

Press release #25

## **Six months since reports of the first COVID-19 case in Nicaragua**

Nicaragua, 19 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 metres 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!**

On the 18 March 2020, exactly six months ago, Nicaraguans were informed of the first case of COVID-19 in Nicaragua, and **the true magnitude of the pandemic continues to be unknown.**

At that time, as we were being given information on the age and gender of the affected person, we were not told where they had been in the days before their diagnosis. We were also not told if the Ministry of Health was fulfilling its legal mandate to follow up on the known contacts of the infected person nor if other potential points of contact were being investigated.

It was already known that there had been a case in South Korea where a person had visited very crowded religious services, commercial spaces and entertainment venues that were also crowded, however the official spokesperson for the Nicaraguan Government decided to give us a lot of information without informing the people of Nicaragua of the risks. It was the beginning of a long and tenacious chain of disinformation!

**In Nicaragua, we have the right to know the true behaviour of COVID-19 in the country. Only by knowing this will we know what we are facing and how to prepare ourselves accordingly.**

The lack of a responsible and adequate response guided by the national authorities has meant a series of sacrifices by this country's citizens, which has affected their physical health, their mental health and their lives.

**As citizens, we still do not know the results of the diagnostic tests carried out. We do not know if there have been studies on the prevalence of the disease in the country.**

The uncertainty caused by the lack of knowledge in best practice for the treatment of the disease has provoked serious unrest in the pharmaceutical market.

The Ministry of Health (MINSAL) in its last report on 15 September reported having 3,689 people who have recovered from COVID-19. With these results in mind, it is important to know – **how are COVID-19 sequels being expressed in the affected Nicaraguan public?** COVID-19 sequels can take place in various ways, whether they are physical, psychological, or economic. They depend greatly on the gravity of the disease and the medical attention that the patient has received. We know little about this, **the Nicaraguan healthcare authorities are entirely silent on this topic, as they have been on any pertinent information on the development of the pandemic in the national territory**, each municipality, gender, and age groups.

**We continue to demand that the Ministry of Health fulfils its responsibility as public health authority, which includes informing the population, so they know the risks and how to protect themselves.**

In the last weeks, the lack of information shared by the Ministry of Health from Tuesday to Tuesday has tended to reinforce the official discourse that COVID-19 has been overcome and that we can all

calmly return to our normal lives. Consequently, as group activities took place over the national holiday fewer and fewer people took personal protective measures.

Some commercial venues have also relaxed their voluntary protective measures, such as the obligatory temperature test, adequate uses of face masks and obligatory social distancing of at least two metres.

Believing that we are all infected and that – in some way – we have achieved herd immunity is an irresponsible attitude that puts our lives and those of our families at risk as there is no scientific evidence that this has happened in the country.

We have received fewer reports via our Citizen Observatory networks as deaths continue to be reported; as we face a lack of complete, true and timely information **we invite you to share information privately through our social networks.**

The only possible reading of the latest COVID-19 reports show that the existence of a single case or death **means that the virus is still circulating which means the risk of infection, disease or death is still present and is strengthened by the diminishing of precautions.**

Please find attached the (Spanish language) report from **10 September 2020 to 16 September 2020**, developed by the Observatory:

Suspected cases reported by the Observatory	Deaths from pneumonia and suspected COVID-19 reported by the Observatory
<b>10258</b>	<b>2721</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>4961</b>	<b>147</b>

The profile of people who are most vulnerable is: **male, people older than 60 and those with preexisting illnesses – they are at major risk of developing the illness in its most severe forms.** Meanwhile children, teenagers, and young people, as well as the adult population are all at risk of acquiring the infection without developing the illness. By acquiring the infection, we are at risk of passing it on to vulnerable people, who in most instances will be those who we love, including our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and other human beings who have often been our protectors. It is now our turn to protect them by protecting ourselves.

We continue to suggest taking the same protective measures that have been effective in combating the infection: **washing your hands with water and soap for at least 40 seconds** and if we do not have access to water and soap, cleaning our hands with 70% alcohol during 20 seconds. We should be maintaining a **physical distance of 2 metres** from other people; **using our face masks with three layers** and if possible, a **face shield**; **and if possible avoiding group activities. Stay at home as much as you can!**