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Leave No One Behind.

Intervention by IFRC

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If we want to be realistic and pragmatic, we cannot say that governments and authorities at all levels in the world have understood how much the tragedy of substance abuse contributes to the unhappiness of people, families and our communities.

The consequences of such insensibility is the wrong use of therapeutic approaches which are inadequate to the needs of people who use drugs. Stigma and discrimination are the cause and the effect of the barriers encountered by the patients everywhere in the globe. Stigma is itself an infectious disease, is a virus, and is the biggest responsible of this slow process of liberation from the slavery of drugs of million of patients worldwide.

We need a stronger strategy to let more government support harm reduction and therapies. Probably we all agree in this room that harm reduction is an effective method – the evidence has been available for many years now. Therapy path starts from there. But not enough is being done to put it into practice. Harm reduction encompasses policy, strategies and

programmes designed to reduce the health risks posed by drug use.

What we need to do now is to influence who doesn't agree with us. After so many Conferences and slogan we could frankly say that a world entirely free of drugs is a utopia. But we can fight to provide HR approach in all the world at least.

Only once we had accepted this fact we could implement a series of measures that combined may create a more dignified existence for those who, for whatever reason, are addicted to drugs. Especially by empowering them.

Only then we can address the total care requirements for drug users. Only then we could ensure that legislation does not impede, but facilitate the access to health care. Only then drug users will be viewed not as the problem but as part of the solution.

Let me emphasise this last point. Drug users have to be involved in the decisions that concern them. Must be empowered. Must be recognized as sick people from one side,

but also as social subject totally able to contribute to the social growth, if is given them the possibility to use their voice. In this sense methadone helped and will help a lot.

We should ensure that people who are struggling with drug addiction be given equal access to health and social services. Family support in this sense is vital. In my experience as funder of Villa Maraini, the best allies for the success of our therapies are the families.

Meet, test and treat all drug users, for example, will help also our communities and families to be safer from infectious diseases risk.

As IFRC together with NGO's we want to continue our advocacy work to go on fighting against the stigmatisation and discrimination that stops drugs users from accessing crucial health services; to work together to revise legislation where necessary.

Leaving no one behind is the title of IFRC's World Disaster Report edition for 2018. It explores how different people are

left behind in humanitarian response, and why. It highlights the humanitarian impacts of crisis, including the complex emergencies, the necessity to address the needs of particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, at local level, and the importance of working with local organisations and communities.

As I speak, volunteers in our National RCRC societies are on the ground working with communities including people who use drugs playing an important role to achieve Universal Health Coverage in development. They work to “reach the last mile” and leave no one behind, to provide health and care to those who are outside or at the margin of the formal health sector.

Our volunteers speak their peoples’ languages; they know their customs; they are there amongst them long before a crisis, and long after it. They are often the only ones who have access to the most vulnerable people and the hardest to reach, in places which are often without schools, without hospitals, without government. I would like that starting from today we can create an alliance between the Volunteers of Green

Crescent and those of Red Cross and Red Crescent to work together in favour of drug users.

To resume, I would like to repeat here in this room what I did say last week during Ministerial Segment: Therapy, therapy and therapy for all, it must be our common slogan, our priority, our key word!

(Massimo Barra)