



Editorial

Volunteerism in difficult times

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Received: 04 May 2022
Accepted: 08 May 2022
EPub Ahead of Print: 14 June 2022
Published:

DOI
10.25259/JGOH_13_2022

Quick Response Code:



At present, the whole world is facing a multitude of challenges – from ongoing pandemics in successive waves, each of which is fuelled by new COVID-19 variant, to the economic recession in countries such as Sri Lanka – creating poverty, hunger, and reduced healthcare-seeking behavior; civil unrest, armed conflicts, and climate-induced catastrophes as well as a lot of man-made and natural issues.^[1,2]

It is the general public who bears the brunt of all the issues. The refugee crisis precipitating from these events poses a challenge to humanitarian workers. The world needs to create appropriate infrastructure to meet the critical resources of water, food, medicine, and sanitation. While the urgent requirements are being attended to on a war footing in most countries, the negligence shown to proper water supply, non-communicable diseases, and particularly the oral health is worrying. The cumulative effect of oral hygiene neglect would be disastrous to large communities. Moreover, as health-care systems and facilities are being targeted in arm conflicts, the issue becomes manifold. The global health system already reeks from the pandemic-induced burden, additional different health-care demands place further strains on the existing system and lack access to health care for those that need it most. The success achieved in polio vaccination, tuberculosis screening, COVID-19 vaccination, maternal-newborn health, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer screening, and preventable vision loss screening is some areas where the setback is evident.^[3,4]

Wide differences in nature of the regional level health issue, each precipitated by different unique causes the issues, will branch out in coming years, to countries and economies around the world. Already the world is more connected in terms of health, economy, and fuel-food dependency. Growing imbalanced wealth and trade has the potential to turn into detrimental factors for human health, but there are also new threats. New infectious diseases and stubborn chronic conditions will present challenges for many years to come, but doctors and scientists also work together globally. Working together, they dedicate their lives to improving global health.^[5]

It is at this juncture, volunteerism and helping tendency need to be stepped up. The world has seen the worst humanitarian crisis but by sheer grit, compassion, and cooperative working, humankind was able to collaboratively create this epoch from the “Holocene” as the perfect “Anthropocene” in terms of psychosocial, biological, medical, and material aspect.^[6-9] The unwelcome aspects of human-induced modification in the whole ecosystem need to be corrected. It might not be still too late to usher in and adapt a series of changes that would make the world a better place to stay in. Most importantly, as part of the medical fraternity, we need to create awareness, motivate, and participate in such actions that would minimize human misery in all possible ways.

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How to cite this article: Balaji SM. Volunteerism in difficult times. *J Global Oral Health*, doi: 10.25259/JGOH_13_2022