**Notes from Engagement and Co-production Working Group meeting – June 3, 2020**

During our meeting we discussed:

- Progress on remote and online engagement in Dhaka. Camilla and the Dhaka team are gauging interest for small and short (60-90min) online meetings with selected stakeholders divided thematically to explore how Pathways can align with current priorities, keeping in mind they may have recently changed due to COVID-19.
- Majid has highlighted that Pathways is not a COVID-19 project and we should ensure that we focus on keeping the project's themes at the centre of the various discussions we are having with partners. For example, rather than focussing on COVID, we should frame the discussions around topics that the project can tackle (housing density, WASH, housing…) and interrogate how they would look like in a post-COVID19 world. We need to be careful in ensuring we manage expectations and do not promise things we cannot deliver around COVID-related priorities.
- Frans specified that we aim to engage with the partners in Dhaka around the issues that the Dhaka team have identified and understand their priorities and views in the context of the goal of health equity, bearing in mind that COVID will have shifted some of the priorities and impacted on stakeholders.
- We need to be conscious that in this uncertain setting things can and will change very quickly and any reflection we start will be about how things are at a specific point in time. This is based on the fact that in an emergency such as this one people tend to think about new things as they come up. For example, "safety" has now a lot to do with social distancing and the pandemic has brought up different facets of old topics. However we decide to engage with stakeholders, we need to be clear that we are at a point of a project that is about health equity and about what we're capable of delivering.
- This idea that the priorities are changing and are highly dynamic means that people's views change over short periods of time. What does that mean, for example, about our partners in Accra? Camilla/Frans to think about going back to Accra's partners.
- We should also reflect on how policy professionals are making decisions now. Often, they need to happen fast and based on the science that is current at the time. An example is how most countries have quickly made masks mandatory, but London hasn't. A co-production perspective could be useful in looking at why certain things are going to be back to normal in months, or a year, while others will happen sooner, or change entirely. Who makes these decisions and why? An empirical documentation of these processes, looking at the changes that have happened and why would be a great addition to the quantitative and methodological side of the project.
- Frans has formalised our reflections around a more systematic way of moving forward with our co-production agenda (see below a summary of his thoughts – Annex A).
- Gary agreed that caution is needed in linking this project to covid-19 too much. We can take a very conservative and incremental approach to it while still focussing on where the project could be helpful, considering that the pandemic has touched on many of the issues Pathways is investigating. We need to "keep the door open" and identify where we could have a voice and do things that are informative or useful while ensuring we manage expectations.
- Meghan highlighted a specific point about researchers needing to think about different products for policy professionals that don't necessarily match our academic outputs. How can we provide some "behind-the-scenes" engagement and support to our partners? How can we contribute to the conversations they are having at the moment? As researchers we need to think about different outputs that help us reach out as it is our responsibility. We may not

always have built-in mechanisms for doing it or the skills to do it but we should think about resources to provide quick responses to authorities. We could focus on capacity building to write policy briefs. Majid/Giulia to look into Imperial's Public Affairs team and see how resources can be put on this. Here is a link of a preprint that has been put together by Pathways researchers on parks and social distancing: https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.05.11.20098269v1

- Going back to the co-production work, Frans highlighted that we need to ensure we take covid-19 into account when we talk to policy people/about policy as its impact will have been impossible to ignore. We need to include reflections around it in the different themes that Pathways aims to tackle and ensure that it is recognised in our different outputs, especially thinking about the policy scenarios. We have to carry on with remote engagement, recognise opportunities that we can take (for example in online engagement) and identify areas in which the project can make distinctive contributions.

- Majid also added that the pandemic will have impacts on economy and society, with most governments trying to "go back" to whatever model existed before COVID. We need a reflection on how we carry on doing our quantitative science in a way that still has equity at its centre, in relations to Pathways themes. For example, the capacity to work from home or ability to cycle to work will have an impact on who's able to keep their job; housing and access to outdoor space will be even more relevant. To understand these changes it is even more important that engagement is carried out not just with government people but also with civil society groups, charities etc to ensure that we position the project.

Actions for next meeting:

- Zahid/Marzuka (Camilla) to select stakeholders for online meetings/workshops for Dhaka on: WASH, housing, flooding
- Camilla to develop goals and agenda for these meetings (60-90 minutes)
- Frans/Camilla to keep reflecting on co-production in Pathways and COVID-19
- Camilla to present on media monitoring preliminary findings

# Annex A - PATHWAYS Co-production WG

**Coronavirus pandemic and PATHWAYS**

One way of organising our thinking about the impacts of COVID on PATHWAYS is to consider:

- *The substance of what we do*: how have the research questions and the policy needs changed with respect to equitable and sustainable urban health?
- *The partnerships and alliances we make*: who should we be working with, given that the questions and priorities may have changed, and the role of the project may have changed (from informing to advocating, for instance)?
- *The mode of engagement*: Given that much of the work, at least until early 2021, will need to be done remotely, how should we be engaging with societal partners?

Below is a list of some of the considerations we may discuss. This is not exhaustive and nor would we be able to do all these things. The aim is to have a discussion and agree a practical way forward.

*Substance*

- COVID and health equity: There is new data about the impacts of social, economic and cultural difference on health outcomes, also in cities. This can inform our modelling, but also draws attention to the pattern and scope of health inequalities.
- COVID and urban form: The spatial and social pattern of COVID morbidity and mortality tells us something about health risk and urban form. This is useful data for analysis but should also feed into our discussions about housing, neighbourhoods and green space, transport and other services.
- COVID and resilience: The pandemic has shown that an important aspect of health inequality in cities relates to emergencies. Organising cities for greater health equity and sustainability is therefore tied up with how resilient cities are to emergencies. This is related to form, governance and local capacities. Across PATHWAYS cities, different levels of resilience will have been revealed by the COVID crisis and understanding how to strengthen future resilience could be a task for the project.

*Partnerships*

- Identifying change agents: The COVID crisis has revealed the weaknesses of much Government planning and provision (it can be seen as a **systemic institutional failure**). At the same time, new agents of change in the public, private, civil society and individual/local setting have come forward to show that they can bring rapid and effective change. In the PATHWAYS cities, which have been the most dynamic and relevant in the urban health equity arena? Can we connect with them?

*Modes of engagement*

- Online engagement: The massive adoption of digital platforms to enable organisations, locally and internationally, to continue functioning offers new opportunities as well as challenges for social engagement in projects like PATHWAYS. What can we learn about effective ways of engaging online? What are the risks and problems? How might digital and face-to-face interactions complement each other in future?

Frans Berkhout, 3rd June 2020