



**Global Platform for the Right to the City**  
 Plataforma Global por el Derecho a la Ciudad  
 Plateforme Globale pour le Droit à la Ville

## **GPR2C Assemblies: Right to the City facing COVID-19 and the global crisis**

Assembly 1: Adequate Housing, popular economy and the Right to the city

April 17th 2020

### **1. Agenda**

<a href="#"><u>Welcome and greetings</u></a>	Henrique Frota - GPR2C	5 min
<a href="#"><u>Initial thematic reflections:</u></a>		50 min
<a href="#"><u>a) Life in informal settlements in the face of the pandemic</u></a>	Anacláudia Rossbach - Cities Alliance Adriana Allen - HIC	(7 min c/u)
<a href="#"><u>b) Differential assistance for homeless</u></a>	Danielle Klintowitz - Polis	
<a href="#"><u>c) Stop evictions to secure the right to housing and to the city</u></a>	Cesare Ottolini - IAI Letícia Osório - IBDU	
<a href="#"><u>d) Impact on informal workers</u></a>	Sonia Dias - WIEGO Maira Vannuchi - StreetNet	
<a href="#"><u>Right to adequate housing as a response to the crisis</u></a>	Leilani Farha - UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing	7 min
<a href="#"><u>Synthesis and connecting challenges: social and territorial justice for the common good</u></a>	Lorena Zárate - GPR2C	5 min
<a href="#"><u>Exchange and debate</u></a>	All (moderation: Henrique Frota)	30 min
<a href="#"><u>Closing</u></a>	GPR2C Support Team	5 min



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## 2. [List of attendees](#)

## 3. Minutes in English

### a. Welcome and greetings - Henrique Frota - GPR2C

Henrique Frota welcomes and presents all the GPR2C support team. He explains that there will be translations in Spanish, English and French. The Assembly is divided into two parts. Today we are going to talk about **Adequate housing, popular economy and the right to the city the Covid-19**, Next Thursday, there will be another assembly about health, the protection of life, food security and gender issues.

The GPR2C, since the crisis began, has been collecting and sharing initiatives, statements and materials from members and allies from around the world. This compilation started with our collective communiqué: "The Right to the City facing COVID-19" and with other statements and communiqués from members and allies. Now we are working on strengthening it focusing on initiatives being developed. That's why it is very important we use this space to share what we are doing (and other organizations in our territories as well) and try to find synergies and ways to complement each other.

All of these materials are available at a dedicated page in our website, which will be frequently updated, and we are sharing on the chat: <https://www.right2city.org/the-right-to-the-city-facing-covid-19/>

### b. Initial thematic reflections

#### i. Life in precarious settlements in the face of the pandemic

#### Anacláudia Rossbach - Cities Alliance

I would like to share with you the webinar "[COVID-19: Informal Settlements and Social Housing](#)" on the impact and response in Latin America. There were 700 attendees.



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In a major part of the world informal settlements are a priority. Some countries, cities and civil society are very worried with the immediate response. However, there is a great opportunity to start more radical and transformative changes in the medium and long terms. I share 5 points:

1. The response to COVID is centered in a strong mobilization with communities, social organizations, networks and philanthropic organizations to attend immediate needs as security food and economic needs and to offer immediate health and hygienic assistance in informal settlements .
2. There is a group of local and national Governments that have been active in prioritizing attention on informal settlements, identifying their needs, mapping the situation and designing and implementing responses on the ground. There is a need for information and the action that comes from civil society organizations to be understood by national and local Governments.
3. This has been generating a set of informal arrangements and spaces at local and national levels. As Platform we have to think how to take advantage of this moment, dialogue between governments and civil society for more robust governance. Civil society can take now a step forward into being an active actor in the decision making in the city.
4. At this time, we are concerned about the immediate response, but we cannot miss the opportunity to make medium- and long-term structural changes to achieve a situation in which universal access to water, services, economic and social opportunities and housing are finally provided. We need to change urban planning in the global south.
5. We have an opportunity to mobilize stakeholders, political leadership for an emergency action that is able to establish the basis for radical changes.

