

Practicing Proximity

Human Needs And Global Resources Partner Responses During COVID-19

Edited By James G. Huff Jr. and Laura S. Meitzner Yoder • July 2021



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Since its founding in 1976, the Human Needs and Global Resources Program at Wheaton College has remained a thoroughly collaborative endeavor that involves the creativity, generosity, and energies of many people living all around the world. This compilation illustrates our long-standing practice of connecting students, faculty, students' host partner organizations, and others for mutual learning.

Special thanks to each faculty, student/alumni and host partner participant in this special project! We are deeply grateful for your willingness to provide a snapshot of your unique work in a season of significant challenge, disruption, and uncertainty. Heartfelt appreciation to Corrie Johnson (HNGR '95) and to Laura Atkinson for your dedicated administrative support of this project. We are especially grateful for and awed by Nina Mantalaba's (HNGR '19) technical savvy, creative contributions in production design, and overall aesthetic sensibilities in producing the final product. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the generous support of multiple donors and College administrators who offered encouragement and support for this project.



Front cover image was produced as a creative independent study project by Studio Art major Sophie George during her Human Needs and Global Resources internship with the Emmanuel Hospital Association in Herbertpur, India, in 2018.

Publication design: Nina Mantalaba

All photos used by permission of partner organizations

Human Needs and Global Resources
Wheaton College, IL
hngr@wheaton.edu
+1-630.752.5199

July 2021



| | |
|--|----|
| Foreword | 2 |
| Partner Locations | 4 |
| Essays | 5 |
| Building Bridges Across Borders | 6 |
| <i>Abara Borderland Connections</i> | 8 |
| Sustaining Routines of Reconciliation | 10 |
| <i>Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance (CARSA)</i> | 13 |
| Strengthening the Fabric of Resilience in Times of Crisis | 14 |
| <i>Claves</i> | 17 |
| Angels of Bethlehem in Times of Fear | 18 |
| <i>Holy Land Trust</i> | 21 |
| Maybe, Just Give Them a Fish | 22 |
| <i>International Care Ministries</i> | 25 |
| Surgeries On Hold | 26 |
| <i>Luke Society</i> | 29 |
| COVID-19, Pandemics, and Learning from Indigenous Peoples' Resilience | 30 |
| <i>Memoria Indígena</i> | 34 |
| The Power of Education | 36 |
| <i>Onesimus Children Development Association (OCDA)</i> | 38 |
| Yo te escucho, Ecuador | 40 |
| <i>Paz y Esperanza</i> | 43 |
| Darkness Looms, but Moving On! | 44 |
| <i>Partners for Life Advancement and Education Promotion (PLAEP)</i> | 47 |
| You Didn't Forget Me | 48 |
| <i>Samaritana Transformation Ministries, Inc.</i> | 50 |
| Pandemic Preparedness | 52 |
| <i>Shalom Delhi</i> | 54 |
| Of Burns, Radio Programs, and New Education | 56 |
| <i>SheWORKS (Women of Reliability, Knowledge, and Skills)</i> | 59 |
| New Beginnings when Old Things Fall Apart | 60 |
| <i>Uganda Christian University (UCU)</i> | 63 |
| COVID-19 Lockdown and Renewal | 64 |
| <i>World Renew Senegal</i> | 66 |
| About the Contributors | 68 |

Foreword

Since 1976, the Human Needs and Global Resources Program has partnered with organizations who pursue God's shalom as they demonstrate how God is with us in all circumstances. Motivated by their Christian faith, and reflecting their diverse church traditions, they live out the gospel in concrete ways in the midst of challenging situations. They have continued their ministries of extending Christ's love under the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic even as they have accompanied communities in earlier times. We invite you to reflect upon and be inspired by the creative work and persistent care that sisters and brothers around the world have offered in contexts of limited financial resources.

This project began as an effort to build connection and to nurture existing relationships in the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic. We wanted to understand how our established global partners have responded to the situation in their own communities and national contexts. Normally, Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) interns serve as a bridge between campus and our international host partners, but the 2020 student cohort completed their internships with new hosts in domestic settings. How could we facilitate learning for Wheaton students, faculty, and others directly from global friends during the pandemic?

In December 2020, we asked Wheaton faculty to invite host organizations they knew to virtually visit their classrooms during January-April of the Spring 2021 semester, and to prepare the brief accounts collected here to share with a broader audience on campus and beyond. We compiled these during May-June 2021 as the global

situation of infections and vaccinations shifted significantly.

As the world tracked COVID-19's spread through 2020, it was evident that experiences were uneven. During the pandemic's first year, multiple factors resulted in most of our partner organizations' countries being affected later, and with a numerically lower proportion of cases, than in the United States. Lower degrees of global connectivity or internal mobility delayed introduction of the virus to and spread within their regions; their isolation served a protective function. Regions that have recent periodic experiences in grappling with disease outbreaks (e.g., Ebola, cholera) can have strong political will and capacity for robust preventative public health systems and structures. Centrally enforced lockdowns in many regions kept outbreaks, which overwhelmed medical systems wherever they occurred in the world, at bay — but for day laborers and people dependent upon a daily wage to buy food each day, the consequences were immediate and more severe than for those who could work remotely from the relative safety of home.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked expanded awareness of something that people in economically and socially precarious situations have long known well from daily lived realities: that vulnerabilities are both differential and compounding. Disasters do not affect people equally; an earthquake of the same magnitude in Japan and in Haiti has radically different impacts. The world became acutely aware of the particular risks borne by health care workers, people whose

work required physical presence, people housed in close quarters with others, and those who are elderly or have underlying health conditions.

The global pandemic both highlighted and deepened some global inequalities. In the same week as we are completing this project, the United States is removing many pandemic precautions due to the increasing proportion of vaccinated people, while India — a major global vaccine producer — is suffering an explosion in COVID-19 incidence in the context of a medical system unable to provide urgently needed care for these patients. While some stock markets' historic highs expand wealth of many long-term investors, pandemic lockdowns have crushed the livelihoods and basic needs of many of the world's most vulnerable people who depend on each day's wages to provide that day's foods — as partners from Senegal, India, and the Philippines remind us here.

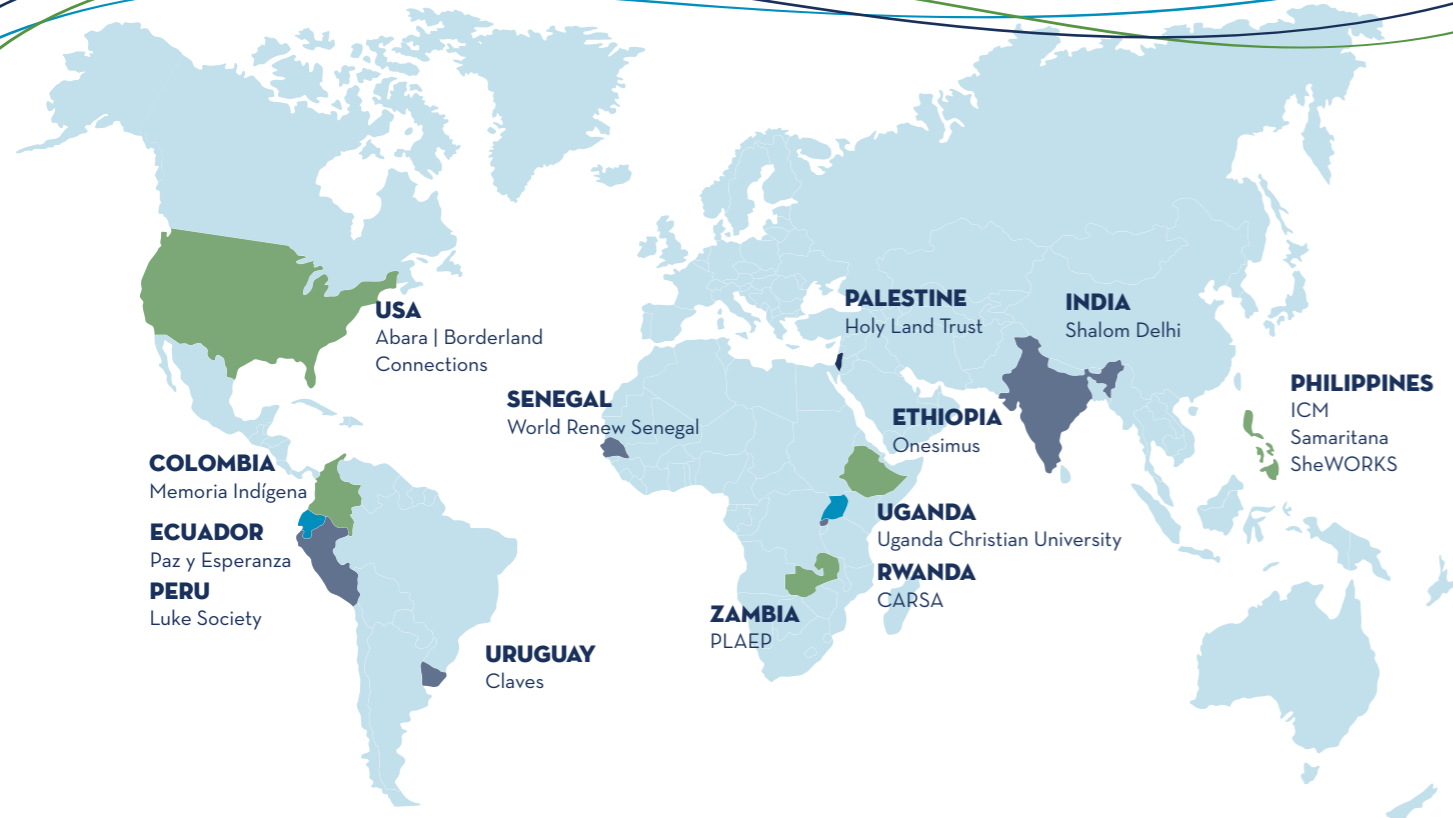
Several things stood out to us in reading these accounts. The writers speak with different perspectives, voices, and insights on their practical responses and reflections on how the pandemic is part of broader and longer-term realities experienced in their communities. Physical distancing requirements did not deter these partners from being close to the needs in their midst. For organizations with established community presence and long experience in integral mission, it is notable that many partners began by recounting the questions they asked of themselves and others, as lockdowns began, of how they could continue to identify and to connect with the current pressing circumstances in their communities. Their already existing

Laura S. Meitzner Yoder
James G. Huff, Jr.
Human Needs and Global Resources Program
Wheaton, Illinois
June 2021

practice of being close to marginalized neighbors made it possible to work creatively with them in managing the social isolation brought on by the pandemic. They drew on their histories of faithful and mutual care that allowed them to rely on and to learn from each other in the midst of this new crisis and hardship. We see how they generously shared gifts of various kinds — resourcefulness, relationships, professional know-how, and more — to develop timely responses that fit the new situation, creating new opportunities to reinforce networks of mutual support with existing participants and their communities.

Finally, several noted that COVID-19 is neither the first nor the only pandemic people have experienced that affects their daily lives — and for some it is not the worst crisis they have confronted. In Rwanda, this pandemic reminded CARSA staff of the severe social isolation of the 1994 genocide, even as ongoing survivor/offender reconciliation relationships provided mutual strength and support to participants during this season. Members of Indigenous groups from across Latin America recalled the long, tragic history of suffering and loss caused by deadly viruses brought from Europe. In India, Shalom Delhi's many years of direct work with the HIV/AIDS pandemic made health workers see how COVID-19 compounded the existing isolation of their patients' social stigmatization. We are grateful to the global partner organizations who shared their perspectives and experiences with Wheaton College faculty and students in this project. It is our hope that by reading these accounts, we can grow in our capacity and readiness to consider the needs of others above ourselves. ■

Partner Locations



Contributing Organizations

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---|-------------|
| CARSA | RWANDA | Paz y Esperanza | ECUADOR |
| Abara Borderland Connections | USA | PLAEP | ZAMBIA |
| Claves | URUGUAY | Samaritana Transformation Ministries | PHILIPPINES |
| Holy Land Trust | PALESTINE | Shalom Delhi | INDIA |
| International Care Ministries | PHILIPPINES | SheWORKS | PHILIPPINES |
| Luke Society | PERU | Uganda Christian University | UGANDA |
| Memoria Indígena | COLOMBIA | World Renew | SENEGAL |
| Onesimus | ETHIOPIA | | |

About Human Needs and Global Resources

Established in 1976, Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) is an academic certificate program that integrates multidisciplinary coursework, a six-month internship, and whole-person formation through experiential learning. Students live, work, worship, and serve with local communities worldwide, while accompanying host partner organizations that confront poverty, challenge inequity, transform conflict, pursue justice, and seek fullness of life. The program cultivates a life-orienting commitment to justice, intercultural humility, compassion, hospitality, environmental health, and peacemaking, as actively reflected in lifestyle and vocation. ■

Building Bridges Across Borders

Abara | Borderland Connections
El Paso, TX

Sami DiPasquale with Amy Reynolds

Abara is a recently launched organization (building on years of neighborhood-based work at Ciudad Nueva) that aims to cultivate opportunities for understanding, serving, and loving across divides. We are located on the border town of El Paso, Texas, just minutes away from Ciudad Juárez in Mexico. Local resident families often cross the border to visit with one another, to go to school, or to live their regular lives. For others, the border is a site that reflects a stop in a long journey. Many from Central America and Mexico seek refuge at the border, hoping to apply for asylum in the United States due to the threats and reality of violence in their home.

"Families who had no place to go, and few resources, might often be found living on the street. Churches in Mexico, then, were faced with the question of how to respond. Many of the churches in these border towns have responded with open arms."

