

# Gaps

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**Photo: Expreso**

By Guillermo Alvarado

The failure of negotiations at the World Trade Organization, the WTO, to advance in the release of patents for vaccines against COVID-19 and thus achieve equitable access to these products, will maintain or widen the gaps between rich and poor countries in the fight against the pandemic.

After two days of discussions in the Council dealing with intellectual property issues, the head of this team, Dagfin Sorli, announced that no positive conclusion was reached, which sends a bad signal to the whole planet because once again solidarity is behind profit.

Non-Governmental Organizations, the UN, numerous countries and personalities from all over the world support the initiative to free the patents, allow the mass production of these biopreparations and alleviate the pressure on the peoples who lack the financial power to buy them.

However, the large pharmaceutical transnationals and the nations from which their capital originates refuse with multiple arguments. One of the latest was that temporarily suspending their intellectual property rights would weaken innovation.

They artfully avoid the fact that much of the research for these vaccines was financed with public funds.

It should be noted here that when we speak of "public funds," we are not thinking of money owned by governments, because none of them generates wealth, they only administer that which is produced by the people and goes into the state coffers through various mechanisms, particularly taxes.

It turns out, then, that it was with the product of the work of society that these transnationals were able to carry out their research until they reached the product that now brings them obscene profits.

Except for Cuba, which produces its own preparations, poor countries are vaccinating their populations with donations, which are insufficient crumbs, and the result can be seen with a glance at world statistics.

According to an updated report by Our World in Data, the United States fully vaccinated 57.3 percent of its inhabitants; Japan 66.6; Germany 65.7; France 67.2; Italy 70.9; and Spain immunized 78.2.

At the other extreme are nations such as Iraq, with 7.9 percent; Nigeria, 1.1 percent; Ethiopia, 0.8 percent; Uganda, 0.9 percent; Ivory Coast, 2.3 percent; and Afghanistan, from which Western troops have just withdrawn, 1.1 percent.

As can be seen at a glance, the differences are abysmal, like night and day, like life and death.

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