### **Adriana Allen - HIC President**

Since the beginning of the crisis, in HIC we have been working in three main fronts:

1. Create spaces for dialogue and to make sense of what this means to the vulnerable
2. Support exchanges and [documenting initiatives of local responses to the crisis.](#)
3. Trying to focus on the advocacy, the mobilization for radical changes

We need to move beyond blanket immunological assumptions. Governments all over the world have been taking similar approaches but they are not practical for a large number of citizens or even pose further risks. COVID-19 makes visible how deep structural inequalities shape what being affected by the virus means not only across different geographies but also across intersecting class, race, gender, age and ability.



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This pandemic highlights that national governments and the development sector are strongly risk averse. Donors provide support based on certainty of delivery & predefined outputs and outcomes. Failure to deliver accordingly often means losing further support. This needs to change, as this approach offers little room for learning by doing.

What can we do to pave the way for long needed structural changes?

**1. Put numbers to the under-recorded impacts of the crisis.** We rarely see any figures in the media on the number of people to be disproportionately affected due to pre-existing inequalities. We need to further disaggregate these figures and bring them to the fore to demand that deep entrenched inequalities are tackled once and for all.

**2. Acknowledge that 'equal' protection does not mean 'same' protection.** Blanket measures covering all informal settlements are likely to be ineffective. We need contextualized responses. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Women represent 70% of the health and social sector workforce globally, they are at greater risk and require special attention to their health and needs.

**3. Prevent stigmatisation:** Raising awareness in informal settlements on how to avoid infection, what to do if you are infected, and how to care for others are critical tasks in contexts where public healthcare is largely absent. Recommendations need to be carefully considered to avoid further discrimination and stigmatisation.

**4. Protecting human rights should be at the center of pandemic and post pandemic responses.** We have all heard how lockdowns in Rwanda and India have already seen citizens killed by the police for breaking curfews. We have to remember that women and men living in informal settlements often have a troubled relationship with state institutions. The same applies to forced evictions.

**5. Act now to address long-due challenges.** For the majority of people living in informal settlements, COVID-19 will be just one among the many health threats they face throughout their lives. We need to put pressure on governments and the international community to stop so much nonsense regarding:

- Forced evictions as a means to de-densify and protect settlements;
- Markets squeezing people to live in marginal environments with high tenure insecurity
- Lack of access to improved water supply and to adequate sanitation
- Commodified wasteful food chains which lead to starvation & undernourishment
- Ignoring gender inequality across all spheres of life ... and the list goes on

The main trial we face is not just about putting in motion social protection measures during this crisis, it is about tackling deep inequalities now and beyond the pandemic. The SDGs already spell out the interconnected challenges to be addressed, they have been endorsed by 193 countries.... But one thing is clear: we cannot wait until 2030.



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**The right to the city is the right to life:** This means recognizing that the social production of habitat is also the social production of health.

## **ii. Differential assistance for homeless people**

### **Danielle Klintowitz - Polis**

I'm going to talk about differential assistance for homeless people. From the Polis Institute we do many actions for this population. In Brazil, we have a very serious situation. In Sao Paulo alone we have more than 24,000 people living on the streets, with 3,000 more susceptible to complications since they are over 60 years old.

In Cracolândia the situation is extreme. It is an area in the center of São Paulo that concentrates more than 2,000 homeless people with high levels of drug addiction. The key to working with these people in the face of the pandemic is to think that they have the right to prevention, isolation and diagnosis. That is why we are working on 4 points of action:

**1) Information:** Most do not know what is happening or the dangers to their lives. We make reports so that they know how to protect themselves.

**2) Diagnosis:** Partnership with Doctors without Borders to make a diagnosis of this population, since the government is not doing anything. We have people who need to be hospitalized, who have symptoms and people at risk.