A few years ago, we noticed a change in the demographics of the arriving people seeking asylum. People were traveling longer distances – often from the Northern Triangle (Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador). Instead of young men traveling, more single mothers with young children were making the long journey to seek safer futures for their families. Border facilities, however, were not set up for families and children. Our community has had to respond to these changes, thinking about ways to minister to the increasing number of children.

Before 2019, people seeking asylum might stay with families or sponsors in the United States while they tried their asylum cases. A coalition of churches in El Paso across the theological and denominational spectrum helped get families to places where they needed to be, and supplied some of their immediate needs while they prepared for their travels in El Paso. This brought together churches of diverse political and theological spaces.

However, in spring 2019, one year before the pandemic hit, the US implemented 'Migration Protection Protocols' (or Remain in Mexico), which made it more difficult for asylum

seekers to have access and to try their cases in the United States. This meant that those seeking asylum often were forced to stay in Mexican border towns, like Ciudad Juárez, and be ready to cross the border for court cases when an opportunity arose.

This created new needs in Ciudad Juárez. Families who had no place to go, and few resources, might often be found living on the street. Churches in Mexico, then, were faced with the question of how to respond. Many of the churches in these border towns have responded with open arms. Many of the churches that Abara works with didn't have large buildings with a recreation/youth room that could be converted into a place to care for those without housing. Many are small churches; many have bi-vocational pastors, and few have specific staff committed to addressing community needs or missions. But churches in Ciudad Juárez are responding in some amazing ways. We saw many convert their sanctuaries into places where people

could be safe; worship happened alongside these bodies that exist in the churches, seeking refuge, in sight of the community, with all the sights and smells that come along with having too many people in too tight a space.

COVID-19 has also brought new challenges for many of the churches that are serving migrants in Mexico. Mexico's health care system requires payment up front, which often makes accessing health care – even in dire situations – extremely difficult. One of our pastor friends on the Mexican border, during his bout with COVID-19, had oxygen levels around 70. In the United States, people are often hospitalized and put on a ventilator when levels approach 90. Our friend was told to go home and wait it out. Praise to God that he survived, but his case is one of the rare ones. ■



Abara | Borderland Connections

<https://www.abarafrontiers.org/>

Pray with us

- For all those fleeing their countries - for protection and wellbeing, especially for children
- For our amazing team members - for rest, peace, courage in the midst of stressful and traumatic situations
- For the church in the U.S. - to step outside of the walls of comfort and safety that we build around our communities and embrace the radical welcome of Jesus

Sami DiPasquale is the founder and director of Abara, an organization that cultivates opportunities for understanding, serving, and loving across divides through education, encounters, and response. Abara accomplishes its mission by facilitating encounters on the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez by resourcing and connecting migrant shelters and by collaborating with other organizations along the border and along migrant pathways from Central America.

Dr. Amy Reynolds is Associate Professor of Sociology at Wheaton College whose research focuses on issues of economic globalization and the influence of religion and culture within markets. Dr. Reynolds has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Photos: Ciudad Nueva Facebook



Sustaining Routines of Reconciliation

Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance (CARSA)
Kigali, Rwanda

Christophe Mbonyingabo
with Mandy Kellums Baraka



Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance (CARSA) is dedicated to supporting communities in Rwanda toward their journey of healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and community holistic development as they grapple with long-term effects of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi people. CARSA staff found that the strong relationships already forged among program participants formed a solid foundation from which to continue building mutual aid during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more than ten years, CARSA has been leading post-genocide reconciliation work that brings together genocide survivors and their direct offenders (referred to as *génocidaires*) to offer them a space for healing and forgiveness. CARSA understands reconciliation as a journey and a process that allows all parties involved to have adequate time to restore their trust. To facilitate this process, the organization has developed an approach known as Cows for Peace (CFP). The CFP program is an intervention that applies the principles of contact hypothesis

to promote sustained reconciliation between *génocidaires* and survivors.

The Cows for Peace program consists of three programmatic activities that are carried out sequentially. All participants first complete a seven-day workshop that focuses on identifying the personal and relational changes needed to facilitate interaction with the other group (i.e. either survivors or *génocidaires*). The workshop was adapted from a cognitive-behavioral based program designed to assist persons affected by war and conflict in acquiring skills to cope with post-traumatic stressors and to support long-term reconciliation efforts. For most participants, the workshop is the first time since the genocide that they have formally interacted with their direct perpetrator or victim in a structured group setting. The topics covered in the workshop are contextualized by their grounding in Judeo-Christian themes of forgiveness and reconciliation, which are culturally meaningful in Rwanda, an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian country.

Once the *génocidaire*-survivor pairs complete the workshop, they begin participation in cell groups, which are self-led gatherings that are hosted in local residential areas. These closed groups voluntarily meet monthly under the direction of a group-appointed leader. The structure and format of cell groups are organized to build on the relational skills participants acquired during the workshops; the cell group program is sensitive to the particular context and relational history of each participating *génocidaire*-survivor pair. The cell groups exist to foster sustained, self-directed interactions between pairs in a supportive group setting. Relationships that were established during the workshops continue to develop through discussions, communal meals, visitations, and other joint activities (e.g., mutual assistance with farming or with carrying out home repairs, and sharing in the care for and benefits from raising a cow together). As the cell group programs proceed, CARSA staff regularly visit the groups to assist in navigating group conflict and to help manage challenging discussion topics.

These cell groups have proven to be a resilient structure for the provision of mutual support during the COVID-19 pandemic. When COVID-19 appeared in Rwanda, the government imposed preventive measures including lockdowns and other restrictions. CARSA adapted its work to respond to the needs that were generated by these lockdown measures. The organization began to administer various relief projects, such as food aid, mask support to rural vulnerable communities, and the distribution of thermometers to health centers. Though the pandemic has had many negative effects, reconciliation cell groups continue to express the strength of their restored relationships in the midst of the crisis. For example, one participant in the program, Beatha, a widow and genocide survivor, recently received food support from CARSA. When Beatha learned that her neighbor and program co-participant, Denis, had not received any food aid, she willingly shared food with the offender's family.



"Though the pandemic has had many negative effects, reconciliation cell groups continue to express the strength of their restored relationships in the midst of the crisis."

The COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions reminded Rwandans of the period of the 1994 genocide when many people (especially Tutsis) were afraid to walk outside and movement was limited. In April 2020, as CARSA staff were allowed to travel to the community to distribute food to reconciliation cell group members, seeing roads empty of people or cars was reminiscent of the time of the genocide. Even though there are some similarities between the current social distancing and lockdown with the social divisions that took place in Rwanda in 1994, the COVID-19 lockdowns were not as frightening as it was during the genocide. In 2020, people stayed inside, but there was no death outside as there was in 1994.

As COVID-19 has affected life in general, an important effect to the cell group members (especially genocide survivors) is that the normal genocide commemoration events were not allowed to take place as they have been in past years. Social gatherings for remembering their beloved ones were prohibited and thus genocide survivors couldn't benefit from the psychological support of having people around them and comforting them during the genocide commemoration.

The CFP program was very much affected by the COVID-19 restrictions as social gatherings were prohibited. However, CARSA was able to recruit some volunteers from the CFP members who were provided with bicycles and phones to be able to visit CFP members in their homes and to communicate with CARSA staff members. The reconciliation workshops could not happen, but CFP members could visit each other in their homes. When a genocide widow named Francoise had her small kitchen damaged by rain during lockdown, other members were able to support her repair of that kitchen with social distancing measures observed. Wearing face masks and observing two meters between individuals, they continued their unity and mutual support.

The strong relationships forged between genocide survivors and perpetrators during CFP programming (especially the cell group) enabled people to support each other during this COVID-19 era. The social and physical distancing measures have not dampened the relational proximity and intimacy that preserve communities and help them thrive. ■

Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance (CARSA)

<https://www.carsaministry.org/>



Pray with us

- COVID-19 has affected the economy and the unemployment rate has increased. Please pray that people who have lost their jobs will be able to find alternative ways to get income.
- CARSA is intending to resume the reconciliation workshops. Please pray that God will provide for the needed resources to continue with the workshops,
- Pray for the cell groups to continue being the light of forgiveness and peace within their communities.

Christophe Mbonyingabo is the founder and Executive Director of CARSA (Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance), a Rwandan NGO that serves communities in supporting their journey towards healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and sustainable holistic development. CARSA's most unique intervention, named "Cows for Peace" (CFP), seeks to foster reconciled relationships between genocide survivors and their direct perpetrators.

Dr. Mandy Kellums Baraka is Visiting Associate Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Wheaton College and from 2014-2021 served as the Student Support Coordinator of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Photos by: CARSA Facebook



Strengthening the Fabric of Resilience in Times of Crisis

Claves, A Youth for Christ Program in Uruguay

Claves
Montevideo, Uruguay

James G. Huff Jr.
with Alberto "Tico" Vazquez

I first met Alberto "Tico" Vasquez during a week-long workshop that I facilitated for the staff of Youth for Christ Uruguay in June 2019. Each morning of the workshop Tico led us in songs of worship, and his animated singing and energetic guitar playing was the jolt we needed to jumpstart the day. Throughout the workshop Tico frequently picked up his guitar and invited us to join him in singing an Uruguayan pop song. These short, unplanned song breaks often ended with everyone laughing noisily. One does not usually associate an "outcome mapping workshop" with fun, but Tico somehow managed to create an environment that simply made us feel glad. It was the sort of gladness that boosted our energy just when we all started to feel drained by the demands of the workshop.

So it did not come as a complete surprise when Tico recently shared with me, "My university thesis in psychology focused on the themes of resilience and sense of humor, and particularly on the roles they play in counseling work with vulnerable children and youth." These same academic and professional interests have guided his work at Youth for Christ, where he has served as the

coordinator for the Claves *Buentrato* Program since 2003. He continued, "Ever since my university studies I have remained fascinated with resilience: the capacity that we human beings have to get back up after falling down and to continue on with our lives. Our ability to rebuild after things have fallen apart." For Tico, strengthening the resiliencies that children and youth exercise when they experience difficult life circumstances is a fundamental aim of the work that he directs through the Claves program. And it is work that has become especially urgent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Ever since my university studies I have remained fascinated with resilience: the capacity that we human beings have to get back up after falling down and to continue on with our lives. Our ability to rebuild after things have fallen apart."



For more than twenty years, Claves' pioneering approach has focused on the development of practical, creative, and participatory methodologies of violence prevention. The program is known especially for its work with children and adolescents, whom the staff consider to be key leaders in the long-term process of generating and sustaining new "cultures" of good treatment (*buentrato*) throughout Latin America. Tico explained, "When we started to work with young people, with children and adolescents who were in the middle of very difficult circumstances, we wanted to first understand them as whole persons. We began by learning about their abilities, their likes, and their strengths. We started by learning about the dimensions of their lives that were whole and well. And by starting this way, we realized that we could better accompany them in the hard work of addressing the parts of their lives that were the most wounded." It is an approach that affirms young people as creative and resilient image bearers of God even as it recognizes their need for support, healing, and restoration.

To accomplish its mission, the program develops pedagogical tools and training seminars that are shared with teachers and church leaders working with young people who regularly experience violence, economic marginalization, and injustice. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, required the Claves team to identify new, creative ways to support educators in their work with vulnerable children and youth. Like many organizations that promote education and training, Claves shifted to digital media and began producing short and engaging videos to share with their partners across the Americas. The creation of the "*resiliencias pequeñas*" ("small resiliencies") video series was fruit of this innovative work.

Resiliencias pequeñas began as a modest proposal to develop short videos building on the training seminars that Claves facilitates for educators, pastors, parents, and others who work with young people. Each video focuses on a specific theme – or, as Tico explained, a small "thread" in a larger "weaving" – that comprise different sources of resilience:

relationships, critical thinking, artistic expression, sense of purpose, adolescence, human rights, and spirituality. They reached out to professional colleagues in Uruguay and elsewhere in Latin America to see if they would develop a short talk on each theme. “We were very surprised by their enthusiasm and eagerness to participate in the videos,” explained Tico. Among the participants are Dr. Harold Segura, a noted theologian and Director of Faith and Development at World Vision; Santiago Benavides, a Colombian musician and Christian songwriter; and Dr. Natalia Trenchi, a renowned Uruguayan medical doctor and child psychiatrist.

Each video features reflections and teachings that are designed to prompt discussion on how these “small resiliencies” might be practically incorporated into the work that diverse professionals carry out with vulnerable children and adolescents. “We think too that the content of the videos will be good for educators themselves,” Tico added. He continued, “In other words, the videos have two dimensions, including one

that addresses the personal well-being and resiliency of people who work with young people. We hope they ask themselves, ‘How am I personally doing in this season? How important is the pillar of artistic expression or spirituality, for example, in my life nowadays?’ How am I weaving together this fabric of resilience in my own life? And then they can begin to think about how they might strengthen these same aspects or pillars of resilience in their own practice as a pastor, as a teacher, as a leader, or as a mother or father.”

Tico concluded, “For me, this kind of work, of focusing on the resilience that young people possess, is something that emerged from my own faith as a Christian. It comes from my understanding of how Jesus worked and interacted with people. How did he see people, and especially people who were among the most scorned and neglected in society? He saw potential in them. He saw the possibility of a new future. His is a hopeful vision.” ■



Claves

<https://www.claves.org.uy/sitio/>



Pray with us

May God give a blessing to Claves.
God bless it from roof to floor,
from wall to wall, to end to end,
from its foundation and in its covering.

Christ in their coming and in their leaving,
be the Door and the Keeper for them.
And for all who work in Claves, this day and every day, forever and always. Amen.

