



The Society of Jesus calls for justice in the global allocation of COVID-19 vaccines

As COVID-19 vaccination campaigns accelerate in the world's wealthiest countries, the Society of Jesus joins the calls for concrete efforts to ensure an equitable and just vaccine allocation framework. Currently, [87% of administered vaccines](#) have gone to high-income or upper-middle income countries while [low-income countries have received only 0.2%](#) of available vaccines. [More than 3, 2 million](#) people have died from COVID- 19 worldwide.

In the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis invites us to realize that we are all in the same boat, but emphasizes the [existing inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic](#). He highlights how the world's nations have failed to cooperate in ensuring a just distribution of resources, especially among our least advantaged sisters and brothers. He urges us to ensure that all people have equal access to care.

Fr. Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, affirms: "COVID-19 is showing us that we are one humanity and how overcoming a crisis is possible when we become aware of the importance of looking after the common good and taking seriously our own individual responsibility. We can only live as one body."

The Vatican COVID-19 Commission as well as the Religious Leaders Declaration of 27 April have strongly [advised against vaccine nationalism](#), rejecting the commercial exploitation inherent in disputes over patent rights and calling for deeper human solidarity in the fight against the virus.

We, as organisations of the Society of Jesus, committed to upholding the dignity of all people, especially marginalized and vulnerable communities all over the world, add our voice to the many individuals and groups in the Church and civil society which are advocating for equity and justice in the production and distribution of vaccines.

Excessive vaccine stockpiling by wealthy countries further threatens the lives of people around the world, contributing to [twice as many deaths](#) than if vaccines were distributed on an equitable, population-based model. Countries such as the UK and US have purchased as many as three vaccines per person.

To promote greater access to vaccines, South Africa and India have called on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to [temporarily waive certain patent rights](#) for all medical products related to COVID-19 to ensure that all countries, regardless of wealth, have access to life-saving medical technologies. The proposal has gathered significant support from low and middle-income countries and is a crucial step to removing barriers related to intellectual property which would allow for the rapid expansion of vaccine production, particularly in countries that already have large-scale pharmaceutical firms. In accordance with the Universal Apostolic Preferences, which call us to walk

with the excluded in a mission of justice and reconciliation, the Society of Jesus stands in full support of this proposal.

We welcome the decision of President Biden to support the waiver. We also welcome comments by European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, that the EU is ready to discuss the waiver. But the gravity of the situation in countries like India is a reminder that action must be taken urgently. Any delay will be measured in the further suffering and deaths of people especially the poorest and most marginalized.

The Society of Jesus supports the following actions:

- Urge those countries still blocking the proposal for a temporary waiver of patent rights to support it so as to expand and speed up the production and distribution of life-saving technologies, medication and vaccines
- Encourage all countries to prioritize distribution of vaccines to the most vulnerable among their own citizens
- Urge wealthy countries to fill funding gaps for the COVAX initiative and to share surplus vaccines from their own stockpiles
- Call on International Financial Institutions and private creditors to cancel the debts of low and middle income countries to allow them to respond to and recover from the pandemic

The Society of Jesus is committed to engaging in advocacy at the local, national, and international levels with like-minded organisations to ensure that all individuals, no matter where they live, have access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Nobody will be safe from the virus until everyone is safe, underscoring the need for increased justice and solidarity in addressing this global issue.

10 May 2021
Rome

Xavier Jeyaraj SJ
Secretary, Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat

Signatories:

Roberto Jaramillo SJ- President, Jesuit Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean(CPAL)

Agbonkhianmegue E. Orobator SJ- President, Jesuit Conference of Africa Madagascar (JCAM)

Antonio F. Moreno SJ- President, Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP)

Timothy P. Kesicki SJ- President, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States of America (JCCU)

Franck Janin SJ- President, Jesuit Conference of Europe (JCEP)

Jerome Stanislaus D' Souza SJ, President, Jesuit Conference South Asia (JCSA)