**3) Protection:** "City of Solidarity" program, in coordination with the city of Sao Paulo, where we collect hygiene material to donate. In this way we put pressure on the government to do basic hygiene. We also pressure them to follow the "Good Meal" program, which guarantees the 3 daily meals and drinking water.

**4) Establish structures and laws for after the pandemic.** We are campaigning for empty hotels and public buildings to be used for the isolation of people at risk. Also to make therapeutic housing, with social and health assistance before the "end" of the pandemic.

**5) Income guarantee.** We are lobbying municipal governments to supplement the federal government's basic income measure for this population. We are helping with enrollment in the federal program. The program carried out by the federal government is not accessible, you must have internet, correct documents and a mobile phone. The homeless population does not have these instruments.



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### **iii. Stop evictions to secure the right to housing and to the city**

#### **Cesare Ottolini - IAI**

In Italy we were one of the first countries to close everything. The neoliberal system has cut off the entire health system. The reality is hard. Elsewhere, in Africa or Asia, things are worse. From the International Alliance of Inhabitants we have started to highlight the situation. We have issued an international communiqué: [Zero Evictions for Coronavirus](#).

People who lose their jobs risk losing their homes because they cannot pay their rents or mortgages. In the US there are 22 million people who have lost their jobs/businesses. These are hardworking people. Similar things are happening in Italy. In India it is worse because the state cannot offer financial support. Being at home, people cannot work and therefore do not have an income to cover basic needs. We have collected about [600 news items from all over the world](#) about initiatives to protect the right to housing.

Citizens' mobilization has succeeded in getting certain states to stop any kind of eviction for a certain period of time, but it is not enough. The states have to distribute more economic resources to society to face the costs of the crisis. What is going to happen in 6 months or a year? Search for partial solutions for the moment, and then return to the same neoliberal mechanism or decide on an alternative portal.

To enter the portal of alternative politics we can highlight the situation of the inhabitants and support their struggles. For example, now it is key to stop evictions but also control the housing market and encourage the spending on access to housing and the development of public housing policy. Housing cannot be more than 30% of the family's income. In the stock market, the banks are rising, what they are going to recover is the debt that people are accumulating. At the end of the crisis there will be a strong conflict if we do not enter with force advocating for alternative policies to neoliberalism. In the United States there is a rent strike, 20% of the tenants are not paying. Where we will go and how, depends on us.

Very well what we are doing about the Right to the City. We have to see how to strengthen links to build alternative policies of resistance, not resilience. In May we will hold a large world assembly to exchange experiences and articulate mobilizations, different from what has been done up until now. Let's see if by October, the month of habitat, 0 evictions and the right to the city, we can have a global mobilization, but we have to deepen the debate. Strengthen the alliances of civil society organizations with NGOs, authorities and progressive governments. The virus has attacked us, but the guilty party is the neoliberal policies, with other policies these things would not have happened.



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## **Leticia Osório - Brazilian Institute of Urban Law**

In Brazil we are focusing on stopping the government from implementing structural changes that will even deepen the housing crisis and the inequality in access to land. One example is that we are fighting to stop the approval in Congress of a provisional measure which will allow for land-grabbing of public land.

Brazil has likely 12 times more coronavirus than the official count. Only 8% of the cases are being officially reported. There is too little testing and long waits to confirm the results. Our health ministry was fired yesterday: he was doing well but in disagreement with our president. For us, quarantine and isolation is not being seen as a right. There is this false controversy between the right to health and the economy. Although the Government has approved a monthly allowance for people who have informal jobs, it is only 150 USD per month. The crisis is still not being dealt with in a proper manner.