Adapted from “Prayers for a Workplace” in *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Zondervan 2010)

Dr. James (Jamie) G. Huff Jr. is Associate Professor and Associate Director of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program at Wheaton College. He is a cultural anthropologist whose scholarship and applied research focuses on religion and social change in Latin America.

Alberto (Tico) Vazquez is a psychologist and educator and the Buentrato Program National Coordinator for Claves, a program of Juventud para Cristo (Youth for Christ) Uruguay. The Claves program is a Uruguayan civil society program that exists so that children and adolescents enjoy full and abundant life. The program identifies and strengthens capacities that enable people to confront violence and promote good treatment towards children and adolescents throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Photo source:

<https://www.claves.org.uy/sitio/quienes-somos/organizacion/>



Angels of Bethlehem in Times of Fear

Holy Land Trust
Bethlehem, Palestine

Elias D'eis
with George Kalantzis

News and social media reports began spreading stories about a pandemic hitting the world. China, the United States, and European Union countries were reporting cases on a daily basis, and the numbers were rising. Initially, we watched assuming that the pandemic was happening “over there.” Then, out of nowhere, it came to Palestine, and specifically to our town, Bethlehem. Until then, many in Bethlehem assumed it would never come. The world was shutting down, flights were being cancelled, and pilgrims and tourists were declining in numbers. Ironically, it was the last tourist group to leave Bethlehem that had some of its members infected. Some of these individuals infected employees of a local hotel, and the virus then spread from the employees to their families and friends. The name of the hotel: The Angels’ Hotel.

Within hours of announcing the virus was in Bethlehem, closures were announced, roadblocks were erected, and checkpoints by Palestinian police were placed everywhere. The hotel and its surrounding area were closed and guarded by the military. The Palestinian population was already vulnerable due to the political and economic hardships caused by living under the Israeli military occupation. Now we also have COVID-19! Can the Palestinian Authority handle this pandemic and survive? Can the population regain trust in the Palestinian Authority to lead us through this ordeal?

As time passed and new cases started emerging in other Palestinian cities, a sense of fear and dread spread. Rumors and conspiracies became the trend on social media. Everyone was afraid of everyone. Bethlehem, the city where the healer of all our ailments was born, became a ghost town. Everything was shut down. No hotels and no restaurants. Even churches closed their doors.

“A small virus knocked us out and made us see that all we do amounts to nothing if we do not fully surrender to God’s love and grace.”

At Holy Land Trust, we felt a strong call to respond. We realized immediately that this was not going to be something that would pass quickly, within a few weeks or months. Our initial action was to extend — like many others did — support to the people quarantining in the hotel by providing food and supplies. Then, our work expanded to offer food packages and medical supplies for families in need. We supported families who were growing home crops and we became a major source of information to organizations and churches around the world wanting to know what is happening in Palestine.

It was not easy for us to sustain this work. Our own resources as a team were depleting fast. One of our main income sources, the Travel and Encounter Program, which serves over 1,300 tourists and pilgrims annually, was closed down. Donations from supporters decreased. But we continued to trust in God’s provision. And we remained confident that our biggest reward is in serving others. This is what Jesus would do. It was simple. He sacrificed for us, and so we sacrifice for others.

As the reality of the pandemic settled in and more knowledge became available about how the virus spreads, we were able to regroup and move back into our office where we could better manage and operate additional

Angels of Bethlehem in Times of Fear

programs. We continued with our peace programs to bring Israelis and Palestinians together. We held webinars, seminars, and training sessions on Zoom, and we supported at least one family in rebuilding their home that was demolished by the Israeli authorities.

The pandemic has taught us a big lesson. It showed us how we humans are fragile; it demonstrated how often we are filled with fear. We have destroyed so much and we have killed each other in countless wars and conflicts. And then a small virus knocked us out and made us see that all we do amounts to nothing if we do not fully surrender to God’s love and grace. Many claim to do so, but do not truly surrender and trust.



One of the key verses of the Bible that guides and sustains us during this time of uncertainty is Matthew 6:26-30 (NIV). There Jesus says, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?”

Our prayer during these times is that we not allow fear to take over. We are reminded of the angels who visited the shepherds not far from where Holy Land Trust offices are located. The first thing the angels said to the shepherds was, “Do not be afraid.” Maybe there is something to the fact that the COVID-19 the virus first came to the Angels’ Hotel in Bethlehem? Maybe this event invites us to remember the words uttered by angels nearly two thousand years ago? Do not be afraid, but trust God in all things. ■



Holy Land Trust

<https://www.holylandtrust.org/>



Pray with us

- To get wisdom and guidance for achieving our vision. To get protection and safety in the midst of hatred and violence that we are living in.
- We need prayers to get strength for our committed team to work on our mission.
- We need prayers for healing the fear, traumas and hatred in the hearts of Palestinians and Israelis and to come together and work for peace and justice.

Elias D'eis is the Executive Director of Holy Land Trust, a non-profit Palestinian organization committed to fostering peace, justice and understanding in the Holy Land. Holy Land Trust is deeply committed to exploring the root causes of violence and to developing solutions to address them. Holy Land Trust has over twenty years of experience working in nonviolence, peacemaking, and creating awareness of the social and political conditions in the Holy Land.

Dr. George Kalantzis is Professor of Theology at Wheaton College and Director of The Wheaton Center for Early Christian Studies. He also serves as Senior Fellow with the International Association for Refugees (IAFR) and Faculty Fellow with the Humanitarian Disaster Institute (HDI) on issues of refugee migration, immigration, and human rights. His research and writing focuses on the development of doctrine in early Christianity, as well as on the interplay of classical Greco-Roman society and early Christian ethics. Dr. Kalantzis has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Photos: Holy Land Trust



Maybe, Just Give Them a Fish

Development and Relief during COVID-19 at International Care Ministries

International Care Ministries (ICM)
Bacolod City, Philippines

Michael Coman and Enoch Hill

It's one thing to read statistics about poverty; it's another to have a relationship with and live among those who face it directly. I (EH) can teach a class on global income patterns, discuss the tens of millions of individuals who have fallen below various poverty lines as defined by multinational institutions, and then return home and watch the Great British Baking Show and not think about COVID and its associated challenges again until prepping for my next class.

Proximity breeds empathy, and with it, an acute sense of urgency. Born in Australia, Michael Coman now lives in Manila, capital of the Philippines. He has witnessed firsthand the deleterious effects of COVID-19 and the ensuing policy measures on the lives of the ultrapoor (the population served by International Care Ministries earns an average

of \$0.28 USD per day). Each statistic is associated with a face, an individual who has experienced a reduction in already scarce income, who has missed another meal, or who has lost a child. Hunger is not a theoretical condition; it's a haunting face, pleading eyes. The luxury of disconnecting from work at the end of the day is not an option.

International Care Ministries (ICM) was started by a group of indigenous pastors seeking to serve the vulnerable and ultrapoor of the Philippines. Over the past 3 decades, it has grown substantially, while its staff is still almost exclusively (>99%) Filipino, it now employs over 450 and reaches over 220,000 people annually. ICM seeks to transform the futures of the ultrapoor through methods which are scalable, and informed by rigorous research.

Two things stood out to me as unique about ICM. First, the pastoral origins of the program persist as a part of its DNA. ICM operates by working directly with an extensive network of over 15,000 local pastors who intimately know and love their local communities. This method which seeks local relationship and understanding is being replicated as they assist in health efforts. ICM is launching a program to recruit and train one person from each community to be community health champions alongside pastors and savings group leaders.

Second, ICM consistently and iteratively updates its methods based on partnerships with leading development researchers like Dean Karlan at Northwestern University. The recently launched health initiative is based on strong evidence that having a local person to identify health issues reduces infant mortality and maternal illness, and also improves other health outcomes. In other words, ICM's approach consists of a holistic combination of head, heart, and hands.

"Although Pastor David is far from his family and has no one to rely on, he has stuck with his community in the midst of hardship. Initially wary of pastors, most of his neighbors have grown close with him after observing his concern for their needs, both physical and spiritual."

Consequently, when the pandemic struck, the response was not an intransigent insistence on long-term goals or a theoretical academic discussion about best practices. Their pastor network knew that development needed to be at least temporarily set aside and called for immediate relief. Sometimes, teaching to fish needs to be put on hold.

Take Pastor David and his small church plant in Bohol, for example. Almost emblematic of the in-process development work of ICM, Pastor David's physical church building stands partially finished. But when COVID-19 ravaged his congregants, plans changed and construction efforts were delayed. "Before COVID, these people could provide for their families. Now they can hardly earn any income, and the prices of basic commodities keep rising." The challenges facing this Bohol congregation are legion. Many work as hired laborers, but no one is hiring. One member sank his savings to pay for documents and fees to allow him to work abroad, only to lose the job when travel became impossible. Now facing the difficulty of feeding his family, he said, "I always have trouble finding food, sometimes I feel hopeless."

Although Pastor David is far from his family and has no one to rely on, he has stuck with his community in the midst of hardship. Initially wary of pastors, most of his neighbors have grown close with him after observing his concern for their needs, both physical and spiritual. "I feel compassion for them, especially for their hungry children."

In response, methods have changed both locally for Pastor David, and more broadly for ICM. In 2019 Pastor David hosted a Transform program, the flagship development tool offered by ICM. The program focuses

on bringing H.O.P.E. to four areas, including Heart (positive values, strong relationships), Opportunity (sustainable livelihoods and lifelong savings), Physical (healthy bodies), and Education. A savings group emerged from the program, but the group dissolved this year when members had nothing to contribute.

As a result of the experience of pastors like David, ICM pivoted from sustainable development to providing direct relief. Initially ICM engaged in distributing meals—from the beginning of COVID to the present they estimate over 14 million meals have been provided through their efforts. Yet, despite the large scale of this work, it is clear that meal distribution has been insufficient. Build, measure, learn is in ICM’s DNA. Even in relief mode, they switched to providing seeds with over 300 million distributed so far. Paralleling the importance of the growth of food is the growth of minds. Similar

to other countries, education efforts have been significantly hampered by COVID-19 restrictions. ICM is currently partnering with the government to provide opportunities for their populations to not fall behind in educational attainment by supporting children and parents’ ability to fulfill education requirements at home.

Someday, Pastor David’s church will be complete and ICM has already restarted its Transform programs in communities where COVID-19 restrictions have been relaxed. However, the setback is substantial. According to the World Data Lab, the Philippines currently has roughly 50% more (roughly 2.3 million people) living in extreme poverty (less than \$1.90 USD income per day) compared to 2019. As Pastor David and Michael Coman know, this isn’t just a statistic; each number represents a person made in the image of God. ■



International Care Ministries



<https://www.caremin.com/>

Pray with us

- Please pray for protection from COVID-19 for ICM staff, partners/volunteers and communities as cases surge again in the Philippines.
- Please pray that God would continue to bless the global expansion efforts in Uganda and Guatemala.
- Please pray for provision for ICM to continue its work in partnering with local pastors and churches to reach out to the ultra-poor.

Michael Coman is the Chief Strategy Officer for International Care Ministries (ICM), a non-government organization based in the Philippines that exists to see the ultra-poor released from physical, emotional, and spiritual bondage. ICM works with and serves households in the Visayas and Mindanao regions by delivering the right support, training, and resources to unlock the bondages of poverty.

Dr. Enoch Hill is Associate Professor of Economics at Wheaton College, serves as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program, and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Photos: International Care Ministries Facebook



Surgeries On Hold

Pediatric Cleft Palate Surgeries in Peru

Luke Society
Moyobamba, Peru

Mario Luis Huamán Dávila
with Christine Goring Kepner

For the past year, cleft palate and fissure lip repair surgeries in Moyobamba, Peru, have had to wait. Since March of 2020, nationwide travel restrictions based on COVID-19 protocols have kept Lima-based plastic surgeons from traveling to the District of San Martín, located at the edge of the Amazon basin, to carry out procedures that are urgently needed by over thirty young children.

The effects of COVID-19 virus have severely impacted many Peruvians in a short period of time. Prior to February 2020, 20.5% of Peru's population (6.5million persons) fell below the international poverty line. By December 2020 the measure had increased significantly: nearly 34% of Peru's population was living in poverty. There has also been an abrupt increase in the number of cases of chronic malnutrition and anemia, affecting up to 46% of the country's rural population.¹ The pandemic has also exacerbated inequalities among households that have adequate economic resources and those that do not. Poor households have been the most adversely affected. Workers in the informal sector have continued to leave their homes to seek out their daily bread and provide for their families.

¹ Mario Huamán, from Peru's Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI)



People who have fallen ill with the virus and require supplemental oxygen have to pay high prices for it. And those who have no resources for such medical services have simply died. Many other victims have died because they were unable to receive treatment. Hospitals often do not have sufficient beds in their Intensive Care Units. We lost our own beloved Luke Society accountant, Eduardo Supo Vega, because there were no beds available at the local hospital. The lack of supplemental oxygen recently led to the tragic death of premature, twin babies, who were hospitalized in the NICU and required oxygen treatment. Both babies perished because oxygen supplies ran

out due to the great demand by COVID-19 patients.

The pandemic has also been very difficult for already vulnerable groups. Children enrolled in public schools have had their school year severely disrupted and the quality of education they have received (online) has been poor. Several patients in our cleft palate and labial fissure program have received no schooling at all throughout all of 2020. Our elderly neighbors are significantly more vulnerable. This is especially the case for those who live alone and in extreme poverty.

A modern (and costly) hospital was inaugurated in 2019 in the city of San Martín where Luke Society offices are located. However, the moment its doors opened its capacity was insufficient. The pandemic quickly exceeded the ability of the hospital to respond to all patients. The death of our friend Eduardo is, sadly, just one of many cases where people have been unable to receive health care services when they needed them most.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many unanticipated changes to Luke Society. We closed down all of our on-site, health care activities for forty-five days, and worked quickly to develop a new plan of action to respond to emergency cases. The plan included administering medical care through home visits, delivering economic donations, groceries, medications and diapers, and providing pastoral counseling and prayer. The Luke Society staff also adapted all its in-person services to comply with COVID-19 protocols.

