

THE LINK Newsletter

SPRING 2020

Stories From
the Ground

An Ounce
of Prevention



Responding to **COVID-19**

Dr. Neal Stretch, Chief Medical Officer for International Needs Canada

While the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns have affected everyone in the world, the poor and vulnerable have faced a total loss of income, severe food shortages, and the risk of starvation. In this issue, we focus on how International Needs responded to the first wave of the crisis, and what we're doing to prepare for the humanitarian crisis that's coming next.



Stories from the Ground

Thanks to all of you who called in asking about the welfare of your sponsored children.

We received a lot of reports from our partners, who did as much as they could to protect the children and families they serve. Here are some of their stories.

Eddie Jibusha, Principal at ZACTS School in Zambia shares,

“ZACTS School closed its doors and sent the students home. However, we are sending food baskets to our vulnerable sponsored children. Last week, local authorities stopped vendors from trading on the streets. This will bring hardship to those who already must live from their meager earnings as street vendors.”

Jocelyn Muraya, Director of International Needs Kenya shares,

“International Needs Kenya asked all programs to immediately put lockdown measures in place. 510 children and their families, from all our programs, received food packages to sustain them for one month. Plans will be made to distribute more food packages as needed.”

Kalpna Tamang, Director of the Lydia Centre in Nepal, shares,

“We sent all 22 trainees back to their villages. We taught the women how to protect themselves and their families from the virus. We also gave them assignments to work on at home. We’re doing our best to help the families with food supplies that will last for a month.”

McDonald Adhikary, IN Director in Bangladesh, shares,

“As most of our children come from families in need, we gave their parents / guardians funds to buy food and health items. The parents expressed great relief and joy when they received this support. We are distributing food parcels to all the families in our programs, and the teachers are sending homework to help the children remain engaged in their studies.”



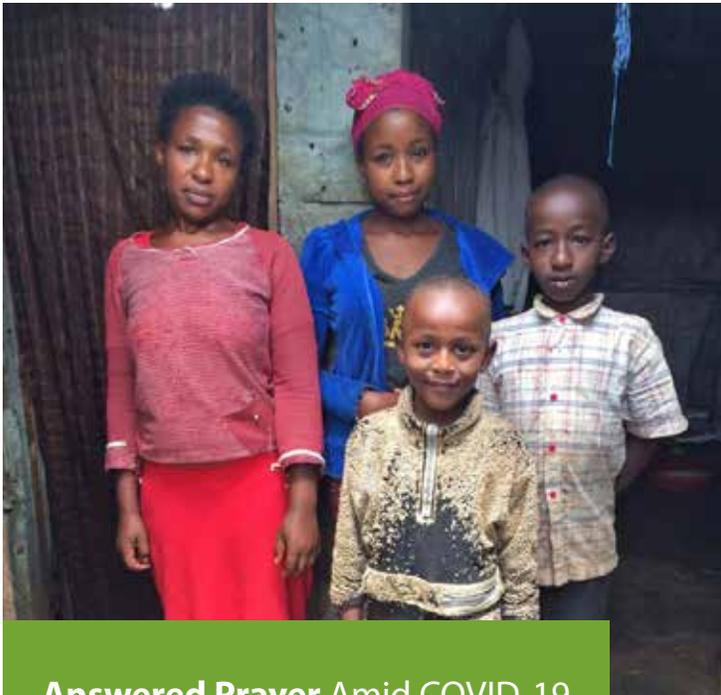
Relief - At Just the Right Time

“Hello, my name is Prakash. I am in grade four at the Naogon Free School, in Bangladesh. My father is a day labourer and the only wage earner in our family. Because my father is not able to go to work we have no money for food. We have spent a lot of time without eating.

continued ...

Then, the staff from International Needs came to our door like angels - carrying rice, lentils, oil, salt, face masks, and soap. We are so grateful and want to bless the people and leaders of this organization. We pray that God will protect you all from this virus."

Hi, my name is Meghnath. My son Indrajit is in grade one at the Naogoan Free School. The food store I worked at has been closed for about two months, and the store owner could not pay me this month's salary. If the lockdown continues, I fear we will die of hunger. It is very difficult to get food. When the staff at International Needs came to our house to give us food, face masks and soap, we were so relieved! Many thanks to those who provided these relief items at this critical time. I pray that God will bless and protect you all.



Answered Prayer Amid COVID-19

Ann Oteke lives in Kibera, Kenya. Two of her children are sponsored through International Needs. When the lockdown began, Ann didn't know how she was going to feed and care for her children. She prayed to God and asked for his help.

Then she received a phone call from our partners in Kenya, asking her to come to their food distribution centre and collect her children's food parcels. Ann was overjoyed! She immediately went to the centre and received the food for her family.

Ann shares,

"I felt like heaven had just opened its doors. The food parcels had all the essentials we needed to sustain us for two weeks. I pray it will be like the pot of flour and the jar of oil that never ran dry in 1 Kings 17:8-24. Thank you so much for caring for us."

COVID-19 exposed the vulnerability in Nairobi's slums.

In Kibera, Nairobi's largest slum, families cluster in 10x10-foot houses made of mud, sticks, and tin roofs. On average, residents share one latrine with up to 150 other people. The people fear dying of hunger more than the coronavirus, which has led to riots and stampedes. Please continue to pray for our partners and the families they serve.



Food Distribution
Brings Hope in the DR Congo

A Food Distribution Campaign in the DR Congo, is bringing hope and encouragement to hundreds of vulnerable families in lockdown.

