

BATTLING COVID-19 IN KENYA

As a deer pants for water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

*My soul thirsts for God, for the **living** God.*

When shall I come and appear before God?

*My **tears have been my food** day and night,*

while they say to me all the day long,

"Where is your God?"

These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:

*how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with
glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.*

*Why are you **cast down**, O my soul,*

and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God;

for I shall again praise Him,

my salvation and my God.

Psalms 42:1-5

Last week, my knees hit the floor as I begged God to pass over this place. I cried out for mercy while tears streamed down my face. My soul was downcast from thinking of what could happen in Kenya.

We do not know if coronavirus will wreak havoc in Africa. But if this invisible infection infiltrates the slums of Nairobi, it will overwhelm an ill-equipped and fragile health care system - only 162 ICU beds and 161 ventilators for over 4 million people. Coronavirus will collapse the growing economy. It will cause massive loss of life.

So, how will MOHI Health respond?

Preparedness and Response Plan

To date, there have been 158 cases of COVID-19 in Kenya (6 deaths, 4 recoveries). The Kenyan government is working hard to slow the progression of the disease by implementing key measures.

CONTAINMENT

We are ordered to stay at home, except for essential activities (i.e. buying groceries) and seeking medical services. To encourage this practice, the government instituted curfew from 7 PM to 5 AM. Social distancing is expected, but difficult to practice for many living in 10 ft x 10 ft shanties with 6+ people.

The Kenya border has been closed, but other governments are allowed to evacuate foreigners if necessary. As of yesterday at 7 PM, nobody is allowed to enter or exit Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kilifi Counties for 21 days, which has left some people stranded. Still this was a necessary measure to prevent spreading the virus to rural regions.

"I would rather die of a virus, than die of hunger."

I have been thinking about Bill Gates response to the United States' lockdown measures. He talked about how the deleterious effects to the economy are reversible, but we cannot bring people back to life. The situation is more complex in low- and middle-income countries, like Kenya. At a certain point, lockdown measures here will cause loss of life due to hunger and violence. If people are not allowed to work, then they don't eat. Hungry people make for angry and volatile citizens. People in Mathare Valley slum are saying, "I would rather die of the virus, than die of hunger." The government has the difficult task of deciphering when a lockdown will cause more harm than good. So far, they have made decisions that have largely kept the peace. Praise God!

PREVENTION

Food Distribution. MOHI is in the process of converting some schools to food and supply distribution centers. We have already handed out 2,500 baskets to the neediest

families. Each basket contains staple foods, soap, a pamphlet on ways to prevent coronavirus, and a small devotion. Though the relief goods are supposed to last a family 1 month, we have found that many beneficiaries are sharing with their neighbors who are equally as desperate. We recognize that this is the best way we can help, so we are praying for the funds to distribute more than 15,000 baskets. If you are interested, please donate here: [MOHI Coronavirus Relief](#)

Community Health Evangelists (CHEs). Via phone calls, CHEs are teaching health lessons related to the virus and then encouraging their trainees to teach their households and neighbors. Topics include: handwashing with soap, social distancing, signs and symptoms of the virus, and when to stay home and when to go to the doctor. CHEs and Social Workers are also calling any contacts or students with HIV and insisting that they have a 12 week supply of medication.

Cloth Masks. Due to the challenges of social distancing in Kenya, wearing cloth masks (in combination with good handwashing) is essential to stopping COVID-19. The MOHI sewing center is creating masks in bulk from leftover fabric. We have also trained MOHI sewing graduates to make masks in their communities, which can be sold for 10 cents. CHEs are training on mask usage and maintenance via phone calls.

It's time for CHE!

At the beginning of year, I boldly said, "It's time for CHE!" This simple statement became our slogan for 2020. Little did I realize the true significance of those words.

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Yesterday, I was overcome by a sense of peace. The heavy weight that had been sitting on my chest for weeks was suddenly lifted. My soul was no longer downcast.

Through God's assurance, we know that this too shall pass. Even though we will be forever touched by this moment in history - and some of us will bear deep scars - it's going to be ok.

Please join me in praying for:

- **Government leaders around the world to make decisions that slow the transmission of COVID-19 while preventing violence**
- **Protection over MOHI communities from the virus, hunger, and violence**
- **Raising funds for food relief**
- **For me to find ways to continue using my public health skills and nursing knowledge**
- **Every country to successfully fight coronavirus with minimal consequences**
- **Scientists to find a vaccine or treatment**
- **Individuals mourning the loss of loved ones from the virus, experiencing loneliness, suffering from hunger, or enduring financial hardship**
- **Each one of us to find moments of gratitude, peace, and joy in every day**

Let's keep fixing our eyes on Jesus. The one who brings hope when we are downcast. The one who brings us out of darkness and into his glorious light.

Standing firm in the Lord,

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