The staff quickly adopted the use of virtual platforms (e.g. Zoom and WhatsApp) to

maintain communication with patients. In this way we have been able to continue with important supplementary programs, such as music lessons and rehearsals, speech and movement therapy, and memory therapy for the elderly. We have even maintained our pastry, dressmaking, and drawing workshops, and continue to offer Bible studies, prayer meetings, and pastoral counseling services. Adaptation to delivering services via internet technology has required considerable creativity and patience. In spite of the significant challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recent spike in cases across Peru, the Luke Society staff continues with its four foundational ministries.

Our *Programa Integral de Fisura Labial y Palatina* (Holistic Cleft Palate and Labial Fissure Repair Program) provides surgical and aesthetic repair for children in the San

"The staff quickly adopted the use of virtual platforms (e.g. Zoom and WhatsApp) to maintain communication with patients. In this way we have been able to continue with important supplementary programs, such as music lessons and rehearsals, speech and movement therapy, and memory therapy for the elderly."

Surgeries On Hold

Martín region with labio-palatine fissure. The services we offer include reconstructive surgeries, ongoing medical care, dental and orthodontic care, infant stimulation, speech therapy, parent education workshops, psychological consults, home visits and music therapy. This ministry is core to Luke Society's health care service programs, making it possible for over one thousand children to receive cleft palate repairs since 1995.

Another core program, *Proyecto: Música Transformadora* (Transformative Music Program), aims to promote the social integration of children, adolescents, and youth from diverse social classes through music education. The program also serves pediatric patients who have undergone cleft palate and labial fissure surgeries. *Musica Transformadora* also serves the 40-member Youth Chamber Orchestra of Alto Mayo through the teaching and performance of classical music in the San Martín region. The music program offers classes in stringed instruments, including violin, viola, and cello, as well as in woodwind instruments,

such as recorder, transverse flute, and clarinet. Training in woodwind instruments is of particular value for children who have undergone surgery on the lips and palate because it assists them in developing proper breathing rhythms and muscle strength.

Two additional programs also continue to thrive, providing special attention and support to people in critical life stages. The *Infancia Feliz* (Happy Childhood Program) program offers workshops on child-rearing, nutrition, and early childhood stimulation through churches and community groups. *Programa Integral del Adulto Mayor* (Holistic Elder Citizen Care Program) provides a range of services to elderly adults in the San Martín area. These include home visits, pastoral, medical, and psychological care, mobility evaluation, exercise and mental health workshops, baking and handicrafts workshops, and the provision of medications and incontinence products. We are grateful for these opportunities for ongoing ministry within the communities of our region. ■

Luke Society

<https://www.lukesociety.org/>



Pray with us

- For our staff, that we may be protected and delivered from all evil, specifically from COVID19; may we be inspired and used by the Lord to faithfully fulfill our calling of service and proclamation of the Gospel to all persons in need.
- For over 30 children with labial fissure and cleft palate who have been waiting for reconstructive surgery for over a year. This is a desperate situation for the children's parents, and just recently our government has imposed renewed restrictive measures (travel prohibitions) due to the latest viral surge. Our plastic surgery team is based in Lima and has not been allowed to travel anywhere outside of the capital since February 2020. Pray that the children may soon receive the surgery that they so desperately need.
- For the construction of our own building. Due to a generous donation, we have the lot on which to build; may God provide the economic resources to finance the construction and to further develop our programs and projects.

Pastor Mario Luis Huamán Dávila has been the Director of Asociación San Lucas in Moyobamba, Peru, since 2010. Asociación San Lucas Moyobamba is a clinic that is formally connected with the Luke Society International network. The Luke Society vision is to participate in God's plan of redemption by following Jesus' example of teaching, preaching, and healing as described in Matthew 9:35-36.

Dr. Christine Goring Kepner is Associate Professor of Spanish and co-director of the Wheaton in Spain Program at Wheaton College. Dr. Kepner has worked closely with students in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program by providing mentoring and research support, and serving as a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Photos: Luke Society Peru



COVID-19, Pandemics, and Learning from Indigenous Peoples' Resilience

Memoria Indígena
Medellín, Colombia

Jocabed Solano, Ismael Conchacala,
Francisco Perez, & Drew Jennings-Grisham
Translated by Dr. Néstor Quiroa
Edited by Professor Lily Quiroa-Crowell



Emerging from conversations within the Latin American Theological Fellowship (FTL) and Indigenous churches and communities, Memoria Indígena's mission is to recognize and to amplify Indigenous voices regarding mission, theology and the church throughout Latin America. Our work provides a space to share stories of the Holy Spirit's movement among the Indigenous peoples of Latin America and Christian theological reflection from their contexts. Here we reflect on Indigenous people's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic from an historical perspective.

COVID-19 and the Peoples of Abya Yala

The current situation of Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala (Latin America) is one of high vulnerability due to many historical and contemporary factors. The violent invasion that began in 1492 gave rise to one of the largest genocides in human history. This invasion brought with it systems of power that erased and denigrated indigenous knowledge systems, as Eurocentric forms of thought were upheld by conquerors as superior to the ways of knowing and being that were practiced

and embodied by Indigenous peoples. Likewise, the systems of power they created — based on social, cultural, economic, and racialized hierarchies — naturalized ideologies that claimed that Indigenous and Black communities were inferior to the white race. These same ideological assumptions were, in turn, used to justify systems of enslavement and ultimately the exploitation of all of creation.

When we ask our Indigenous brothers and sisters about the COVID-19 pandemic, many respond that this is not the first pandemic they have endured. They point not only to the long history of Indigenous peoples suffering from pandemics brought by germs from Europe (which killed an estimated 90% of the Native population of the continent), but also to how we must consider the two "pandemics" of genocide and epistemicide alongside other realities that continue to systematically impoverish Indigenous communities such as extractive industries that generate ecological destruction and political corruption fueled by a global culture of rampant consumerism. It is critical that we analyze the current

pandemic within this framework, which allows us to better understand the COVID-19 crisis in relation to other systems that threaten the Abya Yala region and all the community of creation. At the same time, it is very important to recognize that Indigenous communities remain active players in resisting these systems and continue to be a key voice for ensuring the well-being of our planet and the transformation of these systems of death.

Indigenous Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic: Two Voices'

Two members of Memoria Indígena offered insights from their experience and cosmology, which includes human relationship with the natural world, and share with us what their communities and churches have done in response to this pandemic.

Ismael Conchacala Gil of the Wiwa People in Colombia comments:

For the Wiwa people, the news of a pandemic was the beginning of an evil wind that blew, loaded with selfishness, despair, sadness and with the intention to sicken the spirit. At first, we were skeptical, because historically the government and dominant society have lied in order to take advantage of us. However, while the State and local governments debated over the best strategies to confront COVID-19, our communities took action to distance ourselves, specifically by isolating from urban zones and establishing an effective control of people exiting and entering our community. Many of the Wiwa people who worked outside our territory-

¹ This testimony has had three layers of interpretation- from Wiwa to Spanish to English

community (in urban settings) returned to their lands to cultivate them and to spend time with their families. The Wimake community organized frequent gatherings with a spiritual focus in order to seek healing for the earth. This "new normal" for indigenous people is a call to listen to the voice of all creation. During our isolation, we continued with our everyday life moving forward with our daily work as well as cultural and spiritual agenda according to tradition. However, now that the tourism industry is beginning to restart (following the loosening of national restrictions), we are afraid that the lack of control will result in our communities becoming impacted heavily by COVID-19.

Francisco Perez from the Maya-Chuj people in Guatemala:

In the Chuj and K'anjobal communities in Huhuetenango (Guatemala), the effect of COVID-19 has not been positive, neither for the church nor the many indigenous communities. Even though many of our communities are far from the cities, the Evangelical and Catholic churches cancelled their services for six months in 2020 as a protective measure to prevent

"The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of that which Indigenous communities have never forgotten: the importance of living a life in harmony with creation and the need for deep lamentation for the global situation."

infections. Today the church is following the social distancing and mask protocols put into place (by the Guatemalan government). There is no exact record of cases and we do not know if there were cases within our community. Many have gotten sick and others have gotten better, but many have also perished. However, because there is no access to testing, we do not know their cause of death. Regardless, we quarantine those who show symptoms similar to COVID-19. When our priest visited a hospital with COVID-19 patients, he was surprised to discover that there was not a single COVID-19 patient. We suspected that the hospital administration kept the funds assigned to treat the COVID-19 patients.



COVID-19 in Indigenous Communities: Closing thoughts

This pandemic has also resulted in a massive loss of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom. Men and women elders, and especially the women elders, foster and maintain Indigenous identity and language so that new generations can preserve their communal identities. The spread of COVID-19 has caused many elders to die prematurely. This loss is worsened by the inability to practice traditional death and grief rituals, which prevents collective mourning and the shared remembrance of the life and legacy of an individual.

In the midst of this loss, the church at large is concerned with a quick return to its regular activities and weekly gatherings. It is unwilling to confront the wider injustices that this pandemic has unmasked. Some churches are assisting members who have lost their jobs or need immediate aid. In the case of Memoria Indígena, we have been doing new things in responding to acute needs, such as sending food to Indigenous communities in Colombia that were displaced by armed conflict in the midst of the national lockdown. We have also spent a lot of time simply calling, texting and emailing our partners, pastors and leaders in Indigenous communities, and listening to their struggles and praying together.

These responses, including our organization's, perhaps are the only thing we could do when we were mandated to stay in our homes for most of 2020 and much of the first part of 2021, and they are essential and needed. Nevertheless, the church in general has not been able to discern and comprehend the larger context of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Considering this larger picture requires a comprehensive response that demands a reconceptualization of our relationship with all of creation. And it demands that we take concrete measures to live in more just communion with our neighbor and with every living creature.

These observations invite us to pause and take time for deeper reflection. We can learn from Indigenous peoples' ways of being and living in this world, ways that are rooted in a deep relationship with all that God created. The visions of wholeness and interconnectedness at the core of Indigenous worldviews and the Bible can help us recognize how we all are connected via the same umbilical cord of life. We can also learn from their forms of relating to God in order to discover new ways of harmonious coexistence and to learn rituals that make possible restored and reconciled relationships. The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of that which Indigenous communities have never forgotten: the importance of living a life in harmony with

creation and the need for deep lamentation for the global situation.

The relationships that link us to one another likewise help us to understand that resistance and transformation are necessarily a collective effort. And these must begin from a space of mourning and thankfulness. It is a type of spiritual exercise that reminds us that we are all part of a larger whole. We also learn to see mourning as a form of hope. Our laments help us affirm hope as the basis of our spiritual practices. And this hope reminds us that life is not only lived—nor ends—on earth. The relationships that link us to one another likewise help us to understand that resistance is necessarily a collective effort. Resistance too must begin from a space of mourning. It is a type of spiritual exercise that reminds us that we are all part of a larger whole. We also learn to see mourning as a form of hope. Our laments help us affirm hope as the basis of our spiritual practices. And this hope reminds us that life is not only lived -- nor ends -- on earth. ■



Memoria Indígena

<https://memoriaindigena.org/>

Pray with us

- Pray that we recognize and denounce the systems of death that threaten Indigenous peoples and their territories, whose positions of vulnerability that have been significantly worsened by this pandemic
- Pray that God may help us not to be indifferent to the conditions of others beyond our cultural and physical borders
- Pray that we may join in collective mourning and memory in this time of profound pain and suffering, so that through lament we may experience hope
- Pray that we may learn to join in the struggle against injustice alongside and in communion with Indigenous communities
- Pray that we recognize the importance of our relationship with the earth and all of creation and our mutual interconnectedness and interdependence for coexistence

Photos: Memoria Indígena Facebook

Jocabel Solano is from the Guna nation in Panama. A theologian and writer, she is the director of Memoria Indígena and board member of the Latin American Theological Fellowship (FTL). One of her prayers is to cultivate the capacity to recognize the good news of Jesus as it is interwoven in the identities of Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala (America).

Ismael Conchacala is Wiwa from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. He works in the fields of education, pedagogy, research and visual arts and works with Wiwa youth to generate spaces of informal education through the Casa Wiwa, a place where he helps lead a program of artistic and literary creativity for the strengthening of the Wiwa language, Dumuna.

Francisco (Paco) Perez is Chuj from Guatemala. Paco has his undergraduate degree in theology from SETECA and due to the effects of the pandemic last year moved back from Guatemala City to his rural community where he grew up. There he is now supporting his local church and helping create and support local innovations for improving home heating and cooking methods.

Drew Jennings-Grisham (HNGR '06) dedicates his time to supporting Indigenous churches in Colombia, Bolivia and other parts of Latin America through his work with Memoria Indígena. Currently based in Medellín, Colombia, he also helps coordinate the "Identity, Indigeneity and Interculturality" focus group in the Latin American Theological Fraternity (FTL) and works with Paz y Esperanza Colombia.

Dr. Néstor Quiroa is Associate Professor of Spanish and has taught Latin American Literature at Wheaton College since 2002. His research interests include the religious encounter between Dominican missionary friars and Maya groups in Highland Guatemala. Dr. Quiroa has also written articles on the colonial religious context of native-authored colonial K'iche' texts and on indigenous responses to evangelization. His recent research focuses on twentieth century socio-political discourses in Central American novels. Dr. Quiroa has regularly served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Professor Lily Quiroa-Crowell is Visiting Assistant Lecturer of Anthropology and Urban Studies at Wheaton College. She studies violence, memory, and corporate agroextraction in relation to Indigenous political subjectivity in Latin America. Her dissertation focuses on the Caribbean coast in Guatemala, specifically the Q'eqchi' Maya communities living in and around the port city of Puerto Barrios.

