

Press release #24

## **Six months since the first case in Nicaragua**

Nicaragua, 11 September 2020

**The epidemic has not ceased. Do NOT let you guard down! Let's keep our preventative measures. Zero group meetings, keep a two meters distance from other people, use your face mask and face shield in public places, don't touch your face and constantly wash your hands with water and soap for 40 seconds.**

### **Take preventative measures and let's save lives!**

Almost 6 months since the report of the first COVID-19 case in Nicaragua, the people still do not know what the true situation is with regards to the infection. There have not been prevalent reports, real data for the number of mildly, moderate and gravely sick people is still unknown and in the case of deaths, **the true scale of the pandemic is unknown.**

To approach the illness scientifically it is necessary to know the number of negative tests alongside the distribution among ages genders and regions. We must also know about the cases, their symptomology, and the ages and genders of the people who have been sick. Nicaragua has the right to know the true behavior of COVID-19. Only by knowing will we understand what we are facing and how to prepare ourselves.

The lack of a responsible and adequate response guided by the national authorities has meant a **series of sacrifices by citizens for their physical health, mental health and their lives.**

**There are those close to reaching six months of being inside of their homes.** Households have taken responsibility, particularly women, looking after children's education. There has been an increase in investment to access the internet, shopping habits have changed, some have reduced their entertainment activities and this has all caused a strong deceleration of the country's economy.

The denial of the Ministry of Health (MINSAs) to carry out the RT-PCR test to diagnose COVID-19

has caused households to take on the cost of multiple lab tests.

The out of pocket expense as a percentage of total healthcare expenses was 31% in Latin America and 32% in Nicaragua in 2018 according to the OPS. There is literature that indicates that **“out of pocket expenses in healthcare can plunge a household into a state of extreme poverty,** to the extent that these are incurred at the expense of purchasing other goods and services.” This shows that out of pocket expenses (which were already elevated in the country) for private healthcare has meant a **serious impact on family economies on top of an extended economic crisis in the country since 2018.**

The same OPS has recommended “eliminating the expenses that people make out of pocket as they constitute an important barrier towards accessing healthcare services.”

**The uncertainty caused by the lack of knowledge of best practice treatment of the illness has also provoked serious disarray in the pharmaceutical market:** shortages, stockpiling, unjustified increase in prices and at this moment, a drop in those prices. These expenses impact the economy, in general all families, but especially those that are in poverty.

**Families have lost faith in the healthcare system,** especially in hospitals, both public and private. Families have opted to get help via alternative channels including social networks and over the phone. There isn't an evidence that

centers for primary care have been used by the public to treat and prevent COVID-19.

Despite all the efforts of international organisms, scientific institutions, independent press outlets and the Nicaraguan civil society, **there is still a significant lack of knowledge of the illness** that can be observed in inadequate measures, a high index of self-medication, delayed attention and other behaviours that have been reported to the Citizen Observatory.

Almost 6 months since the beginning of the pandemic and 4,818 cases and 144 deaths later, the Nicaraguan government has not carried out a single study in prevalence of the illness in populations of the highest risk such as those older than 60 or healthcare personnel, never mind among the general population.

In the last month, the level of public activities has increased notably – just this week we received reports of 80 different activities.

These activities will have a delayed impact, as such **we recommend continuing with preventative measures in the street, public transport, workplaces, schools, etc.**

Please find attached the (Spanish language) report from **3 September 2020 to 9 September 2020**, developed by the Observatory:

Suspected cases reported by the Observatory	Deaths from pneumonia and suspected COVID-19 reported by the Observatory
<b>10205</b>	<b>2707</b>

*\* Suspected cases reported by the Observatory, deaths by pneumonia and suspected COVID-19 have been verified by a local information source.*

Cases confirmed by MINSA	Deaths reported by MINSA
<b>4818</b>	<b>144</b>

**We demand that the Ministry of Health carries out its responsibilities in looking after public health, which includes informing the public of the risks and showing them how to protect themselves.** Until now, the information gaps express the weakness of this institution in not identifying an 'active circulation zone' of the virus in this country, as well as other questions that have gone unanswered by the authorities.

As of 9 September, we report a grand total of **10,205 suspected cases verified by the Citizen Observatory** in all departments and autonomous regions (in 138 municipalities, one more than last week - 90% of the country).

As of 9 September, we report a total of 2,707 deaths by pneumonia or suspected COVID-19.

In total, there have been reports of 2,346 irregularities of which 37.8% correspond to the exposure of people during group activities. This week there were reports of a siege of workers who were fired in a free zone, preventing them from filing their complaints in court, thus violating their right to freedom of expression and labour rights.