The Issue of Access to Vaccines in Marginalised Communities

On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the coronavirus SARS-Cov-2n (COVID-19) as a pandemic and this virus continues to disrupt the world with new mutations and variants. Though initially 'defenceless' against the disease, various vaccines have been developed in record-breaking speed, the first in the UK being administered on 8 December 2020. Since then, over 55% of the world population have received at least one dose of a vaccine and 75% in the UK.

Despite these advancements, there is a clear difference in the accessibility of vaccines for members of certain communities. It appears to be a recurrent theme that members of marginalised communities were consistently less likely to have been vaccinated leaving them unprotected against the virus. A study done by OpenSAFELY revealed that in England, one in four elderly black people were not vaccinated compared with 3% of white people of the same age.

The tense relationship between marginalised communities and the medical system that has persisted over generations, especially on the topic of vaccines, comes into play when considering the accessibility of vaccines. Long histories of poor medical treatment and experimentation on marginalised communities has caused a lingering mistrust and contribute to the significantly higher rates of vaccine hesitancy that is seen in these communities.

This issue cannot be allowed to persist, and developments must be made to try and ensure that members of marginalised communities are not continued to be left vulnerable and have their lives at risk.

Points to Consider
- What is your country's current vaccine rollout? How many have been vaccinated and from which communities?
- How does your country present information about vaccines? How might this come across to members of marginalised communities?
- Which communities has your country prioritised vaccine rollout to? How has this affected your country's overall vaccine rollout?
- What is your country's history with offering health services to marginalised communities? How can your country overcome mistrust of health services by marginalised communities?
- Is it the responsibility of the government or vaccinated members of marginalised communities to encourage vaccine uptake? What steps can your country take to overcome vaccine hesitancy?
- How does your country plan to make vaccines more accessible?

Useful Links
- https://data.undp.org/vaccine-equity/
- https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=GBR
- https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)00306-8/fulltext