

IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XXXVI

COVID-19 Report from the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board

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The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a collective failure to take pandemic prevention, preparedness and response seriously and prioritize it accordingly. It has demonstrated the fragility of highly interconnected economies and social systems, and the fragility of trust. It has exploited and exacerbated the fissures within societies and among nations. It has exploited inequalities, reminding us in no uncertain terms that there is no health security without social security. COVID-19 has taken advantage of a world in disorder¹.

“No one is safe until we are all safe”²

Introduction

This Briefing focuses on the new report from the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board: “*A World in Disorder*”.

Published in September 2020, this report has application to every country in that it speaks to strategies that will assist all countries if enacted. The key points bullet points are set out below with further summaries for the benefit of IIMHL and IIDL leaders.

Lessons Learned from COVID-19

- Political leadership makes the difference.
- Preparedness is not only what governments do to protect their people, it is also what people do to protect each other.
- The impact of pandemics goes far beyond their immediate health effects.
- Current measures of preparedness are not predictive.
- The return on investment for global health security is immense.
- No one is safe until all are safe.

A Call to Action

GPMB sets out a set of urgent actions that leaders can take based on the principles of responsible leadership.

¹ https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual_report/GPMB_AR_2020_EN.pdf p.3

² *ibid* p.6

National leaders and leaders of international organizations and other stakeholders take early decisive action based on science, evidence and best practice when confronted with health emergencies. They discourage the politicization of measures to protect public health, ensure social protection and promote national unity and global solidarity.

GPMB has reiterated their call for heads of government to appoint national high-level coordinators with the authority and political accountability to lead whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, and routinely conduct multisectoral simulation exercises to establish and maintain effective preparedness.

They also suggest that national leaders, manufacturers and international organizations ensure that COVID-19 vaccines and other countermeasures are allocated in a way that will have the most impact in stopping the pandemic, that access is fair and equitable, and not based on ability to pay, with health care workers and the most vulnerable having priority access. Each country should get an initial allocation of vaccine sufficient to cover at least 2% of its population, to cover frontline health care workers.

GMBP has called for engaged citizenship. They state that citizens demand accountability from their governments for health emergency preparedness, which requires that governments empower their citizens and strengthen civil society. In this way every individual is encouraged to take responsibility for seeking and using accurate information to educate themselves, their families and their communities. They adopt health-promoting behaviours and take actions to protect the most vulnerable. They advocate for these actions within their communities.

GMBP also make a further set of recommendations which include:

- Calling for strong and agile national and global systems for global health security
- Calling for sustained investment in prevention and preparedness, commensurate with the scale of a pandemic threat
- Calling for robust global governance of preparedness for health emergencies

Conclusion & commitment

The COVID-19 pandemic is providing a harsh test of the world's preparedness.

GMBP concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic is providing a harsh test of the world's preparedness. They suggest that little progress has been made on any of the actions called for in last year's report and that this lack of leadership is exacerbating the pandemic. Failure to learn the lessons of COVID-19 or to act on them with the necessary resources and commitment will mean that the next pandemic, which is sure to come, will be even more damaging.

GPMB has recognized that it too must change. They indicate that their monitoring and advocacy for preparedness must better reflect the contribution of sectors other than health, the importance of social protection, and be based on improved and

predictive measures of preparedness. GPMB has made a commitment to support good governance of global health security by fulfilling their mandate to independently monitor preparedness across all sectors and stakeholders, report regularly on progress, and continuously advocate for effective action.

Link to report:

https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual_report/GPMB_AR_2020_EN.pdf