The Power of Education

Onesimus Children Development Association (OCDA)
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Amy Peeler
with Nega Meaza

“My father was the only educated member of our village, and that made a profound difference for our family.”

The twenty-five members of the upper-level Bible course, Gender in the New Testament, were fascinated to hear the story of Nega Meaza, Director of Onesimus Child Development Association in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, speaking to us live from his home, during one of our classes.

His story brought to life so much of what we had been studying in the historical context of the New Testament. Coming from a

family of nineteen, the fact that his father had been educated opened opportunities for him and his siblings to be educated, yet the opportunities played out differently based on gender. His sisters had different constraints than did Nega and his brothers. Rural living, large families, and gendered realities for education seemed much more similar to the world of the New Testament than did our own culture in Wheaton, Illinois, in 2021. Nega could hear Scripture with ease in ways that we could not. Knowing such a brother and hearing his story is a vital part of faithful hermeneutics.

"In a class in which we are often wrestling with debated topics, it was incredibly refreshing to step out of those and hear from a brother halfway across the world who is doing the long, hard, faithful, but rewarding work of loving children – exactly what Jesus called his followers to do."

Yet there were profound points of connections between us as well. The doors that opened for Nega resulted in a crisis for him. Would he pursue a relatively comfortable life because of his education or would he respond to the children living on the street he encountered when he moved to the capital city of Addis? After prayer and reflection, he chose the latter. God laid a call upon his heart to meet the needs of the many children who live in poverty and without great hope. The ministry of Onesimus, whose namesake in the Bible was transformed from useless to useful because of the power of Christ (Philemon 10), was born. As Nega received a clear call from God, everyone in our class could as well.

Now Onesimus is celebrating its fifteenth year of ministry. In addition to feeding, educating, and clothing children who live on the street, the organization seeks to reunite children with their families and to teach the families to become self-sustainable. Building upon its connections with over 1200 Ethiopian churches, as well as Christians across the globe, the ministry has begun sustainable farming initiatives and plans the construction of a sustainable building to meet even more

fully the great needs of their community. They praise God for the many children who have gone from living on the street to graduating from high school and college with honors. This month Nega himself will graduate with a Doctorate of Ministry in Leadership and Preaching. The seeds of his father's education in the soil of God's power and grace have borne fruit beyond what anyone could have imagined.

COVID-19, thankfully, has not caused intense amounts of suffering for them. The restrictions were hard at first, but life is returning to normal. Our class was struck that in a community who regularly deals with so many intense challenges, at the time of our Spring 2021 class visit they seem to have been spared the worst of this one.

In a class in which we are often wrestling with debated topics, it was incredibly refreshing to step out of those and hear from a brother halfway across the world who is doing the long, hard, faithful, but rewarding work of loving children – exactly what Jesus called his followers to do. May our work to understand with confidence our identities as men and women in Christ prepare us to serve just as faithfully, wherever and to whatever God may call. ■



Onesimus Children Development Association (OCDA)

<https://onesimuscda.webs.com/>

Pray with us

May God give a blessing to Onesimus.
God bless it from roof to floor,
from wall to wall, to end to end,
from its foundation and in its covering.

Christ in their coming and in their leaving,
be the Door and the Keeper for them.
And for all who work in Onesimus, this day and every day, forever and always.
Amen.

Adapted from “Prayers for a Workplace” in *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Zondervan 2010)

Rev. Dr. Amy Peeler is Associate Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College. Her research centers in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the story of Mary, mother of Jesus, and theological language. Dr. Peeler has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Nega Meaza is Executive Director of Onesimus Children Development Association (OCDA) located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. OCDA works to rescue at-risk children and youth and to ensure that they remain in or return to a loving family. Since 2006 the organization has provided holistic programs that meet the physical, emotional, developmental, and spiritual needs of children and youth.

Photos: Onesimus Facebook & Website





Yo te escucho, Ecuador

Embodying Just Mercy in the Pandemic

Paz y Esperanza
Guayaquil, Ecuador

James G. Huff Jr.
with José Vines Rodríguez

Few are the times when we have the opportunity to observe someone seamlessly embody a great love for mercy with a determination to act justly. Getting to know José Vines Rodríguez has provided me with such an opportunity. Ordained as an evangelical pastor and trained in human rights law in his home country of Peru and in Spain, José Vines is someone who ordinarily and humbly lives out Micah 6:8. And as the director of Paz y Esperanza (Peace and Hope) Ecuador, he has had plenty of opportunities to put into practice what is good and to carry out what the Lord requires of us all.

Paz y Esperanza Ecuador is a Christian non-government organization that works to defend and promote the human rights of vulnerable groups so that they can sustain lives that are free from violence and injustice. Since

its founding in 2009, the organization has collaborated with community organizations, local churches, and Ecuadorian public institutions to work tirelessly and creatively for the common good and for God’s shalom for all people in Ecuador. Not surprisingly, Paz y Esperanza’s work has been especially important in the context of the numerous hardships and challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic this past year.

In 2020, the organization’s home base of Guayaquil, Ecuador suffered one of the worst COVID-19 [outbreaks](#) in the world. At one point in April of last year, an estimated 600 COVID-deaths were reported in one day in Guayaquil. José Vines, the only full-time staff member, works with a team of six part-time staff who have invested their energy and lives full-time into Paz’s work. Shortly

after the onset of the pandemic, the team mobilized volunteers to distribute 2,500 food aid and hygiene kits to vulnerable city residents, including pregnant women, the elderly, children, people with disabilities, and Venezuelan migrant families.

The well-being of Venezuelan migrants, who have been especially vulnerable during the crisis, has been of particular concern to the Paz staff. As of June 2020, an [estimated](#) 5 million refugees and migrants have left Venezuela because of continuing political, economic, and social crisis there. This massive displacement of people in a relatively short period of time (since 2015) has been very challenging for neighboring Latin American countries, including Ecuador where an estimated 400,000 Venezuelan migrants are located. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 made life especially difficult for this already vulnerable group of people. At one point last year, the Paz team discovered that some Venezuelan families lacked the

“The pastoral talks that Paz y Esperanza offered left a distinct mark on my life and on the lives of so many families. From the encuentros I learned how to draw close to people who had lost a loved one; I discovered how to offer them guidance as part of a process of caregiving that will strengthen their lives in the middle of very difficult circumstances.”



economic resources needed to bury family members who had died because of COVID. They quickly responded by raising funds to cover funeral costs for migrant families.

The team also immediately recognized the critical role that local pastors would play in providing holistic care in the midst of the crisis. They organized a series of ten *encuentros* (meetings) for approximately sixty church pastors, including women and men, to provide biblical and professional training in psychological, emotional, and spiritual caregiving for individuals and families suffering because of the pandemic. One Ecuadorian pastor, Jhon Freddy Sánchez Martínez, remarked, “The pastoral talks that Paz y Esperanza offered left a distinct mark on my life and on the lives of so many families. From the encuentros I learned how to draw close to people who had lost a loved one; I discovered how to offer them guidance as part of a process of caregiving that will strengthen their lives in the middle of very difficult circumstances.”

Yo te escucho, Ecuador

Along with the pastoral encuentros, the Paz team mobilized groups of professional volunteers, including lawyers and psychologists, to develop virtual programs to address problems being exacerbated by the pandemic. The program, known as *Yo Te Escucho Ecuador* (I hear you, Ecuador), utilized Zoom meetings and cell phone calls to offer psychological care, to provide training on preventing child sexual abuse and domestic violence, and to deliver legal counseling services for people and organizations working with Venezuelan migrants. Notably, the team's tireless care and resourceful advocacy for Venezuelan migrants has not stopped there. As the pandemic has waxed and waned over the past year, the Paz office has remained focused on mobilizing other civil society and religious groups to insist that the Ecuadorian government respect the human rights of Venezuelan migrant families, who lack the

resources needed to cover costly legal fees that are associated with securing their immigration status.

Bryan Stevenson, a U.S. attorney and noted author of *Just Mercy*, has [remarked](#) that one "cannot create justice without getting close to places where injustice prevails." Getting proximate is exactly what José Vincés and his tireless Paz y Esperanza colleagues have been doing in the midst of the crises generated by the COVID-19 pandemic this past year. May God strengthen the work of their hands. And may God grant us the ears to hear (and the eyes to see) their work and to do the same in our communities. ■



Paz y Esperanza

<https://peaceandhopeinternational.org/>

<https://www.pazyesperanza.org/en/>

Pray with us

May God give a blessing to Paz y Esperanza.
God bless it from roof to floor,
from wall to wall, to end to end,
from its foundation and in its covering.

Christ in their coming and in their leaving,
be the Door and the Keeper for them.

And for all who work in Paz y Esperanza, this day and every day, forever and always.
Amen.

Adapted from "Prayers for a Workplace" in *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Zondervan 2010)

Dr. James (Jamie) G. Huff Jr. is Associate Professor and Associate Director of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program at Wheaton College. He is a cultural anthropologist whose scholarship and applied research focuses on religion and social change in Latin America.

José Vincés Rodríguez is a pastor, lawyer, and human rights defender. He is the director of Paz and Esperanza Ecuador, a Christian non-government organization located in Guayaquil, that works with poor and marginalized groups against various forms of violence and injustice.

Photos: Paz y Esperanza



Darkness Looms, but Moving On!

Partners for Life Advancement and Education Promotion (PLAEP)
Kitwe, Zambia

Prisca Kambole
with Brian Howell

On 10th March 2020, I was to receive a Most Inspiring Individuals Award from the Egmont Trust, a Wales-based charity that supports organizations working in sub-Saharan Africa. But my time in the UK was short-lived as I had to quickly change my travel plans. The coronavirus was spreading everywhere, and many countries were quickly imposing air travel restrictions!

Within a few days of returning home to Zambia, schools were prematurely shut. The closing of schools meant over 700 children at the PLAEP-supported Musonda School were going home. It was troubling to imagine what would happen next. How would the children living with HIV/AIDS that were referred to the School by the local clinic because of the school meals survive? Antiretroviral treatment for HIV must go with good nutrition so that the children remain healthy. The school meal is a

lifesaver for many children at the school who frequently only have one or two meals a day at home. How would those children be affected? Schoolwork was another huge concern. Most of the houses in the slums where our students reside do not have electricity and many of the students' caregivers are not literate and, therefore, are limited in their ability to help with schoolwork.

In March 2020, the World Bank predicted that Zambia would be hard hit by COVID-19 due to slowed economic activity with China and South Africa, which are major trade partners that had also been affected by COVID-19. Most parents or caregivers in our beneficiary communities are at the bottom of the economic ladder. They work as day laborers, security guards, housekeepers, and other low-income jobs, and typically earn less than \$50 (USD) per month. They lost

jobs or had their incomes severely reduced. Those with small businesses reported drastic reductions in profits; some indicated that they had to close their businesses altogether.

Gift, a female student in the 9th grade in 2020, went through a difficult time. Her mum, a widow, worked as a housekeeper. She lost her job because the family she worked for told her they could no longer afford to pay her. Despite these difficulties, Gift worked very hard and topped the class in the final exams! But she was very sad after getting her results because she knew no one would pay her school fees. The Lord in His mercy has enabled us to financially support Gift's education this year. Another student, Evans, however was not as fortunate as Gift. He received very good grades in the 7th grade final exams. One morning, as I was going through the list of students who passed, I asked about Evans' whereabouts. I was later told that Evans' parents had relocated to the village. His dad lost his job and life became very difficult for them. I mourned deep down my heart. I wish I could find Evans and bring him back to school.

In August 2020, PLAEP conducted a study on the effects of COVID-19 on school children. The study showed that 32% of students had reduced mealtimes and meal portions because of caregivers' reduced incomes. Body Mass Index (BMI) tests were administered when students returned to school in September and the results indicated that more than 40% of the students had poor health. We conducted a similar study in the previous year (2019) and it had indicated that less than 4% of the students were in poor health.

With no means of continuing learning at home through radio, TV, or online programs,



students had to wait until they returned to Musonda School to continue their learning. For some students, remaining at home exacerbated other challenges and vulnerabilities. Six teenage female students, for example, reported being pregnant by September 2020.

Examination classes (grades 9 and 7) resumed early June. Notably, approximately 10% of the student population did not return to school when other grades reopened in September 2020. When all of the students returned to Musonda School, managing the learning space was another significant challenge. In a normal year the average class size at the school is 60–70 students. The building only has nine classrooms. In order to comply with social distancing protocols, we had to split the classes into two or three groups. This resulted in reduced school contact hours, which, in turn greatly reduced students' opportunities for learning. Exam performance went down by nearly 20% this academic year.



Darkness Looms, but Moving On!

"Approximately four thousand masks were made, which we distributed to local clinics in our target communities and to all our students, staff, and volunteers. Every three months we created new masks (hand-sewn!) and distributed them to all the students."

So how has PLAEP responded to these challenges?

Musonda School staff worked quickly to create and prepare worksheets that students collected on designated days and completed at home. Nevertheless, many students still faced the challenge of not having someone at home who could assist them with schoolwork.

Musonda School partners responded swiftly to our appeal for food aid for students and particularly for children living with HIV/

AIDS whose health conditions were very concerning. From May to December 2020 food packs were distributed every month to at least fifty families. We also inquired with local partners about distributing donations of second-hand clothes to use for making hand-sewn face masks. Approximately four thousand masks were made, which we distributed to local clinics in our target communities and to all our students, staff, and volunteers. Every three months we created new masks (hand-sewn!) and distributed them to all the students. We also had a go at making liquid hand soap and hand sanitizer, since we did not have a budget to purchase these items for over eight hundred people!