Since the very beginning, NGOs and social movements have been very active in stopping evictions. This was in conjunction with the office of public defenders and public prosecutors. There is no national measure to stop evictions, only some initiatives by local and state governments and courts. There were some evictions issued during the pandemic, but then public defenders and social movements managed to suspend them in some cases. There are two issues relating to evictions. One is to suspend the collective orders, which relate more to evictions in slums or communities that have occupied land. On the other hand, in terms of renters, there is a bill pending approval in Congress now seeking to suspend evictions based on the non-payment of rent. However there is no security that evictions due to nonpayment of rent will be suspended.

As for rural areas, there is another problem related to illegal activities that are not being suspended, such as illegal mining and logging, which pose threats to traditional and indigenous communities, especially in the Amazon. Their land was already being previously invaded, but there is a rise in deforestation, meaning that these activities are entering more and more in indigenous' and traditional communities' land.

It will be very difficult to reverse all these trends, especially trying to establish rent ceilings in Brazil. One thing that could help is to have greater support from the international system, taking a human rights approach on how to deal with the pandemic beyond the health-related measures. I think there is little on that still.

Of course, staying at home is not possible for many people, and many others are being threatened with eviction. So it is very important for international organizations to work on a framework to call governments to act, or at least refrain in adopting measures that will violate rights even more.



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#### **iv. Impact on informal workers**

##### **Sonia Dias - WIEGO**

WIEGO's work regarding COVID-19 has been focused on the devastating impact for the world's 2 billion informal workers. We are striving to ensure that informal workers' issues are addressed, that information and advocacy tools are shared and we are arguing for policies and plans to include informal workers. Our social protection team carried out a rapid assessment to understand how the pandemic was affecting workers in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A few highlights of some of the findings:

- Limits to physical distancing in informal settlements and for informal workers
- The impact on livelihoods, which in many cases represent a permanent loss of income
- Lack of access to basic hygiene structures: clean water, soap, etc
- Availability of protective equipment
- Mental health challenges
- Domestic violence

So, as Adriana mentioned, blanket measures for all sectors are ineffective. So with this understanding we have created different pages in our website with sector specific materials, such as for: home-based workers, domestic workers, street vendors and others.

I want to give a deeper insight of the reality of informal waste pickers, who are frontliners in this pandemic, providing in many cities the only house waste collection available right now. Their work is very important even if very often unrecognized. When we think about this pandemic there is a layer of vulnerability that these workers are facing, because they are in contact with dangerous materials, once that the virus can survive in surfaces for a much longer time than other viruses. They are also in contact with medical waste because now many people are being treated from their homes.

What we are doing to mitigate the risk and address the issues of waste pickers:

- Participation on emergency relief committees
- Providing support for workers to advocate for cash grants and food security schemes
- Tracking government policies and the responses from workers' organizations
- Drafting and supporting the drafting of sector specific guidelines
- Communication and dissemination, solidarity campaigns
- Thinking ahead in terms of transforming the urban solid waste systems in the future

We have also been advising workers to put pressure on their governments, so that their measures to mitigate the crisis address the main issues of waste pickers such as: provision of protective equipment and access to cash grants, information, and hygiene kits. We advocate that these workers are acknowledged as essential service providers but with safety measures in place.





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Whenever possible, these workers also should have the right to go into lockdown, but for that, they need access to cash grants.

In terms of thinking forward we need to invest in building the capacity of informal workers to deliver services in complementarity to formal solid-waste systems. We need to strengthen their capacity to recover from all sorts of impacts. We need to rethink and reshape solid-waste systems to understand the role of informal workers as they provide services that are important in terms of public health, environment and of feeding the industry with raw materials that sustain production.

To conclude: we need a holistic approach that integrates safety, economic and social protection measures to address informal workers' particular needs during the pandemic but also beyond this outbreak.

### **Maira Vannuchi - StreetNet**

From StreetNet we knew from the beginning that the crisis would hit hard the street vendors of the world, so we started to think and share ideas on the path forward. What we know is that street and market vendors work on a daily basis: they work during the day to eat at night. So we saw that the protection measures such as social distancing and lockdowns would have a direct affect on their livelihoods.

