

Philippines: Communists call for collective action against Covid-19

written by Communist Party of the Philippines

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In the face of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic, and the threat of the epidemic rapidly spreading among the Filipino people, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) calls on the Filipino people and all their revolutionary forces to

mobilize, organize and act collectively to respond to the emerging public health emergency.

This response must be organized and be led by the organs of political power comprising the people's democratic government (PDG), based primarily on the revolutionary village committees and mass organizations in the guerrilla zones, as well as by the revolutionary organizations under the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The people's collective response must be both widespread and comprehensive. All possible resources must be mobilized and directed at supporting the collective response of the people to the threat of a Covid-19 epidemic.

The Party calls on all agencies of the PDG and the NDFP to activate and strengthen existing village health committees and build thousands of other health committees in factories and communities. These committees, composed of local health workers and volunteers, must help organize the people's collective response.

Health committees must lead in studying and raising awareness about Covid-19 in order to encourage a collective people's response. They must exert efforts to mobilize the broad masses in campaigns to prevent the spread of the disease through sanitation and community cleanup drives, as well as encouraging personal hygiene. They can facilitate the free distribution of face masks, alcohol, soap and other cleaning agents. They can mobilize people to produce face masks using other possible alternative material. They can help spread the use of herbal medicine to help strengthen the people's resistance to similar coronavirus strains.

In addition, the factory-based workers' health committees must push for other practical health and safety measures such as free provision of medical and hygiene kits to workers, and other measures to improve working conditions and make them less vulnerable to the easy transmission of pathogens. Urban poor health committees must push for more efficient garbage collection, access to clean water, as well as

free distribution of health kits and sanitation systems.

The Party calls for a humanitarian united front of all democratic forces to help mobilize all possible resources in order to extend the broadest support for people's actions against the threat of a Covid-19 epidemic. The Party calls on all enterprises, from big capitalists to small businessmen, as well as international humanitarian agencies and organizations, to extend all forms of support — including supply of face masks, alcohol and testing kits — to help people's health committees and local people's organizations to ensure the success of the collective response of the people.

The Party calls for strengthening the democratic organizations of nurses and doctors, and medical professionals and health practitioners, to ensure their welfare amid serious threats to their lives as they stand at the front line in the fight against the Covid-19 epidemic. They seek an increase in allocations for public health to help ensure funds both for raising salaries, improvement of medical facilities and scientific research. They must counter state policy support for health service-for-profit and medical tourism. They must demand the strengthening of public hospitals and stop the policy of commercialization where generating profits is placed at the center of their operations.

The Party also calls for further strengthening scientific research in order to develop testing kits and vaccines and antivirals. At the same time, there must be deeper study and understanding of the links between the emergence of Covid-19 and other recent viral outbreaks and the practices of big capitalist agriculture.

The Party directs all units of the New People's Army (NPA), its medical officers and red fighters, to assist the people and their health committees in the campaign of mass mobilization against Covid-19. Units of the NPA can guide the local health committees in efforts to come up with a plan of collective response. Its red fighters can help in sanitation drives and cleanup campaigns in villages around the areas of operations of NPA units.

Criticism of response of Duterte regime

Instead of coming up with an organized response to the Covid-19 threat, the Duterte regime has resorted to a lockdown which is causing further grave economic hardships on the people, without any provision for financial insurance during the one-month period. The measures have already caused widespread disruptions in economic and commercial activity. Many people observe that if the lockdown stubbornly persists for one month, it is likely that there will be more people who will die because of hunger than the disease.

The military and police checkpoints across the National Capital Region and other provinces where people's temperatures are taken and which have prevented people from going to their place of work, or to look for work, border on the stupid. Not only is it useless, it is resulting in chaos and creates conditions for the easy transmission of diseases. What the people need are testing centers, not checkpoints.

The lockdown and checkpoints are part of the standard solution of Duterte's martial law mindset. It covers up the government's failure to even ensure basic supplies of face masks, alcohol and sufficient numbers of test kits. Knowing the gravity of the disease, Filipinos are easy to convince to have themselves tested whenever they notice symptoms. Duterte, however, is obsessed with imposing his will, even on the matter of public health, even if this causes large scale dislocations.

The lockdown also covers up how the Duterte regime cut by half the 2020 budget for the Epidemiology and Surveillance Program (from P262.9 million to P115.5 million), which severely limits the capacity of the Department of Health to handle the outbreak of diseases. It obscures the grave state of the country's public health infrastructure marked by dilapidated facilities and severe lack of state funding for public hospitals. The inability of the Duterte regime to provide a correct response to the emerging public health crisis (through the provision of medical and social and not military and police measures) thoroughly exposes the rotten fundamentals of the

Philippine ruling economic system.

The threat of the Covid-19 epidemic has added to the grave public health conditions of the Filipino people. Last year, there were more than 150,000 cases of dengue fever where at least 650 died. There is also the grave problem of tuberculosis and other controllable and treatable diseases. These manifest the consequence of the miserable social conditions and state abandonment of the people's health.

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Source: [Philippine Revolution Web Central](https://www.philippinerevolutionwebcentral.org/2020/03/18/philippines-communists-call-for-collective-action-against-covid-19/)

