PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2021

WS205

RESISTANCE, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS DURING COVID PANDEMIC

| BACKGROUND

Almost everywhere in the world, certain groups of people more than others experience severe forms of deprivation and discrimination, violence, abuse and extortion, and even detention and incarceration (including arbitrary arrest) due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, citizenship status, or sexual orientation. Human mobility has increased significantly during the last two decades, as internally displaced or international migrants seek to escape wars, conflicts, ethnic persecution, political instability, armed violence, extreme poverty, income inequality, and, increasingly, climate change impacts. Many of these drivers of population movement originate in corporate practices (e.g., the continuing international arms trade), government policies (e.g., a proliferation of trade and investment agreements compromising livelihoods), and national and global failures to deal effectively with climate change. Extractivism has led to forced displacement and dispossession of indigenous communities all over the world. Many of those most affected by displacement or forced migration are women and children. Others face discrimination within their own countries and may seek migration or refugee status to avoid violence, including members of LGBTQ+ communities, or those discriminated against based on race, religion, ethnicity, or other minority differences. Aggravation

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these existing social exclusion and prejudice. People of color, people in lower-income households, indigenous communities, unauthorized migrants (especially those in detention centers), refugees and asylum seekers, and prisoners (including political prisoners) have experienced a higher burden of the pandemic. These vulnerable populations and socially excluded groups were heavily impacted in terms of higher prevalence of infections, higher severity of the disease, compromised access to healthcare services, and higher rates of deaths. Mental health impacts, and increase in gender-based violence and domestic violence have also been seen.

| OBJECTIVES

- Identify and describe forms of resistance in terms of enforced extraterritorial obligations, governmental policies, social movements. How may they be supported? What have been the opportunities and threats?
- Identify and discuss policy proposals to address social exclusion at different levels, calling upon the conference participants to adopt.



Panelist

Akihiro Seita

Director, Health Department

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Dr Akihiro Seita is the Director of the Health Department at UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Special Representative at UNRWA since November 2010.
As the director of health, Dr Seita is the leader in health reform. He successfully converted UNRWA health services to implement best practices based on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) including the introduction of a person-centered family medicine approach, electronic medical records (e-health), and mental health care.
Dr Seita is currently the Chair of the UNRWA COVID-19 Coordination Body since February 2020. He takes the lead in developing shared vision and strategy in UNRWA's overall response to COVID-19 pandemic, and effectively communicate and guide UNRWA directors from all five fields and from different departments to implement and monitor a high-quality response.

Dr Seita assumes number of leadership roles in the senior management in UNRWA, including Chair of Advisory Committee on Human Resources (ACHR) to supervise senior staff recruitment process since
December 2019, and Interim Delegate for Decision Review (or management review) since January 2020. This reflects Dr Seita's commitment to quality work and integrity.
Dr Seita is the innovator in health systems. He led the introduction of smartphone applications on maternal and child health and non-communicable diseases. He is a strong advocate for Palestine refugees. He works very closely with the Lancet (global scientific journal) and international partners
to organize international events and writes peer review journal articles.