We thought COVID would quickly disappear. However, it is now evident that it will not pass anytime soon! Pray with us that the Lord will open doors of support to extend our school building so that we can have more classrooms for the students, more school scholarships to keep students in school, and more resources to develop income earning opportunities for caregivers of the students. ■



Partners for Life Advancement and Education Promotion (PLAEP)

<https://www.plaep.org/>

Pray with us

- Extend school building to have more classrooms for the students. Only 7 classrooms for over 800 students
- Obtain school scholarships to keep students in school.
- Resources to develop income earning opportunities for caregivers of the students.
- Funds to continue providing food for the students during school time.

Prisca Kambole is the Executive Director and co-founder of Partners for Life Advancement and Education Promotion (PLAEP), a Christian organization addressing education, health, and economic challenges of children affected with HIV and economically constrained communities in Zambia.

Dr. Brian Howell is Professor of Anthropology at Wheaton College whose research and writing as an anthropologist of religion focuses on global Christianity, short term missions, and the intersection of theology and anthropology. Dr. Howell has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Photos: PLAEP



You Didn't Forget Me

Samaritana Transformation Ministries, Inc.
Quezon City, Philippines

Jonathan Nambu with Brian Howell

The woman received her relief food pack from Samaritana last year, declaring her gratitude—*“Thank you for the relief you gave us”* she said as she received the small packet of food. *“You didn't forget me.”*

What did she mean by not being forgotten? Not being forgotten in a time of need, even though many felt forgotten and passed over by the government as emergency assistance was being distributed? Not being forgotten by us, as she had already completed training with Samaritana and since moved on? Not being forgotten as those many among the poor who feel marginalized by family, friends, and society?

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” (Luke 23:42 NIV)

The repentant thief on the cross beside Jesus pleaded that Jesus remember – not forget – him upon coming into his kingdom. It is striking that this man was seeking not relief from his suffering, but to be *remembered*, a universal and existential human longing.

The crisis brought by COVID-19 stripped all of us of familiar moorings and experiences of the joy and honor of remembering and being remembered. Gathering with loved ones on special occasions was no longer possible. Even culturally important customs of honoring the memory of loved ones who died, comforting one another in lengthy wakes with abundant food and warm fellowship, were strictly prohibited. Scores of the women we serve at Samaritana, not having been properly recorded on the files of their local

“We also found ways to connect with women, and connect them with one another, in spite of the restrictions on movement and gathering in groups. Making use of online group chats on Messenger, we created – and continue to maintain – guided prayer on weekday mornings, and small group discussions and sharing on Tuesday evenings. These have become essential touchpoints...”

government unit's office, were not eligible for the emergency relief assistance provided by the government, and experienced “being forgotten” as they were caught in the seas of people who fell into the “no work, no pay” informal economy sector.

So as the days and weeks of imposed quarantine lockdown beginning in March 2020 stretched on with no end in sight, we decided that we needed to respond to the immediate felt need of our community's members. Even though we don't consider ourselves a relief agency, the crisis had made relief—to augment the government's assistance—a real need. And so, for almost three months, we solicited specially designated donations; bought rice, canned goods, personal hygiene products, and vegetables in bulk; transformed our multi-purpose main hall into a warehouse and staging area for repacking; and delivered food goods to over 1,100 households. We

remembered our current women friends, the women friends whom we had served and helped in past years, and new prospective friends in the communities we are active in.

We also found ways to connect with women, and connect them with one another, in spite of the restrictions on movement and gathering in groups. Making use of online group chats on Messenger, we created—and continue to maintain – guided prayer on weekday mornings, and small group discussions and sharing on Tuesday evenings. These have become essential touchpoints for the women, to not feel isolated and to find encouragement and hope through the community they have come to value deeply, and through experiencing God through Lectio Divina and prayer. We *remember* our women friends online, and experience with them the comfort of being remembered by God.

Ultimately, our women friends experience and feel they are *remembered* by God, through us. God *remembers* all of us – especially those who are otherwise left out and forgotten—through the compassionate care and involvement of the people of God in the world, as the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. And sometimes the experience of not being forgotten, the feeling that someone has *remembered* us, the deep awareness that we have not been and will not be forgotten by God, is enough to soothe our souls even in the midst of suffering and uncertainty. ■





Samaritana Transformation Ministries, Inc.

<https://www.facebook.com/SamaritanaTransformationMinistries/>

Pray with us

May God give a blessing to Samaritana Transformation Ministries.
God bless it from roof to floor,
from wall to wall, to end to end,
from its foundation and in its covering.

Christ in their coming and in their leaving,
be the Door and the Keeper for them.
And for all who work in Samaritana Transformation Ministries. this day and every day, forever
and always.
Amen.

Adapted from “Prayers for a Workplace” in *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Zondervan 2010)

Jonathan Nambu is a Japanese American who has lived in the Philippines for thirty years. He has ministered to refugees, street gang members, and homeless persons in Chicago for five years before moving to Manila. He is the Executive Director of Samaritana, a Christian organization where he ministers with his wife Thelma among adult women survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking. Jonathan and Thelma have one daughter, Katrinka.

Dr. Brian Howell is Professor of Anthropology at Wheaton College whose research and writing as an anthropologist of religion focuses on global Christianity, short term missions, and the intersection of theology and anthropology. Dr. Howell has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Photos: Samaritana Transformation Ministries, Inc. Facebook



Pandemic Preparedness

Lessons Learned from 20 Years of Work in the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Shalom Delhi, A Project of Emmanuel Hospital Association
Delhi, India

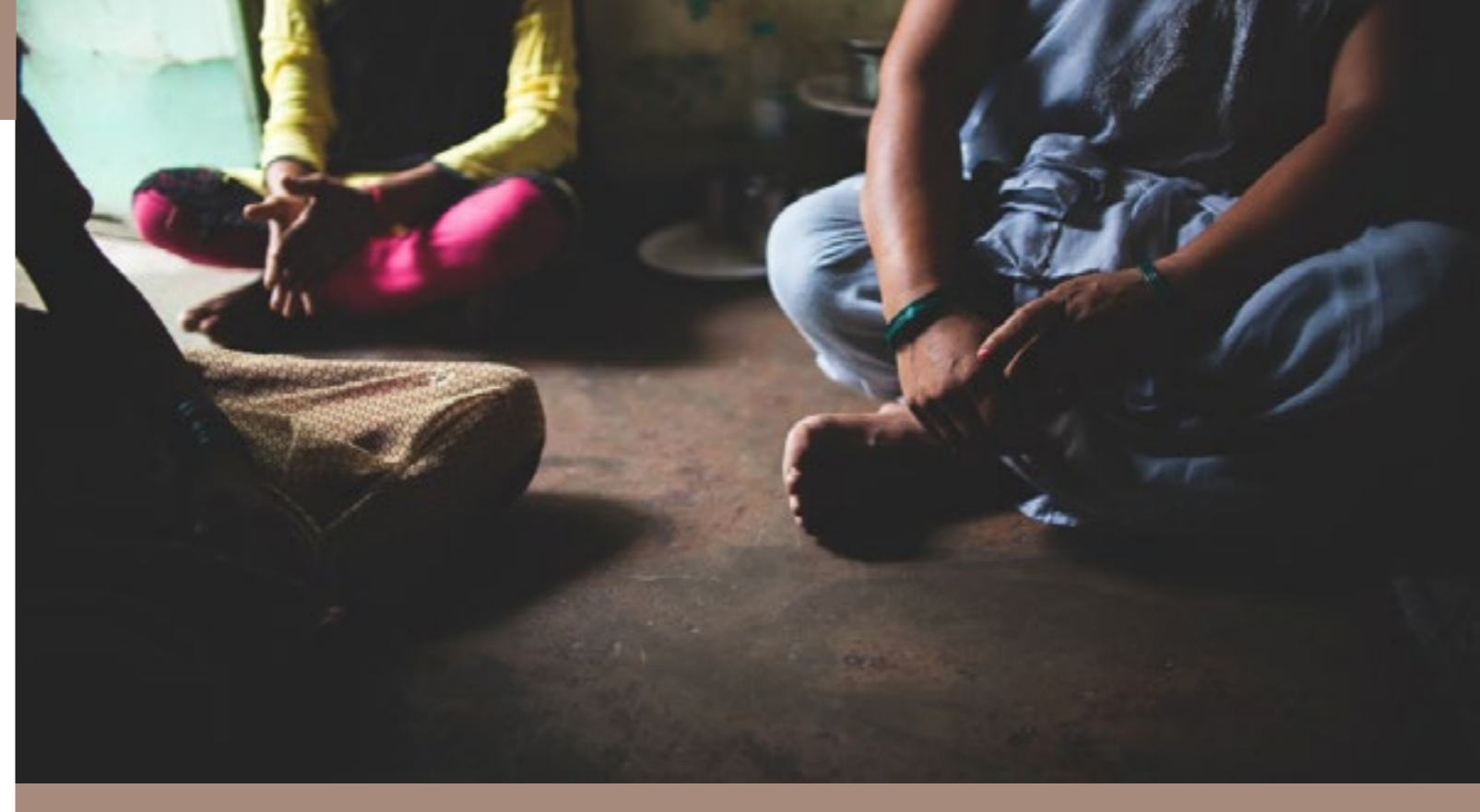
Rajni Herman and Kristen Page

Pandemics are not new to the staff of Shalom Delhi, a health project of the Emmanuel Hospital Association located in Delhi, India. This small project has been providing compassionate care since 2001 for those living through the realities of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Delhi. Shalom cares for the most marginalized and vulnerable members of society, and it seemed unimaginable that things could become any more difficult for these neighbors than they already were. Yet, when COVID-19 became a reality in Delhi, and the lockdown began, Shalom was met with new challenges for helping those who find it hardest to access care. At the time of the lockdown, we wondered: *How will the families served by Shalom – those whose livelihoods depend on daily income – survive the lockdown? Do our patients have their basic needs met? Do they have food? Can they contact us if they need something? Who will care for the one patient remaining in the hospital? Can we provide what these families need? What have we learned by caring for these families through a different pandemic that can inform our response now?*

Two pandemics at once...the HIV/AIDS pandemic isolates many through stigmatization; for the families served by Shalom, to be further isolated due to a nationwide lockdown had serious implications. Prior to the COVID-19

pandemic, Shalom recognized that the economic vulnerabilities of the families they served were a source of constant stress and concern, and therefore established many programs that would ultimately provide a stable foundation of support throughout this new pandemic. Of course, the relationships provided through the home-based care programs were critical to the COVID-19 response. Without established relationships, it would have been nearly impossible to know the specific needs of each family. When the lockdown was announced, Shalom received many calls from families enrolled in their programs, but more importantly, Shalom called all of their home-based care families and other patients served every day!

"Two pandemics at once...the HIV/AIDS pandemic isolates many through stigmatization; for the families served by Shalom, to be further isolated due to a nationwide lockdown had serious implications."



Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has brought enormous change into our lives and the lives of the individuals with whom we work, pressing needs are narrated to us in our daily calls with the families we serve. We also hear concerns shared openly by those who are coming to Shalom for treatment. We frequently hear “...there’s just no money to pay rent, no finances to sustain (us), (our) savings have been used up, we have lost our daily income.” For those served by Shalom, the further economic instability caused by COVID-19 coupled with illness has seeded deep fear and anxiety in their lives. It has been a time for us as staff to listen, and to provide a sense of belongingness to Shalom. In addition to listening, 28 families, 11 transgendered *Hijra* persons, 15 patients with terminal cancer, and 12 girls from families in dire need were supported financially in the immediate days after the lockdown began. This type of assistance continues for those in dire need, and the staff at Shalom continue to assist patients with everything from accessing the antiretroviral medications provided by the government to meeting basic needs.

Prior to the pandemic, programs like our livelihood project and the adolescent programs provided the foundational infrastructure for a more rapid response to COVID-19. During the lockdown, the wages were paid to all of the women working in the livelihood project, and the adolescents were also supported financially (as necessary) or with food donations. Sadly, pandemics are not new to Shalom, Delhi, but their faithful work with those living through the HIV/AIDS pandemic have helped them develop the most important skills for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic – listening, loving, and bringing the comfort and the hope of Christ to hurting people. ■

Shalom Delhi

<http://shalomdelhi.org/>

Listen also to the Spring Symposium Podcast with Dr. Rajni Herman, Dr. Kristen Page and former HNGR intern Kalei Hosaka: <https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/human-needs-and-global-resources-hngr/symposium/2021-spring-symposium-podcasts/>

Pray with us

- Please pray for funding and opportunity to develop programs that would provide psychological support to families and patients served by Shalom.
- Please pray for funding and opportunity to develop a disability initiative for HIV patients with disabilities
- Please pray for continued funding and support for existing programs, especially for medical services and the livelihood project
- Please pray for opportunities to sell livelihood products – the bags and other sewn goods made by the women working in the project.
- Please pray for the staff of Shalom – that they will have energy as they work tirelessly to support the families and patients.
- Please pray for funding that can provide an additional physician to be hired. Currently there is only one physician serving.

Dr. Rajni Herman is a palliative care physician, working as the Project Director of Shalom Delhi, which is a Palliative care Unit of Emmanuel Hospital Association. Shalom, located in Delhi, India, provides holistic care for patients with HIV, terminal cancer and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Its various components include a hospital clinic with inpatient and outpatient facility, Home care programs for patients with HIV, cancer and NCDs, an adolescent program, palliative care work among transgendered people, support groups and a livelihood program.