Without any rights or protections, street vendors can't stay at home, because they need to secure their livelihoods. So it was clear that public expenditure needs to increase to issue policies of basic income. This was the first thing we knew that we had to claim for. The second is the exemption on paying bills for essential services, as energy, water, gas.

Many countries won't implement those measures, so we started to think about those who cannot stay at home. We started to talk about safe work conditions, especially for those who are in the food supply chain and should be considered essential workers. In many countries, street vendors are key for ensuring food distribution. They need to be recognized as essential workers and count with safe working conditions and special licenses to sell.

We have noticed that violence has increased. In Nigeria police and law enforcement agents are harassing food vendors, to a point where we are seeing more people being affected by this violence than by the virus. We have seen this increase of violence, in a context of rapid emergence of armed groups and gangs which are also coercing street vendors. Law enforcement should protect street vendors, not harass them.

It's important to demand free public access to health systems and the participation of entities of different sectors of the society, so the policies adopted reflect their different needs. Beyond the authorities, it is important to call for solidarity. There are interesting experiences in fundraising, crowdfunding, and donations. We also see communities organizing to face these challenges.



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We know that when this crisis passes, it will leave behind a major economic recession. Workers in the informal economy are very fragile and will feel the impact heavily. One positive point of this is that workers in the informal economy usually can restart their activity more easily. We need to remind governments about this when we are in a moment of pushing for economic recovery and demand the introduction of measures to open the way for street vendors, recognizing their contribution to society and to the national economy. Our community leaders are very worried about the future and need help for assuring the conditions to rebuild and strengthen themselves after the pandemic. One possibility is restructuring business through cooperativism.

When governments approve subsidies for workers in the informal economy they are recognizing their existence, their productive activity and condition of vulnerability. We cannot count on this, we have to work hard, but this might be a first step towards a greater recognition and protection.

To conclude: workers in the informal economy need to be central in rebuilding local value-chains. Our cities won't be the same again. We should use the opportunity to rebuild the cities we want.

### **c. Right to adequate housing as a response to the crisis**

#### **Leilani Farha - UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing**

I guess I will start telling my own feelings about the COVID-19 crisis. The first time I heard this was a pandemic I was in Geneva at the time and I traveled back home and I started to hear what was emerging at the global scale. It was this health policy of stay home, wash your hands and physical distance. It was a mantra. It took me a few days before I realized that the global housing crisis that we have been experiencing will make those recommendations impossible for a huge portion of the population. This policy was based on some misunderstanding that the world lives with adequate housing.

This idea of #StayatHome is discriminatory. It is based on a misunderstanding that we all can stay home. This logic is a violation on the Right to Housing.

Evictions are violations of the right to housing and they are happening even during the pandemic. The unaffordability of housing, for renters and even for people who own homes is also a violation of the right to housing. Of course now housing is even more unaffordable because people's incomes have plummeted and people are losing their jobs. The cost of housing was absurd before the pandemic and now it is even more. Same goes for people living in informal settlements, where implementing the safety measures is nearly impossible, as Adriana pointed out.

**We have a pandemic that exposes the global housing crisis and the question now is if there are responses to tackle this situation in the short and long term.**



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We have seen some interesting initiatives. Danielle mentioned some of them. There have been some successes. In Belfast there are no people sleeping on the street anymore. There is a supposed moratorium on evictions in many countries.

In my experience if you look under the surface those policies are the "same old, same old". We are not seeing structural change, we are seeing a lot of governments that say that now is not a moment for structural change. We all have a lot of work in front of us. Whether this is a moment of structural change or things will stay the same as before.

In 2 weeks I will be wrapping up my mandate but I will be still active working on The Shift project and will be happy to keep on working alongside you in the years to come.

#### **d. Synthesis & connecting challenges: social and territorial justice for the common good**

##### **Lorena Zárate - GPR2C**

Thank you Henrique and all. To make a synthesis is impossible. Many elements have been presented. I will point out a few key points that come up throughout the presentations:

1. It is clear that this emergency is a crisis that affects all spheres of individual and collective life. It makes visible the enormous inequalities that we already had, as a consequence of neoliberal policies, structural adjustment policies, privatization and reduction of the state's and public's capacity to act. It also brings to light the need to focus on the priorities and possibilities of changing this course. The question of different time-frames and logics was pointed out: one of attention to the emergency, which requires urgent actions, but also another time-frame and logic in the medium and long term. The intention in this space is to reflect on the connection between these two logics.
2. Different themes, actors, scales and regions were pointed out, which speak of the connections and challenges between all this. The issue of proximity, in a territorial approach to health care, food, income, families, etc. highlighting the social function of city spaces is fundamental. The territorial view and the view of the social function of spaces, property, infrastructure are central to the Right to the City
3. The most urgent need for horizontal collaboration between actors (government, communities, civil society) at different scales (neighbourhood, city, national, international). So far, except for the WHO, we have not seen such an active presence of other agencies and this is a concern.



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4. Lack of a human rights approach to the emergency measures and regarding long term transformations. GPR2C's organizations have it very clear: interdependence, interrelation and universality of rights are key. We cannot separate water, health, sanitation, food, from work, education, etc.

The emergency has brought the need to put life at the center, prioritizing it over profit and private interests. Many governments are taking steps in this direction, but this might only be superficial and we might end up returning to “business as usual”. The logic of resilience, that is, to return to an old, unjust, patriarchal and capitalist system or to reinvent ourselves and promote the profound changes we need. Neither governments nor multilateral agencies will do this. We need to mobilize even more and work in a more coordinated way. This is the meaning of these assemblies. We want to continue to deepen these exchanges. What more can we do to advance these changes and this ethic of care?

#### **e. Exchange and debate - all (moderation: Rodrigo Iacovinni)**

##### **Humphrey Otieno, Kenyan Social Movement Network**

I will focus on four concerns coming from the perspective of a Human Rights defender:

1) From an African perspective, we have not been hit really hard by COVID-19 in comparison to other countries. For the moment we can learn lessons from other continents and countries that have already been deeply affected. Especially concerning precautionary measures to cushion residents in informal settlements, because I am sure that when the numbers start going up in Africa, and especially in informal settlements, it will be a mess.

2) Is there an accountability measure that we can raise or is there somebody that needs to take accountability for the spread of this virus? WHO has a role of cushioning countries concerning the health sector. But what has happened before so we end up in the situation that we are in now? As a Human Rights movement we have to find a way to pressure for accountability measures regarding the current situation.

3) Again in regards to accountability: why are the IMF and World Bank very quick to dangle money to countries that have not reported cases of COVID-19 when the only criteria to access that charge was having reported victims? These institutions are playing with our rights and somebody has to hold them accountable for that.

4) From a economic, social and cultural rights perspective: we come from different races and cultures, which should all be respected. We have to pay close attention to the way the victims of



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the epidemic are being sent off and buried, which is undignifying. They are victims and are being treated as oppressors.

### **Olenka Ochoa, FEMUM-ALC**

Some elements to enrich the debate:

Local governments are central actors in crisis management and post-COVID-19. In this stage of health and economic crisis, what can we do so that local governments lead strategies of employment generation, fair trade and social and solidarity economy at the territorial level? In Peru, 70% of the population works in the informal sector: popular sector, middle sectors, cities and rural areas.

Beyond: What can local governments do to generate healthy public spaces? Bearing in mind that after quarantine the risk of contagion will not decrease.

Finally: What can we do to get local governments to take on these tasks in times of economic crisis for themselves? In Peru, and I suppose all over the world, there will be a drop in the income of municipalities because people will not be able to pay taxes.

Beyond local governments, I would like to introduce a priority: to adopt an approach based on the rights of children in the framework of the recovery from quarantine, thinking particularly of General Comment No. 19 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which speaks of the public budget. The poorest of the poor are children, and in the midst of this quarantine they suffer from deprivation.

Last point: Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Governments should use the tools of this framework in this crisis in relation to humanitarian aid, distribution of resources and, specifically, water.

### **Pat Horn, Streetnet International and WIEGO**

As Humphrey has mentioned, in Africa we are in the early stages of our infection curve and have not yet reached the peaks yet. Many African countries we are concerned about the ability of our health systems to manage the kind of pressure we have seen in countries like Italy and Spain. Obviously being behind on the curve, our countries have the advantage of being able to learn from what other countries are doing.



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In South Africa we have had a fairly good approach from the government, which is in a better position to deal with the situation now than three years ago. Our leadership has been fairly progressive and transparent, not to say that there aren't problems such as corruption on food parcels distribution and delays in getting a response from the government regarding cash grants. But I think this transparency has helped the population to get some understanding on what the government is responding to from a health point of view. The government has also been very conscious of the fact that we have larger parts of the population working in the informal economy than in European countries that have reached the peak before us.

One thing I have noticed working in Africa is that people on the ground in countries that have battled with the Ebola virus seem to be far better prepared than those of countries who did not (such as South Africa). Here we are struggling with members of the population not taking this issue seriously until someone in their neighbourhood gets it, and by that time it is too late. We have noticed with the Sierra Leone Trade Union for example that they have been incredibly proactive and have worked with the government on awareness raising. So having successfully battled previous very dangerous epidemics might be a small advantage that we have.

### **Michael Beltran, National Alliance of Philippine's Urban Poor**

I want to raise the issue of how fascist governments and authoritarian governments are dealing with this crisis. In the Philippines right now because of the lockdown more than 23,000 people have been arrested (data from a week ago), with an average of more than 1,000 arrests a day. Of course this affects disproportionately people living in informal settlements and slums.

Just today the president said that if people fail to comply with the militarist procedures to combat the virus, he will impose a martial law over the next weeks.

In the absence of any kind of comprehensive social protection, many people in the Philippines live on less than a dollar a day. So within the first week of the implementation of the lockdown they were already going hungry. Hunger and starvation are the most urgent problems we are facing. We are also very focused on getting people out of jail, because people that are in jail are not going to receive any food. We are campaigning heavily for the government to put in place social assistance programmes.

Our main demands can be summed up as follows:

1. State social assistance for people who have virtually no livelihood
2. Mass testing
3. No bail-out for big corporations, but for working people
4. Respect for democratic and Human Rights



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This pandemic should not be used as a pretense for further criminalizing people who are the most vulnerable, like the poor and homeless.

**Ana Falú, CISCOSA,**

We are facing a problem and a pandemic resulting from intertwined powers, that have to do with nationalism, facism, xenophobia, a rampant colonial and patriarchal neoliberalism. That is why, as has already been mentioned today, it is key to place the issue of inequalities at the centre of emergency agendas and actions. But in this inequality I think we really have to challenge the concept of neutrality. In this respect, women and all the intersections that cross women and diversity must be part of the emergency response actions.

We are convinced that we must consolidate the community networks, think about the collective and consider some central points:

- Economy and food for these sectors that are in greater vulnerability.
- We have to think about which are the scales of intervention: if all the intervention is focused on staying at home or if it is necessary to think about staying inside the community, in the neighborhood, and to have strategies for that
- Care: women are the caretakers inside the house or in the community. It is women who are replacing schools. Imagine the situation of these women, in poverty, overcrowded, in the more than 30% of households which are run by women alone, with unruly adolescents, with situations that are not very controllable and in economies of distress.
- Violence: the lockdown, and this for all social sectors, aggravates situations of violence. It is primarily against women, but also against children and the elderly. We need to adopt a perspective that breaks with neutrality.

