



# World Council of Churches

A worldwide fellowship of churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian

## WCC convenes faith-based healthcare providers to share challenges, map the future



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**On 19 June, the World Council of Churches (WCC) convened a group of church-based healthcare providers who discussed what a global COVID-19 response looks like—now and in the future.**

Participants included regional ecumenical organizations, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and church health associations and organizations. The International Christian Medical and Dental Association, Health Care Fellowship (USA), and Medical Mission Sisters were also represented.

Participants discussed the capacity of families and communities to survive and thrive amidst mounting economic uncertainty, and explored the complex question of how the church can offer a prophetic voice and practical action. Among plans discussed was the proposed establishment of a WCC “Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing.”

Dr Mwai Makoka, WCC programme executive for Health and Healing, helped lead a discussion that explored successful practices health providers are offering, as

well as which communities need them the most. “Clearly,” he said, “some issues need international advocacy. The question is: ‘who has a listening ear?’ ”

At this point, the coronavirus pandemic is requiring both a short-term and intermediate response to protect and preserve both lives and livelihoods. The pandemic also requires a need to map longer-term goals for resilience, human sustenance and development.

For example, in areas in which the pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity, churches are already vital in helping to fill gaps that the government can’t. But, in the long run, could churches also be instrumental in changing an unjust system?

Churches also have a role in being a trusted source of accurate information, enhancing a community’s ability to be self-sufficient, and publicly valuing the contribution of faith-based health providers—all this while still retaining a spiritual stance on health.

“Caring for our health as one human family requires a team approach from churches and healthcare providers on local, regional, national and international levels,” said Makoka. “The more we know about each other’s challenges and resources, the better we can coordinate a global response, now and in the future.”

Makoka is encouraged to see churches across the world giving more thought to health issues.

“As Christian health professionals, we have gathered many insights on how we are increasingly vital to communities, and how we can in fact strengthen our approach to health and healing even more, whether that means building awareness or praying and walking with each other,” he said.