Dr. Kristen Page is the Ruth Kraft Strohschein Distinguished Chair and Professor of Biology at Wheaton College. She is a disease ecologist and teaches many courses that range from ecology to parasitology to global health. For the past 21 years, Dr. Page has had the tremendous blessing of mentoring students in the Human Needs and Global Resources program; collaborating with the students and global partners to learn about the ways in which the use of natural resources impacts the environment and human health.

Photos: Shalom Delhi's website



Of Burns, Radio Programs, and New Education

SheWORKS community life under quarantine

SheWORKS (Women of Reliability, Knowledge, and Skills)
Quezon City, Philippines

Tina Dedace and Mandy Kellums Baraka

Our small community of four staff, five survivor-leaders, and two volunteer counselors were shaken when the Philippine government declared an indefinite lockdown in mid-March 2020. At that time, we served 75 children with their 62 mothers (trafficked women) in two urban poor communities. A mixture of fears and questions crept into our hearts and minds: How can our barely surviving mothers feed their already-malnourished children and their families? How do we continue to operate in this lockdown? How do we stay COVID-free? Can we keep our community afloat given the big economic downturn due to the pandemic?

The lockdown was initially traumatic for us. The government said that they would close all borders nationally and internationally. We could not go outside. We had to wait for food to be provided, especially the poor people—our survivors' families included. "Everyone is panic-buying," one of our leaders jokingly said. "But we can only panic like they do; because we do not have the means to buy!" We needed to act fast and secure our small working force first. We thought of continuing our survivor leadership development through online learning with

our five survivor-leaders—something we have never done before. Armed with five borrowed laptops, books, and some groceries, we sent our leaders home on the last day before the nationwide lockdown. The first attempts at online training were bad. Internet signal was poor, and there were lots of distractions in the background: sounds of children shouting and playing could be heard, and the neighborhood was noisy. One of our leaders set up her "office" in an adjacent empty lot, with hens crowing in the background. We learned to make some rules: talking and sharing one at a time and muting our speakers so we could maximize our learning.

We met four days a week. A typical day usually started with prayer and Scripture reflection, sharing, then computer training on their laptops to develop their reading and writing skills. We also conducted life skills sessions for continuous character-building. We always began centering ourselves in God by showing a picture of the Bible and a cross, with fresh flowers or leaves. A candle was lit as a reminder that God is always with us. We also called our women survivor-friends weekly and asked about their situation. They were all hungry and in need of a steady supply of food

"For Filipinos, providing comfort during deaths entails physical presence during the wake, but with the lockdown, it was difficult for us not to be there. Our four women leaders managed to make a one-day wake visit, and we organized nightly online services. Our leader shared later that she felt the love of the community throughout the grieving process."

and milk. They had also begun quarreling with family members; they needed someone to talk to. We gathered one-page materials about COVID parenting and building good relationships with families and shared these with our survivors online.

God's goodness was very evident all throughout the year. We thank Him for the kindness of churches and individual donors,

especially One Child, our partner ministry for the children's education, who graciously included food packs and hygiene kits in their support. To this day, we have something to share with our communities because of them. We also prayed, "Lord, no accidents, please." Yet we inevitably experienced facilitating emergencies through the phone because a child had a broken bone; a girl's whole right arm got burned while her mother was trying to sell food in the neighborhood; one survivor gave birth; and one of our leaders' kids died of a heart attack. Our leader was inconsolable; we offered spaces for her and all of us to grieve with her family. For Filipinos, providing comfort during deaths entails physical presence during the wake, but with the lockdown, it was difficult for us not to be there. Our four women leaders managed to make a one-day wake visit, and we organized nightly online services. Our leader shared later that she felt the love of the community throughout the grieving process.

To educate the children on COVID-19, one of our staff wrote two activity books. The kids learned about it in an enjoyable way! We also distributed a single portable radio



for each family, where they got news updates on COVID-19 and experienced spiritual upliftment. Our Director, Michelle, has a weekly children's program called Okiddo; the kids listen to it, and we call them afterwards to share what they have learned. We also interviewed a few kids. They were thrilled to hear their voices played on air! Moreover, we started a weekly one-hour online session of prayer and sharing called "Bawal-Judgmental" (No Judgment) with other survivor-leaders of International Justice Mission. Constant communication, prayers, and Scripture reflection have become sources of strength, mentally and spiritually.

We still face challenges and experience the impact of the pandemic, for instance on the children's continuing education. The kids of our survivors are given thick modules to answer; not one of them initially had tablets. Thankfully, a growing number of Christians donated some electronic gadgets. Fourteen

volunteers are now helping the children learn through weekly online tutorial sessions, and we need sixty more. The second challenge is more serious: the incidence of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) rose 264% during the pandemic. Last year, we banded together with the Freedom Sunday Network and campaigned against OSEC. Faith-based organizations are now becoming more aware of the issue and are more supportive. There is still much to do about awareness-raising.

Our struggle is far from over. Yet we can only look back to 2020 and see how gracious God is amidst fear and confusion. In one of our daily reflections, we learned from the story of the disciples on the boat with Jesus that we can choose to be present with Him in the storm, to wait for Him to speak peace, and to be still. This may be the best thing that we can do through this global stormy weather that we are all experiencing. ■



SheWORKS (Women of Reliability, Knowledge, and Skills)

<http://www.madeinhope.org/sheworks.html>

Pray with us

- Wisdom and discernment as we continually explore and implement various economic empowerment alternatives and strategies that will generate sufficient income for women survivors of trafficking
- May the children of the survivors also grow in Christlikeness and break free from the generational chains of oppression and abuse in their families
- May the churches also become active and strong partners in fighting oppression among trafficked women and children.

Tina Dedace is the Program Coordinator of Made in Hope, Philippines – She WORKS, Inc. She oversees the four program thrusts of She WORKS (She LEADS, She WORKS, She CARES, She ACTS) and facilitates leadership development of women survivors of trafficking. Tina's passion is to see trafficked women equipped to their full potential so that they become equippers of others.

Dr. Mandy Kellums Baraka is Visiting Associate Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Wheaton College and from 2014-2021 served as the Student Support Coordinator of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Photos: SheWORKS Facebook





New Beginnings when Old Things Fall Apart

Uganda Christian University
Mukono, Uganda

John Kitayimbwa and Paul Robinson

“The word change normally refers to new beginnings. But...transformation more often happens - not when something new begins, but when something old falls apart.”

– Richard Rohr

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic. For most of the world at that time, the virus was virtually unknown -- not much more than a vague and unsettling rumor. Mortality was low, but gathering pace.

In Uganda, where no cases had yet been reported, we were only beginning to hear of quarantines and lockdowns across the globe. One week later, on March 18 and with no warning, President Museveni announced immediate measures that would, in his words,

prevent the virus from finding dry grass ready for ignition in Uganda. With immediate effect he closed all schools in the country and suspended all religious gatherings. Five days later he announced the closure of Uganda’s borders and sole international airport, and by the end of March he had imposed a total lockdown on movement within the country. While several months later the internal total lockdown would be lifted in phases, the airport and borders would not reopen for seven months, and universities would not begin to physically reopen until a year later, in March 2021.

We didn’t know it yet, but “something old” was falling apart, and something new was about to begin that would require our transformation. Uganda Christian University

(UCU) was plunged into crisis. Within 48 hours, more than 13,000 students on our five campuses were sent home, our Easter Semester ending prematurely just two weeks before the start of final examinations. Offices were closed and the campuses were shut down. Almost entirely dependent on tuition revenue and with very limited financial reserves, our institution’s very survival was at stake. Added to this was the reality that university education in Uganda is accredited and regulated by the government. Any path forward during the crisis that involved changes to curriculum, teaching pedagogies, and assessment would necessitate the approval of regulators, cabinet ministers, and even Uganda’s national parliament and presidency.

UCU needed to find a way to operate amidst the total lockdown and beyond into a COVID-19 world. This would necessitate migrating almost every function, service, and process online. Key to the university’s continuity was the need first to complete those final two weeks of the Easter Semester by finding a way for students to “virtually” sit for exams, and then secondly planning new, virtual methods and practices for subsequent semesters. But how? While UCU had begun building an e-learning teaching platform in 2014, it was largely untried, untested, and not accredited. Such a transition would involve fundamental changes in teaching, learning, and assessment. This was a direction UCU wanted to move over the course of coming years - not weeks. But we had no choice.

We have a saying in East Africa: “God is good—all the time, and, all the time—God is good!” We needed help and God had given us a Fulbright Scholar from Wheaton College at that time, Prof. Paul Robinson. He had

“We didn’t know it yet, but ‘something old’ was falling apart, and something new was about to begin that would require our transformation.”

much global experience bridging educational philosophies and practices and was hearing from Wheaton colleagues about their own COVID-19 response of moving, within weeks, all the college’s 900 courses from in-person to online teaching and learning.

We asked Paul to spearhead an effort to equip and to prepare our faculty and students for a rapid transition to online assessment and learning. He immediately reached out to Wheaton’s Provost and, with her encouragement, to deans and faculty. In the midst of their own heavy responsibilities, Wheaton faculty from across the disciplines responded with sample curricula, examinations, and counsel on teaching and assessment. With these, Paul’s team at UCU developed and disseminated extensive guides for faculty and students on preparing, administering, and taking online examinations. They also developed a comprehensive, rigorous, and clear assessment rubric that would give confidence to both professors and students. They then worked with UCU’s teaching faculty to rewrite and to align all of our pending semester examinations with that rubric.

New Beginnings when Old Things Fall Apart

Fundamental changes to systems—even if it leads to more exceptional and effective outcomes—necessitate attitude and mind resets and rarely are introduced without opposition. We initially received broad resistance from teaching faculty who were unfamiliar with these new methods and technologies, from students and parents who were worried about grades, and even from the floor of Uganda’s Parliament!

Paul then wrote a formal brief explaining this form of assessment, its broad international credibility, and its suitability for university examinations. This document helped convince Uganda's government to allow all Ugandan universities to adopt robust e-learning teaching and assessment methods, and subsequently proved rigorous enough to satisfy the national accrediting agency. UCU was successful in rolling out online exams in September 2020 and delivering online semesters in October 2020 and January 2021.

COVID-19 is proving to be a catalyst—or tipping point or driver—for transformation in how information, knowledge, and values (i.e., education) will be created, delivered, and received. Humanity may be on the cusp of a global revolution in how and what teaching and learning will be, and higher education globally, including in Uganda, has

been caught up in these changing physical, social, and economic environments. We believe the changes afford unparalleled new opportunities; new technologies offer new possibilities for invention, inclusivity, and accessibility. The moment demands innovation while at the same time being grounded in the best of what has been. UCU has weathered the immediate crisis and is poised to more effectively and ably meet new challenges and opportunities ahead of us. Wheaton College has been involved in the development of Christ-centered higher education at UCU since 2000, when Wheaton’s Politics and International Relations Professor Ashley Woodiwiss helped us envision the integration of faith, learning and service as our grounding ethos. Our experience for 20 years with multiple collaborative initiatives between UCU and Wheaton College demonstrates the very best of how we can together and with God’s help meet the challenges each of us faces. We conclude by noting that a joint Wheaton/Uganda Christian University Colloquium on faith, teaching, and learning best practices had been planned for the summer of 2020. This was cancelled because of COVID-19. We pray that this and further collaboration and partnership initiatives will develop as our two Christ-centered institutions meet the challenges we face independently and together for Christ and his (global) kingdom. ■

Uganda Christian University (UCU)

<https://ucu.ac.ug/>

Pray with us

- For Uganda Christian University and Wheaton College to continue innovating and leading the way in our respective teaching and learning journeys.
- For UCU to access resources to fully revamp its ICT infrastructure to fully cope with the demands of the new normal.
- For new collaboration and partnership initiatives between UCU and Wheaton so that we ever more faithfully be strong witnesses to the Kingdom of God present and transforming individuals and societies.

Rev. Dr. John Kitayimbwa is Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs [Provost] of Uganda Christian University. He holds a PhD in Computational Biology, an MPhil in Computational Biology, and an MSc in Mathematics, and is an ordained priest in the Anglican Church of Uganda. John’s vision is for higher education that equips young women and men to serve church and society in bringing to reality the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Paul Robinson is Wheaton College Professor Emeritus and was Director of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program from 1999-2013. He is co-founder of Congo Initiative and the Christian Bilingual University of Congo. Paul spent much of 2019-2020 at Uganda Christian University as a Fulbright Scholar, where his initial and primary tasks were focused on deepening UCU’s integration of faith, learning, and service. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought additional and unanticipated opportunities for deepening and expanding a relationship between Wheaton College and UCU.

Photos: Uganda Christian University Facebook



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence In the Heart of Africa



COVID-19 Lockdown and Renewal

World Renew Senegal
Dakar, Senegal

Esther Kühn with Scott Ickes and Allison Ruark

When Senegal locked down in March 2020, it bore major impacts on people's daily lives. It limited their opportunities to generate income and to buy food. People from villages could not travel to town because there was no public transportation, so they could not go to the market or the doctor. Churches and mosques closed. Day-laborers suddenly could not find work, and their situation endured through the whole year. In Fall 2020, at least 440 people, mostly young Senegalese men, died when their small boats sank trying to get to the Spanish Canary Islands; they perished attempting a two-week journey which people haven't travelled by small boat for a long time, but with COVID-19 many young men had become desperate. In early March 2021, this situation exploded. There were riots in several cities in Senegal including the capital Dakar. The immediate spark was the politicized arrest of an opposition leader, but the main reason people were willing to take to the streets was a year of hardships and restrictions due to COVID-19.

The response of the Senegalese Government to the COVID-19 challenge was actually very good, said to be the second best response in the world ([globalresponseindex.foreignpolicy.com](https://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2020/04/27/global_response_index)). The sick were tested, contacts traced

and quarantined in empty hotels, and the government took the advice from health professionals very seriously. So in terms of health, the response has been exemplary, but the country doesn't have the resources to withstand such widespread economic fallout through its population.

