

COVID – 2021 SCENARIO

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At the end of 2020 the downside risk was that in 2021 the virus would not be brought under control by the end of the year and that a second and third waves would emerge and be equally as lethal.

It happened and today here we are in a race against time, and epidemiologists say that we are in for a long haul.

Yes we have the vaccine and the western and rich countries might see the light out of the tunnel provided that their protection has a lasting effect, what nobody knows at the time of writing.

Today it is not the case for the indigenous communities of the world rainforests who have a long history of devastation from epidemics brought by colonizers from their first arrival.

As the number of COVID 19 infections rise worldwide as well as high mortality rates, among certain vulnerable groups, unfortunately, according to the UN, data on the rate of infection in indigenous peoples are either not yet available or not recorded. Relevant information about infection diseases and preventive measures is also not available in indigenous languages. Their vulnerability to the pandemic is exacerbated with the lack of access to national health, water and sanitation systems, the shutting down of markets and mobility restrictions that have greatly impacted their livelihoods, food insecurity, and well-being.

Many organizations working with and for indigenous peoples have been active in trying to respond to their needs since the outbreak of the disease in 2020, among them THE RAINFOREST FUND through its partners in Africa, Asia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Guyana, and in direct contact with them provided accurate information on disease prevention, distributed protective gear and hygiene supplies, supported traditional medicine, livelihoods and recovery - such as oxygen devices for hospitals close to their communities- always in ways that are appropriate to Indigenous People's priorities and culture.

Our support continues in 2021 along the same line. New requests are immediately fulfilled as the latest one related to bringing back indigenous children to school in Indonesia.

We never forget that indigenous peoples are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced. The land and natural resources on which they depend are inextricably linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods as well as their physical and spiritual well-being.

Working with them and for them, supporting indigenous systems for resilience and livelihoods, is our goal during these critical times and reflect the voices and aspirations of the indigenous peoples we support.

Dr. Franca Sciuto