

## LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE...

## BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



Like an earthquake, the Coronavirus has shaken the ground beneath our feet. Things we assumed we could count on have been cancelled or postponed. We're doing some things we could never have imagined (staying at home in our bubbles, distancing ourselves from others), and we're not doing many things we expected to be doing (gathering together for church, visiting family members, commuting to work). Secure jobs have disappeared. Education has shifted to homes. People are dying and loved ones cannot attend funerals.

Earthquakes are scary and dangerous because they upend what we assumed was strong and stable. Coronavirus has done this to many of our assumptions, and a lot of us are struggling to find our feet. We're off-balance, disoriented, uncertain, lonely, grieving.

It is also having a very significant impact on our partners. Many of them are facing new issues, and new layers of need are piling on top all the existing ones. As well as COVID-19, rebels are attacking our partners in northern Mozambique, one of our partners died in Myanmar, a partner couple in Pakistan was robbed by armed bandits, schools are in desperate need as the kids stay home and aren't paying fees, and locusts are sweeping through East Africa destroying crops.

It doesn't make for great reading. A number of partners have written expressing the point that COVID-19 is forcing many to make the difficult decision between possibly catching the virus and definitely dying of starvation. Lockdown and social distancing seem to be Western luxuries.

Many trips have already been cancelled by BHW facilitators, and this is shaping up to be a very different year to what we imagined in January. We're having to make many difficult decisions. We're not an aid agency, but it's impossible not to be drawn into the immediate needs of our friends. Many have given to our appeal and we're in touch with many partners who are helping with the little they have. Have a look on our website and Facebook and see some of the stories.

And, at the same time, we cannot afford to be diverted from the long-term vision of helping people become self-sustaining. It really is like an earthquake. Once the short-term aid period has passed we must get back into building the long-term capacity of our partners. The dream remains that all our partners have enough capacity to withstand these earthquakes with their own resources. Disasters like this keep reminding us that resilience and capacity are so important. Development cannot flourish when people are constantly in relief mode hanging out for the next handout.

We're in a period when wisdom is required like never before. It is a time when many of the gains made in previous years could be destroyed, when focus could be shattered and when confidence in the God of Psalm 91 may crumble. Otherwise this earthquake will shatter the foundations of faith and hope. And that would be a real tragedy.

Kevin Honore  
*New Partnerships Facilitator*

It is impossible to publish a newsletter at the moment without it focusing on how COVID-19 is impacting the poorest of the poor around the world.

For the team here at Bright Hope World, even as we individually struggle with lockdown isolation and, for some, threatened jobs and lost income, our hearts are heavy for the reality of facing this virus in the places where our partners live.

These are places without social safety nets, government subsidies or mortgage holidays. These are places that are facing chronic food shortages, rapidly rising prices and alarming gaps in medical care.

For that reason, a couple of weeks ago we launched a COVID-19 appeal and have been posting regular updates from our partners ([www.brighthopeworld.com/covid-19.asp](http://www.brighthopeworld.com/covid-19.asp)).

We have been encouraged by the response, and have already sent funds to quite a few partners in urgent need.

Yet our view is that the economic crisis that follows the health crisis will hit the developing world very hard. We are wanting to continue to build a fund to help with loans and job creation over the next six months or so.

If you can help us help the most vulnerable people around the world, please do so. We see this as a genuine Kingdom investment worthy of the God we serve.



*This is an abridged communication we received from a partner working among the poor in north India. For security reasons, we cannot communicate further partner details.*

We were numbed and reduced to tears as we witnessed millions of men, women and children – jobless migrant and daily wage labourer families trying to get back to their villages... hungry, without jobs, without hope... we had to do something... we had to respond!

Our centre in rural North India has, at the best of times, faced opposition. Despite showing genuine love and concern for the community around them, they have continually faced threats. Since COVID-19 hit the country, the local police showed up at the doors of the church. The pastor was apprehensive because of the unrest and negative interactions with the authorities in the past. The police brought a request from the local authorities to make 1,000 cloth facemasks in their centre to be distributed among the community. They then accompanied the pastor there to a local cloth shop, specially opened for them to procure the necessary materials. What the police did not know was that the church community had been praying for ways to respond during the lockdown. The Lord answered by providing an opening to serve and the potential for better relationships with the authorities. The police personnel accompanied our Pastor to distribute the masks. With the Government making it mandatory for everyone to wear face masks whenever they step out of their homes, face masks became a necessity but out of stock. The poor could not afford to buy masks. Our centres responded to the situation and immediately started stitching masks and distributing them to the poor. 4,000 face masks were stitched in house and distributed to common people who have no access to these.

We and the churches have believers who now find themselves living within communities where fear and despair is widespread, and who are joyfully and sacrificially serving their friends and neighbours, being the hands and feet and mouth of Jesus Christ. It is a time of great hardship yet a time of great opportunity. We plan to reach out to at least 2000 families.

Read more partner updates at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/covid-19.asp>.

1. Pray that this virus does not take hold in Africa the same way it has in Asia, the US and Europe. We really need a miracle here or the death toll could be astronomical.
2. Pray that the global church would rise up and be the face of love, service, self-sacrifice and compassion in such trying times. Pray that those that are currently opposing Christians would see their actions and view them differently. Pray that many would come to faith as they seek genuine hope.
3. Pray for all of our partners that are facing hardship, lost income and difficulties in securing food. Pray that God would strengthen them and provide for them.
4. Pray for our partners in northern India that the work they are doing would build relationships and help God be introduced in one of the darkest areas of the world. Pray for protection and safety for our partners there.

*Grace and Gabriel Abanga went from serving in one of Kenya's worst slums to helping build effective farming practices in a very poor and remote rural village.*

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