As a Christian community development organization, many of our activities involve groups and people getting together, so it took us and our partners time to adjust. We immediately went into a major lockdown so



planning changes in strategy—which is hard in normal times—with people working from home that often didn't have internet, and who couldn't reach communities, was complicated! Our programs that were interrupted and/or affected included community vegetable farming and support of parents and vulnerable children in an area with a high rate of HIV; pastor training; support of newborns whose mothers died in childbirth; mother-tongue literacy classes; and adolescent peer education groups learning about reproductive health and rights.

After the initial shock and scrambling for communication, we did what we could to support partner staff and the communities where we work together, doing those aspects of the development programs that could be continued. When lockdown was eased, we adjusted to train local people to provide support and information directly. As restrictions are lifted we have organized some group activities, but in smaller groups so we can maintain social distancing.

We have done a number of more humanitarian responses, for example, food distributions among the people living with HIV/AIDS with whom our HNGR intern Hannah worked. We distributed hygiene products and information manuals to local clinics and made it possible for literacy groups to restart with donations of masks and handwashing stations. In Senegal we didn't usually do this kind of work; we try to avoid donating materials, focusing on community transformation instead. But with our vulnerable communities going through extraordinary times, we have found new ways to support them.

COVID-19 has not impacted our values or general approach, and we have always dealt with challenging situations and logistics, but now the calculation has changed. Where we previously trained community members and local clinic staff on dealing with a new disease and supervised them, now we have distributed manuals and hygiene products and hoped and prayed for the best. This is not our preference, but we are trying to create other ways of training and supervision. As time goes by, we are getting better at responding to this new situation. Little by little, case numbers drop and restrictions are lifted, so it also becomes easier to find appropriate ways of working.

Though I haven't been able to visit our partnering communities, I now receive more pictures and videos from partners through WhatsApp. For now, that gives me connection to the work, but I'm praying I can visit again soon because as the pandemic conditions last longer, my lack of physical presence in communities and partner offices limit the growth and deepening of our partnerships. ■

"COVID-19 has not impacted our values or general approach... but now the calculation has changed. Where we previously trained community members and local clinic staff on dealing with a new disease and supervised them, now we have distributed manuals and hygiene products and hoped and prayed for the best."

World Renew Senegal

<https://worldrenew.net/senegal>

Listen also to the Spring Symposium Podcast with Esther Kühn, Dr. Scott Ickes, and former HNGR intern Hannah Sanders: <https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/human-needs-and-global-resources-hngr/symposium/2021-spring-symposium-podcasts/>

Pray with us

- That we will clearly hear people's needs and will be able to respond
- That communities will continue to be able to work with us and our Christian partners in this majority Muslim country.
- Also pray for a good June-September rainy season, since a bad harvest would mean higher food prices for the whole country.

Dr. Esther Kühn is the Senegal Country Director for World Renew, which works in partnership with local Christian organizations to empower communities to achieve food security, gender justice, and support for those living with HIV. World Renew Senegal and its local partners have hosted interns from the Human Needs and Global Resources Program since 2011.

Dr. Allison Ruark is Assistant Professor of Applied Health Science whose work and research as a social epidemiologist concentrates on behavioral HIV prevention, gender-based violence, and the impact of couple and family relationships on health. Dr. Ruark has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Dr. Scott Ickes is Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Health Science at Wheaton College, where he serves on the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee. His scholarship examines the socio-cultural, behavioral, and structural causes of poor nutrition, and seeks to identify and evaluate strategies to improve nutrition and health in low-resource contexts.

Photos: World Renew Senegal team: Ndeye Fall, Esther Kühn, Jatu Weber, Gédéon Weber; World Renew and local partner SLDS distribution of hygiene products to communities affected by COVID-19; World Renew and local partner ELS distribute hygiene products to a literacy group



About the Contributors

Michael Coman is the Chief Strategy Officer for International Care Ministries (ICM), a non-government organization based in the Philippines that exists to see the ultra-poor released from physical, emotional, and spiritual bondage. ICM works with and serves households in the Visayas and Mindanao regions by delivering the right support, training, and resources to unlock the bondages of poverty.

Ismael Conchacala is Wiwa from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. He works in the fields of education, pedagogy, research and visual arts and works with Wiwa youth to generate spaces of informal education through the Casa Wiwa, a place where he helps lead a program of artistic and literary creativity for the strengthening of the Wiwa language, Dumuna.

Professor Lily Quiroa-Crowell is Visiting Assistant Lecturer of Anthropology and Urban Studies at Wheaton College. She studies violence, memory, and corporate agroextraction in relation to Indigenous political subjectivity in Latin America. Her dissertation focuses on the Caribbean coast in Guatemala, specifically the Q'eqchi' Maya communities living in and around the port city of Puerto Barrios.

Pastor Mario Luis Huamán Dávila has been the Director of Asociación San Lucas in Moyobamba, Peru, since 2010. Asociación San Lucas Moyobamba is a clinic that is formally connected with the Luke Society International network. The Luke Society vision is to participate in God's plan of redemption by following Jesus' example of teaching, preaching, and healing as described in Matthew 9:35-36.

Elias D'eis is the Executive Director of Holy Land Trust, a non-profit Palestinian organization committed to fostering peace, justice and understanding in the Holy Land. Holy Land Trust is deeply committed to exploring the root causes of violence and to developing solutions to address them. Holy Land Trust has over twenty years of experience working in nonviolence, peacemaking, and creating awareness of the social and political conditions in the Holy Land.

Tina Dedace is the Program Coordinator of Made in Hope, Philippines – She WORKS, Inc. She oversees the four program thrusts of She WORKS (She LEADS, She WORKS, She CARES, She ACTS) and facilitates leadership development of women survivors of trafficking. Tina's passion is to see trafficked women equipped to their full potential so that they become equippers of others.

Sami DiPasquale is the founder and director of Abara, an organization that cultivates opportunities for understanding, serving, and loving across divides through education, encounters, and response. Abara accomplishes its mission by facilitating encounters on the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez by resourcing and connecting migrant shelters and by collaborating with other organizations along the border and along migrant pathways from Central America.

Dr. Rajni Herman is a palliative care physician, working as the Project Director of Shalom Delhi, which is a Palliative care Unit of Emmanuel Hospital Association. Shalom, located in Delhi, India, provides holistic care for patients with HIV, terminal cancer and Non-Communicable Diseases. Its various components include a hospital clinic with inpatient and outpatient facility, Home care programs for patients with HIV, cancer and NCD, an adolescent program, palliative care work among transgendered people, support groups and a livelihood program.

Dr. Brian Howell is Professor of Anthropology at Wheaton College whose research and writing as an anthropologist of religion focuses on global Christianity, short term missions, and the intersection of theology and anthropology. Dr. Howell has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Dr. Enoch Hill is Associate Professor of Economics at Wheaton College, serves as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program, and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Dr. James (Jamie) G. Huff Jr. is Associate Professor and Associate Director of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program at Wheaton College. He is a cultural anthropologist whose scholarship and applied research focuses on religion and social change in Latin America.

Dr. Scott Ickes is Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Health Science at Wheaton College, where he serves on the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee. His scholarship examines the socio-cultural, behavioral, and structural causes of poor nutrition, and seeks to identify and evaluate strategies to improve nutrition and health in low-resource contexts.

Drew Jennings-Grisham (HNGR '06) dedicates his time to supporting Indigenous churches in Colombia, Bolivia and other parts of Latin America through his work with Memoria Indígena. Currently based in Medellín, Colombia, he also helps coordinate the "Identity, Indigeneity and Interculturality" focus group in the Latin American Theological Fraternity (FTL) and works with Paz y Esperanza Colombia.

Dr. George Kalantzis is Professor of Theology at Wheaton College and Director of The Wheaton Center for Early Christian Studies. He also serves as Senior Fellow with the International Association for Refugees (IAFR) and Faculty Fellow with the Humanitarian Disaster Institute (HDI) on issues of refugee migration, immigration, and human rights. His research and writing focuses on the development of doctrine in early Christianity, as well as on the interplay of classical Greco-Roman society and early Christian ethics. Dr. Kalantzis has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Prisca Kambole is the Executive Director and co-founder of Partners for Life Advancement and Education Promotion (PLAEP), a Christian organization addressing education, health, and economic challenges of children affected with HIV and economically constrained communities in Zambia.

Dr. Mandy Kellums Baraka is Visiting Associate Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Wheaton College and from 2014-2021 served as the Student Support Coordinator of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Dr. Christine Goring Kepner is Associate Professor of Spanish and co-director of the Wheaton in Spain Program at Wheaton College. Dr. Kepner has worked closely with students in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program by providing mentoring and research support, and serving as a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Rev. Dr. John Kitayimbwa is Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs [Provost] of Uganda Christian University. He holds a PhD in Computational Biology, an MPhil in Computational Biology, and an MSc in Mathematics, and is an ordained priest in the Anglican Church of Uganda. John's vision is for higher education that equips young women and men to serve church and society in bringing to reality the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Esther Kühn is the Senegal Country Director for World Renew, which works in partnership with local Christian organizations to empower communities to achieve food security, gender justice, and support for those living with HIV. World Renew Senegal and its local partners have hosted interns from the Human Needs and Global Resources Program since 2011.

Christophe Mbonyingabo is the founder and Executive Director of CARSA (Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance), a Rwandan NGO that serves communities in supporting their journey towards healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and sustainable holistic development. CARSA's most unique intervention, named "Cows for Peace" (CFP), seeks to foster reconciled relationships between genocide survivors and their direct perpetrators.

Nega Meaza is Executive Director of Onesimus Children Development Association (OCDA) located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. OCDA works to rescue at-risk children and youth and to ensure that they remain in or return to a loving family. Since 2006 the organization has provided holistic programs that meet the physical, emotional, developmental, and spiritual needs of children and youth.

Jonathan Nambu is a Japanese American who has lived in the Philippines for thirty years. He has ministered to refugees, street gang members, and homeless persons in Chicago for five years before moving to Manila. He is the Executive Director of Samaritana, a Christian organization where he ministers with his wife Thelma among adult women survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking. Jonathan and Thelma have one daughter, Katrinka.

Dr. Kristen Page is the Ruth Kraft Strohschein Distinguished Chair and Professor of Biology at Wheaton College. She is a disease ecologist and teaches many courses that range from ecology to parasitology to global health. For the past 21 years, Dr. Page has had the tremendous blessing of mentoring students in the Human Needs and Global Resources program; collaborating with the students and global partners to learn about the ways in which the use of natural resources impacts the environment and human health.

Rev. Dr. Amy Peeler is Associate Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College. Her research centers in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the story of Mary, mother of Jesus, and theological language. Dr. Peeler has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Francisco (Paco) Perez is Chuj from Guatemala. Paco has his undergraduate degree in theology from SETECA and due to the effects of the pandemic last year moved back from Guatemala City to his rural community where he grew up. There he is now supporting his local church and helping create and support local innovations for improving home heating and cooking methods.

Dr. Néstor Quiroa is Associate Professor of Spanish and has taught Latin American Literature at Wheaton College since 2002. His research interests include the religious encounter between Dominican missionary friars and Maya groups in Highland Guatemala. Dr. Quiroa has also written articles on the colonial religious context of native-authored colonial K'iche' texts and on indigenous responses to evangelization. His recent research focuses on twentieth century socio-political discourses in Central American novels. Dr. Quiroa has regularly served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

About the Contributors

Jocabel Solano is from the Guna nation in Panama. A theologian and writer, she is the director of Memoria Indigena and board member of the Latin American Theological Fellowship (FTL). One of her prayers is to cultivate the capacity to recognize the good news of Jesus as it is interwoven in the identities of Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala (America).

Dr. Amy Reynolds is Associate Professor of Sociology at Wheaton College whose research focuses on issues of economic globalization and the influence of religion and culture within markets. Dr. Reynolds has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program and is a member of the Human Needs and Global Resources Advisory Committee (HAC).

Dr. Paul Robison is Wheaton College Professor Emeritus and was Director of the Human Needs and Global Resources Program from 1999-2013. He is co-founder of Congo Initiative and the Christian Bilingual University of Congo. Paul spent much of 2019-2020 at Uganda Christian University as a Fulbright Scholar, where his initial and primary tasks were focused on deepening UCU's integration of faith, learning, and service. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought additional and unanticipated opportunities for deepening and expanding a relationship between Wheaton College and UCU.

José Vínces Rodríguez is a pastor, lawyer, and human rights defender. He is the director of Paz and Esperanza Ecuador, a Christian non-government organization located in Guayaquil, that works with poor and marginalized groups against various forms of violence and injustice.

Dr. Allison Ruark is Assistant Professor of Applied Health Science whose work and research as a social epidemiologist concentrates on behavioral HIV prevention, gender-based violence, and the impact of couple and family relationships on health. Dr. Ruark has also served as a mentor and advisor to interns in the Human Needs and Global Resources Program.

Alberto (Tico) Vazquez is a psychologist and educator and the Buentrato Program National Coordinator for Claves, a program of Juventud para Cristo (Youth for Christ) Uruguay. The Claves program is a Uruguayan civil society program that exists so that children and adolescents enjoy full and abundant life. The program identifies and strengthens capacities that enable people to confront violence and promote good treatment towards children and adolescents throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Dr. Laura S. Meitzner Yoder is the Director and John Stott Endowed Chair of Human Needs and Global Resources, and Professor of Environmental Studies, at Wheaton College. She is a political ecologist whose applied research and writing focus on human-environment interactions, especially in Southeast Asia.

