

An Unequal Pandemic

Insights and Evidence from Communities and Civil Society Organisations

Summary

About this report

The Civil Society Collaborative on Inclusive COVID-19 Data seeks to harness the potential of data generated by communities and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The Collaborative aims to create a holistic understanding of how people who have been marginalised have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, their responses and resilience.

The Collaborative results from many communities' and organisations' time and effort during an incredibly challenging period. We extend thanks to individuals, groups and communities who have generously contributed their perspectives and experiences to research that contributed to this report.

Over 20 CSOs are engaged with the Collaborative, representing and working with diverse groups, including: ethnic minorities; Dalits; indigenous peoples; internally displaced people; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex; migrants; older people; persons with disabilities; refugees; religious minorities; street-connected children; undocumented people; women and girls; and young people.

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the International Civil Society Centre shared the secretariat role for the Collaborative, bringing together the partners from the Inclusive Data Charter and the Centre's Leave No One Behind Partnership.

Executive Summary

People who have been marginalised have made critical contributions to the COVID-19 pandemic response: providing practical support to families, friends and peers (including food parcels); providing mutual financial aid; and translating or sharing official information. People who have been marginalised have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, adapting to the pandemic's effects, including finding alternative sources of income.

In contrast to communities' efforts, official government responses to COVID-19 have often overlooked or excluded people who have been marginalised. The pandemic has exposed considerable gaps and bias in official data published and used by government agencies and public bodies. These data gaps render many people and groups 'invisible', in turn excluding them from national responses. The pandemic has built upon structural inequalities of our societies, disproportionately impacting people who have been marginalised.

Effective COVID-19 pandemic responses and recoveries require a comprehensive understanding of both the impact of COVID-19 on people who have been marginalised and the strategies used by communities to adapt to and manage these impacts. Data collected by communities and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can increase the visibility of people and groups overlooked by official data, improving understanding of their situations and coping strategies.

To understand the unequal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and chart the pathway to an inclusive recovery, a group of CSOs formed the Civil Society Collaborative on Inclusive COVID-19 Data. Working alongside communities, the Collaborative advocates for a more holistic approach that values using community and CSO data to help meet the diverse needs of people and groups who have been marginalised. This report uses insights from community and CSO data collected by Collaborative partners, often in close cooperation with communities, to provide a clearer picture of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people who have been marginalised and their responses. This report highlights five common issues and impacts for people who have been marginalised: access to health; income and livelihoods; food insecurity; education; and violence, abuse and discrimination.

This report is not intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the realities experienced during the pandemic by people who have been marginalised or overly critique government responses to COVID-19. Instead, the focus is on using insights from communities and CSO data to motivate more inclusive COVID-19 pandemic responses and recoveries and demonstrate the value of this data.

Insights in this report highlight that official data provide an inadequate picture of communities experiencing marginalisation in this pandemic. The insights also indicate the enormous challenges that people who have been marginalised have had to respond to, often without adequate support from governments.

Community Voices

In their own words, four community advocates share their reflections on the impacts of the pandemic, the responses of their communities, and their ambitions for this report.

Daniel Calarco,
24 year old youth
advocate and expert
from Rio de Janeiro's
favelas, Brazil.



"To sustainably rebuild, we need to first understand how this pandemic has impacted our communities and their priorities for the future. We can only know this if we have the right data. Data that is intersectional, that values and validates local knowledge. Data that is collected and monitored with communities safely, as well as data that protects communities from its misuse. We need strengthened partnerships with National Data Authorities that are rooted in trust and accountability. Decisions to design strengthened and more inclusive data collection mechanisms and social policies need communities at the centre, to inform rebuilding and recovery efforts."

Mati Soren,
26 year old female
Youth Champion at
the Youth-led Digital
Engagement Project.
Member of the Santal
indigenous community,
Gonoker Daing (Godagri,
Rajshahi), North-Western
Bangladesh.



"This report demonstrates that COVID-19 has had an unequal impact. This report also shows that data generated and/ or validated by National Statistical Offices overlooks many negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people who have been marginalised here in Bangladesh. The absence of people who have been marginalised from official data frequently excludes groups and people in my community from the national COVID-19 response. Non-official data collected by communities and civil society organisations, can increase the visibility of people who have been marginalised who are overlooked by official data and improve understanding of their coping strategies. I am hopeful that this report will lead to stakeholders undertaking more inclusive COVID-19 responses and recoveries, guided by the recommendations in this report."

**Sulayman
AbdulMumuni Ujah,**
44 year old male and
deaf disability rights
advocate and National
Project Officer at African
Disability Forum, from
Abuja, Nigeria.



"This report highlights the challenges created by not having official data in a crisis focused on persons with disabilities and official data not identifying and addressing the vital gaps and barriers faced by persons with disabilities. As a result, this report presents a wake-up call for all stakeholders to address gaps and barriers and reiterates the importance for governments to use disability disaggregated data to create evidence-based programmes and policies. With hope, all stakeholders will fully implement the report's recommendations to ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all COVID-19 interventions."