Tshinyama Kalosa, School Principal at Ephphata School for the Deaf ,

“The families are responding with extreme gratitude for the lifesaving food packages we are sending. They were already suffering from want before the lockdown began. Now, the situation is unbearable. On behalf of our Ephphata School families, we want to thank International Needs Canada for your continued support. It means a lot to all of us. Please, keep us in your prayers.”

The DR Congo is on the United Nations list of extremely vulnerable countries.



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**Frontline Workers
Thank You!**

Healthcare workers, police officers, grocery store clerks, truck drivers, and many more essential workers left the comfort and safety of their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect us and make sure we had what we needed to survive. **Thank you so much!**

Dr. Susan Batten,

“We are all standing and working together to care for our families, friends, and communities together. We must continue to stand up and share our resources (masks, hand sanitizer, financial support). We will only survive this epic event as a local and global community if we give to others - in any way we can.

PRAYER CORNER

Items for Praise

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” - Colossians 4:2

Praise God for the quick reaction of our partners - providing food packages and other essential items to the children and families in their programs, to help them through this crisis.

Items for Prayer

“Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.” - Psalm 4:1

Please pray for our partners and the families they serve at this extremely difficult time. According to the United Nations, the world is facing famines of “biblical proportions” because of the COVID-19 pandemic that could push millions to the brink of starvation. Pray for peace, protection, and provision for the peoples of the world.



An Ounce of Prevention

**A Zoom call
with David
Marshall**
*(Executive
Director)*

**and Dr. Neal
Stretch** *(Chief
Medical Officer)*

David Marshall – Dr. Stretch, thanks for joining me today. Given the current pandemic, I thought this would be a good time for us to talk about how we can support the children and families we serve.

Dr. Stretch – Yes, the situation with COVID-19 is serious, and it's going to hit developing countries even harder in the coming weeks and months. We're hearing a lot of predictions about famine and a spike in poverty, and I suspect those stories will come true.

David Marshall – We feel a bit helpless, since International Needs is neither a medical nor a relief agency. We do development work, which includes health, but medicine isn't our primary focus.

Dr. Stretch – That's true. International Needs looks at the long-term, making sure the children are healthy enough to learn and grow.

David Marshall – So what do you suggest we do now?

Dr. Stretch – Keep doing exactly what you've always done: sponsorship.

David Marshall – But many of us feel like we should be on the front lines, helping out. Why do you say sponsorship?

Dr. Stretch – There are lots of medical agencies that specialize in handling COVID-19 – let the experts do their work, and keep your focus on what you do best – supporting vulnerable children. In fact, the work of International Needs is going to be even more important once the crisis ends.

David Marshall – We're really concerned about elderly caregivers, who are at greater risk from COVID-19.

We expect high casualty rates, which means there will be more vulnerable children on the street. It's just a matter of time.

Dr. Stretch – Sadly, I think you're right, which is why I'm suggesting you focus on sponsorship.

David Marshall – Good, we're on the same page: our plan is to increase sponsorship by 50%. This is a massive undertaking, but we believe it's the best way to go – build a 'war chest' so we can be ready to fight for these children.

Dr. Stretch – Excellent – that sounds like a solid strategy.

David Marshall – And any final advice on what our priorities should be?

Dr. Stretch – First, work with the local leaders to identify vulnerable children and ideally remove them from the source of the risk. For example, abuse, forced labour, malnutrition, crime...it's a long list. Second, provide basic public health activities – make sure they have nutritious food, safe water, and knowledge of personal hygiene. And third, stay connected in the community; shine some light into the darkness.

David Marshall – Our programs pay for education, which creates a safe environment during the day. At school, they learn about health, hygiene, and life skills. Additionally, the schools provide water and two nutritious meals a day.

Dr. Stretch – Keep at it. You know that old saying: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure? That's what sponsorship is all about, and that's exactly what we need to be doing.

David Marshall – Dr. Stretch, thank you so much for your insight, and for everything you do for the beneficiaries of our programs.

Dr. Stretch – My pleasure.

Dr. Neal Stretch serves International Needs Canada as volunteer Chief Medical Officer. Over the last 17 years, he's led at least 20 medical outreach trips to Ghana, Zambia, and Bangladesh. On these trips, he and his team work with local doctors and nurses to provide free medical checkups to the children and families enrolled in the International Needs schools. **We're grateful for his years of faithful service!**

Planning for the post-COVID humanitarian crisis

THE NEXT CRISIS IS COMING... The months and years following **COVID-19** are shaping up to be as much of a **humanitarian crisis** as the pandemic itself. Leaders in the development field suggest decades of aid and progress will be wiped out as famine and poverty tighten their grip on developing countries. We've already seen **food riots and violence** in poor regions of the world, and the global economic fallout has barely begun.

IT'S GOING TO GET UGLY... For the vulnerable children and families under our care, the **day-to-day reality of life will be nothing short of horrific**. As elderly caregivers succumb to the virus, children will be left once again to fend for themselves. Boys will be drawn into gangs and forced labour, with girls turning to prostitution to survive.

WE'RE GETTING READY... As we look months and years into the future, we're deeply concerned, and we need your help to **get ready for a massive rescue effort**.

Your gift pays for food, medical supplies, education, school supplies, and more, but the long-term **outcomes are priceless!**



PLEASE, HELP US PREPARE FOR THE POST - COVID CRISIS

There are two ways you can help:

1. **Support a child.** For \$41 a month, you can transform a life.
2. **Support a group of children.** Change an entire community.

We're sending 100% of your gift to support vulnerable children and families.

Help us prepare for the post - COVID crisis



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