**COVID-19 NGO GROUP**

**C/O Community Work Ireland,**

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**To:** An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, Department of the Taoiseach, Merrion St. Upper, Dublin 2

 Cc: Chief Medical Officer Dr. Tony Holohan

 Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD

 Chair of Covid 19 Oversight Group Mr. Martin Fraser

**Date:** 5/10/2020

**Subject:** COVID-19 NGO Group - Call for NGO representation on NPHET

Dear Taoiseach,

Prompted by the COVID-19 crisis, a group of NGOs, facilitated by Community Work Ireland, have been meeting online to share information on COVID-19 related issues and challenges and the responses needed to mitigate the differential impact of the virus on the already marginalised, minority and vulnerable groups that they represent.

We write to request that a specific number of seats on the NPHET be allocated to NGOs working with and representing the concerns of marginalised communities.

As United Nations evidence reinforces, marginalised groups become increasingly vulnerable during emergencies.[[1]](#footnote-1)  There is clear evidence from agencies working on disaster and crisis response that equality is only considered when marginalised groups are able to participate in emergency response planning. Further, this evidence suggests that the most impactful responses are the ones which include the marginalised groups they target in their emergency response planning. It is critical, therefore, that that their voices are now present and heard as responses to the COVID-19 crisis are being planned and implemented. Inclusive and robust processes of consultation and engagement will strengthen the efficacy of responses and ultimately the resilience of these groups and communities in the immediate and long term.

The role and expertise of local and national NGOs working with disadvantaged communities needs to be recognised. Their role to date in shaping national and local responses has been invaluable. It is our view that these NGOs must be represented and consulted throughout the decision-making process to ensure that the needs of the communities they represent remain to the fore and effective responses can be developed.

We acknowledge the huge challenges facing all of us at this very difficult time and collectively support the efforts on the part of Government, government departments, and agencies, as well as the courageous health workers at every level in seeking to deal with the multitude of complex and diverse medical, social, environmental and economic concerns that this pandemic is causing.

We look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Anastasia Crickley, Chairperson Community Work Ireland Policy Group on behalf of the COVID -19 NGO Group

Contact: Anastasia.crickley@mu.ie or phone 087 – 2985611

**This letter is endorsed by the following COVID-19 NGO Group Members:**

* Belong To
* City Wide Drugs Crisis Campaign
* Community Work Ireland
* Dublin City Community Cooperative
* Dublin North North East Recovery College
* European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland
* Independent Living Movement Ireland
* Irish Council for Civil Liberties
* Irish Local Development Network
* Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
* Irish Refugee Council
* Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
* National Collective of Community Based Women’s Networks
* National Women’s Council of Ireland
* National Youth Council of Ireland
* One Family
* Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
* Simon Communities of Ireland
* West Clare Family Resource Centre
1. COVID-19: How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement - UN Women and Translators without Borders on behalf of the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Asia and the Pacific https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/COVID-19\_CommunityEngagement\_130320.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)