

COVID19 in Africa

Since our last newsletter, our world has entered what feels somewhat like a sci-fi movie. First we heard stories from abroad, then with very little warning, coronavirus hit the US. We saw panic purchasing of food staples, cleaning supplies, and paper products followed by new rules that kept changing every day. Gatherings were to be kept to groups no bigger than 250 people, then 50, then 10, then 5. The term “social distancing” became part of our vocabulary. We couldn’t go to church, school, the salon, or out for dinner. Weddings, graduations, and sporting events were all cancelled or postponed. Life changed abruptly. But most of us have now settled into a state of acceptance--working from home, worshipping via livestream, and leaving our homes only to buy groceries or other necessities. We are thankful to have good doctors nearby (with the capability for virtual doctor visits, if necessary), plenty of clean water and soap (even if we can’t get ahold of hand sanitizer anymore), and food to eat (even if we can’t always find our favorite brands nowadays). But imagine if you lived in Africa, in a hut. Staying home for weeks would not be an option. Obtaining fresh water, even in the best of times, is a daily ordeal and requires going out, often long distances and where lots of others



are also gathering for water. Food is not always plentiful. You would grow or raise most of it yourself and most likely wouldn’t have a large stash. You would need to go out to trade or sell in order to get money. If your child got sick, there probably wouldn’t be the necessary medicine close at hand. Or any kind of medical help, for that matter. As in the case of the widows in DR Congo, you would have to hire a boda boda (motorcycle taxi) driver to drive you, holding the sick child, the twelve miles into town to the nearest health facility. The trip would take over an hour on the winding, hilly, and very rutty roads. And you would

have had to leave all the other children at home alone fending for themselves. Confinement in Africa doesn’t look like confinement here. No Netflix. No cozy family times roasting marshmallows for s’mores while sitting around a campfire. No big home improvement projects there is finally time for. No Skype/Facetime/Zoom to keep the friendship connections close. The fear of disease is real.

In DR Congo, the HCCA ministry team is going around door to door to the homes of the widows (since the government is not allowing gatherings of more than 20) to teach them about disease prevention. There is a desperate need for hand sanitizer since it requires no water and is quite portable. Ideally they would like to get some into each household so all 224 of the orphans and widows there have access to it. That's where we come in. We aren't in a position to babysit, give rides, or set up a meal train for the widows. But we can give. Even in our own confinements we can share of what we have without ever leaving our homes. Please consider letting God use you in that way today.

Blankets and Mosquito Nets

They stated a need, and you listened. Thank you! There was much rejoicing over the blankets and mosquito nets HCCA was able to hand out last month. According to the website worldometers.info, which sets forth some fascinating up-to-the-minute statistics, between January 1st and March 25th of this year, 21,000 people around the world died of coronavirus. However, during that same time frame, 228,000 died of malaria. That is a startling statistic! But it's a good reminder that the mosquito is an ever present problem in many places around the world. Netting, of course, is the first line of defense against these malaria-carrying creatures. How much better to prevent than to have to treat. So your gifts mean a lot!

And an Interesting Tidbit



Ebola is always a concern in DR Congo. We were a bit surprised to be met on the tarmac by a woman with a thermometer to check our temperatures even before we got into the airport when we landed in Bunia in January. There was also a handwashing station set up outside the airport that we were directed to use. Restaurants always had a sink at the ready for handwashing, and we encountered roadblocks (a rope stretched across the road) where we had to stop, get our temperatures checked, and get a squirt each of hand sanitizer before being allowed to continue on our way (they would lower the rope so we could drive over it). So the importance of handwashing is not lost on the folks in both Uganda and DR Congo.

- Jonathan Unverzagt (and Hope)
Assistant Director, HCCA

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- Give to the gift of a micro loan _____
- Give the gift of health to provide medicine _____
- Give to the general fund so we can meet the most pressing needs _____



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