Vappu Taipale,
81 year old female
campaigner for older
people's rights, from
Helsinki, Finland.



"Governments have tried their best to find solutions to COVID-19 that protect and support their citizens – and their economies. COVID-19 has, however, challenged everyone. Here in the Nordic countries, older people mostly live alone, enclosed in small apartments, with no visitors. UN organisations have started talking about the 'shadow pandemic', the increase in domestic violence. There is another even darker shadow that is not being addressed: older people being starved of human contact. This is where civil society organisations have an important role to play. Civil society organisations have captured the experiences of older people to help guide the pandemic response and recovery."

The pandemic has built upon structural inequalities of our societies, disproportionately impacting people who have been marginalised.

Our Recommendations

Government responses to COVID-19 must complement and strengthen the efforts of communities experiencing marginalisation to prevent further widening of inequalities and reversal of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To help prevent inequalities from deepening further through more inclusive data systems, the Civil Society Collaborative on Inclusive COVID-19 Data calls for:

Use of data from communities and CSOs to inform plans and monitor COVID-19 response and recovery.



SHORT TERM

National COVID-19 taskforces and similar government coordination bodies to actively seek and use community and CSO data to inform the development and monitoring of national and sub-national response and recovery plans and policies.

SHORT TERM

Communities and CSOs increase the sharing and dissemination of COVID-19 related data according to best practices, alongside transparent discussion of the methodologies used, limitations and strengths.

Urgent disaggregation of COVID-19 data to identify, address and report inequities, and prioritise advancing the inclusivity of official data systems.



SHORT TERM

Government ministries and National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to strengthen the collection, use and reporting of COVID-19 case, fatality and socio-economic impact data disaggregated by age, disability, gender, geographic location, income, migratory/ displacement status, race or other characteristics as relevant in local and national contexts, using internationally validated and comparable tools.

LONG TERM

NSOs, in coordination with government departments, to strengthen official data systems to be inclusive of all and prepared for future crises, including advancing civil registration systems, deepening data disaggregation and increasing the generation and use of qualitative data.

Strengthened partnerships and coordination mechanisms between governments, communities and CSOs to increase the use of community and CSO data.



SHORT TERM

NSOs to appoint a senior-level lead responsible for working with communities and CSOs to gather, analyse and assess the quality of community and CSO data to complement analyses and reports delivered using official data.

LONG TERM

NSOs and other government departments to establish and strengthen data partnerships and working groups with communities, CSOs and other key producers of relevant non-official data (such as Human Rights Institutes) to establish effective and transparent systems for producing, sharing, analysing and using community and CSO data alongside official data.

LONG TERM

NSOs, communities and CSOs to work together to develop national guidelines and quality standards for community and CSO data, thereby supporting active use of such data in policy planning, implementation and crisis response. Communities and CSOs to assess and report on the quality of their data.

Accelerate investment into the production of community and CSO data and development of more inclusive official data systems.



SHORT TERM

LONG TERM

National governments and donors should encourage, facilitate and allocate funds for the generation of community and CSO data to develop more efficient, targeted and accessible programmes that help to address the situation of communities experiencing marginalisation.

LONG TERM

Governments and donors to increase funding to NSOs and government departments to strengthen comprehensive and inclusive official data systems.

LONG TERM

Donors to support knowledge exchange and capacity building between NSOs, communities and CSOs to strengthen data quality, sharing and use.

To advance an equitable COVID-19 recovery and fulfil the leave no one behind commitment, the collaborative calls for:

People who have been left behind to be prioritised in COVID-19 responses and long-term recovery planning, implementation and budgeting.



SHORT TERM

COVID-19 taskforces and similar government coordination bodies to critically assess all planned and recently adopted sub-national and national COVID-19 response strategies on whether they adequately respond to the situation of people who have been marginalised.

LONG TERM

National governments to strengthen and improve targeting of social protection measures based upon an intersectional analysis of the economic impact of the pandemic on people who have been marginalised.

LONG TERM

Governments to ensure economic recovery plans and other national and sub-national COVID-19 strategies, budgets and implementation plans fulfil the principle of leaving no one behind. Introduce more participatory budgeting cycles at subnational and national levels to follow up and review the implementation of programmes and targeting of communities experiencing marginalisation.

Inclusive and participatory decision-making processes on COVID-19 response and recovery and longer-term policies and programmes.



SHORT TERM

National COVID-19 taskforces and similar government coordination bodies to partner with **communities and CSOs** to jointly develop accountability mechanisms to identify and engage representatives of people who have been marginalised to actively participate and engage in decision making and implementation processes.

LONG TERM

Community representatives and CSOs to strengthen intersectional connections and collaborations at local, national and global levels to support inclusive decision-making processes and streamline engagement with governments.

LONG TERM

Government departments to co-develop coordination mechanisms with communities experiencing marginalisation to ensure their leadership and full, effective and equal participation in decision making on the design, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes.

Read the full report

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The Collaborative aims to create a holistic understanding of how people who have been marginalised have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, their responses and resilience.

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Members of our Collaborative:

