

COPPER Knowledge Hub launches Learning Exchange Sessions (LESSONS) on Pandemic Preparedness and Response

The Communities in Pandemic Preparedness and Response (COPPER) Knowledge Hub launched the Learning Exchange Sessions (LESSONS) last July 30, 2024. LESSONS is a series of webinars designed to build the capacity of civil society to engage in discussions on pandemic preparedness and response. The event was organized by Activists' Coalition on the Asia-Pacific (ACT! AP), hosted by APCASO the Africa Coalition on Tuberculosis (ACT Africa), and the Regional Learning Hub Anglophone Africa as well as Hub Regional Afrique francophone. The talk was attended by more than 85 participants coming from civil society organisations, affected community representatives, the academe, and multilateral organisations.

The event was opened by Jeff Acaba, APCASO Programme Manager and ACT! Asia Pacific coordinator, who explained the rationale and objectives of the learning exchange sessions.

Aggrey Aluso, the Director of the Africa Region of the Pandemic Action Network, served as the inaugural speaker with the topic **“Introduction to Pandemic Preparedness and Response”**. In his talk, he described the timeline of pandemics, the impacts of COVID-19 to people and the economy, and his key insights on how to prepare for future pandemics. He highlights how the declaration of pandemics is inherently political with the power to declare public health emergencies of international concern (PHEIC) concentrated within the WHO.

Declaration of PHEIC is an important trigger for a coordinated response from the international community. However, citing the experience of Ebola, these mechanisms have not been activated when Africa was heavily affected with high risks of spread to other countries. He argues that if regions are given the mandate to declare outbreaks as public health emergencies of sub regional/continental importance, the response would be more proactive as countries would not have to wait for the infection to cross borders before it is made.

“ Everyone has the responsibility. Everyone who is a human has a real role to play in the prevention of potential pandemics. Every part of the world, whether poor or rich, has a role to play in whatever small way. ”

Aluso also highlights how pandemics can widen social divides within the country and internationally. He mentions how the marginalised sectors, particularly women, are disproportionately affected with the impacts of the pandemics and how lower income countries must wait for the vaccine supplies to trickle down from rich countries with lesser burden. In contrast, those who are more well-resourced received a substantial share of vaccines and had the potential for faster recovery.

Recognizing these issues, Aluso called for alternative mechanisms of funding innovation. He posits that the current market-driven model is incompatible with efforts to build capacity for future pandemics. He also argues that a big chunk of innovation during the pandemic is publicly funded which counters the claim of pharmaceutical companies that they needed to recoup their investments to sustain their business. He then proposed a funding mechanism grounded on solidarity and aligned with the global public interest investment models.

Aluso advocated doing things differently with greater participation of the community. He called on civil society to assert themselves in various platforms where pandemics are being discussed and make unequivocal demands to their governments who play the role of duty bearers. **“Best chance of really stopping the pandemic is involving the community. Pandemics start and end in the community,”** he said.

News and Updates !



Watch the 1st LESSONS ([Click](#))

 <https://copper.apcaso.org/>

 APCASO

 _APCASO

 APCASO

