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Foreword

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 304, *Healthcare organization management*.

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Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus that is currently affecting many countries around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus “a public health emergency of international concern” on 30 January 2020 and a global pandemic on 11 March, 2020.

Public health crises pose a threat to lives, escalate socioeconomic crises, and jeopardize survival. These crises affect all members of society, but pose a greater threat to those already affected by structural inequalities. If the dignity of socially vulnerable groups is compromised due to a pandemic resulting from an infectious disease, such an infringement constitutes the violation of the dignity of all individuals who are equal as human beings.

Caring for socially vulnerable groups is important as it can strengthen social structures. According to *Strengthening and adjusting public health measures throughout the COVID-19 transition phases, policy considerations for the WHO European Region*, published by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, strengthening social structures needs to be considered as a way of reducing socioeconomic damage, which can contribute to the reinforcement of social cohesion and engagement while ensuring that no one is left behind. In doing so, society can also meet the need for medical and social services, thereby ensuring the health and recovery of its members.

Thus, this document provides guidance to enable humanitarian aid providers and local communities to plan, establish and support a set of minimum multi-sectoral responses in terms of essential social welfare services and medical support for socially vulnerable groups, in an effort to respect human rights based on the dignity of all members of society in the event of a respiratory epidemic disaster.

The implementation of this document requires comprehensive cooperation among various actors involved in humanitarian aid. In the midst of a global pandemic of an infectious disease, it is difficult to expect that any single local community or organization has the capability to implement all necessary minimum responses on its own. This document can be utilized by all humanitarian aid actors to coordinate and organize the necessary forms of support. It is particularly important for local communities and authorities to actively engage at all levels; and their engagement is essential in order to successfully adjust and implement support measures, enhance local capacity, and ensure sustainable support.

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