living with disabilities.

Healthcare workers: As part of the pandemic response we have called upon our medical practitioners, nurses, clinical officers, midwives, community health workers and volunteers, placing themselves and their families at risk in an attempt to secure the health of this nation. (Article 41 of the Constitution). Every worker has the right to fair labour practices, this means the Government must provide quality and adequate personal protective equipment in sufficient quantities to healthcare workers or other staff caring for suspected or confirmed patients.

Respecting the rule of law: Strict protection of the right to privacy and confidentiality of health information is maintained. We urge the government, the media and other actors to avoid succumbing to pressure to name the affected people. Recognition that punitive measures or criminal sanctions are not effective in epidemic control. Criminal sanctions are counterproductive because they drive people underground and expose more people to the virus. Police brutality as witnessed on the first day of the curfew is condemned as it is a violation of human rights.

Social and economic protection: Minimizing severe effects of the pandemic and response to it, on people's livelihoods, employment, and access to food and essential services. The COVID-19 response must ensure that people are protected from loss of employment, income or livelihoods through strong labour protections, social security schemes and insurance, so that Kenyans are better able to look after their health, to self-isolate and, accordingly, improve the response to the pandemic.

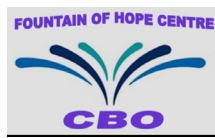
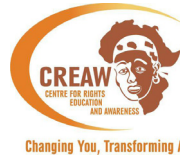
Attention to women and girls: Health crises, such as COVID-19 impact women and men differently, exacerbating gender inequality. Previous experiences have shown that women and girls will be more severely affected by the pandemic.

Responsible Media: Building public trust is a key component of any pandemic response and the media can play a significant role in ensuring accurate and timely information is availed to citizens, as well as provide avenues to build rapport between the government and its people; and use their influence to hold Government to account.

Participation of the UN and Multilateral Development Institutions: This will help to scale up efforts in supporting the Government to respond to the crisis in an inclusive, transparent and rights-based manner that adopts evidence-based interventions.

This advisory was submitted to: **Hon. Mutahi Kagwe** – Cabinet Secretary for Health; **Hon. Simon K. Chelugi** – CS for Labour, Social Security and Services; **Dr. Fred Okeng'o Matiang'I** – CS for Interior & Coordination of National Government; **Hon. David Maraga** – Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court of Kenya; **Hon. Wycliffe Ambetsa Oparanya** – Chairperson, Council of Governors; **Mr. Hilary Nzioki Mutambai** – Inspector General, National Police Service; **Siddharth Chatterjee** – UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya

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