It is women who do most of the work and, on top of that, have to take care of the family. That is why we cannot continue to talk in general terms about "people", in a way that omits priority situations related to those that are more vulnerable and in greater need of policies.

**Armand Nouwe, CODAS Caritas Douala**

The 1st case of COVID-19 was identified in Cameroon on March 6, 2020. The government took, we thought, the right measure, avoiding a lockdown as it did not have the means to accompany the lockdown by compensating families with economic measures. The barrier measures taken by WHO to prevent the spread of the virus in Cameroon were implemented. However, for some time now,



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we have realized that these measures have their limits. From 6 p.m. onwards, the families could no longer carry out their economic activities (at night), which lowered their income, preventing them from paying their rent or electricity costs.

Thus we begin to observe the impact of COVID-19 on the right to housing, and the inability of families to feed themselves. Generally speaking, in most of these neighbourhoods, there is no access to basic services such as drinking water. This also makes it difficult to wash hands. At the moment, we do not have the means to provide solutions to all these problems. But starting next week, we are going to provide hand washing points in some neighbourhoods. We are also going to work with the municipality to see to what extent it can act on taxes, for example, to help workers who can no longer work.

COVID-19 is a challenge for us, but we need to be solidary and we will overcome it.

### **Luis Alfonso Saltos, The right to the City Observatory in Guayaquil.**

Guayaquil has been one of the Latin American cities most affected by COVID-19. Guayaquil is the city in Ecuador with the highest percentage of unsatisfied basic needs, of households in overcrowded conditions, of lack of public services in the peripheries. All this has made the situation of COVID-19 more serious in the city. How are we going to work on medium- and long-term public policies in the territory? How do we improve the life of people living in the streets if we do not have enough to feed the people in hospitals? We are beginning to see a precarious situation in the city between those who are in hospital and those who are in the street, those who are in quarantine and those who are not. These are issues that need to be analysed in the long term.

### **Clara Manzueto, Proyecto Habitar:**

I wanted to reinforce the focus that has been made on inequalities, emphasizing the link with multiple types of inequalities and under a territorial and historical perspective. In the popular settlements of Latin American cities, the population was already forced to put their lives in the forefront when they had to take over the land, by the exclusion of the water services, by the lack of waste collection and coexistence with open-air dumps. In other words, this informality and the general lack of policies in a context of inequality is historical and can be seen in space. The inhabitants generate networks to transcend these conditions and it is important to take into account, when thinking about policies that go beyond the emergency, the importance of strengthening these ties, not only to recognize the work in the battle front, but also to make viable the participation in the formulation of problems in daily life, in the programming of actions,





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influencing the distribution of resources and the projects that are developed. Always taking into account the social function of property and space, central notions that have to transcend this conjunctural moment as inequality transcends and drags itself historically until it explodes in front of our eyes today.

### **Ivahanna Larrosa, CIEDUR:**

I think we have a similar analysis of the problems that have brought us to this moment and how the lack of answers is affecting certain sectors of the population with certain characteristics. From a Human Rights perspective, it is very important to make an analysis based on the intersectionality of structural inequalities. We must continue to respond to the emergency today and also highlight these structural issues by addressing how we prepare for the post-pandemic. We have to see how we are prepared in different ways for the "aftermath" depending on how we approach the quarantine.

In this sense, it is important to think about GPR2C's role because of the capacities we have as a diverse collective, bringing together different actors. How can we reinforce our role in front of national and local governments that today are relying much more on the actions led by civil society, which is leading the response to this situation? How can we make these responses more valuable and be protagonists in accessing information and participating in the design of the current measures and the lifting of the emergency? From the GPR2C we have to look together for the answers to these questions.

### **f. Conclusion**

#### **Henrique Frola, GPR2C:**

Thank you all for the debate and interventions. We will send you the presentations and notes as soon as possible. Don't forget that this assembly was just the [first part and we will have the continuation next Thursday](#). We will structure the next encounter so we have more time for the debate and to coordinate actions.